This week’s high drama for regime change appears to have fizzled out as the UML beat the Nepali Congress in its competition to woo the UCPN(M).

As this paper went to press on Thursday evening, there were indications that a ‘coup’ attempt by the NC to bring down the UML-UCPN(M) coalition, oust Prime Minister K P Oli and replace him with Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal had been foiled.

UML Vice-chairman Bam Dev Gautam went to meet Dahal at his home early Thursday morning and appears to have convinced him that Oli was ready to hand over the premiership to him if he waited till after the budget is presented on 28 May. Later, when a delegation from the NC went to meet Dahal, the Maoist leader reportedly thanked them for their offer, but that he’d have to decline for now.

What this means is that the NC’s attempt to register a vote of no confidence this week and form a government with the Maoists and the support of Madhesi parties has not been successful. But it firmly established the UCPN(M) as a kingmaker party since Dahal would be the next PM no matter which side won the power struggle.

The NC accused the Oli-led coalition of being unsuccessful in ensuring earthquake relief delivery, in governance, resolving the Madhes crisis and curbing the black market. It proposed Dahal as prime minister in a new coalition that would include the NC. The UML managed to convince Dahal that it would not press for the investigation of wartime atrocities.

As things stand now, the parties in the present coalition will remain the same, but there will be a new prime minister (probably Dahal) and a new ministerial lineup after the budget is passed.

Kunda Dixit
A
fter ten days of detention by the Commission for the
Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIIA), the
Supreme Court ordered the release of journalist and
Himalmedia co-publisher Kanak Mani Dixit on Sunday.
Acting on a petition for a writ of habeas corpus, the bench
comprising Chief Justice Sushila Karki and Justice Jugalnath
Sharma Pradhan – in a landmark decision – termed the
detention unlawful and warned the CIIA not to take anyone
to custody without furnishing sufficient and appropriate
reason. A precedent has now been set, whereby the CIIA
can no longer continue to act ultra vires with impunity.

The Supreme Court concluded that the CIIA had over-
reached its mandate, and raised serious questions about
the watchdog’s activities to the past. Before Dixit, the CIIA
had filed cases against two lawyers, Sambhu Thapa and Jyoti
Baniya, who had also opposed the appointment of Lok Man
Singh Karki as CIIA chief in 2013. The CIIA coerced the Internal
Revenue Service to raid Sambhu Thapa’s law firm, and
even then the Supreme Court had rebuked the CIIA
because its behaviour was against the law. The court also
denied the case against Baniya. So the decision in the Dixit
case is the third time that the Supreme Court has found
the CIIA’s actions ultra vires.

Ever since the strategically premeditated appointment of
Lok Man Singh Karki to head the CIIA, we have seen a
gradual but far-reaching erosion of the freedoms guaranteed
to us and enshrined in our Constitution. He has used
intimidatory tactics, threats and improper rewards to
persuade powerful institutions and individuals to do his
bidding. A creeping counter-revolution is taking the country
back to authoritarianism not by force of arms or mass arrests,
but by the blatant and unchoked abuse of authority by the
very institution created to curb it.

In the three years since his appointment, Karki has made
the CIIA an extra-constitutional cradle of political power
working hand-in-glove with business syndicates, political
cartels and at the behest of external agencies. Kanak Mani
Dixit was merely the latest pawn in Karki’s chess board,
but there are larger geopolitical forces moving the pieces for
him. Many who had run afoul of Karki in the past have
been issued CIIA summons or been hauled over the coals.

On the pretext of investigating corruption, the CIIA
has systematically targeted bureaucrats, police, politicians,
professors, journalists, lawyers, civil society activists and
campaigners for pluralism. The intimidation and threats
have instilled a culture of silence that has been destroying
our democracy and rule of law. Most politicians, civil society
and sections of the media were too afraid of the CIIA
to publicly denounce Dixit’s detention on 22 April.

They did not protest either when Dixit was denied access
to his lawyer for a full 72 hours after his detention, a flagrant
violation of Article 20 of the Constitution, which guarantees
an arrested person the right to legal representation. The
Federation of Nepali Journalists issued a feeble statement
signed by a junior functionary, but only after its global
umbrella body, the International Federation of Journalists
issued a strong statement. The Nepal Bar Association, which
has always been at the forefront of the struggle for
democracy in this country, refused to speak out.

To be sure, many among Nepal’s politicians, civil servants,
legislators, and even heads of sports bodies, are rotten to
the core. The CIIA was set up precisely because organs of
the state could be co-opted by organised criminals enjoying
political protection. But today that very institution has
been infiltrated and is controlled by a coven of epitomising
the collective sycophants his office is tasked to investigate.

What do you do when an Executive agency set up to
turn the CIIA is itself rotten? Or when politicians whose
clerical rattle with skeletons keep mum? To counter abuse
of authority by a constitutional body we can only fall
back on two other constitutional bodies: the Judiciary and
Parliament. Sunday’s Supreme Court verdict on Dixit’s
case is a refreshing and timely reminder that the Judiciary
has not yet been defeated, and that Nepal’s first female
Chief Justice has defied pressure and acted without fear
or favour to establish the rule of law. It remains to be seen if
the Legislature will show the same fortitude and stand up
this culture of silence. But then Parliament has plunged
broadfoot into a political crisis this week.

We have been reminded that Nepal’s democracy is still
fragile, our freedoms need to be protected from authoritarians
in our midst. Those who remained silent during this whole
scandalous episode might need to be reminded of the famous
message: there may be no one left to speak out when they
come for you.
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Anthropomorphism and mythology

Mythology meets cartoon characters and anthropomorphic animals to populate the works of street artist Kesaridha Shrestha and Kumar Maharajan. They are intriguing images that compel the audience to contemplate human attributes from a fresh new transgenic perspective.

