Tragedy at TIA

Thrusting in Nepal's only international air portal, and it
is in disarray – representing the state of a country wrecked by
ineptness and inefficiencies caused by political sharing of the spoils.
When the US-Bangla Dash 8 turboprop fell from the sky on
Monday afternoon, it fulfilled out the lives of Bangladeshi tourists,
Nepali students, tour operators and others. The crash highlighted once
more Nepal’s poor aviation safety
record.

Here was a country trying to
give back to normalcy after natural
and political upheavals, hoping
for a spike in tourist arrivals, and
moving to high-end tourism to
match the country’s natural and
cultural assets. But then came the
crash, making the tourism
industry vulnerable once more.

The reality is that while flying
STOL aircraft into precarious
mountain airstrips can be risky, TIA
in itself is not a hazardous airport.
Its single north-south runway
undoubtedly makes it inefficient for
flight handling, but the terrain,
approach, altitude and general
weather conditions do not present
great hazards.

The US-Bangla crash was
the first disaster with multiple
fatalities within the airport
perimeter. The Airbus A320
evacuation in 2015 closed the
airport for three days, but there
were no fatalities. Smaller planes
have escaped near the airport,
but usually due to pilot error or
technical malfunctions.

Two wide-bodies crashed within two months of each
other in 1992 when they hit terrain
outside the Valley in whitestorms.
Both were ascribed to pilot error (one pilot flying north
while thinking he was headed
south, the other flying thousands
feet below the prescribed altitude).

The heavy loss of life in those
two high-profile crashes put
Kathmandu on an international
list of notorious airports. But since the installation of a radar system
after the two crashes of 1992,
the last 16 months has seen
provide all-Nepal coverage, safety
safeguards have improved.

One of the very first acts of
Prime Minister K P Oli's new
government should be to now
improve the services at Tribhuvan
International Airport.

While we wait for the verdict of
the official enquiry in the US-
Bangla disaster, certain informed
conjectures can be made about
what might have transpired
based on the data of the air traffic
control (ATC) communication
that is available on the net, and
the several expert eye witnesses,
photos and videos of the plane in
its last moments.

Kanak Mani Dixit

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FINAL
MOMENTS
Kathmandu: A special
we had to reconstruct the flight path
and last moments of flight 84211.

PAGE 14-15

LAST FAREWELL: A Bangladeshi plane
was climbing towards Kathmandu airport on Thursday
after a fight from Dhaka, passing the wreckage of US-Bangla 84211.
HOPES DASHED

O

ow more Nepal has hit the international headlines for all the wrong reasons. The tragic crash of a Bangladesh airliner on Monday that killed 91 people has been trending worldwide.

It was all the more devastating because of the loss of a dozen youth doctors. Most of these were young women whose families had invested heavily in the medical education of their children. The hopes of many of them, and indeed the nation, went up in flames this week. The tragedy was an exasperating report seen on the television of a Bangladeshi airliner's crash in 2008 in which 20 Nepali students returning home from boarding school were killed very close to where the Bangladeshi plane came down on Monday.

Amidst the debris at the airport were medical text books (see photograph). The bodies of dead MBBS students were taken to the very hospital where they would have started work. A prominent Nepali surgeon, a noted Bangladeshi photographer, successful travel agents, and returning migrant workers were among the dead.

Like many accidents, this one need not have happened. Much larger wide-body jetliners had been landing at Kathmandu airport all day, and in fact surface visibility had actually improved when US-Bangla Airlines 737 started its approach in Kathmandu after an 80-minute flight from Dhaka.

As our transcript of the tape of the conversation between the Captain and air traffic controllers shows, page 14-15) the pilots made a routine straight-in approach into runway 02 but then pulled up, probably because of misalignment with the threshold. Thereafter, there are indications that Capt. Atul Chand had poor situational awareness, and was confused about the direction of the two ends of the runway. His transmissions from the cockpit were unfiltered and contradictory.

We will have to await the final verdict of the investigation panel, and the testimony of Capt. Sultan who survived. But what we do know so far is that after his missed approach, the Bombardier Dash 8 turboprop made three orbits above the airport to allow another aircraft to land from runway 09.

Throughout those nine minutes between 0824 and 0833 UTC, there is confusion between the air traffic controller and the captain about which runway to use, where to hold, and whether the runway is visible. The controller was visibly agitated in the commentary in Nepali that the Bangladeshi plane's pilot had desisted, and advised the tower to help it safely fly out.

While the plane was holding, one eyewitness reported seeing the plane fixating unusually low and close to Kapah Monastery to the north of the airport. Another aviation expert who was driving along the Ring Road towards the airport witnessed the last 360-degree turn the plane made, and remembers watching in horror as the plane was about to clip the top of the bungers over the domestic area in a tight left turn. With landing gear down and full flaps, the plane then flew level past the control tower, over two domestic flights waiting at Tinku K, overfly the runway, impacted and skidded across a football field used for security, breaks apart and burst into flames.

