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## Muddling along

**EDITORIAL** 

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

In the first three months of
his tenure, Prime Minister K P
Oli focused on just three tasks:
improving political ties with India,
building on economic cooperation
with China, and uniting with
the Maoists to form
the monolithic Nepal
Communist Party. That

took to the themsel
politicia
about his
is being
has become

the monolithic Nepal Communist Party. That seems to have sapped all his energy. He did try to

his energy.

He did try to
address the people's
concerns by ordering his ministers
to dismantle transport cartels, go
after gold smugglers, and punish
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 craters themselves. Even former UML politicians close to Oli are worried about his tarnished image. "He is being heaped all the blame, he has become the lightning rod,"

said one close aide, in frustration.

Indeed, PM-inwaiting and party cochair Pushpa Kamal Dahal is conspicuous in his silence. Home

Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, who once threatened to break cartels and the bones of errant contractors, has not been heard from recently.

The government is busy firefighting and too distracted to address long-term crises. This week's delay in confirmation of Deepak Raj Joshi as Chief Justice by the Parliamentary Hearings Special Committee is because he is being punished for his interim 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 Radheshyam Adhikari.

public disenchantment is also growing. There is open ridicule of Prime Minister 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, smells blood. Prime Minister Oli's window of opportunity for damage control is narrowing.

Rameshwor Bohara

### TALKING ABOUT



of the **black PAGE 7** 

Schizophrenia in Family

Raising Children Can Be Therapy

**Gaming Disorder** 

PAGE 14-15



### **DOUBLESPEAK**

 $E^{\rm ven\ if\ it\ has\ a\ comfortable\ majority\ in}$  Parliament, no one should envy the current Communist rulers of Nepal. Prime Minister K P Oli, for all his bluster and swagger, confronts a mountain of mounting

Some of them, to be sure, are inherited from failed previous regimes. Oli was partly right in blaming his predecessors for the state of the streets of the capital this monsoon which look like they are pocked with calderas. But it is also true that he was one of his own predecessors, and the mayors belonging to his party have done zilch to fix the roads in the year since they assumed

The dreadful state of Kathmandu's thoroughfares today are emblematic of the state of the nation.

However, there have been signs the PM is beginning to see the writing on the wall. His teams managed to convince to call off the hunger strikes of two activists in the nick of time before the tragedy of their deaths triggered a larger national emergency.

Gangamaya Adhikari put off her fast after

Widespread criticism of the move seems to have rattled officials. A minister told representatives of the donor and diplomatic community that the guidelines were just a draft, and merely suggestions. But some other ministers have lashed out at critics in xenophobic tones, calling them 'dollar farmers'. The Prime Minister himself assured members of a party-affiliated media club of handsome rewards if they wrote in support of the government, and his Information Minister this week scolded editors who dared express solidarity with Govinda KC.

Fears of a drift towards authoritarianism, especially, appears to have hit a raw nerve. Ministers who should be reassuring the public, have gone around banning programs critical of them, or issuing open threats, duly amplified by the Facebook faithful. The lesson we should learn from the doublespeak in totalitarian states is to take what officials assert most emphatically with a pinch of salt because that is what is farthest from the truth.

The Nepali people had collectively thought that by giving the NCP such a thumping majority, that would end the incessant



The few correct decisions taken in the past weeks happened because the Prime Minister Oli responded to public opinion - an important template for the future.

the government agreed to demands that her son's murderers be brought to trial. This set a precedent for all other transitional justice cases for families of war victims still awaiting closure.

After bungling its response to Govinda KC's hunger strike by its initial unwillingness to address his demand for reforms in medical education, the government began negotiating in earnest only after the fast was about to enter its fourth week, and the doctor was in danger of suffering multiple organ failure.

The question arises why, if such a bold intervention by the Prime Minister was possible, did the government take the risk of waiting so long to even negotiate? Why did the police dupe KC? The brinkmanship cost the NCP, and Oli personally, much public support. It convinced many (even those who voted Communist) that the leaders had lost their way. A government that said it was here for the next five years squandered most of its trust in just five months.

There have been many other issues which the government has mishandled, botched, or been recklessly cavalier about. There has been an all-around squeeze on open society. Few disagreed that the activities of outside agencies in relief and development needed better monitoring, but the government's draft code of conduct for INGOs and donors appeared to have been designed less to regulate, and more for control.

squabbling and the instability that had become the norm in the coalition governments in the past decades. The people trusted that the NCP 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, fixing 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 dilly-dallying in providing the constitutionally 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 outlandish decisions by provincial governments, like the new tax on bicycles announced by one of them, is therefore being heaped on Kathmandu.

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

#### **10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

The Nepali Times Editorial from ten years ago this week (#411, 1-7 August 2008) was titled 'A Million mutinies' and drew attention to the country sliding into ethnicity-based politics. Excerpt:

'This past week of tyre-burning proved, if proof is still needed, just how volatile and unstable the political situation still is. The spark of the vice-president's ill-advised decision to take his oath in the official language of a neighbouring country lit the brush fire. The lingering political deadlock fanned it.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. The entire point about the political transition of the past two years was to install stability so that the constitution-making process could go ahead without pressure groups rampaging in the streets. Any grandstanding on sensitive topics such as ethnicity-based federalism was supposed to happen on the floor of the house, not on the asphalt outside.



#### **ONLINE PACKAGES**



Kul Chandra Gautam, once Nepal's senior most official at the United Nations with a career spanning 45 years, speaks with Kunda Dixit in this edition of *Nepali Times* Studio. Watch him narrate his personal antecedents, experience as a world citizen, and talk about his memoir Global Citizen from Gulmi, being launched next week. Review: page 11.



Ashna Lama's sketches of smooth female figures full of shards and sharp ends are born out of her anxiety. She has decided to exhibit them to highlight mental health issues. Go online to watch her at work, and explains how art can help deal with mental



Although traditional Nepali food is complete and balanced in nutrition and taste, aggressive marketing and misleading advertisements have influenced people's eating habits. Watch this video to hear from health experts about the benefits of traditional whole foods, which are readily and locally available, and of the dangers of seemingly healthy processed junk. Story: Page 8-9



For more videos on health, environment, culture, heritage and Nepali politics, subscribe to the Nepali Times YouTube Channel.

#### **BREAST IS BEST**

Best wishes to Nepal to continue promoting the healthy practice of breastfeeding ('Back to the nipple in Nepal'. Sonia Awale, #920). Kate Rezelman

#### **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 Bhattarai, #920). The industry needs to implement a quality management system focused on consistency. The objective should be earning trust and not overnight business. Lack of quality is the main reason for the fall of any industry.

Lakshman Shrestha

#### **RESILIENT NEPALIS**

Nepalese are the most resilient people I know - mentally (' Nepal's Gross National Sadness ', Anil Chitrakar, #920). Despite everything we don't lose our smile. But it doesn't take away the fact that times are hard, and probably the hardest since a lot of us younger generation have seen. Yet, hope persists. Dasain!

Salina Giri

#### Times.com

#### **Nepal's Gross National Sadness**

One meets many unhappy Nepalis these days. From negotiating water-logged streets, highways that are death-traps to a doctor on hunger strike to make medical care more affordable, Nepalis have hit the rock bottom in Gross National Happiness. But by Dasain, we will be a happy nation again.

