Bullheaded

A day after the outgoing Sher Bahadur Deuba government chose temporary headquarters of all seven provinces, protests have erupted across the country.

In Dhankuta, protesters torched several government offices, forcing the local administration to declare a curfew. Demonstrators wanted their hill town to be the Province 1 capital, and took to the streets when the government chose Biratnagar. In Birgunj, protesters have enforced a strike demanding their border city be the Province 2 capital instead of Janakpur, which is the government’s choice. People in Rara, too, are up in arms.

In Dang, cross-party leaders and cadres have joined hands to oppose the government’s decision to set up Province 5 headquarters in Rupandehi. In Dipayal, NC cadres burnt effigies of their own party president. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, for declaring Dhangadi the Province 7 capital. There is also dissatisfaction against Hetauda, instead of Kathmandu or Kavre, as the Province 3 capital. Only Pokhara and Surkhet, the temporary headquarters of Provinces 4 and 6 respectively, have been unopposed so far.

Upon his arrival Thursday from a medical trip to Bangkok, UML Chair KP Oli, widely seen as the PM in waiting, slammed the government for naming state chiefs and provincial capitals to “fulfil its own needs.” But he urged protesters to roll back their strikes, saying state assemblies will later decide on provincial capitals.

Gil’s appeal is unlikely to calm protesters. They know the government has chosen temporary headquarters only, and that the real power to declare provincial capitals lies in state assemblies. But they also know that if they relent now, they will have less power later. NC leader Sundar Banerji, who is in the forefront of protests in Birgunj, says: “The more we intensify our protests now, the stronger our bargaining power will be later. If we fail to make our voice heard now, the state assembly will endorse what the government has decided.”

Chaudhary’s statement sums up the mindset of cross-party leaders and cadres spearheading protests. “They know what they are up to now is just a rehearsal for a bigger fight. And, if state assemblies nullify the government’s decision, protests will erupt in the cities that have been made temporary headquarters. It seems the real test to implementing federalism has just begun.”

LOCKING HORNS: Two bulls face off in a jaora village of Nawali, some 60 km east of Kathmandu, as local farmers make the bulls fight for a prize money as part of the annual Mangha Satrika Festival, which was celebrated on 13 January this year.

THE PAST FORETOLD

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

 Pad Power

Taiwanese artist leads village women to embrace the beauty of the feminine cycle

PAGE 8-9

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THE PAST FORETOLD

A

fter the Left Allience won a near

two-thirds majority in the November

election, many people voiced concerns over the future of Nepal’s
democracy. They were alarmed not because they
believed the NC’s propaganda that the

UML-Maoists would impose authoritarian
rules, but because they thought the new
opposition would be unable to curb the rise of a

Kathmandu, is putting on a display of power-related

attitudes, including warm-ups. However, there are

two forms of alliances, and there are essential
to retail what you are about. Words of wisdom in

considered the persuading and discuss their

in the construction of:

The NC establishment has not conducted

any introspection about its electoral rout,

and how it can regain the people’s trust.

Deuba has finally called a meeting of the

NC’s central working committee, but he is

reportedly unwilling to act on the party’s

lost. Other top NC leaders also seem more

interested in finding a way to sneak back

into Naga Bahar than playing the role of a

constructive opposition.

The NC government has finally named

the chips and temporary headquarters of

seven provinces on Wednesday. But it took

much longer than necessary, which was

a result of its efforts to claim to power.

Naming of temporary headquarters has

sparked protests and strikes in several parts of

the country. People who wanted its cities to be

viable provincial capitals are on the warpath.

The government rigidly chose temporary

headquarters only. It did not, and cannot,

declare where provincial capitals will

be. This is a constitutional right that only

state assemblies can exercise. But the

government has downplayed this constitutional

truth, hoping against hope that this protest

might escalate so that the Upper House

election will have to be postponed. That

just might be a self-defeating prophecy.

Deuba is probably hoping to buy time to

make another attempt to seize control

UML-Maoist unity if the Upper House is not elected on

February. But this makes the NC even more

unpopular, and it will harm its prospects of

bouncing back in the next elections. Its failure to

emerge stronger could actually give

a united communist government a free hand.

ALTERNATIVE AIRPORT

It is interesting to read about how long

it takes to get work permit for foreigners
to work on strategic infrastructure
development (With new airport, Pokhara waits for
takes for work permit, by Zyn Liu, Apr 52).

Applications from immigration in

foreign ministry to home ministry to labour

department. At the international airport

on the way are alternatives to
cumbersome Kathmandu.

Gyurme Dondup

GREATNESS OF YESTERDAY

‘Oldest nation state... oh yes... the

same one which still cannot give equal

citizenship to its women... ok...

got it. Keep harping on your greatness

of yesterday... and do nothing for today.

(Prithvi Naryan Shah reborn), Shekhar Koirala, Apr 52.

Namah

OPEN YOUR EYES

The Nepal Congress led by Sher

Bahadur Deuba is doomed (What’s next for

the NC? Congress, Pushpa Kamal, Apr 52).

It has been on a downward spiral since

he became the President. He has

let his party, Nepal and Nepalis
down many times in the past. Surely, there

are some honest and capable men in the

NC that can restore its prestige and glory.

Bikas Sharam

TOURISM POTENTIAL

There is nothing to imagine or RE imagine

about tourism. (Planning tourists, Anil Chitrakar

1/2 Full, Apr 52), Foreign visitors
come to Nepal for two reasons:

1. They love Nepal and 2. They love

the Nepali people. So, if you could

only remove the dirt, the smoke and

the lines at Kathmandu airport, they

would pour in by the millions. It will

not rocket science.

Birendra Shah

GOVERNANCE FAILURE

Nepal is a government (From Chitwan to

Chitwan, India, Apr 52) only knows how
to collect taxes from Nepalis working abroad.

They don’t care about us.

Lodro Bhuclung

E

INTERESTING TO READ ABOUT HOW LONG IT TAKES TO GET WORK PERMIT FOR FOREIGNERS TO WORK ON STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT (WITH NEW AIRPORT, POKHARA WAITS FOR TAKE OFF), BY ZYN LIU, APR 52.

APPLICATIONS FROM IMMIGRATION IN FOREIGN MINISTRY TO HOME MINISTRY TO LABOUR DEPARTMENT. AT THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON THE WAY ARE ALTERNATIVES TO CUMBERSOME KATHMANDU.

THE NEPAL CONGRESS LED BY SHER BAHADUR DEUBA IS DOOMED (WHAT’S NEXT FOR THE NC? CONGRESS, PUSHPA KAMAL, APR 52). IT HAS BEEN ON A DOWNWARD SLOPE SINCE HE BECAME THE PRESIDENT. HE HAS LET HIS PARTY, NEPAL AND NEPALIS DOWN MANY TIMES IN THE PAST. SURELY, THERE ARE SOME HONEST AND CAPABLE MEN IN THE NC THAT CAN RESTORE ITS PRESTIGE AND GLORY.

