Risking his life to save lives

Medical care should be affordable and accessible to all. In one sentence, that is all Govinda KC wants on behalf of Nepal.

On Thursday, the government ordered police to use force inside a Jumla hospital where KC was on the 28th day of his latest hunger strike demanding an end to commercialisation of the medical sector. A policeman was killed in friendly fire, hit by a rubber bullet at close range.

Amidst protests in Jumla and Kathmandu, and a nationwide hospital strike, KC finally agreed to be flown back on an Army helicopter, saying he wanted to prevent any more violence.

The reason quality health care is out of reach of Nepal’s predominantly poor people is that subsidised government hospitals are so shoddily, ill-equipped, poorly-managed, under-funded and understaffed.

State neglect and mismanagement at its facilities means expensive private hospitals have stepped in to fill the gap. Medical care has therefore become a lucrative business, where rampant over-charging is the norm.

But that is not where the real money is. The bonanza is in medical education, where billions can be made overnight charging students for admission fees and royally to feed the demand from private hospitals. It is no secret that the medical mafia enjoys strong political protection.

KC’s main demands follow the recommendations of the Kedar Bhakti Mathema Commission two years ago: an end to universities giving random affiliation to new medical colleges in return for kickbacks, restricting universities to maximum five affiliations, limiting private medical colleges in Kathmandu Valley to two.

Successive governments over the past decade have promised to meet these demands to make him end his fast, but never fulfilled them.

After the government restricted protests in Kathmandu, KC went to Jumla for his 19th hunger strike last month, where he was housed by the local administration, making him seek refuge in the Karnali Health Science Academy.

That was where on Thursday the riot police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to dislodge students and protesters blocking access to KC’s room on the third floor.

Although there are more doctors in Nepal today than 20 years ago, the population has also increased in that period. Nepal’s doctors to population ratio is one of the lowest in the world: 2 physicians for every 10,000 people. KC’s demand is to spread medical care evenly throughout the country, not just Kathmandu.

However, with so much money involved, KC’s hunger strike is a direct challenge to Prime Minister Oli, who is beholden to powerful businessmen with investments in the medical sector. Tycoon Durga Prasad, who owns BMC Hospital in Baga, was a key facilitator in uniting the UML and Maoists to form the Nepali Communist Party. Rajendra Pandey and comrades have invested heavily in the Man Mohan Memorial and the Kathmandu National Hospitals.

Kleptocrats of Kathmandu and Kuala Lumpur

Kleptocrats of Kathmandu and Kuala Lumpur

Nepalis in Qatar work on facilities for the 2022 World Cup

Klepotocracy of Kathmandu and Kuala Lumpur

Find out how cross-border corruption on a grand scale has robbed poor Nepali migrant workers of Rs 5 billion in 5 years.

PAGE 14-15

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BETWEEN TWO OCEANS

There was a time when Nepal had to be careful about balancing its giant northern and southern neighbours, but the world is now multi-polar and getting to be a much more complicated place. As his tour of Europe showed, Donald Trump has reset relationships, freestawar alliances, and upset many apple carts. There has been a technicist shift in geostrategic terms in the region, with Holden forecasting that countries like Nepal have to be much more supply and source-focused in foreign policy and economic diplomacy.

One of the clearest indications yet of the current shift is the Trump administration’s renaming of its Pacific Command into Indo-Pacific Command. It builds on President Obama’s initiative, made in April 2016, and designating India as a Major Defence Partner. It has also come on the heels of an attempted military exercise between the US and Indian navies.

This is a part of Americas’s strategic assets in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Times.com

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHATS TRENDING

Red Rice

The government that came to power with so much promise is setting the country on a new, lower-growth path. System failure has punctuated its first 10 years, and many are wondering with a sinking heart if the country is taking a U-turn. But the government has maintained its forward momentum, and a new leader has emerged who promises to take the country to a new era of prosperity.

Most popular on Twitter

Bhaktapur inundated

Although Aathaurugf was a heavy rain, the primary focus of the floods was the缴纳 area. Heed to the outpouring of concern in the affected areas. The government has taken swift action to address the situation, and more aid is on the way.

Most watched online

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Nepali Times on 12 July 2014 (INR 10) covered the 10th anniversary of Nepal’s first president, Pushpendra Pratap Gurung. The article focused on his role as mediator and put up the story of the prototype republic: Jat yogaPandit Singh. Here is an excerpt from a first-page story.

TAP IN

Sells a gap in Nepal’s infrastructure, but during the monsoon the has a slight gap in water supply from the main river. A man should not eat the same ghee, as it is highly dangerous. Go and read a page 4 file stay and watch a video.

IMPACT

Barparai

2.25 April 2014 Nepal Love story is a Nepali love story in Hollywood. The film is directed by and written by . The film is produced by and distributed by . The film is the first Nepali film to be nominated for an Academy Award. The film is about a young man who is forced to choose between love and duty.

Most commented

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The workers’ football

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar will shine a light on Nepali migrant workers’ welfare

In a world where populist anti-immigrant narratives dominate, the diverse composition of football teams in the World Cup in Russia did not go unnoticed. Players of foreign origin, including former refugees and children or grandchildren of immigrants, especially in the winning French team, stole the show.

In 2018, Nepali workers busy building the infrastructure for the next World Cup found escape from their hard work watching the games in the evenings. The next championship, in the winter of 2022, presents opportunities and challenges for Qatar, which is still in the throes of a Saudi-Emirates blockade, as well as for Nepal which is a major supplier of workers to the country.

Qatar is expected to further ramp up hiring as it races to complete all its eight stadiums and other facilities. This will translate into hundreds of thousands of workers. On the other hand, given the nature of work, it raises questions over migrant rights: a topic the Qatari are sensitive about.

After media highlighted human rights abuses including migrant deaths on FIFA construction sites, there have been reforms. Implementing a minimum wage, they include minimum wage guarantees, lax exit visa requirements and allowing workers to keep their passports, and timely payment of wages through bank accounts under the Wage Protection System.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) recently opened an office in Doha and there is talk of Qatar setting up one stop centres in all migrant-sending countries, including Nepal, rightly recognizing that many problems faced by migrants start at home. Under this scheme, recruitment procedures, medical check-up, biometric fingerprinting, and contract signing will be completed prior to departure.