Shrestha’s street name is Deadline, and her ‘Holy Holy Space’ adorn the walls of the ground floor in Siddharta Art Gallery. She tactically traces the resonances between science fiction portrayal of extra-terrestrial life and creatures from Hindu mythology.

Looking at features of Lord Shiva with his blue skin or Shesh Naga with multiple heads, Shrestha uses acrylic and paint to create bright coloured characters that force us to look at the figures in new light.

‘Samudra Manthan’ (see above) depicts the churning of the primordial ocean, a popular scene from Hindu mythology, with stark simplicity and minimal use of colors, the similitude of the gods and demons romp like cartoon characters. It is an arresting image that forces viewers to question iconic figures that they have come to take for granted. Shrestha’s nostalgia of her childhood interactions beautifully with her fascination for her culture giving a fresh new perspective to Hindu myths. Her portrait of Namdeva is reminiscent of sketches seen in Japanese manga comics, and the ‘Shesh Naga’ sketches also evoke a new modern avatar of the holy serpent.

Maharajan’s title name is ‘Life’ and his ‘Life’ series uses both acrylic and aerosol paint on canvas, combining the physical features of humans and animals. We come away realizing how we have much more in common than we think.

‘Though we say we are different, in many ways we are similar to animals. It is this similarity that makes all us humans the same,’ Maharajan explains.

The two works in the series exquisitely display this sense of oneness. Maharajan’s ‘Beginning’, less below of a human baby in the womb merged with parts of the body of an elephant foetus seems to imply that all creatures have a similar genesis and gestation. His other work, ‘End’, portraying a dead house fly with sickly human arms protruding from where its legs should be again underlines that whether it is an insect or a human being, death is a part of life.

Influences of deconstructivism and pop reality is seen throughout Maharajan’s artwork and his use of calligraphy adds to its aesthetics. Incorporating various human and animal features in his other works like ‘Evey’ and ‘The Kiss’ they urge the audience to find equality in a world filled with divisions.

Displayed as part of the sixth series of works created by recipients of the Australian Himalayan Art Award, the artworks move away from the convention, perhaps an influence of their origins in street art.

Shrestha Banerjee

Until 9 May, 11am to 5pm, Siddharta Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited

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Football in exile

Each year football teams from Tibetan refugee settlements across India, Nepal, US and Canada come together to compete at the Gyalyum Chenmo Memorial Gold Cup (GCMGC) held in memory of the Dalai Lama’s mother who passed away in 1981. The location for this year’s tournament, the 22nd, was a dusty football field of the Doeguling Tibetan Settlement in Mundgod of the state of Karnataka in India. There were 18 teams: 16 from India and two from Nepal. Representing Kathmandu was the Boudha-based Team Choelsum United which received financial support from community members and local business owners to pay for travel and participation.

The club’s manager, Rinzin Sherpa said that Choelsum’s aim is “to get more Tibetan youngsters into football”. He sees the sport as an alternative to drugs and alcohol abuse for young Tibetans in Kathmandu and elsewhere.

Competing in the GCMGC in 2013, Choelsum did not advance out of its group, and this year was no different. The club was placed in Group C with Dhungyaling Sports Club from Tezu, Arunachal, Gulladhalla FC, from Bylakuppe, Karnataka, and Gangjong FC, from Shillong, and Galladahalla FC and Gangjong FC from Shillong, and Galladahalla FC from Shillong.

A Kathmandu team hoisted the Gold Cup in 2004, but no Valley club has won since. Choelsum United hopes it can change that next year.

Since 2003 the tournament has been organised by the Tibetan National Sports Association which aims to promote the game of football within the Tibetan Community and raise awareness about the Tibetan cause and issues.

Kelsang Dhondup, the executive secretary of the TNSA, worked closely with a local voluntary association, the Doeguling Youth Sports Association, to help organise this year’s tournament.

Growing CG, Chaudhary Group’s CG HOLDINGS announced its acquisition of Tigerland Safari Resort & Lodge in Chitwan recently. The 35 cottage resort is located on the edge of the Chitwan National Park, near the Rapti river.

Dawn in the dark
G.P. Trading Concern recently inaugurated the Opple LED Lights showroom at Putalisadak, Kathmandu. With different varieties of LED lights, the brand boasts a patented flicker free technology and consumes 88% less energy than other lighting devices.

Discounts galore,
Colors Mobile is offering Pearl Black K3 at Rs 17,495, with a discount of Rs 3,500. With a 5-inch HD screen, the phone boasts of features like 32 GB ROM, 3 GB RAM, 13 MP rear camera and 8MP front camera.

Coming soon: M5
Gionee recently announced that the Marathon M5 Plus will be launched in Nepal soon. The latest addition to its big-battery marathon series, M5 Plus comes with a 1.3 GHz Octa-core processor and reverse OTG charging. The phone will be available in champagne gold colour.

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More exercise, less soft drinks...

... most effective way to tackle an epidemic of diabetes sweeping Asian developing countries like Nepal

SONIA AWALE
IN HONG KONG

The number of adults with diabetes worldwide has quadrupled in the past 35 years, according to a recent study, with most of the increase in Asian countries. Lifestyle changes, sugar-rich diets and genetic predisposition mean Nepal also faces an epidemic of the disease, researchers warn.