WHATS TRENDING



Most reached and shared on Facebook

#### What's so funny?

Cartoonists in the Nepali language press have been obsessed with Govinda KC's hunger strike, which ended after 26 days last week. They used the fast and the government's initial dismisiveness and highhanded response to ridicule Prime Minister Oli. Go online to enjoy a selection of some of the sharpest



Most visited online page



#### The Tamu Trek Trail

The Tamu trail is a new hiking route retracing the heritage of the Gurung people. From Besisahar to Ghale Gaun, Bhujung, to Kohla Sonthar and down to Pokhara via Tangting and Sikles, this can be your new trekking destination for the upcoming autumn season. Visit nepalitimes.com for more information of the route and its historical significance.



**Most commented** 



Most popular on Twitter

#### **QUOTE** TWEETS



Nepali Times @nepalitimes #POLL Do you think this is Govinda KC's last fast?



Sandesh @Sandesh\_8848 It's unfortunate we even have to poll this!! That is telling us how corrupt our govt is and with the I'm afraid even half of those agreements will actually be fulfilled.



Nepali Times @nepalitimes Who would have thought that beautiful art could

be created from hospital waste like bottles and caps? But today the busiest corridors of Kanti Children's hospital have come alive with jungle panorama.



L Devaney @pglen68 Such a beautiful and uplifting story.



Some gender-sensitive people say there is a male-bias in the words Himalaya and Man Sarovar. Obsolete place names hark back to Nepal's feudal past, and we need names more suited to these despotic times. The ass has some suggestions.



pigreen @pigreen1 As always there is a sharp point to these humorous suggestions.



Weekly Internet Poll #921

#### Q. Do you think this is Govinda KC's last fast?

Total votes: 163 Definitely yes 16% Probably no 63% Can't say 21%

Weekly Internet Poll #922 To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should public figures need to have passed at least high school?





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# Nepal turns to solar and

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

Tepal'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 1044MW 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 Kulekhani cascade. Currently, Nepal meets nearly all its peak demand by importing coal-fired electricity from India.

Peak load demand is traditionally met with electricity from hydropower reservoirs or power plants burning fossil fuels. But as countries 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 with its proposal to generate 150MW of solar power and store 20MW of it in battery systems to meet Nepal's seasonal and daily peaks.

Called Peak Energy Management (PEMa) 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 hydroelectricity generated during the night to partially meet the morning peak demand.

Such generation and storage of solar power would have been prohibitively expensive till even two years ago. But the cost of storing energy in batteries dropped to less than \$200/kWh from \$1,200/ kWh ten years ago. The price of photovoltaic cells have similarly plummeted to only \$60/MWh compared to \$400/MWh in 2008.

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

#### **FALLING SHORT** Electricity Supply-Demand Winter 2018

650<sub>MW</sub> 1.050<sub>MW</sub> 1000 500 Peak demand

Nepal's power grid will have a dry season shortfall for the next ten years till large reservoir projects like Budi Gandaki and Tanahu come online. Till then, NEA is several idea to bridge the gap. Among these are solar storage schemes like PEMa to meet daily and seasonal peak demands.



1. Imports from India With new crossborder transmissior lines, Nepal can import:  $550_{\scriptscriptstyle extsf{MW}}$ 

2. New Hydropower







Replacing 20 million incandescent bulbs with LED all over Nepal will save

**200**mw

4. Net metering If 20% of households in Kathmandu install solar panels and feed surplus power to grid it will generate

**220**<sub>MW</sub>



6. Leakage control NEA targets reducing 200MW lost to leakage





compared to the decade that it will take for Nepal's next big reservoir projects like Budi Gandaki and Tanahu. Solar is also much more ecologically benign. There is also a neat fit: Nepal's peak demand is in winter when solar generation is highest because of cloudless skies.

'We are not trying to replace

hydro with solar, we just want a flexible and reliable system to meet peak demand by complementing hydropower," explains Mike Winkel, Director of the Dolma Himalayan Climate Fund, an offshoot of the Dolma Impact Fund, the first international private equity fund for Nepal which has

### "A part of something bigger"



#### Nepali Times: It looks like you have quite a soft spot for Nepal.

**Tim Gocher:** I first came here in 2003 and just like for a lot of 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 Pooja Gurung who I met in Dhunche during a trek 15 years ago. I have never looked back.

#### And how did the Dolma Impact Fund come about?

It was not a business to begin with, it was the love for the country. I had met a girl named Dolma, 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 lived a double life. I had this 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 to stimulate sustainable growth. It took us three years to persuade anybody to invest in the first private equity fund for Nepal. I got laughed at in quite a few offices.

#### Which sector do you think is most critical for Nepal's economic development?

I don't think we at Dolma Impact Fund are focused in any one sector. The underlying fundamentals for infrastructure are holding companies back. So we have invested in two hydro power projects and I was going say how great the political stability is till ... (Laughter, 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 cost disadvantage, and wanted to use new energy technology to help with domestic energy production. Solar and battery costs are going down. We can provide through Dolma Himalayan Climate Fund a solution which is very similar to seasonal hydro storage where they would deliver power on as needed basis in the dry season by storing water in summer. The beauty of it is speed. Big hydro storage 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 offset some of the imports from India.

#### How do you see the political and economic future of Nepal?

I certainly won't tell you how I see the political future of Nepal, none of my business. But I will tell you a bit about business future. Do you want the bad news first, or the good news?

#### Bad news?

I have invested and done business in many countries, and there is obviously need for reform. We tend to see some restrictive things. Things that are meant well actually might stop the initial investment growth, job creation, prosperity. But it doesn't stop us, we were certainly well aware before we came in. We now provide employment in our portfolio companies to 3,000 people. If that's the bad news the good news must be really good.

This is not a small country, it has the population of Malaysia. There is rarely a place where the regulations are perfect. Where else do you get to meet the ministers and governors, and they will hear you out. They are not always going to act, but sometimes they do. It is not all not mapped out for us business people and as investors it is risky. But you also feel like you are a part of something bigger. It's not just about the money. If was just about the money I would still will be in London or New York.

#### **BIZ BRIEFS** 💠 prabba bank 📗

#### To Wales and London

Qatar Airways has announced two new flight services to Cardiff, Wales, and Gatwick, London, in presence of Country



Manager Jaya Prakash Nair and British Ambassador to Nepal Richard Morris, operating 16 weekly departures to Gatwick and daily departures to Cardiff.

#### Hyundai trade-in

Laxmi Intercontinental has organised a car exchange campaign for Hyundai owners



August, 10am-6pm, throughout the country. Also

facilitating at the campaign: easy finance and insurance, cash discount, loyalty bonus, exchange bonus, four years of free service, free gift on every test drive and

#### Thai Lion here

Thai Lion Air has begun four weekly flights from Bangkok's Don Muang to Kathmandu



using Boeing 737-8 aircraft. The new service will add to flights already operated by Thai Airways and Nepal Airlines

#### Two more from Huawei

Huawei has launched two new smartphones in Nepal, Nova 3 and Nova 3i, with the announcement of pre-booking and



chances to win portable printers or portable speakers. The trendy new handsets feature an Al quad-camera setup, and a powerful SoC at their core.

#### New Galaxy arrives

Samsung has launched Galaxy J8 in Nepal, as part of the new Infinity series. Packed with a larger 6" Super AMOLED Infinity Display, industry-first dual camera innovations, chat- over-video, the smartphone is available in

blue, black and gold and costs Rs33,490.