THERE IS NOTHING TO IMAGINE OR RE IMagine ABOUT TOURISM. (PLANNING TOURISTS, ANIL CHITRAKAR 1/2 FULL, APR 52), FOREIGN VISITORS COME TO NEPAL FOR TWO REASONS: 1. THEY LOVE NEPAL AND 2. THEY LOVE THE NEPALI PEOPLE. SO, IF YOU COULD ONLY REMOVE THE DIRT, THE SMOKE AND THE LINES AT KATHMANDU AIRPORT, THEY WOULD POUR IN BY THE MILLIONS. IT WILL NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.
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Things are falling apart

A society without a moral compass needs its conscience overhauled

The previous chief secretary Somal Subedi had only three months to go till retirement. He pushed a file up to the cabinet to allow himself to work at the Asian Development Bank in a post meant for a civil servant working at a level three steps down the rung. The cabinet, under Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, approved it swiftly, unabashedly an upsurge against the government and anning Subedi.

One of the main agendas of the Mestis while they were underground was to weaken the state. They destroyed public infrastructure, discriminated the cultural narratives and disrupted social norms. Even after the party came into mainstream politics following the ceasefire, they didn’t seem to have given up trying to sabotage democratic politics from within.

In their decade-plus of over-ground political activity, ex-Mestis have established themselves as one of the most corrupt parties in Nepal. Dahal, disruptor-in-chief, has become prime minister twice, proving his knack for nepotism. He orchestrated a mayoral win for his daughter using a loophole in the election regulation last year, and crafted a massive win for the alliance with the UML. Now, newly-minted billionaire Ajaya Raj Sumari, said to be a close confidante of Dahal in financial matters, is under scrutiny for charges of money laundering and amassing illegal wealth. It has become an open secret that Sumari struck it rich under the political patronage of the Mestis, especially Dahal. Sumari, said to be the Mestis bagman, managed Dahal’s personal finances, extracted from compensation for ex-guerillas. He was caught on tape admitting that he had inflated the strength of the rebel militia to enlarge the purse. There is a trickle-down effect of this sort of plunder. Even at the grassroots level, ex-rebels made no effort to hide their newfound opulence. The nexus of the mafia, politicians and business interests is so intricate and so deeply entrenched in our society that criminals contesting elections and winning came as no surprise.

But blaming Mestis for all the ills would be unfair. Traditionally, with all sources of power and prospects of upward mobility in tight control of a few elite groups, Nepali society was structurally engineered to be corrupt and immoral. The feudal forces exploited it to the hilt, and the imperfections became more severe in the era of limited democracy. The same forces that were supposed to fight those imperfections helped reinforce them. And now, the decadence seems to have penetrated to all levels and all institutions. The interest of the medical mafia, with strong support from the UML, has destroyed the promise of a two-tier health system.

The medical community has joined the list of corrupt institutions. A few years back it demanded a century-old heritage building, citing the need for a hospital for serving and related military personnel and their families. But now the military has issued a tender for renting the space as a commercial mall (see page 11). They did not even bother to get the required building permits from the municipality.

What is more worrying is the tolerance: Nepali society has developed for corruption at the household level. It is even quietly lauded in family gatherings. When Somal Subedi was questioned about why he accepted the ADB job when he was sure it would cause a great disgrace for him, he was reported to have said that it was time he earned some money. He his clarity was that in the three years that he would spend with the ADB, he knew there was no chance that he has earned his whole life as a civil servant. Dahal, the prime minister, was asked as to why his appointment was approved by the cabinet. His answer: “When the cabinet secretary comes up with a personal request, the PM usually does not say ‘no.’” No further questions.

Learning the London way

Nepal Times: How does the college maintain the quality and standards it has promised since its inception? Rajan Kandel: The administration is constantly evaluating processes and practices while also maintaining a state-of-the-art infrastructure, such as a fully-equipped library and IT labs specializing in networking, forensics, science and research, to ensure comprehensive educational experience for students. Also, we interact with both students and parents to get feedback and suggestions on how we can improve as an institution, which this has fostered a close bond between us.

Have Nepali students, who are accustomed to rote learning and a laid-back culture, been able to adapt to the independent and time-bound learning and teaching styles of London?

The practicality of the courses, interactive nature of the teaching, and diverse assessment techniques ensure students gain knowledge that extends beyond dependence on a simple textbook. The British system's emphasis on independent learning, challenging and demanding for students currently planning to introduce a foundation, in terms of the characters of students, which has helped to achieve incredible accomplishments in the community. In spite of the short period of our existence, our graduates have already succeeded in diverse fields, from entrepreneurship to working for multinational companies.

What are the challenges for growth and development of the College? The current bureaucratic system of government is really the bottleneck to our growth. For example, we would like to introduce additional courses for students, not only from Nepal but also China, India and Bangladesh. Current policies require approval from the Ministry of Education or any new programme. However, because the ministry is changing from time to time, it delays the application process. As a result, Nepalese students are forced to go abroad.

Does the college have future plans for additional courses?

Despite the challenges, we are currently planning to introduce programs in areas like health and hospitality.

Tap on the app

Turkish passengers who download the airline’s new mobile app can get a 10% discount on tickets between June 10 and 20.

Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways has extended its Global Sales Campaign for an extra three days, until 19 January, offering a 50% discount on fares across all classes to more than 150 destinations in the airline’s extensive global network.

Ride the Celerio

GO Motors has been offering free rides in the Celerio for a month or so, as per the trend, the company has received positive responses from the 302 test rides done till now.

Motor apps

Motor apps: bus, taxi and ride-sharing services.

Terrano in town

Formerly a popular car model, the new Nissan Terrano with 22 new features and a fuel efficiency of 17.6 km/l.

Carlsberg Red

To salute the 25th anniversary of its partnership with Liverpool FC, Carlsberg unveiled the Britted Red Roof. Red Roof is brewed using unique monohydrate and carbon-free technology.

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NATION
Corruption and democratic decay

Sarah Chayes is a senior fellow in the Democracy and Rule of Law Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington D.C. Her work explores how severe corruption can help prompt such crises as terrorism, revolutions and their violent aftermaths, and environmental degradation. Chayes is the author of Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security.

She was in Kathmandu on invitation of The Asia Foundation, where Ashutosh Tiwari caught up with her.

Ashutosh Tiwari: Your book talks about global security. What was the context for it?
Sarah Chayes: The book came out a few years ago. Since then, the context has somewhat changed. At that time, in western countries, politician and policy makers were obsessed about violent religious extremism. That narrow focus pushed aside other areas of development, such as sustainable and equitable economic growth and the importance of creating jobs, the environment and the survival of the species, modes of collective transport, infrastructures and so on. My argument was that extremism came out of bad governance, and that the extractive, corrupt behaviour of governments led to extremism. It was the symptom of the systemic decay, the decay caused by corruption.

You have taken international aid organisations to task over their failures to talk about corruption. International aid organisations say that they exist to enhance the development potential of a country. However in practice, they work differently. They work in silos. This has exacerbated the problem of corruption. Take for example, a health project on vaccines funded by a donor. The project may have to work with corrupt health ministry officials and other corrupt health institutions. When asked about the corrupt practices in the health sector, the aid official’s response would be, “That’s not for me to worry about. That’s for the anti-corruption people to tackle.” You go to the anti-corruption people, and you see that they are funding awareness-relating workshops and the like, which does not help much. In either case, what is missing is the holistic picture of development: that development is about accountability at all levels.