The study published last month in the journal The Lancet compared diabetes levels worldwide from 1980-2014 and found that low and middle-income countries had the biggest increase. The world average for diabetes prevalence is 9 per cent, and Nepal is nearly at the top of the list with incidence at 14 per cent.

“Rural to urban migration in Nepal has multiple impacts like decreased physical activity, shift to high energy diets leading to obesity and increasing the risk of diabetes,” explained Sanjib Sharma of the B P Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS) in Birgunj, and a contributor to the study.

The number of people suffering from Type 2 diabetes in Nepal, particularly in urban areas, is growing alarmingly with more than ten times the prevalence rate in cities as in villages — mainly due to sugar-rich diets and reduced exercise.

Genetics plays a role, and early life conditions can also determine whether a person will develop diabetes later in life, especially in countries with poor maternal and child healthcare.

“Idequate nutrition during pregnancy and low birth weight of babies may increase diabetes prevalence in Nepal,” Sharma told Nepal Times by email.

His research has shown that the prevalence of diabetes in Nepal is 8.1 per cent, with 1 per cent in rural areas and up to 14 per cent in cities. There are 2.5 million people with Type 2 diabetes in Nepal. India and China currently have the highest numbers of diabetic patients, and also show the sharpest rise in total numbers with the disease. Studies suggest that South Asians are six times more likely to develop diabetes than the general population, with lifestyle and genetics the main factors.

Another contributor to the study, Daniel Ho of the University of Hong Kong, said the main culprits were sugar-rich soft drinks and carbohydrate-rich diets. "Soft drinks have very high calories, and people aren’t even aware about the danger they pose,” he said.

All those extra calories coupled with generally declining physical activity are cited as the main reasons for the sharp increase in diabetes in Asia. An average Nepali consumes 35g of sugar per day in their diet, with a much higher consumption in urban areas. The World Health Organisation (WHO) cites 25g/day as the threshold safe limit for sugar consumption.

Sharma said it is more prudent and cheaper to prevent the disease by behavioural changes rather than treating it once diagnosed in a patient. “The greatest gains in public health in countries like Nepal will be derived not from breakthroughs in biomedical research but from changes in behaviour. Public awareness is needed to convince people about more exercise and reducing sugar consumption,” said Sharma.

China, India and Nepal could also learn from government policies to reduce the consumption of sugar-rich soft drinks. Mexico, for instance, passed an excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages after it was found 72 per cent of the population was overweight. Just two years later, there was up to 12 per cent decline in the consumption of sweetened beverages in Mexico and a 17 per cent drop among poorer households, according to a recent study published in the British Medical Journal.

“We can draw parallels to tobacco control. Like tax on cigarettes, we can do something similar for sugary drinks like Mexico did,” said Ho.

As Nepal’s disease burden moves from infections to a greater prevalence of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, experts say it could use the proven effectiveness of community health programs by mobilising Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) to spread awareness about the dangers of energy-rich diets and a sedentary lifestyle.

“For diabetes, too, we need simple approaches of empowering grassroots health care providers like FCHVs,” said Sharma. “This will help detect and treat diabetes earlier, helping to prevent more serious complications that drain the country’s resources.”

For the first time ever, there are more obese people in the world than underweight. China now has overtaken both the US and UK in diabetes prevalence, with 9.4 per cent of its population diabetic. Even its overweight population is increasing and has crossed 35 per cent. Similarly in Hong Kong, one third of people in the city now weigh too much.

“People are moving in cities, consuming fast food and soft drinks with little physical activity,” explained Ho. “Any policy that can increase physical activity can be useful, anything we can do to reduce obesity will be useful to prevent diabetes.”
S

eventeen floors up on the helipad of
the Grande Hospital in Kathmandu,
Chakra Pandey (pictured, below) sounds like the kind of person who has
reached the pinnacle of his medical career.

The doctor has reason to be proud of
his achievement: the Grande International
Hospital which Pandey built from the
ground up with a consortium of investors
has partially stemmed the exodus of Nepali
patients for treatment abroad as well as
established a new standard for state-of-the-
art medical care in Nepal.

“Our dream was to set up a world-
class hospital in Nepal. But this is just the
beginning. We have only completed 30 per
cent of our dream, we still have 70 per cent
left to do,” Pandey said.

Indeed, in the three years since its
inception, Grande has overcome challenges
that most institutions take decades to
erperience: there has been a bruising
falling-out between some partners, last
year’s earthquake damaged the high-rise
hospital in Dhapasi, and then there was the
Indian blockade which affected services for
five months.

On 25 April last year, as the building
swayed, hundreds of patients were carried
down into the spacious parking lot which
was turned into a tent hospital for the next
weeks, carrying out 122 major surgeries,
treating more than 1,000 wounded and
offering free medical care for four months.
Many of the wounded of the Langtang and
Everest Base Camp avalanches were also
choppered here for emergency treatment.

The hospital now carries out at least
100 hip and knee replacements a year,
does ligament reconstruction, sophisticated
cardiac and kidney procedures. Grande’s
pathology, MRI and CT diagnostics,
individualised ICUs, Cathlab and 30 other
departments all have modern equipments.
Being an orthopaedic surgeon himself,
Pandey has set up a well-equipped
physiotherapy rehabilitation centre for
post-op patients.

“This place lacks nothing, there are
very few hospitals like this even in India,”
said Ashok Vardhan, an Indian hospital
consultant formerly with Fortis whose
company is now managing Grande. “The
trauma department here is the most
comprehensive I have seen.”