The Fire Station had held a drill at the exact spot where the plane came down. The rescue teams were quickly on hand. But the wreckage too was mangled and the fire too fierce for them to bring out many of the passengers trapped in their seats.

Nepal’s media spoke to many aviation experts who were in agreement that based on available evidence, the lack of familiarity with approach procedures contributed to confusion and distraction in the cockpit leading to the plane to stall and crash.

However, this does not absolve Kathmandu airport management from blame as noted in an earlier report in our page 14-15. Although rescuers werepromptly at the scene, videos show her put away at the crash site. Ground staff, inside and out,

drivers, even baggage handlers can be seen running across an active taxiway and runway to the site.

The gawkers were joined by the Prime Minister and his entourage which worsened the traffic jam and delayed ambulances. Passengers on other planes that landed just before the crash had to wait three hours for their luggage because the loaders had gone off to take pictures of the crash.

It is clear why some people want it to be ‘top secret’ because it exposes flaws in the air traffic controller’s handling of the incident. Not only are they not equipped with adequate English, there is a lack of clear, sharp instructions, and decisiveness to help an obviously befuddled crew.

Nepal has a bad international reputation for air safety. Kathmandu always tops the list of ten worst airports in the world. Even though the accident was not the airport’s fault. Nepal’s tragic loss of life once more highlighted how much further we have to go to revive confidence in Nepal’s aviation sector.

Charles Herbek

traffic controllers show...
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The bumpy road to federalism

Democracy will not deliver unless political power is devolved and people are put at the centre

The road in front of the house I live in Sanga, and one next to the school my six-year-old son goes to, was dug up for expansion two months ago. It has not been repaired yet.

In Kathmandu, it has become the new normal to turn a busy road into a dustbin construction site for months, causing traffic snarls and sandstorms. It is dusty in the dry season and muddy after rains.

It will not come as a surprise if authorities say they have not cut out of budget midway, and the dug up road remains left open for more than a year. It would be too much to expect for only a 5km stretch of the road to be expanded a day, and that another section would be dug up only after the previous stretch is repaired. We do not have a culture of keeping people at the centre of planning.

The new Constitution, promulgated two years ago after decades of conflict, redefined the state-popleship relationship; from centralisation to decentralisation. But that has not changed anything in how authorities treat people. They still view them as the rulers, not as service providers.

Federalism was supposed to shake up this status quo, but it did so only on paper. In reality, the bureaucracy is too obsessed with preserving its power, and is fighting hard to not let go of it.

As it stands, having a constitution promulgated by an elected assembly of the people is not enough to sort out the issues of governance. The near future is going to be a steep learning curve for politicians, bureaucracy and people alike. The course Nepal takes from here on will be defined by how the governments, people, the media and the party systems conduct themselves.

During the three tiers of elections last year, the main pitch of the NC against the Left Alliance was scaringmongering. The spectre of autocratic communist rule was their only political agenda. People did not subscribe to the NC’s election propaganda, and it failed miserably. But the current state of politics gives us a lot of reasons to worry. The first set of challenges comes from the federal system itself. The unique three tiers of federalism ensures a lot of power to local governments, and they are already being assertive. But provincial governments are yet to take full shape, and they lack prior infrastructure and legal instruments. Everything has to be built from scratch. However, when they come into full form, they will certainly begin to look for their space, possibly clashing with the Centre and local governments on many fronts.

The tussle will not only cut the federal system, and a strong central government may complicate the matter.

Another challenge is to prepare the people for the radical democracy we have embossed. Unless the system of governance learns to keep the people at the centre of decision-making and policy planning, and unless the people at the grassroots learn to demand that attention, democracy will not deliver.

The bridge between government authorities and people are the political parties and the media. And in a democracy, where public opinion should matter the most, this ecosystem becomes most vital for a healthy system to evolve.

So another set of challenges for Nepal’s democracy, as Pristine University professor Jan Werner Muller puts it, lies with politics and the press. “It is media and party systems that are rapidly falling in many countries and require systematic re-building,” he writes in a Project Syndicate article.

Rebuilding Nepal is a daunting challenge, and a society on edge demanding that our roads be built with people’s concerns at the centre, the road ahead leading to a better democracy is perilous.
Dolpo’s Dorje Dolma

PROUD FAMILY: Dorje Dolma (left) with her sisters Dolma Chitra, Sunmukhi Kembing, mother Dolma Tseying and father Karma Thundu.

Dorje Dolma was born in 1989. Her father was a Tibetan healer, and she was taken to Kathmandu for medical treatment with conditions diagnosed as advanced ascites.

That month-long journey on foot from her hometown in the remote Dolpo district of Nepal to Kathmandu caused the founder, Les Whit, to help her go to school. Even as a child, she instinctively knew the importance of education. Dorje was soon adopted by an American family and taken to the US for four operations to correct her spine.

