Polling together

Walking through the rustic countryside on the outskirts of Tikapur under gathering monsoon clouds threatening rain, it is difficult to imagine the horror of what happened here on 24 August 2015. Hundreds of protesters carrying spears and knives set upon unarmed policemen, killing eight of them and shooting a baby. Here, beside a maize field and a small pond, was where Thara activists chased a policeman, and burnt him alive. Further down the road, they fired on a policeman’s house, killing his two-year-old son.

The country was still in shock after the earthquake, and the government in Kathmandu was trying to “fast-track” the Constitution amidst intensifying protests for self-rule in the Tarai. The fires that were lit here in Tikapur spread across the plains the following months leaving more than 50 dead and leading to the blockade that ruined the economy. A report later found that four senior politicians had incited the protesters.

There is little to remind visitors of the carnage here as Tikapur Municipality prepares to elect its own local government in elections next week. The candidates are all in campaign mode, and Thara leaders say their ultimate goal is still autonomy in a separate Tharuhat province, made up of parts of Kailali and Kanchanpur districts from Province 7 to be carved out of Province 5, where Tharus will make up 40% of the population.

The violence deepened the divide between Tharus and hill settlers like never before, but it appears that most people are trying to forget. Forget and reestablish social harmony by participating in the election on 28 June.

“The situation is completely different when everyone is preparing for the local election. People have already forgotten what happened here two years ago,” says Rish Bahadur Rai, an eyewitness to the lynchings.

Publicly, all of the candidates are saying the right things; they will ensure the rights of Tharus and restore social harmony. They’re also confident that voting will be peaceful.

Local MP Janak Raj Chaudhary sees the polls as an opportunity to bridge the gap between Tharus and Pahadi. “We are still fighting for an autonomous Tharuhat state, but we don’t want that to intrude on the local election,” says Chaudhary, who is also State Minister for Federal Affairs and Local development.

Shreemaya Shrestha in Kailali

Read full story page 4
GUEST EDITORIAL
CHANDRA KISHORE

Moderating the moderates

Khamruddin’s rulers saw fit to find_Upendra Yadav’s_ altruistic number only after he had Burn a copy of the national Constitution and launched the agitation in the Madhes in January 2017. He had strived in India during the war, and was known in his own music crowd before that. There have been other two movements in the Madhes since then, and numerous, speculation and distrust prevails. The Matuwa ruler, who is the Mahtawa ruler, wants to find_Upendra Yadav’s_ sympathy and agree to local elections without an amendment to the Constitution? Why? Only when the Khadki ruler in the street despite India’s pressure on the India? Why? Who is in Power? 2022 is uncertain even though two other Madhes-based parties led by Upendra Yadav and Braha Gaurav are also at stake! Who is actually behind the Indian? Yadav looked like a Madhesi hardliner until recently. He insisted that polls would not be acceptable without amendments to the Constitution. Now, he wants to invite elections even more so in the Khamruddin establishment. He has clarified that the RJP for depriving Madhesi of a chance to elect their own representatives. To those who know Yadav, his latest 150-turn was sudden but not surprising. A Rewa strategist, he believes in the principle of unity. He carefully avoided any conflict with the Khadki ruler in Madhes. Yadav led the negotiation panel of the Madhes Front, Yadav focused more on agitation. It is an emerging in the biggest Madhes-based one, relegating Yadav’s Madhesi Sadhun to third

POLLs APART

Prime Minister Sheh Bahadur Deuba entered his official residence in Baluwatar for the fourth time in 20 years on Monday morning at 5:00AM. The reason for that odd timing was that he was waiting for the right planetary moment. He is now taking advice from astrologers for the interior decoration of both Baluwatar and Singh Baharab as the furniture alignment will improve his political clout. Political leaders in this part of the world often derive more from astrology than in the leadership abilities. Bumser junta leaders were into numerology. Thai generals consult astrologers before every move. In India, the main political tool is the horoscope. Our rulers have been so shaky about their position that they have often left their fate, and the fate of the country, to the planets.

Deuba is a man who was twice sacked by King Gyanendra for “incompetence.” The PM has a track-record of sabotaging elections in 2002 and 2003 and damaging democracy. This time, too, all the vacillation and fumbling ahead of the fourth postponed second phase of local elections is not a good sign. Commentators are voicing suspicions that Deuba is up to his old tricks. The voting could not be decided, and should have, been done in a single phase. It can go on 14 May, but had to be divided into two phases to appease the new alliance of Madhes-based parties, the RJP. There was finally hope that an ethnicity-based territorial party was trying to metamorphose into a national party. RJP cadre even waved Nepal’s red double-triangle banner at their rallies in the Tara. (See Guest Editorial by Chandra Kishore below). But three bogey women were soon doused because every time guarantee are given about amendments, every time polls are put off, they have to be postponed again because the RJPN threatens to disrupt them. This has happened again: the second phase is finally slated for 28 June in Province 1, 2, and 7, but they had to be deferred in Province 2 till September. And now the RJPN is saying it may not even agree to September unless its demands on amendments to the Constitution are met. Moving the goal posts repeatedly like this allows Prime Minister Deuba to shift the blame on elections to the RJPN. Many local Madhesi leaders from the RJPN are fed up, and are fielding candidates as independents. Public opinion in the Tara is for polls (see story on page 4) while working on amendments, and Mahant Thakur and Rajendra Mahato are competing for influence. Upendra Yadav’s FSPN is taking part as a national party. The composition of local elections is important for stability, and the conduct of federal and Parliamentary elections later this year. The longer Province 3 holds out against local elections due to fear among RJPN leaders that they will lose, the longer this period of instability will continue.

DEUDA AND INDIA

Does India want to destabilise the Deuba government by supporting the disruptions of the Madhes parties, or does India want to stabilise Deuba government by telling the Madhes parties to contest in the elections? We have to wait and see.

K. K. Sharma

India will always meddle in Nepal and keep the chaos alive. As long as Nepal has corrupt leaders it will be easy for New Delhi to work with help. Nepal has no honest or patriotic leader alive, all of them depend on India for their welfare. It’s a shamefully sad that for 30 million to be governed by remote control

Gopal

Indian leaders do not care who among RJP/SMP/Gadhimai are in Nepal’s PM. They are only interested in getting their national interest served.