It is this investment in quality that
Pandey hopes will be an asset for Nepal’s
adventure tourism industry, since world
class heli-rescue, ambulance services
and trauma care is now available in
Kathmandu. Grande is also hoping to serve
the local expatriate population and promote
medical tourism. The hospital is getting
overseas Nepalis as well as their parents
come for tests that are not mixed with other
sick patients. “We are beginning to see a
growth of preventive health culture in
Nepal, people are not waiting till they
get sick to have a checkup,” explained
Archana Pradhan at the Grande’s
Wellness Centre.

The hospital has a special ward for
needy patients who only have to pay Rs 750 per day, but offers the same level of
care and service. “Our philosophy is that
healthcare cannot be purely commercial,
and we use part of the revenue from well-
to-do patients to subsidise poorer ones,”
Pandey explains.

The doctor now wants to scale up
that system to the national level by trying
to convince the government to allow
private hospitals to manage government
hospitals in underserved areas of the
country so they can offer affordable
and accessible health care to rural
populations. In return, the government
would provide hospitals with soft credit
for their city hospitals.

Grande recently added to its roster
Arjun Karki, formerly of Patan Hospital,
to oversee its quality and ethical care
and noted heart surgeon Bhagwan
Koirala. Both are well known for their
achievements in spreading the reach of
government health services also to rural
areas.

For Chakra Pandey, the work has
just begun. He said: “We are not trying
to make money overnight, we are here
for the long haul. This is not just our
hospital, it is Nepal’s property, no one
can take it away from us.”

Nepal’s most state-of-the-art
hospital is reducing the number of patients going
abroad for treatment

\[Image\]
Walk down the street in Darbar Marg, Thamel, Pokhara or Dharan and you can see Nepali youngsters riding the Korean Wave.

**SEULKI LEE**

Eight jeans and flak waders matched with oversized crop tops and a small sling bag. This is the new female fashion trend increasingly spottable on Darbar Marg, Thamel, Bhamrikhel and even Pokhara and Dharan.

The young women wearing them also keep their natural skin tone, have minimal eye makeup with mascara, and are almost indistinguishable from the Korean actresses they are trying to imitate.

“T’s great that I can style myself, the clothes are comfortable and stylish,” says newly-married Manita Gunung, 26, in front of Sherpa Mall in Darbar Marg. The references for her fashion coordination were South Korean TV serials.

Boys Over Flowers (2009), The Fairy (2013) and Descendants of the Sun (2016) are the most popular hit Korean TV dramas amongst young Nepalis. And actor Lee Min-ho is the most famous name from South Korean showbiz, in Nepal as elsewhere across China and Southeast Asia.

“There are lots of cute boys, the serials are not too long and there are really stylish fashion and make-ups for us to follow,” says Krishna Tamang, 16, who just finished her SSL exams.

Interestingly, random interviews in Kathmandu Valley revealed that it was usually Nepalis of Janajati origin like Tamang, Gunung, Sherpa or Newar mostly who were into Korean fashion and cosmetic products. In fact, many of the young women could easily be mistaken for being Korean. Most of them said they watched DVDs of Korean serials, or tuned into Korea’s KBS World channel.

Even men seem to be buffeted by the Korean Wave. Two blokes cut hairdo and short sleeve T-shirts with flat slip-on shoes is the easiest way to spot Korean influence on men on Kathmandu’s streets. "I didn’t intentionally copy it from Korean dramas, but I found it cool and stylish," says Tsewang.
K-WAVE: Momo Gurgung, 24, centre, with her friends at Darbar Marg on
Tuesday. The three friends are avid fans of
Korean drama and fellow Korean fashion.

SEUL TO SANEPA

With recent exposure to
Korean soap opera on tv
and the internet, Nepali women
have started seeking out
Korean clothing and cosmetic products.

One such outlet in Kumanipati
is called, simply, ‘Korean Shop’. And although it displays
clothing from China or Thailand,
customers come here mainly for
men and women’s semi-leather
and Korean fashion and

these are all made in Korea,”
says Sushan Raj Shrestha, 20, in
Nepali-accented Korean, pointing
to men’s boxer underwear, shoes,
sunglasses, and other fashion
accessories. Shrestha and his elder
brother used to work in Korea and
decided to open two shops upon
their return four years ago.

He admits that most of the
customers come to shop because
of its sign name ‘Korean Shop’,
but the displayed female clothes
in second floor have tags with

incorrect Korean.

True to its name, the most
popular items here and in another
Korean shop in Kumanipati,
Misumi, are Made in Korea

cosmetic products for skin, nail
and hair care.

There are about 15-20 customers visiting our shop every
day. All of them know that we sell
Korea’s branded cosmetic products
like Misula. The Face Shop and
Enude House directly from Korea,”
says Misumi salesperson, Sajista
Magar (pic, above).

The shop was opened two
years ago by Pragya Shrestha
and is preparing for second branch
in Nag Poshari next month, and
interestingly does a lot of its
marketing through Instagram and
Facebook. As the customers’ needs
are specifically targeted to Korean
brand cosmetics, the shop is
confident about its growth.

“The market is growing, the
big sales factor of Korean cosmetic
products is that customers think
they will have the natural look of
Korean actresses that they see
on tv,” explains Magar. “Korean
cosmetics are designed for a
natural skin tone according to
individual’s skin colour and type.”

The top three sellers of
Misumi are ‘BB cream’, Sheet mask pack
with anti-wrinkle effect,
and 3-in-1 type powder ‘magic
cushion’. A 50ml BB cream tube
from Misula costs Rs 2,000 in
Kathmandu – three times more
than in Korea.

Says Magar. “The price is
higher here but affordable
compared to imported products
from India or America.”

