Miracles happen

As Canadians living in Kathmandu, we woke up Thursday to the headline news in all the dailies that Nepal had defeated Canada in cricket. My family in Canada woke up to read about another murderous shooting spree in the neighbourhood US, a new government initiative for the country’s indigenous people, and a political leader in the province of Ontario claiming to be the target of a conspiracy.

To state the obvious, cricket is not big news in Canada. In fact, it doesn’t even rate its own page on the website of CBC, the national broadcaster. Athletics, tennis, swimming, cycling, rugby and volleyball are all there. No cricket.

I consider myself fairly sports-minded. As a child, I played organized soccer and basketball for years, and tennis, baseball and a bunch of other sports for fun. But I didn’t see my first live cricket match until I was in my 40s in Ottawa, on the grounds of the Governor-General’s residence. Not exactly mainstream Canada. A Google search of Wednesday’s Nepal-Canada match yields no results that are obviously Canadian in origin. This week all Canadian sports fans’ eyes are on the winter Olympic Games, where Canada currently stands 4th in the medal count — with the gold still to be awarded in ice hockey, the most Canadian of sports (although more of us actually play curling). Yes that’s right, curling — and it has nothing to do with hair, though I suppose if you think of the curling itself as unruly, then the resemblance is there. Baseball and hockey are our most popular sports in Canada, right? And that’s it.

I skimmed Thursday’s headline news long enough to learn that Nepal had pulled off a last-minute win. ‘Nepal needed eight runs off the final over and after four dot balls in a row…’ I read as my eyes started to glaze over. I get the basics of cricket, but it’s the nuances that count for sports fans, and I was lost at ‘dot balls.’

What happened in Namibia was news not only in Nepal, it was described by ESPN as ‘one of the most miraculous endings to an ICC tournament match at any level.’ It seems the game was a little close, and the match ended up being a thrilling one for the Canadian fans.

...also in politics

UML Chair KP Oli (left) was sworn in as Nepal’s new PM on Thursday, a day after striking a power-sharing deal with the Maoist-led CPN-MC. The deal means the two leaders will now co-chair their party and will try to form a new government. The next step is to form a Cabinet and prove a majority in Parliament in 30 days. The Maoists claim the deal also requires UML to step down and support Oli as the new PM after two and a half years, but UML leaders are mum about that part. It means party unity will thrive in the air.

Immerse yourself in Canberra

Unspoilt nature and cultural attractions abound in Australia’s vibrant capital. Start your day with an epic hot air balloon ride before visiting the city’s diverse selection of museums and galleries, restaurants and public gardens. Whether you are on the ground or in the skies, Canberra has an abundance of spectacular sights to discover.
PARLOUR GAMES

Nepal has been ruled by a three-party coalition. The coalition is a result of the conflict in 2006, and throughout the decades-long transition after that. The main in the major parties made all important decisions on power-sharing from behind closed doors, bypassing Parliament and even their own control committees.

Well, it looks like nothing has changed. The same men from the same parties are still playing parlour games. This week, two months after the election results became clear, the lame-duck prime minister finally stepped down and the two communist alpha males have decided to co-opt their united party, and rotate the prime ministership. There is no precedent and no such provision: they just decided secretly to go ahead with it in a meeting at a private contractor’s home in Man Shawan on Tuesday, while the country was on a five-day holiday.

The announcement of a Left Alliance between the UML and the Majo just before elections last year was a political masterpiece. It ensured a near-two-thirds majority for the combined parties in Parliament. The other part of their agreement was to formally unite the parties, and that has turned out to be much more difficult. The unity is supposed to happen before government formation, but now looks like it is going to be pushed back.

The NC which lost the election was in no hurry to hand over power to the winners. In fact, the NC-led coalition used the lengthy negotiations to spend lavishly and make illicit appointments to official positions. What was even more surprising is that the UML-Maos was not in any particular hurry either to assume office. There were many reasons for this: the Election Commission not formally announcing the final tally of the National Assembly elections till this week. That gave the three-party cartel all the justification it needed to indulge in its usual patronage of playing political musical chairs.

For the past, the UML’s prime minister-in-waiting KP Oli and the NC’s Pushpa Kamal Dahal anyway needed more time to boggle over the composition of the new government as well as the terms and conditions for party unity. Thus, in turn, provided the caretaker NC-led coalition the opportunity to cling on to power and make non-careerists’ decisions on spending and appointments. Even as it prepared to issue office, the Cabinet awarded Rs1 million of taxpayers’ cash to a well-to-do outgoing minister for medical treatment.

Finally, now that both the Lower and Upper Houses are duly constituted, Oli and Dahal have their hands tied and need to take a new government and to make it look inclusive will try to include women, Madhesi, and Janajati figures. The Madhes-based FPSN and the RJP have so far refused to join coalition without a firm promise on constitutional amendments, but some within these parties look sorely tempted by portfolio holy-balls dangled in front of them by the wily Oli. It was a foregone conclusion that Oli would be prime minister again, what is less foregone even now is whether his party can in fact unite with the Maos. Oli and Dahal are so used to not keeping their word and subverting each other in the back that it is perfectly possible this is just going to be a coalition government of the UML and Maos without party unity.

