Labour pain

Ministers and delegates from 12 labour exporting countries in Asia and six destination countries are gathered in Kathmandu this week for a conference of the Colombo Process currently chaired by Nepal. But while officials at the Saline Crown Plaza Hotel huddled in closed-door meetings to discuss making migration easier and cheaper, hardly 100m away, Mohan Gurung was at the end of a long, slow-moving queue at the Department of Labour’s Tabahal office to renew his documents. “I don’t think I will get to the counter before the office closes, which means I will have to come tomorrow and pay for another night at the hotel,” said Gurung. The hassles for migrant workers like Gurung start in their home countries: a rent-seeking state, unfriendly bureaucracy, extraction by recruiters, harassment at immigration. When they get to the host country, most are not paid promised wages or allowances, household are often abused, and there is no compensation for injuries or death. The Colombo Process is a platform for labour-sending countries like Nepal to share best practices, like the agreement it recently signed with Malaysia to clean up the system.

INTERVIEW
LABOUR MINISTER
GOKARNA BISTA
PAGE 15

PAYING AN ARM AND A LEG
Migrant workers are becoming essential to enable Nepal’s economy.

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PAGE 14-15

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BARGAINING POWER

A
n estimated 2.5 million Asians every
year migrate under work contracts
to other countries in the region and
bargain for their countries. They
tend to compete with each other rather
than cooperate, thus decreasing the bargaining
power of their nations. However, the
desperation of people seeking employment
and the high number of workers have often left
workers vulnerable to exploitation and
discrimination.

The 12 Asian labour-exporting
countries got together with help from
the International Organisation for
Migration (IOM) and the Swiss government
to set up the Colombo Process to manage
continental over-expansion. As the current
country of origin, Nepal (a bowling minister) in
Kathmandu this week to monitor projects
and the implementation of migrant workers,
optimising the benefits of overseas migration
by coordinating responses, and enhancing
the impact of remittances.

The Colombo Process is too important to
be just another regional talkshop. Our
countries are too reliant on remittances to
be bogged down in more harry
committees and joint
platinums.

The meeting is
happening in Kathmandu
just after Nepal signed
an MoU with Malaysia
to streamline migration,
and to minimise the role
of middlemen who were
distributing desperate
workers.

A recent investigation on this issue by the Centre for Investigative Journalism – Nepal and carried by
this newspaper prompted the new regime in
Kathmandu to work with
the European Union Minister for Labour,
Gokarna Rista, to
hammer out a deal.

Labour exporting
countries must put
the protection of
our collective
interest at the
forefront.

Labour exporting
countries must put
the protection of
our collective
interest at the
forefront.
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Success in Nepal means not having to work

Nepalis work hardest when they are outside Nepal

The Nepali farmers who had hired them could afford to do so because their three sons were all working in Japan and sending home money.

Across the country, including Kathmandu and on trek routes, there are skilled and semi-skilled workers from northern India and Bangladesh doing the same work that Nepalis have gone abroad to do. In some cases in districts along the 2015 earthquake zone, Indian workers earn as much as Nepali carpenters and masons earn in Qatar.

In jewelry shops that line Kathmandu’s New Road, very little of the work is done by the focal Newar owners, most of it has been passed on to hired Indians. Every time these Newars get a haircut, there is a fair chance they are sending money to India as out-flowing remittances.

There is a sense that, like many Indians, the desire for modernity is one of the driving forces in India. As they wear their suits and use their smartphones, there are a few Indians still long for the years when they worked hard for a few rupees.

With infrastructure reaching saturation, most Gulf countries will now require managers, and service worker, and lower manual workers, Korean language institutions are in high demand because many Nepali workers believe that this is a market that will help them move up the social ladder, and hard work really pays.

In the West, and Australia, still draw the young who are strong academically and have families willing to pay for their education.

Qatar is seeking the Nepali Police to help secure its venues during the upcoming World Cup in 2022. Malaysia wants Nepali workers, and is willing to cover all fees associated with them under a new G20 deal. The USA diversity visas lottery is attracting hundreds of thousands of Nepal applicants.

Soon, there may be more Nepalis working outside Nepal than in Nepal. Terrace farms are being filled with workers and construction workers from India and elsewhere. And now, in the West, in the Middle East, in the Orient, in the Far East, in the Caribbean and Africa, many more Nepali workers are sent, probably because there are no Nepalis left who can do the job.