Anupam

Nepal and the sea

This is kind of logical and a commendable job done by Shalwerwa K. Upadhayaya during the 70s (Landlocked mindset). Kamal Mamri Dhiit, 2015. Many Nepali have now realized their woes at the Law of the Sea Conference and landlocked countries’ rights for access to the Sea. Various trade deals made in recent decades are now being hit due to this declaration. The initiative of UNGA/GATT gave birth to WTO for labelling and labeling food in International trade. This is the point of mutual interest at bilateral/International level. Free trade vs. protection is also a never-ending debate, and will also be the international agenda.

Bimal Pandey

STANDARDS FOR BEAUTY

Media and society in general need to stop setting arbitrary standards for beauty (Charikamat-Nika, Sadhna Shrestha [W633]). Being beautiful, we need to stop glorifying beauty pageants.

Supraj Raj Joshi

DEUDA’S RULE

Deuda should dissolve all elected bodies again (Election in institutions), Om Astha Rai, 46693. Let’s put a Crown on his head and pronounce him King. That will stop Nepal with an iron fist for the rest of his life.

Mahesh Thakur

NO EQUALITY

The Nepalese practice apartheid, do as Indians (Modern-day domestic slaves). Shekra Shrestha, W633. There is little respect for law and order, only for money, caste and power rules.

David Darlkan

onlinespace

LIVING WITH PAIN

One in 19 women in Nepal suffers from uterine prolapse. The condition is more common in rural females than in urban females. Scientists say women have to work hard from a young age and start using girdles. Since the government now lacks budget, any 20% of the estimated 1 in 100 women with the condition would be treated. This is a chapter in Women in Nepal and Chinese stories showing increasing cases all over the world as part of this pandemic. Many of them live in poverty.

JOURNEY IN TIME

Compared to one another 15 years ago, Nepal has seen a lot of change. People want to change their life. The government has now realized that 20% of the population is suffering from this problem. It is a matter of concern, and many need to change their diet and lifestyle, and many are now seeing images online.

WHAT’S TRENDING

Modern-day slaves by Anumol Skaha

Slavery isn’t a thing of the past. It’s real and present in modern-day Nepal. Follow the story of Shyam Bahadur who was forced to work as a domestic at 5 and 15 years later is still a bonded laborer. This powerful video helped spread awareness about domestic child labor through social media.

Most shared and shared on Facebook (13,256 reads, 36 shares)

Blocking Qatar

India has blocked Qatar’s entry. Neelapal Singh from Nepal Times published this story on 16th February 2017.

Most commented (30 comments, 42 likes)

Nepal watching from Delhi by Shyam Chatterjee

India’s policy on Nepal has changed. Khare Desai, who started her Nepali Times column from New Delhi, DC, 4569, sent this first answer. Go on Nepali Times to read the extensive feedback to the above.

Most visited online page

Landlocked mindset by Neelapal Singh

The opportunities are well as the obligations that apply to the opening of Nepal. But we remain stuck in a closed mindset. How can Nepalis take the high tax?

Most tweeted

QUOTE TWEETS

Do you agree with the government’s decision to disconnect social media in Province 25? 80% reads, 50 favourite

Do you believe that the new bill is not sufficient to address the current problems in CBE?

Do you believe that the bill will not make a significant difference to the current problems in CBE?

Do you believe that the new bill will make a significant difference to the current problems in CBE?

Do you believe that the new bill will not make a significant difference to the current problems in CBE?

Do you believe that the new bill will not make a significant difference to the current problems in CBE?

Do you believe that the new bill will not make a significant difference to the current problems in CBE?
A HAPPY EID AL-FITR
Voting to forget

Two years after bloody clashes, Tikapur is trying to bury the past to hold local elections

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA
in KAILALI

Campaigning on Tuesday near where the policemen were lynched two years ago, local MP Janak Raj Chaudhary says the election is an opportunity for Tharus to increase their access to state power. National Congress candidate Jung Bahadur Saud was going door-to-door in a Tharu community, while the ruling candidate was addressing a gathering nearby.

The UML’s Binod Rawal, whom many Tharus blame for opposing the demand for a Tharu-dominated province, addressed the gathering in Tikapur. Home Minister Janardan Sharma and IGP Prakash Aryal flew in on Tuesday to observe the security situation.

Following the Tikapur incident, police detained at least 25 Tharu leaders, including Laxman Tharu who is still in jail (see box below). Many other accused, including Rashman Chaudhary, fled to India. Despite that, however, he was awarded Rs 17 million in compensation, causing outrage in the media.

The government compensated hill families whose houses were set on fire, even though many homes of Tharus were also destroyed in the counter-violence after the killings.

Tharu leaders maintain that many of those detained are innocent, and that police acted by while supporters of an unrepresented Far West province ransacked their houses during the curfew that followed the violence.

“We never wanted a divide between Pathalis and Tharus so we are participating in the local polls,” says Dinesh Tharu of the Nepal Democratic Party. “But we will keep fighting for a separate state based on our identity.”

LOCAL ELECTIONS 2017
Second Phase

No Tharuhat

Nepali Times talked to the main candidates for mayor of Tikapur Municipality

PARTIES’ PLEDGES

Jung Bahadur Saud, NC

“I have already been NC chief of Tikapur (since the Tikapur municipality was formed). I was able to win because of votes from Tharus and I am sure Tharus will vote for me this time too. The Pathalis and Pathalis are living in harmony. My main agenda is to lift living standards of the under-served, including Tharus, with my One House, One job campaign.”

Tapendra Rawal, UML

“The Tikapur incident is a stain on the past. It hasn’t affected this local election; everyone is actively participating. Our country and people should not be divided on the basis of caste and ethnicity. ‘Tharuhat protest is over, Tharais and Pathalis live side-by-side here; I will make both Tharu and Nepali official languages of Tikapur.”

