Muddling along

Despite its two-thirds majority, and after getting off to a flying start, the government is digging itself into an ever deeper hole.

In the first three months of its tenure, Prime Minister K.P. Oli focused on just three topics: improving political ties with India, building on economic cooperation with China, and uniting with the Madiyas to form the monolithic Nepal Communist Party. That seems to have sapped all his energy.

He did try to address the people’s concerns by ordering his ministers to dismantle transport cartels, go after gold smugglers, and pursue those responsible for delays in road repairs. But all these moves fizzled out. The horrific road conditions this monsoon are emblematic of the national political quagmire.

The people are running out of patience. In Boudha, monks took to the streets to repair roads themselves. Even some UML politicians close to Oli are worried about his tarnished image. “He is being hounded all the blame, he has become the lightning rod,” said one close aide, in frustration.

Indeed, PM-in-waiting and party co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal is conspicuous in his silence. Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, who once threatened to break cartels and the houses of errant contractors, has not been heard from recently.

The government is busy firefighting and too distracted to address long-term issues. This week’s delay in confirmation of Deepak Joshi as Chief Justice by the Parliamentary Hearings Special Committee is because he is being punished for his injudicious order, overturning the Prime Minister’s sacking of officials appointed by the NC government. If true, this would represent gross interference by the executive on the independent judiciary.

“If you do not follow the rule of law, there can be difficult days ahead,” warns advocate Keshabkumar Adhikari.

Public disillusionment is also growing. There is open ridicule of Prime Minister’s promising ocean-going ships and railroads when nothing is done to repair roads and deliver better services. The opposition NC, after being trammeled in elections, wants blood. Prime Minister Oli’s window of opportunity for damage control is narrowing.

Kameshwor Bahara
THE TAMU TREK TRAIL

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Most commented
Most popular on Twitter

BREAST IS BEST
Best wishes to Nepal to continue promoting the healthy practice of breastfeeding. [Back to the ripple in Nepal.] Sorina Aswati, RGN.
Kate Rezalman

FALL OF AN INDUSTRY
The industry needs to focus on quality to compete in the international market. (A post-mortem of Nepal’s garment boom.) Sewa Bhattacharya, RGN.

RESILIENT NEPALIS
Nepalis are the most resilient people I know—mentally (Nepal’s Gross National Sadness: Art & Photography). Despite everything we don’t lose our smile. It’s just doesn’t take away the fact that times are hard, and the probability that some of us in the younger generation have seen. Yet, hope persists. Casisan.

Salina Girl

WHAT’S TRENDDING
Nepal’s Gross National Sadness by Akila

ONLINE PACKAGES

EATING THE NEPALI WAY
Although the Nepali food is simple and humble, with traditional taste, aromatic aromatic and very appealing but containing a lot of calories and fat. It’s an easy and simple guide to your Nepal.

Times

Globally

Globally

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Nepal Times’ Editor from ten years ago this week (Aug 11, 2008) was called the Million mark men and drew attention to the country’s sending of international public enemy.


even if it has a comfortable majority in Parliament, too often wound by the current Communist regime of Nepal. Prime Minister K P Oli, for all his bluster and swagger, confronts a mountain of political troubles.

Doublespeak

Wide-spread criticism of the moves seems to have gathered a wide audience. A minister told representatives of the donor and diplomatic communities that the guidelines were just a draft, and merely suggesting that some other ministers have lashed out at critics in xenophobic tones, calling them ‘dollars farmers’. The Prime Minister himself assured representatives of a party-affiliated media club of handsome rewards if they wrote in support of the government, and his Information Minister this week accused editors governments opened sordidly to the CovindaKC.

The door of drift towards authoritarianism, especially, appears to have hit a new fervor. Ministers who should be reassuring the public, have gone around bashing programs critical of them, or speaking directly coupled instead of the Facebook faithful. The lesson we should learn from the doublespeak in totalitarian states is to take what officials assert more with a pinch of salt, in the form that is that. The Nepali people had collectively thought that by giving the NPC such a convincing majority, that would end the incessant squabbling and the instability that had become the norm in the political landscape in the past decades. The people trusted that the NPC would use its majority wisely to address some of the country’s structural problems and deliver better living standards. However, the government has been kept so busy firefighting from day-to-day (much of it caused by its own actions), it must be said that it has had little time to pay attention to the other looming crises.

The government needs all the allies it can get in confronting the challenges ahead. Delivering affordable quality health and education, reducing crumbling infrastructure, curbing inflation, extortion and corruption, and the biggest hurdle of all: finding jobs for the 700,000 young Nepalis who enter the job market every year.

The federal government is still trying to provide the consistently stipulated legal framework for provincial and local governments, which has brought the centre in direct confrontation with the periphery. The blame for some of the escalating decisions by provincial governments, like the new law on bicycles announced by one of them, is therefore being heaped on the federal government.

The few correct decisions taken in the past weeks (Gangamey, Covinda KC happened because Prime Minister Oli responded to public opinion. That should serve as an important template for the future.

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ITALY

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Nepal turns to solar and hydro

As prices fall, it is now feasible to store solar electricity to cover the country’s energy shortfall

Nepal’s planners have always faced an uphill task in ensuring energy self-sufficiency. The main issues in the past have been politics, the absence of a strategic vision, and policies that forced the country to suffer chronic power cuts. But the country has a new beginning with a new government that has promised political stability and economic prosperity.

The other challenge is an engineering one. Nepal may have one of the highest per capita hydropower potential, but most of the total 268MW capacity today comes from run-of-river plants which depend on the water flow to turn turbines, and not from reservoirs that can store monsoon water for the dry season.