Some have argued that the Maos need unity more than the UML. There are grumblings within the UML about a democratic party having to subservce a party that has still not atoned for the violence it unleashed on the land. Some leaders in the Maos, like Khadga Bahadur Mahara and Barisha Man Pun, indicated the end and that Dahal should not agree to unite unless the party was given either one of the executive positions: prime ministership or chairmanship of the joint party. So they agreed to shoo both positions.

That is what it has come down to: if you can’t agree, rotate. There are also other positions to haggle over: will the President and Vice-president stay on, or be replaced by appointees like Baldev Koirala and Mahbub Thakur?

The portfolio distribution and the allocation of chief ministerships of the provinces have gone fairly smoothly along the agreed 60-40 formula. Party unity, if it does happen, will be more fraught. What the Nepali people are now really worried about are that the UML and Maos separately, or together, will deliver on their election promises of stability and prosperity. For so, with the only sure deal that Dahal will succeed Oli as PM, it does look like politicians is business as usual.

WHAT’S TRENDING

Mira Rai racing to help other runners

By Sangeet Hada

Mira Rai’s international trail running sensation Mira Rai is in a big steps against times now after all the girls they have the same opportunities as the guys. Her entire interview with Times in Buffalo Buffalo where she applied a 12km mountain marathon recently. She’s about what Mira Rai is for to help other talented runners.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Ticked down corruption

The national rail has ticked down to the local level. Last week’s situation of lowest elections have thrown up mayors and self-styled who are not local a government with questionable reputations was mobbed and tweeted past.

Most popular on Twitter

Bulldozing democracy

By Addis Ababa

One third of minors and alliances council’s seven to vote to a single party personal wealth rather than the people who elected them. It seems the investigation report and analyses, nectarines.com.

Most commented

QUOTE & TWEETS

Kama Debi @kamadebi How TIcked down corruption is bulldozing Democracy...The threat of electing local government leaders is overcoming educators. Must @gportsmeshi report and analysis and report blog. (3) https://twitter.com/... -...-

Renata Mayer @renatamayer50 Ensure to refrain the destruction of Nepal DNS include deactivation of internet access denial through denial of service. Please consider @IPNepal to restore its connectivity. Design, share, and develop adequately. USONIC @USONIC_ @Globekovala

Devendra Raja @DevendraRaja30 CMOS.

Nepal Times @NepalTimes Nepal Timess Nepal Times is a news agency to help citizens, providing a platform through which talented journalists can receive the news they deserve. Read more https://bit.ly/3l9Rd

Base George @BaseGeorge Nepal The ever-growing super fast internet service is only slowly awareness. What a waste.

Election

What to do if you are under threat to be nominated as independent?

Total votes: 167

% Yes: 84

% No: 13

% Don't know: 3

Wednesday, August 10, 2022

6:30 PM

Times

Wednesday, August 10, 2022

10:30 AM

Times

Wednesday, August 10, 2022

9:00 PM

Times

6:30 PM

How will this NOC perform in second round?

10:30 AM

Times

Wednesday, August 3, 2022

9:00 PM

Times
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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER.
Aftershocks of the Blockade
Nepal and India both need to learn their lessons, and move on to improve bilateral ties

The University of Chicago itself has a strong Nepal collection. How was this achieved? Chicago has been keen on acquiring the papers of Dinkar Nepal for several decades. In 2004, under the leadership of Prof. Maxine Pfefferkorn, the University successfully acquired the Nepal collection of the Princeton University Library. The University of Chicago itself has a strong Nepal collection. How was this achieved? Chicago has been keen on acquiring the papers of Dinkar Nepal for several decades. In 2004, under the leadership of Prof. Maxine Pfefferkorn, the University successfully acquired the Nepal collection of the Princeton University Library.
On air to deter child marriage

How radio is helping prevent Nepali girls from being married young

“I had to quit school after I got married, but then I couldn’t get a job and I realized that marrying without completing education is a terrible thing to do.”

To be truly effective, however, the programs need to be part of a broader approach that provides alternatives to marriage and prevents girls from being married off in future. This includes empowering girls to understand and assert their rights, and ensuring they have access to education, healthcare and legal protection.

Nepal has taken important steps over the past few years to promote gender equality. In March 2016, the government hosted a Girl Summit, launching a national strategy to end child marriage by 2030. But for change to happen, these commitments must be backed by the resources needed to make a real difference in the lives of girls. If not, millions more childhoods will be lost.

To 18-year-old Sangita, a Mai Sari Sonakshi fan from Sunsari District, the message is clear: “We might fall in love at any age, but we shouldn’t make any big decisions like marriage. Getting married young will ruin your education, kill your dreams and make you dependent.”

Shipra Jha is Head of Communication at Giri Anjali Bides. The global partnership to end child marriage: Giri Anjali Bides is a global partnership of more than 900 civil society organizations from over 90 countries committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfill their potential.

SHIPRA JHA

Every year, 15 million girls around the world get married before they are 18, and Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world — with 37% of girls married as children.

Growing up in Bhukut, 13-year-old Ramila had seen girls as young as ten dropping out of school to be married. She might have become one of them, had it not been for her favourite radio star, Jumalma.

“Jumalma got married while she was still a child, but it turned into a nightmare for her. Her story taught me that we shouldn’t marry without finishing school and being independent in life,” says Ramila. “She inspired me to fight for my rights as a girl.”