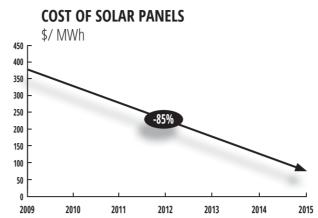
# batteries to meet peak demand

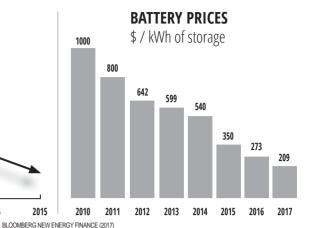


investments in the hydropower, technology, agriculture and health sectors.

The Dolma Group was set up by Tim Gocher, a finance executive and professor specialising in energy. (Read interview, left and watch Nepali Times Studio on our YouTube Channel.) "The project is not going to replace hydro by any means, but solar does give Nepal another energy option which should directly offset some of the imports from India," Gocher told Nepali Times

The PEMa serves the same purpose as a storage dam to cover





SUNNY SIDE UP: A solar farm with
battery storage similar to the type
designed for the PEMa scheme in Nepal
by Dolma Himalayan Climate Fund (*left*).

A dractic reduction in the price of

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

peak winter demand, but unlike reservoirs it can be completed in two years, and can be quickly upscaled to 850MW 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 ten 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 DHCF, an energy specialist who was formerly with the Norwegian SN "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 Maha Prasad Adhikari is also excited about the venture. "This is an innovative way to improve Nepal's energy mix, and can support our peaktime and dry season demand within a short timeframe."

The Dolma Impact Fund will also be building on its investments in Nepal's hydropower, that include the 28.1MW Lower Likhu project in Okhaldhunga and the 6.4MW Suri Khola Project in Dolakha into which the Fund has injected \$4.5 million and may invest more in hydropower or other solar projects.

solar projects.

Winkel used to be with the global energy giant E.ON mana

global energy giant E.ON 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-theart power generation and storage technologies to deliver clean, secure and competitive electricity for Nepal."

Kunda Dixit



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#### 3 - 9 AUGUST 2018 **#921**

### **Monsoon memories**

he monsoon deluge hammers our rooftops and buckets of water are seemingly hurled at our windowpanes by divine hand. Drains clog and swell, streams overflow, and rivers spill onto what



is left of roads, with their surfaces corroded by wheels and weather. Drenched hillsides release their soil and stones, creating slips and landslides

Nepal's summer monsoon floods cause untold misery, damage and disruption, even if we have come to consider them 'normal'. Draining into the sacred Ganga, Himalayan rivers have not much more than 100m elevation to drop between the southern border with India until they meet the Bay of Bengal 2,000km away. India shares the flooding watercourses and the suffering.

At Tiger Tops in the middle of Chitwan, it never even occurred to us to try to keep the lodge running during this annual drama.





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

Access across the swollen rivers and overgrown tracks was nigh on impossible, the Tarai heat and humidity were oppressive, and the jungle environment more teeming than usual with tics, leeches, scorpions and snakes, flooded out of their homes.

Closed every year mid-June to mid-September, monsoon was the time for lodge maintenance, repairing roof thatch and bamboo walls, resting the elephants, sporting only a skeleton staff who rotated to their villages for six weeks' annual leave. The tented camps deep in the forest or overlooking riverbanks were packed up and carefully stored to avoid mould, fungus 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 profligate 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, swirling brown with topsoil from the middle hills, and carved new courses, gouging their sandy banks and dragging down huge trees in the flatlands of the Tarai. Unnoticed 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, repaired, refreshed and polished clean. The National Park roads had to be labouriously rebuilt by hand, jungle trails cleared of encroaching greenery, forest campsites reclaimed, boats positioned for Rapti and Reu crossings, and Land Rovers floated across the rivers, wheels balancing precariously on makeshift rafts made from lashed together wooden boats, ready for the first of the arriving guests.

Only elephants could forge their way through the dense towering grasslands that had flourished in the heat and wet, disappearing beneath the delicate pink Saccharum 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 presence of animals was only betrayed by swaying grass or crashing branches, and a rare glimpse if you ware bucky.

A few hardy 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 denim or jeans which I remember well, having been denied boarding in Chicago due to my blue pencil skirt.

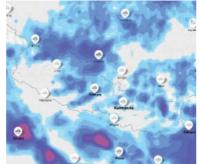
Sleeping on the scrounged sofas of kind Nepal-lovers or Jim's bemused friends, I could visit eight Hong Kong or Singapore travel agents in one day, persuading their weary staff why they should sell Nepal above other destinations. With partners such as Lindblad Travel, Abercrombie & Kent and Mountain 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 bland motels, I slept in more strange spare rooms and attended luscious lunches and elegant dinners hosted by Nepal enthusiasts to further ferment their fervour amongst their circle of friends. Taking time out to regroup with Jim in our fledgling 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 whilst the monsoon raged, my nomadic progress took me to major capitals and cities linked by Pan Am Boeing flights, on a mission to spread the word and help establish what would become the adventure destination of Nepal.







Every year towards the middle of the monsoon, its two arms from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal mingle to bring the kind of relentless rain we have been seeing in Nepal this week. Fortunately, so far the precipitation has been at normal levels without major cloudbursts. But this is the time we have to be careful about landslides and flashfloods. The soil is saturated, and the showers tend to be heavier and more localised. Cloudy and rainy weekend ahead.











into blackness".

Art has historical association with mental health. Frieda Kahlo painted self portraits to deal with debilitating injuries, Monet was highly anxious, Picasso was said to be schizophrenic, 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 taboos. (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, Lama 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 more definition to her form of expression. She also paints commissioned work where she digresses 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 gemstones to make colours, using the techniques to make my own kind of art."

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

The Fragility of Anxiety, August 10 Hotel Annapurna 12 August, 4:30-6:30PM



Watch Ashna Lama sketch out a figure in her signature style, and listen to her speak about how her art represents her inner turmoils. Lama is exhibiting her collection of black and white figures which she created three years ago. She is finally exhibiting her art to generate discussion about mental health issues.

nepalitimes.com

SONIA AWALE





# Could Nepali cuisine go glo

#### **Thomas Heaton**

andwiched between two culinary monoliths, it's a wonder Nepal's cuisine can't be found on as many corners of the globe as omnipresent Chinese and Indian restaurants.

Nepal has its own hybrid foods: Nepali-Indian or Nepali-Tibetan and this guarantees the best of both worlds. It fuses together Szechuan pepper, Indian spices, dumplings, bamboo shoots, but the real question is why few seem obsessed with Nepal's Himalayan spice?

Nepali Times put the question to one of the Momo Sisters, Pragati Sunwar. She is one part of the London-based Nepali food vlogging duo, and replies: "To promote Nepali food, we need to bring it to the high street."

The reality is that overseas, Nepali food is mostly catered to Nepalis only. And the country's culinary treasures are buried under

piles of Indian dishes in an effort to get local bums on seats. In the UK, it's assumed Nepali cuisine is highly similar to Indian, even though you know, and we know, it is different.

"There are regional varieties of Indian cuisine. And there are regional varieties of Nepali foods, too. We have Newari, Thakali cuisines, and we just need to be confident about what we are doing," adds Sunwar.

Momos have made it all over the mundo, but there is a very slim chance of finding a bara, or laphing on a menu overseas.

Jothyi Pathak, who lives in New York, wanted to change this with her acclaimed cookbook Taste of Nepal. Living in one of the gastronomical centres of the world, she does not see much of a chance of Indian and Chinese cuisine being dislodged any time soon.