“There have been improvements: stricter audits and random checks by welfare officers at workplaces are ongoing with consequences for non-compliance of labor standards,” admits one Nepali worker in Doha.

Others are less optimistic, however. A Nepali seeking worker who helps discussed and stranded Nepalis, says: “Monitoring and implementation are the key. In South employers working at high profile workspots, particularly the stadiums, but not in others. These are reforms made without workers in mind.”

A football tournament for migrants, captured in a well-made documentary The Worker’s Cup, has been criticized as a publicity stunt to appease critics. “We are not about the worker. It was never about the worker,” one migrant labourer says in the documentary.

However, the international spotlight surrounding the 2022 World Cup presents opportunities for welfare work to get global attention, they have expressed. There is a precedent: reports of child labour in Sri Lanka of Pakistan, the supplier of ball used in the World Cup, spurred big brands like Adidas and Nike as well as FIFA to take action resulting in the elimination of the practice.

With the introduction of reform following media publicity about worker mistreatment in the coffee, chocolate, garments, and handball gadgets industries. This is not easily extended to the construction industry because Nike, Apple, Starbucks, H&M have become household names, in ways that firms like Al Ijber and Tekfen which hire migrant construction workers are not.

With all eyes on Qatar, however, there is scope for migrant issues to be highlighted through non-conventional partnerships with players like the Centre for Sport and Human Rights that focus on the rights of athletes in the sports industry. Because migration is receiving global attention, a strategic campaign that appeals to the spirit of the game, which these construction projects are tied to, would also be useful.

The Global Compact on Migration this month got countries to agree to cooperate on migration governance. It remains to be seen how these non-binding agreements impact on the day-to-day lives of migrant workers. The real challenge is in improving working and living conditions, high recruitment costs, and uncountable deaths of workers, are now. What is new for Qatari is their association with a mega sporting event like the World Cup, and the power of sports diplomacy gives it wider relevance and potential for longer-term reform.

Says Pandem, one of the Nepali players depicted in The Worker’s Cup: “We had players from Ghana, India, Nepal, Kenya while our coach was from Egypt. Most of us spoke broken English, so in many different accents, it was hard to understand each other, yet we had a strong team spirit, we bonded very well.”

It adds that Nepalis have very good reputation in Qatar’s construction sector, where high-risk jobs on high buildings needs skill and courage. He expects the demand for Nepalis will grow in the coming years.

Pandem, who also played at the Khalifiyah International Stadium with other migrant workers, hopes to visit Qatar in 2022 like many other Nepalis. And it won’t be just for the love of the game.

Das Deutsche Bier

In 1753, in a small town located in the heart of Germany’s Bavaria, a brewery was established in Berchtesgaden. The brewery says it assures the production of the premium beer by focusing on traditional brewing methods and quality of control, innovation measurement practices and cutting-edge position technology.

Indeed, the brewery is the most modern and advanced in South Asia, following the same exacting standards set by German Purity Law.

[GI] had been working for the past year on establishing a world-class brewery in Nepal with the intention of benefiting the Nepali customers’ demand for quality beer. Through state-of-the-art manufacturing, big sales and marketing teams, high innovation, and sound financial base, the company says it is looking forward to “a strong partnership with Warsteiner.”

The company has a wide range of products, from light and medium-bodied beers to strong and dark ales, as well as craft beers and ciders.

Warsteiner claims that its beers are hand-crafted in small batches, using only the finest ingredients, and that they offer a perfect balance of flavor and aroma.

The brewery says that it is committed to sustainability and environmental protection, with a focus on reducing waste and carbon emissions. It also has a strong focus on quality control, ensuring that every batch of beer meets the company’s high standards.

Increasing traffic

Tourists flocked to the region for the first time in 1850s, with the railway. Today, the region is one of the busiest travel destinations in the world, with an average of over 120,000 passengers per day. The airport is one of the busiest in the world, with over 30 million passengers passing through it each year.

Travelling times have also improved, with average journey times of less than 30 minutes between most destinations. The airport is well-connected, with flights to destinations around the world, including Europe, Asia, North America, and the Middle East.

In 2018, the airport handled over 25 million passengers, making it one of the busiest in Europe. The airport has been expanded and modernized in recent years, with the addition of a new terminal and increased runway capacity.
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MERCY EDUCATION
catching up with Col John Blashford-Snell, the army explorer and nepal aficionado

in a Ausie tavern Lately asked: “what do you guys do in a quaff?” Proping up the bar, the locals looked at me, baffled. “pick up yer beer, mate!”

Without Robbins I had no choice but to proceed alone on the Navy’s patrol boat early next morning. The very large and very papuan Captain graciously moved out of his side cabin for me, and the all male crew could not have been more polite. We put to sea but it wasn’t long before the engines failed and I was hauled over to another similar vessel. That got us a couple more days through the flying fish and past the distant conical clad volcanic islands of New Ireland, when the same thing happened again.

near Kavieng we visited an old planter’s Club that literally rocked on its wooden pillars and crumpled to the ground before my eyes – or am I imagining this episode? Eventually we reached the remote feni islands in the Bismack Archipelago that was our destination, having anchored offshore within tantalizing sight of its sandy beaches and gently swaying palms, I was unable to land because the surfboard on the dinghy failed to start.

92 years, always happens at this time of year!” declared the unlikely named Colonel manyasa, cheerfully leaning on the desk in a starched white uniform when, back in Port Moresby headquarters and reunited with JBS, we admitted to him our single-handedly disabling the best part of his entire PNG naval defence force. Colonel Manyasa grinned shaking his head in sympathy, “It’s the end of one annual budget cycle and without any funds for maintenance the boats are always breaking down.”

I left John and Judith waving well from their back door in the English summer sunshine and drove back through the lengthening shadows past the stonehenge monoliths – it was surely the longest day with its midsummer solstice. The ancient power of these places still potent.

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Living legends

Wach sxix first expedition fort, when seated, explorer John Blashford-Snell asks about the place followed to become a legendary modern adventurer. [http://www.pascale.co.nz/active/18187]

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Sahina Shrestha

Dinesh Sunar breaks the record for the most backward somersaults against a wall in 30 seconds in January this year, managing a staggering 16 somersaults, beating the previous record by leaps and bounds. Last year he also did 14 back flips to set the record for the most twisting backflips off a wall in one minute.

