Ashes to ashes

A profoundly galvanized Prime Minister Dahal toured Bhupur on Tuesday, which was damaged in a fire. The town was букв на символизм: destroyed homes, heavy security, hollow promises of help from the leadership and citizens as spectators (picture, above).

Second-time prime minister Dahal is in a tight spot once again as the country marks the tenth anniversary of the peace accord this week. He is preparing to table the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution in Parliament in the next few days, but no one seems to be on his side.

He assured the Madhesi parties that he would deliver this time, but they are not satisfied with his promises. The UML, the second largest party in parliament, has told him point blank it will not support the bill. His coalition partner, the Nepali Congress, is letting him stew.

But Dahal is putting on a brave face. He told Nepali Times this week he doesn’t feel burdened by his work. A self-proclaimed risk-taker, Dahal may be tempted to take a political gamble since it is a make-or-break for his career. He may go ahead and register the bill, and pass the blame on to the UML and NC.

Most-Centre party leader, Bhol Raj Upadhyay says: “The Chairman has lost his charisma, the cadres are frustrated and our party is on the verge of collapse. He needs to make a bold move and quickly. If he succeeds, it will save our party and his own political career.”

Dahal is trying to make the constitution ‘broadly acceptable’ by pushing four amendments: ticketing with federal boundaries, easing restrictions on the rights of naturalized citizens, ensuring proportional representation in parliament and recognizing more official languages.

But the UML is opposed to Dahal’s proposal, saying it is not in the interest of Nepalis and is directed by a foreign hand. The Federal Alliance has rejected the amendment bill, and even the Madhesi Front is lukewarm, fearing a backlash from its plains constituency.

The NC is backing Dahal, but its President Sher Bahadur Deuba may want the deal to fall so he gets the credit for resolving the constitutional impasse when he takes his turn to be prime minister in May. If Dahal fails and the political crisis deepens, Deuba could lose his chance even earlier.

Chandra Rai

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21 JANUARY 2018

Nepal’s politics is sliding towards the edge of the cliff, and there isn’t much time left to meet the deadline for an elected Federal Parliament.

It is rare for national leaders to already be lame ducks when they assume office, but Pushpa Kamal Dahal is one of them. He started his tenure with a built-in nine-month expiry date. That backroom agreement paved the way for regime change and the current coalition between the Maoist Centre and the Nepali Congress.

Knowing that his administration would automatically self-destruct in nine months hasn’t given Dahal much confidence. His roar is now a meow, and this is the weakest prime minister we have had for a while. Aside from ceremonial ribbon cutting and issuing 26-point directives to the bureaucracy (which it blindly ignores) Dahal has been unable to get his coalition partner as well as the opposition UML to back his formula for constitution amendments to appease the Madhesi parties. The ruling coalition doesn’t have a concrete plan on amendments regarding electoral districts, citizenship, language and federal provinces. The NC is leaving Dahal alone to struggle to find a compromise, probably preferring to wait until its own President Sher Bahadur Deuba takes over as prime minister in April.

Dahal has been coercing the NC and the UML to agree on a least a common denominator on the amendments. Being the second-biggest party in Parliament, the UML holds the swing vote on any proposal to change the constitution, and is driving a hard bargain. Party Chair K P Oli is still bristling at a vote on any proposal to change the constitution, and is looking to study a subject which is the Madhesi people living along the border. But the NC and the UML are not in agreement on the finer points of the constitution amendments involve, among others, the dispute over five Tarai districts in the far-west and east, as well as splitting up Province 5 to carve out a Tarai-only province. Dahal has tried his best to meet the two-week ultimatum given by the Madhesi parties, and they have now threatened an agitation. The UML is also warning it will go on war-path. Protests have already started in Rolpa and Banke. Tensions simmer among the non-Madhesi populations of Kailali, Morang and Sunar. In the eastern Tarai there is fostering resentment against Kathmandu’s attempt to roll back on autonomy. This does not bode well for Nepal’s stability.

There are other looming deadlines. With only 14 months left for the new federal constitution to go into effect, time is of the essence. But you wouldn’t know that given the lethargy of our elected representatives who seem more intent on raising their own perks.

The current Legislature-Parliament’s mandate expires on 21 January 2018, and by that time we need to have already conducted local, provincial and federal parliament elections. Local and federal provincial elections have to be held at latest, by May 2017, but we haven’t even agreed on how many provinces and their boundaries.

Nepal is sliding inexorably towards the cliff edge. If the current Parliament expires, the country will be at a standstill. The country will be at a standstill, and the people will not be able to elect a new government. The next election will be a free-for-all, and the country will be plunged into chaos.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
Justice-in-Chief

Fiercely independent, Sushila Karki is determined not to be a token female and has flouted convention throughout her career.

In the 63 years of the history of Nepal’s judiciary, Sushila Karki is the first female Chief Justice in April for a 14-month tenure. Being the 26th Chief Justice she is leading the Supreme Court at a challenging time.

Parliament has promulgated a new constitution but there is dissatisfaction especially among the people in the plates to some of its provisions. Her tenure has also seen the rise and fall of Lokman Singh Karki who headed an anti-corruption agency, but resigned as a parallel power centre. She also faced a backlog of cases with only seven justices in the Supreme Court. As per the constitution, she needs to supervise the setting up of seven new high courts in seven federal provinces within one year.