That calls for the kind of moral courage that is not usually associated with aid officials. How does one instil such moral courage? Yes, curiosity may blinker aid officials’ views of the holistic picture of aid. They may just refer to their terms of reference to account for narrow deliveries. But there’s no reason why they should not decide to lift up the people and make them part of the solution. It is crucial that people do not grasp the true extent of the corruption around them. Besides, those who have been accused of corruption often refuse to talk about it, afraid of being labelled as ‘identity divers’, casting aspersions on the very identity of the accused in ways that create a rift between the people. So, we have to account for the fact that democracy itself has been dented in many ways. The two pillars of democracy — constitutional resistances on power and elections — have been manipulated by corrupt regimes to entice both the interests and not those of the public in whose name they govern.

Dr. Govind KC, a prominent Nepali anti-corruption activist, recently ended his 14th hunger strike, which was aimed at highlighting corruption in the judiciary. Do you think his activism is creating a momentum for bringing corruption to justice? Activities will get attracted by those in power. Their work is never done. They need to build alliances, get more supporters to engage in strikes and use the media effectively to push for change. The more the public at large sees how corruption is robbing them of opportunities, all the more they are going to demand accountability from their kids and diminishing everyone’s hope for positive political change in the political elite. It will strike a chord for mass protests. We have seen this in Honduras, Guatemala and Bolivia. We will see similar movements across all countries going against corrupt politicians and bringing down corrupt regimes.

Delighted to build new home
Small but a home of their own: Earthquake victims are happy to move in their own houses after a long wait residing in temporary shelters

April 25, 2015 at 11:56 am, Rosamaria Serrano B. was at her neighbor’s flat in Itagüí, Antioquia municipality when the earthquake struck, delivering her back to her house despite the shadows she saw on the three children who were fatally unharmed. However, her house had collapsed over the nearby flat.

Soon after the collapse, along with her husband who returned home from their neighboring house, the capitastrait to find a safe shelter for their children. They had spent nights right on the streets in the same area until the day when they were finally able to reach the shelter.

According to the Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Program, Bocanegra’s team had only 360 houses total (200 permanent and 160 transitional) to rebuild. However, the Serrano B. family was one of the first families who were called to build a house.

In Itagüí neighborhood, Antioquia, which was the 12th worst affected area in the nation, 299 families were called to build their own houses. A number of government officials were involved in the process of reconstructing the homes.

A Collectative Approach

A dedicated committee, headed by the government and a team of engineers and social workers, implemented the collective approach. The group of government officials and engineers undertook to plan the construction of the houses. They also sought to monitor the progress of the reconstruction. Each house was expected to be completed within a year.

The approach established an arrangement of bank to bank payment program that transferred the advance amounts by bank to the beneficiaries and the rest by the compensation fund. The government has been implementing this approach for the purpose of the land and funds of the project.

For many of those, the grant amount could be a adequate in certain cases. A total of 3,800 families (from government first installment grant of 8.30 million in each beneficiary) bank account, and has constructed 510 houses in the village in coordination with the government’s public housing program. The government is working towards the implementation of such an approach for the purpose of the land and funds of the project.

The beneficiaries were provided with multiple house models to choose from the other options. The government and the social workers provided guidelines and support and were present in the houses.

The house committee was supported by the government and the people communities. The government had been supporting them through the process.

A Challenges of the Process

The government committed a support and fund for the process. To implement the project, the government had been providing the funds to the beneficiaries.

(As provided by Rosamaria Serrano B./C)
Phaplu in winter

The lodge in Phaplu echoes with time and memories. Its wide wooden floors, polished and smudged over the decades, have been trodden by many feet, including mine when I first stayed here nearly 20 years ago. The exuberantly painted downstairs still reminds me of a monastery, with elaborate wood pillars and ceiling beams adorned with mandalas. We huddled on crocking leather chairs and a Tibetan carpeted bench around the ragged wood-burning stove, avoiding the fingers of cold that penetrate every unheated inch.

Little has changed at the Phaplu Everest Base Camp. The familiar mugs, sitting on the same garden furniture, but newly painted white, and the pine plantation in front has grown taller. Strings of bright prayer flags still traverse the dented cobalt sky. As always, I admire the commitment of bringing the comfortable, white-sheeted, buttoned leather chairs and the circular, tooled leather-covered table, to such a remote spot — the dream of an Italian climber realized at great cost to the common people blending with Sherpa style. I like to think of those bulky pieces being laboriously carried up the tortuous first trail, the same route taken by all the early Nepali Everest expeditions, including John Hunt, Tenzing Norgay and Ed Hillary in 1953.

Today a serviceable road from Kathmandu reaches Phaplu, and the former dirt airstrip is now blacktopped, with daily flights from Kathmandu and shuttle services the seven-minute link to Lukla. We sit on the dusty concrete steps in the December sun, watching supplies for trekkers being loaded for the flight up, and well-dressed local families with ladies in Sherpa aprons being brought down, perhaps to catch the bus to the capital or on winter pilgrimages to India. On the hill behind us we can hear the chink of hammers as the Himalayan Trust hospital is repaired and extended after 2015’s earthquake damage.

First time I was here it was spring 1999 and my joie de vivre was still strong. The American Ambassador, my 20-year-old son Zachary, his little friend and I trekked to Chomolungma and Thumphesholing. Ralph Frank’s resolute police escort followed dutifully behind. The rhododendrons were flowering and diamonds scented the trail through the pine forest. A lone hiker wearing a colourfully carpeted saddle rode towards us through the trees, legs and arms flailing to urge his sturdy brown pony faster.

Clothing monasteries was a stiff climb, standing sentinel on a massive Himalayan cliff over a vista of terraced fields and wild Sherpa stone houses. At Thumphesholing, we turned the massive prayer wheel and climbed the wooden hood ladder to the monks’ upper quarters. And one very special day we followed the trail from the Phaplu lodge to Solatt, only half an hour for us but Sir Ed already could not walk well so was delivered by helicopter, ladies with white shawls and helped by the proud Sherpas. It was an important day for the monastery, and people had gathered from across the district. At the Rinpoche’s behest, Sir Ed was to be ordained a Buddhist monk, honoured for his work helping the people, schools and hospitals of the Khumbu. With his wife Barbara, son Peter and a Himalayan Trust couple we were invited to witness the exceptional event — recorded by Mike Dillon in his book Everest documentary, a quiet Australian filmmaker with his ubiquitous camera.

That distant morning we sat cross-legged on carpeted cushions against the monastery wall as marmot noses were dropped on Sir Ed’s tall bent body, not quite long enough to reach his dusty brown boots. The yellow Moksha felt hat blew awkwardly on his bowed grey head. Monks chanted, drums sounded, hand-bells tinkled and conchs and long trumpets blared in celebration, resonating across the valley.

“Mom, don’t forget it’s Rinpoche’s birthday!” Sangay reminded me gently after a fortifying breakfast of porridge, fluffy conch, noodles in sweet milky tea. The reverberations of those long-gone footsteps on the polished floorboards recede, and I am jolted back to the present with a jolt.

(The Phaplu House is undergoing extensive upgrading and restoration, reopening for March/April, 2018 in a lavishly new addition to Nepal’s collection of five quality lodges in scenic desinations.)