So, what are Parkour and Free running? Let’s hear it from the man himself: “Parkour is an act of going from point A to B using the obstacles in the path to increase efficiency. And Free running is using the movements skillfully to express ourselves.”

These days, when Sunar is not busy with his police duties he uses Kathmandu as his training ground. The 25-year-old, known as ‘Parkour Dinesh’ also works as a stuntman in movies, having performed in 13 Nepali and one Bollywood movie.

Sunar started attempting flips and jumps off mounds of construction sand on the banks of the Manahan River in Kathmandu. “At that time I didn’t know what I was doing had a name, I just got together with few of my friends and jumped off high places,” recalls Sunar, who only found out it was called Parkour after watching videos on YouTube.

When he moved back to his hometown in Khutang, he continued to practice. When the internet became available, he relied on online videos for inspiration.

Things took a dramatic turn when Sunar got an opportunity to perform Parkour at a competition in Khutang. Police chief Sunil Kumar Baskot of the Armed Police Force spotted his talent and brought him to Kathmandu to put him under the tutelage of sports-in-charge Prem Kumar Shrestha and coach Rajeshwar Man Shrestha.

Sahina Shrestha

Watch world’s best Parkour demonstrator Mr. Dinesh Sunar demonstrate his backflips and leaps, and see him reveal how he rose from humble beginnings to the opportunities about the sport. Despite all the odds, Sunar is committed to helping other young Nepali athletes get the opportunity to pursue their passion just as he did.
Thomas Heaton
in Nawalparasi

It's either sweat or rain during monsoon season on Nepal's golf courses. But, we golfers are a specific species for punishment breed.

Rain, shine, snow, hail; we will keep playing no matter what nature throws at us. My first experience on a golf course in Nepal was during the monsoon's humid heat, and it would be fair to say I was a frustrated hacker by the end of the round. Not only are the courses in this wonderful country exquisitely difficult, they are even harder and potentially more hazardous during monsoons.

The key to enjoying golfing in the rain is being prepared, using common sense and timing it right. Seasoned players are in the habit of driving early to beat the heat and rain, while some play later in the day. But because it rains mainly at night, the course is Army in the mornings. The afternoons may be hotter, but they are dryer. While the weaker ones resign golf bags to the brown closet during the monsoon, those playing continue to improve their games.

Just visit the Royal Nepal Golf Course in Kathmandu on Saturdays, Sundays or Wednesdays, to see the usual cult golfing going through the dusty months. Testing off of rain-soaked greens, golfers take to the course for their rounds to beat the heat and, on Saturdays plenty of young aspiring golfers take in the range to hone their swings.

The best known courses in Nepal, Royal Nepal and Clubmen Forest Retreat, are unique, but there are three other courses in Pokhara, Dhun and Devachan. Having played in four of these to write this review, it is fair to say each has its own challenges and charm (see next).

Golf is simultaneously frustrating and rewarding at the best of times, but more than usual when playing during the monsoon season. Squelching down the fairways, players have to not just contend with the heat and rain which are not unique by international standards, but also leeches, mosquitoes, leeches and wildlife in the greens. (And watch out for the snakes.)

The balls plug into the turf, but courses typically allow for placement and clogging of the ball. It is a hassle many have to contend with not getting the ball to run down the fairway is almost impossible.

With impromptu and intermittent downpours, those who are game should pack a rain jacket and umbrella, and a pair of waterproof shoes. There is also a lot of long grass in the monsoon, which makes the stakes of the game a little higher as the pressure to hit the perfect shot is even more important. Even still, it's sometimes hard to find the ball on the fairway.

During high season, the Himalayan Golf Course in Pokhara offers stunning views of the Annapurnas. During monsoon you play among few, if any, other players. Walking over greens and galleries, shooting blind over trees and across the Bhagpat Canyon, the course is stunningly verdant and there is plenty of cover when Pokhara's legendary rains come pouring down.

PHOTOS: THOMAS HEATON
Nepali Golf Association’s Deepak Acharya says many unprivileged young golfers are coming through the ranks. Every Saturday, the course hosts youth development sessions for them. Typically Nepali golf clubs host about 40 young players, while Nivana Golf Club and Resort, Himalaya Golf Club and Gokarna host 10 players each.

One such player, 20-year-old Soka Baruka, has shown both talent and talent. NSA has helped him further his education, like many other young golfers. There are plenty of golfers hitting the target in the hopes of securing a career out of the sport. Name to look out for will be Sino Tamang, 15, Subash Chitrakar, and Binip Tamang, 19. Re-sailed herself a place in the top 10 at the World Amateur Open last year, while Tanka Subba and Kedu won the Asian Amateur Open resents. Both these players were found through the NSA youth development programme, and there is obviously more talent to come.

Himalayan Golf Course, Pekhara

Considered among the most unique courses in the world, it currently has 18 holes. Par-72 over 6,270 yards the course is a well-worth getting there. There are plenty of water hazards and some of the best putting greens in the country. Warning, bad roads to get there.

Nepali Courses

TAP IT IN

Nepali golf courses are great year-round, but there are some tips to help you avoid the monsoon. For a look at the dedicated courses and for some tips, take a look at the Nepali Times website.

Pratima Sherpa’s past year has been anything but subpar

She has met golf greats like Woods and played at the best courses in the world. After coming out of the International media attention, ESPN featured her as the young golfer in a dedicated documentary: “Mountain to Climb.” The 10-year-old golfer, having grown up in a shed on the third level of Royal Nepal Golf Course, acknowledges it’s been a crazy year. Back in Kathmandu, the self-assured yet self-effacing Sherpa continues to work hard on her golf and streamlining her moves of making a career in the game. The goodwill of the Nepal Golf Association, and several others, has seen her hit out and benefiting from a good education.

On a rare afternoons at training, she sits outside her home on the third hole and reflects on the past year. She has been almost from golfing greats, touched by her story, and is now working hard to do well in future TOGSA and SAF exams in three months time, having been encouraged to apply for a full scholarship to pursue higher studies in the US.

“It’s a great opportunity to live and the upcoming ladies,” she says. In October Sherpa is speaking at the ESPN Women’s Sport Summit in the US. To lower her handicap by 5, to become Nepal’s first female pro, she is looking to secure a career management role in place ofAdams Woods in US.