Sushila Karki could not hit the ground running because Parliament took more than three months to notify her appointment as Chief Justice because the three main parties could not agree on the composition of the Parliamentary hearing committee. However, ever since she was confirmed she has taken the bull by the horns, catching up with all the pending work in the administration of the judiciary and to restore the public’s faith in the independence of the Apex Court.

In his last day as Chief Justice, his predecessor Kalyan Shrestha told the media that the Supreme Court had a strong leader under Sushila Karki. Another former Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha had once said that he selected Karki as a Supreme Court Justice not because she was a woman but because of her integrity, dedication, fairness and courage.

Indeed, Karki proved her independence through her verdicts in some well-known corruption cases. She is the one who convicted J P Sharma when he was a sitting Information Minister. As someone reputed to be close to the Nepali Congress because of her Biratnagar background, it is interesting that Justice Karki’s gavel fell mostly on Congress politicians in corruption charges. It was only Sushila Karki with Justice Bishawarma Shrestha and Sapana Pradhan Malia who dared reopen the case about the appointment of Lokman Singh Karki as the head of the NBA which had been scrapped earlier by the Supreme Court. A new bench will start the much-awaited hearings on 1 December. There is a lot hanging on the case since Lokman Singh Karki also faces an impeachment motion in Parliament.

Sushila Karki was born into a well-off family in Biratnagar that was close to the kotirala clan. Fiercely independent, she also fought convention at a young age to live by herself and not with her family. Forty years ago, there were very few women going to law school, but Sushila Karki bucked the trend becoming a successful lawyer in Biratnagar and Dilaram.

She married former congress politician Dhuga Subedi who was always unemployed. Subedi looks after their children and Karki is the one who earns for the family (see Interview, below). Before taking up the Chief Justice residence in April, Karki and Subedi lived in a sparse rented room in her sister’s home in Dharahara. The family is known for its frugality and simplicity.

This being Nepal, there were many who did not trust Sushila Karki to take a leadership role. Some Justices didn’t have too good a reputation, and midwives were known to be fixing cases. How could a woman Chief Justice survive in such a hotbed of intrigues? People dismissed her as a token female. They said she lacked understanding of constitutional, economic and tax related issues. She was accused of favouring women in cases. Even her staunchest critics never admit that she has shown integrity and fairness, restoring the Supreme Court’s prestige.

Sushila Karki is determined to leave a mark, and if her past seven and a half months on the job is any indication, she will be known for bold decision-making and leadership. By the time she steps down in April 2017, she aims to leave a legacy with landmark judgments. Given the nature of some of the pending cases, it will not be easy for Sushila Karki.

The remaining six and a half months of her tenure will be equally challenging to cap her prove her nearly 40 years of judicial experience. She has both the challenges and opportunity to prove herself while some well known and crucial cases are pending in the Apex Court.

“A woman is as capable as a man.”

Chief Justice Sushila Karki in an interview with Binita Dahal of NBC Nepal, 27 November.

NBC Nepal: How difficult was your journey to the post of Chief Justice?
Sushila Karki: In the legal profession you do not have a godfather. You have to have an in-built capacity to earn in this field. I was chosen as a Supreme Court Justice because I had served as an advocate for 31 years, and there were only a few women in this field.

How challenging was it for a woman to study law in Nepal 40 years ago?
Only a couple of women were studying law at that time. My mother wanted me to be a doctor, but later encouraged me to study law. I began practicing law in Biratnagar.

What is the current status of women in Nepal?
They are still left behind, more so in rural areas. The state and the society must be responsible to uplift the status of women.

You once talked about an unpleasant experience as a woman justice among male colleagues in the Supreme Court.
Our society is still unwilling to take the progress that women make, and does not believe that a woman can hold a top post. I worked with several Chief Justices, and some of them treated me like a token female. They thought I was handicapped only because I was a woman and to fill the gender quota in the judiciary. They did not consider important cases to my benefit. Luckily, there were other Chief Justices who were better.

What are you doing to end discrimination against women in the justice system?
At Nepal’s first female Chief Justice, I am working hard to prove that a woman can be as capable as a man. Forwarding cases to justices and having direct contact with them. Since I became Chief Justice, the SC has been clearing a backlog of cases by fixing times from 10 AM onwards. Some of my predecessors used to forward cases only in the afternoon.

Some say you believe in positive discrimination and prefer a woman to a man if both are equally capable. Is it true?
I have not chosen a less qualified woman instead of a qualified man. However, I believe that women should be given a fair chance, it should be a level playing field.

What does this translate into leniency towards women in verdicts?
No. But a woman is constantly tormented by her husband and he kills him, we should also take into account her suffering while passing a sentence on her. Can that be real equality against women?

Why are you advocating for free legal service for victims of gender-based violence?
Women are shy about fighting for justice because of family pressure, lengthy legal process and repressive acts of advocates. More women will be encouraged to fight for justice if they do not have to pay.