This means the country suffers from shortfalls in production during winter when peak demand is highest. There are also the daily peaks in the mornings and evenings that need to be covered by Nepal’s only storage dam, the 92MW Koshi Khadakhsar. Currently, Nepal meets nearly all its peak demand by importing coal-fired electricity from India.

Peak load demand is traditionally met with electricity from hydro power reservoirs or power plants burning fossil fuels. But as economics try to meet carbon emission targets, there is pressure to adopt solar and other renewable energy sources to meet demand.

This is precisely what the Dolma Himalayan Climate Fund (DHCF) is trying to do. Its proposal to generate 150MW of solar power and 40MW of hydro in battery systems to meet Nepal’s seasonal and daily peaks.

Called Peak Energy Management (PEM) System, the first phase of the project got approval from the Investment Board Nepal (IBN) last week to “time-shift” daytime solar generated power to help meet evening peak demand, and also store surplus hydro-electricity generated during the night to partially meet the morning peak demand.

Such generation and storage of solar power would have been prohibitively expensive till a few years ago. But the cost of storing energy in batteries dropped by less than $1000/kWh from $3,600/kWh ten years ago. The price of photovoltaic cells have similarly plummeted to only $600/kWh, compared to $840/kWh in 2008.

The other advantage is that a project of this scale can be up and running within two years

To Wales and London Qatar Airways has announced two new flight services to Cardiff, Wales, and Gwanzu, London, in a presence of Country Manager Jason Hainsworth and Managing Director of Airline Relations in the UK, Jason Tomsett.

Hyundai trade-in Lamin, presenters have organised an export campaign for hoteliers in Nepal from 25 August to 1 September. "In a week, the hoteliers have shipped seven trucks of hotel furniture to 4,000 people. That’s the great news. The goods need to be received.

Bad news? I have invested and done business in many countries, and there is obviously much need for reform. We need to see some realistic things, such as things that are being well actually applied to the initial investment stage, and job creation. But it doesn’t stop us, we keep our business. We keep our business in different countries to 3,000 people. That’s the bad news. The goods need to be received.

This is not a small country, it has the population of Malaysia. It is a very rich country in terms of its culture, history, and its infrastructure. The people of Nepal are very good. They are not always good in politics, but sometimes they do. It is not too much better for us business people and as investors.

Thai Lion here Tours in Asia have begun: four weekly flights from Bangkok’s Don Muang to Kathmandu

New Galaxy arrives Samsung has launched Galaxy 3G in Nepal, as part of the new Infinity series. Paired with a 5-inch Super AMOLED Infinity Display, industry-first dual camera innovations, chat-on-video, and smartphone, available in blue, black, and gold and costs Rs3,690.

“A part of something bigger”

Nepal Times: it looks like you have quite a Soft spot for Nepal. Tim Gocher: first time here in (03) and just like for all of us westerners, there was something magical here for me. And over the years, I have begun to put my finger on what that magic is. I almost found what I was looking for in a remote Himalayan village. But I have to say the real magic was my wife Fajia Curing who I met in Ushuaia during a turn 15 years ago. I have never looked back.

How did the Dolma Impact Fund came about? It was not a business to begin with, it was the love for the country. I had met a girl named Doma, she was nine, but not going to school. I sponsored her education, and that grew into the Dolma foundation which still educates hundreds of children. I went a double life. I had the voluntary charity while also working for investment banks in Singapore, London, and New York. I wanted to bring the two together to bring the power of markets and capital is stimulating sustainable growth. It took us to a point to generate 150MW in the first private equity fund for Nepal. I got excited at quite a few offers.

Which sector do you think is most critical for Nepal’s economic development? I don’t think we in Dolma Impact Fund are focused on any one sector. The underlying fundamentals for infrastructure are holding companies. So, we have invested in two hydropower projects and I was going by Oxfam and Nepal National Bank (NNB) – Dhakar, as a political demonstration passes the street outside.

How did the transition to peak demand generation from solar happen? We saw companies across the board operating at this end discussion, and wanted to use new energy technology to help with domestic energy production. Solar and battery costs are going down. We can produce through Doma Himalayan. I wrote a story which is very similar to seasonal storage solar where they would offer power on an on-demand basis in the dry season when water is in summer. The beauty is all in speed. Big hydropower plants take a long time to build, but solar can be built in two years. It is not going to replace hydro, but it does give Nepal another energy option to offer some of the imports from India.

How do you see the political and economic future of Nepal? Certainly, to me I see the political future of Nepal, which is changing. But I tell you a bit about business, you need to know the bad news. You need to know the good news.

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batteries to meet peak demand

**COST OF SOLAR PANELS**

$ / MWh

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2009</th>
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**BATTERY PRICES**

$ / kWh of storage

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**SUNNY SIDE UP:** A solar farm with battery storage similar to the type designed by the PEMA utilities in Nepal by the Himalayan Climate Fund (HCF).

A drastic reduction in the price of photovoltaic cells and storage batteries has made such projects feasible (above).

The peak winter demand, but unlike reservoirs it can be completed in two years, and can be quickly upscaled to 800MW in the second phase. This makes business sense because Nepal’s electricity demand is expected to grow at 7% per year, while peak deficit will continue for another two years until the big dams come online.

“It will buy Nepal time with short-term supply of power to meet peak time deficits,” says Sandip Shah, Managing Director of DDCP, an energy specialist who was formerly with the Norwegian SN Power.

“‘My entire career has been with hydropower, and I have always grappled with making Nepal self-reliant in meeting daily and seasonal peak power deficits. With prices of solar and battery coming down, the technology is finally there to make Nepal energy independent.’” explains Shah.

When it comes into operation, possibly by 2020, PEMA will be one of the first utility scale battery operated grid power plants in the region, and it will immediately reduce Nepal’s power import bill as well as carbon footprint which has doubled due to the current import of coal fired energy from India.

