A bullet killed her son. Now she is turning to the ballot for justice, not just for herself but for everyone in the community.

On a calm afternoon in September 2015, when the Constituent Assembly was on the last lap of promulgating Nepal’s new Constitution amidst protests by Tantric-centric parties, Anita Devi Patel (53), and her son Chandan, 4, were buying vegetables in Bhaktapur, Kathmandu. Suddenly, a clash erupted between police and protestors, and she ran for safety, carrying Chandan on her shoulder. But she could not outrun the bullet that killed her son on the spot.

Patel, 27, is now running to become deputy mayor in Pokhara municipality, near Birgunj. The Madhes-based RJPN, which boycotted the first two phases of local elections, has fielded her as its candidate in the last phase of polling in Province 2 only, on 18 September.

Two days after the second death anniversary of her son next week, the mother of likely the youngest ‘martyr’ of Nepal will try her luck with the ballot box.

“I still cry when I remember my son, but now is the time to wipe my tears off and fight for justice,” she told Nepali Times, carrying Chandan’s photo during an election rally on Thursday, a day after registering her candidacy.

More than 18,200 candidates have entered the fray in Province 2. Of them, 6,427 will be elected as mayors/deputy mayors, village council chiefs/deputy chiefs and ward council members.

The failure accompanying candidates’ registrations shows that the voters of Province 2 were desperate for local polls – the first in 20 years – which were postponed three times in a bid to persuade the RJPN to participate.

It’s hard to predict the results of Province 2 polls, but one thing is clear: they will shape provincial politics. The ruling NC, which won in 226 local councils in the first two phases, might catch up with the UML (276). The UML could further widen its gap over the NC and Maoists by taking Province 2 – which could harden the party’s stand against a constitutional amendment.

If the RJPN and other Madhes-based parties collectively emerge in the lead, they will see it as endorsement of their demand for that amendment. If they lose, they will face a moral crisis. Locals in the flood-devastated province are more concerned about whether elected representatives will fix their problems. “Everywhere has been disrupted by floods, but this election is giving us so much hope,” said RJPN cadre Manoj Kumari.

Jyotiba Thapa Press

FLOTSAM EDITORIAL

Back to the land

These migrants decided to return to Nepal after finding out they can earn more growing cash crops.

BY SONIA AWALE

PAGE 2

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EDITORIAL

FLOTSAM

I t will take a long time for the Eastern Tibetans to recover from the floods that ravaged the plains in eight districts, affecting 20% of the region’s population. At least count at least 50 people had been killed. Tens of thousands have lost their homes, grains and standing crops have been destroyed, livestock has been washed away. As the waters recede, the true scale of the devastation is becoming evident. It will take years for the region to recover from this calamity, and because those are also districts with some of the highest rates of out-migration of young men, there is an immediate need for food and shelter.

It is a cruel irony that the worst-affected districts are also part of Province 2, where local elections are due in a week’s time. Had there been local elections, perhaps some of the poorly planned infrastructure on floodplains in Nepal and across the border in India could have been prevented. The floods would not have been as bad, and the relief distribution would have been more fair and expeditious.

Elections are finally happening, but for the victims living in temporary shelters without food, water and clothes, it is too late. Amidst this devastation they are also preparing to elect their local representatives on 18 September.

As cynical politicians everywhere never let a serious crisis go to waste, candidates of various parties have predictably been promising rapid rehabilitation, and distributing token relief. The flood-hit people cannot offer even a glass of clean water to those canvassing hut-to-hut for votes because they don’t have any for themselves. The flood disaster has been closely followed by an epidemic of infections, with more than 50,000 people, mainly children, ill.

Some local politicians visit flood survivors asking for votes, the people should ask them a counter question: Why did you cause so much suffering for us?

The politicians have argued that this was a natural disaster, and to a certain extent there was record rainfall in the catchment area. But the people of the Tarai want to know why the politicians let the Chure range immediately upstream be decimated by loggers and sand-miners. Why was no thought given to draining these natural embankments were built? Why did no one discuss with India the construction of leves and elevated roads on its side of the border? And the most important question: what plans do you have to prevent such floods in future?

In a democracy, people can question their leaders and leaders must have answers. An election gives the people a chance to question their candidates directly, and voters in Province 2 are doing just that. The people can now hold their elected leaders accountable, and hopefully this will improve conditions in this neglected region.

While they are at it, the people are also asking candidates why they had to wait until 18 September to vote when the rest of the country cast their ballots months ago. What did they gain from the delay? The questions are especially pertinent to the Tarai-based parties like the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist Centre.

Democracy, as it is said, is the worst system of government except for all the others. We have to make it work by putting leaders on notice that it is not enough to win votes. Their performance once in office will be closely watched.

GUEST EDITORIAL

BHOLA PASWAN

Between the cracks

Saputara District is still reeling from the destructive flooding of last month. Twenty thousand families have been affected, and 5,000 here have lost their homes. Many people have yet to receive relief aid, and a section that political parties have capitalized on this political gain.

Although Saputara experiences flooding each monsoon season, this year was particularly bad. Floods swept much of the Eastern and Central Tarai simultaneously, fed by small streams that originate in the Chickung ranges. Soil erosion caused by deforestation and sand mining in those hills over the past couple of decades exacerbated the flooding. The state has been complicit in this environmental destruction, profitting from taxes on products removed from the area in certain months, which is allowed despite the Prime Minister’s Chhatra Tharu Mahasabha Conservation Development Board program. In addition, corrupt officials have colluded with contractors to mine illegally.