However, she says that as the size of Nepali diaspora expands, Nepali and Himalayan restaurants are popping up in most large US



**HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES:** Cupcakes made from millet, barley and semolina flour mixed with ripe fruits for sweet taste, along with herbal tea made with dried flower and spices. No sugar and refined flour used.

# Nepalis binge on junk foods the West... and shun indigenous whole foods now famous in the W

#### **Duksangh Sherpa**

Talk down the aisle of any supermarket in Kathmandu, and there they are arrayed along the shelves: tetrapacks of juice claiming to have the goodness of whole fruits, instant noodles promising to make you more intelligent, chips and cheese balls in flashy foil packing, and fizzy sugar drinks piled high.

Supposedly fortified with iron, vitamins and vital minerals, the attractively packaged processed foods have become symbols of a modern 'Western' culture. Families are moving away from agriculture and nutritious traditional foods to an urban lifestyle with its quick onthe-go meals, setting off an alarming rise in chronic diseases.

"The majority of our medical problems these days are directly linked to poor diet and lack of information about nutritious food created by false advertising," asserts public health specialist Aruna Uprety, and author of a recent book

on nutrition. "There is a damaging notion that it is expensive to be healthy because packaged food in fancy wrappings are more nutritious. This is completely false."

The figures say it all. The incidence of anemia among women increased from 36% in 2006 to 41% ten years later. Children with anemia rose from 48% in 2006 to 53% in 2016. Prevalence of hypertension has also increased from 13% of women and 18% men with high blood pressure in 2006 to 17% and 23% respectively ten years later.

Recent research has shown that 2.5 million Nepalis suffer from Type 2 diabetes, which is 8.1% of the population. However, the prevalence rate for diabetes in rural areas is only 1%, while it is as high as 14% in some cities where people lack exercise and have higher intakes of sugary sodas and processed foods.

Health experts say the line between good and bad food is getting blurred because of misleading advertising and

promotion, influencing Nepalis subconsciously with claims that fast, junk foods are healthy.

The first challenge for regulators is to curb false advertising of junk food, and strictly implement a policy to reduce misinformation and unquestioned consumption. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is especially worried about the exposure to children of such targeted marketing.

In the absence of strict labelling criteria, nutritionally void products can claim to be enriched with vitamins, minerals, calcium and iron, while conveniently overlooking the fact they are laden with preservatives, emulsifiers, artificial colours and flavours, excess salt, sugar and unhealthy fats.

For decades, most industrialised countries have been cracking down on junk food manufacturers and fast food companies. Increased health consciousness in the public has also forced them to use more wholesome raw materials. However, self-regulation by the advertising industry is not working.

London is phasing out junk food ads from the city's public transport network. Mexico, a country with the second highest rate of adult obesity in the world, saw consumption of fizzy drinks drop by 7.6% since a tax on soft drinks was imposed two years ago. Other countries are watching the Mexico experience closely to see the impact on Type 2 diabetes of taxing sugary

The UK has also banned advertisements of a health drink that claimed to make children 'taller, stronger and sharper'. However, the same company continues to air TV commercials with similar content in South Asia, including Nepal.

Nepal has no strict policies or advertising standards to regulate outlandish health claims made by manufacturers of packaged foods, fizzy drinks and franchised fast food outlets. Public awareness of the health impact of sugar consumption is growing in the West with books like *The Case* Against Sugar, but there is no such campaign in Nepal.

Arjun M Bhattarai of the Advertising Association of Nepal says the government has no code of conduct governing marketing of harmful foodstuff, and the industry cannot act until there is. Nepal has followed the international trend in regulating cigarette advertising, but there has not been similar restrictions for alcohol and processed foods.

"Advertisements for junk foods should be strictly regulated just like ads for cigarettes," says nutritionist Sophia Uprety. "Junk food tastes good only because it contains layers of addictive flavour enhancers, which are not good for our health. The traditional Nepali diet is a goldmine of nutrition, we do not need to look anywhere else. Let us not wait for the West to tell us what we already know."

Traditional Nepali whole foods like buckwheat, barley, corn, millet and a variety of legumes and spices such as turmeric are fresh, organic and wholesome, having medicinal properties. Ironically, however, consumers in Western societies now regard



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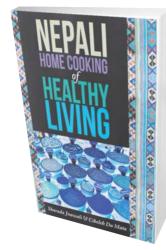
cities. The challenge is for Nepali food items to appeal to a larger

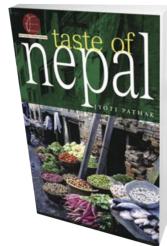
"Visitors and tourists who have spent time in Nepal have come to understand the virtues and its diversity, and many tell me that they appreciate the freshness and healthy aspect of our food," Pathak told Nepali Times.

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 change she has seen when visiting Kathmandu annually since moving to the US several years ago.

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

"Momos, KFCs, pizzas, burgers and northern Indian cooking are getting more popular, and urban populations are eating more processed, packaged foods," Pathak





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 Sharada Jnawali, who says the influx of global foods, and an increase in the purshasing power of the young has resulted in more inroads by outside 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

Pragati Sunwar says Nepali cuisine could become more popular if its health benefits were better known, and she hopes to open a restaurant by changing the formula for Nepali restaurants from a number of afterthoughts 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 54kg, 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



oily and deep-fried.

**Aruna Uprety** 

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 hypertension by the time

he is 25. His grandmother is worried about his addiction to sugarsweetened sodas and packaged foods.

While in the US, 15 years ago, I saw many obese adolescents, and remember thinking we had the opposite problem in Nepal: undernourishment 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 Sindhupalchok, 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 the lack of 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 aghast when I showed them pictures of children gaunt 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 Center in Nepalganj, and was nursed back to

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 is 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 showing we are becoming a throwaway society, and if we are not careful we will throw away our children's futures.

Aruna Uprety is a public health specialist and co-author of the book, KhanaKhanuBhayo?

st rejected

these foods Nepalis are discarding as superfoods, while Nepalis buy junk food that the West has rejected.

Sunita Rimal of the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre which conducts classes for mothers and children about how to make nutritious meals from available ingredients, says wholesome food need not be expensive.

"There is a notion now that supermarket food is better and more nutritious, that has to

change," Rimal says.

Health food practitioner Sharada Jnawali has sought to revive the popularity of fresh, healthy Nepali dishes with her book, Nepali Home Cooking for Healthy Living. She says: "Eating healthy is not complicated. We can even make common snack items like momos healthier by simply using unprocessed flour, reduce the excess spice in the meat. We can replace instant noodles in chatpate with bean sprouts and beaten rice. The little changes will make all the difference."