Shiva Thapa, Maoist-Centre

“We will work to restore communal harmony in Tikapur. We will provide free medical treatment to Tharus who suffer from sickle cell anemia. Empower farmers, focus on development, promote tourism and relocate the landless.”

Lautan Chaudhary, Nepal Democratic Party

“Our demand for an autonomous Tharuhat state remains. We are fighting for identity and equality by taking part in elections. Putting Kathmandu and Kanchanpur in Province 5 is still possible through a constitutional amendment and will push for it once I am elected mayor. If these districts are kept in Province 7, our population will come down to 9% from 40% and we will lose our identity.”

Laxman Tharu, the most prominent Tharuhat leader, is now in a jail in Kailali for allegedly being behind the Tikapur massacre. He plead not guilty, and is awaiting withdrawal of the charges against him as part of a deal between the government and Maoist-led parties in Kathmandu. Tharu spoke to Nepali Times from inside the prison this week.

Nepali Times: Would you have participated in local elections if you were not in jail?

Laxman Tharu: Yes, I would have. Even from inside the jail, I have urged Tharuhat leaders to contest local elections and fight for the rights of the Tharu community.

Where is the Tharuhat movement now?

The state suppressed our movement. Most of our influential leaders were arrested after the Tikapur incident, and no one is left to lead our struggle.

What is next?

I will no longer fight for a separate Tharuhat province. We were inspired by other ethnic rights movements to demand an autonomous Tharuhat state. But I don’t think that is possible now. Instead, I will keep fighting for justice and equality for the Tharu community.
Darjeeling and the idea of India

I was relating a bedtime story to my six-year-old son when my wife read an SMS on her phone: "Though you're enough. We want Guwahati." She then said: "This is the making of the longest time. We are unscopy the way things are. We look at the development that it all has achieved and pride ourselves.

Dinkar Nepal

My wife was born in Sikkim, a tiny city of Darjeeling District adjoining Nepal. She went to school in various places in North India, on tour of her family's places other than the Hindi-speaking belt of India. She spoke excellent Hindi. Till now, I had not imagined her a passionate supporter of the Gurkha cause, seeing her always as someone with a strong sense of belonging to the idea of India. I took a few more time to realize that she can be both at the same time.

India has a right from the beginning, a complex political entity. In fact, many writers,3cribed at independence in 1947 that India would not last a decade as a nation. It's a striking success of the nation-building project that India has continued. Most Indian national movements have barely been able to carve out a space in the popular psyche. The Indian National Congress, in its struggle to enter the core of Indian nationalism, has discerned its association with Nepal and heavily relied on creating an identity around the term Gurkha. Gurkhas is the dream of a homeland for the Gurkha 'Indians' of Nepal origin. The main argument is that the Gurkha 'Indians' of Nepal origin for many years into a non-violent political movement.

The term Gurkha is officially associated with the area where the Gurkha National Administration was formed as a communist group and Rimli Gurung became the new leader of the Hills. However, it stagnated again, a repeat of the Gurung era. Now, an upsurge ignited by the West Bengal government's recently announced language policy has called people together again for the cause of a separate state of Darjeeling. The Hills are burning, and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata is threat in crushing the street movement.

Looking at a few things, there are clear political reasons for us. One, dissent raised in the popular psyche may be dormant but doesn't fade away easily, and is ready to erupt at the smallest provocation. Two, underdevelopment feeds the fires of moth—especially when neighboring regions are seen to be surge ahead. There is then a tendency to blame it on "others", as expatriate politicians impose a communal identity to take advantage of the unrest.

The most important lesson for Nepal at this stage is, however, from the strength of the idea of India as a nation. Once a strong framework for nationhood makes it possible to build on that framework. The lesson is that politics of pluralism has to go hand in hand with the project of nation-building.

Dinkar Nepal

Revenues rise slightly

Nepal’s revenue rose 4% in mid-June this year and the country’s public debt is trending down the past four years due to budget surpluses led by strong remittance growth combined with subdued capital spending, so says an IMF report released this week. Spending rose to 42% during the same period while capital expenditure in the first half of July was Rs.130 billion, up 11% from last year. The execution rate, however, remained low, at 35.6% of the budget. Local governments amounted to Rs31.4 billion in May and grew 8% in the past 3 months expired to last year, supporting the current account.

The Best Airline

Amped the present era in the Gulf, India-based Gulf Airways has been named the Best Airline of the year at the annual Skytrax World Airline Awards held in Paris.

Funding for Fairfield International Trade Cooperation (FIC), a member of the World Bank Group, has provided $7.5 million to Nepal's hospitality and tourism industry.

To develop the 3-star hotel, Fairfield Marriott, in Thamel, Kathmandu, the Dubai-based hotel company from the United Arab Emirates has agreed to develop the 3-star hotel, Fairfield Marriott, in Thamel, Kathmandu, the Dubai-based hotel company from the United Arab Emirates has agreed to develop the 3-star hotel, Fairfield Marriott, in Thamel, Kathmandu, the Dubai-based hotel company from the United Arab Emirates has agreed to develop the 3-star hotel, Fairfield Marriott, in Thamel, Kathmandu, the Dubai-based hotel company from the United Arab Emirates has agreed to develop the 3-star hotel, Fairfield Marriott, in Thamel, Kathmandu.
I was a hot, humid afternoon in April when telephone rang on the blue-painted desk in my Kathmandu office. “This is Senator Edward Kennedy calling from the United States.”

Long distant calls were a rarity, and the line crackled. Could I get in touch with his nephew John who was trekking in the Everest region? “Please tell him that his cousin David has died of a drug overdose. He might want to return home for the funeral.”

The son of the assassinated president was traveling in India and Nepal with a college friend on a post-university gap year in 1984, keen to see how the other half lived and to experience the social realities of the subcontinent. I had been asked by Indian friends to take care of him in Nepal, where he hung out in the Khumbu, Kathmandu and Tiger Tops.

“I look on these as my fondest days,” John wrote to me afterwards, even though it turned out to be a sad time for the extremely courteous, extraordinarily good-looking, 23-year-old. Sherpa runners were sent to relay the tragic news. John aborted his trek and left early.