Sudhi Lee

THE HAIR WAVE

It is easy to spot the brightly coloured Korean Beauty
Shop and Training Centre amidst a row of less
decorated houses and restaurants along Bhaisepati in
Lalitpur. Opened less than two months ago, the Korean
salon is already a hit amongst the Valley’s K pop fans.

“Most of our customers come here because they
want to look like the Korean stars they idolise,” says
owner Pinky Sherpa, 22, who herself follows Korean
tele-drama religiously.

Sherpa says she saw a market for a Korean hair
salon because of the Hallyu effect on the youth here,
and a growing number of Korean expats living in the
city.

For the venture Sherpa has teamed with a Korean
couple based in Kathmandu. Sherpa’s business
partner Kwon Kyung Sun runs a Korean language
institute in Bhaisepati while his wife, Kim Song Ae,
offers hair cutting services to customers at the salon.

“Many girls come here demanding to get their hair
cut like the Korean actress Kim Hyo soo who also the
boys ask for the two block cuts,” says Song Ae who
worked as a hair stylist in Korea. Song Ae travels to
Korea twice a year to buy all necessary supplies for
the salon, which exclusively uses Korean products.

On weekdays the salon receives around five
customers, says Sherpa, and the number doubles
during the weekends.

Smita Bhusan

THE HAIR WAVE
Mother’s Day. Celebrate the strong women who raised you. 6 May

Green film, Screening of Greening the island of the Gods, a short documentary about Bali’s garbage crisis and its grassroots solutions. 7 May, 3.30pm to 5pm, Art Cafe, Jodhpur. (01484)9901

Nonviolent communication, A workshop on effective communication during stressful situations, conducted by Jeanette Sauvain, Dipl Peace Service, Australia. 6 May, 7am to 8pm, CSIRP Hall, Annapoorni. RSVP at (01484)362414968.

Mother’s Day. Celebrate the strong women who raised you. 6 May

Dancemandu, The second edition of Dancemandu: Music Festival celebrating the best of electronic music. 6 to 7 May, 2 to 10pm (Friday), 2 to 10pm (Saturday), Tiktes, Rs 2,000 (pre-sale). Rs 3,000 (door) Naliving Resort, SUViki

Solidarity, An art exhibition featuring veteran artist Girish Vamanurth celebrating his collaboration with budding artists as well as seasoned experts. 19 May, 5.30pm, Alliance Francaise, Kathmandu

14 May, 6.30pm onwards, Fundelter, Kathmandu

Design Workshop, Pick up tips and tricks to curating an exhibition, as well as display techniques. Registration necessary. 15 to 19 May, 9am to 5pm, Kathmandu. Rs 6000 per person. 01484792335/981829933M

Earthbag building, A workshop on earthbag building technology and projects undertaken in Nepal. 10 May, 5 to 5pm, Alliance Francaise, Pulka

The Terrace Garden, A BBQ-filled Friday and Saturday overlooking the cityscape, only at Radisson Hotel. Enjoy the menu with a selection of desserts. 6 to 10pm during weekends, Radisson Hotel, Jodhpur. (01484)2111

The Terrace Garden, A BBQ-filled Friday and Saturday overlooking the cityscape, only at Radisson Hotel. Enjoy the menu with a selection of desserts. 6 to 10pm during weekends, Radisson Hotel, Jodhpur. (01484)2111

Top of the World Festival, An evening of music at the top of the World. 27 May, 9am onwards, Jodhpur Football Ground, Jodhpur

The Terrace Garden, A BBQ-filled Friday and Saturday overlooking the cityscape, only at Radisson Hotel. Enjoy the menu with a selection of desserts. 6 to 10pm during weekends, Radisson Hotel, Jodhpur. (01484)2111

Pataleban Vineyard Resort, A perfect place to stay, near by pool, massage, saunas, and delicious food of your choice. Srinagar, Pulka. Rs 5500. 01484) 5620123, info@pataleban.com

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The Yellow House, Sand and Bocce for the light traveller. Sirmad, (01484) 336905. www.theyellowhouse.com

Metal Monsters Tour, Rock out with metal bands Crown of Thrones, Kavinsky, Iman Dementia, and X-Menace at Purple Haze. 14 May, 11am onwards, Purple Haze, Thamel, Kathmandu

Hotel Yak & Yeti, Celebrate Mother’s Day by pampering your mother with a delectable dinner at the Sunrise Restaurant. May 6, 6.30pm onwards, Sunrise Restaurant, Hotel Yak & Yeti. For reservations, (01484)5624999
Rs 2,500 plus taxes (20% discount for privilege card holders)

Kripa Joshi, Miss Moti-vation

Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen, A charming restaurant serving the unique flavours of delicious Roha Muslim Food. Jomshahel, 9901257777, 9802395522

Ankit Tiwari Live in Nepal, Celebrate the arrival of Ankit Tiwari, who was behind his hit Galiyan and Suna Raali Hai Hai Tu, at this event. 27 May, 9pm onwards, Jawaharlal Football Ground, Lalitpur

Famous Farm, Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze walking in through the arai field. Nawatkot, (014848046), info@farmlandheritage.com

Art market, Buy, sell, art pieces at this monthly event. May 7, 12 to 4pm, The Yellow House, Sirmad

Nepathya Live, Nepal’s famed folk rock band performs live in the country after a long break. 14 May, 5pm onwards, Jawaharlal Football Ground, Lalitpur

Shambala Garden Cafe, Unwind with Hotel Shangri-La and enjoy a live performance by Chetan Gurung every Friday. 5pm onwards, Hotel Shangri-La, Jodhpur. (01484)22999
Dubas, the ubiquitous roadside restaurants that dot highways along northern India and Pakistan were once the exclusive domain of truck drivers. Today these eateries have transformed into something of a tourist attraction - a visit to one completes the India experience.