Watch this short video to know more about traditional and local Nepali food which are high in nutirition and natural taste compared to all the processed junk which are sold to us with misleading health claims

nepalitimes.com



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### **EVENTS**

#### Free music workshop

Robert Jordan and Derek Beckvold, two American music educators, are giving free lessons on an overview of the musical, social, and political outcomes of the jazz tradition through the lens of six US icons. 4 August, 5-6pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5543554

#### The Egypt Art Market

This year the Art Market is on a world trip showcasing various countries or regions of the world through their culture, art, cuisine, dance, workshops and products. This week it is the turn of Egypt. Be there! 4 August, 2-6pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01) 5553869

#### Thrift a gift

A garage charity sale donating a gift to a child in need for every item you buy, clothes, toys, recycle bags, hemp products. Food, drinks, stalls, music, live art by Artlab and more. 4 August, 12-6pm, De La Soul, Thamel, 9810294525

#### Yellow House market

Art, music and local food market. Beautiful place for nice Sunday morning breakfast. 5 August, 9am-12pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01) 5553869



#### Nepal photo exhibition

An exhibition of 153 photographs submitted for The 6th IME-Global IME Bank Nepal Photo Contest on seven categories: daily life, nature and wildlife, news, tourism and culture, Nepal smiles, sports and photo story. 21 winning photographs also on display. 3-6 August, 10am-5pm, Nepal Art Council Babarmahal, (01) 4220735

### Comedy Circle open mic

Enjoy the funniest night in Kathmandu with the funniest comedians and their jokes. Be a part of comedy night with comedy circle. 9 August, 6-8pm, Samay Kathmandu, Kupondole,

#### Comedy TukTuk show

Book a tickets for a TukTuk ride to a night of laughter with stand-up comedians of the K-Town, Alan Jung Thapa, Bishal Gautam, Shraddha Verma (Headlining). 4 August, 7:30pm onwards, SukraBar, Lazimpat, Rs100, 9841574241/9808639657

#### Drop-in art

Let your child explore creativity for a couple of minutes, or an hour. Castle building, music, art creation and many artistic activities are in line. Materials are provided by CAM

Every weekends of August, 1-4pm, Rs350 per hour, Children's Art Museum of Nepal, Hattisar, 9801087072, 9851058271



#### Can't pay? Won't pay!

Based on Dario Fo's play 'Can't Pay? Won't pay!' Mandala Theatre brings 'Sakeko tiraula, natra firima', translated and directed by Bikash Joshi, starring Sarita Giri, Pramila Khanal, Anupam Sharma, Bijaya Baral and Umesh Tamang.

3-26 August, 5:30pm, Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar, (01) 4249761

#### Art-theory

A basic course programme in an attempt to introduce-involve-implement methods and perspectives of (critical) art theory in the context and discourse of the contemporary scene in Nepal, with selected texts and various art works of any medium. 11 August, 3-5pm, Kaalo.101, Nagbahal, Patan, 9803553123

#### Health Transformed by Art

Documentation of the journey 'Health Transformed by Art Project', which brought out the untapped therapeutic value of visual art in a hospital setting, providing psychological relief to patients, hospital staff and public, and works of the artists. 3-16 August, 10am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4218048

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### MUSIC



#### Underside ft. Mohini

Underside playing in their hometown after a long time. Visit the underside with the band's metallic performance featuring MohiniDey. 4 August, 2-7pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel

#### Sun Down Affair

Groove to the music of DJ Praveen Acharya and DJ Vinayak^a from India at the Khukri XXX Rum Sun Down Affair Vol 01.

4 August, 2pm onwards, Prive by Level 3 Terraces, Labim Mall, (01) 5536513



#### Laure

This Saturday, liberate yourself with hip hop and rap with Ashish Rana, a.k.a., Laure. Also performing is The Aerials. 4 August, 7pm onwards, Turtle Lounge and Club, Thamel, 9840918433

#### Trio music

Kiran Nepali, Project Sarangi and the band Fusion Note will be performing at the reopening of Cameleon Diner. Join in for a folk musical trip.

3 August, 5pm onwards, Jhochhen, Basantapur, 9841230526

#### **OUR PICK**



#### Opens in Kathmandu on 3 August

Young adult fiction is pushing new boundaries, with their personalities stronger and storylines sometimes as dark as adult fiction. The latest in this trend is The Darkest Minds, where youngsters go on an out-and-out battle with adults. After they develop superpowers, the youngsters including Amandla Stenberg, Mandy Moore, and Gwendoline Christie run away from a government that is out to destroy them. The film promises to provide entertainment as well as soul searching. The film is directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson, famed for her Kung Fu Panda movies.

### DINING



The hotel offers a perfect venue to combine work with buffet dining: breakfast or lunch for 4, at the cost of 2. Till 31 August, 6:30-10:30am/12-3pm, Royal Singi Kathmandu, Kamaladi, Rs1,000 (++, breakfast)/ Rs1,400 (++, international executive lunch, (01) 4424190

#### Epicurean Extravaganza

Get a taste of progressive Indian cuisine through a nine-course menu with a complimentary glass of Chandon sparkling

3-4 August, 6:30-10:30pm, Sunrise Restaurant, Hotel Yak & Yeti, Rs2250 (+taxes), (01) 4248999 extension: 2865

#### Le Trio

The vintage-esque posters that line the walls and rustic wooden tables give the impression that you've stepped into a 1960s Parisian café, but the menu is very much local in taste. Try Grilled Chicken Cheese Burger for a happy lunch. Jhamsikhel, (01) 5521674

#### Club House Restaurant

The panoramic view of the 18 holes golf course amid the evergreen forest compliments the Thai and Chinese culinary journey. Chefs here are selective in using organic and fresh products to create culinary masterpieces.

7am -10pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali, (01) 4451212



#### Beer and barbeque

Enjoy "Beer & Barbeque Night" at the hotel with unlimited drinks and food. The flavour of monsoon will be going strong throughout

Every Friday of August, 7-10:30pm, Kava Grill and Lounge, Fairfield by Marriott Kathmandu, Thamel, Rs1,499, (01) 4217999, 9801227613

#### Atithi Resort & Spa

Continuously on the top ten lists of hotels in Nepal by TripAdvisor, the resort is a quiet sanctuary that fuses Nepali tradition with modern amenities. Spend the New Year's night here to make it remarkable. Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 1466760

#### Bandipur Kaushi Inn

Gather along 3 or more friends and drive to Bandipur for a quick weekend 1 night, 2 days getaway before summer goes away. The cost also includes breakfast and Nepali

3-20 August, Bandipur, Tanahu, Rs2,450, (065) 520083



#### **Tranquility Spa**

De-stress, relax and pamper yourself to a wide range of massages at any of the spa's nine branches in Nepal. www.tranquilityspa.com.np, (01) 4420424

#### **Grand Norling Hotel**

Enjoy a calm and relaxing stay at the hotel which provides a spacious bedroom with adjoining bathroom, a large balcony with sights of the golf course, monkeys and deer herds, and not to forget, the garden. Gokarna, (01) 4910193

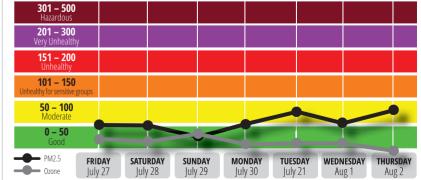


#### Balthali Village Resort

A small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses.

Panauti, Kavre, 9851087772

#### **AIR QUALITY INDEX** KATHMANDU, 27 July - 2 August



The Air Quality Index (AQI) in Kathmandu's city centre was slightly more polluted this week because of less rain, and remained steadily in the moderate ratings for the majority of the time. Concentration of particles in the air below 2.5 microns (PM2.5) dropped on rainy days, and rose again when traffic picked up, showing a direct link to vehicular emissions. Ozone concentration remained good on average throughout the week, largely because the monitoring stations are set back from the streets. Ozone is a short-lived gas, which is mostly formed when motorcycle emissions react with air in the presence of sunlight, and then easily dissipates.

https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/

# Kul Chandra Gautam's long journey home

#### **Kunda Dixit**

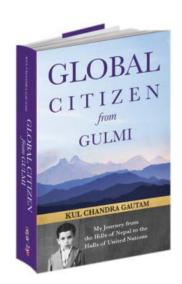
'ul Chandra Gautam's life is an inspirational story of ⊾how a school boy in one of the poorest and remotest districts in Nepal went on to become the seniormost Nepali in the United Nations. He achieved this by a lot of hard work, extraordinary perseverance, and never losing sight of his duty to help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

Gautam is a soft-spoken, but hardcore 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 2008 to contribute to his motherland.