In the aftermath of the recent flooding, the behavior of all political parties has been disappointing. Many people had high expectations for the Madhesi parties, but their response has been lukewarm. It isn’t the fault of the widow of Raja Bishnu, who was killed by rioters during the 2015 Madhes movement and whose memorial became a rallying point, says the Madhesi parties have visited her since the disaster. Her house in Bhardaha was submerged, destroying all the family’s possessions and food, and it is barely functioning because her children. Likewise, mainstream parties have failed to adequately address flood victims’ needs. Local leaders from the major parties have been in Kathmandu for the past two weeks to advocate for themselves in the convoluted process of disaster assistance.

At the same time, distribution of government relief has been politicized. Province 2 still lacks elected representatives of local bodies, and the process for local level registration as “flood affected” is mediated by local party leaders. Leaders from all parties – Madhesi and mainstream – need to allow the relief to their own supporters.

Mainstream parties may not be particularly concerned about Chure degradation but the Madhesi parties should be; because it threatens their main constituents. In addition to focusing on rights, Madhesi parties need to address the day-to-day needs of Madhesi areas. There is a genuine question of justifications about their plans to halt Chure degradation, and cast their votes accordingly.

WHAT’S TRENDS

Sweet original sales

BY JOLIMOR CHAUDHARY

The behind-the-scenes insights of the Yankee Sessions, an edgy and experimental soundscape, are now available for eager listeners through the latest webcast. Indeed, the embers of love that were ignited at Yankee Sessions are now being harnessed by fans in the Gulf of Malaysia as a testament of cultural evolution’s формироваться.

Submitted by: Times.com

Online Packages

Back to the Farm

Udayapur has its own high altitude citrus plantation in Nepal, with at least one hand-made drink from each family away. In more recent years, migrant workers have returned to grow crops that earn them hard cash. Times with a taste for a new era: Thakali, a Kumaun tea that is now making waves region wide earning more than they did in the Gulf or Malaysia as a successful artisanal valorization of vegetables.

Submitted by: Times.com

Flood and food

BY JOHN HENRY

The deadly nightmare,了解到 many farmers in the Tarai will have no harvest, and that we are now generating an assemblage of common tenders and was widely shared on social media.

Submitted by: Times.com

Middle ground in Doklam

BY SHERA NEGI

Last week’s agreement between India and China was a victory for the Doklam debate, as far as our columnist Narayan Sandhu is concerned. Both sides agreed to end the conflict, and it was our most commented story.

Submitted by: Times.com

Constractive suggestions

It’s good to see Kanak Dharma Dieti reporting from the field (Border wall, Kanak Dhi, Dili, W074). He is correct to castigate the powers on both sides of the border for a failure to manage effectively the water system that affects ordinary people on both sides. But it will not be effective to play the blame game for failures. In any case, Dieti’s suggestions for bilateral water management at local, national and international levels are badly needed. Maybe, as Dieti hopes, the newly elected local representatives in Province 2 will be able to garner the appropriate authorities and water management specialists into action.

Submitted by: Times.com

Culture of travel

I love your writings Lisa (One day in the jungle), Lisa Cheegay (W074). We lack the culture that guides us to travel. It is a must to promote and encourage not only international tourism, but domestic too, which I believe can be a primary source for Nepal’s ecotourism and sustainable prosperity was overwhelmed and honoured by people with diversified culture and tradition, with their service, immense forests and wild animals and birds when I was on vacation in Chitwan District last summer. My next destination is Bardia National Park for a deep forest trek. Would like to leave a message to all Nepali Times readers to do the sattes tours at least once.

Submitted by: Times.com

Quote Tweets

Nepal Times: [link]

@madanbadal "If you have any justifiable demand to make, you should call on the government, continue opposing the government."

Nepal Times: [link]

@freak: "Should you please tell me, why don’t you try? I will not jump on your bandwagon, all is well, and it’s not a Bihu celebration.

Nepal Times: [link]

@nepaltimes: "Should the government consider doing its own? The government should consider doing its own."

Submitted by: Times.com

Questions

Totaal voters: 223

Sudha: 31

Maya: 22

Bijaya: 10

Times

Weekly internet hits: 485

Weekly online readers: 485

Weekly print readers: 485

Times is the devolutionary force of the people, purifying the administration of our ancestors.

Submitted by: Times.com

Guest Editorial

BOHOLA PASWAN

Between the cracks

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In the aftermath of the recent flooding, the behaviour of all political parties has been disappointing. Many people had high expectations for the Madhesi parties, but their response has been lukewarm. It isn’t the fault of the widow of Raja Bishnu, who was killed by rioters during the 2015 Madhes movement and whose memorial became a rallying point, says the Madhesi parties have visited her since the disaster. Her house in Bhardaha was submerged, destroying all the family’s possessions and food, and it is barely functioning because her children. Likewise, mainstream parties have failed to adequately address flood victims’ needs. Local leaders from the major parties have been in Kathmandu for the past two weeks to advocate for themselves in the convoluted process of disaster assistance.

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A Star Alliance Member
Day of the carpetbagger

Gangamaya’s hunger strike for justice is tied directly to Nepal’s economic progress

Due process does not only mean the existence of a fine Constitution and compliant laws. In addition, we need an independent and incorruptible judiciary, a bar and academia that demands the optimum application of jurisprudence and an executive branch that stands by the Constitution. None of these criteria are presently fulfilled in Nepal.

What you have instead is a scintillating situation exemplified by the fact that murder convict Balkrishna Dhungel can thumb his nose at society, while the Nepal Police refuses to respond to the call of the Supreme Court to escort and put him behind bars.

The problem, as we all know, emanates at the top of the political superstructure. The lack of responsibility and good sense among the political party bosses has left governance in tatters. We may have had little hope from the Maoist leadership, with their history of deadly violence, but a minimum of ethics was expected of the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML.