In hopes of recreating the roadside dining experience, Soaltee Crowne Plaza launched the second edition of its Dhaba Festival this month.

Upon entrance, milestones placed in prominent places in the premises guide you to ‘Happy Singh da Dhaba’. At the venue, fairy lights shrouded across the temporary bamboo structures, posters of old Bollywood hits plastered on the walls, and loud bhangra music playing in the background liven up the ambience.

My friend and I settled in a comfortable spot overlooking the entire dhaba and were promptly asked for our preferences. A round of drinks and a platter of snacks were then served by men in punjabi kurta.

With three expansive menus of lassis, charcoal roasted meat, vegetable dishes, oven-fresh naans, puchkas, and a wide variety of sweet dishes, the food festival hopes to recapture the essence of these small eateries.

The different yet delicious tasting Tadka walla lassi stood out with its rich spicy aftertaste. The drink paired well with the delectable Pyaz Mutter Ki Roti, a deep fried flatbread consisting of onions and peas wrapped to resemble a momo, and Panner Ki Side, roasted yet soft paneer, served with tarty condiments.

Moreover, the succulence of the roasted mutton and the crispness of the deep fried fish as snack items whetted our appetite for the mains.

For dinner we headed to a live station making Chole Bhature, a signature dish of dhabas. The fresh deep fried flour bread paired with spicy chickpeas balanced out tastes of both the dishes. The creamy Dal Makhani, whole black lentils and red kidney beans cooked in butter, added smoothness to the otherwise dry combo of the Chole Bhature.

The dhaba also offered a vegetarian and non-vegetarian buffet. Among the assorted menu, the Sarson Da Saag, a gravy of mustard leaves made in spices topped with butter stood out with its rich flavous. When eaten with the tawa baked Makki Di Roti, bread made from corn flour, the taste of the gravy was even more pronounced. In addition to the veggie delights, the piquant taste of the Gosht aur Ane ki Biryani, mutton and egg biryani, and the succulent Vind Pur die Murgh, gravy chicken, left us craving for more.

To round up the evening, a variety of appetising sweet dishes was laid out on the counter. The savory Gajar ka Halwa, a carrot pudding, served hot provided a perfect end to a satisfying meal.

A food haven for vegetarians, non-vegetarians, Punjabs and non Punjabs alike, the Dhaba Festival in Soaltee is a must visit. Attend not only for the flavourome meal but also for the true Dhaba experience.

Smiti Bainet

How to get there: Turn right Southside mall chowk and go 200 metres until you see the Soaltee Crowne Plaza sign on the right. If you reach Grand Vista, you’ve gone too far.

Open from 6.30PM onwards
Rs 1,850 plus taxes
Until 14 May 2016
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THE WIND RISES

The 75-year-old Japanese animator, Hayao Miyazaki, is in the eyes of most discerning animation lovers, the undisputed maestro of that world. With his revered Studio Ghibli, Miyazaki has conceived, directed, and produced some of the most profound, sublime works, masterpieces really, that make the ‘Kung Fu Panda’ of American studies look like fluffly cotton candy - delicious to eat but slightly sickening afterwards.

Miyazaki’s films are gorgeous to look at, delightful, dark, full of magical creatures, and often with political undertones that obliquely or obviously refer to human-kind’s impact on the planet. Films like Howl’s Moving Castle (2004), my personal favourite, is an adventure that is absolutely captivating for a child, but exponentially more meaningful to adults, with complex character development, resounding anti-war messaging, and a whimsical, fantastical storyline that never fails to surprise.

While the aforementioned film, along with My Neighbour Totoro (1988), and his most famous Academy Award winning Spirited Away (2001), are all just fine for children, I would warn that Princess Mononoke – a fierce, captivating film about a warrior princess is very much a film for grownups, as is Miyazaki’s last film before he retired (he has threatened to retire six times to date), The Wind Rises (2013).

This last film tells the story of a young man who becomes a pilot and is later drafted into the air force during World War II. In World War II – a subject that weighs heavily in Miyazaki’s mind. The Wind Rises follows the life of Jiro Horikoshi, the engineer who designed the Mitsubishi ASM aircraft, the precursor to the fighter planes that the Japanese used during the war, Jiro dreams of flying, a fascination reflected in Miyazaki as well (and is manifested in many of his films). Howl’s Castle doesn’t just move, it flies through the air, and therefore a fitting final film to cap such a distinguished career.

In many ways The Wind Rises is a classically formal film, following Jiro from childhood dreams of flying, through his training as an engineer, his struggles as a brilliant young visionary who longs to take flight himself, and his poignant love affair with a beautiful young woman with tuberculosis. There are not many surprises in this unite film which is more a poetic meditation on life, love, loss, and the power of dreaming.

Perhaps Miyazaki’s most beautiful film with its simple, elegant visuals, The Wind Rises, when it came out, broke all box office records within Japan, becoming the country’s biggest film as people flocked to see it. Even while Miyazaki was criticized by the disgruntled few who accused him of being a traitor for daring to refer to Japan’s role in the war; an unfortunate occurrence for a film that showcases the beauties of Japan and its culture with so much sensitivity.

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Free: Journalist Kalakmani Dixit with his wife Shanta Dixit after his release at the Supreme Court premises in Kathmandu on Monday.