The manuscript of his memoir was cut in two by his publisher, nepa-laya. The first part came out as Lost in Transition: Rebuilding Nepal from the Maoist Mavhem and the Mega Earthquake in 2015. Rubeena Mahato, who reviewed the book for this paper, wrote then: 'In a brilliant counter-narrative, Gautam destroys the dominant discourse that eulogises the Maoist war as a natural 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.

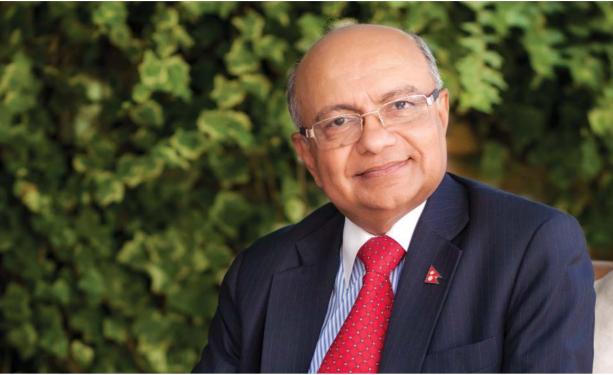
A prequel to that book is being launched next week: Global Citizen from Gulmi: My Journey from the Hills of Nepal to the Halls of the United Nations. This is Gautam's real memoir that narrates his personal antecedents and experience as a world citizen which lend both books credibility, and make him a bête noire of the Stalinist votaries of violence in our

We first catch a glimpse of Kunjarmani Gautam as a young boy, as his grandfather taught him the Devnagari alphabet in Gulmi 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 Peace Corps volunteers in Tansen with his self-taugh English and prowess at Scrabble.



#### **Global Citizen from Gulmi:**

My Journey from the Hills of Nepal to the Halls of the United Nations, by Kul Chandra Gautam, nepa-laya, 2018 547 pages with glossary of acronyms and Index. Rs895, paperback; Rs 1395, hardback.



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'. any tribute to Havel. 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 atrocities up close, and had to be evacuated from Phnom Penh in a Royal Air Force Hercules to Fort Butterworth as the country descended into the Killing Fields.

Many years later when he hears Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai (who reminds him of Khieu Samphan) call the Khmer Rouge genocide a 'Western exaggeration' he is convinced revolutionaries seldom learn from history. Gautam then works in Laos and Indonesia and finally is sent to Haiti by his UNICEF mentor, James P Grant. Haiti is a lesson in how ruthless dictators like Baby Doc Duvalier can consign their nations to perpetual poverty.

He is posted in Latin America at a time of Liberation Theologists, the Shining Path and Paolo Freire's theory of *conscientização* in Brazil. Gautam unrolls Pele as a UNICEF breastfeeding ambassador, getting his mother to say: "Of course he is the world's best football player, I breastfed him."

Then it is post-Soviet Europe where countries are collapsing into chaos. Gautam helps coordinate relief for Sarajevo, and gets to sleep in Albanian dictator Never Hoxha's bed in Tirana.

Grant then posts Gautam to India, where the Nepali overcomes the arrogance of Indian babudom to help locate UNICEF's regional South Asia office in Kathmandu. He was a 'Sherpa' for the historic World Summit for Children of 1990 in New York, negotiating minefields of protocol, egos and geopolitics to get members states to sign the National Plans of Action, which became the model for the MDGs and the SDGs that followed.

He has great admiration for Vaclav Havel, and notes that the Czech President died on the same day as Kim Jong-Il in 2011, and that Nepal's Communists trooped off to the DPRK embassy in Kathmandu to sign the condolence book. He is ashamed not one Nepali leader paid

Gautam's other hero is Nelson Mandela, who impressed him in Pretoria with his disregard for pomp and protocol. Unlike some 'democratic' Nepali leaders, Madiba never had to show how important he was by displaying trappings of power. Years later, Gautam sees lessons for Nepal in

Mandela's handling of truth and reconciliation and the dangers of ethnic Bantustans.

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 pseudorevolutionaries. He calls it like it is: a needless carnage that derailed Nepal's march towards democracy and development.

He is scathing about the organisation he once worked for, the United Nations, and the expats in rose-tinted glasses 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 blatant attempt at state capture by misguided figures espousing an obsolete ideology.

Indeed, today's united 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.

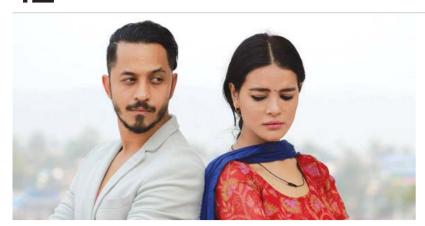
Because of his own life struggle and wisdom, every word in Kul Gautam's book rings true, carrying the immense power of his conviction.



Watch Kul Chandra Gautam in conversation with Kunda Dixit in the new edition of Nepali Times Studio

nepalitimes.com





### ROMEO&MU

chhuchi girl Muna (Shristi Shrestha) in Dharan meets a pupuleko dude Ved (Vinay Shrestha) from America. He has the money to host luxurious pool parties and she has no money for milk in her morning tea. Will they ever click?

It seems unlikely: he tears her kurta as he shoves past her and she splashes paint at him. But the director Naresh KC manages to bring the two together to create sizzling, sparkling chemistry. The transition from spitfire to flames (from sandwich me to sketch me to sandwich chhaina? Back again) is entirely believable. Along the way we also learn why the girl is so stubborn, and why the guy so callous. Vinay is a convincing insensitive brat, Shristi credibly essays a struggling small-town girl in flowery kurtas and plaited hairdos, but it's her sister who brings the eastern flavor with her on-point accent.

Not that the movie is not without flaws. The editing, especially in the first half, is not that great, it jumps abruptly from a girl doing the *shradha* funeral ritual to a bikini party to a dream sequence with a monster. And the shock value of that gimmicky bikini party song on Nepali screen is a whole another story (was it really necessary to imitate wannabe South Asian rap videos? Kathale magekai

There are some tropes that could have worked until the 90s, 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 golddigger 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, benevolent father and a problematic mother. This time he reverses it with a romanticised, absent mother and a difficult father. In this 'tribute to Van Gogh', the painter's strong bond with his brother is reflected in Jukhuri and Thupri, 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 slay. The attempt to tackle deep seated emotional trauma is laudable, but not entirely satisfactory -- 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 swirls everywhere: from the title credits to Vinay's shirt to songs. A blue train chugs behind Shristi in a red dress and parasol, bringing Bridges across the Seine at Asnieres to life. A field of post-impressionist sunflowers wave in the wind. A couple takes a mid day Siesta on a haystack to Sukmit Gurung's Pal Pal Timrai Samjhana Ma. Giving new meaning to old songs is something of a favourite for KC. Having used the classic Kehi Mitho Baat Gara to great effect in Dying Candle, he does it again with the mushy favourite Gahiro Gahiro Sagar Jastai. The movie's original songs are also delightful, especially the soulful Sanjh Paryo.