At the investment Board Nepal, CEO Mahendra Prasad Adhikari is also excited about the venture. “This is an innovative way to improve Nepal’s energy mix, and can support our peak-time and dry season demand within a short timeframe.”

The Delma Impact Fund will also be building on its investments in Nepal’s hydropower, that include the 3.6MW Lower Litibhu project in Okhaldhunga and the 6.6MW Sun Khepa Project in Dolakha into which the Fund has injected $4.5 million and may invest more in hydropower or other solar projects.

Winkel said he is with the global energy giant SN Power managing 60,000MW grids, and says PEMA is trying to find the optimal technology to meet the shortfall in Nepal’s peak energy supply. He adds: “Making renewable energy competitive has driven me for many years, and PEMA makes this vision a reality by combining state-of-the-art power generation and storage technologies to deliver clean, secure and competitive electricity for Nepal.”

*Kunda Dixit*
Monsoon memories

Monsoon is a special time in Nepal with rain-washed views and infinite plant life.

Access across the swollen rivers and overgrown tracks was an impossible task. The tented camps deep in the forest or overlooking riverbanks were packed up and carefully stored to avoid mould, fungi and damp rot, the tent shelters remade, and the jungle kitchens rebuilt.

Monsoon is a special time to be in Nepal, rewarded with theatrical cloud effects, unexpected sunsets, rain-washed views and prolific plant life, but I was not prepared for the natural violence wrought in the lowlands, cataclysmic erosion changing the landscape. Rivers rose and fell with the relentless rains, swelling brown with silt from the middle hills, and carved new courses, gouging their sandy banks and dragging down huge trees into the floodwaters of the Tarai. Untouched streams became impassable, and even large mammals, such as domestic buffaloes, and wild rhinos were swept to their deaths. An attempt at crossing the Rapti on elephant back needed to be carefully timed and was never predictable.

At the end of this annual onslaught, as rivers settled back into new alignments, Tiger Tops was painstakingly reassembled, regrown, refreshed and polished clean. The National Parks roads had to be laboriously rebuilt by hand, jungle trails cleared of encroaching greenery, forest campites reclaimed, boats positioned for Rapti and Bhera crossings, and Land Rovers floated across the rivers, wheels balancing precariously on makeshift rafts made from hauled together wooden boats, ready for the first of the arriving guests.

Only elephants could forge their way through the dense towering grasses and trees that flourished in the heat and wet, disappearing beneath the delicate pink conch flowers of September. It was the hardest time to show any wildlife — hidden in the foliage, invisible in the vegetation and with ubiquitous water sources, the only proof of animals was only betrayed by darting flocks of birds, hovering at branches, and a rare glimpse if you were lucky.

A few lucky foreigners, mainly researchers and naturalists, took their chances in Chitwan during the summer months but I never spent a whole monsoon in the jungle. My role in marketing and communications during the 1980s had me travelling on sales missions and promotion tours, or helping my then-boss Jim Edwards host his annual salmon fishing groups on remote rivers in Iceland.

Armed with a free Pan Am air ticket around the world, Jim’s extensive network of contacts, heaps of yellow brochures, a slide carousel (remember those?) and a miniscule budget, every June I would set off around the world to promote Nepal and Tiger Tops, visiting trade shows, travel agents, tour operators and well-wishers on whom we depended for business. Standby travel on Pan Am was uncertain and stressful as we only flew when there were empty seats — with bizarre rules such as a dress code banning denims or jeans which I remember well, having been denied boarding in Chicago due to my blue pencil skirt.

Sleeping on the squashed sofas of kind Nepal-lovers or Jim’s bemused friends, I could visit right Hong Kong or Singapore travel agents in one day, persuading their weary staff why they should sell Nepal above other destinations. With partners such as Lonely Planet, Abercrombie & Kent and Mountain Travel USA, we did the rounds of North American and European fairs and travel retailers who formed the interface with consumers in those pre-digital days.

Between agent slide shows and promotional events in blatant motels, I slept in more strange spare rooms and attended luxurious lunches and elegant dinners hosted by Nepali enthusiasts to further cement Mal’s clout amongst their circle of friends. Taking time out to regroup with Jim in our Hedging London office, I visited conservationists, climbers, filmmakers, journalists, media, museums, zoos, and anyone else we thought might help us sell wildlife and trekking holidays in the distant and still-mysterious kingdom of Nepal.

So while the monsoon raged, my nomadic progress took me to major capitals and close links by Pan Am looing flights, on a mission to spread the word and help establish what would become the adventure destination of Nepal.
Sewa Bhattarai

Asnna Lama flips a black folder. Each page has a stack female figure in white. Some standing up, others sitting, lying down or meditating.

The rows edge encloses shards and squiggles, as if hiding a deep hurt within. The drawings seem to signify how women try to keep their pain inside, while keeping a bubbly facade.

Asnna Lama herself is a chubby 21-year-old who laughs a lot, makes self-deprecating jokes in her singing voice. Few can tell that this chesny face masks a difficult struggle with anxiety attacks and depression.

Lama grew up in an artistic family with the smell of acrylic and turpentine. She sketched from a young age, expressing her sadness in art. The current series “The Fragility of Anxiety” was drawn in 2015 after the earthquake when she had panic attacks, and was put on medication.

“I was traumatised, I didn’t speak to anyone for four days. There were a lot of thoughts running through my mind,” recalls Lama. “Then I turned to my sketchbook and started drawing, these figures just flowed. When I concentrated on sketching I didn’t think of anything else, and the stress calmed me down.”

Three years later, Asnna is ready to exhibit her sketches alongside her own poetry at the one-day exhibition at Hotel Annapurna on August 10. Lama says the black pages of the notebook spoke to her, and resonated with her art. She describes her bouts of depression as “spiralizing into blackness”.