Jumalma is one of the characters in the radio drama series Mai Sari Sonakshi (Orchid, Like Mail) produced by Population Media Centre which broadcasts radio programs in more than 30 countries, and is among 90 members of Giri Anjali Bides. The global partnership to end child marriage, in Nepal it has two long-running radio dramas Mai Sari Sonakshi and Hiker (Ripples in the Water) both addressing issues such as child marriage and sexual violence.

Jumalma’s story may be fictional, but for millions of child brides in Nepal and around the world, the devastating consequences of child marriage are very real. Married girls have their childhoods cut short and their education is often abandoned. They face serious health consequences by becoming pregnant at an early age. They also face an increased risk of domestic violence.

Nepal has the third highest rate of child marriage in Asia, after Bangladesh and India. Although the legal age for marriage is 16 for boys and 18 for women, many children, predominantly girls, continue to be married early as a result of poverty, insecurity, or to avoid the higher dowry prices demanded for older girls.

An increasing number of organizations are using entertainment through radio, TV, film, street theatre or even magazines and comics in Nepal and India to try to spark conversations about issues like child marriage. Public Awareness Campaign Nepal is also a member of Giri Anjali Bides, and uses documentaries and radio programs to raise awareness about child marriage.

By combining entertainment and education, TV and radio dramas can address sensitive subjects in a non-threatening and engaging way, raising awareness about the consequences of child marriage and helping girls to understand their rights. A 2017 review by Giri Anjali Bides of media programs addressing child marriage found that it had a measurable impact on attitudes about the issue, listeners of some shows were up to six times more likely to state that women should be 18 or older before marriage.

Mahendra, now 22, got married when he was 15 years old. He is a big fan of Mai Sari Sonakshi, and says he wishes the show had been around when he was at school.

“Early marriage was the culture in my village,” he says.
“Tell me more ...”

Liz Hawley said goodbye and thank you, then expressed surprise to be still alive the following morning.

Tell me more about your friend Micky Wetherall, whom I never knew. Is it true he was the only man you considered marrying? I rudge her into reminiscences: "Oh that was mostly speculation on my part. She confuses, brighty "I doubt he ever knew. He was splendid fella. I started a bit, but the real thing I had was the Sudanese gentleman on the riverboat in Egypt." Liz’s adventure had taken place during her early travels, before first arriving in Kathmandu in 1959, and I reckon the stolen kites are the closest she came to a relationship. "What use would I be as a wife? I can’t cook, and I’m not interested in homemakering. I’d be hopeless."

In a magazine interview in 2004, I had described her "passion" for Nepali politics and the collection of mountaineering facts. "Lisa, please remove that word from your article," she snapped. "I simply record facts - I am not passionate about ANYTHING."

I ask her about trekking, founder Col. Jimmy Roberts, and Mike Cheesely who worked with him at Mountain Travel. "Jimmy’s life was almost entirely in the Himalayas, first Indian Army then Nepal. He had a couple of stints in Wales - can’t remember their names and don’t Jimmy could either. He was quite a character and of course never married. If you ask me, I think he was afraid of woman."

In April 2016 I had received a rare summons: "Lisa I have to see you urgently. I need to discuss my future. The future? At her age? It sounded sinister. My regular visits had diminished from long lunches to regular drop-ins, leading her books, catching up on news, hearing her grumble at my travels, checking her nurses were taking care, and that the Himalayan Trust downtown was managing her bills. She had a well-ordered life, but I arrived some time late. A shrinking figure determinedly upright at her table, Liz gestures with irritation to a pile of brown expedition folders at her elbow. "I can’t do it, Lisa. I can’t concentrate and these files of information don’t make any sense to me anymore. My eyes go blank. It’s too hard." She nipped with depletion in her own force. Leng-anticipating this moment with a backup plan in place and willing hands poised to take over, touch her pale bony hand and smile encouragement. "How wonderful, Elizabeth. Finally at 92 years old you have retired. How exciting for you, and many congratulations. Her worried expression goes way to a cautious smile of relief. "Ah yes, that’s what it is. Retirement."

Liz’s retirement lasted less than two years as she left us last month, with enviable peace after a short bout of pneumonia in hospital surrounded by people who cared, and with her wise and humour still about her. Ever organized, she said goodbye and thank you, then expressed surprise to be still alive the following morning.

She died first page news in UK, US and New Zealand as well as Nepal. We gave her a fitting farewell, a brocaded Sherpa cremation at Swyambhunath, and a memorial tea party at Switwars. "A committee of doctors, she would not have wanted a fuss," said Kanak Dutt in his tribute. Her favourite surpali came with his wife from Colorado, her nurses were in tears, and her driver Subram claimed: "She loved me more than any of her mountaineers."

Archdukes and admirers poured in from household-name climbers, her descendants and friends from all over the world, her uncomproing everlast a common theme. The last thing she had said to me the week before as I left the country on a job I was in CWIEG with a chest infection but don’t worry, it’s not serious." She got that one wrong.
Natural intelligence

Nepali software engineers have been migrating for jobs abroad in droves, but one company is trying to reverse that trend by creating a specialized talent pool here on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and drone making.

Many people still think AI is science fiction, and that it doesn’t have too many applications in Nepal. But AI is already ubiquitous in everyday life: sorting emails in order of importance, or in the Internet of everything.

That is where Sameer Maskey, founder and CEO of Fuesmachines Inc, sees an opening. “With the talent shortage for AI engineers around the world, Nepal has the potential to become a leader in the space and help fulfill the growing demand,” says the computer science professor who teaches Artificial Intelligence at New York’s Columbia University.