You recently said you preferred to promote professionalism of women rather than their proportional representation. Why?
We hear grievances in the Tantra and Madhesi women are backward because the state has not ensured their proportional representation. Ensuring women’s proportional representation in politics or other fields is an issue, but in the judiciary a woman has to be competent. What is the point of demanding proportional representation of Muslim women if they face cultural barriers in the home, are forced to wear veils, are married off early and not given proper education?

Your husband once said in an interview that you are the breadwinner of the family and he just does household chores. Is your family matriarchal?
My husband always treats me as the head of the household. I earn and he takes care of the house. He raised our children. I was producing law and needing to hide legal documents I’ll never figure it out. He used to make tea for me. I manage the money. My husband is like a hero. He was never tempted to earn money. The clothes that he wears are his only property.

Most women want to marry rich and successful men. You married an idealistic politician.
Yes, I was impressed by his ideals and honesty. I thought I could make a living by myself and did not need a husband who had a salaried job. I married someone else, it could have been different. If my husband had been greedy, I’d need to drive, or boast about power I wouldn’t probably be where I am today.

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Christmas thangka

A U.S. based non-profit organisation has found a novel way to honour both Buddhist traditions and the Christmas festival by selling Made in Nepal thangkas depicting the Santa Claus myth in the United States to help a monastery in Kathmandu.

The Christmas Thangka project involves having a digitally created photo-painting printed on canvas and then turned into a thangka and accompanied with a tree that serves as the traditional ‘pooja’ altar manual for worshippers.

A donation of $300 is suggested for the Christmas thangka and is tax deductible. The proceeds from the sale of the thangka will go to Nepal families connected to the Zazari Stupa at the monastery in Kathmandu.

“The Christmas Thangka is for people who celebrate Christmas, this project is to give the Sherpa Buddhist hope on it,” says Hugh K. Downs, author of the 1980 book, Rhythms of a Himalayan Village, who spent two years in Nepal as an apprentice to the Sherpa monk painter, Nyawang Jeltshul. Downs also says that the thangka will serve as a ‘thank you’ substitute for everyday greens for those who believe in the importance of the tree.

In the thangka, Santa appears as a yak and is also accompanied by three winds of the风 하는 하늘의 풍, a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Thangkas serve as meditation aids and serve to cultivate a sense of selfless concern for others. At the bottom of the Christmas thangka is a pile of traditional Christmas gifts and above them are depicted three winds howling as three flaming with graphing symbols. In the background is the scene of the Buddhist Valley with the Thangka Chauk Manyun and Mt. Nambar. Says Downs: “I hope the project will also re-locate the message of Christmas which has been threatened out by what some people see as ‘operative commercialisation’.”

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Dr. Michael J. Barnes
Principal
ENGENDER
Sangita Thebe-Limbu

first female American president. The recent appointment of Portugal’s Antonio Guterres as the next UN secretary-general was made amidst growing call for the organisation to select its first female top diplomat. Close to home, the picture is comparatively positive with Sushila Karki appointed as the first female Chief Justice following the selection of Bidy Devi Bhandari as Nepal’s second President and former guerrilla Osaci Gharti Magar as the Speaker of Parliament. Yet, at the ministerial level and across Nepal’s civil service, civil society and media, the gender gap remains stark.

Substantive representation of women in political, social and economic spheres is an important agenda, but the politics of everyday life within households is commonly overlooked. This is particularly the case for unpaid care work, which underpins the functioning of every household and contributes to reproduction of labour force and the market economy. But it remains undervalued by society and policymakers alike.

Unpaid care work includes all household activities carried out by family members without pay such as cleaning, cooking, washing, fetching water, collecting firewood and caring for children, elderly, sick or family members with disabilities. While care is fundamental to our well-being, in most societies care is perceived predominantly as ‘women’s work’ regardless of race, class, ethnicity or religion.

Based on extensive surveys in 65 countries, an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report concludes that the vast majority of unpaid household and care work is performed by women. In developed countries, women spend an average of 4 hours and 20 minutes on unpaid care work while men spend 2 hours and 16 minutes per day. In developing countries, women spend 4 hours and 30 minutes per day on unpaid care work compared to 1 hour 20 minutes for men. The higher gender gaps in lower income countries can be attributed to lack of time-saving infrastructure and technologies, limited or non-existent social care services, or inability to outsource domestic work.

The unequal distribution of care work within households results in ‘time poverty’ for women and girls, where there aren’t enough hours in a day for productive activities such as education, training, paid employment or leisure. Women spending disproportionate amount of time in unpaid work also affects the quality of employment as more women tend to concentrate in part-time, informal or precarious work.

In Nepal, the female labour force participation is very high. It was at 80.7 percent in 2006 – the highest in South Asia. It can be attributed to increased male migration, poverty where work is not an option, variations of socio-cultural norms, and in particular collection of goods for own consumption (example firewood) is included under the definition of work in Nepal. However, of the working women, 84.3 percent are engaged in mainly subsistence agriculture.