The Maoists were codified by the Western international donor community during the post-conflict era, many actually believing the professed social transformation. Later, India began using its own considerable leverage with the former rebels to intervene in national politics.

The UML and NC leadership did not have the fortitude to stand up to humanitarian principles, and went into successive coalition governments with the Maoists. The all-time low is now, with the NC in electoral alliance with the Maoists everywhere, from local government to the Federation of Nepali Journalists.

This abandonment of ideology has happened in the party of BP Koirala, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Geetesh Man Singh.

The ‘democratic’ party leaders have been so compromised in the embrace of Pushpa Kamal Dahal that they have lost the ability to be part of the side demanding accountability for excesses committed by the warring sides during the decade of conflict rape, abduction, torture and murder. And so Gangamaya’s husband Nepal Prasad Dahal (2017) was allowed to die more than two years ago, his fast-ravaged body dumped in the Teaching Hospital morgue.

No one seems to feel the shame that, till today, he has been denied last rites.

Gangamaya, a Maoist battlefield commander whose ‘explosives’ can be downloaded on YouTube, is henceforth alienated. The immediate past attorney general, Ramun Shrestha, did everything in his power to undermine due process and rule of law while the Nepal Bar Association simply watched, not even dumb-founded.

All things are relative, but over the centuries Nepal Mandal has been a society marked by rule of law and due process. Today, the compromises of the political bosses have made a mockery of the legal/judicial system. Starting with the refusal to see justice done on cases confronting the human rights violations against humanity, the political complexion with the Maoists has lowered the threshold of probity in public life, even as the level of corruption among the bureaucrats/politicians combine has gone up from cursed to null.

We are generating a kind of self-perpetuating, self-perpetuating, legitimate, competitive business environment where success is directly linked to the personalities of Nepalese citizens for business. It is not enough to have democracy in name, we need it in practice, as seen and proven first in the United States where the judicial accountability for murder, rape, torture and abduction.

In the absence of rule of law and due process, it will be the aukulgauntha who will have the run of the economy. Domestic and international carpetbaggers will make humongous profits on the back of the citizens, while the political parties scramble about for the crumbs.
HAVE BOLD TASTE
AND INTENSE CHARACTER

KEEP WALKING

Global Trading Concern (P) Ltd.
PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
People, politics and placentas

Despite dramatic improvements in maternal survival, many Nepali mothers are still dying needlessly at childbirth

Bikash Gauchan in Achham

Nineteen-year-old Khima Saud from the village of Ramaroshan was brought to Bayalpata Hospital with a retained placenta 26 hours after delivering her first child at a remote health post. She had been carried for six hours on a stretcher up and down mountains, and finally to a jeep that charged Rs4,000 for a 20km trip to the hospital. She had married 10 months previously; her husband was away working in India.

Saud had suffered massive blood loss and needed an immediate transfusion if she was to survive. The hospital did not have her blood type. One of the doctors and an auxiliary nurse midwife donated blood while she was resuscitated with intravenous fluids.

Her haemoglobin count was down to 4.8 g/dL, whereas the normal is 12. Her distended bladder was blocking the pathway for the placenta, so a catheter was used to empty it. Her bleeding stopped, and Saud received four bags of blood.

“I am reborn now,” Saud told staff as she prepared to return home with her baby a few days later.

Across Nepal every year, there are thousands of Khima Sauds who suffer complications at delivery. Although the country’s maternal mortality rate has dropped dramatically from 889 per 100,000 live births to 258 in the past two decades, many young mothers still die needlessly at childbirth due to unavailable obstetric care.

“She was lucky,” said Shital Khanal, who was on duty when Saud was brought to the hospital. Massive bleeding due to retained placenta continues to be the leading cause of maternal mortality in Nepal. Last year, a mother from Khaptad was rushed here with retained placenta 24 hours after childbirth, but she could not be saved.

Nepal’s success in reducing the maternal mortality rate is mainly due to the government’s Safe Motherhood Program, started 26 years ago to increase institutional delivery. The Ministry of Health provides incentives to women to complete at least four antenatal care visits and deliver at health facilities.

There are thousands of Female Community Health Volunteers involved in maternal and child health at the village level. More recently, even comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care, which ensures the availability of an emergency cesarean, has been put in place in each village council or municipality.

But even with a seemingly robust health system and progressive maternal health policy, why did it take 26 hours for Khima Saud to arrive from a health post that should have been able to deal with her condition? Why do more than 46% of childbirths in Nepal still occur at home? Why is Nepal’s maternal mortality rate still three times higher than the UN’s health target?

Khima Saud’s mother-in-law, Hima, said she was alone at home which is why she could not bring her earlier. Ongoing migration from Nepal and patriarchal norms mean that it is difficult for women to make decisions on their own—especially because of the cost.

While country-wide data shows an improvement in maternal health, much of this is in the cities. Many village councils and municipalities do not have access to the highly regarded comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care. Many district hospitals still cannot provide round-the-clock emergency care.

“Why won’t any resource go to me, why don’t they want to take care of me?” says mother Jhima Amaz at Bayalpata Hospital. It is time for policymakers, health workers, ministry officials and others to make safe motherhood a reality in every village and municipality, they have the resources. What we need is the political will to make sure mothers and newborns do not die because of lack of care in poorly-equipped and understaffed health facilities.
Window to a new future

I would not have been able to complete my high school if it hadn't been for this school

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

Ostracized by her in-laws for giving birth to three daughters, Somam Gyamla (photo below) left her house in Dolakha and came to Kathmandu three years ago. She was just 23, alone and looking after three girls.