“Nothing is impossible; it’s difficult; it’s not impossible,” she says.

And, if all goes according to plan, Sherpa wants to come back to Nepal to continue achieving her goals. There are many young girls taking the ball well, however, not just Sherpa.

Sukh Bibari (26), her coach, says there are eight determined girls playing at the Nepal National Open, and there are plenty of talent in the ranks. Among the best are Partha Rai, 77, Kathmandu; Thib, 78, and Shum Barbari, 15.

Sherpa says she hopes there will one day be enough women playing the game to justify a Women’s tour. She also hopes to represent Nepal at the Olympics one day.

There are many young men making a go of the sport as well.

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Nepali golf courses are great year-round, but there are some tips to help you avoid the monsoon. For a look at the dedicated courses and for some tips, take a look at the Nepali Times website.

Pratima Sherpa’s past year has been anything but subpar

She has met golf greats like Woods and played at the best courses in the world. After coming out of the International media attention, ESPN featured her as the young golfer in a dedicated documentary: “Mountain to Climb.” The 10-year-old golfer, having grown up in a shed on the third level of Royal Nepal Golf Course, acknowledges it’s been a crazy year. Back in Kathmandu, the self-assured yet self-effacing Sherpa continues to work hard on her golf and streamlining her moves of making a career in the game. The goodwill of the Nepal Golf Association, and several others, has seen her hit out and benefiting from a good education.

On a rare afternoons at training, she sits outside her home on the third hole and reflects on the past year. She has been almost from golfing greats, touched by her story, and is now working hard to do well in future TOGSA and SAF exams in three months time, having been encouraged to apply for a full scholarship to pursue higher studies in the US.

“It’s a great opportunity to live and the upcoming ladies,” she says. In October Sherpa is speaking at the ESPN Women’s Sport Summit in the US. To lower her handicap by 5, to become Nepal’s first female pro, she is looking to secure a career management role in place ofAdams Woods in US.

“Nothing is impossible; it’s difficult; it’s not impossible,” she says.

And, if all goes according to plan, Sherpa wants to come back to Nepal to continue achieving her goals. There are many young girls taking the ball well, however, not just Sherpa.

Sukh Bibari (26), her coach, says there are eight determined girls playing at the Royal Nepal Golf Course, and there are plenty of talent in the ranks. Among the best are Partha Rai, 77, Kathmandu; Thib, 78, and Shum Barbari, 15.

Sherpa says she hopes there will one day be enough women playing the game to justify a Women’s tour. She also hopes to represent Nepal at the Olympics one day.

There are many young men making a go of the sport as well.

Nepal Golf Association’s Deepak Acharya says many unprivileged young golfers are coming through the ranks. Every Saturday, the course hosts youth development sessions for them. Typically Nepali golf Club hosts about 40 young players, while Nivana Golf Club and Resort, Himalaya Golf Club and Gokarna host 10 players each.

One such player, 20-year-old Soka Baruka, has shown both talent and talent. NSA has helped him further his education, like many other young golfers. There are plenty of golfers hitting the target in the hopes of securing a career out of the sport. Name to look out for will be Sino Tamang, 15, Subash Chitrakar, and Binip Tamang, 19. Re-sailed herself a place in the top 10 at the World Amateur Open last year, while Tanka Subba and Kedu won the Asian Amateur Open resents. Both these players were found through the NSA youth development programme, and there is obviously more talent to come.
GETAWAY

Coffee meet
Discover more about Coffee with trainers from Coffee to Go, Nepal, and challenge yourself in various inclusive activities.
20 July, 6-9pm, Swayambhunath, Kathmandu, (01) 4451368. (01) 5044619

Kathmandu Kora Cycling
Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge is back this July, its 8th edition. Ridders from Nepal and all over the world gather to a personal challenge of 300/150 kilometers around Kathmandu Valley, for a social cause.
21 July, 7:30pm, Begins at Sitalpati, (01) 4473458

That’s what she said
Funny lady talk brings up all those comedy shows with Nepal’s lady standup comedians cracking their side of jokes and stories.
20 July, 6-8:30pm, Garage lounge and bar, Jhamsikhel, (01) 4900177

Trivial night
Join in at the Trivia Night for 5 rounds of 10 questions on a variety of themes with wine, beer, and snacks. Lowest scorer is out.
20 July, 6-8:30pm, Nepal Community Centre, Pulchowk, (01) 5550229

Health Transformed by Art
A community art project bringing together the unbridled therapeutic value of visual art in a hospital setting, proving psychological relief for patients, hospital staff, and general public.
Exhibition marks the completion of the pilot project and displays the process and manner in which it was captured during the project. 20 July-26 July, Swayambhunath (6pm-8pm. -Inauguration on 22 July), Siddharth Art Gallery, Bakhtapur. Mahalaxmi, (01) 4711840

Shapes and shades
A Baku Eventing workshop for beginners by Minya Kayacspa. Bring along materials and any drawing inspiration for a crash course on basic rules of constructing figures with making portraits.
21 July, 11-am, Swayabhnath Art Centre, Kathmandu, (01) 45527812

Panorama 60s’s
Panorama 60’s: Pioneers of Nepali Modernism’ is a pansematic showcase of 1960s Nepali contemporary art, featuring work from eight modern avant-garde pioneers of Nepal.
21 July, 6pm onwards, Swayabhnath Art Centre, Pulchowk, (01) 4552724

Kta Ilaru
The fun wind band with their original live on the center stage on Friday night. Showdown along with the amazing music while drinking some beer.
21 July, 7pm onwards, Beers N Cheers, Jhamsikhel, (01) 4900180

Fairfield by Marriott
Indulge in a granite delight at the hand with limited buffet dinner in our house. Enjoy.
Every Saturday 7-10pm, Swayabhnath, (01) 45527812, (01) 5276163.