Meaning there is a double burden of responsibilities where women are engaged in economic activities and they also perform the bulk of unpaid care work, which negatively affects their well-being and engagement in wider socio-political structures. Much of the unpaid care work remains under the radar of labour market analysis whether in calculating Gross Domestic Product or formulation of economic growth policies. Even when it is recognised, how to measure it and its contribution to growth and productivity accurately remains a challenge. However, there are initiatives like “time use diaries”, which are being used as a tool to make unpaid care work visible and demand for policy changes.

In a 2013 report, Action Aid showed that in Nepal women on average spend 268 minutes per day in housework (includes cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping) in comparison to 56 minutes per day by men. In contrast, men spend 101 minutes per day in socio-cultural activities (includes socialising, attending external events) as opposed to 24 minutes per day by women, which draws attention to the common social dictionary of public vs male and private as female space.

Care work is central to our everyday lives and crucial to our well-being. It forms the foundation of our society and the economy. Hence, the focus is to underline the importance of care but to put the spotlight on caring and unequal care work distribution.

The prevailing social model of male as breadwinners and female as caregivers need to be challenged to demand for more equitable redistribution of care responsibilities and power balance within households.

Further, care work can be redistributed widely between the household and the government through social protection schemes (such as childcare support grant, early childhood education schemes) to support careers, effective healthcare provision, and investment in inclusive and gender sensitive infrastructure and services.

But the first step of course is to recognise that providing care is an important work in itself.
“FREEDOM IS NOT FREE”

The first Bangladeshi to climb Seven Summits wants to empower girls to scale life’s mountains

SMRITI BASNET

Looking down from the top of the world at sunrise last year, Nasiria Nazreen (pic, above) was overcome with emotion. On the summit of Mount Everest with other Himalayan peaks piercing a sea of clouds below her, the Bangladeshi mountaineer suddenly understood life.

Back in Nepal, and sitting across a table at a cafe in Boudha, Nazreen admitted that at one point during the climb, she thought she was not going to make it. What kept her going was the promise she had made to the people of her country on the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh: to highlight how far women have come.

“I hope I never forget this moment in my entire life, it made me realise the value of my time on the Earth,” said the 34-year-old who became the first Bangladeshi to scale the highest points in the seven continents.

“Symbolically the struggle to climb the mountains was parallel to the struggle women face in society,” explained Nazreen, for whom it was an uphill struggle even before she started climbing.

With no sponsorship, she sold off her ancestral jewellery to fund her expeditions. But soon, the media caught up, and she had people offering to help her. “One of them was a divorcee who came up to me with her alimony and said ‘free me on the mountain’,” she recalled.

Nazreen is all too familiar with the everyday battles women face, with minimal family and financial support she remembers the burden of paying her way through college.

She strongly believes in empowering women to be independent, and hopes that her climbs inspire other women in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

“For any South Asian woman freedom is not free. No one is going to make this possible for us, we have got to do it ourselves,” said Nazreen. In Bangladesh, men now come up to her with requests to take their daughters under her wings, but she knows that Bangladesh and South Asia still have a long way to go when it comes to gender equality.

Which is why Nazreen has set up Ovel Foundation, named after her Tibetan name that means ‘clarity of the human mind’, which aims to instill self-confidence through sports and outdoor activities. The Foundation plans to establish an alternate school for adolescent girls first in Bangladesh and Nepal and then in Sri Lanka and India.

“We want to tell girls that each one of them has the light in them, and it is possible to reach that potential,” said Nazreen.

The climber’s four years of climbing was made into a short film by Apple Inc., shot entirely on an iPhone. She was also awarded National Geographic Adventurer of the Year in 2014, and National Geographic Emerging Explorer in 2016.

Nazreen also co-founded RESET, an organisation which designs trek and retreats around the world for leaders and works with World Bank and Facebook. Said Nazreen: “We need to start changing the minds of those who actually change policies.”
Rajman Singh worked for the British Resident in Kathmandu, Brian Houghton Hodgson, from 1828–1844. But it took another 150 years to make his work known to the world, when Raymond Head 20 years ago published five of his 50 exquisite pencil drawings in the Royal Asiatic Society in London. These are very different from the water colours produced by Rajman’s contemporary, Henry Ambrose Oldfield, who was posted as surgeon at the British Residency in 1850 and who himself produced some 75 paintings which are now in the British Library and the Royal Geographic Society. When two of Oldfield’s paintings were published in the Illustrated London News in 1855 they were the first images to make Kathmandu Valley known to the world.

Some of Rajman’s 50 drawings from the Asiatic Society are being shown at a rare exhibition in Kathmandu at the Taragaon Museum till 16 December. In 2004, the former curator at the British Library Jeremiah Losty wrote on Rajman Singh’s diverse drawings of which a few were published by Hodgson.

Losty observed that these drawings ‘grew increasingly skilful and confident in the European manner’ and was sure that Rajman saw ‘drawings in the picturesque manner’ produced by the Calcutta School of painters. He is also sure that Rajman used the camera lucida, an optical device which allows a view to be traced in perspective.

I met Jeremiah Losty at the British Library and David Waterhouse at the Royal Asiatic Society in 2000. I was able to see them handle Rajman’s original pencil drawings and was overwhelmed, and was determined to raise money to digitise them for an exhibition in Nepal.