Though this movie is wanting in a lot of ways, it is watchable for venturing into new territories. Nepali cinema is just beginning to flap its wings, so this is not time to compare the fledgling 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. 💟

Sewa Bhattarai



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**NI HAO:** Prime Minister K P Oli and Vice Minister of International Department of the Communist Party of China Wang Yajun on Sunday followed up on issues discussed during Oli's recent Beijing visit.



**HELPING HANDS:** Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri hands over Rs2.1 billion in aid for earthquake reconstruction to Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada and finance secretary Rajan Khanal in Kathmandu last week.



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



BIKRAM RAI

**WIDE ANGLE:** Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari at the launch of an exhibition of best photographs of the year organised by Photojournalist's Club at Nepal Art Council on Thursday.



THAI AIRWAYS

**BLOOD RELATIONS:** Thai Airways organised a blood donation and cardiac health checkup clinic at Hotel Annapurna on Tuesday in memory of those lost in an accident in 1992 in Kathmandu.

### **Lost and not found**

Janak Raj Sapkota in Kantipur, 31 July

कान्तिपुर



"For 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 Aashish Ghimire 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

A Kathmandu-based middleman named Aashish Ghimire 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 were charged up to Rs500,000 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 Rs1.1 to 1.5 million to enter Greece via Turkey have risked their lives. Gurung and his team were detained for 25 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 Rs25 million.

"I spent 900,000 but didn't make a penny," says Tikaram Bhattari who left for Turkey via India with Tiwari but was unable to enter Greece.

According to DSP Manohar Bhatta, a cross-border human trafficking racket is luring 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**



BIKRAM RAI

Onlinekhabar, 30 July

online khabar

New information shows the government purposely propagated lies 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.

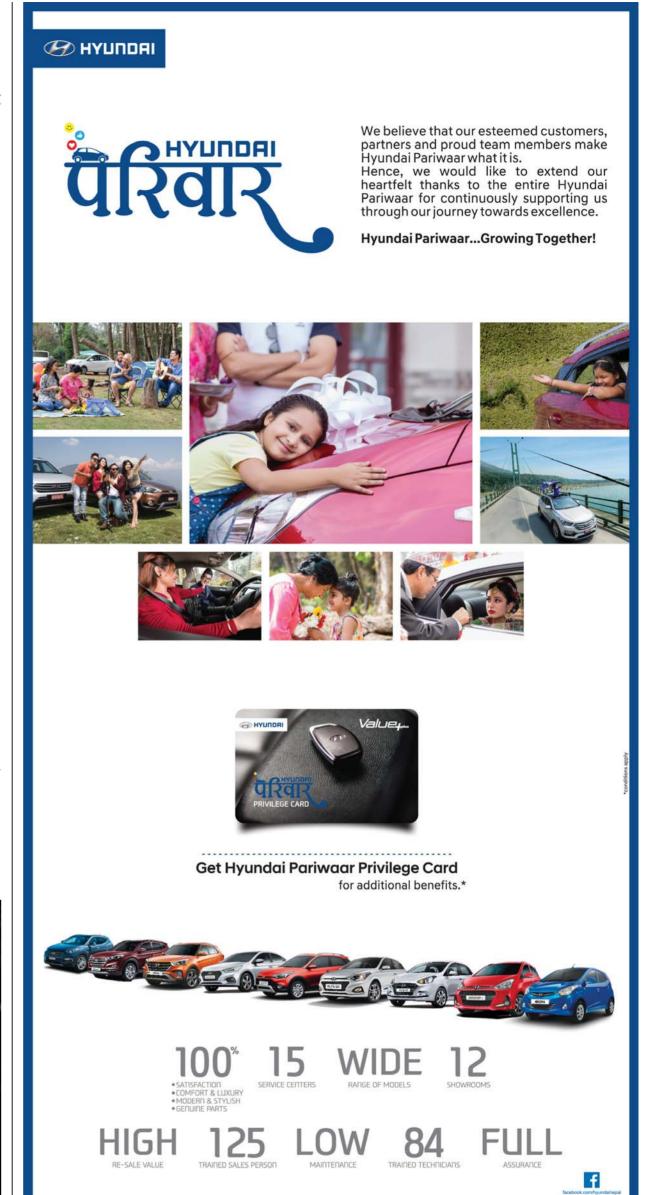
That was when the police started

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 wept as he climbed down from his bed, saying: "I will go to Kathmandu."

As KC was on his way to the helipad, 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 medevaced to Nepalganj, where his injuries were found to be minor and caused by a



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# All in the family

Relatives are an important part of removing stigma and healing

#### **Prakriti Kandel**

The debilitating effects of mental health diseases and the social stigma associated with them are not limited to patients: the lives of family members also change irrevocably. Family support can also be an important source of strength and even help in the healing process, say psychiatrists, patients and their relatives.

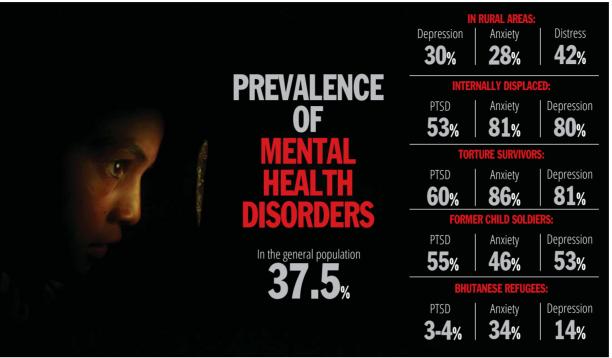
Reshma Magar from Sindhuli, brought her 35-year-old son to a mental health clinic in Kathmandu after he displayed symptoms like severe headaches, mouth fizzing, and haphazard running around. As a mother, she was constantly worried he might hurt himself.

"We have the Sun Kosi River nearby and I would think: what if he jumped?" says Magar, who has to tie him up in the hospital bed to contain his violent behavior. "I would be crying and the nurses here would console me."

Nabina and Samira Pradhan shared similar hardships. Their brother, 40, started showing erratic behaviour after his wife left him, taking their daughter with her. He throws things around, does not eat, and their 71—year-old mother has to look after him.

"It is very hard," Nabina says, "mother herself has health issues and because of our brother's state, violence in the home remains a constant danger."

Sufferers of psychotic mental illnesses are generally unaware they have a problem. In schizophrenia, a severe psychotic disease, patients have a distorted sense of reality –



SOURCE: THE LANCE

hallucinations, extreme paranoia, hearing voices – that their mind infers as truth. They resist help, and family members have a difficult job coaxing them to seek and continue medical treatment.

Beyond this, the emotional trauma of having a suffering relative is a constant feature of life for the Magar and Pradhan families, which makes each day frightening and unpredictable.

Research has shown that patients suffering from psychosis have various structural and functional abnormalities in the brain. Schizophrenia patients have dysfunctions in their neurotransmitter systems, metabolic pathways and certain structures in the brain regulating

motor activity.

Traditionally Nepali society, which did not have coping mechanisms, regarded mental disorder as a curse, and there is strong social stigma and ostracisation of both the patients and their families. Derogatory labels for 'crazy' people like 'dimag khuskeko' or 'pagal' are still widely used

However, now that science has shown that the causes are mostly chemical imbalances, there is treatment. says Basudev Karki of Lagankhel Mental Hospital: "Medicine now has treatment for mental diseases, just like for physical ailments. Problems of the mind also need medical care and treatment and there is nothing

wrong in that. Instilling this understanding will help address stigma for patients."