Le Trio
The vintage age pasteur with the halls and roof top gardens in all gives the impression that you’ve stepped into a 1960s Parisian café but the menu is very much local. Must try their signature Pollo manoro, (01) 2716194

Japanese Noodle Kitchen
Pull offers a fresh, fast, affordable Japanese dining experience at an affordable price, with a focus on noodles, dried and soup.
Khadibabha, Ringroad, behind The Olive, (01) 4903788

The Diplomat
Experiencing fabulous culinary delights at the hotel’s Indian and Continental restaurants, without compromising on ambience.
Jugum, Ambassador, (01) 4443632

Na-rinking
Join us for an intimate conversation with local artist, Chivita Gomes, as she talks about writing, life, body and being, special performance by the warrior woman of the world of Nepali art and music and a performance by Ruby Bariky & Co.
21 July, 6pm onwards, Kila, Paschimbhak, (01) 4902450

The many roots ensemble
An exciting group of artists from various roots play folk, Hip Hop, African, Folk, Classical, Reggae, Disco, Fusion, Electronica and Experimental.
21 July, 7-10pm onwards, Narayani, (01) 3278637

Blues & Roots session
Weekend nights with a great blues performance by the bands, from the Valley — MIR Trio and Newiez.
21 July, 6-11pm, Shiroo Lounge & Bar, (01) 4901299

Hyatt Regency
Dahasguring the Jaipur guitar, the hotel spa offers a tranquil refund to rejuvenate both body, mind, and soul. Enjoy an Ayurvedic massage, Shirodhara or enjoy a personal yoga session for a unique, traditional therapeutic experience. Packages available: Mountain Path, River Path and Forest Path.
50% off for treatments between 9am-2pm, Club Gras. (01) 4901273

Dahlia Boutique Hotel
A luxury hotel at the hotel at the banks of Phewa Lake with 180 degrees mountain and city view. A grand entry to a memorable trip.
Lakefront, (01) 4602255

Shangri-La Village Resort
2 rights and 3 days special package at the village resort. Let the mansion bring out the madness in you.
20 July-26 September, Shankerpath, Bhat, (01) 4901999, get coupon worth Rs 10,000 body, (01) 4602222

Atithi Resort & Spa
Continuously on the top ten list of hotels in Nepal by TripAdvisor, the resort is a quiet sanctuary that4s been Nepal tradition with modern amenities. Spend a magnificent getaway here to make it memorable.
Lakefront, (01) 4606780

Bayleaf
Deep by the garden restaurant for Burmese dishes such as Baw Leu (Tikle Khin), Ma Saw (Tikle Khin), Seng (Moem Seng), and other signature park dishes.
Rahaul, opposite to Aparao Bar, (01) 4552782

Arniko Room
Enjoy a sumptuous Euro-Lean Levant at the hotel’s Chinese restaurant. A range of soup, main course and desserts to choose. Sundays 1-4pm, Hotel Arniko, Durbar Marg, 01 550 556, (01) 4271511

Tempel Tree Resort and Spa
A pleasant place to stay, come here to a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna. All the best to have a short while you’re here.
Ghattak, Lakefront, (01) 4602819

Arniko Room
Enjoy a sumptuous Euro-Lean Levant at the hotel’s Chinese restaurant. A range of soup, main course and desserts to choose. Sundays 1-4pm, Hotel Arniko, Durbar Marg, 01 550 556, (01) 4271511

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Air Quality Index

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From the above analysis, the daily average of Kathmandu’s Air Quality Index has been aggregated into six concentration levels of ‘Good’ (15 to 50), ‘Moderate’ (51 to 100), ‘Unhealthy’ (101 to 200), ‘Unhealthy for sensitive groups’ (201 to 300), ‘Unhealthy’ (301 to 450), and ‘Very unhealthy’ (451 to 500). The readings above 500 may appear as zero under certain conditions. For more information, including the current air quality index for Kathmandu, please visit the website: https://nepa.uesp.org.np/embassy/air-quality-monitoring/
Parks, not parking lots

Exemplary community effort to restore open space gives hope for a greener Kathmandu

Dukshang Sherpa

It is 6AM on an overcast monsoon morning. Despite dark clouds threatening rain, people are already at Narayan Chau, some jogging, others walking with umbrellas, a group is doing yoga on mats in the grass. The children are on swings and slides, and the elderly amble slowly along the stone paths.

For a city known for its congestion and lack of parks, Narayan Chaur stands out as a model for urban renewal in which a community got together to restore an open space for public use.

Spread over a hectare, in the heart of Kathmandu, and surrounded by new office towers, the Nand Keshar Garden (as it is officially called) provides a oasis of green amid the concrete chaos surrounding it. Until five years ago, this was a smelly garbage dump, infested with drug dealers. It got to a point where people from the neighbourhood would not walk out after dark.

The person most responsible for Narayan Chaur’s transformation is the artist and writer Narendra B Shrestha, who understood the cultural significance of the Nand Keshar temple. During the reign of Rana Bahadur Shah in the later 19th century, flowers from the garden where the park now stands used to be offered to the temple.

One of the few people who helped Shrestha in his park renovation project since the beginning was Prabhupur Bhanet, a forestry and environmental studies student. Bhanet was appalled at the state of the historic site and consulted Shrestha about how to restore it. Bhanet runs a farm and is the founder of Khali Khaita, a company which produces eco-friendly, all-natural products. She used her knowledge of trees and plants to start greening the property — and that effort grew into an initiative to reclaim the area.

“We could do it because it was a community effort, and it is proof that it is possible to transform other such spaces in the Valley to make Kathmandu cleaner and greener,” says Bhanet, who is now working to revive other open spaces that have become parking lots or garbage dumps.

Some are already following the example of Narayan Chaur. The Vidy Park in Dumrebarahi is an initiative of The Vidyas Organisation which has transformed another garbage dump along the Bisho Khola into a park. Along the Bagnati River numerous organisations have come together to turn the Bisho banks into parks. Narendra B Shrestha agrees that the park would not have been possible without the Naxal Narayan Chaur community and the community police being involved, and his initiative which brought together the entire community, proves that change is possible if there is will. “The government was not involved, it was the people coming together to restore the space, and to manage its maintenance,” he adds.

Work on the restoration began in 2012 and took in factors like selection of tree species and disaster management preparedness, while ensuring that the drug pushers did not return. Architect Prabhu Thapa was enlisted to design the park, and corporate figures like tourism entrepreneur Yogi Shrestha chipped in with seed money. By 2013, the master plan was complete and presented to the Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA), and the park was opened to the public a few months before the earthquake in April 2015.