It was while in the US at age 15, when her German mother strongly encouraged her to start writing a book. It was then he realized that he must tell his story in the most effective way.

Dorje graduated in Fine Arts from the University of Colorado and worked as a teacher for four years before deciding she had to live off her 15th birthday by writing. Writing the book has helped Dorje process her experiences and the remarkable blend of multiple cultures. She belongs to two worlds, and being a daughter of different realms, she has come across significantly different sets of parents, writing has helped her balance the polarities and also allowed her to meld the two distinct worlds to come together to form her own unique way of living.

It has been 26 years since Dolpo left Dolma for medical treatment, but very little has changed in her homeland. Dolpo still does not have proper health facilities and does not know where to send children to school.

‘People in Dolpo don’t want to leave, the land is majestically beautiful, but they need to get out for education or health,’ says Dorje, who plans to build a clinic in her village. Part of the proceeds of her book will go towards the Dolpo Tulku Foundation.

Tak Giril was released in the UK in January and will soon be available in Nepal. Dorje spoke of her life and book to the Times of India last week, followed by the screening of a Dutch documentary The Only Son which is about Dolpo’s family. She said she is inspired by the authentic and traditional ways of life.

The book launch was followed by a three-day exhibition of artwork by Dorje, her sister Sunmukhi Kembing and her uncle Padma Tshene, a celebrated Dolpo artist.

Dolma’s deep and childlike expression is a testament to the indomitable human spirit. Her resilience and gentle approach towards life has inspired many. As one who has been given so many challenges, we remain unaware of the power of healing.

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Wintering in Mongolia

The huge wide open spaces of Mongolia release the soul and make the heart sing.

The weather is warming up, but temperatures are still not the warmest available in the time of the year. The months to be observed by people are February, March and April. The weather in Mongolia is very cold during the winter. The temperature during the night may drop to minus 40°C. Even the days will be around minus 20°C. The average temperature during winter is about minus 5°C.

The landscape is very cold and frozen. The cold wind blows fiercely, and the snow drapes everything. The wind is so strong that it can knock down trees. The snow is deep, and it is difficult to walk on.

We take a car to Khorgol Lake National Park. This settlement on the Siberian end of the lake is best accessible in winter when the lake freezes solid.

Our Mongol team, in convoy of three warmed-UpVs, take their equipment seriously. They do not venture outdoors without layers of high-tech clothing, balaclavas, hats, gloves and scarves. Soon I discover why. The unrelenting temperatures are never less than 22°C below zero and one night it reached up to minus 47°C. Cold enough to send shivering pain through a carelessly unglowed hand and make my truck-shod feet ache.

From the city, we drive along a dirt track and make our way to the outskirts of the settlement. The small isle is surrounded by water, and the wind is blowing fiercely. The villagers are busy collecting ice for the winter months. They use the ice to keep their food fresh and to make ice cream.

The entire landscape is covered in snow, and the air is filled with a sharp, cold smell. The wind is howling, and the trees are swaying. We drive along the coast and see the villagers busy with their work. They are cutting ice, and the sound of the saws echoes in the cold air.

The village is located on the edge of the sea, and the sea is frozen. The villagers are busy building huts and making fireplaces out of the ice. The houses are small, and they are made of ice and snow. The villagers are happy to see us, and they invite us to their homes.

After a day of work, the villagers are tired, and they go to bed early. The night is cold, and the wind is howling. The villagers sleep under the snow, and the ice is their bed. The sound of the wind is the only sound that can be heard.

The next morning, the villagers are busy with their work. They are cutting ice, and the sound of the saws echoes in the cold air. The villagers are happy to see us, and they invite us to their homes. The villagers are happy to share their food with us.

We drive back to the city, and the journey is long. The road is covered in snow, and the wind is howling. The villagers are happy to see us, and they invite us to their homes. The villagers are happy to share their food with us.

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WALKING ON ICE: Training locals to improve wastafication in the Khumji Lake National Park. (above) Tsering, the driver, makes offerings of vodka before venturing onto the ice (left).

ride the smooth black, fractured white with cracks, sometimes frozen ripples as though a wind has suspended the ruffled surface, and then chasms wavy like circular icy pools. We slide to a halt and get down to dance on the ice, pausing at a shaman shrine amid pine trees on the lake’s largest island.

Snow is blown into icy ridges and glittering blocks where the great sheets of ice have melted and collided and overlapped, cracking into uneven joined gullies of anxiety for the drivers. Long cracks have formed into a frozen furrow, sometimes several metres wide. These cause the most concern and have to be inspected before our cautious convoy date proceed – some are 30 cm but narrow enough for us to splash across. The twenty Toyotas forge through in a fog of steamy confidence, but other fractures require long detours. Tsering, our stoical and highly skilled driver, has stopped singing Mongolian songs, his brown brow creased into a frown. Most alarming are the gunshot booms as the ice expands, cracks, and ricochets in the unusual cold. The thermometer on the dashboard reads minus 24°C and it is midday. Tsering adjusts his brown fur hat and radio to his colleague in the car behind. “I’m so frightened I can hardly speak,” comes the reply. Tsering sighs when we reach the end of the lake. “Landed.” He grins, his big face wrinkles with relief.