However, Karki cautions that medical interventions alone sometimes do not suffice because the triggers may be a combination of biological, psychological and social factors. For example, there was a surge in mental disorders in Nepali society during the conflict and after the earthquake and Blockade. Outmigration and family separation pushes people into another class of mental illness, like neuroses, such as depression and anxieties in which, unlike psychosis, the patients preserve a sense of reality.

Following hospital treatment it is up to family to provide psychological support for patients,

to think positively and maintain a healthy lifestyle. They must protect patients from extreme stress due to social factors, such as unemployment or financial trouble.

Muna Tamang shows extraordinary determination this week as she sits beside the hospital bed of her 24-year-old daughter who is suffering from psychosis. "As long as she can live and heal, I have decided that we will do anything for her treatment, even if we have to take loans," Tamang told us.

Nepal's mental health facilities are mostly based in cities, but even here there aren't enough trained specialists to deal with what is a national mental health epidemic. Up to one-third of Nepal's population suffers from some form of mental illness, according to one study. (See chart)

One group, The Transcultural Psychosocial Organistaiton (TPO) is working to remedy the urbanrural mental health gap, by training doctors and health workers at the local level with Female Community Health Workers.

"We do not just want to make these services available, but to also ensure people reach out to them, and refer patients to seek help in facilities," says Kamal Gautam at the TPO.

Such efforts have helped remove stigma, and empowered patients and families to receive treatment and care. But Nepal still has a long way to go. With greater state investment, access to mental health services and proper therapy, family members can be even more involved in helping patients and reducing their stigma. Some names have been changed.

### Addicted to the joystick

Compulsive computer gaming is now classified as a psychiatric disorder

#### Suprasanna Aryal

he first thing I used to do after returning home from school was to turn on my desktop and get back to my favourite computer game. It never crossed my mind that it had the potential of becoming a serious health issue. For a significant number of young Nepalis, gaming disorder is now an affliction.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has added 'Gaming Disorder' as a new mental health condition in the 11th edition of its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), stating: 'The behavior pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.'

In a developing country like Nepal, the disorder is common among youth who have grown up with electronics. According to Sharecast Initiative Nepal's Nepal Media Landscape Survey 2018, 95.5% people have access to mobile phones, 18% own computers, laptops or tablets, and 24% have daily access to internet. Together with gaming disorder, an addiction to social media browsing through the smartphone is also becoming an epidemic.

Arun Raj Kunwar, Head of Kanti Children's Hospital's Child Psychiatry Unit in Kathmandu, says: "Patients come to us with symptoms, but since most aren't familiar with gaming disorder yet, they assume it is



something else."

There are warning signs: children may lie to their parents so that they can play games, or say they are unwell so that they can skip school. The symptoms are persistent headache, poor eye-sight, lack of concentration, all leading to falling grades in school.

Many children have been found to turn to gaming to avoid punishment by teachers

or bullying by friends. Narmada Devkota, Clinical Psychologist at Rhythm Neuro Psychiatry Hospital and Research Center in Patan, saying she is getting an increasing number cases of gaming disorder. Three boys aged 13-14 actually had to be

Three boys aged 13-14 actually had to be admitted to hospital for a month. One had threatened to stab family members with a knife when not allowed to pay his computer game, while another threatened suicide. All

three had a history of being bullied that even parents hadn't known about.

Some children take gaming as a platform to socialise because it is easier to make friends online than in real life. Kunwar recalls treating a 17-year-old recently who had pimples all over his face, and was into computer games to avoid social interactions.

"Parents want us to counsel their children out of gaming disorder but we can't help them until the environment at home is favourable," says Kunwar, who recommends parents be involved, find out about their children's insecurities, help them deal with problems, and provide healthier alternatives like outdoor games that require human interaction.

One of Kunwar's patients was a good flautist and liked to play the madal at school, so she asked the parents to bring these to the hospital. The patient was praised for his creativity and this gradually improved his behaviour.

While health officials have started taking gaming disorder seriously, passionate gamers claim that including it in ICD-11 was overkill. Those who work in the gaming industry strenuously reject that it is a mental health issue, just as working too much or reading too much aren't considered harmful

Nonetheless, the classification of the disorder has shone an important light on such behaviour and heightened the urgency of countering it in Nepal, where the use of computers, Internet and smartphones is spreading rapidly.

rimes

# Raising children can be therapy

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

#### **Ketan Dulal**

hen 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 Charlottetown 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 fulltime job for which there are no wages.

In *The Gardener and Carpenter*, psychologist Allison Gopnik has problems with the current model of parenting. Parents, instead of thinking 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.



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To build such a relationship with children is the key to becoming a parent. It is especially important for parents with mental illness, like me. The stereotypical view is 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 have also been several 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 seems to increase following the birth of a child and during interactions with infants.

Similarly, testosterone in the brain of a father decreases after a child is born and following interaction with children, although it may help in protective response, for example, when the child is threatened by a predator.

Parenting can also be a therapeutic tool for patients with mental diseases 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 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 that I do to reduce relapse is interact with my daughter as much as possible and also build a positive approach to my parenting job.  $\square$ 

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

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### **News in Briefs**

Here at this newspaper we get a lot of requests from all Tom, Dicks and Hari for coverage of this or that book lunch. Being a public service media, we try to accommodate all legitimate events, however it is physically impossible to attend every chia pan. We are humanoid, after all. Here are some items that didn't fit this week:

#### **Monks To the Rescue**

JORPATI — After the government failed to pave the Boudha Road for four years, local monks have taken the law into their own hands and forcibly asphalted their road themselves.

This has impressed the Kathmandu Mayor so much he is now mulling handing over Rani Pokhari and re-paving of all city streets to Monks & Nuns, Inc. The Ministry of Roads and Kingdoms is also having second thoughts about Stolen gold chain excreted

after 60 hours

getting the Nepal Army to build the Taraí Fast Track. It is seriously considering giving it to the monks so they can complete the expressway ahead of schedule.

#### **Shitting Bricks**

KATHMANDU — If the amount of gold being funnelled through Tribunal International Airport is any indication, Nepal is already a middle income country, and we don't have to wait till

Just the other day, an arriving passenger was detained after he swallowed a gold chain when apprehended at Customs. He was taken to prison, fed laxatives, and lo and behold a couple of days later, she shat it out. And the astounding thing was that the gold chain was in mint condition and ready for reuse. Nepali Workers, Unite! You Have Nothing to Lose But Your Gold Chains.

#### **Bicycle Tax**

IANAKPUR — In an effort to boost revenue to repair motorways, Province 2 has instituted an annual tax on all its bicycles. A back of the envelope calculation shows the Provincial Grumblement is expected to make enough revenue for the entire Cabinet to upgrade to Scorpio SUVs.

Taking its cue, Province 3 (which includes Kathmandu) has decided to tax pedestrians who

insist on walking despite all sidewalks having been removed. Swimming across large puddles on the roads, however, has been declared tax-free. Not to be outdone, Province 4 will start

taxing people for breathing

from next fiscal year. The Federal Government, being cash-strapped and running out of stuff to tax, will soon institute a death tax that can

The Ass



be paid posthumously.