Nepalis are said to work hard, but only when they are outside Nepal. At home, manual work is regarded as shameless. The jagir culture thrives because salaried government jobs demand more, but assure a pension for life. You see young men playing cards or card and not building in the farm. Success in Nepal means not having to work.

But things are changing. Nepal youth today run many businesses that require managerial logic and good academic qualifications. From vegetables to bag manufacturing, from soft drinks, from raising rabbits to meat processing, Nepalis are launching businesses closer to home.

Nepal is earning more now, exporting IT products more than earned from tourism. Families and communities need to respect those who refuse to go abroad and seek work within Nepal. We are proud people, sometimes too proud to work and get our hands dirty. We need to start doing manual work and tell the world proudly of what we do.

Anil Chitrakar, a resident of Siddharthnagar.

Go gyakok

Maize, chickpea, boiling, u shiabey, thentek, white peas and other fruit and vegetables, and other produce have been favorites among Nepali for quite a long time. But one dish which has huge potential to be much loved, yet has not so much a page in Wikipedia. Their dish is Trichotti pat, nursery known as gyakok.

Gyakok is known in the Chinese, Korean and other East Asian nations’ familial food that can be simmering in a copper pan with a cherry blossom on top, and a burner at the bottom for a constant flame. You can droop your desired meat, vegetables, radish, mushroom, woman and dumplings, u shiabey, or anything else, into the soup and eat it as a meal. The dishes is fit for those who want their mamas and thentek in one place and can share it with others.

For a few years, restaurants and hotels in Kathmandu have been promoting this indigenous Tamang dish during winter. This year, it’s Hotel Shangri-La in Sauraha and its sister in Pokhara bringing out the Relay. They are both working Chandrak Gyakok for the coming winter from mid-November until the end of December.

“Gyakok can be modified according to gustatory preferences. Vegetables or raw-vegetables, rice or noodles and types of meat and vegetables. Gyakok can be served with the tanpa and enjoy with a big group of friends or family,” says Shangri-La’s new executive chef Vivek Kumar Shrestha. Shangri-La offers plenty of ingredients to add to the tanpa: mutton, beef, shrimp and prawn, and chicken, flatbread, eggs, tofu and seasonal vegetables. Side dishes include kitchi salad, garlic cucumber salad and mushroom bat. These can be paired with steamed rice, rice balls (noodles) or snails. Gyakok can be served with the tanpa, and enjoy with a big group of friends or family,” says Shangri-La’s new executive chef Vivek Kumar Shrestha. Shangri-La offers plenty of ingredients to add to the tanpa: mutton, beef, shrimp and prawn, and chicken, flatbread, eggs, tofu and seasonal vegetables. Side dishes include kitchi salad, garlic cucumber salad and mushroom bat. These can be paired with steamed rice, rice balls (noodles) or snails. Gyakok can be served with the tanpa, and enjoy with a big group of friends or family,” says Shangri-La’s new executive chef Vivek Kumar Shrestha. Shangri-La offers plenty of ingredients to add to the tanpa: mutton, beef, shrimp and prawn, and chicken, flatbread, eggs, tofu and seasonal vegetables. Side dishes include kitchi salad, garlic cucumber salad and mushroom bat. These can be paired with steamed rice, rice balls (noodles) or snails. Gyakok can be served with the tanpa, and enjoy with a big group of friends or family.”
The 16th edition of Nepal’s first and only jazz festival, Surya Nepal Jazzmandu 2018 began on 1 November with a free concert for school children at Alliance Française, Jamanksi. The rhythm and instruments may have been unfamiliar, but the students enjoyed the lively music, dancing to the beat – proving jazz is indeed universal.

They sang along and whistled to international music, from Brazilian beats to European melodies, as musicians interacted with them. The day ended with a performance by Galania, the group which first brought Jazzmandu to Nepal, at their home base Jazz Upstairs.

The following day had jazz gigs at various venues around town. Adres Brandreit performed piano-led soulful melodies at Manny’s Eatery & Tapas Bar, while Dave Feusi and The Groove Gang presented groovy jazz, building their rhythms around saxophones. At Jazz Upstairs, Cynthia Abrahams’s husky voice and Eduardo Mendonça’s Brazilian bass gelled well to wow the audiences. Nick’s Cousins presented jazz with a punch of rock at House of Music, a show geared at audiences who enjoy exploratory jazz.