The Kharak Lodge door opens in a dramatic swirl of vapour like a pantomime entrance of dry ice as the frozen air condenses in the warmth. Frost crystallizes inside the door frame, and boots clump inside. It was late that evening, nursing milk tea by the stove with flame patterns flickering on the cabin’s wood ceiling, that Shoma tells me the real story. A pony whinnies outside.

The drivers were unusually nervous because last night the Kharkh school van ended up at the bottom of Lake Khurugul. In the reckless drive, the driver hit an unseen crack. There was plenty of time for him and the ten teachers to get out unharmed, but now the school has no transport.
Sabina Devkota

Jayanti Acharya, 62, had never been ill in her life. She had never had an accident. So when she learnt that she had multiple fractures in her bones, she was shocked. The doctor who examined her was not. He ordered a blood test, and it confirmed what he had guessed: Acharya had Vitamin D deficiency.

Laxita Rajaecharya, 17, began to feel pain in the hip late last year. She initially ignored the ache, and kept going to school. The pain did not subside, and she suffered unbearable muscle cramps. A blood test revealed she was suffering from Vitamin D deficiency.

Raj Shahi, 28, was passionate about martial arts, and always aspired to be an ace karate player. But a bone disorder caused by low Vitamin D forced him to give up the dream. Instead of practicing karate, he is now in physiotherapy.

Chandra Gurung, 42, was being treated for a thyroid disorder when she started suffering chronic joint pain. Soon, she could not even walk or stand up. A blood test showed it was due to a sharp drop in Vitamin D.

An increasing number of Nepalis are falling victim to a nationwide epidemic of Vitamin D deficiency as they adopt an urban lifestyle, stay indoors a lot and do not work or stay outdoors under the sun.

Exact data on the percentage of Nepalese suffering from low Vitamin D is not available, but doctors interviewed for this article all agreed that it is now becoming a national health emergency.

“Residents of Kathmandu Valley are at very high risk of Vitamin D deficiency, which leads to a host of medical complications,” says Sant Poudel, an orthopedic specialist at Spark Health Home. A research team found low Vitamin D levels in 74% of 2,168 patients at a medical lab in Pokhara in 2014-15 and published the findings in the Journal of Medicine and Medical Sciences in 2016. In Kathmandu, a study conducted seven years ago at a nursing home found that out of 99 patients who were tested, 78% had low Vitamin D.

Worryingly, Vitamin D deficiency is affecting under-five children more than other age groups, leaving them with life-long ailments. A study conducted by University of Oslo in 2013, examined 280 children below five in various parts of rural Nepal, and found that 91% had low Vitamin D. The same research showed that children who had been breast-fed had higher levels of vitamin D.

Vitamin D is vital for humans as it enhances their capacity to absorb calcium, which protects bone from fractures, osteomalacia and other disorders resulting in thin, brittle, misshapen and broken bones. Vitamin D is naturally found in very few food items like egg yolk, cheese and salmon. But 15 minutes of exposure to direct sunlight every day is enough to replenish Vitamin D levels in the body. Ultraviolet solar radiation allows the skin to generate Vitamin D which is then transported to the liver and kidney.

Depressed Vitamin D levels do not directly kill people, but it makes them susceptible to other deadly diseases like diabetes, asthma, cardiac arrest, paralysis, thyroid, dementia, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and cancer.

However, despite its prevalence only a few Nepalis know about the importance of Vitamin D for good health. Most patients find out about it only when they go to hospitals to treat a different symptom caused by insufficient level of Vitamin D in the blood.

A majority of kidney patients being treated at Grande International Hospital have been found to have low Vitamin D. Nephrologist Bishnu Pahari says: “This proves that there is a direct correlation between Vitamin D deficiency and renal failure.”

Vitamin D deficiency can also lead to depression, says psychologist Sani Obh. “If the body doesn’t get enough exposure to sunlight, it does not secrete enough of the hormone, serotonin. Vitamin D supplements are prescribed for some patients with signs of depression.”

What was once regarded as a condition confined to countries in the polar regions where the sun does not shine for 6-6 months in a year, is now a disease found all over the world as people move to cities and do not stay outdoor enough.

Says Poudel: “Those who mostly stay in shaded rooms, or apply sun block before stepping outside are more susceptible to Vitamin D deficiency.”

Nepali film actresses Keki Adhikari and Richa Sharma have recently found out that they have low Vitamin D, and both are on supplements. They said in an interview that since the film industry demands for fair skin, they could not expose themselves to the sun.