Maskey felt Nepali engineers could be just as bright as his students in the US, given the right resources and training. However, despite the worldwide demand for AI engineers, specialized courses were not yet available in Nepali colleges and students had to go abroad.

All that is changing with the fellowship program that Fuesmachines has launched in Nepal, on completion of which students receive a degree certified by Columbia.

The one-year course gives students the opportunity to get world-class education in Artificial Intelligence. Says Maskey: “The aim is to help develop Nepal’s software workforce and enable companies to benefit from the power of machine learning. Our mission is to democratize AI.”

Fuesmachines’ first batch in 2017 had more than 400 applicants for 27 seats. The 2018 course is currently in session in Kathmandu. Selected students get a $1,200 scholarship and are provided with in-house mentors previously trained under Maskey himself.

Students work on online courses and get involved in research projects in the company. 

Rupak Shrestha of Fuesmachines Nepal says: “We want to be a platform where students can learn and implement their ideas.”

One of the 2017 fellowship students is 22-year-old Sushil Shikshakar who says that if it hadn’t been for Fuesmachines he would have to switch to another subject, if go abroad.

Indeed, Fuesmachines’ Sita Shrestha says one of the goals of the project is to reduce Nepal’s brain drain and build the country’s human resource capacity: “We want younger to learn, work and stay in Nepal, and by doing so, we also reduce the outflow of our young talent.”

Rajesh Shikshakar, 25, is another fellowship student who completed his bachelor in Mechanical Engineering and is currently working on a drone-making project.

“Nepal has huge scope for drone applications to overcome a lot of limitations that we have,” he says, “we can use drones to control and monitor traffic and crowds, deliver medicines to remote areas, or protect wildlife from poachers.”

Both Shikshakar and Shikshakar want to stay on in Nepal after their fellowship to help other Nepali students.

And Maskey is aiming to encourage them: “With proper training and guidance Nepal can someday produce AI and Machine Learning specialists who are as good, or even better, than elsewhere. We can give them the opportunity to work with global companies and build the needed AI systems for Nepal right here in Nepal.”

Dukshang Sherpa
Not so long ago

Remarkable images of Kathmandu Valley show how much and how fast we changed

PHOTOGRAPHS by DANIEL W EDWARDS

There are many photographs from the early 1970s that give us an idea of what Kathmandu Valley looked like a century ago. Most of those pictures were commissioned by the Vanaas, who brought in photographers from Calcutta to take snapshots of their opulent palaces. They are valuable visual documentation of a Nepal before the country opened up to the outside world.

To see how much and how fast Kathmandu Valley has changed, however, you don’t need to go back 100 years—four decades is enough. A new picture book by Peace Corps volunteer Daniel W Edwards (photographed right) shows us a Kathmandu from not so long ago. Even as recently as 1970, you see in the photos how clean the capital’s air was, how undisturbed the streets were, how much of the rice fields, even within the Ring Road, were intact.

But Edwards tries to look at the bright side, and explains in the introduction to his book: “While much of the physical landscape has changed dramatically since the 1970s, readers will note that one may still see multi-story traditional houses in Patan or Bhaktapur, and one may observe festivals and religious ceremonies that are carried out much the way they were many years ago.”

Edwards says the lively children he sees in schools and shops are better dressed and less shy today, but they still remind him of the Nepali youngsters he taught in the 1960s. Indeed, the book is another invaluable addition to the corpus of writings that have recently been put in the public domain.

Edwards has let the photos speak for themselves, including only brief captions to show when and where they were taken. Many images stand out: Lagankhel and Lalichaur in 1966, the view of Tinkune from a plane landing in Kathmandu in 1972, the green fields near Bandaha, a trolley bus-stop in Basantapur and the Chobar cement factory.

One of Edwards’ former math student, Binya Bahadur Mali, writes in his foreword: ‘Looking back I feel our development process has gone terribly wrong. We embraced modernity on a wrong footing. We dumped trolley buses and ropeways for polluting and costly fossil fuel transport systems. We turned our rivers into sewers, and did nothing to stop the unplanned growth of our towns. My eyes were moist when I looked at the wonderful pictures of a Shangri-la when life was serene, innocent and less complicated.’

Nepal in Color, 1966-1975
Peace Corps Days
The Kathmandu Valley
By Daniel W Edwards, 2017
Rs 1,500
**GETAWAY**

**Himalayan Outdoor Festival**
A call to all outdoor enthusiasts for trail running, rock climbing, and mountain biking.
16-18 February, Hanhott Resort, Phangal, 9815238987, himalayanoutdoorfestival.com, Registration: https://gojoo.net/2hjor

### Swinging social dance
Embrace the rhythm of the Swing era at the social dance parties.
- 17 February, 4-8pm, Dhaat, photoshoot, A150, 9815119234, 9815556645, info@kaaip.com

### Farmers market
Enjoy Saturday morning with fresh food in a great atmosphere. Discover organic fruits and vegetables, a variety of locally produced cheese, fresh fish, specially baked breads and pastries, organic honey, home-made chocolates and jams, artisanal meat and delicacies from Kathmandu’s top restaurants.
17 February, 8am-2pm, A-One, Shiga Heights, 014420084