Rajman was from the Chitrakai family of Patan, and was representing the temples of the Newar cities at a time when photography was arriving on the subcontinent. His drawing of the Nyatapola Temple in Bhaktapur chooses to place the pinnacle of the temple into the central axis. The temple is framed by bringing in the top view of the Asan-mudii, what is today the Nyatapola Cafe and a tall building to the left which never existed. Rajman intentionally composed his views. His drawing of the Jhataleka Temple captures the background.
in detail but the sheet of paper was large enough to add a stile with four representations of the Buddha which were never there.

Rajman not only presented picturesque views, but also documented a few ground plans of temples, albeit without any scale. He does this at a very early time, more than 100 years before Wolfgang Korn produced the first professional measured drawings of Kathmandu’s temples in 1968 and which are now kept at the Nepal Architecture Archive.

Rajman presented the Lakshmi-Narayan and Mahadeva temples at Hatka just opposite the Jibahal monastery in plan and as a picturesque view. We learn from this drawing that the Mahadeva temple once had a triple-tiered roof, which was replaced after the 1934 earthquake by a clumsy dome. To turn the drawing of the two temples into a picturesque view, he added a palm tree in the foreground which probably stood somewhere in a courtyard but certainly not in the narrow road leading to Ukabaha.

There is also a rather strange composition bringing three temples of the Patan Darbar Square together. The central one is the Char Narayan, identified by Rajman Singh as Tavudveda Narayan. It is seen in a deplorable state, on the verge of total collapse, but the portals of the ground floor and most of the windows of the upper tiers in place. It was obviously damaged by the earthquake in 1833 and exposed to the rains for a couple of years. The temple was restored and survived the 1934 earthquake, but not the one in 1955.

The Char Narayan Temple needs to be restored, but the question is how? The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) salvaged the smallest fragments of the ruin and is now putting together the portals so that as much of the original wooden elements as possible are used. This has never been done in historical times. After earlier earthquakes, what was left of destroyed temples would have been used as firewood, new portals would have been carved. The KVPT is using modern metal techniques such as highly sophisticated screws, nut bolts and even stainless-steel pins.

Unfortunately, heritage conservation is entangled in a rather dramatic debate based on belief systems. Indeed, conservation itself represents a belief system. There are many ways to restore and reconstruct a building lost in an earthquake, and no one has a monopoly on the truth.
**Events**

**Karavan Kathmandu**, Join Karavan Kathmandu at the Christmas seasonal markets kick off in Patan. Enjoy the atmosphere as you shop around for high-quality made products and witness the unique Nepali lace craftsmanship.

26 November, 12 to 5 pm, Jambeshwori, Lalitpur, karavankathmandu@gmail.com

**Bookparty**, Put your love of reading to good use and bring along a book to swap with other book lovers. All proceeds will go to the supplying of books in rural schools.

27 November, 1 to 4 pm, near international friendly Children’s Hospital, Thapathali

**India’s policy**, A talk by Carnegie India’s Constantine Kaxiras on New Delhi’s new approach to South Asia and what Kathmandu and New Delhi can learn from the past to foster bilateral cooperation in the future.

28 November, 4 to 5.30 pm, Hotel Nepal, Patan Bazaar, (01) 5553176

**Divine debris**, Attend an exhibition of sculptures by artist Meena Kanyattra at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 27 November to 17 January, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Balaja Mohit Budhathoki, (01) 4210846/4631930

**Radisson at sea**, Give your taste buds a treat and enjoy a sumptuous meal at the Norwegian Seafood festival.

28 November, 7 pm onwards, Olive Garden Restaurant, Radisson Hotel, Lalitpur, (01) 4411818

**Phat Kath**, Offers French street food. Takeaway crates, hookahs, and a formidable hip hop sound track for everyone.

Pashchim, (01) 4927539

**Phat Kath**, Offers French street food. Takeaway crates, hookahs, and a formidable hip hop sound track for everyone.

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**Japanese and Nepal**, Celebrate 40 years of dramatic evolutions between Nepal and Japan with a live cultural program, food stalls, games, arts and more.

26 November, 10 am onwards, Sundarbesh Ground, free entry

**Wine at Hyatt**, Experience the taste of Nærørs wines recommended by Jesper From Mortensen paired with an evening of delectable food.

3 December, 6 to 11 pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, Rs 3599 per person

**Jhule Mountain Resort**, Resting 2305 m above sea level, the resort boasts a farm house that stretches across a hill covered in fresh pine. Enjoy an organic homestay experience.

Shankar Nagpure National Park, Jaspalsheri-3, Jhule, (061) 6721339

**Mum’s Garden Resort**, Head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages surrounded by a lush green garden with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range.