Fully equipped to cope with the disaster with safety boxes, six water recharge wells and solar lights, Narayan Chaur provided refuge for hundreds of people after the earthquake.

People those days are focused on commercialising public space, putting up high rises and not enough importance is paid to community open spaces, not just for recreation and aesthetics but also for safety in times of crisis,” Shrestha adds.

Kathmandu’s rapid urbanisation without proper planning is a slow-moving disaster in itself. Protecting green spaces is therefore not only socially and environmentally necessary, but can also bring economic benefits. Land and rental prices have soared in Naxal after the Nand Keshar Park was opened.

The park was handed over by the government to the community to maintain and manage, something quite rare in Nepal. Learning from Naxal, the government has come up with a list of 83 other sites which can be turned into community parks and safe spaces during times of emergency.

One of them is Tiskundu on the airport road, which has been an eyesore for more than 20 years. Naxal Narayan Chaur has shown how to go about it; stop waiting for the government to do things, the people have to get the community involved.

GREEN REVIVAL: Narayan Chaur, officially known as Nand Keshar Bagha, is a green oasis of calm in the middle of grey Kathmandu (left). Narayan Chaur before the renovation when it was a garbage dump (above left). The park is being renovated, fully equipped with emergency boxes containing tools and equipment for earthquake and the rescue (above right).
They say the difference between truth and fiction is that fiction has to make sense. Truth is true, no matter how improbable it sounds. Such is the story of Pakistani teenager Nano Dharghe, who had to defend her land against a gang of 200 armed bandits. Nano (Bushra Akbar) and her younger sister Saeda (Ozman Malik) are aided in their night-long gun battle by their mother Wasiq (Razia Malik), who would rather die than be forced off her land.

My Pure Land is based on the true story of a family feud that left three women guarding their ancestral land. At its heart is the perception women are not rightful owners of land, and that when men are gone, property is up for the taking. But these women believe their land is their honour, and honour is even more important than life itself.

The story starts with happy family moments with the girls’ Bab (Syed Tauseef Hussain) and brother Sikander (Asif Akhtar Bhatt). Through well-placed flashbacks, we slowly realize how the men became incarcerated, and how their parents trained the girls to fight with guns. Images of the teenagers running around in shirts and trousers raise the poignant question: whether a woman’s strength is ever enough, or whether they must act like men to be respected in patriarchal societies. The film creates nail-biting suspense as the women find themselves surrounded by their uncle Mehboob (Ahmed Mustafa) and his henchmen. Taking stock of their state, they realize, with a sinking feeling, that they don’t have enough. Braving the bandits, they stealthily steal their weapons. The women in the audience feel a chill down their spine when the armed bandits realise there are only women in the house, and ask if they can “go in.” Women treated as spoils of war, sounds familiar?

Amidst the scintillating gunfire is a little romance that even delivers some laughs. Valiant and fiery Nana finds her match in the silent, almost mute Alik (Tayyib Talat). Only after setting the condition she should be free to study and travel, that is.

At this point one wishes the director had not left the story hanging, and had gone beyond the single battle to tell us how Nana actually managed to take control of her land. Some of the flashbacks seem prolonged, because one would have liked to see how Nana continues to fight, how her example has inspired other women to question patriarchy, and how she successfully acted on the aforementioned conditions she set before marriage.

The director seems to have taken a few artistic liberties with the material: portraying the women as more outnumbered than they were (when Nana’s recounted to other media, she spoke of a dozen people in the house), and by portraying the family as innocent victims rather than active agents in the family feud. He has delivered an engaging thriller that has not only been called a “feminist western”, however, but also lays bare the struggles of women in patriarchal hinterlands of South Asia. The movie succeeds in showing how women must go the extra mile in a society that makes them vulnerable, and how they must muster courage from within to do so.

Sewa Bhattachary
A plastic republic

An integral part of modern lifestyles and the global market, plastic is an essential component in the latest gadgets and luxury goods, and in packaging everything from electric appliances to food items. Around the world, governments are under growing public pressure to ban single-use plastic, to use less and recycle everything. Rewards, and even parts of Somalia have banned plastic. There is no reason why Nepal cannot do the same, but repeated government efforts to ban plastic bags have failed. Nepal restricted the use of plastic bags some 20 years ago, but was unsuccessful.

More than 1 million plastic bags are used once and thrown away in Kathmandu Valley every day, and it now forms more than 11% of the waste. Of the 304 tons of plastic waste generated in Nepal every day, 131 tons end up in garbage piles and dumping sites. Plastic is contaminating our water sources and the soil, it ends up in cattle feed, and is a major threat to fisheries. The floods in Bodhgaya last week were partly blamed on plastic garbage blocking drains.

When Denmark started charging for plastic bags, it reduced use by 60%. Similarly, Ireland taxed 0.15 euros per bag and brought down use by a whopping 94%. London has also been able to control plastic use since it started charging 5 pence per bag. Nepal can learn from these examples, which suggest that taxing is more effective than a blanket ban.

Nepal lags far behind, both in policy and implementation, despite importing plastic materials worth Rs 22 billion annually and earning Rs 87 billion in excise tax. Because of the source of revenue, and the lobbying by industries, a blanket ban is not realistic.

Plastic Bag Regulation and Control Directive restricts production, sale and use of plastic bags below 35 microns. Our studies have revealed that while municipalities like Byan, Bhatuwa, Ilam, Damak, Paups and Pokhara have banned the use of plastic bags thinner than 35 microns and black polythene, the use is increasing in Bodhgaya, Dhulikhel and Nechiapar.

On average, a family uses 30 plastic bags per week. This means if a person is charged Rs 200 for plastic bags below 30 microns, its use can be reduced to zero. When Ilam municipality implemented a penalty of Rs 223, it could reduce the use of plastic bags to almost zero. Whereas in areas with full restriction, the use went down to zero, even when bureaucrats and consumers were in support of the ban.

Following up

On average, plastic materials are cheaper 14% tax, which isn’t high compared to other items. Timely monitoring is equally important. We observed 24 travelers in 24 municipalities during our survey. Most of them didn’t carry a spare bag from home, but 9% carried plastic bags. 11% of people in areas with partial restriction were found to be carrying plastic bags while only 1% did in municipalities with full restrictions.