The next day was for large stages and group revellers. Free shuttle busses departed to Gokarna Forest Resort where musicians wowed crowds at the edge of the forest on 3 November. True to Jazzmandu’s goals, the day showcased not just international artists, but also gave them something to take back and learn about Nepali music, as international artists jammed with a team of srangis from Nepal.

On 5 November, the day Nepal worshipped cows, audiences got a South American flavour of jazz with ‘Sounds of Latin Jazz’ at Dhokame Cafe. The exuberant audience enjoyed the loud and vibrant music with enthusiastic applause.

Students of jazz were able to interact with visiting musicians at the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, whose vocal and instrumental workshops were held. Like the concert for schoolchildren, this event was also free but with limited seating.

“One of Jazzmandu’s main concerns is promoting music education and cross-cultural understanding of music,” says organiser Samik Chatterji, also a member of Cadenzas. “We have always made these opportunities accessible to those who are interested, and we hope to develop an appreciation for international styles of music through these programmes.”

Kantipur Temple House saw true jazz style fusion as Cynthia Abraham and Maria Pajaro sang soulfully to the tunes of Sahbi Lal Shrestha’s tabla, and other eastern classical instruments. An attactive crowd quietly savoured jazz becoming more vibrant with the infusion of western classical music.

Jazzmandu bid adieu to its 16th year with a finale timed for Dog Day on 6 November at the Yak & Yeti. The week-long extravaganza ended with all the performers coming together for a rousing evening of entertainment. Like every year, Jazzmandu entertained audiences while raising the bar for contemporary music in Nepal. Seema Bhattacharya

**Jazzmandu Finale**

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Mexico adopts Kukur Tihar

Nepal’s tradition of honouring dogs at Kukur Tihar has been taken to the other side of the world by a collective of Mexican animal rights groups that has started celebrating the festival too.

Last week, after Nepal worshipped its dogs, Mexicans brought out their pets in Mexico City’s Revolution Square and in Puerto Vallarta, garlanding and smearing vermillion on them just like in Nepal. Kukur Tihar celebrations were started in Mexico in 2010, and was inspired by the Nepali festival to spread awareness there about the respect humans owe to all animals. Since then, the festival has gained popularity, and dogs have been singled out for special honour.

“It is important to raise awareness among the population about the respect we owe dogs,” organiser of the annual festival Martha Deu told the El Universal newspaper, “we are convinced that a human being who does not hurt an animal will hardly hurt a human being.” Dogs garlanded with marigold, and smeared with red powder could be seen with their owners in Puerto Vallarta at two events last week. One of the organisers, Protecció del Perro Galledo also shared a YouTube tutorial on how to make marigold garlands for dogs.

Amenos Mayas of the Organización Proporro said the festival was inspired by Kukur Tihar in Nepal in which dogs are worshipped because they are messengers of Yamaraj, the God of Death. “We hope that this celebration will spread throughout Mexico to raise awareness about the abandonment suffered by dogs and create a feeling of gratitude that is so necessary,” Mayas added. Owners fed dogs their favourite treats, and played with their canine friends throughout the celebration, which included colourful drapes, banners and even rangoli adorning the celebration grounds at Hotel Puerto de Luna in Puerto Vallarta, creating the vivacious atmosphere that defines Tihar.

Last year’s event in Puerto Vallarta paid tribute to Frida, a rescue dog involved in the earthquake in Mexico in 2017, and observed a minute’s silence to all other pets which died in the quake.

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NEPAL. WHEREVER YOU ARE.
Bipul Chettri Back in Kathmandu

In September, American producer and DJ Diplo and Danish songwriter star MØ released a music video with Nepali singer-songwriter Bipul Chettri and rapper Laure. “Stay Open” has already got 4 million views on YouTube. Now, Bipul Chettri, Laure, Diplo and others, are bringing a one-of-a-kind concert in Kathmandu on 12 November. Nepal Times spoke with Bipul Chettri on his arrival in Kathmandu for the concert.

Nepal Times: Are you happy with your musical journey so far?
Bipul Chettri: Music for me is a tool to express my thoughts and emotions. My journey has only just begun, and I am still learning and progressing. Guided seems to have every new song or tune, so I am quite content.