Princess Margaret’s son, David Lithey now Lord Shrewdon, had visited Nepal the previous year, this time sent by mutual friends from London. Quietly humourous and unassuming polite, he sat in my garden under the lychee tree discussing his future and family. His aunt put him to sleep. The inherited street dog whose liver-coloured coat suffered from chronic mange despite his grand historic name.

After several weeks trekking through the landscapes of Ladakh, David was enjoying Nepal’s lush green vegetation. I’d like to think that our meanderings through the Darbar Squares and bazaar lanes, witnessing the wood carving skills of the Valley’s Newar artisans, inspired David in his career as a maker of fine furniture.

Being a Hindu kingdom, Nepal had many royal visitors, especially from Britain. Prince Charles has twice trekked in the Annapurna, his route lined with welcoming villagers, glamorous Damai bands and security personnel disguised as trekkers. I record the first Royal Trek route in 1980 with Pertemba, one of Mountain Travel’s star guides, then escorted the press pack down from the hills to ensure the Prince of Wales was left in peace to paint watercolours of the “green clear” mountain view. Only the murder of John Lennon knocked the Nepal story off the front pages. His second trek followed the India visit where Princess Diana was photographed perched alone and forlorn on a marble bench in front of the Taj Mahal.

During my first decade in Nepal, it was unheard of to speak of the ruling King Birendra in anything but the most deferential and respectful terms, a remote and unattainably powerful figure who was seldom seen, forever solemn and always shielded with dark glasses. Even amongst consenting adults in private, we always referred to him as “His Majesty”.

The only occasion during his lifetime that I visited Narayan Bhiti Palace was after lining up with the customary public devotees to be blessed by a then distant Dastin. The line snaked down Darbar Marg, but I was undeterred. Once we entered through the towering iron gates, royal aides ushered the disconcerting foreigner to the front of the queue, despite my embarrassed protestations. When the moment came, Gopendra Bahadur Shah, last Raja of Salyan, who was retained as court photographer, treated me with a picture that for years hung framed in my office.

From England, one endearing story did permeate this obsession with royal protocol. It was related that, breaking at the restrictions of school discipline, the youthful Birendra had protested to his Eton housemaster that his father the King was considered a Hindu god, revered by the people of Nepal as a living incarnation of Lord Vishnu. “That makes absolutely no difference,” retorted the tutor to him. “We are quite used to having tens of thousands of people here.”

There are not many things that I regret in a life characterised by seized opportunities, but one of them is discounting to help John’s kitchen out of its mother’s travellers cheque. The Kathmandu banks would not accept the five rupees. For only $20 I could have owned a cheque signed by Jacqueline Kennedy and mistakenly counter-signed Jacqueline Chassias.
Education in her blood
Nepali becomes first female South Asian dean at a university in the United States

When Shabnam Koirala was growing up in Kathmandu, she had no aspirations to be an educator. But everything she saw, inside and outside her home, pushed her imperceptibly towards her eventual profession.

Nepal was changing. With the People’s Movement of 1990 there was great hope that the restoration of democracy would bring progress in health and education. Yet even back then, Koirala felt that although she was going to the best girls’ schools in the country, there was something missing.

“Living in Nepal was fantastic. I look back on my childhood with a lot of fond memories and gratitude, but the way we learned didn’t allow us to think creatively, the education practiced here never really met my creative needs,” recalls Koirala, who has just been appointed the first South Asian female Dean at a major US university, the School of Education at the University of San Francisco.

Even as she commuted from home to school every day in Lalitpur, Koirala realised early on that her childhood was different than that of her friends. For one thing, she was growing up in a bi-cultural family: her father is a Nepali and her late mother was Austrian.

After high school, it was clear to Koirala that if she wanted to pursue higher education, she would have to leave the country. She got a scholarship and enrolled at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, a liberal arts college for women.

In her first year, her professor asked Koirala: “What do you think?” A straight-forward question but it had an everlasting impact on her.

“I had never thought what I think or feel, or to question facts. It was during that time that I thought more seriously about pursuing education as a field of study and eventually work,” said Koirala.

This impulse to educate is in her blood. She is the fourth generation of teachers on her mother’s side, and her grandmother faced great difficulty as an educator in Iran because of her Bahá’í faith, which was heavily persecuted.

The conditions for her teaching were dangerous and constrained. Shabnam’s father is Hinaut Dutt Koirala, the noted Magazine-winning journalist and media educator.

“When I think about education, it is not this idea of mass education for all. Instead, it is a specific education, for a specific group of people who are oppressed,” said Koirala.

“Education can be empowering to people when delivered the right way.”

Koirala’s experience of growing up in Nepal allowed her to see the impact foreign aid has on a developing country: the lack of follow-through and the corruption. She became more interested in how education and social change intersect.

This curiosity would lead her to pursuing both a Master’s and PhD from the University of California at Berkeley.

Now that Koirala has accepted her appointment as Dean, she intends to focus on maintaining her integrity while staying true to her Nepali roots. To her that means a strong sense of resilience, hospitality, compassion, understanding and patience.
ALL OUR YESTERDAY
Photographs taken by Peace Corps volunteers a half-century ago serve as a stark reminder of how much Nepal has changed.

Nepal was one of the first countries to request American Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) after the program was announced by US President John F. Kennedy. The first volunteers arrived in Nepal in 1962, and many groups of PCVs followed. They were sent to live and work for two years in many towns and villages throughout the country. About 3,800 PCVs have served in Nepal and most had cameras to take pictures to send back to their families in the US or to keep as personal mementos. There are currently 68 PCVs serving in Nepal, all working in income generation and nutrition education.

Doug Hall was a PCV in Nepal in 1966-1969. A few years ago he digitized some of his old Nepal photos and posted them on Facebook. A few Nepalis commented that he should preserve these photos because they had historic importance. He then realized that hundreds of PCVs from the early years also had photos that should be preserved. His wife Kate Rafferty Hall was also a PCV in Nepal and together they began a project to collect, digitize and catalog as many Nepal photos from the 1962-1975 period as possible.