On Break: Head of Delegation of the European Union to Nepal, Ambassador Renata Tenreiro, at the Annapurna Base Camp on Sunday.

FAKE PILOT: Bishal Karki, a co-pilot of Gama Airlines, who was arrested earlier this week for submitting fake academic credentials is escorted by a Nepal Police personnel to a press conference at the Central Investigation Bureau Office in Mahabirganj on Wednesday.
Dinner dialogue

Maya Pattrika, 9 May

After misunderstandings arose within the governing coalition, Prime Minister KP Oli called for a dinner meeting Tuesday night between his own UML party and leaders of the UCPN(M). Present were the UML’s Oli, Madhav Nepal, Jhalanath Khanal, Jwala Pokhrel, Rijbam Rawal and Bidhum Poudel, and from the Mestree there were Prachanda, Nayanjajee Shrestha, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, Bishweshwar Pun, Gajendra Mani Pokhrel and Harish Chaudhary. Even though the dinner spread included chicken, fish and mutton, the conversation didn’t go very well. Here is what they said:

Prime Minister Oli: “We crafted this coalition at a very difficult time, but it gave the nation a new constitution and government. When we join in a coalition, there will be some achievements and some difficulties. Let’s have a constructive discussion, I am prepared for any new alternative.”

Prachanda: “There was danger that the differences between the parties would prevent a new constitution, but even in the aftermath of the earthquake we were able to get a new constitution and government. The challenge now is to implement the constitution, and this work hasn’t proceeded as expected. Our coalition has not been adequate for this task. It is now necessary to bring in the NC which is outside the government and the Madhesi Front which has rejected the constitution. Let’s be ready to go forward together.”

Madhav Nepal: “A coalition forged at a difficult time should be looking after the people’s welfare, not its own. In this, it must be said that the government has failed. The government’s reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts after the quake have not been satisfactory. The people have not experienced good governance either. The government should take this into consideration and reform itself, but this is not the time or place to talk about an alternative to the coalition.”

Prachanda: “The peace process isn’t over yet, we have to bring the Madhesi parties into the mainstream. There are delays in boundary demarcation that is affecting the implementation of federalism. Delays in reconstruction has prolonged the people’s misery. The NC has asked me to take charge and bring all parties together. So what do we do now? We need to find a conclusion from the prime minister to have a common solution.”

Oli: “You have already given the conclusion. Let’s eat.”

After @robpenner

Canada’s recent election has been a boost for those who believe the government has failed. But for those who believe in the government’s failure, it has been a wake-up call. The government on Tuesday gave up two days to leave the country. The Department of Information cancelled Priti’s visa citing “mistrust of his work visa” and for showing “unnecessary interest in Nepal’s internal policies and personal matters on Twitter.”

Priti has been accused of “treating Nepal as a source country for trafficking of human beings.” But this is not the time or place to talk about an alternative to the coalition.”

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A TIME TO EVERY

The Wheel of Life

For 72-year-old Lalu Prasopati, life literally revolves around his potter’s wheel. Even since he was 12, Prasopati has occupied a small space at the entrance of an alleyway that leads to Bhaktapur’s famous Potter’s Square, where he creates a variety of earthenware vessels used in rituals or as piggybanks by children. This is a skill passed down from many generations. “My grandfather taught my father, and when I turned 12 my father taught me, and when my sons were old enough I taught them,” says Prasopati, who started with small oil lamps and moved to more intricate clay vessels.

One recent morning, Prasopati was deftly moulding a revolving lump of clay into a vase. He did it in three minutes, while simultaneously talking to a visiting reporter.

Prasopati says pottery is not just about controlling hand movements, it starts with the right selection of clay which has to be mined from a few metres below the topsoil. “The fine clay of the Valley gives us an advantage,” he explains. “It makes stronger earthenware.”

In his childhood, Prasopati remembers good clay was plentiful and there was a lot of demand for earthenware. Today, clay is hard to come by and people are switching to plastic or metal utensils. There used to be a time when at least 100 families in Bhaktapur were potters. Today, there are only 30 households. Prasopati is the only potter who still uses the traditional wooden hand-operated wheel which he bought 50 years ago. Prasopati is now worried that the younger generation in his family doesn’t want to continue with the profession. He says ruefully: “The newer generation is educated and doesn’t want to be involved. Even my grandchildren aren’t interested. The skill may die with us.”

Living off the Land

For the first time in 70 years, Krishna Awale is not planting corn this year. He is not readying his land for paddy seedlings, either. The 84-year-old stoops, and breathes heavily, but that is not the reason; he is not tilling the land anymore — there is no more land to till.

The farms he used to cultivate on the outskirts of Patan have now been turned into parking lots and malls. His own ancestral land was parcelled out long ago and sold off. This week when we met him in Chyam, Awale was sitting near his
When the phrase ‘heritage conservation’ is mentioned, most think of Kathmandu Valley’s temples and ancient monuments. But also critically endangered are Nepal’s intangible heritage like its festivals — and traditional occupations. As the younger generation moves away from the jobs of their forebears, many precious skills are on the verge of vanishing forever.

Mustard Man

Bimal Das Dangol, 77, remembers a different Kathmandu Valley from his childhood — one with narrow lanes and green farms, blue sky and clear air. He travelled across the Valley with his father, sometimes even to the Tarai to sell the mustard oil that his hometown of Kohkana is famous for. Dangol’s father worked for Juddha Shumsher Rana, and learnt to bake and press oil from mustard seeds at a young age. He used to hike down to Hetauda to buy mustard seeds, hauled it back to Kohkana, made oil, sold it to clients in the Valley, walked back to Hetauda and traded the remaining oil for more seeds.