Island, Pokhara, (069) 4634689, www.mums gardencastle.com

**Famous Farm**, Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the Amdikhunj, Nawalparasi, (061) 4705425, info@famoulsfarm.com

**Balthali Village Resort**, Japanese influenced farm stay with great views, jungle walks, and picnics.

Chyasain, Kathmandu, 58470/58364

**Norwegian Seafood Festival 2016**, 14 - 28 November, 2016, 6.00 pm onwards. Olive Garden, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu

**Music**

**Bajeko Sekuwa**, Enjoy a range of delicious Nepali dishes including authentic Bajeko Special banekip.

Sangrak, (01) 4513479

**Phat Kath**, Offers French street food. Takeaway crates, hookahs, and a formidable hip hop sound track for everyone.

Pashchim, (01) 4927539

**Irish Pub**, Don’t miss Kathmandu’s most hip and happening pub.

Arundite Bhawan, Lalitpur, (01) 4416027


10 December, 7 pm onwards, Purple Hostel, Khokha, (01) 4945495, 478, RC60 (Admission sales), Rs 500 (Door sales)

**Kripa Joshi**

**Miss Motivation**

Start where you are. Use what you have.
The ecology of worship

Pollution and encroachment of the Vishnumati River have affected the culture and rituals that used to take place along its banks.

One of the primary attributes of the sacred Kanchenjunga civilization have been the holy rivers that flow through its historic towns. From birth to death, rituals and festivals happen on the banks of the Bagmati and Vishnumati – in fact the rivers themselves are worshipped.

Rapid urbanization, unplanned growth and waste mismanagement have turned the rivers into sewers. The rivers, frothing with foams, no longer command a divine status due to increasing pollution. While the government and donors have invested a lot of money into preserving the architectural heritage of Kanchenjunga Valley and its historic core, there hasn’t been as much attention paid to restoring the rivers that give life to these temples and festivals. Our sacred rivers are the backbone of our culture and civilization.

Kathmandu’s inhabitants have used the rivers to purify the temples, places of worship and their own bodies, and the waters themselves are connected with life-cycle rituals. River festivals bring people together and the river is used as a part of the ecology of worship, strengthening the ties to nature.

Fears of water-borne diseases have forced devotees to dissociate themselves from the polluted river, uprooting river water with well or tap water. Some people now start using bottled drinking water for performing rituals. Likewise, the rituals which need to be conducted at the river banks are already being performed inside the house and the offerings that need to be floated away into the river at the end of puja are being thrown somewhere else than the river.

The main cause of river pollution is the direct discharge of untreated sewage and industrial waste, garbage dumping as well as excessive sand mining. A citizen’s movement to clean up the Bagmati and Vishnumati has begun, and sewage main is being constructed to prevent waste water from entering into the river. As the cleanup of the Bagmati at Pashupati has shown, a combination of political will and private sector involvement can restore a holy river to its original sanctity.

Although a majority of respondents in a survey were frequently unhygienic, they no longer showed a religious perspective on disease and did not have an educated understanding of how infectious diseases are spread through water pollution and unhygienic surroundings.

People living along the banks chose to take medicines rather than performing puja to get better and they visited medical doctors only when seriously ill. Most of them did not think there was any religious or scientific connection between their poor health and river pollution. The banks of the Vishnumati have many important temples and holy sites. The most sacred part of the river is where it joins the Bagmati near Toku. But even here, the overpowering stench, mountains of garbage and pollution has eroded the belief that the river is divine.

The reverence of rivers in early civilizations came from the belief that their waters sustained life, and therefore their cleanliness needed to be protected. That necessity was translated into religious belief that held for millennia. But today, most people do not equate river pollution and garbage dumping with inflicting poison into the veins of the human body.

Aside from human health, the other great cost of the demise of rivers like the Vishnumati will be the rich identity and culture associated with the river. Just like the aquatic life of river, the cultural practices that require the river and its water is also going to become extinct if nothing is done for its improvement.

www.friendsofthebagmati.org.np

HOLY WATER

Along the Vishnumati and Bagmati, there are many traditional rituals and religious activities that involve water from the river.

River water used to purify temples and homes:

1. Holi Puja
2. Pashupatinath Puja

River water used to purify the body before worship:

1. Shraddha
2. Shringi Puja
3. Teli Puja
4. Holi Panchami

River water connected to life-cycle rituals:

1. Kheer feeding ceremony
2. Anuvrat Puja
3. Cremation
4. River as a place of worship that brings people together:
5. Daxi Puja
6. Tilak
7. Naso

River water as a part of ecology of worship, strengthening ties to nature:

1. Dussehra
2. Saraswati
Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

J.K. Rowling’s genius lies in her ability to create rich, varied worlds that are full of unforgettable characters. There is a depth and a darkness in Rowling’s creations that belie the initial perception (to those who have not read the Potter books) that these are “just” children’s stories. There are two fallacies that are inherent in the presumption that children’s literature is facile, the first one assumes that there is no real art required to execute the form, and the second affects that these creations are a lesser genre, conjured to entertain the kiddies and keep them quiet with stories of no real importance. Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland disproves the first notion thoroughly, and Rowling’s Harry Potter series is a resounding showcase of British stoicism, humour, and a certain magical ingenuity that could only have come from the mind of an Englishwoman who, even through her darkest struggles, has managed to teach her readers, young and old, that emotional intelligence is perhaps the most important kind of all.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is penned by the great Rowling herself in a first, enormously successful attempt at screenwriting. Directed by the talented David Yates who has a clear affinity for the Potter world inhabited by Harry Potter, this new franchise exhibits all of the marvels of that wonderful, strange and often unsettling creation, but starting a new cast of very promising characters, several of whom have already lodged themselves irremovably in this particular columnist’s brain.

Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne) is the star of this show, which introduces and elaborates upon the character’s endeavors, particular oddities as he lands in New York City in 1926 on a mysterious mission to Arizona. An unlikely wizard who has hidden deep ties (quite literally) within his unassuming suitcase, Scamander quickly becomes embroiled (very laughably) in an ongoing tussle within the wizarding world in the United States. The ensuing chaos involves the eponymous fantastic beasts, a very evil wizard, a disconcerting, thought provoking case of hideous child abuse (an ongoing theme for Rowling if you recall how Harry was treated by the Dursleys), and two love stories between some hilarious eccentrics that bode well for future installments.

Having avidly gobbled up almost everything Rowling has ever written aside from her first non-Potter novel, The Casual Vacancy, most of my delight during this film was elicited by absolute ignorance of the plot, so I will do you the same favour by not elaborating further on exact details. You can rest easy that there are the same exquisite details and force, tender friendships that you loved in the books, laced with Rowling’s sure touch that guides this film firmly onto the list of things that make us happy. nepalitimes.com
The surveillance state

Rameshwar Bohara in Himal Khubchandani,
(20-26 November)

When 157 UML-Maoist MPs registered an impeachment motion against the CIAA Chief Lokman Singh Karki in October, they accused him of abusing his authority and committing crimes against the state.

One of the false charges against Karki is that he unlawfully snooped on political leaders and security leaders by collecting their call details and tapping their phone calls.

Phone tapping is illegal, and even police are not authorized to intercept calls even though the Narcotics (Control) Act 1976 and the Prevention of Organized Crime Act 2013 allow them to do it during the investigation of certain cases.

How did Karki gather the wherewithal and the authorization to listen in to the phones of politicians, businessmen, journalists, lawyers and civil society activists? Parliament could investigate this, but hasn’t.

However, after Karki’s suspension, government agencies and security officials who were earlier afraid of him are now spilling the beans. They are giving details of the elaborate surveillance network that used to be directed by Karki from his headquarters in Tangel.

It was standard practice for the Home Ministry to second 100 selected policemen to duties at the CIAA. But after Karki’s appointment he started to personally handpick senior officers and policemen for positions at the CIAA. He prepared his list of 250 personnel, got it endorsed by the Home Ministry and inducted them into the CIAA headquarters turning it into a backroom.

Shortly after becoming the CIAA Chief, Karki used an inspector to spy on the publisher of an influential newspaper.

But the inspector refused and somehow managed to get transferred out of the CIAA. Since then, Karki started working only with policemen he trusted and personally picked.

Karki sought budget from the Ministry of Finance to set up a state-of-the-art surveillance system and chose police officers with training in electronic surveillance.

“The fact that he chose the best of our surveillance officers shows that Karki was up to something sinister,” said a police officer. “There is evidence that he intercepted calls of leaders, but what we do not know for sure is whether he did it from his own office or through telecommunication companies.”

Police are allowed to rely on telecommunication companies to trace calls, SMS and geo-locate suspects in criminal investigations. But the constitutional provision on the right to privacy does not allow them to intercept and tap phone calls.

There is speculation that some diplomatic missions in Kathmandu have their own equipment to intercept calls without relying on or informing telecommunication companies. The mysterious release in 2013 of an audiotape in which a man alleged to be Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara was heard requesting a Chinese businessman for Rs 500 million fueled speculation that phone calls are being tapped in Nepal.

The installation of such a system is very expensive, and can cost up to Rs 60 million. “But for Karki, that was not an impossible amount,” said one police officer.

The CIAA Act 1991 does not allow the anti-graft body to tap phone calls either, so if Karki was intercepting calls he was doing so clandestinely. Even without such equipment, he could have still arm-twisted telecommunication companies to record phone calls for him. For someone who was harassing the Prime Minister, ministers and MPs, that would not be so difficult.

Using surveillance as a tool of harassment is not new in Nepal. In 2001 after a state of emergency was declared, former Chief Justice Birawarchh Upadhayaya confided with close friends that royal army spies were spying on him. But the use of surveillance for harassment, bargaining and personal interests increased after Karki became CIAA Chief. He even used plainclothes policemen to spy on Chief Justice Sushila Karki, forcing the Supreme Court administration to raise this issue with police headquarters.

In April, Nepal magazine published a letter written by the National Investigation Department (NID) Chief Dilip Regmi to Karki informing him about a 406-page report containing personal and financial details of 42 politicians, 62 bureaucrats, 39 retired bureaucrats and 52 retired and serving security officers. Regmi also mentioned in the letter that he had prepared the list under the personal instruction of Karki.

As more details emerged, the NID report on personal details of politicians and bureaucrats turned out to be an icebreaker of the iceberg. It was when political leaders learnt that they were being tracked and could be arrested on corruption charges any time that they felt the need to impeach Karki.

Senior advocate and Nepal Congress MP Radhekshya Adhikari said: “Phone tapping by the CIAA violates citizen’s constitutional rights to privacy.”
“The revolution was a great achievement”
Nepali Times caught up with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Thursday morning before his ping pong game for three quick questions.