Art has historical association with mental health. Frida Kahlo painted self portraits to deal with debilitating injuries. Monet was highly anxious, Picasso was said to be schizotypal and Van Gogh depressed and bi-polar. Lama says her art is also a reflection of her inner turmoil.

“When the pressure cooker is about to burst and the whistle goes off, the steam is art. If it is too much to handle, I draw,” says Lama, adding it was not easy to decide to share her work and open up about her deepest emotions. But she decided to go for it to spread awareness of mental health in Nepal, and break the taboo.

(See page 14-15)

Lama found out she was getting too dependent on medication. Once, having lost her pills she started banging her head on walls, hoping she would pass out. The drawings have helped her get off medication, and she says many others with mental health issues may also need an outlet for expression.

After she came out to talk publicly about her affliction, Lanna found many opened up too. They were lonely, and felt as if they were the only ones suffering. It helped to share.

“Mental health is so little understood in Nepal. There is so much stigma, and I want to generate some discussion through this exhibition. It is for people who appreciate the effort it takes to bare your innermost soul to an outsider,” says Lama. Once a science student and a part-time model, she decided to take a clean break and enrolled in an art school in Florence. She says formally studying art in the city of Michelangelo, Botticelli, Raphael, and Dante gave her more definition to her form of expression. She also paints commission work where she derives from signature black to dabble in rainbow hues.

The future? Lama wants to return to Nepal and learn thangka painting. “I want to sweat it out, grinding pigments to make colours, using the techniques to make my own kind of art.”

It would be a homecoming for Asnna Lama, shedding black for the vividness of life in her own country.

The Fragility of Anxiety, August 10
Hotel Annapurna
12 August, 4:30-7:00PM

DEALING WITH DEMONS

Watch Asnna Lama sketch a figure in her signature style, and hear her speak 4:30 PM for all.

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Could Nepali cuisine go global?

Thomas Heaton

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andwiched between two

extravagant monoliths, it’s a

wonder Nepal’s cuisine can’t be

found on as many corners of the

globe as consistent Chinese and

Indian restaurants.

Nepal has its own hybrid foods: Nepal

Indian or Nepali-Tibetan, and this
guarantees the best of both

worlds. It fuses together Schezuan

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bamboo shoots, just the real

question: is there really any

difference?

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challenges for Nepali food items to appeal to a larger public.

"Visitors and tourists who have spent time in Nepal have come to understand the virtues and its diversity, and many tell me that they appreciate the freshness and healthy aspect of our food," Pushak told Nepal Times.

The other reason for her book was that she could not find any firm records on Nepal’s culinary heritage. Perhaps recipes are at risk of being lost too, given the changes she has seen when visiting Kathmandu annually since moving to the US several years ago.

Particularly in Kathmandu Valley, Pushak finds people’s tastes are changing, despite the virtues of Nepali cuisine with its unique flavors, health and family traditions.

"Momos, KFCs, pizzas, burgers and northern Indian cooking are gaining ground, and urban populations are eating more processed, packaged foods," Pushak notes, while adding that much of the countryside food habits have not changed much.

The nature of Nepali recipes makes it an oral tradition, passed down from one generation to the next. Which is why cookbooks and food videos are needed to preserve its culinary culture.

Another book is Nepali Home Cooking for Healthy Living by Shambhu Jhawal, who says the influx of global foods, and an increase in the purchasing power of the young has resulted in more imports by outsiders foods.

Ingredients now marketed as the most beneficial health-wise, as interest increased overseas, have always existed in Nepal’s cuisine: barley grass, wheat grass, fermented foods, amaranth and vitamin-rich items.

Pragati Sugwara says Nepali cuisines could become more popular if its health benefits were better known, and she hopes to open a restaurant by changing the formulas for Nepali restaurants from a number of shorthand on a menu to wholesome and attractive items.

"If you showcase it, and make it in the right way, I think it will be amazing," she says.

Living to eat

Junk foods are a symptom of a throw-away society

The 15-year-old boy weighs 84kg, much more than an average Nepali his age. He is malnourished. His breakfast and lunch consist of biscuits, instant noodles and other packaged foods. His uncle buys him fizzy, sugary drinks. The boy does not like home-cooked meals, and when he does they are silly and deep-fried.

When he came to me, the boy was already suffering from a sore back, he could not run, and found it difficult to climb the stairs to the third floor. There is a strong chance he will suffer from diabetes and high blood pressure by the time he is 25. His grandmother is worried about his addiction to sugar-sweetened sodas and packaged foods.

While in the US, 15 years ago, I knew many obese adolescents, and remember thinking we had the opposite problem in Nepal: under-nourishment and stunting. Not any more, however, because urban Nepal is now seeing an American-style epidemic of malnutrition.

It used to be rare to see an overweight child in Nepal’s schools, but today it is a common sight. In a recent informal survey of a school in Sindulpalchok, I found students mostly bring money from home to buy packaged food for lunch. Teachers themselves consumed junk foods for snacks, and had no idea about nutritional value.

They purchased the packets out of convenience.

The mothers of the students told me they always believed instant noodles were nutritious. They liked the fact that it was cheap, didn’t need to be cooked, and their children loved it. They were upset when I showed them pictures of children gout with malnourishment. Some mothers asked, if junk food was so bad... then why were there so many celebrity-endorsed TV advertisements? If the government does not care about your health, we have to think of it ourselves, I answered.

A three-year-old in Far Western Nepal was dying from malnutrition, not because she had nothing to eat, but because she had been eating the wrong food. Her mother took the child to a health centre, where she admitted her daughter only ate instant noodles and cheese balls. The girl was referred to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre in Nepalgunj, and was turned back to health.