### Potatodigging tour
A fun-filled package for experience potato digging. Get your hands dirty!
17 February, 9-11am, Pushchowk, Laum, 0532
Registration: 9851103062, 9851127701

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**MUSIC**

**Women of the World**
A celebration of women of the world, featuring panel discussions, interactive and educational workshops, mentoring from leading women professionals, market, and music and more. Ani Choying Drolma, Neha Thapa, Mira Rai, Ranju Bhusan and other South Asian women speakers will be there.
17 February, 10am-6pm, VISE, Pulchowk Campus, For details: anichoyingdrolma@gmail.com, http://www.ataaslova.org/schedule/

### Osho mystic rose therapy
Experience the nosing powers of laugh, dance, and silence.
16-February to March, Sidhun, Topason international Curative, Nagarjun Hills, 014425120

### The entertainers’ story
Stories of Nepal’s top prominent entertainers, presented by the Storytellers, Ashik Shyamg, Nishal Barik, Sabita Shrestha and Suraj Singh.
- 21 February, 11am onwards, Russian Culture Centre, Krishna Park, 98300 (port booking), 98500 (on door), Events: 9851107128, https://gojoo.net/2hoyw

### Zen-doodla yatra
Learn the basics of doodling, and doodle is a way to practice mindfulness.
22 February, 10am-1pm, Satya Media Art Collective, Panthapul, 98150, Registration: https://gojoo.net/2hoyw

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**EVENTS**

**Plini in Nepal**
Australian musician Plini will be performing in Nepal with special guest David Maxim Micic.
16 February, 5pm onwards, Tangegod Court, Road, 9815000 (fixed), bookings: 9822081209 (or door), (01) 4401655, tanggodwodups@gmail.com

### Losar special
Tendon Thundrup, also known as Sanam Topor, a young Tibetan singer, song writer and composer will be performing live at The Nest, Thamel on the second day of Losar. Join in the celebration. 17 February, 7pm onwards, The Nest, Thamel, Satgaur, For details: 9815524207, 9815536306, nestgour@gmail.com

### Music for charity
Performances by James Pridhan, Sashi Kuniyur, Sreeni Singb, Sanjib Shrestha and Sunday Jaiyi in support musical treatment of legendary pop icon Om Biram Rana.
15 February, 6pm onwards, 6 Degrees, Thamel, 981500, 9815521740, 9815557307, artistsgalledeg@gmail.com

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**DINING**

**The Café**
Enjoy Chinese dinner on Friday or brunch on Saturday with cultural performances by artists from China Culture Centre at a monthly Chinese New Year’s celebration.
16-17 February, 6-10pm, 11:30am-4pm, Hyatt Regency, Bhaktapur, 9815200 (for reception), (01) 4445124

### Black Pepper Café & Pub
Cosmopolitan dining and tangy beverages in a traditional style courtyard. Try the apple sauce pork chops and enjoy the good service.
(9815524207, 9815552606

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**Atithi Resort & Spa**
A spa sanctuary that fused Nepali tradition with modern amenities, complete with a fuzzy pool and a easy restaurant.
Lakeside,Pokhara, (01) 4616760, info@atithiresort.com

### Mango Tree Lodge,
Culture walks, walking in the Gamali, wildlife exploration and jungle safari at Bardia National Park, Bharatpur.
barotahotel@ mangotreelodge.com

### The Yellow House,
Bed and breakfast for light travellers.
Sarangkot, (01) 5538569, 9815522578.
www.theyellowhouse.com

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**GETAWAY**

### Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel
Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at probably the best hotel in the area.
Lumbini, (01) 5502208, 9851031789, info@kymom.com

### Hatibhan Resort
Spend a weekend out at the Hatibhan Hills where adventures of Himalayan Outdoor Festival await.
Hatibhan, Phagal, (01) 4317044/705177, www.hatibhanresort.com

### Retreat at Damaar
A retreat for contemplatives in an undisturbed sanctuary to enrich and enlighten your inner self-awareness.
Bekashwor, Kuze, 9815032482, ajoy@retreatatdamaar.com, www.retreatatdamaar.com

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**OUR PICK SPOTLIGHT**

**Open in Kathmandu on 15 February**

Sunny and Eden
An acoustic musical evening with Sunny and Eden – tenondrous voices singing beautiful songs.
16 February, 8-11pm, House of Music, Amrit Mong, Thamel, 9851037172, sunnyeden@gmail.com

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**NEW SPOTLIGHT**

**1905**
19th Saturday morning at the restaurant’s weekly farmers market, with Upal Gudhip’s art on display and sale.
Kathmandu, Nov, (01) 4471148, 9895477238, www.1905.com

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**BUDDHA MAYA GARDENS HOTEL**

**GUARANTEE OF CLEANLINESS**

Health at home is an organization which facilitates home based health care services. Health at home service promotes health care in home, out of hospital setting to the clients. By taking the best care to 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.

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Land Reform in Cold War Nepal

The first US Ambassador came to Nepal 65 years ago this week to push for socio-economic reform.


TOM ROBERTSON

The first US Ambassador to visit Nepal arrived not by plane or car, but by horse. In February 1952, US Ambassador to India and Nepal Chester Bowles came to Kathmandu, for meetings with King Tribhuvan. At the time, most ‘buddha mandics’ who came overland from India were carried by porters in dandies, but not Bowles.