In addition to monitoring, we have to communicate through mass media that offenders are out to catch offenders and make them pay, as well as broadcast recent arrests and penalties. We can mobilize communities and demote street plays to increase the effectiveness of the campaign.

If we are to successfully implement the restriction and penalty in Kathmandu, we will save more than Rs 500 million in plastic bag waste. But more than this, we will be saving the future generations of Nepal from dealing with our waste.

World Environment Day, June 5th

In Kathmandu and Mahendranath Sushi in Hotel Kathmandu (81 July)

Pokhara’s plastic road

Keshav Shame Lamichhane in Annapurna Post, 17 July

Youth in Pokhara have shown the way to recycling plastic by paving a section of road with the non-biodegradable waste (pictures below).

Plastic wrappings from noodles, biscuits, milk packets and tobacco were used in blacktopping 100m of Annapurn Marg in Pokhara-14, and the section was inaugurated by Pokhara Mayor Man Bahadur GC.

Green Road Waste Management introduced plastic into the traditional bitumen mixture, reducing the amount of expensive asphalt concentrate to make cheaper, longer-lasting and environmentally friendly roads. The plastic waste is first processed into pellets, then boiled at 160 Celsius with other components including asphalt. Of the 2,475 Tons of bitumen used in the blacktopping of Annapurna Marg, up to 16% was plastic and cost only Rs 20,000.

“The use of plastic saves Rs 200,000 per km of road. This means if we pave 200km of road, it will save us 60 million,” said civil engineer Rajiv Subedi of Green Road Waste Management.

Subedi spent a week in Bhutan learning about the technology, first introduced in India in 2001. So far, 100,000 km of roads in India and 200 km in Bhutan have been blacktopped using plastic. Kathmandu can learn from Pokhara, given how much plastic is piling up in garbage on the streets.

“Using plastic to pave roads is an appropriate alternative to the Valley’s growing plastic pollution,” said Sanjeev Bastola, founder of the Green Road Waste Management. “Roads blacktopped with plastic have higher load-bearing capacity, are water resistant, and durable.”

My fitness routine is not complete without Dabur Honey

TWO- DAY TRAINING FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

Date: 7th & 8th of August, 2018
Cost: NPR 30,000/- VAT Excluded
Venue: Hotel Tibet, Lazimpat

For Registration
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Kleptocrats of Kathmandu

Politicians and recruiters in Nepal and Malaysia collude to loot poor Nepali migrant workers

Ramu Sapkota in Kathmandu with Alya Aldajri in Kuala Lumpur

A deeply-rooted nexus of politicians, businessmen and bureaucratic雾霾 in Nepal and Malaysia have hopped more than Rs 15 billion over the past five years from vulnerable Nepali migrant workers desperate to seek work in Malaysia. Nepal’s Labour Minister Gokarna Rista is trying to dismantle the players involved in the exploitation by cracking down on Kathmandu-based companies but up to now, he has no power to arrest contract workers. In Malaysia itself, the newly-elected Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed has also launched an investigation into the previous government’s involvement in profiting from migrant workers.

The scheme involved powerful Malaysian businesses with close links to ministries and officials in the Barisan National cabinet of former Prime Minister Najib Razak and implemented by their agents in Kathmandu who had contacts with influential politicians and bureaucrats in Malaysia. It all started five years ago when Malaysia’s Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi announced a private company (Ultra Kirana Sdn Bhd) which required Nepali migrants to apply for work visas through a Kathmandu-based Malaysian company called Malaysia VN L. The agency charged RM3,200 from every Malaysian-bound Nepali worker, and collected RM 2.5 billion from more than 600,000 workers between September 2013 and April 2018.

Then in July 2015, Malaysia made it mandatory for all Nepali migrants to undergo a biometric test. The Malaysian government hired Biotest Sdn Bhd, a tech firm run by Malaysia’s Home Minister Hamidi’s brother-in-law Amin Rusyidz Abdul Nor, for biometric health screening. Minister Hamidi’s brother Abdul Hakim Hamidi and ex-Malaysian Environment Minister Ahmad Khaledi also reportedly owned shares in Biotest. Bestinet participated with Nepal Health Professional Federation (NIHF) to carry out biometric screening through 38 medical centres which charged RM4,500 from each migrant worker for biometrics. Bestinet and NIHF have already collected over RM1 billion from over 200,000 Nepali workers.

Previously, migrant workers could have applied for visas independently or through any manpower agency. They could get a visa for just RM120. They could get medical tests from any of 200 government-approved health facilities. But after Malaysia required private companies for visa processing and biometric screenings, workers were forced to pay much more.

The real scam involved the lack of transparency in Malaysia and in Nepal on the choice of the private companies hired to facilitate this process, which ended up fleecing workers. While in Malaysia the companies were partly-owned by relatives of politicians in Nepal, bureaucratic politicians benefited from kickbacks for sanctioning the new system. Fees were added on arbitrarily, and all involved in the syndicate in the two countries divided up the profits.

For example, the RM3,200 visa processing fee did not cover all visa-related costs of a migrant worker. In May 2015, Malaysia hired another private company, One Stop Centre (OSC) to collect visa fees and passports and drop them at its embassy in Kathmandu. The OSC chose the same Malaysian VN L company for this job, which added an extra fee of RM2,800 from each applicant.

Bestinet has also been allowed to charge each migrant worker RM3,200 just for scanning passports, fingerprinting and an additional RM5,500 to upload the data online. Bestinet’s Kathmandu-based agent, GSG Nepal, scans passports and fingerprints for all Malaysian-bound migrant workers. Bestinet in turn collaborated with labour recruitment agencies in Kathmandu and has so far collected over RM3.1 billion in fees for passport and fingerprints scanning, and online data entry.

Tailed together, the Malaysian government and companies backed by powerful Malaysian politicians have, in total, taken more than RM3 billion (US$450 million) from over 600,000 Nepali workers between September 2013 and April 2018. Nepali politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen were directly collaborating with their Malaysian counterparts in cheating the workers. There are over 600,000 Nepali workers in Malaysia, and their remittances help sustain Nepal’s economy.

The arrangements have been put into place on an ad hoc basis, without transparency and in the absence of any bilateral agreements between the governments of Nepal and Malaysia. Some of the companies managing migration in Nepal do not even have government approval.