Commemorating Edmund Hillary

SETH SICROFF

The tenth anniversary of the death of Sir Edmund Hillary was a poignant moment to think again about the legacy of this great man. There are not many anniversaries: 65 years after the first ascent of Mt Everest in 1953, and the centenary of Hillary’s birth next year.

At one time, Edmund Hillary was the most famous person in the world. Every child knew of his climb on 29 May 1953. These days, if you ask an American under the age of 45 who Ed Hillary is, they are likely to say: “Brother or uncle of Hillary Clinton!”

During the 1950s and ’60s, Nepal was known as the recreations and spiritual goal of the world, a destination that was on everyone’s bucket list. In large part, that allure was due to the achievements and the personal and professional effort of Ed Hillary. The goal of reaching the summit inspired millions in the generation that fought to protect the environment, promoted recycling and planetary sustainability. They were inspired by Ed, but also by Tenzing Norgay.

Hillary’s son Peter Hillary, a world-class adventurer and humanist in his own right, wrote of the inspiring effect of his father’s achievement on Mr Everest. “When EdHillary and Tenzing Norgay just wanted to climb the mountain because no one had reached the summit, it never occurred to them that these mountains were spiritual and unknown, that the realm of possibility for every one of us down nears zero, the fact that we too could climb the world’s highest mountain if we wanted to, we are all bettered by the successes others, because their success inspired us to think that it can be done.”

Kumar Mala Rimal, president of Mountain Legacy, the Nepalese NGO that administers the Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal, has power of the game-changing impact of Hillary’s style of development: “We all know about the expedition, but far less about the far greater significance of the model development that Edmund Hillary pioneered after that climb, a model that demonstrated the potential of the model of development that had been largely side-lined: whether pastoral, Evangelical or aesthetically philanthropic, the model would be utilitarian and agenda-driven without input from the impacted communities, their grassroots successes that it can be done.”

The Unicef-funded Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal was awarded to the Quaker Peace Corps Volunteer in New Zealand for his work in helping the people of the rural community where he was living. The award was presented by the Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Trust, which is managed by the Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation.

Hillary did not regard himself as an explorer or a humanitarian. He was too keen, and he was an adventurer. Hillary was not just a practitioner of achievement, he was also a practicing, in the service of the human spirit. By adventure he understood an effort to reach a goal, which might make a great deal of difference or even be of importance, but would merely be one’s skill and character to the utmost, and still fall short. What he realised as he undertook his first development project in the Khumbu eight years after arriving in Nepal, was that building a school or referring a hillside could be the same kind of effort. International adventure became a stepping stone to philanthropic adventure, directly or indirectly. Hillary’s example has led thousands of lecturers, mountaineers, and other adventurers to undertake a huge diversity of adventure assistance that have greatly benefited Nepal’s people and helped sustain its environment.

New Zealand is planning its own Hillary Centenary in 2016. We should remind the world that Hillary is the primary focus of his Hillary Adventuring. This is a final opportunity to capture an asset of unparallelled power to stir the imagination. Let’s seize it.

Seth Siroff, director of Mountain Legacy, Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal Project
Five of the world's top 10 tennis players made headlines all last year for the wrong reasons: Hip surgery, tennis elbow, bad wrist, knee injury. But tennis players battle nerves on the court as much as they do physical injuries.

Manish ‘Munty’ Basnyat realised that early in his career as a high-school circuit tennis player in the United States. Having suffered his share of frayed nerves, he now coaches students at his tennis academy to overcome them, even while training them to make the right moves.

“The 20 seconds that players get in between points is crucial. If you don’t know how to stay in the present, separate private thoughts from the game, and focus on strategy, you are most likely to lose,” says the 46-year-old tennis director of the Park Terrace Tennis and Swim Club in Sacramento, California. Basnyat was five years old when he started hitting balls on the walls of a garage at the office in Kathmandu of his uncle Singhba Bahadur Basnyat, himself Nepal’s national tennis champion for two decades in the 1960s-70s. Basnyat recogised his nephew’s talent and got him to the US to learn English and tennis.

Manish Basnyat continued with tennis through high school, where he finished with a top-ten ranking in the Boys 18 category. After graduating with a business degree from the University of California in Riverside in 1991, he was offered a part-time job as a tennis instructor. More than 20 years later, he has successfully combined running a business with the game. His academy has students ranging from 2 to 5 years to 22, all of whom keep a journal where they write about their performance goals before each match and grade themselves after the match is over.

The students are made to play sets with adults for better practice and to improve their game performance. In weekend tournaments, adults and children play against each other, since Basnyat says mental toughness is more important than physical attributes.

“Tennis is about having character—discipline, resilience, confidence and mental strength. More than teaching tennis, I try to instil good, strong characters in my students, who may decide to stop playing but will carry lessons for the rest of their lives,” he says. Basnyat visits Nepal often, during which he conducts tennis clinics for young Nepali enthusiasts. Once in 2009, as strikes and curfews dragged on for days, organisers of tennis training took Basnyat to Pokhara, hiring him in an ambulance.

That is where he met an eleven-year-old named Abhishek Barola. Five years later, Barola bagged the men’s singles category title at Nepal’s own 14th National Lawn Tennis tournament in Sattalato last November without dropping a set throughout the seven-match event. The proud coach says Barola’s talent is supplemented by his realization that tennis is a mind game, but Basnyat is disheartened to see young tennis talents in Nepal without a platform to perform.

“Nepal has good coaches, but tournaments here resemble Nepal’s education system: twice a year where they regurgitate all they have learned,” says Basnyat, who suggests frequent mixed-group tournaments to boost performance. “Young players here will benefit from competing against adults with a passion for the game.”

Soma Awale
Taiwanese activist leads village women to embrace the beauty of the feminine cycle

ZIYU LIN
in KAVRE

"I hope women can reconnect with their bodies, starting from their menstruation," says Lin Nien-Tsu (Zi Yu), a Taiwanese who set up Bharti Mata (Mother of the Earth) Sustainable Workshop in Palikhit, near Dhuskhal, to provide local women with jobs producing eco-friendly, cotton menstrual pads. She was nominated as one of the BBC 100 Women 2017.

Inspired during a trip to South India, Claire bought her first bag of cotton pads and brought them to Nepal, where menstruation remains a taboo. An extreme example is the custom of chhaupadi, practiced mainly in the western hills, where girls and women are isolated in crude huts during their periods (see commentary below).

Claire says her aim is to raise Nepali women’s awareness of menstruation and make them feel confident and comfortable during their periods instead of being constrained by age-old social taboos and practices.

Initially, she interviewed 100 women around Palikhit about their experiences during periods. "I found women experienced hardship during menstruation. And their response to cotton menstrual pads was positive," she says. She started Bharti Mata in 2011.

It took her nearly two years to launch the workshop, including finalizing sources of raw materials and the production process. "I was quite anxious at the beginning, I am used to the Taiwanese working style where everything is fast and super-efficient," says Claire.

Quick-tempered by nature, she says her experiences in Nepal has softened her. "We want to provide women with affordable and eco-friendly cotton, sanitary pads made by women themselves, and it turned out, it is necessary to spend more time on it."