"I mustered the courage to leave my husband and in-laws but I didn't have any income to survive in Kathmandu, and wasn't educated," said Gyamla. She had just passed her school exams when she married at 16, having her first baby a year later, and had to leave school. She gave birth to a third child to fulfill the family's desire for a boy.

After her husband left for Saudi Arabia and didn't return, Gyamla was tormented by her in-laws and left them. Destitute and abandoned, she arrived in Kathmandu with a dream of educating herself and her children.

That's when she came across Nim Memorial Higher Secondary School (NIMS) in Tokha. More than a school, it is also a home for 410 children without families and survivors of disasters and trafficking. Gyamla completed her own studies there, and now her own children are also enrolled at NIMS.

"I can't imagine what would have happened if not for this school," she says.

Established in 1999 as a school for street children, 365 students have graduated from NIMS since then. Apart from classes, the institution also has vocational education so students have skills when they pass out. NIMS was started by Nicola Wick Thakuri, who comes from a privileged Swiss family. "As a child I didn't understand why all children did not have the same right to education," she says. This feeling deepened when she saw street children in Thamel, and led her to establish NIMS.

Sapana Tamang is another NIMS alum. Her mother died when she was a baby, and her father remarried and abandoned her. Tamang was taken to NIMS, where she was raised and educated. After finishing secondary school, NIMS helped her find sponsors to do an MBBS in Bangladesh. At 27, Tamang today is a pediatrician at International Friendship Children's Hospital and runs a medical clinic at NIMS itself.

"I want to go back to the school that gave me a new life," says Tamang. "Forget about becoming a doctor, I would not have been able to complete my high school if it hadn't been for this school."

One former NIMS student, Kamala, got pregnant after she was raped by her stepfather at 16. Abandoned by family and society, she was taken in by NIMS and gave birth to a baby boy. Kamala completed her higher secondary level, and today she works in a cold store and is studying for a Bachelor's degree at a private college.

Now that NIMS has grown from its initial few street children, Nicola Wick Thakuri feels she has larger responsibilities. She has given up her Swiss nationality to remain in Nepal and focus on raising money to take care of more needy children. Some names have been changed.
Falling with water

PHOTOS BY YUVARAJ SHRESTHA IN POKHARA
Join Nepalis from various walks of life as they jump off waterfalls in the country’s latest adventure sport, which could attract a new breed of tourists.

People say there is too much water to trek in the monsoon. But there is never too much water for Nepal’s other adventure sport, canyoning. The country’s topography offers many waterfalls, and endless opportunities to abseil down them. And the most exciting time to do waterfalls is during the monsoon.

Besides the blue Kosi Valley and Jaljale on the Prithivi Highway, the 108m Lopung Ghalel waterfall in Kaski is becoming the most popular for canyoning among Nepali youngsters seeking adventure.

Canyoning from the Ghalel Fall is being promoted by Ram Gurung. He is training 14 local, unemployed youth to abseil respecting all the safety norms so they can be guides. He set up Pokhara Canyoning and now has a mostly Nepali clientele. College student Pujha Thapa, 23, says she is addicted to the adventure of falling with a waterfall. “At first I felt like what Spider Man must feel. The edge from which I jumped off was so slippery, and towards the middle the roar of the water and the mist was so scary I screamed with excitement,” she said, dripping wet at the foot of the falls.

Rinoel Rai travelled from Ilam just for the canyoning because he found it so thrilling the first time.

Actress Srijana Subba (main picture) was in Pokhara recently on location to shoot her next movie ‘Punchhe Baju’ and decided to go canyoning. “It is an adventure like nothing else, but you have to muster the confidence to jump off,” said Subba after taking the plunge.

Gearing up for the adventure requires a wet suit, helmet, life vest and shoes made specially for canyoning. Newcomers to the sport need professional guides.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

www.nepaltimes.com
GETAWAY

Shangri-la Village Resort
Two nights, three days at Shangri-la Village Resort, Palembang, with cash back coupons in room rate; roll-in, Rp5,006, 88,299 net per person on twin sharing rooms.
Phone: (0811) 829009, shangriла@palembang.com

Juilee Mountain Resort
Residing 2,350m above sea level, the resort boasts aSteamhouse that stretches across a hill covered in fern jungle. Enzy an organic homestay experience.
Shawparkirangjaya Kandivali Park, Jalgaon, (021) 6271588

Park Village Resort
Villas, resorts and ayurvedic treatment in a quiet corner of Kalimaya.
Nimalayan Peace and Wellness Centre, Park Village Resort, Budhnanathosi, (0914) 2903602, parkwellness.com

Haizatun Resort
Climb up to Khambata in the morning for a royal view of Kathmandu valley and jog down to the forest for a relaxed evening. Phewa, Kathmandu, (01) 4775977 / 78

Nepal Africa Film Festival
Don’t miss the opportunity to watch selected African films at the sixth edition of the Nepal Africa Film Festival. 18-20 September, Som-Say, Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari, (01) 4416060

Dining

Displaced
Visit this exhibition reflecting stories of refugees in Nepal.
30 August-12 September, 10am-2pm, Bale Moriya, Kadoorie Road, Free, (011) 7753925, 9878573034

Comic con in Nepal
Fans of Marvel, DC, Anime, games, and the comic genre are in for a treat. The event will also host international cosplay artists from Japan, the Philippines and India.
9 September, 10am-6pm, Heritage Garden, Sarno, (01) 5730306

Mexican Amate
Save the date for the Mexican Amate painting exhibition.
2-14 September, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baker Makkah Art Center, Kathmandu, (01) 4738688, (01) 4453993

Unplugged Awaj
Unplugged concert of local artist Unplugged Awaj.
9 September, 8-11pm, House of Music, Phone, 9875497721