I have an acquaintance who works in one of the instant noodle factories in Nepal, and he says he wouldn’t touch the stuff - he knew what went into it. “I would never eat it, and never give it to my children,” he told me.

The junk food industry is all about creating demand through marketing and branding. It equates packaged foods with modernity, affluence, and a trendy lifestyle. What it really all about is putting them in non-biodegradable single-use plastic into our landfill sites, and robbing our people of their health. Junk food is another symptom we are becoming a throw-away society, and if we are not careful we will throw away our children’s future.

Aruna Uprety is a public health specialist and co-author of the book, Katha Kama Shraya.
GETAWAY

Atithi Resort & Spa

Continuously on the top ten lists of hotels in Nepal by TripAdvisor, the resort is a quiet sanctuary that borrows Nepali tradition with modern amenities. Spend the New Year's night here to make memorable. (Katmandu, Kathmandu, 31061, 3272776)

Bandipur Kaushi Inn

Gaining a lot of more friends and drive to land up for a cool weekend? 1 night, 2 days getaway before summer comes again. The costs also includes breakfast and Nepali dinner. (3000, Bandipur, Tanahun, 32060, 3272785)

Tranquility Spa

Relax, fall and pamper yourself to a wide range of massages at any of the spa's nine branches in Nepal. www.tranquilityspa.com.np, 3032719

Grand Norgor Hotel

Enjoy a calm and relaxing stay at the hotel which provides a spacious bedroom with a spacious bathroom, a large balcony with sights of the golf course, mountains, and deer herds, and not to forget, the garden. (32060, 3032719)

Balthali Village Resort

A small, easy retreat with a bird’s eye view of green terrace fields, dotted with active pauler houses. (32060, 3032719)

MUSIC

nderseit M. Mohini

Underseits in playing their hometown after a long time. This time the band all metal performance featuring Mahatipit. 4 August, 7-8pm, Purple Haze Rock Club, Thamel.

Sun Down Affair

Groove to the music of DJ Praesh Adhikari and DJ Viney's from India at the Khwai 100 R.L Fun Down Affair Vol 01. 4 August, 8pm onwards, The Cat, 15 minutes, Subash, Kathmandu. (3032719)

Le Trio

The vintage-style poster that left the walls and rusted wooden tables give the impression that you've stepped into a 1960s Parisian salon, but the menu is very much bang in the modern-day. Try Grilled Chicken Cheese Burger for a hearty lunch. www.frenchbaise.com, 3032719

Club House Restaurant

The panoramic view of the 18 hole golf course and the evergreen forest compliments the Thai and Chinese-culinary journey. Chefs here are selective in using organic and fresh products to create culinary masterpieces. (30320, Kakani Forest Resort, Thamel, 3032719)

Beer and barbecue

Enjoy “Street & Barbecue Night” at the hotel with unlimited food and drinks. The funfair of music will be going strong throughout the month. Every Friday of August, 7-11pm, Rose & Gauge, Lounge. www.mrcharlesrestaurant.com, (3032719, 3032719)

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 27 July - 2 August

Air Quality Index (AQI) is a worldwide method for reporting how clean or polluted the air is. Air quality depends on the type of pollutants present, their concentrations, and the sensitivity of the population to the pollutants. The health effects of air pollution are far reaching, so it is crucial to understand and prevent air pollution. (Kathmandu, 3032719, 3032719)

Events

Comedy Circle open mic

Enjoy the funniest night in Kathmandu with the funniest comedians and their pies. Be a part of comedy night with comic crime. 9 August, 6-8pm, Swayambhunath, Kapan, Kathmandu. 32060, 3272776

Comedy Luckaluck show

Boasts a bold ‘Luckaluck’ tribute to a night of laughter with stand-up comedians of the K-Town. 4pm, Jay Thapa, Bishal Gautam, Shraddha Verma (Headline). 4 August, 8pm onwards, Shambhala, Lajpat, Kathmandu. (3272719, 3032719)

Drop-in art

Look for drop-in opportunities for a couple of minutes, or an hour. Castle building, music, art creation and many unique activities are live. Materials are provided by CMF Nepal. Every weekend of 8-7, 4pm onwards, Swayambhunath. (3272719, 3032719)

Can’t pay? Won’t pay!

Based on Pankaj Kapur’s play ‘Can’t pay? Won’t pay?’, Madhava Thapa brings, Sulekha trail, Anu Kiran, translated and directed by Bhupendra, joined Sinta Gir, Premi Kuma, An%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%

Art-theory

A basic course programme in an attempt to introduce basic implementation methods and perspectives of (critical) art theory in the context and discourse of the contemporary scene in Nepal, with several other events and various art works of any medium. 11 August, 3-5pm, Ashoka 107, Nagyagbag, Patan, 3032719

Health Transformed by Art

Documentation of the journey ‘Health Transformed by Art’ which brought out the unappreciated therapeutic value of visual art in a hospital setting, predominant in the patient’s life and the public, and works of the artists. 3-16 August, 10am-8pm, Siddhath Aarti Gallery, Pokhara Monkesh-Vidhyut, (3032719)

Nepal photo exhibition

An exhibition of 50 photographs submitted for The Hit India Asia’s best Bank Nepal Photo Contest on categories like; daily life, nature and wildlife, news, tourism and culture, Nepal art and crafts, women and sports photo. 21st writing photographs also available. 3-16 August, 10am-8pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, (3032719, 3272719)

OTHER EVENTS

Nepal photo exhibition

A week is full of fun, fun and fun! Here are our picks:

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Our pick

Epicurean Extravaganz

Get a taste of progressive Indian cuisine through a nine-course menu with a complimentary glass of Chandon souverain wine. 3-4 August, 6:30-10.30pm, Sonme Restaurant, closed Friday & Sat., 32060, 3032719.