The workshop now consists of seven women cutting, sewing and assembling daily from 10am to 4:30pm. The local women ensure things run smoothly, occasionally proposing more productive ways of working.

The village women do the usual farm and housework in the early morning and after work, "I am proud working here, doing something for women ourselves," says Kalpana Khatri, the first local to join the workshop.

Claire recalls meeting Anmita Bhat, who joined Bharti Mata last year. "Anmita came to us for a post in the workshop when we didn’t have any vacancies. We told her it would be helpful if she knew how to sew. After a year, Anmita returned and announced that she had learnt sewing. ‘We were amazed,’ says Claire. ‘We could do nothing but employ her.’"

Bharti Mata gets active support from village men as well. Bishnu Tiwari, from Hasara Farm, cooks the women’s lunch and snacks. "Women see our treasures, we couldn’t maintain the family without women," Tiwari says.

When male farmers visit the workshop, the women introduce the cotton pads and explain menstruation to them. "Many male farmers solved the puzzle of feminine physiology, and bought cotton pads for their wives, daughters and granddaughters as souvenirs," says Claire.

Besides selling the pads at the workshop and online, Claire takes them to Taiwan and Kathmandu, including Karma Coffee Nepal, Sanyap, which has been selling Love Lady pads since 2015. Recently Karma started selling menstrual cups too. "Not only do they buy the pads and menstrual cups as gifts for their friends, many local girls also try these menstrual products themselves," says employee Suni Dangol.

Claire is actively collaborating with other groups to promote sustainable menstrual products. "Some NGOs order pads and take them to girls and women living in high Himalayan regions," she says.

Looking back on her seven-year experience, Claire says she is proud to have worked with local women, who are now like a family. She adds: "They are grateful for the job we offered, while I am grateful that they helped me to have a job too, we empower each other."

PAD POWER

FIGHTING TABOOS

Menstruation remains a taboo in Nepal. Follow up the story of a Bangladeshi in Nepal who worked in the Bharti Mata Sustainable Workshop producing eco-friendly, sustainable cotton pads while also spreading menstruation knowledge in the village.

nepalivees.com

Removing men

CLARA HARE-GROGG
in MUSTANG

Human rights activists have made great strides by calling attention to the practice of chhaupadi, isolation of menstruating women and girls during their periods, which killed another woman in Western Nepal this week. (see Darbhad, above, right). However, menstrual isolation is not prevalent across Nepal. In Lower Mustang, for instance, I was pleasantly surprised during a recent study tour with Nepali student Kunsang Gurung that many locals were completely at ease discussing menstruation. The region is rapidly evolving due to education, tourism, and transportation but even so, conditions for menstruation are far from perfect. In Mustang, home to pilgrimage shrines like Muktinath, menstruating Buddhists still avoid temples to keep from polluting sacred spaces and avoid cooking to keep from contaminating the rest of the family. Menstruating Buddhists have the option to avoid certain places or activities, and some choose not to alter their behaviour. Buddhist texts do not explicitly ban menstruating women from monasteries, but some women feel that visiting would be disrespectful.

Tibetan medicine regards menstrual blood as different from the rest of the body’s blood.
The menstrual revolution

The first wave of the menstrual revolution I was marked by the rise of disposable sanitary pads, signalling the rise of feminism. "Now comes the second wave of the revolution, which encourages the open discussion of periods and the connection between women and their bodies," says Tawakale activist Lin Nien-Iau (Claire).

This second wave encourages products like reusable cups and resealable pads, and is being pushed by local activists in Nepal. Kavita Sharma of Mila Chhadi has been working with Claire since 2014. She voluntarily gives lessons and workshops on menstruation to girls from more than 20 schools around the villages of Nolan, teaching them how to make sustainable cotton pads and informing them about feminine physiology. "The girls working in the workshop sometimes cry in tennis with girls as we do," says Dihlau.

Lhamu Yangchen Sherpa, the senior manager of PS Nepal who resources menstrual products, says there are no standards for sanitary pads in the country. "Women don't know what we are using for menstruation. Some women are using unhygienic materials to manage their periods since there's no standard on materials used. Prices and the disposability of menstrual pads," says Dr Sherpa.

She adds many girls in rural areas prefer they don't afford pricey sanitary pads which use a 13.1% tax imposed by the central government. Sherpa and her team are pressing the government to reduce the tax and establish standards for menstrual pads.

They are also promoting local products. "It saves time for resealable pads to reach the commercial market, and we want to promote local-made, eco-friendly menstrual pads rather than depending on imported ones," explains Sherpa. "It's give girls choices, and let them choose what makes them comfortable during their menstruation."

Banished

Nepal’s Parliament passes a bill criminalising the banishment of women during menstruation last August. It is set to take effect in August 2018. Anyone who violates the law can be sentenced to three months in jail and Rs. 5,000, or both, including girls and women who prescribe themselves.

However, the draconian laws went unchallenged as women’s minds and attitudes. Anita Thapa, executive director of her fund, an NGO that focuses on empowering adolescent girls, boys and women, says it will take time to change people’s minds as chhaupadi is closely associated with hinduism.

“We spoke to girls in the western rural areas, and told us it could be difficult to abide by the law. Most people follow the tradition because they fear that if they do not, their girls will be angry and will have a difficult time in the village,” says Thapa.

Lhama Yangchen Sherpa, senior manager of PS, also doubts the law will be effective. “We take girls over to visit relatives who banish them outside the house during menstruation. She has to drink milk as a mark of family relationships, and usually in rural areas, men yield the most power in the family.”

Since 2015, Thapa has held workshops on women’s health issues, including chhaupadi, in more than 30 schools in Gorkha, Jumla and Sindhupalchowk districts. No least there are some slight changes, instead of staying in nookwards during their periods, they now have a separate room to stay in,” says Thapa.

Working for women: Divulding...
Getaway

Club Himalaya

32km or a 1-hour drive from Kathmandu lies Club Himalaya at the height of 217m. The balcony featured with every room in the hotel provides a majestic view of the Himalayan range.
Kagti, (01) 444-4226
ombassador@clubhimalaya.com.np

Glacier Hotel & Spa

Built in 1990, renovated in 2016 and now remodelled in the neo-classical fana palace style, the hotel provides peaceful and efficient service for your stay in the city of Lakes.
Lakeside, Pokhara, (08) 463-7232
pochlocom@nepal.com

Fish Tail

For the newswire; Fish Tail has three honeymoon packages on offer: Behula Behuli, Maijhun Memoria and Love in Paradise. Enjoy the getaway while it lasts. 19-21 January, Lakeside, Pokhara, (01) 485-5717

Cocina Mitho Cha

The restaurant, set up to support locals and hotel staff, offers traditional Nepali food and a variety of European and Asian dishes. Try their Tandoori fish, followed by Spanish rice for dessert.
Jorpati, (01) 482-5744

Kathmandu Steak House

Serving lunch and dinner, the restaurant’s menu offers many varieties of steak. Sizzling flame steak is a highlight.
Chobikhani Marg, Thapathali, (01) 435-4545
kathmandusteakhousedisham@gmail.com

Mango Chili

With a good range of Thai dishes, various levels of chilli and an efficient service, the restaurant is located on the second floor of Labil Mull. Don’t forget to order Taro chips and T使命 Saya for starters.
Nayapati, (01) 525-3848