1905
Heritage boutique suites with garden dining. 1905 Suites and Restaurents is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Bookings open for tour boutique suites.
Bangaloria, Nepal, For more information: 9875749550

Ventures Café
Step by step for the best fusion menu and all local favourites and enjoy the breezy outdoors sitting. A great sense for inner caromass. Boluvator, 9875228074

Coffee Pasal
The place to sip an aromatic cup of coffee while gazing at Narayanthi’s Museum. Darshan Marga Darshan Marg, (01) 4473842

European Bakery
For patis, Eccum, Swiss rolls, cookies, doughnuts and many more. Saturday specials. Charged. (01) 4421067

Durga
Head over for delicious continental food and don’t forget their signature cocktails, all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. Lahore, Patan, (015) 755217

Manny’s
Kick off your Fridays with a selection of mouth watering liquors, paired with red or white wine on a mouth and a choice of tasting menu for Rp9,000.
Jawaliketal, (01) 5513691

Wunjala Moska
Treat your palate to Newarian and Russian dishes in the lush garden of ancient trees and whispering streams. Menu, (01) 4452529

Mitho tour
Mitho presents a month-long city tour, the “Mitho Tour”, for those who enjoy a unique blend of poetry and music.
9 September (Kathmandu), 22 September (Lopkara), 11pm, free entry

Obstacle race
Be ambitious, run and test your strength in Nepal’s first obstacle race.
9 September, 8am, Godawari Football Ground, 450,000, free for ultra-run.

Miss Motivation
Kripa Joshi
There are no great people in this world.

Events

Let’s dance
Register if you want to learn to move your feet with Mitra Loped from Spain, including the popular American dance Lindy hop. Classes on Mondays, 17 September first class, 6pm, Mitra Angels, The Colombo, (01) 4710544, (01) 5230691, info@kizakku.com

Hazy Farewell
Enjoy and groove to a farewell of tunes with musician Enny Garing & The Band.
13 September, 9.30pm onwards, Purple Flower Bar, Thamel, 9865791887

Monsoon Music
Sample a mix of cuisines, check out product booths and enjoy a blend of upcoming and traditional Nepali musicians at this lively food fest.
3 September, 10am-6pm, RTQ, Balkunar

Le Trio
Some of the most succulent Jill momoses (soup momos) in town.
Narayanthi Park and Botanical, (01) 4453480, (01) 4321647

10

Music

Composers in Kathmandu on 8 September
This Nepal film relates a series of comedic errors by two hapless, long time smugglers. There’s one day of a transaction slip and a Rs1.5 billion bungle the pair are on a quest to recover it and save themselves from a whole host of situations. Directed, written, and starring Ash Shah. Moshal Banerjee and Buddh Tamang also star excel in the screen roles.

10 - 14 SEPTEMBER 2017 #875

DISPLACED

All about arts
Renowned artist and cultural leader Puruja Loped is in town to present an ArtMix South Asia’s Fellowship. Followed by a panel discussion at the British Council (by registration).
8 September, 8pm, Himalayan Bank Auditorium, Kaveshala, 9855753333

Journey to Persia
Prevent a first-hand look at the amazing journey to Persia by Taib Ali Darghi.
12-13 September, 8.30pm onwards, White Dinner, 9856890453

Birds Talk
Don’t miss this unique presentation on “The birds of Sagarmatha and Taukaua Area” by Aykand Lamin, followed by his book launch.
9 September, 2-5pm, Shangri-la Hotel, Lopkara, (01) 4476807, (01) 4442717
The beautiful square

After two earthquakes, a long-overdue restoration reveals Sundari Chok’s glory

SAHINA SHRESTHA

The southwest corner of Sundari Chok, the earliest surviving courtyard in Patan Durbar Square, has a large bay window that looks out over the city. In 1827, when the courtyard was built, this may have been where King Siddhinarasimha Malla looked down upon his kingdom. Once the centre of a society, where court was held and rituals performed, the Chok deteriorated over the years. After being partially damaged in the 1934 earthquake, the famed sunken bath of Trusha Hiti, with its exquisite stone delicacies, was all but abandoned. Elements of the intricate lattice windows on the first floor of the three-story palace, with its embellishments and images, were damaged or missing. Many others were footed. The leaking roof had damaged the interior leaving the walls damp and the woodwork rotting. The square even housed a police station and a prison till 1993. But walking through the restored palace during the soft opening of the courtyard earlier this week, Sundari Chok was transformed. It took nearly 10 years, and an earthquake interrupted the restoration, but the re-making of the square is finally complete. “It is easy to rebuild from scratch but in-situ conservation, especially of this proportion and importance, takes time. This is one of the most important buildings in Kathmandu Valley, both in terms of history and architecture, and we are happy to have restored it,” says Rohit Ranjitkar of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT). The Trust started the restoration in 2007 with support from the German Government, the US Ambassador’s Fund, Prithivi and Pratima Pandit, and other donors. The soft-spoken Ranjitkar downplays just what a momentous feat the restoration was. For 60 years, there had been no maintenance. The west and south wings were badly damaged, and the hurried reconstruction after 1934 did not respect the original style of the palace: many elements were missing. “It was not done carefully, they used different types of unoriginal bricks,” says Ranjitkar. This time, the team tried to stay as true to the original as possible. In the west wing, KVPT used minimum intervention to keep a segment of the historic plaster wall intact. The team also uncovered two murals featuring narrative horizontal bands, representing temples and processions, animals and deities, on both sides of a room in the south wing. In 2013, the murals were restored by a team from the Institute of Conservation at the University of Applied Art Vienna, and the precious relics have now been enshined in glass.