Public health experts say the stigma against dark skinned people and the increasing use of fairness creams is contributing to the Vitamin D crisis. Doctors usually prescribe Vitamin D capsules to patients, but nutrition expert Aruna Upnui says: “If nature has blessed us with a bright skin, why do we need Vitamin D supplements. Just let the sun shine on you.” (some names have been changed)
Blood, bone and brain
How vitamin D deficiency debilitates our bodies

Blood: weakened muscles of the heart
Pancreas: Can cause cancer
Respiratory: Reduced immunity and respiratory infections

Decoding Vitamin D

Symptoms
- Frequent illness
- Fatigue
- Back pain
- Depression
- Slow healing
- Bone loss
- Hair loss
- Muscle pain

Effects
- Rickets and Osteomalacia
- Depression
- Cancer
- Kidney problems
- Diabetes
- Cardiac Arrest

Prevention
- Soak up the sun as much as possible
- Eat vitamin D-rich foods like seafood, eggs, milk, cheese and milk
- Eat calcium-rich foods like sunflower, broccoli and spinach

Who needs more sunshine?
- Ultraviolet rays of the sun are filtered by pollution, haze, so city-dwellers need more exposure to direct sunlight.
- Dark-skinned people need to be in the sun three times longer than others.
- Smokers need more vitamin D.
- Those using fullness creams and sunblocks need more sunlight falling on their skin.
- Older people need to be in the sun longer.
- Pregnant women need more Vitamin D.
- Elderly people need more sunlight exposure.
- Sick or convalescing people need to stay out more.

Vitamin Alphabet

Vitamin A: Important for vision and immune system. Found in carrots, vegetables and meat.
Vitamin B: Needed for cell metabolism. Found in nuts and berries.
Vitamin C: Helps prevent scurvy and heart disease. Found in oranges, fruits.
Vitamin D: Helps absorb calcium and magnesium. Prevents diseases. Found in sunshine, egg yolk, seafood.
Vitamin E: Prevents heart diseases and repairs damaged skin. Found in nuts, wheat germ and fruits.
Vitamin K: Promotes blood clotting and bone metabolism. Found in fruits, meat, dairy and fermented foods.
**GETAWAY**

**ChaChaWhee**

The fun park resort with lush green lawns, outdoor activities and an all-inclusive food and drink package makes it perfect for a short vacation, especially for stressed parents with kids who want a break from city life.

[Read more](http://www.chachawhee.com)

**Atithi Resort & Spa**

The resort offers luxury at its best, offering a multitude of spa options and diets to use only the best of oils and spices.

[Read more](http://www.atithiresort.com)

**The Old Inn**

Experience Bandipur’s peaceful ambience, a quaint from Chitwan National Park and view of the Ganeshthauli range.

[Read more](http://www.theoldinnbandipur.com)

**Hotel Barahi**

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[Read more](http://www.barahihotel.com)

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[Read more](http://www.dvarikaresort.com)

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**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

**KATHMANDU, 9-15 March**

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While the skies and weather were brought to the white clouds, you may be a weather expert to realize that the average daily AQI is less than the actual value range. The monthly data is affected by sudden pollution, delayed reporting or in-depth analysis by posting pollution in the actual value range. In the next 1 week a fresh update about the pollution index will be posted on this site.

[Read more](https://napa.gov.np/air-quality-monitoring)

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**EVENTS**

- **Farmer’s Market**
  A 10 minute walk from the Southbend Shopping Center, the lush green groves of Love Residence awaits with organic food stalls and live music.
  17 March, 10 am onwards, Lower Residence, Southbend, 500066715

- **Ford’s Motor rally**
  A motor competition where teams of driver and navigator race to take prizes during the 200km drive from Kathmandu to Pokhara.
  24 to 26 March, 8 am onwards, 8234, 999 (for first for second for third for first for second for third for first for second for third for first)

- **Kramasiev**
  Giving you the best of traditional music, Kramasiev is a concert to remember.
  26 March, 7:30 pm onwards, 500368978

- **Open mic night**
  Featuring koolaid for classic covers of Bob Dylan, Eagles, Dire Straits and more. The stage will be yours too.
  26 March, 7:30 pm, House of Music, Annapurna, 500506710

- **Ketan Chhetri**
  Bone camp music festival continues with Ketan performing his original and classical hits.
  26 March, Rin onwards, 500258855

- **The Midnight Riders**
  Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with The Midnight Riders playing classic rock, southern rock, blues, ballads and hard rock, 70’s retro disco, 80’s pop and contemporary hits.
  17 March, 3 pm onwards, 500246960

- **The Francophonie Week**
  Celebrating the beautiful language of Melodies, the much awaited Francophonie Week of 2016 will have various film screenings, live music, games and concerts scheduled for each day.