This was political theatre, he wanted to show he was different than the ‘buddha mandics’ who had ruled in India, and prove that Americans understood the troubles of ordinary people. In Delhi, he had impressed the Indians with his fondness for bicycling around town and had also enrolled his children in Indian schools.

A year later, exactly 65 years ago this week, Bowles was back in Nepal to push a program for land reform aimed to improve the lives of average Nepali citizens. He met government officials, with Paul Kunev and the members of the new US Operations Mission in Nepal (the precursor to USAID). In the 1940s and 50s the US was pushing for land reform around Asia, including Japan, Taiwan and South Vietnam as a way to counter the appeal of Chinese communism.

Bowles had worked in domestic US state politics, but had almost no international experience. Historian Robert Merrill has found Bowles ‘boundless energy’ and reformer’s zeal, but criticized his ‘go-getter style and natural optimism.’ This optimism led Bowles to misjudge the seriousness of certain harsh realities, such as the caste system and the lack of political will in India for structural change.

Two weeks before Bowles arrived in Nepal, the government had introduced a bill to reduce the power of the aristocracy, and not only residents of the hills. The bill was eventually passed but Bowles believed that he could not push for it. However, he was convinced that land reform was inevitable and he suggested that the government should be pushed to do it without foreign involvement.

Bowles believed that the land reforms were necessary for Nepal’s development. He believed that the government should be more proactive in pushing for land reform and that the United States should play a role in supporting the process.

The text also mentions Bowles’ role in Nepal and the challenges he faced. The text highlights Bowles’ optimism and commitment to land reform, despite the challenges he faced.

The text ends with a quote from Bowles, where he expresses his deep concern for the people of Nepal and his belief in the potential of land reform to improve their lives.
The Cloverfield Paradox

For sci fans, there is nothing better than the equivalent of a locked room mystery in space: the classic spaceship lost in space trope that ensnares a crew full of stressed out scientists trying to get out of the ship, away from the monsters inside, away from their worst selves, out of an alternate universe, and back home to their loved ones who they talk to fondly on giant screens.

J Abrams latest production, and third, but entirely stands alone, installment of the Cloverfield films. The Cloverfield Paradox is a classic, watchable, thrilling, imperfect but enjoyable example of this type of sci-fi that thrills you using the void of space as the main antagonist.

While the preceding two Cloverfield films (2008, 2016) have not really interested me (I am based on shock, terrifying, creatures taking over the earth, but both have gimmicks which I cannot revel for fear of totally spoiling your thrill), this one, just released on Netflix in an attempt to avoid all kind of deal between Netflix and Paramount, caught my eye, and kept me fairly enthralled through its brief but intense action packed 102 minutes.

Based on the already much used premise that the Earth is running out of fuel, a team of scientists must stay in space on the Cloverfield, a spaceship designed to hold the Shepard particle acclerators that being tested for the first time, but is far too powerful to try out on earth; if it were to work it would provide our planet with an infinite amount of energy. Two years later, Ava Hamilton (played by the wonderful Gina Rodriguez) and her crew are still stuck in space, racing against time (the Earth is on the brink of war ever fuel), to get the Shepard to produce a stable beam. With an ensemble cast that includes David Oyelowo, Zhang Ziyi, and Elizabeth Debicki, the Cloverfield jumps into an alternate reality – in essence the titular Cloverfield Paradox, and unexpected some of the creepiest happenings I’ve seen yet on cinema.

Equipped with gore, horror, thrills, secrets, and mysteries, the film never bog, and while the decision to release on Netflix instead of in theaters was reportedly prompted by fears of box office failure. However, despite those misgivings, this is a perfectly fine film about the horrors of space and the abuse of science and technology, packaged in a sleek looking film inhabited by some pretty amazing characters, each of whom managed to convey a distinct personality due to the innate talent of the actors. While the cinemas provide little entertainment and as the Western world passes us for its usually empty awards season, you can entertain yourself, and maybe even surprise yourself a bit with this little, delectable piece of science fiction madness – designed to keep you hooked for the next Cloverfield film.

UNIFICATION DIARIES: Leaders of CPN-UML, and Maoist Centre during the joint party co-ordination committee meeting held in Man Bhawan on Wednesday.

INDIA’S ARMY: Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat calls on President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Wednesday in Kathmandu. General Rawat was in Nepal from 12-14 February.

BRITAIN’S FOOD: Visiting British Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster (third from right) at Kathmandu’s Humanitarian Staging Area on Monday. Also pictured is British Ambassador to Nepal Richard Morris (second from right).

DEAL SEALS: Abdulla Turesu, General Country Manager of Turkish Airlines (left) and Man Bhawan Pratik, CEO of Tranquility Spa (right) shiver hands after signing a year-long MoU between the two companies on 8 February.
“We cannot change federalism, but we can change leaders”

Kamal Nabin Chaudhary

February 11

Devendra Raj Pandey has been in the limelight for the past 30 years after suddenly resigning from the Panchayat civil service in 1980. He spoke to Hari Babur Thapa and Janak Raj Sapkota of Kathmandu.

Translated excerpts:

Kathmandu: Two months have passed since elections, we don’t have a new government.

Pandey: We have been a long time since our hopes and confidence have been dashed, that the leadership would step up to its responsibilities, and that parties would move in a certain direction. Despite this, we have to hope for the best.