El Mediterraneo

For those wanting a dish from a greek dishes, plan a dinner at this easy restaurant for Mediterranean cuisine.
Highly recommended. Special tips set.
Dhulikhel, (01) 527-0599

The Pavilions

Surrounded by farmland, forested hills and a mountain-fed river, this ecologically run hotel is one of the best retreats after an adventurous hike.
Chhaparkot, Pokhara, (08) 694-019
info@thevillagepavilionhotels.com

Pokhara Grande

The hotel, situated about a 1.5-km walk from Fewa Lake, is your go-to spot, not just for a simple resort stay also for a destination wedding.
Path, Pokhara, (08) 462-0100 / 462-0526, (06) 462-070, reservations@pokharagrande.com

Hotel Yechu

Take a round-trip tour to Bhumias Darbar Square and have a fish at this newly established 4-star boutique hotel.
Kagati, fird, (01) 491-901, info@yechu.com

Events

Dining

Music

Getaway

Learn Nepali

This 2-hour workshop on a crash course model will teach the basics of the Nepali language so they can communicate in a local environment. Funds collected will support the start-up, StreetUp Nepal, a cafe with a social purpose.
22 January, 5-7pm, UoG Cafe & Bar, Bhadukot, RSS50, 9841157578

Healing retreat

Connect your spirit with your body and mind at the 5th Akasha healing retreat for holistic wellness in the lap of the Himalayas.
22-27 January, from 8:30pm, Aabode lodge, Pokhara, Registration: 9806523398, info@akashaheal.com

Baaja

Kaalas 101 presents the second edition of the monthly Moonshine Affair, with the group’s collaboration with musical performances by the band, AAB, Register and enter by 7pm to preserve the show’s intimate setting.
21 January, 7:30pm, Nightclub, Patan, For Registration: 9841791944

Bobin & Suran

Performing their originals and covers, the duo Bobin and Suran will transport you to their world with amazing music.
22 January, 8:30pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9841575712

Research seminar

Martin Chauliar offers a series of research seminar topics including tips to be a better writer, affordable technology and real-time monitoring to enable research, and case studies on the Nepal Punhi festival.
21/22/28 January, Martin Chauliar, Thapathali, (01) 426055 / 74702271, chauliarm@gmail.com, for more: www.martinchauliar.org

Power investment summit

Hosted for the second time by Energy Development Council Nepal, Power Investment Summit 2018 will focus on an investment in the energy sector, Energy Mint, speeches by International experts and more.
27-29 January, Ban-Park, Registration: 418911/6718, 984536819; rscpl@vistars.com, www.energymint.com

Night of Ideas

La nuit des Idees / The Night of Ideas: Power to Imagination, a panel discussion on how imagination drives the evolution of Nepal society, in a global context, organized by the French Embassy, Alliance Française de Kathmandu & Nepal Economic Forum.
25 January, 7-8pm, Himalaya Hotel, Water Holidays, Bhadukot, Registration until 22 January, communcomc@nepal.com

Mi Ku

Contemporary folk band Mi Ku sings of rural aspects of human life in the form of warm and catchy poetic expressions, in a mix of eastern and western sounds. Parela Bath Mittu will also perform.
20 January, 8-11:30pm, Shringara Terrace cafe & Bar, Thamel, (01) 470-1164

La Casita De Boudhanath

To celebrate its 5th anniversary, the restaurant is offering a range of discounts on all dishes, drinks and desserts through their Facebook page. Grab the chance to have a romantic dinner out.
Boudhanath, 9841763-64

Opening in Kathmandu.

Kathmandu

La Pajuba depicts the stories of people from an imaginary village, Mithi Gamar, particularly three of them: Sushak, Madha and Dün Marshi (Bahi Kur). The two hearts fight over the ownership of a great animal land in the village. The comedy is directed by Nigam Shrestha of Dahesharma and, written and directed by the director himself, Gajendra Thapa Madya, Memuka Pradhan and Mrutu Majhi, who makes his debut in the movie, are the female leads.

Caring at home is an organisation which facilitates home-based health care services. Health at home service promotes health care, i.e., out of hospital to the clients. Being the first of its kind in the whole South Asia, Health at Home is here to cater to the needs of those who desire health care facilities to be delivered at their doorstep.

Doctor on Call: Starting at 7:30 NMN for doctor general check-up available for the members of health insurance.
Nurse on Call: Day and Night care for home by qualified and experienced professionals starting at 1500NMN (minimum working hours 8 hours a day)
Lab on Call: Comprehensive lab details are done by professional lab technician
Physiotherapist on Call: Qualified and experienced physiotherapist starting 300 NMN per visit.
Elderly Care Assistants: Fulltime in my own care by qualified and experienced carer.
Travel Support for Sick Citizens: Full support for sick client in my own carer and professional driver.
Appointment Management: Appointment management for registered clients is different hospitals.
Help Desks: Medicalcare for every needed people from 7am to 7pm.
Health at Home: Kailali Home based health care facilitator organization.

Health at Home: 98181360 166 | www.healthathome.com

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 12 - 18 January

FRIDAY
SATURDAY
SUNDAY
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
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WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY

The average air quality throughout this week was in the dangerous ‘Very Unhealthy’ band, as seen in the graph above. The only change Thursday was slightly better due to the mountains and pollution because of the mountain range.

Credits

Design: SS Design 
Developed by: Mahesh Pandey
Print: JLD Printing
Nepal Army demolishes historic hospital to make way for commercial complex

RAMESWOR BOHARA

Of the 80,000 Nepali soldiers sent to fight in the First World War, 20,000 never returned. Many more were wounded. As a symbol of gratitude for that sacrifice, Britain used its Post-War Reconstruction Fund to help build the Tri-Chandra Military Hospital in Kathmandu.

The imposing neo-classical structure impressed Percival Landon, who wrote in his book Nepal that even architects in Calcutta were envious of Kathmandu. For 85 years after it was built in 1925, the statue of the marching soldier atop the hospital became an iconic part of the Kathmandu skyline.

Just before the 2015 earthquake, however, the Nepal Army started demolishing the building, saying it was going to replace it with a modern, bigger, non-profit hospital with the same name, for the treatment of serving personnel, veterans and civilians.

But even as the facade of the new building shores its scaffolding, the Army is asking for bids to rent out the business complex. Of the 31,000 sq ft of the new building, a 275,000 sq ft area is being offered for commercial rental, with only 9.5% of floor space set aside for clinics.

The Army had already shifted Tri-Chandra Military Hospital to its Chisapani base and merged it with the Birendra Military Hospital in 1990, and the intriguing question then was why it planned another large hospital in the middle of the city.

Nepal Army sources told us the new building was never intended to be a hospital — that was just camouflage. “Even now, they have added the clinics so that there won’t be any allegations that the Army is getting into the real estate business,” said the source.

The construction was financed with a $2.7 billion investment from the Army Welfare Fund, which is made up of contributions from, among others, the salaries of Nepal Army UN peacekeepers in war zones around the world. The Fund currently has nearly Rs 4.6 billion in savings, which it uses in health, education and charity work and housing for retired soldiers.