- **Paheli Batti Muni and Ranzen**
  A part of Save Camp music fest, Paheli Batti Muni will be performing, followed by performances by Ranzen.
  16 March, 7:30 pm onwards, House of Music, Annapurna, 500506710

**Dining**

- **Rox Restaurant**
  In celebration of French gastronomy, Rox has prepared a special 4 course set Gozo de France menu, including amuse, soup, starter, main course and dessert.
  27 March, 7:30 pm, Regency, Babatola, 500354000

**Music**

- **Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen**
  Pre-order the freshly added items on the menu—Babur Landau, Chicken or Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen, and enjoy the dinner with open mic comedy and live music.
  500727027

**Made in Nepal expo**

Expo organized by Nepalese Young Entrepreneur Forum for the sixth time. More than 75 Nepali product and service stalls, Palet (a women’s fair), photo exhibition and guest lecture.

16 - 18 March, 10 am onwards, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, 500214641

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**Yellow House House**

Start your Sunday evening with a special drink buffet at the Yellow House and saddle up around the stalls for interesting art and local food, accompanied by music.

18 March, 7 pm onwards, The Yellow House, Swayambhunath, 500555598

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**Economics of happiness**

A talk program on the economics of happiness by Author Mark A. Krieger, discussing on how governments, communities and individuals can redefine their approach to measuring economic prosperity.

18 March, 5:30 - 7:30 pm, Nepal Community, Pokhara, 500254529

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**GAMEE**

Global Adventure and Mountainering Conference and Expo is an international forum for exchange of information, products and services on adventure and mountaineering.

23 - 25 March, Bhairab, Hotel Park and Hotel Durbar, 500354008, mountaineerconfernece.com

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

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Win-win for women

Young women who have overcome deprivation and discrimination could make ideal assistants to newly-elected village and municipality women leaders

Namrata Sharma
in Nepalganj

A s provincial governments and legislatures get down to business in Provinces 8 and 6 in western Nepal, young elected representatives hold the answer to inclusive development of this under-served region.

The newly-elected local women vice chairs of village councils and female deputy mayors could get help from young women and committed individuals who have struggled against deprivation and discrimination.

“I am worried that the newly elected local women and Dalit leaders have not been consulted, incompetent for their jobs,” explains Sharda Ragni Biewokarma, vice chairperson of Rajastuth Rural Municipality in Province 5. One of the vice chair’s responsibilities is to address judicial issues, and many lack the expertise and experience in legal matters.

If men were vice chairs they too would be in the same situation, but Biewokarma feels that elected women are more likely to labelled unfair and their positions scrapped by the next elections.

Samarth Tharu, 21, is an undergraduate student at the Mahendra Multiple Campus in Nepalgunj, and also serves as a support teacher in her high school. She was forced to be independent from age 6 when her mother ran away with another man leaving her with an older brother.

She was abused by her father and step mother. Samarth attempted suicide, but found her feet with help of a local charity.

Ritika Pariyar is from a Dalit family with three siblings. Her father was a migrant worker in India, earning just enough to pay for her ailing mother’s medical bills.

She was lucky to get a scholarship to go to school in Khajur of Province 3, and now works as a student mobilizer for Second To Read, and is attending college at the same time.

Nuzia Khan, 20, is part of a Muslim family of two brothers and two sisters. After her sister’s education was stopped she was forced to work, or to be a child bride and was enrolled into a school bare.

She is also teaching and studying for her undergraduate degree at the same time. “Education empowers girls from Muslim communities to stop from being child brides and gain confidence to earn and study,” says Khan.

Manisha Khadka is from Surkhet in Province 8 and was married when she was in Grade 10.

She quit school for six years as she gave birth to a son. She is now trying to catch up with her education, while her husband often beats her up at home. She is now also a part-time teacher and is speaking out in public against domestic violence. “The fact that I got support to continue with my studies has made a big difference to me,” says Khadka.

Strijna Nisha is also an undergraduate with her own income as a Friskay teacher. She comes from an under privileged Muslim family and had to support them as a child worker. She was lucky to be identified as a possible girl at risk and was put to school till Grade 12.

She now teaches younger girls like herself in the madrasa from where she graduated and earns enough to pay for her college.

in 2001, there were 44 students with a majority of boys. Today it has 200 students with more than 50% girls, says head teacher Ahmed Reza. The girls have continued with their studies while the boys have dropped out because they have to work to pay off the family debt. The message from these young Nepali daughters is that education empowers them to reject early marriage, find jobs, and deal with domestic violence themselves.

Many vice chairs of rural municipalities have been elected after a long struggle in the women’s rights movement. However, they lack the knowledge to take up the judicial role of the vice chairs.

The women profiled above come from diverse backgrounds, but all have struggled to overcome discrimination and entrenched poverty. They could be ideal assistants to elected women representatives. They are young, smart, committed, and need jobs, and elected women need help in their new positions. It could be a win-win.
When I first saw the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh’s Lieutenant of Inishmore on stage in New York in 2006, I never imagined that this brilliant, sharp, funny, melodic, verbose writer would make the jump into cinema. His work seemed made for the stage, with characters and patterns speaking beautiful, articulate sentences more suited for theater than cinema.