Nepali Times: How do you feel about the 10 years of peace process? Was the revolution worth it?
Pushpa Kamal Dahal: I feel the revolution was a great achievement for the people and the country. We have done away with a feudal ruler, declared our nation secular with no domination of one religion as our country is of multi-religious, multi-cultural character. The people are exercising full democratic rights and freedom they never experienced before. We have promulgated a constitution by the people’s representatives for the first time in the country. With strengthened national unity and end of transition phase these epoch-making transformations are bound to lead our nation forward.

How do you see Nepal’s future?
I see a bright future for our country. We have natural, human and cultural resources to develop our nation. We have a moral resolve our political issues. With the consensus of all the stakeholders we will be fully implement people’s constitution. In addition, we have resourceful neighbors ready to support our endeavors for national development.

The job must be stressful. How do you relax?
It’s not so stressful. I believe we should not feel burdened and stressed by our own work. I enjoy going out to nature to refresh myself.

SHADOWING PRACHANDA
A photographer’s pictorial documentation of Pushpa Kamal Dahal from revolutionary to two-time prime minister

The Chehurang conference in 2005 was a watershed moment in the Maoist conflict. The war had been going on for nine years, and the revolution was losing momentum.

Prachanda brought forward a proposal to join King Gyanendra to stabilize the alliance of seven democratic parties. Vice-chair and party ideologue Baburam Bhattarai opposed the move, and the clash nearly split the party. Bhattarai was expelled, and his wife Hilda Yom was also expelled. The two did patch up, and ultimately the party followed Prachanda’s ‘democratic republic’ line to forge an alliance with the other political parties against the King. This paved the way for the 10-point agreement in New Delhi in November 2005.

Dahal and Bhattarai posed for photographs in Chundang, pretending that everything was fine between them. It was photographer Dhesh Shrestha’s sight who snapped the notable moments, just as he had throughout the conflict while shadowing Prachanda as his official photographer.

Some of Shrestha’s photographs are rare mages from the conflict never published before. Dahal trusted Shrestha not to let any of the photographs fall into the hands of the security forces. For many years of the conflict, no one knew what Prachanda looked like and there were even rumors that he was a fictitious character.

“I used to hide the conflict pictures at my relatives’ houses in Kathmandu so that nobody could find them,” recalls Shrestha.

Shrestha himself was jailed in 2002 for being a Maoist and more than 1,500 of his pictures from the conflict were confiscated by the Army and he never got them back. The self-taught photographer showed Dahal closely and described him as a very committed leader. “He always had this amazing energy and ability to convince everyone with his charms,” says Shrestha. “He is a role model.”

Shrestha says Dahal liked to be photographed, and knew that what he was doing was historic. He would like to set up an archive of his amazing photographs of the conflict.

Shreepada Shrestha
Hold it right there. Where do you suppose you are going? You think you can just walk in here and start reading this column? Stand back, we need to talk to you first. Do you have a photo ID? What is your username? What is your password? Are you 18 years or older? Do you have security clearance to read this stuff? Here, fill out this form and bring it back next week. Rubber stamped by a public notary, we will take five working days to process your application and we will notify you by post.

Easy for you, isn’t it. Do you have any idea how difficult it is to produce this junk week in and week out? Anyway, here is my 15-point demand and if they are not met within this week, I will begin a decisive relay hunger strike, which means skipping afternoon snacks. And if my ultimatum is not honoured in letter and spirit, I will step writing this column. And that’s a threat.

This is the land of jattas and we have the right to protest for and against anything, including the right to protest against predators blocking streets. So, you hooligans, go forth and multiply and exercise your demographic rights with those bright new ideas.

1. Dacoits, crooks, highway robbers and revenue officials can organise a motorcycle rally demanding an immediate 20 percent increase in kickbacks, emblems, and bribes to keep up with inflation. “We haven’t had an increase in decades,” said one red-handed Cross-Section Officer.
2. Taxi drivers will park their vehicles and block the main roads in the city by burning their spare tyres to demand the right to cheat passengers for another fiscal year.
3. Pre-emptively protest any plans the Nepal Tourism Administration may be hatching to scrap the US Diversity Visa lottery. Carry placards with slogans including “The Green Card is a Basic Human Right”, “Long Live Imperialist Running Dogs”, or “Yankees, Go Home, And Take Us With You”.
4. The main partner in the ruling coalition can organise an anti-government rally with angry slogans like “Down With Our Very Own Government”. Our Turn

To Ruin the Country”, or “I am Diagnosed Also”.
5. Nepali Election Authority employees are about to launch a decisive nationwide movement to protest the end of load shedding which has deprived them of a guaranteed side income for the past 20 years. Rallying cry: “Keep Nepal Dark, Raise Our Par Capital Income”.
6. Rally of Ex-Ministers are demanding 5 million for international hospitalisation. Only one slogan: “We Also Want Equal Treatment!”
7. Journalists’ March: News hounds and boozers from all walks of life, including columnists and their fellow-communists, will walk to Parliament after brunch on Saturday for no particular reason. Said one scribe to this scribe: “It’s a slow news day and we were bored stiff.” The march was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Ohamala.

The Ass

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