Army spokesperson Naitraj Dahal admits: “The main military hospital is in Chisapani, and it was appropriate to use the building in the city centre for commercial purposes to generate revenue for the Fund.”

The Army hasn’t compiled with existing rules on building permits from the municipality. In fact, they never bothered to get necessary building design approval. When construction started, the municipality wrote to Army Headquarters and the Defence Ministry twice, but the letters were ignored. “They didn’t even verbally acknowledge our letters,” recalls Ram Bahadur Thapa of the municipality’s Building Permits Office.

To be sure, some military structures do not need approvals because their designs are classified for security reasons. But a hospital in the middle of the city need not be a shroud in such high secrecy. However, the basic dimensions of such buildings require formal consent from the municipality. Any new structure also needs a completion certificate from the city for electricity, water and other utilities, which the Army hasn’t bothered to acquire either.

The Nepal Army has also violated the building code, which excludes structures taller than five floors in the congested city core. The military’s commercial complex is nine stories high with basement parking, says Thapa. “Because the Army is getting away with it, others putting up illegal structures are saying, ‘you punish the Army first.’”

The new building was originally designed to be 14 stories, and the foundation was laid accordingly. But when the 2015 earthquake struck during construction, the design was scaled down, the Army says, because it did not look commercially viable.

We asked Ram Baburam Kunwar of the Department of Archaeology how such a historic building was allowed to be pulled down to make way for a mall. His reply: “We found out only after the hospital was demolished.”

The Army’s construction also needs an emergency response plan, according to new zoning and safety guidelines for public buildings drawn up by the Local Development Ministry after the earthquake, which it does not have.

Says advocate Sichari Aryal of Transparency International Nepal: “It was bad enough to bring down a heritage structure, but it is a complete no-no to build a commercial complex in that space. Unilateral decisions like this by the Army also weaken democracy.”

Centre for Investigative Journalism

My fitness routine is not complete without Dabur Honey

STAY FIT, FEEL YOUNG.
Logan Lucky

A time when all of Hollywood is clamouring for awards season attention, it seems apt to review a film that stepped aside from those trappings and followed a rather adventurous path of its own.

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Logan Lucky is the result of Steve Soderbergh coming out of his three-year retirement to direct a film that would break the usual industry mould, finding a way to finance and distribute his project outside of a studio system that still calls all the shots, even though their aim is often off.

A classic heist film with a not so orthodox cast of characters, Logan Lucky boasts a large ensemble of actors whom directors salivate to direct. Channing Tatum, a Soderbergh staple since the delightful Magic Mike (2012), stars as the seemingly stoic, but not too bright, Jimmy Logan, an out of work fisher whose down-at-heel life is lit up by his adorably little girl Sadie (played by a sweet and fairy Furrh Mackenzie). The girl lives with her unapologetically conformist mother Bobbie Jo (played sarcastically unimpressively by a shrill Kate Holmes). Jimmy’s ex, who is now married to an unimpressive but firmly middle-class car dealer. When Jimmy loses his job at a construction crew, he faces the loss of his daughter but comes up with a seemingly dim-witted plan to rob the Charlotte Motor Speedway, using a tip he gets from his former (ex) which was working on repairing part of the firefighters. With the help of his equally want-wanting brother Clyde (Adam Driver), and their delightfully sharp sister Mellie (Riley Keough), the Logans collect the dubious know-how of a con and expert sub-crook named Joe Bang (Daniel Craig), who is currently in prison, and his two inappropriately silky brothers.

While this may not sound like quite your slick, smooth talking Ocean’s Eleven (2001), it is worth sticking to this picture, which pays off in the most weirdly wonderful ways, bringing a tongue-in-cheek innovation to a blase movie trope, making it refreshing, surprising, full of heart and oddly memorable.

It would not do to elaborate further on a film that relies so much on surprises, but suffice to say that it is worth watching the film if only to see the impeccable, original work of the notorious newcomer Rebecca Blunt, credited as role screenwriter, Blunt is thought to be Soderbergh’s wife Jules Asner, or even Soderbergh himself, who often uses pseudonyms to credit himself as cinematographer the uses Peter Andrews and editor Mary Ann Bernardi, roles he often fills in his own films.

Logan Lucky is a surprise from beginning to end, a film that was made for a mere US$22 million (which was raised by selling the film’s screening rights worldwide) but didn’t quite get its due at the box office possibly because of an ill-timed release in late August this year.

Still, it is a film that proves that if you have the guts you can break out of the system and make something cheapish, fast and good, a lesson that the Michael Mann of this world would do well to learn from as they try to maneuvers their $100-million beasts through the quagmire of production distribution and advertising.
Heads of states

www.nepaltribune.com

After much delay, the government on Wednesday named state chiefs for all seven provinces. Here is a brief introduction of each state chief, who will be administering the oath of office and secrecy to assembly members in their respective provinces. Of the seven state chiefs, five are from the NC, while the two Madhesi parties have nominated one state chief each.

Govinda Subba, Province 1 chief, is a professor at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) at Tribhuwan University. He was involved in the communist movement in his home district of Shantakuta before joining the NC and contesting the 1991 local elections to be mayor of Dharan, which he lost to Dhyan Subedi Rai.

Ratneshwor Lal Kayastha, Province 2 chief, is a former government secretary. After the first Madhes movement in 2007, he joined the Madhes Jan Adhikar Forum, which nominated him as a member of the First Constituent Assembly in 2008. He was later elected to the post of party secretary.

Anuradha Koirala, Province 3 chief, ran for Nepal in an NGO known for rescuing and rehabilitating trafficking victims. She was honoured as a CNN hero in 2010. She joined the NC just before parliamentary elections in November. She was handpicked by the palace as a minister during King Gyanendra’s rule.

Baburam Kunwar, Province 4 chief, is a lawyer and former president of the Democratic Lawyers Association. He was appointed by the Salikot-based government as attorney general.

Uma Kant Jha, Province 5 chief, is a former administrator who became a minister in the government led by Chief Justice Khila Raj Bhakta Regmi in 2013. He is now general secretary of the Rastriya Janata Party, the NRN’s largest party in Parliament.

Durga Keshar Khanal, Province 6 chief, was elected as a member of the Upper House after the first general elections in 1991. He was active in local politics in his home district of Syatham.

Mohan Raj Maika, Province 7 chief, was a member of the national assembly during the party-less Panchayat era. He was known as a liberal pro-royalist. He was with the Rastriya Prajatantra Party after the pro-democracy movement of 1990, but joined the NC after the First Constituent Assembly elections in 2008.
What are you allergic to?

An epidemic of pollution-related allergies sweeps Kathmandu as winter wears on

SONIA AWALE

Dristi, Sapkota first came to Kathmandu eight years ago for college, and since then has been tormented by a chronic eye allergy. Every time she goes out, her eyes itch, get red and swell up.

“I lived in Chitwan for 18 years and never had this problem until I moved to Kathmandu,” said the 24-year-old, herself a dermatology intern at Dhulikhel Hospital.

Sapkota’s doctor prescribed eye drops and anti-allergens, but it never gave her permanent relief. This week, she was at the hospital to undergo a test so she can identify the allergens she is sensitive to.

Also at the clinic one morning this week was Binita Sarde, 25, who has red itchy patches on her wrists and forearms. She has been on anti-allergens for over a year and wishes her allergy could be finally pinpointed so she can avoid it.