Is the delay because the incumbent government doesn’t want to step down, or because that is the way the constitution was written. I often ponder that, too. But whenever the constitution says, we should have followed certain democratic norms and values.

According to the logic, the winning party forms the government and the losing party sits in the opposition. But I even look like the parties that won a majority are not getting together to claim leadership. This is a bit strange.

So, does that mean that the parties did not foresee this possibility? It may be that because the debates about Maoists and janajati rights, or delayed, earthquake relief prompted the government to act in a hurry. The leaders were also not competent; we have been seeing their political and moral behavior and their misuse of the budget. There is also a tendency among the leaders to reward sympathetic behavior, and not listen to expert advice.

Do you have any reason to be hopeful about federalism? Not at all, we are going. The leadership is not a result of federalism. It is because of the leadership that we have federalism. We cannot change federalism, but we can change the leaders. How can you have effective decision-making if even the privileged class finds it has to latch on to a party to secure its future? Civil society has also become weak. Transformation needs a spark, and I haven’t seen civil society in the past 10-12 years. Where is the spark?

You have just written a book on governance and corruption. What is your conclusion? We have made a lot of laws in the past 20 years, but there is a lack of implementation in the state structure. I have included examples of other countries. There is not just one reason for the rise in corruption. There has to be all-around reform, but it must start with the leadership.

My fitness routine is not complete without Dabur Honey.
OM ASTHA RAI

It was December 2016, with the war over, Nepal was looking to the future with optimism. The tourism authorities put up an ambitious target of bringing two million tourists in ten years' time. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) sanctioned an $80 million loan to upgrade Kathmandu airport to handle increased aircraft movements.

Eight years later, the volume of passengers has surged; migrant workers are using the airport in record numbers, and even though Nepal is unlikely to meet the 2020 target, nearly one million tourists visited Nepal last year. International passenger volume at Kathmandu airport has grown by 20% between 2015 and 2017. However, the phase-wise plan to increase the airport's traffic capacity has been stalled, leading to heavy congestion in the air and on the ground. Nepal’s only air gateway is turning out to be an economic bottleneck.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAA) filed a Spanish contract, Constructrora Sanjeev after it reportedly failed to meet one deadline after another. Sanjeev had hoped to source earth filling material from the nearby Pashupati area, but when that was not allowed it tried to renegotiate the terms and delayed the project to extend the runway and expand the international terminal building. A messy court battle is ongoing in Singapore, with Sanjeev said to be pressuring the Civil Aviation Minister Hemanta Dev to sack CAA chief Sanjeev Gautam to reclaim its security deposit. The minister backed off after the media exposed the plan.

The airport expansion project has now resumed and is being carried out by four contractors. “We learned from the Sanjeev episode that it would not be wise to put all our eggs in one basket,” CAA spokesperson Bijendra Shrestha told us. Work on extending the southern threshold of the runway by 300m as well as expanding the international terminal has resumed. One more contractor is due to be selected to expand the international apron and extend the parallel taxiway to both ends of the runway, which requires 1.2 million cubic meters of earthfill. (See map) The much-delayed $22 million project is now expected to be finished by 2020.

Despite rapid recovery after the earthquake andilibicate, tourism authorities have more or less given up hope that there will be two million tourists by 2020. The main reason being that the airport just cannot handle that volume of traffic.

“The only international airport is so congested, it is choking tourism industry,” says Binayak Shah of the Hotel Association Nepal (HAN). “We cannot bring in two million tourists a year without fixing the airport.”

The government has now pushed back the target, saying it hopes to attract 2.5 million tourists by 2025. But even for that, the airport improvement needs to move immediately into the next phase of building a brand new international terminal building, moving the domestic terminals to the existing international building, adding aprons and remote bays and adding taxiways.

We will increase the number gradually to reach 2.5 million by 2025, and a lot of it will depend on whether the airport expansion plan goes smoothly and if the Bhairawa and Pokhara airports are completed on time,” says Suresh Acharya of the Tourism Ministry.

Congestion is now so bad that aircraft are required to hold for hours to land, parking bays are often full, and passengers have to wait for hours to collect their luggage from trolleys. Despite this, Nepal Airlines is bringing in

Alternate airfields

On Monday this week, when visibility was below the minimum required for a standard instrument approach into Kathmandu airport, most international flights were diverted. A flight from Delhi had to go to Kolkata after a costly hold for over two hours. Another flight from Dubai was diverted to Delhi.

If the new Bhairawa airport was completed as scheduled in December 2017 some of those flights would not have to go to India - reducing delays and saving money. But just as Kathmandu airport improvement was delayed because of a dispute with the Spanish contractor, Blaisawa also faced problems with its Chinese contractor.

Only 30% work has been completed so far in Bhairawa, and CAA’s Paspy Adhikari himself admits: “It is a sick project, and the progress is not satisfactory at all.” Adhikari is also overseeing Pokhara and Nijgadh International Airports. Much-delayed Pokhara is now picking up speed and is expected to come into operation by July 2021. When Pokhara and Bhairawa start operating international and domestic flights, the hope is that congestion in Kathmandu will ease, but by then the volume of passengers is also expected to increase. For which the new radar in Bhairawa (left) will be useful. But congestion in Kathmandu will not lessen until the international airport in Nijgadh is completed in the coming decade.
two wide body Airbus300-300s this year, Himalayan Airlines is adding four more Airbus 320s, Buddha Air and Yeti Airlines are expanding their fleets with three more ATR 72s each.