“We realized that there was some urgency to do this as the volunteers posted in Nepal in the 1960s are now aged 70 and older,” Hall told Nepal Times. “Some have died and their old Nepal photographs have been discarded by their heirs, thus lost to history.”

After three years of work, the archive now has over 19,000 photos from more than 120 volunteers, adding to the existing collections of period photos from Kathmandu Valley, the Rasuwa and Chitwan, and studio photos of families from much earlier than 1962.

The unique nature of the collection that the Halls have put together is that its focus is the lives and events of typical Nepalis in towns in the Tarai, Hills and Himalas from half-century ago. There are photos of tea shops, men fishing, children shepherding animals, weddings, building of bridges, Punchayat elections, mud fights during rice transplanting, families at their homes, posters carrying grain loads, local festivals, women bringing home fodder for their animals, pujas, cremations making beechnaces, baat bazaars, etc.

The collection is searchable by keyword, description, location, date and contributor. The Halls have provided Nepal Picture Library, Madan Parasak Pustakalya, Tanagra Museum and others with complete searchable sets of the photos.

“This Nepal Times centerfold has images from the Halls collection and more recent ones from the Internet of the same places to provide a sense of how much things have changed,” says Hall. “Change and development may seem slow to people living in a community, and they may not realize how much their town has changed over 50 years. Old photographs can be informative and perhaps even startle the viewers.”

The Peace Corps photo archive project was initiated by Doug Hall and Kate Rafferty Hall (left) who were both volunteers in Nepal in 1966-68, and got married.

Go online to view more before-and-after photographs, and for the archive, visit the PC Nepal Facebook page and http://nepalimagery.com/galleries/nepal-photo-history-contributors/contribute-display-albums/.
The Peace Corps in Nepal

The Peace Corps came to fruition after Senator John F. Kennedy delivered an impassioned speech to students at the University of Michigan in 1960 in which he challenged Americans to “break the bonds of mass misery” by volunteering one to two years in the developing world. Kennedy would be elected president, and training began for the first batch of Peace Corps volunteers at U.S. colleges, universities, and private agencies.

Nepal was one of the first countries to accept Peace Corps volunteers in 1962, and since then nearly 3,800 have served in Nepal. Despite the differences in culture, language, and economic status between Nepal and the United States, PCVs have made great strides in the area of small business development, education, health, environment and youth development. They have served in Patan before it was joined by highway to Kathmandu, in Janakpur and Nepalgunj in the Terai, from Lam to the remote Humla in the west.

“Our true legacy can be found in the relationships made between the volunteers and the Nandsin they came to know, live and work with. These bonds of friendship and mutual respect produce a better Nepal and a better U.S.,” says Troy Parolek, Director of the Peace Corps in Nepal.

The Peace Corps continues to build upon its agricultural development program through new volunteers by focusing on four activities: soil management and improvement, bio-intensive gardening, fruit and nut tree production and nutrition education. In addition to these activities, it intends to put additional emphasis on gender and youth participation.

The program was suspended abruptly in September 2004 after two improvised explosives were set off by the Maoists at the US Information Centre in Guwahati. The Embassy immediately withdrew all volunteers from Nepal, deeming it unsafe for them there. In 2012, six years after the peace agreement was signed, the Peace Corps returned to Nepal to work mainly in nutrition and agriculture.

Sean Shoemaker

NEW FOREST

The big change in Nepal’s mid-hills over the last 50 years has been the spread of community forestry. Pictures taken half a century apart by Peace Corps volunteers.

CHAUTARA 1968

CHAUTARA 2017

SANISCHARE 1971

SANISCHARE 2016

HILE 1971

HILE 2015

ILAM 1971

ILAM 2016

TANSEN 1973

TANSEN 2014

TANSEN 2016

CHAUTARA 2007

KATE RACKERT/AL JAZEERA/NEPAL
GETAWAY

Atithi Resort & Spa,
A quiet sanctuary that fuses Nepali tradition with modern amenities, complete with a fancy pool and a city restaurant.
Localside, Pallahu, (01) 5487680, info@atithi.nest.com

Pataleban Vineyard Resort,
Japanese-influenced resort with great views, jungle walks and picnics. Chakaphat, Kathmandu, 9841575964

Meghalaya Serai,
Enjoy the mansion offer at Taj Safar Meghalaya Serai and spend a relaxing time fire dining and going for wildlife safaris in Chitwan.
Chitwan National Park, 9801761922, 9817014394

The Yellow House,

Gokarna Forest Resort,
A luxurious paradise that relaxes your breathing and encourages meditation, just a 20-minute drive away from Kathmandu in Gokarna. (01) 5461212, info@gokarna.net

FETA DE LA MUSIQUE
Celebrates this year’s international music day by participating in the annual Fete de la Musique where various artists will be performing,
23 June, 7 to 10 pm, Avantage Française Kathmandu, Free entry

MUSCIC

Chez Caroline,
Authentic ambiance, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more. Bibian Mohil Rai, (01) 5491297

Dhokaima Café,
Brass the feast with indigenous mocktails at the Basantmali Bar.
Patasho Dhadka, (01) 5522113, dhokaimafood@yahoo.com

Saturday Night Live,
Sway to the rhythms of alternative rock band Teflax and spend your weekend with friends and family.
30 June, 6:30-9:30 pm, A-la Carte Lounge, Restaurant, Kunnupark, 9851718887

EVENTS

Poetrybug,
Poetry lovers unite for a day full of lively discussions on ‘Three Fine Lines’ poetry anthology, followed by a live poetry reading session.
24 June, 7 to 4 pm, Trish Mandala, Kukhulo Road, Patan, Registration: https://go. gl/0ODo8

Watching Israel,
Don’t miss the opportunity to watch selected Israeli films at the 11th Israeli Film Festival. Viewers can choose from two films that will be screened for three days.
28 to 30 June, 2.30 pm and 6.30 pm, OKX Restaurant, Lakeside, Patan, http:// embassy.gov.np/kathmandu

Mud fest,
Celebrate this rain-planting festival by getting soaked in the rain, playing in the mud and mingling with locals. Includes a Newari fun at the end of the day.
24 June, 7 am to 3 pm, Bhaktapur, Rs.350 for adults, Rs.99 for children, free for children below 4, http://www.socialtouris.com