Nepal’s Labour Ministry was initially reluctant to accept Malaysia’s proposal to introduce biometric systems, arguing it would allow certain medical contreux to overcharge migrant workers. But those lobbying for biometrics were so powerful that the ministry had to approve the system as a pilot project for six months. But long after the six months were over, Bestinet and the NIHF continued with biometric systems with no interference from the government.

In January 2015, Parliament’s International Relations and Labour Committee instructed

Hindu men

In May, police arrested 40 bootstrappers, including Malaysia VLN Nepal Chief Ram Prasad Shrestha, for illegally charting Nepali migrant workers for visa processing, biometric and online data entry.

Shrestha, who was later released along with 29 others on bail, told police that he was just an agent responsible for sending fee money collected from migrant workers to Malaysian companies in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong. He also informed police that his Kathmandu-based company would get a cut of Rs 108 of every RM3,200 visa processing fee and another RM42 of every RM2,800 passport collection fee.

Shrestha claimed his company had sought permission from the Nepal Sastra Bank (NSB) to transfer the money to Malaysia and Hong Kong. Police wrote a letter to the NSB to verify Shrestha’s claim. Bhima Raj Dhungana, Executive Director of the NSB’s Foreign Currency Exchange Department, says: “A company that does not have a permission from the government to collect money cannot exchange currency and transfer it out of Nepal.”

There is evidence that the companies used official funds to transfer cash to Malaysian parent companies. Malaysia’s Migration Management System (MMIS) collected more than RM729 million through Nepali manpower agencies between May 2016 and April 2018 through the illegal Hindu system.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has revealed that ex-Malaysian PM Najib Razak’s brother owns an offshore company in the British Virgin Islands which was used to stash ill-gotten wealth. The speculation in Kuala Lumpur is that it includes fees collected from impoverished and desperate Nepali migrant workers, that were illegally sent to Kuala Lumpur.
CASH BONANZA

SEPTEMBER 2013

Malaysia makes it mandatory for Nepali workers to apply for visas through the Nepal Home Ministry in Kathmandu. It is a move towards Malaysia Home Ministry scramble to control the influx of illegal migrant workers. Another move by the Malaysian Home Ministry to tighten visa requirements for migrant workers is to implement an online system. Malaysia has introduced a new visa application system for Nepali workers, which requires them to apply online through the Malaysian Immigration Department. The online system is expected to help control the influx of illegal migrant workers into the country. The online system will also help to prevent fraudulent activities by中介机构 andrajaje who are facilitating illegal entry of migrant workers into Malaysia. The online system is expected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

JULY 2015

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MAY 2016

Malaysia makes it mandatory for Nepali workers to apply for visas through the Nepal Home Ministry in Kathmandu. It is a move towards Malaysia Home Ministry scramble to control the influx of illegal migrant workers. Another move by the Malaysian Home Ministry to tighten visa requirements for migrant workers is to implement an online system. Malaysia has introduced a new visa application system for Nepali workers, which requires them to apply online through the Malaysian Immigration Department. The online system is expected to help control the influx of illegal migrant workers into the country. The online system will also help to prevent fraudulent activities by中介机构 who are facilitating illegal entry of migrant workers into Malaysia. The online system is expected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

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**SOFT TARGET:** Malaysia-bound migrant workers at a Kathmandu-based GOS office, where they pay for insurance and registration fees. The government is working on making it mandatory for migrant workers to apply for visas through the Nepal Home Ministry in Kathmandu. It is a move towards Malaysia Home Ministry scramble to control the influx of illegal migrant workers. Another move by the Malaysian Home Ministry to tighten visa requirements for migrant workers is to implement an online system. Malaysia has introduced a new visa application system for Nepali workers, which requires them to apply online through the Malaysian Immigration Department. The online system is expected to help control the influx of illegal migrant workers into the country. The online system will also help to prevent fraudulent activities by中介机构 who are facilitating illegal entry of migrant workers into Malaysia. The online system is expected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

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**EXCHANGE**

**Thalapthi, Kathmandu**
Fora and fauna

Madam Chair, Respected Sir, Your Local Righteousness, Incomparable Morality in Large, Fellow-southerners Sitting in the Caliber, Members of the Premier Gold Smugglers Mafia, Heroin War Criminals, Chief Lists of the Medical Industrial Complex, Insult Hypocrites, Media Syphonists, Maf’s Donors, Organized and Organised Criminals Enjoying Political Protection, Reared Blackballed Contrariants, Governed Money Launderers, Tax Smudgers, Respected Clerics and Takers of Stolen Goods, Owners and Owners’ Owners, Vermin Members of the Society of Nepali Intellectuals (NINIM), Ex-Celebrities, Adherents of the Journalistic True Faith, Disturbable Quacks, and Mr. Rohit Dhakal.

It is not a pleasure and a pain in the ass to be sneered here once again to the Nepalese Pub for the Fuses to Fuses Program today to speak to you about how the country has been doing. Firstly, since I am among fellow-poorman here, I don’t need to belabor the obvious and waste your and my time speaking about how the country is now-mired upon the glorious path to stability and prosperity. Come to think of it, if I don’t need to tell you, then why am I doing just that? The is a question that often asks myself when I have to attend fora and fauna like these. It has bedevilled me, and I am sure it has bedevilled every Prime Minister of this country since time immemorial. That’s why today I am deporting from my prepared English text to speak thankfully and to boast my own trumpet here, if I may. It must be clear to all you political observers, anonymous analysists and western diplomatic sources who don’t want to be quoted by name, that despite some improvement and efficiency we are well on track to achieve stability in this country in the not too unforeseeable future.

In fact, just this morning while attending to a call from Nature, I was temporarily disconnected because Nature itself wasn’t calling me by my first name, but on Vibes. But when we established contact again I was naturally delighted that I had to pay an extra 10% tax for the call. We will use that money to pay for my medical bill in Singapore.

The other side of the new normal is that garbage is piling up again on the streets. It is a deliberate government policy to scatter them so that ordinary residents of the capital don’t forget the good old days.

We promised a government that is stable, and we fulfilled it with all this horse manure. You wanted prosperity, and we are on track to manufacture at least 10 more Nepali Forbes billionaires.

Hey, wake up, the specification is over. Please stand up for the national anthem.