“Everything was manual in those days, even the oil mills,” recalls Dangol. “Since most of the households here were involved in the same profession, the oil pressers were jointly owned.” Today, with competition from imported soyas and sunflower oil, and farmers not growing mustard anymore, most of the pressing machines have shut down in Kohkana.

Dangol (left) still sells mustard oil to his old clients, but buys it from a mill instead of processing it himself. “I am growing old,” he says. “local farmers don’t cultivate mustard because there is no land and the salhus only sell big quantity to the mills.”

None of Dangol’s three sons want to be in the mustard oil business. “It is okay, it’s a difficult job after all,” says Dangol philosophically. “But I will keep doing this as long as my body allows me to.”

Nail Clippings

Kanchi Napit, 40, unfolds a piece of cloth and takes out a shining steel blade — the chhalachha — that she uses to cut nails. Then she takes out a small brass bowl for water, and the red ash powder and small brush. These are the tools of the trade for Nepal’s endangered traditional nailcutters.

Every day, Napit (above) travels to as far as Chobbar from her home in Bungamati to perform the tattahetikaa — a purification ritual in which women cut their toenails, and colour their feet. She works for her jajman, the clans with whom her family has worked for generations to trim nails during birth, marriage, death and other life-cycle ceremonies.

Napit’s family have been professional nailcutters and barbers for as long she can remember. She learned the skills from her in-laws when she was 15, and her husband Bischu has been a nail cutter and barber for the families of the priests of Patsa Mahadevanath.

Traditionally, the payment for Napit is not cash, but rice from the jajman twice a year. But as farmlands dwindle, the families pay them Rs 1,200 a year.

These days, the amount of grain and the money we get from the traditional job is not enough to feed the family and send the children to school,” says Bischu, who has opened his own barber shop near the bus park in Bungamati to augment income.

In the mornings he works for his jajman and runs the barber shop for the rest of the day. “I am the first generation in my family to have a shop, it is not sustainable to work just from home anymore,” he says.

But it looks like Bischu and Kanchi will be the last in their generation to be barbers and nailcutters. Education is one reason, and inter- caste marriages are another. There is also a stigma attached to what is regarded as a lowly profession.

“Children these days are educated and have the option to choose their career, we didn’t have that,” says Kanchi. “They say they are too embarrassed to touch someone’s feet.”
Fresh new faeces in government

In this day and age, it is impossible to verify every rumour so we don’t bother anymore. We will just go ahead and print them all, and let the chips fall where they may. That is the way the cookie crumbles, folks, you have no choice.

For instance, rumour has it, that this is a newspaper of record. We break world records for gossip and hearsay, so it behoves us to respect the great faith and trust that you, our valued clients, have placed upon us for stimulation and scandal.

We have it on good authority that readers these days also have short attention spans. Which means most of you have already stopped reading this influential column, and are now all on your smartphones watching the video of the wardrobe malfunction of a member of the British royal family. I can, therefore, write just about anything here on forth, and it won’t make any idea of difference to everyone in general and anyone in particular, because some of you Aus wholes are actually reading this.

As if the world wasn’t depressing enough, we in the newspaper business are determined to make you more miserable by not allowing a single day to go by without news of regime change, corruption in high places, petrol pumps committing adultery, or lust and plunder by public officials. We thought it was bad enough when fake doctors got busted, now there are engineers with counterfeited certificates, and this week they caught a kid you not a fake co-pilot. Good thing we donkeys don’t need certificates to write subtitles columns like those otherwise we’d have to fake them too.

So, lucky for you, there is still one newspaper that brings us glad tidings, items of holocaust news that are uplifting, inspiring and tell tales of the triumph of the human spirit. But it just folded due to lack of content material. To make up for that, here is some good news of the week:

This Government Useless: Govt

With its days numbered, the government this week came under simmering attack from both in parliament, junior ministers expressed dissatisfaction with their own performance, and said they no longer had the capacity to pay on power.

"This government is useless," said the government spokesman Wednesday, “we demand that is step down forthwith.”

The situation is amid growing calls from within the UML Making coalition for it to be dismantled to make way for a new UML-Most coalition for no other reason than to make things more interesting.

In answer to a question about whether or not there was any point in regime change at this point in time, the spokesman replied, "That is not the point. I was getting really bored seeing the same old faces every day, so we have decided to bring fresh new faces."

Prem K C Poudel also said it will be a relief if he is relieved of his duties. He said that he was glad there was an appropriately named Prime Minister's Helipad for which he could clean out before he left office to substitute his retirement. "It has been a self-fulfilling helipad," he said, emitting a loud gurp.

More Goodies from Qatar

The Government of Qatar has said it hopes that the gift of nine Mercedes from the Qatar the week will help in earthquake reconstruction, "as well as bring relief to those in need."" It also represents the hope that there would be more goodies for us in the pipeline. It would be great if we could also get the gos to the Mekong, Thapa said doing the hand-over ceremony.

The Delhi Runs

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi has once more proven that he is adept at regime change in Kathmandu starts soon after Nepal’s readers return from pilgrimage to the Amarnath Dham after getting his nose-cop, Desai started making his move to dislodge the Linty and aligned a carrot in front of Chirman Aeswani whose led a movement was, predictably, to start sallivating.

Soon after, a King G was an atashed in an overnight where he is reported to have laid out various options on the feet of the King Shah to rollback the republic. And following in his footsteps will be President Bhandari who is only going to India because she can’t go to Kunming unless the TV goes to the Kunming Meca in Kunming.