Le Trio

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Kul Chandra Gautam’s long journey home

Kunda Dixit

Kul Chandra Gautam’s life is an inspirational story of a school boy in one of the poorest and remotest districts in Nepal went on to become the seniormost Nepali in the United Nations. He achieved this by a lot of hard work, extraordinary perseverance, and never losing sight of his duty to help those in underserved parts of the world, like where he grew up as a boy.

Gautam is a soft-spoken, but hardy believer in democracy, open society, non-violence and has a strong commitment to social justice. While at UNICEF, he was a dynamo for reform, believing that the UN itself had to change if it wanted to change the world. After devoting his entire career for the welfare of children worldwide, he returned to Nepal in 2006 to contribute to his motherland.

The manuscript of his memoir was cut in two by his publisher, nepal times. The first part came out as Lost in Transition: Rebuilding Nepal from the Maoist Mayhem and the Mega Earthquake in 2015. Rohitshree Maiti, who reviewed the book for this paper, wrote: “In a brilliant counter-narrative, Gautam destroys the dominant discourse that eulogises the Maoist war as a noble and inevitable uprising of the oppressed, arguing instead that the war cut short Nepal’s march towards democracy and development and pushed us into protracted transition.”

A sequel to that book is being launched next week: Global Citizen from Gulum: My Journey from the Hills of Nepal to the Halls of the United Nations. This is Gautam’s real memoir that narrates his personal anecdotes and experiences as a world citizen who lends both books credibility and, make him a bible for the Stalwart votaries of violence in our midst.

He first catches a glimpse of Kunjeramji Gautam as a young boy, as his grandfather taught him the Devanagari alphabet in Gulum by writing them down on the ground with a stick. He later changed his name to Kul Chandra Gautam, a favourite poet. The young boy impresses Force Corps volunteers in Tansen with his self-taught English and prowess at Scrabble.

Gautam then gets a full scholarship to Dartmouth College in the US, but has his first run-in with bureaucracy where ‘people are made to serve the rules rather than rules made to serve the people’. This is 1966, and his passport application goes up the Panchayat government ladder all the way to King Mahendra, only to be rejected.

He finally gets to Dartmouth the next year, overcomes culture shock, excels in class, joins anti-Vietnam protests on campus, and goes on for graduate studies at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton where he admits he was a ‘left-leaning student’. Gautam wants to return to Nepal, but lands a job with UNICEF in Cambodia, beginning a career spanning 45 years. He saw Khmer Rouge steadfastly up close, and had to be evacuated from Phnom Penh in a Royal Air Force Hercules to Fort Bucharest as the country descended into the Killing Fields.

Many years later when he hires Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai (who reminds him of Khurshid’s Sampanthan) to be the Khmer Rouge, genocidal ‘Western exegugenator’ he is convinced revolutionary socialism learnt from history. Gautam then works in Laos and Indonesia and finally is sent to Haiti by his boss to help the Haitians. He is a lesson in how ruthless dictators like Baby Doc Duvalier can consign their nation to perpetual poverty.

He is posted in Latin America at a time of Liberation Theologians, the Eldridge Pats and Paolo Emilio’s theory of conscientización in Brazil. Gautam enthralls Pelo as a UNICEF broadcasting ambassador, getting his mother to say: ‘Of course he is the world’s best football player, I bestowed him. Then it is post-Soever Europe where countries are collapsing into chaos. Gautam helps coordinate relief for Srejovo, and gets to sleep in Albanian dictator Hoxha’s bed in Tirana.

Gautam then ports Gautam to India, where the Nepali overcomes the arrogance of Indian babuism to help locate UNICEF’s regional South Asia office in Kathmandu. He was a ‘thief’ for the historic World Summit for Children of 1990 in New York, negotiating minefields of protocol, ego and geopolitics to get members states to sign the National Plan of Action, which became the model for the MDGs and the SDGs that followed.

He has great admiration for Vatsalya Haveli and notes that the Czech President died on the same day as Kim Jong-il in 2011, and that Nepal’s Community troops off to the DPRK embassy in Kathmandu to sign the condolence book. He is ashamed not one Nepali leader paid any tribute to Havel.

Gautam’s other hero is Nelson Mandela, who impressed him in Pretoria with his disregard for pomp and protocol. Unlike some ‘democratic’ Nepali leaders, Mandela never had to show how important he was by displaying tappings of power. Years later, Gautam sees lessons for Nepal in Mandela’s handling of truth and reconciliation and the dangers of ethnic Buntaristism.

Parts of the book about Gautam’s return to Nepal after retirement are extracted from Lost in Transition, where he recounts the efforts to start peace negotiations with UN HQ, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, and directly with King Gyanendra and Maoist leaders. He understands the anger driving the Maoist revolution, but never glamourised it like many Nepali and international pseudo-revolutionaries. He calls it like it is: a needless carnage that derailed Nepal’s march towards democracy and development.

He is nothing about the organisation he once worked for, the United Nations, and the expats in posh-tinted glass who led its post-conflict peace mission in Nepal. The past few years have proven Kul Chandra Gautam right: the insurgency was not a revolution but a Maujist attempt at state capture by misguided figures espousing an absolute ideology.

Indeed, today’s exiled Communists have turned out to be worse than the rulers they replaced. The real victims of that ruinous war were the very people who were supposed to be liberated. Because of his own life struggle and wisdom, every word in Kul Gautam’s book rings true, carrying the immense power of his conviction.


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ROMEO & MUNA

Achchhu girl Muna (Shrishti Shrestha) in Bhaskar Bhattarai’s film ‘Ved Ved’ (Vineet Shrestha) from America. He has the money to buy luxury goods and she has no money for milk in her morning tea. Will they ever click?