Imagine my surprise then, on him winning the Best Screenplay award this year at the Oscars for the spine-chillingly poignant, belly-achingly funny film which he also directed, Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri - a heartbreaking film about a woman who goes all out to find her daughter’s rapes and killer.

Mildred Hayes (played in a feral, funny, riveting, unforgettable performance by Frances McDormand) who won the Best Actress Oscar for her role is infatuated by the lack of progress from the town police in the brutal murder of her teenage daughter Angela. Depressed from her drunken abusive husband and consumed by grief at the loss of her daughter, Mildred puts down a payment of $5000 to paint an astonishing series of signs on three billboards just outside the town - shaming the town police who have no leads even months after the killing. Needless to say, the small insular town is aghast at her brash, unrepentant attitude in accusing one of the town’s most beloved members, Chief Willoughby (Woody Harrelson) of ineptitude. It also doesn’t help that Chief Willoughby is dying of cancer.

The film follows a tight, sharp dramatic arc that includes unforgettable performances from a cast of actors who play the town’s quirky characters in a story about how revenge can consume, and forgiveness can redeem.

Sam Rockwell, another under the radar but incredibly fine actor won for Best Supporting Actor playing Officer Jason Dixon - a bigoted policeman whose life is changed by Mildred’s vendetta. McDormand does the almost impossible, which is to create a deep, dark film about violence, loss, racism, brutality and sexism, lacing it with irreverent humour and a complete, compassionate understanding of the flaws of humanity. McDonagh understands that “No man is as bad as his worst act” – but nevertheless everyone must pay for their actions if they have morals for the immoral sociopaths, there is no reprieve.

All of McDonagh’s films, including the hilariously funny and incredibly bleak In Bruges (2008), are suited almost more for theatre than for cinema. Yet this film manages to be a powerful work uncoined: it creates a sense of place so strong that one believes McDonagh’s version of Bruges and quiet Ebbing, Missouri are out there somewhere.

While Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri lost in the Best Picture category to The Shape of Water (necessed last week in this column), it is as worthy a contender, if not more deserving. For those who want to see a real masterpiece this year, this is the film to watch. Do not miss this film, it is the stuff of legend.
Lucky escape

Sanam Shyam of Lucky Travels speaking to Chetana Gurung:
I was among 12 travel agents returning from a Fami Trip to Dhaka, and boarded the US-Bangla plane at 12:30 pm. The plane was full, and I was seated in the front. There were Nepali MBBS students at the back returning to Nepal. There must have been around 30 Nepalis and as many Bangladeshis on board.

We were all excited about flying back to Nepal, even though the mountains were not visible. Passengers were taking pictures through the right side windows. The plane circled probably due to air traffic. I have been flying into Kathmandu often, but I had never seen the mountains so close.

Even before the plane landed on the runway it was shuddering in an unusual way. The plane impacted with the ground in such force it felt like we had hit a mountain. It skidded and hit an obstacle.

There were cries, passengers fell off their chairs, others were trapped in their seats and baggage fell from the overhead lockers. We realised that the plane had made an emergency landing away from the runway. The only challenge was how to get out. We tried to get up from where we were trapped, but couldn’t. Then the back of the plane caught fire and smoke started billowing out. There was frightened screaming.

We knew that if we didn’t get out we would be burnt alive. We managed to extricate ourselves. Passengers ahead of us got out, and we followed them. We could not rescue others in time, some had their hands and legs trapped. By then the fire was so intense we couldn’t go near. I don’t remember much after that.

Now I sit at New Chitwan, and think about all our group members. We were 11; 10 of us managed to save ourselves, while one of our friends was killed. I am frightened thinking how close I was to dying in the plane. This is probably what they mean by being lucky.

“We had to improvise”

Nepal Army Lt Col Puran Gahle was in the first rescue team to reach the US Bangla crash site on Monday, and spoke to BBC Nepali Service.

BBC Nepal: What did you see when you reached the crash site?
Puran Gahle: The plane was burning on the grass, and we sensed a danger of the fire spreading and we heard explosions.

So how did you respond?
We have gone through frequent training drills precisely to respond to such disasters. Even last year, we had conducted a large-scale simulated crash. Learning from our mock crashes, we tried to douse the fire and rescue passengers and crew members. We split into different units, and tried to cut through the cabin to reach survivors. My unit had collapsed structure rescue equipment, but we also needed to improvise. The fire control team of the TIA also arrived there with foam and other equipment. The ambulances took a little more time.

What challenge did your unit faced in rescue?
The aircraft was engulfed in fire, fuel was leaking from the tanks. We had to be careful not to ignite the fuel and trigger an explosion. We had to manually break into the aircraft hull and pull out passengers. After police arrived, we got more manpower to rescue passengers by using traditional equipment like axes and ropes.