Kathmandu Kora,
Join hundreds of cycling enthusiasts and ride 50, 75, or 100 km to raise funds for a cycling trail in the Sangaati Area of Kathmandu Valley.
15 July, 7 am onwards, Patan Durbar Square, https://www.facebook.com/kathmandukora/

Artist in residence,
Attend the seventh season of artist in residence with works of artists CC Chang and Chen Siao Chi of Taiwan, Kapti Mani Diti of Nepal and Iptu Freeman of Nepal on display.
23 to 30 June, Gallery MDT, L. Jktour. www.gallerym.org

Inviting submissions,
Submit your documentation for the 11th edition of Film Southasia to be held in Kathmandu from 2-5 November 2017.
Deadline 15 July.
http://www.filmosouthasia.org/film-south-asia

Go take a hike,
Gear up for a hike to Kanjel starting from Lukluk Bhangyang, going through lush forests and finally reaching the top to get a view of the Himalayas and Kathmandu Valley.
24 June, Meeting point, Bhaktali Monday. Entrance fees: Rs.500 (for those without bikes), Rs 400 for those with bikes, (01) 4405935

Vocal workshop,
Register to learn singing techniques from renowned jazz vocalist Shankar Basnet, hosted by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. 5 July to 30 August, (01) 5013354 http://www.kjca.com.np/vocal-teacher-shankar-basnet/

Musical tribute,
Karmen will be playing rap metal, rap rock and alternative metal songs, as a tribute to Rage Against the Machine & Tool.
August 8 to 10, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, 9841339992

Spring Season,
Brace the heat with indigenous mocktails at the Basantmali Bar.
Patasho Dhadka, (01) 5522113, dhokaimafood@yahoo.com

Dining

Club Himalaya,
For amazing mountain views and refreshing weekend excursions, special packages available for Nepali and expatriates.
Neporgar, 441004

Temple Tree Resort and Spa,
A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlours and suana. It’s hard to be loose once you go in.
Gurighat, Lakeside, (01) 5485719

Mango Tree Lodge,
Culture walks, rating in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at Bardia National Park.
Bardia, Bardia@mangotreehotel.com

Miss Motivation
Kripa Joshi

Bootcamp,
Participate in readings and discussions on different pedagogical ideas, theories and methodologies in a workshop led by Niranjan Kumawat.
3 to 25 July, Guest’s Cave, Jomolu, Rs. 5000 (01) 5553814

Celebrating death metal,
Meetheads, test your ears to some choice death metal and technical death metal of Nepalese bands all the way from Japan. Chitwanathmara from Sikkim and home grown bands Aevitas, Nirvanya Nepal, Cynicalson and Warsaw will be performing too.
6 July, Rogee Bar, Thamel, Rs. 500 (01) 5552288

Jay Sean live,
Book your tickets now to listen to British singer and songwriter Jay Sean perform live in Kathmandu.
27 July, 7 pm onwards, Deja Vu, Darbar Marg, Rs. 2500, 5500, 7500, 9500/MAWA

Embers,
A range and cozy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali cuisines.
Kitchen’s Gate, Pulchowk, (01) 5540006, embers.lkt@gmail.com, www.embers-restaurant.com

Foodstuffs,
A creative vegetable and fruit juice bar.
Nepalgunj, (01) 5485719

Lakpa’s Chulo,
Offers a wide selection of soup from around the world. Quiet and warm ambiance.
Jhilmiller, (01) 5542986

Mango Tree Lodge,
Culture walks, rating in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at Bardia National Park.
Bardia, Bardia@mangotreehotel.com

Lakpa’s Chulo,
Offers a wide selection of soup from around the world. Quiet and warm ambiance.
Jhilmiller, (01) 5542986

Fuso Bakery,
Licked in Chukop, this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat, and banana cake.
Chukop, Lktour

Fete de la Musique,
Celebrates this year’s international music day by participating in the annual Fete de la Musique where various artists will be performing.
23 June, 7 to 10 pm, Avantage Française Kathmandu, Free entry

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Culture walks, rating in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at Bardia National Park.
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Chukop, Lktour
OM ASTHA RAI
in SINDHUPALCHOK

Itpana Lama (right) had just turned 18, and was preparing for her wedding with 27-year-old Tok Lama when the earthquake struck central Nepal on 25 April 2015. Their homes in Golche village of Sindhupalchok near the Chinese border were destroyed, but the couple went ahead with the wedding in a temporary hut in a shelter in Salang village.

Like 1,600 other families in central Nepal, the Lamas don’t just have to rebuild their homes. They have to relocate the entire neighbourhood to a safer area because Golche is in danger of being buried by falling boulders.

Itpana gave birth last rainy season, but three monsoons later the family is still in a camp for survivors in Salang, waiting for the government to relocate them.

“We miss our village, but we can’t go back because there are still rocks falling off the cliff. No one lives there now, only ghosts,” says Itpana. Many of the buildings buried in the slides were never recovered.

Itpana has fond memories of happy but subsistence living in Golche, growing maize, wheat, millet and potatoes. Now, she looks after her 1-year-old son while Tok roams Salang looking for day jobs. He says: “The quake turned our lives upside down, made us homeless, but at least we are still alive.”

Sixty-four families, mostly Tamangs, moved down to Salang, and will join 250 other relocated households in an integrated settlement planned here by the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) and Oxfam International.

The NRA has identified five villages, one each in Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dolakha, Gorkha and Kameschuwara districts, which are uninhabitable because of the danger of landslides. It is in the process of acquiring land before the end of this monsoon, and says it will begin constructing road, water and electricity infrastructure soon afterwards.

Nearly 700 families in the five districts will be relocated in this first phase.

Govind Raj Pokhrel, CEO of the NRA, says it is Nepal’s biggest ever relocation plan after a disaster, and is trickier than transmigration of families moved from national parks and wildlife reserves: “Relocation is always tricky, but it is trickier because we are not forcing anyone. We are just offering options and incentives.”