It seems unlikely: he tears her kurta as she shows past her and she splashes paint at him. But the director Nawal KC manages to bring the two together to create a lively, sparkling chemistry. The transition from Epix to Enamashes (from sandwich to sketch to sandwich: chulna! Back again) is entirely believable. Along this way we also learn why the girl is so stubborn, and why the guy so callous. Vineet is a convincing insensitive brat, Shrishti credibly essay a struggling small-town girl in flowery kurta and pleated heels, but it’s her sister who brings the eastern flavor with her pointy nose.

Not that the movie is not without flaws. The editing, especially in the first half, is not that great. It jumps abruptly from one girl doing the same act. Ritual to a bikin party to a dream sequence with a monster. And the shock value of that gimmicky bikini party song on Nepali screen, a whole another story (we say it really necessary to limit wannabe South Asian nep video shot Kathmandu nightlife)

There are some tropes that could have worked until the 80s, but not today. For example, when Ved loses access to his money and is forced to do Muna’s bidding, the audience comes up with a thousand reasonable things he could have done to solve it. Some plot twists are reminiscent of Korean melodramas. Sushma Karki’s gold digger character is not just over the top, but the entire subplot is annoying.

What is refreshing, however, is the movie’s approach to real world issues. In his first film Dying Candle, the director had explored complicated family dynamics with an absent, beleaguered father and a problematic mother. This time he reverses it with a romanticized, absent mother and a difficult father. In this ‘tribute to Van Gogh,’ the painter’s strong bond with his brother is reflected in Jacki and Thupthi, that was also at the center of Dying Candle. Animation plays a refreshingly large role, perhaps for the first time in Nepali cinema. A CGI-rendered monster haunts Muna’s dreams and spills over into her paintings. It is a symbol of issues that we cannot run away from, demons we must stay. The attempt to tackle deep-seated emotional trauma is feasible, but not entirely satisfying—and this is the movie’s biggest flaw. One wishes the writer had worked harder to make the reconciliation more plausible.

Still, Van Gogh is a rare treat to movie-going eyes. Starry Night steals everywhere from the title credits to Vineet’s shirt to songs. A blue train chugs behind Shrishti in a red dress and parasol, bringing Bridges across the Seine at Amsterdam to life. A field of post-impressionist sunflowers wave in the wind. A couple takes a mid-day Siseta on a haystack to Sukhim Gurung’s ‘Pas Pas Timi’ Similhara Mr. Giving new meaning to old songs is something of a favourite for KC. Having used the classic Keki Milho ‘Bat Care’ to great effect in Dying Candle, he does it again with the mushy favourite Gahun Gahun Zaga Jati. The movie’s original songs are delicate, especially the soulful ‘Sankh Paryo’.

Though the movie is wanting in a lot of ways, it is watchable for wetting into new territories. Nepali cinema is just beginning to flap its wings, so this is not time to compare the fledging industry with the world cinema. But there are some things this movie does as well as any other deliver an emotional punch, especially on its central theme: the redemptive power of love.

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HELPING HANDS: Indian Ambassador to Nepal Vimal Singh Pur hands over Rs2.1 billion in aid for earthquake reconstruction to Finance Minister Yuba Raya Thapa and Finance Secretary Rajan Paraj at Kathmandu last week.

AMERICAN CONNECTION: Nepal’s Ambassador to the United States Arjun K Karki meets with US Envoy, the US Ambassador to the United Nations in New York on Tuesday. The officials discussed bilateral relations and geopolitics.

WIDE ANGLE: Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari at the launch of an exhibition of best photographs of the year organized by Photojournalists’ Club at Nepal Art Council on Thursday.

BLOOD RELATIONS: Thai Airways organized a blood donation and cardiac health check-up clinic at Hotel Annapurna on Tuesday in memory of those lost in an accident in 1992 at Kathmandu.
Lost and not found
Jinu Raj Sapkota in Kathmandu, 31 July

“Fur seven days we walked through dense forest without much food or water. We were on the verge of death,” recounts Moti Gurung of Ilam, who was among a group of Nepalis being taken by human traffickers to Greece via Turkey. Gurung says he lost contact with fellow Nepali Nabin Tiwari during the trek, and he has been missing for seven months.

“Our Pakistani agent allowed us one call and we spoke to Ashish Chhimire about Nabin’s condition but they didn’t do anything,” says Gurung, who last saw Tiwari while following a railway track as the trafficker put them on a train.

A Kathmandu-based middleman named Ashish Chhimire had lured Gurung, Tiwari and one other Nepali with a promise to smuggle them into Europe via Turkey and Greece where they could make a better living. Each was charged up to Rs 500,000 and then handed to a Pakistani national named Mohammad.

Nepalis going to Turkey via India on tourist visas to find their way to Europe are being stranded and duped by human traffickers along the way. In some cases, individuals who pay anywhere from Rs 1.5 to 1.5 million to enter Greece via Turkey have risked their lives. Gurung and his team were detained for 35 days for illegal entry before being deported back to Nepal.

There have been 37 complaints against human traffickers, smuggling Nepalis to Greece at the Central Bureau of Investigation, who have been swindled of Rs 20 million.

“I spent 500,000 but didn’t make a penny,” says Tikaram Bhattachari who left for Turkey via India with Tiwari but was unable to enter Greece.

According to IOC Mandhavi Bhatta, a cross-border human trafficking racket is fueling Nepalis, with dozens of agents promising to take them to Europe. So far six agents, one consultancy and two manpower agencies have been found to be involved. Of the 37 cases registered at the Bureau, 14 agents are linked with the scam but only 9 have been arrested so far.