The hospitality industry is gearing up for an increase in tourist numbers. International chains like Sheraton and Hilton are putting up new hotels, several new luxury resorts are coming up in Pokhara, Chitwan and Nepalgunj — adding 4,000 new rooms over the next two years.

But these investments could go sour if the airport is not fixed. Negative international publicity about the chaos and filth at the airport is dissuading travelers, says aviation expert Meenakshi Aryal. “We can mitigate the problem, but we cannot solve it completely unless the second international airport in Nigedh and the fast-track highway connecting it to Kathmandu are built.”

Aviation experts like Aryal say some measures like extending taxiways to the threshold of the runway could have been done long ago. This would have increased the frequency of landings and takeoffs, reducing long and wasteful holding patterns. They say the new radar on Bhale Danda that came into operation this month won’t ease air traffic, unless the taxiways are extended first.
Cricket glossary

A
sin is divided into two types of country: those that play cricket and those that eat them. The Line of Control between these two ecologically distinct domains passes along 118 degrees East meridian in the vicinity of the Arabian Sea that separates China, Philippines and Japan (which play basketball and baseball) from India, Sri Lanka and Australia (which play cricket). There is also a third type of country in Asia, which is the one that likes to play with cricket by trying pieces of string on their hind legs, and gambling on cricket races (Thailand and Laos). But in general, it would be safe to say that west of the Arabian Sea, cricket is a sport, and to the east, it is a meal.

Since Nepal was never colonised by leg breakers, and therefore did not inherit a sport with a scoreboard that looks like the result of a three- tier general election, we have never really been passionate about cricket. And since we have never played off-square leg in Asia, we, as a nation, are not up to speed on cricket terminology. Although we knew it was a nail biting finish in Namibia the other day, many of us have no clue why it was so exciting. That is why, as a public service to the nation at large, the Ass takes time to list a truncated glossary of cricket terms so you can follow the running commentary of not just cricket but also political games that are currently ongoing in Nepal.

Agricultural Shot: A batting lineup that includes giving the Muscat Centre a shot at being the Minister of Agriculture.

Bouncer: KPO was already batting on a sticky wicket since he started his innings as Skipper, but his team-mate PKD suddenly bowled a Bouncer from behind him by saying the only deal was off unless he also gets to be skipper after two-and-half years.

Century: The time it will take for the batting team under the present Skippers to fulfill the promise of stability and prosperity without Queenin the Pitch at any time.

Chimpanzee: Unnamed left-wing wrist-spinner who spoke in Khari Bhabhadi Mahas years ago offering them 50 crores to change sides.

Donkey Drop: The Ass has absolutely no idea what this is, but it has a nice sound to it because it seems to describe accurately the donkey’s belong to our political jumble in time from time.

Drinks Break: What happened at Man. Khawan the other night as one faction of one party met with another faction of another party to plot against rival factions in both parties, usually well lubricated with M柱al and Teddy.

Full Toss: What will happen if Parliament follows the tradition of the First Constituent Assembly when chairs were damaged from the floor of the BBC. Why stop at chairs, why not upgrade to bigger furniture, and maybe someday even propel a couple of Honourable Members of the August House out the window?

“Howzat”: blood-curdling cry, often emanating from cabinet members, when the Finance Minister is mangled while trying to present the budget. The Speaker is not required to rule on the physical appeal for dismissal unless asked in this way. But, if asked, he is mandated to form a Task Force, an Inquiry Board or an Investigation Commission.

Jockstrap: Also known as ‘grin- guard’, mandatory gear for all newly nominated ministers whose genitalia could be the targets of well-aimed yorkers, especially if they are fielding at Silky Point.

Leg Break: A form of ‘bowvic carburizer’ practiced during the war by Buddha Bowlers, but still being employed selectively in order to dismiss opposition snapper from time to time. Also known as Leg Breaky.

Lunchtime: The first of the two intervals (see also: Drinks Break) taken during a full day’s session of the House, which usually occurs at lunchtime at about 12:30pm Indian Standard Time, and can last anywhere up to three hours.

Match Fixing: The accepted behind-the-scenes method of cobbling together a coalition government which involves bribing players with promises of cabinet berths, or housing plots in Spinath.

No Balls: This happens when an ex-minister repeatedly shows a lack of scottish fortune in the field, and is reassured instead of performing Quickies with Madame.

One Day International: A match in which a Lame Duck Finance Minister flies halfway around the world for a one-day international conference in Australia so he doesn’t have to rescue the economy from collapse.

Overthrow: Prolonged peer delivery could lead to the fielding team from the Left Alliance staging a violent takeover, leading to a batting collapse.

Partnership: An alliance of convenience byBatsmen from two parties with completely different ideologies, for example between PKD and SSD, that lasts as long as one of them is either a Golden Duck or a Lame Duck.

Powerplay: The block of overs that offers temporary advantage to the Coalition Government in an endgame struggle to be in Singhas Darbar or by hook or by crook. Mostly by crook.

Rost Day: Every day.

Wicked Keeper: Another name for party boss, the guy who is Caught Behind while keeping party faithful faithful.

Yorker: Opposite of Googly, as in: “PKD delivered a Yorker on a jockstrap-less BRR by calling him an Indian singer, SSD (then quickly bowled him a Googly in retaliation.”

"The Ass"