The NRA plans to finish the first phase of relocation in two years, but that will cover only a quarter of families living on slopes destabilised by two massive earthquakes in 2015. In 13 affected districts, the NRA and the Department of Mines and Geology (DMG) have identified 2,629 households that need to be either protected from rockfalls or relocated.

Whole settlements, not just a few houses, need to be relocated in 60 of the 136 places identified by the NRA as being vulnerable (see map). The NRA is covering some big settlements in the first phase itself, but many other villages will have to live through the danger for a few more monsoons.

Rajendra Prasad Khanal of the DMG says: “In those settlements where only a few households face landslide threats, mitigation measures will work. But in others where all households face landslide threats, the sooner we can relocate people the better.”

Relocation also means dislocation. Most families have an emotional attachment to their homes where their ancestors lived for generations. Moving to a new place also means losing livelihoods and starting life all over again.

“We understand these sensibilities, and this is why we are not forcing anyone, but their lives will always be at risk if they do not relocate to safer places,” said Pokhrel during a trip this week to Salang, where earthquake-displaced families are desperately waiting for the NRA to begin resettlement.

Tamba Bikram Sitwal, a 65-year-old cardamom farmer, lives in a temporary shed near his earthquake-damaged home. Two hours’ walk from Salang, most of his neighbours have abandoned their houses because of falling rocks, but Sitwal is staying on because he has to take care of his farm.

“I know it’s good here, how will I feed my family if I go away? This is where I have spent my entire life. But if everyone leaves, I will also have to go,” he says.

VULNERABLE VILLAGES
Over 700 families in 13 villages are living on slopes destabilised by the earthquakes and need to be relocated. Many of these villages have been to be entirely evacuated.

VULNERABLE VILLAGES

- Villages with over 50 households
- Villages with 25-50 households
- Villages with less than 25 households

SOURCE: NRA

DOUBLE DISASTER:
After the 25 April 2015 earthquake devastated Nepal’s capital, Kathmandu, a second shock in the earthquake’s epicentre in Upper Gorkha, hit by a small aftershock. It has now put a strain on the government’s relief efforts.

Itpana Lama, with her husband and baby (left), waited two years in a shelter for the government’s resettlement plan in Salang, Sindhupalchok.

Moving after shaking
Over 2,600 families in villages threatened by quake-induced landslides need to be urgently resettled before the monsoon

OM ASTHA RAI
in SINDHUPALCHOK
MUST SEE
Sophia Pande
released in theatres, even with the backing of the likes of Sony Pictures, so the film came out in the US and the UK only in late 2016, and is just now reaching the rest of the world.

Aisholpan, with the help of her loving father, disregards old-fashioned customs to become an eagle huntress at the age of 13. It is a story that breaks through the boundaries of cultures, giving us a glimpse into an extraordinary life and providing a view of how, with the support of one’s family, a young girl might do anything.

Set in Mongolia and narrated with nuance by Daisy Ridley, who became famous with Star Wars: The Force Awakens (2015), this breathtaking documentary begins with a traditional male eagle hunter setting his bird free after seven years of captivity. He thanks the bird for its loyalty, sacrifices a sheep for her to feed upon, and walks away after taking off her hood and feathers so that she may roam free for the remainder of her life. It is a thoughtful, deeply moving beginning, and one that sets the tone for the film.

The filmmakers slowly and patiently document Aisholpan’s life with her family, and her longing to become an eagle huntress, following in the footsteps of her father and grandfather. Director Otto Bink has an understanding of the importance of Aisholpan’s persona in a film like this; and he gives her room and space to breathe. Getting to know this young, brave, physically and mentally strong girl is one of the real pleasures of this film. That aspect, among others, is genuinely enhanced by the vivid but not showy cinematography of Simon Niblett.

Aisholpan faces many challenges, but her confidence, backed by her father’s unwavering trust in her, helps her through her journey as she trains, becomes fit enough to capture her own eaglet, competes in the national eagle hunting tournament, and finally, becomes a huntress in the harsh, wintry Mongolian wild.

Populated by interesting, articulate people, amazing scenery and a culture that we may never have access to aside from this film, The Eagle Huntress is a classic story of a bonding between girl and eagle, father and daughter, culture and wilderness, and an unforgettable coming of age for a lovely, free-spirited child who follows her dreams, which, due to her hard work and determination, come true. If you want to learn a bit about Mongolia, and one of its most riveting traditions, find this uncommon film.
Airports update

Bhairahawa 
Construction of Guatemala Buddha International Airport in Bhairahawa has once again ground to a halt. Birendra Prasad Shrestha, spokesperson of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAAN), says work stopped because of the Chinese contractor and its sub-contractor. The Rs 4.3 billion project, partially funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), was to be completed this year. But frequent obstructions have postponed the deadline to December 2018.

Pokhara 
China CAMC Engineering Co will begin construction of the Pokhara International Airport next year, and is expected to be finished by 2020. Nepal has taken a loan for the project from the Export-Import Bank of China.

Nigad 
The land acquisition process is underway, and the government has decided to involve the Nepal Army in clearing the field in Baisi district for the project. But no agreement has been signed so far, and even the CAAAN is not sure when this project will take off and be completed.

Kathmandu 
The Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) expansion project is also moving very slowly. The Spanish contractor was to complete this ADB-funded project in 2015, but it was delayed last year for “non-performance”. The CAAAN has called for fresh bids to complete the project, which now has been split into three components.

Ballot power

Editorial in Agnik, 20 June

The Madesh-based RJPN and the Neeta Bilkram Chand-led Maoist party are boycotting local elections, but their cadres are contesting as independent candidates. This is proof that the ballot is superior to the bullet in a democracy.

Ballots have brought revolutions that even armed struggle has not achieved. In Nepal, the Maoists failed to topple the monarchy even after 10 years of bloody war, but an elected assembly abolished the 240-year-old monarchy. The RJPN and the Bipash Maoists have chosen not to study recent history, and are resorting to violence to push through their agenda. Their local cadres, however, know where real power lies and how to achieve it.