“I’d had to put my plans for my family on hold because of the endless medications. I just wish my allergy can be finally identified,” says Sarde, who is from Biratnagar and came to the capital to diagnose a condition that started one night after she was abruptly awaken by an itchy sensation on her cheeks. By morning, she was covered in hives.

After unsuccessful treatment in various hospitals, she went to Dhulikhel for tests that showed she is allergic to house dust, mites, mould, cow and buffalo dung, storage mites and pollen. Both Sapkota and Sarde were told to avoid smoke, dust and smoke as much as possible and prescribed anti-allergens.

As winter pollution in Kathmandu gets worse, a large chunk of the population is exposed to higher concentrations of pollutants in the air. Allergies have reached epidemic proportions, doctors say, as have respiratory illnesses, aggravated by the usual level of smoke, dust and chemicals in the environment.

“Allergies of all kinds are on the rise, and the biggest culprit is Kathmandu’s air pollution, which has worsened due to vehicle congestion and construction activities,” says Buddhil Pandeyal, a physician at Patan Hospital.

Allergies occur in different forms and can be caused by any substance in the environment. Worldwide, 400 million people are affected by hay fever, while 300 million more suffer from asthma.

More than 200 million have food allergy, and a significant number of people develop a mostly fatal anaphylactic reaction to drugs. Genetic predisposition determines which individuals are more likely to have a hypersensitive reaction. While most allergies except for anaphylaxis aren’t life-threatening, they severely compromise quality of life and performance.

Buddha Rastriya, a consulting physician at Patan Hospital, says the air is now so contaminated it is a leading cause of many non-communicable diseases.
**TESTING FOR ALLERGY**

Watch a video of Dristi and Bindu being tested for possible allergens in Dhulikhel Hospital this week, and recommendations of consulting physicians to others who have similar symptoms.

**All about allergies**

Any hypersensitive reaction of the body’s immune system to an otherwise harmless substance is called allergy. The substance that causes the reaction is called an allergen, and can be just about anything in the environment, from pollen and chemicals to an insect bite. Allergies are also hereditary in nature, with 52% inherited from the maternal and 48% from the paternal side.

**Types of allergies**

- Contact dermatitis (caused by direct contact with the allergen)
- Allergic rhinitis (hay fever) (characterized by sneezing, runny nose and watery eyes)
- Asthma (allergy to the lower respiratory tract)
- Food allergy
- Insect sting or venom allergy
- Sinus infection
- Lava allergy
- Drug allergy (medications like penicillin known to cause a fatal anaphylactic reaction)
- Feces (shock caused by red, itchy and dry skin)
- Allergy conjunctivitis

**Ways to prevent allergies**

- Avoid carpets and encourage home cleaning
- Practice good cleanliness and hygiene
- Use proper laundering of blankets, pillows and bedding
- Avoid detergents, soap, direct contact with raw meat and fruits juices, metals like nickel and use gloves when possible
- Avoid exposure to cold air, dust and smoke
- Provide sufficient ventilation and sunlight in rooms
- Remove allergens from the vicinity of the patient

**Treatment**

There is no cure for allergies, but they can be prevented and treated. Most of the time, prevention and management of symptoms work well. If they don’t, physicians employ immunotherapy. Injectable immunotherapy can lead to anaphylactic reactions and should not be administered without the presence of a physician.

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**Asthma outbreak**

Kathmandu’s polluted air has led to an outbreak of asthmatic ailments. Larger dust particles can lodge themselves in the upper respiratory tract and cause allergy there, while very fine soot particles smaller than 2.5 microns enter the bloodstream, increasing the incidence of asthma.

At Patan Hospital, respiratory medicine specialist Raj Pargan says that the out-patient ward has been overfiling with patients this winter. “Pollution from vehicular emissions is a public health calamity.”

Bronchial asthma is a chronic disease in the lower lungs that inflames and narrows the airways, resulting in chest tightness, shortness of breath, coughing and wheezing. Triggers for the illness are pollutants like dust and smoke. Moreover, patients with upper respiratory illness have a 50% higher chance of developing asthma later in life.

“After being diagnosed and treating many and more children with asthma,” says paediatrician Sudha Bhattarai at teaching hospital. “There are more cases in winter because children breathe in more dust, smoke and cold air at street level.”

She adds that many parents resort treatment for asthma due to a misconception that inhalers are addictive. “Some treatment increases the chances of the child having a better quality of life and chance at education,” explains Bhattarai.

Back at Patan Hospital, Pargan says many of his patients “are waiting for it to happen. It’s easy to seek treatment for asthma, which means physicians have to prescribe much stronger drugs.”

He adds “It’s awareness, education and counseling on asthma so it is not mistaken for pneumonia, and patients are open to accept early treatment.”
Kathmandoo—do

WARNING: This week’s Burke & Wills contains material that some readers may find offensive. Customers are advised to keep the issue in their possession in front of you, as it may cause an emergency! If this advice is not followed, we will not be responsible for any damage or untoward incidents.

Now that we have cleared the legal minefield out of the way, we can get right down to using all the offensive terminology we want without fear of being sued in a court of law.

The US president made headlines all over the world last week by putting Nepal on his travel list. It must be a relief to the Shishoule community. Nepal was understandably outraged: how dare the president of the most powerful country in the universe unilaterally declare us only a Shishoule? But we know it for a fact that Nepal is actually a vast country.

President Trump was being diplomatic by using the word Shishoule figuratively, whereas we were far more generous. We know that Kathmandoo—do is literally an open sewer. And ever since the government declared Nepal an Open Defecation-Free Federal Republic, the whole country has turned into a latrine. We therefore take strong umbrage with Donald Uncle poop-pushing our poo and underplaying our excrements. The Go-Wellington has left no stone unturned to ensure that Nepal retains its status on the US Shitlist by following the following steps:

- Removing Kathmandu airport Shishoule terminal AromaPlus, deflating the EC’s endeavours to bring in the airport, so that passengers get a whiff of what is to come as soon as they arrive, and are left with a lingering stinging memory of Kathmandu before flying out.
- Why spend all that money diverting sewage in the Bagoa Stadium to a treatment plant just at the sacred temple transport hot spot as it flows past our temples.
- Under its ‘Don’t be a tourist’ campaign the Tourism Board has thoughtfully ensured that visitors with the runs can excrete calls from nature by ducking behind historic monuments to take a dump at many times as they want provided they have paid their Nudar Square Ticket ($1,000 for foreigners, Rs250 for fellow-South Asia countries, and free for domestics).
- Nepal will strive to retain a Shishoule as our rules ensure they are not often woolled and identified as the Third World status.

To ensure that all the above steps are followed, we hereby appeal to our readers to support the Go-Wellington and help us achieve a clean Nepal where everyone can enjoy the comfort of a clean Nepal.

NPI Collection

Our exquisite collection of cashmere products are hand woven by master artisans who collaborate with our designers to bring contemporary designs.

We believe in empowering women with equal opportunities.

http://www.facebook.com/olddurbar

The Ass

NPI Collection

Our exquisite collection of cashmere products are hand woven by master artisans who collaborate with our designers to bring contemporary designs.

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