Police duped
Govinda KC

Oshin Shankar, 30 July

New information shows that the government is allegedly helped to force Govinda KC to come to Kathmandu from Jumla, where he began his fast-unto-death demanding medical education reform.

On the morning of July 19, an army helicopter reached Jumla to bring KC to the capital, but the doctor refused to leave. Police attempted to get him out from the Karnali Health Science Academy by force, and in the process fired tear gas and baton-charged supporters.

As the situation grew more tense, KC agreed to come to Kathmandu, but not on an army chopper.

That was when the police started making an announcement over the loudspeaker: “We have a casualty, one of our policemen has died.”

The message reached KC and his team that a policeman had been killed. KC’s supporters said the doctor was very disturbed by the news and went as he climbed down from his bed, saying: “I will go to Kathmandu.”

As KC was on his way to the hospital, government sources said the policeman was actually alive. “We had to spread the rumor otherwise the situation would have turned ugly,” a local administration source confirmed.

The policeman, Kamal Upadhyaya, was also mowed down to Nepalgunj, where his injuries were found to be minor and caused by a nail.
### Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>Rural Areas</th>
<th>Internally Displaced</th>
<th>Internally Displaced Child Survivors</th>
<th>Bhutanese Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxity</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distress</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
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### Sources
- The Lancet

### Notes
- The debilitating effects of mental health disorders and social stigma associated with them are not limited to patients; the lives of family members also change irreversibly. Family support can also be an important source of strength and encouragement in the help-seeking process, say psychiatrists, patients, and their relatives.
- Kalsang Tshering, from a displaced family in Jomson, says they have been trying to cope with the loss of a loved one, but the stigma associated with mental illness makes it difficult for them to seek help.

### Addicted to the Joysick

Compulsive computer gaming is now classified as a psychiatric disorder.
Raising children can be therapy

Hormones released while parenting can help fathers and mothers cope with their mental illness

Ketan Dulal

When my daughter was born I was not present during the delivery. I could not hold her like most parents after their newborn is brought into this world. Here I was in Canada, and she was born in Nepal. At five months, she arrived at Charlottesville airport. I did not hug her first, but her mother who had warned me on Skype: Don’t suddenly hug your daughter, she gets spooked easily.

She is a beautiful baby and I can see myself spending a lot of time with her as she grows up, as I dream about what kind of person I want her to be.

Why become a parent? The evolutionary reason for it is that you want to leave your genes after you pass on. But that idea is wrong. Parenthood, as Andrew Solomon says in his book Far From The Tree, is an act of production rather than reproduction. Seeing ourselves in our progeny is a profound mistake.

Parenting is anything but normal. What you are doing in becoming a parent is sacrificing your life to a being, while not knowing how they will turn out. It is a full-time job for which there are no wages.

In The Gardener and Carpenter, psychologist Allan Gephardt has problems with the current model of parenting. Parents, instead of thinking of themselves as guardians of their children and trying to mould them into what they want them to be, should instead let them flourish as they are. She says.

To build such a relationship with children is the key to becoming a parent. It is especially important for parents with mental illnesses, like me. The stereotypical view that parents with mental illness are not good at their job. Admittedly that has been supported by some studies, which show that parenting can indeed lead to more stress for fathers and mothers with mental illness.

However, there has also been some studies to show that raising children can actually bring about short and long-term change in the hormones in the parents’ brains. The attachment between mother and child, for instance, is stimulated by the production of the hormone oxytocin in the brain. Oxytocin levels in fathers also seem to increase following the birth of a child and during interactions with infants.

Similarly, references in the field of a sober decrease after a child is born and following interaction with children, although it may help in protective responses, for example, when the child is threatened by a predator.

Parenting can also be a therapeutic tool for patients with mental disease like schizophrenia, who are under antipsychotic medications that block the receptors of dopamine. However, although antipsychotics can treat symptoms of schizophrenia (like hallucinations and delusions) it is ineffective in treating other symptoms like lack of motivation.

Oxytocin, on the other hand, is involved in the process of attachment. The hormone can be used as a therapeutic agent to reduce some symptoms of schizophrenia. And since it is produced also in fathers and mothers when they interact with their children, parenting could be an antidote to the disorder.

The most important thing for parents with mental disease like schizophrenia is not to be too anxious about how their children are going to turn out as they grow up, but look to develop lasting relationships with them.

Parenting can be stressful, but it is a blessing. Developing good parenting skills to build good relationships with our children without trying to mould them can be an effective tool for handling mental disease.

I have schizophrenia, and one of the things I do to reduce relapse is interact with my daughter as much as possible and also build a positive approach to my parenting job.

Ketan Dulal is a PhD candidate at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada.
News in Briefs

Here at this newspaper we try to accommodate all legitimate events, however it is physically impossible to attend every chili pan. We are human, after all. Here are some items that didn’t fit this week:

Monkeys to the Rescue
JORDAN — After the government failed to pave the road for four years, four monkeys have taken it into their own hands and manually assembled the road themselves. This has impressed the Kothimatra Mayor so much that new hard-working Kari police are now patrolling all city streets in the city

Bicycles to the Rescue
JORDAN — In an effort to boost revenue to repair damaged bikes, Province 3 has introduced an annual fare on all bicycles. A basic of 20 rupees, the new fare is expected to make enough revenue for the entire Cabinet to upgrade to Scions.

Shifting Bricks
KHOKARAN — The amount of gold being smuggled through the central international airport is so high that Nepal is already a middle-income country, and we don’t have to worry any longer.

The Ass
NEED A BATTERY?
FREE HOME DELIVERY
WITH FREE FITMENT SERVICES

The spirit of the "COURTEOUS" Gorkha soldiers live inside each of us. Let’s capture the real essence of the Gorkhali in you.