Because there is no photographic evidence pre-1934, the palace has been restored to its post-earthquake state. But the modern brick have been replaced by traditional ones, and the original windows have been reused. While the facade hasn’t changed, the interior has been modified for use as a gallery. “In the east wing, we have added an interior balcony at the end of the corridor. We are happy to include it as something that is practical,” says Ranjitkar. Although initially planned for completion in three years, assessing and documenting the Chok’s condition took a couple of years. The restoration process started in 2009 but the slow arrival of funds pushed the date further. By 2014, three of the wings – west, south and north – had been restored; than the 2015 earthquake brought the east wing...
“Equity” is a film that I’ve been saving for a fateful period—a time when there’s nothing in the theatre aside from Baby Driver, which I am betting is probably okay watching at home on your sofa, and a third-rate horror movie that doesn’t really bear any mentioning.

Directed by Indian American director Meera Menon, daughter of film producer Vijayan Menon, *Equity* is a 2016 film about Wall Street, naked ambition, passion, hard work, betrayal, and one woman’s gripe on her own integrity as things start to fall apart.

Anna Gunn plays Naomi Bishop, a high-ranking investment banker who has succeeded more than she has failed. Only a chair away from the top position in her firm, Naomi is hindered only by her straight-talking personality and the fact that she wears jeans instead of brogues. She is cool, smart, determined, and her story is as much a character study as it is an indictment of capitalism at its worst—namely the people who make their living playing the stock market and insider trading.

When Naomi lands a coveted account: an initial public offering (IPO) for Cachet, a Facebook-like entity that guarantees a secure closed network, she knows it is her chance to the top. She does her job well but is betrayed at every turn, and the result is a nail-biting film that never loses its focus, which is Bishop herself, played in an unforgettable performance by Gunn.

Other characters have important roles in the film, but the surprising thing about *Equity* is its dual message. While it seems to be a film made by women about women surrounded by glass ceilings, it is also another, sharply insightful, look at the cost of living in an amoral environment, no matter how smart and hardworking you are. Gunn plays it straight, enough everyone around her has an agenda.

The film, written without sentiment but with knowledge of the context, portrays the luxurious world of high-powered investment bankers so that we know what’s at stake: extreme comfort, status, handling huge sums of money, and the intoxicating effect of learning how to beat the smartest at their mind games.

It is refreshing to see a story told without an enormous ego behind the camera. This is almost a quiet story, but it is a must see for anyone who likes a really good thriller and spending a few hours in the life of a woman who we grow to care for despite her prickly, distrustful exterior. As we learn more about her, we realise that she is kind, good and has a hearty laugh.

The resemblance of Gunn’s character, Naomi Bishop, to Hillary Clinton is striking, and for those who have believed in Hillary all along, like this writer, you will feel the familiar, overwhelming despair at seeing a strong woman brought to her knees by a world that only looks at her stiff outer shell and judges her for her profession. This scrutiny discards her years of hard work to get where she is now—the equity never paid off.

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**HAPPENINGS**

**SHINING RELATIONSHIP:** Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba inaugurates the Festival of West Bengal in Kathmandu on Sunday. Organised by the Embassy of India, it celebrates 70 years of Indian independence and India-Nepal diplomatic relations.

**ELECTION FEVER:** Mayor and sub-mayoral candidates in Taiping register their nominations on Wednesday for the 18 September local election in Province 2.

**READING PARTNERS:** Popular comic duo Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Lamsa Akharya during the launch of Shrestha’s autobiography ‘Ma’ in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

**SPOOKED:** Laxmi Ranit performs the Laika dance at the Indira Jatra festival at Hanuman Dhoka on Sunday.

**PLATINUM AWARD**

**BEST AGENT:** Senior Manager Naveen Chauka (left) and Country Manager Jaya Prakash Nair (right) present Oliwa World Travel Nepal with the top prize at the Qatar Airways agents awards Night 2016-2017 in Kathmandu on Tuesday.
100 days of Kathmandu’s mayor

Ramesh Wagie in
www.pahlistopost.com 6 September

Kathmandu Mayor Bidya Sundar Shaktya completed his first 100 days in office this week. During the honeymoon period of his election campaign, he had promised to complete 100 tasks, including ridding Kathmandu of air pollution and turning the capital into a ‘smart’ city.

Shaktya turned out to be just another politician, who promises a lot during the election but delivers nothing after being voted in. Although he failed to fulfill any of his 100 promises, he often made headlines for the wrong reasons.

The first board meeting of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) chaired by Mayor Shaktya decided to buy mobile phones worth Rs30,000 for all ward council chairs, and more expensive ones for himself and the deputy mayor. After widespread criticism, Shaktya said that he had withdrawn his decision. Later, ward council chairs revealed that KMC did buy them mobile phones.

An elected mayor is the executive chief of a self-governing municipal council, with legislative and judicial authority, and is superior to a deputy inspector general (DIG). But DIG Surbendra Khanal, chief of the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, invited Shaktya to his office, and admonished him for not improving roads and ending traffic jams. Shaktya just listened, without defending himself or vowing to work harder.

When a school girl died after being swept into an open drain during heavy rainfall in Kathmandu, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba instructed authorities to patch all potholes on the capital’s streets within 13 days. Mayor Shaktya’s response: “Patching potholes before monosoon is a waste of our budget, so we do not have any plans or intention to do that.”

UMI Chair KP Oli chose Shaktya as the party’s candidate for mayor, brushing aside other senior aspirants. Shaktya tried to return Oli’s favour by inviting him to be chief guest at his swearing-in ceremony. But that was all. When Oli returned home from an unofficial foreign trip, Shaktya went to the airport with a bouquet to welcome his party boss. A mayor usually ventures to the airport to welcome a President or Prime Minister: Oli is neither at the moment.