In Thabang of Lho district, independent candidates of the Bipash Maoists are in the electoral fray to become village chief and deputy. In this anti-social battle of the rebels in the midwestern hills, people boycotted the last local elections in 1997. None of them turned out to vote in the second Constituent Assembly elections, either. But this time, Amrit Gurung of the Bipash faction is contesting polls on 20 June to become Thabang village council chief. This confirms that competing in elections is the only way to gain power. The central leadership of the Bipash Maoists has failed to understand what 15 cadres in Thabang have already understood.

Some for the RJPN, its cadres are independently contesting elections in Rupandehi, Kapilavastu and Bara districts, in defiance of their party’s central-level decision to boycott and disrupt elections. It also shows that the RJPN leaders, who live mostly in Kathmandu, do not have the pulse of their own grassroots supporters and are spending the general public mood in the Madhes, where the gravity of the ground reality and the need for the voices of the people cannot be denied democratic. The RJPN and the Bipash Maoists must understand this before it is too late.

“QUOTE OF THE WEEK”

“He is an RJPN candidate. He asked for votes, but said ‘don’t tell anyone’”

Rabin Sapami in Agnik, 10 June

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Women with uterine prolapse who got free surgery

SOURCE: UNFPA 2016

HARD TO REACH

Proportion of women with uterine prolapse

Total number of women with uterine prolapse

6.4
870,000

Women with uterine prolapse who got free surgery

20%

TOTAL POPULATION OF NEPAL

13.6 million

Biura BK, 28

Biura BK is a 28-year-old mother of three whose going sans her village. She was 16 when her first baby was born and while collecting firewood soon after giving birth, she felt her womb came out. She is still in pain and is worried that her husband will leave her because she cannot fulfill her physical needs. Three months ago, Biura's pain became unbearable and she went to the District Hospital in Gaungafi, where the doctor told her that she had fourth degree prolapse and referred her to the Kathmandu Jomal Hospital in Panki. She was offered a transport allowance, but it would have cost her Rs.10,000 for bus fare and lodging costs for herself and a attendant. So she never went.

Ram Shakhi Mukhiya, 70

Ram Shakhi of Kanchanpur in the Tarai is another mother of six who kept her prolapsed uterus a secret for 34 years. A friend told her she could get free treatment in Janakpur, so she asked her son to take her there. From Shakhi was weeping when she told us: "My son and daughter-in-law told me, why do you need an operation? In this age you can't do anything!" Her neighbour Payarsha Devi Mahara, 40, is one of few women who had surgery for her wäre prolapse, but her right leg turned and she cannot walk because of the operation.

The pain and shape of...
1 million Nepali women

Chukka Nepali, 41

Chukka is a mother of six in one of the remote villages of Nepal’s remote district, Mustang. She had to fetch firewood and collect fodder a few days after giving birth to her fourth child, living a chronically undernourished life at a young age, and doing arduous back-breaking work soon after delivering caused her spine to slip, and she was soon bedridden with this painful condition, which got steadily worse with every new birth.

Chukka Nepali was already suffering double discrimination for being a woman and a Dalit, but the untreated prolapse made her even more of an outcast. Neighbours shunned her children, saying their mother was a witch.

“They said my woman’s land is not because I was evil, and God punished me,” Chukka told us. “For the past 25 years besides the physical pain I had to endure mental torture. Her face, used is the village is a taboo who makes, just enough to feed my family and cannot afford free surgery because of other costs involved.

Saraswoti Devi Thakur, 40

Saraswoti Devi, from Dhading district, has been living with prolapsed uterus for 14 years after giving birth to her second baby. She tells us in a barely audible whisper: “I have three children, and I just can’t keep up and keep working at the fields, but now the uterus does not go back, it is painful to walk.” Raising the family is difficult enough with an alcoholic husband who beats her up every night, but the prolonged illness has made her life infinitely more difficult. She knows the hospital offers free treatment, but her husband doesn’t allow her to go, saying, “Who will do the work if you go to hospital?”

“I feel tired all the time. I have a white discharge and it is difficult to walk. My husband doesn’t understand that I am in pain, no one does,” Saraswoti says.

Happy to be rid of it

Shreebati Devi Mahato, 70, has lived in Lakhti village of Dhading district all her life, and for most of it, she had this thing hanging out of her. She gave birth to 11 children, seven are alive and four died at childbirth.

“I lived in hell for most of my life when my womb dropped. I had back pain, and couldn’t walk,” says Shreebati who had free surgery at Janakpur Teaching Hospital six months ago. “Now I can walk. I am in heaven.”
The fine print

A llow mewarn readers at the outset that this week’s column contains information that some may find disturbing. You are therefore advised to read this fine print before proceeding any further.

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practically transportable, is made other than the author or publisher. And, oh yes, this fine print contains some fine print below because I high-end US, although capable of containing images in years it occurs, not to seem to miss a and/or sum to a hole and not deplete of reaching the sum 00 level (because that, you know, would have increased more, distorted the other and brought down the dynamic range of the image.

Right, now that we have those legal niceties out of the way, and there is no way you can sue the Ass’ as off any more, we can get on with the rest of the column with my remaining word-count this week which is 85 words plus-minus 10.

Our subject today is the news item concerning the bull that inadvertently fell into a pothole in Goronaghe Municipality. Despite heroic efforts of the residents providing unsolicited advice to extricate the ox, it took all day because recuing bulls from the Mlamchi Trench is easier said than done — the law of gravity was just inescapable.

A bulldozer (so named for its ability to dodge bullets) was finally able to wedge the animal out of the hole that he had got himself into.

Officials from the Department of Roads and Caetex said Wednesday’s incident had proven beyond reasonable doubt that the dimensions of Kathmandu’s potholes are now ISO9002 certified: “Our potholes used to be of standard size, but now we know a city bus can easily fall into one of our potholes.”

The Metropolitan Traffic Police, meanwhile, has converted the problem of the sudden increase in the bovine population of Kathmandu’s streets into a solution by turning bullocks into traffic islands.

Cows benedict are required to cross at zebra, even if it means falling into a pothole.

Anil Gurung
National Football Player

"I AM PERFECT I AM CRETA"