What are the lessons from this crash?
The fire could spread easily, causing more damage. So we need to keep the airport area clean, removing all the grass. If aircraft engineers were there, they could have shown us the right way to get into the wreckage. In this case, they came only after we requested them.
Kanak Mani Dixit

Things seem to be going smoothly enough as Co-pilot Priyanka Ranahi handles cockpit communications with the TIA tower. The aircraft is cleared to descend and land at the southern ‘02’ end of the runway.

At one point, however, Capt Abdul Sultan takes over even as female air traffic controller (ATC) comes on to inform the aircraft that it is moving towards the northern ‘20’ side of the airport when he had been given permission to land on ‘02’. There seems to be some confusion in the mind of the pilot about the runway ends 02 (south) and 20 (north). Even as the Dash 8 is on approach, the Nepali pilots of other aircraft are heard warning the ATC that they cannot see the runway and are confused as to which runway is the right one. They point out that the pilot didn’t seem to know where he was and were worried about when he would land up ‘adivalyo jaasto chhah’, ‘yo kata jaadal’.

20 by 02

Confusion over the two ends of the runway also reflects a separate tragedy of the mismanagement of Kathmandu airport.

FINAL MOMENTS

Approximate flight path of the US-Bangla flight BS211 on 12 March pieced together with expert analysis, eye witness reports and ATC tape.

KATHMANDU

Ring Road

Normal Approach Path

SHIVAPURI

KAPAN

GAGALPHEDI

BS211 makes 3 orbits over the airport while taking in air traffic control.

The Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 with registration VH-ACU was the aircraft that landed at KTM on 12 March 2018. It had been involved in a runway accident in November 2016.

Captain Abdul Sultan was a veteran pilot who had been flying for Air India. He had been flying with US-Bangla for only 3 months.

This was his third flight with the airline when the incident occurred.

Photo posted on Twitter by passenger on Dash 8. It shows crash site, and the stationary bodies of two passengers.

The crash site was close to the fire station and the hangar, no survivors were found, but the wreckage was said to have been severely damaged.
An exasperated male ATC comes on to warn the pilot at one point: “I say again, do not proceed towards runway 26.” Again, he is asked to remain on hold and not to land because there is another Buddha Air aircraft on approach.

After that plane lands, the ATC asks the pilot whether he wants to be cleared to land on runway 02 or 20, and he chooses the latter. He is then asked if he has the siding right in sight, to which he replies, “Negative.” Then, immediately thereafter, the pilot reports, “Affirmative.”

At that point Capt Sultan announces his understanding: “Cleared to land runway 02” (even though he had sought permission for 20). The ATC too now clears him to land on 02.

Talking to a Nepal Army Airbase helicopter (Army 34) which is on hold 15 km away, the ATC says that the Bangladesh aircraft is “on final for 20.”

Apparently, this was Capt Sultan’s fifth flight of the day, and he had just been in his resignation to the US-Bangla management in order to join a Gulf airline.

A scary video that came to light on Wednesday shows the Bourdier turning closer to the ground below the Simla reittance at Gangpohdi, pulling up and climbing upwards without stopping the landing gears. It was a small glimpse of an aircraft that seemed to have lost its way to clear daylight.

One question arises why the ATC did not ask the aircraft to move from the ‘visual flight rule’ to instrument approach in time. The Prime Minister’s Office will regard this tragedy as a wake-up call to make improvements so that the sole international airport is no longer an object of national shame.

It shows how badly the airport is managed that we rejoice when we find that the toleres actually have water or do not soil. Yet, lackadaisical attitude of staff in all categories, the choice at the baggage carousels, the long lines waiting to fly after having witnessed this dangerous circuit.

The last recorded words of the US-Bangla pilot spoken right away: “[Unintelligible] said sir, are we cleared to land?”

Tung [tells other domestic traffic to hold side valley. Transmission in Nepal]

Tower: 01:50:20 nu aulaiy chha joda (He sounds perturbed) 01:50:20

Tower: 02:00:20: Mr. Affirm. Kato ha ro hidwam dhikalo joda got (Yes, he sounds very divasitiated)

Tower: 03:00:20: Mr. ID: 00 018 ho radar vector gur thapta parcha joda kha Ra. jo kato joda (Unintelligible) to surrounding drugers ho kato jauna. (Right, we need to give him a radar vector out of here so he goes somewhere else, visually in surrounding mountains is not at good)

Tower: Roger, thank you sir.

Tower: Bourdier 211, runway, cleared to land. Runway’s vacant, after runway 02 or 20

Tower: 03:00:20: Mr. ID: 00 018 ho radar vector gur thapta parcha joda kha Ra. jo kato joda (Unintelligible) to surrounding drugers ho kato jauna. (Right, we need to give him a radar vector out of here so he goes somewhere else, visually in surrounding mountains is not at good)

Tower: Roger, thank you sir.
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