Big promises, no cash

www.onlinekhabar.com,
7 September

When Nepal held an investment summit in March, China outshone every other country by pledging to invest over $8 billion—a little more than 60% of the total pledge of $13 billion. Eight Chinese companies showed interest in Nepali hydropower, mining, railway, hospital and other infrastructure projects.

Six months on, none of the Chinese companies have started the process of investing in Nepal. While a few firms are inquiring about today’s investment climate, others have not gone that far.

After the summit, Industry Minister Nebindu Raj Joshi formed three committees to start the process of getting the cash pledged to Nepal. While Joshi himself led the main committee, the other committees were led by the CEO of Nepal Investment Board and a joint Secretary of the National Planning Commission.

When NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba succeeded Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal as Prime Minister, he did not appoint an industry minister. He kept the portfolio for himself, practically rendering the three committees dysfunctional, and delaying the process of translating investment pledges into actions.

Nepal’s ambassador to China, Lesla Mani Poudyul, says he is constantly following up with the Chinese companies, but their responses are not encouraging.

Nepali business leaders say Chinese and other foreign investors think twice before investing here, mainly because of the lack of coordination between government agencies. Despite recent reforms, foreign investors still must get approval from multiple ministries, departments and agencies. The much hyped one-window policy has not really worked, which is a huge deterrent for foreign investors.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara flew to Beijing this week, aiming to speed up the investments.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Elected representatives of the people will effectively facilitate rehabilitation of flood victims. So urge all voters in Province 2 to participate in local elections on 11 September.

Chief Election Commissioner Apah sri Poudel Yadav

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- Dr. Satbir Golar, dentist practising in the UK.

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Back to the land

These migrants decided to remain in Nepal after finding out they can earn more farming vegetables

SONIA AWALE
IN UDAYPUR

Ghaman Singh Magar worked day and night for four years in Malaysia to earn just Rs15,000 a month. Cheated by a recruiter who had promised a much higher salary, he ended up in a metal factory. Today, back home in Saune of Udaypur, Magar saves much more money from his vegetable and livestock farm.

“We can work hard in the Gulf or Malaysia, but we can earn just as much in our village and among our own family here,” says the 35-year-old, inspecting a cauliflower patch (right) damaged by last week’s heavy rainfall.

Business is so good, he leased another plot to expand vegetable production.

This district in the eastern Inner Terai has historically either had too much rain or too little, discouraging the production of cash crops. Udaypur, therefore, has one of the highest rates of outmigration in Nepal, with villages like Saune and Bagaha having at least one male member from each family away.

But in recent years, migrant workers like Magar have returned to grow crops that earn hard cash. Sajendra Rai was in Malaysia for four years, returned and then went to Dubai to work in an aluminum company. Despite long hours, he earned only Rs20,000 a month. Today, he makes more than Rs50,000 selling his farm produce.

“I’ve learned that we can comfortably raise families right here in our own village. I want to tell others that if you choose to stay back and work as hard as in foreign countries, you don’t need to go away,” says Rai.

However, floods like the one in the Eastern Terai last month mean agriculture is still a high-risk profession, and income from traditional farming is not enough to sustain families. ICIMOD’s Himalayan Climate Change and Adaptation Programme (Himalica) through the Centre for Environment and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEARPRED) is training farmers in Udaypur in water and crop management, bio-competing, off-season vegetable production and cost-effective techniques like mulching, drip irrigation and tunnel farming.

“People don’t have to migrate for work because they can have a good income from sustainable agriculture here,” says Shyam Krishna Ghimire of CEARPRED.

Proof of this is Kuhita Chaudhary (above), who has a nine-year-old son and a husband who is working in Malaysia. Yet she single-handedly manages a farm and runs a tailoring business on the side (see box). Her family, which at one time didn’t have enough to eat, now earns over Rs150,000 yearly from the farm.

After I learnt the right method of vegetable farming, I am more independent and I haven’t had to use any of the money my husband sends home,” says Chaudhary as she prepares to irrigate a new row of tomatoes. She has also paid off all her loans, and sends her son to an English school nearby.

Commercial vegetable farming has also reduced Udaypur’s dependence on neighbouring districts and India. “There used to be a shortage when the roads were blocked even for a day, but now it
Shalom Nepal

The conflict in Nepal forced Shrees Krishna Adhikari (above) to leave his job of health assistant and migrate to Israel 35 years ago. He lived in the heat in Gaza for nine years, survived Hamas rocket attacks by hiding in bunkers and was convinced the drip irrigation he saw in a nearby kibbutz farm could revolutionise commercial farming back home in Nepal.

"The weather and the war made it difficult. But I admired how the Israelis had made their desert green, and solid vegetables in Europe, and it got me thinking," recalls Adhikari, 55: "If Israelis could do this in a desert, imagine what we can do with our fertile soil and rainfall."

He returned to Nepal determined to farm, and helped transfer Israeli drip irrigation technology to farmers across Nepal to reduce labour cost, save time, and boost productivity by irrigating fields with limited water supply.

When we first came back from Israel and started making greenhouses and farming, our neighbours thought we were mad: now they also want to learn how to do it," he says.

Along with drip irrigation, Adhikari has adopted other technologies he learnt in Israel, like growing seeds with coco peat and nursery trays.

"Through his shop, Shalom Agriculture in Jalapa, he sells UV-proof plastic for greenhouses, thermal shade and insect netting, net houses, tomato clips and mulching plastic to farmers across Nepal.

"We can only convince people not to leave for the Gulf if we can increase the productivity of the land by adopting new technologies," explains Adhikari. "Agro-technology has made farming attractive to young people, and the government now needs to implement farmer-friendly policies."

Nepal wherever you are.

"I'm independent now"

Rani Kumari Chaudhary had a dream that her daughter would grow up to be more successful than all her peers. Two decades later, her dream has come true.

Rani Kumari lost her husband when her daughter Kabita was just three. She took odd jobs at construction sites, earning Rs5 a day, but often wasn’t enough for her mother and daughter to eat.

"I knew how difficult it was for my mother to raise me, but she always wanted me to move forward," says Kabita, now 26, and a matter of a child herself. "She encouraged me to study, attend agriculture workshops and get trained."

A few years after the birth of their son, her husband Nageswar left for Malaysia. Back then, Kabita started learning about greenhouses, drip irrigation and growing off-season vegetables (left).

"We had the land, but productivity was always low. I’m not content now because I can manage the household without using any of the money my husband sends home," adds Kabita. She manages the entire farm on her own, earning Rs150,000 a year from selling tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, bitter gourd and chilli, as well as miler, wheat and maize.

Kabita’s vegetable shop is also doing well. When squeezed with work, her mother helps out. But Kabita wishes her husband had stayed back to help on the farm instead of going abroad. "He is coming back soon, and this time I will convince him to stay. We can easily earn Rs5-6 lakh a year right here."

doesn’t make a difference because local farmers grow the vegetables we need here," says Gayatri Purbe at the Gulghat market.

Despite the technical know-how and increased production, poor roads limit the options for farmers like Rati and Chaudhary.

"While vegetable farming is a good option for returning migrants in Udayapur, farmers need better access and support systems," says Amita Maharjan, an agricultural economist at ICIMOD. "Agriculture needs to be commercialised for it to be a sustainable source of income."

Shrees Krishna Adhikari has been providing modern agro-technology services to farmers in Kathmandu for five years after returning from Israel, where he learned about drip irrigation on a kibbutz farm. (see box right)

"Traditional farming alone is not enough. For families to earn more from farms they need mechanisation to reduce the drudgery," says Adhikari, 55. "The tax on imported equipment and agricultural tools should be reduced."

The challenge for Nepal is to alter the perception that farming is hard work and only for poor people, and to reverse the trend of young people leaving their farming families after studies.

Shruti Chandra Baral of the Asian Human Rights and Cultural Development Forum returned from South Korea to prove to other young Nepalis that they can make a decent living by combining farming and tourism in their own country.

"We can grow local ethnic foods, run homestays and promote both our culture and our agriculture, while increasing income for families," says Baral.

Shiv Chandra Mandal, a former government agriculture extension officer, is back after working in Israel, and agrees it is not necessary to leave Nepal to earn money, provided there is a sound business plan. But he adds: "There must be sufficiently large plots of land for commercial farming, hassle-free help for farmers, fixed production costs and earnings from cash crops."

Back to Farm

Published with farmer ingenuity on Wednesday issue

www.times.com
nepaltimes.com
Trek King

Unlike other countries which only have four directions, in Nepal we have six cardinal points on the compass: North, South, East, West, Up and Down. It is this third dimension that has given rise to the mainstay of Nepal’s tourism industry: trekking. The word ‘trek’ is derived from the Afrikaan word ‘trekken’, which means ‘Carry your body weight and a backpack weighing a ton up and down vertical mountainsides for 20 days, share sleeping quarters with yaks, while attending to calls of nature in full view of spy satellites.’ Why we had to import a South African word for a completely indigenous form of torture, I have never figured out.

At the start of the autumn trekking season we bring you some useful tips on making your next trek fulfilling for mind, body and soul:

Am I fit?
The main pre-requisite to trekking is that you should train yourself in the art of walking straight up and down like a gecko. Practice on a wall at home. Dig a hole behind the bush in your garden and practice outdoor spitting every morning.

What should I eat?
Muesli. This energy-packed cereal is what they give mules to eat for breakfast on the Lo Manthang trail so their after-burners can kick in during the steepest inclines, adding critical thrust to propel them over Cocksang Pass in time for lunch. Important hint: According to Newton’s Third Law of Thermodynamics, bursting slaves you down.

Dai-bhat withalu, dal-bhat with maha, dal-bhat with banda, dal-bhat with badi, dal-bhat with say, or even dal-bhat with dal-bhat.

To level out a steep uphill there is nothing to beat the locally-brewed, high-octane apple brandy. Pour a little of this into your tank just before a steep stretch and watch yourself fly like the wind.

(Statutory Govt. Health Warning: Hangovers are a pain in the ass.)

Is it safe to drink the water? The first rule of thumb is not to drink anything that doesn’t have the mandatory hologram Seal of Approval of the Nepal Bureau of Standards ISO 9000. Adhering to this rule will mean that you will die of thirst on the first day of your trek. Management does not bear responsibility for any untoward incidents if you drink pure Himalayan spring water directly downstream of defecating water buffaloes.

Nepali greetings on the trail:
Very beautiful! Haa! otha! otha! Haa! I am hungry, too. – But shera bhat hit, no money. – Namaste ma bhedha Satu satin spaha Patas.

Whose father can do what? – Kaksi bau sa kai hau?

There are fossils in my bed, I’m going back to Tokyo. – Malli da ru apne, to, Tokyo. I want denim and jam. – Nasta chukka jam dines.

The Ass

Discover Cultural Chiang Mai

Chiang Mai, the largest city in northern Thailand, is known for calm-serene atmosphere and sights. Come unwind yourself at the natural rainforest reserves and waterfalls, bubbling hot springs and peaceful country villages, and visit the glorious ancient temples.