Which of your recent overseas gigs stands out for you?
I speak for most musicians when I say performing live is special, no matter where you are. But there are some venues, like the SSE Arena at Wembley, which are on bucket lists for artists. Especially since most of the people who have played at such venues are icons one has grown up listening to, and have been huge influences in shaping our musical expressions.

The Nepali audience is fragmented, yet your music seems to appeal to everyone. What is the secret?
I cannot fathom what the secret is but if I can guess, it is to be feeling of home that the diaspora audiences misses. The music may help them escape the foreignness, even if for a brief moment.

How did the Stay Open collaboration with Laure, Diplo and MØ happen?
The song was already composed by Diplo and sung by MØ. Tuborg provided a set of guidelines to follow in terms of scope and lyrics to add Nepali perspective to the tune without actually taking away from the melody and theme of the song. We accepted the project so that we could understand and experience how international artists worked. It was a great learning experience for all of us.

How do you see the scope and prospect of folk songs in the Nepali-speaking diaspora?
Nepali music listeners are very active and informed in the age of the Internet. Content is available at the click of a button, and people are now exposed to more music than ever before. The chance of Nepali music being heard is increased, but it is still very other genres. It may be too early to say that Stay Open helps create an appetite for Nepali music, but I think it is a stepping stone for local musicians to start the world for an international audience. Music, in my belief, that we know and love, have actually come out of these kinds of associations.

How difficult is it to mix and market music in Nepal and India separately?
Music is not a brick and mortar business like it used to be, when tapes or CDs were the only way to acquire music. Physical bodies no longer matter, any content one uploads to an online platform is available to everyone in Nepal, India or the world. But being an independent artist is the real challenge as everything ends up being a DIY project, which in a way is fun and exciting but it does beg one down with complications along the way.

Can you tell us about your daily job?
I have a day job as lead of the Arts Department at a school here in Delhi, and I teach western classical guitar to children aged 6-18.

What’s next for Bipul Chettri?
We are currently recording some new material and we hope to release it by first half of 2019, not sure how many songs...

SOUL MUSIC

Go online to watch the Stay Open music video, recorded by American producer and DJ Diplo and Danish songwriter star MØ. Nepali artist Bipul Chettri and Laure have completed Nepal touch into the track with their unique voices.

Tuborg Open Fest
17 November, 4-10pm
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Rs200
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BUZZ
The political, socio-economic, military and demographic impact of Gurkha recruitment in World War I on Nepal, 100 years on.

David Seddon

The centennial of the Armistice last week was an occasion to gauge the scale and significance of Nepal's involvement in World War I. Politically, it cemented the long-standing subsumption semi-colonial relationship that locked Nepal into British Imperialism, but it also concomitantly Nepal's formal independence and the legitimacy of the Rana regime.

It led directly to the Anglo-Nepal Treaty of 1923 in which the very first article read: 'The two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect each other's independence, both internal and external.' There was the additional benefit for Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher Rana of an annual payment by the British of a million rupees.

The War also served to underline the divisions of class, caste and ethnicity within Nepali society because the majority of soldiers who went to fight were not only from specific regiments but from particular ethnic groups and rarely from the dominant castes or ruling classes. It also contributed to the distinctive political ideology of Nepali nationalism as a defanged nation. An historian, Pratyusha Ota has noted, the Kathmandu ruling class legitimised 'the soldier's pain in the battlefield ... as part of one's necessarily sacred duty to the Nepali nation.' That path (Gurkha) was very real.

Militarily, Nepal made a real contribution with the deployment of soldiers in support of the Allies, not only of the Gurkha regiments of the British Indian Army on the Western Front in North Africa and in the Middle East, but also of Nepali Army forces in India to relieve British troops while the Indian Army was serving overseas and helped in campaigns, including in Waziristan on the North West Frontier, to maintain British control across the subcontinent.

Historians say more than 200,000 Gurkha recruits were put at the disposal of the Indian Army, which represented a quarter of the total male population of the ethnic groups involved. These Nepali troops were deployed as part of the Indian Army, in many of the most difficult of operations and at the forefront of the battle and, as a result, suffered disproportionally high casualties.

Whether freezing in the cold and rainy weather in the trenches on the Western Front, or in the hot, dry conditions of North Africa and West Asia, the Gurkhas, Sikhs and other regiments of the Indian Army suffered not only from enemy fire and bombardment but also from sickness, cold, heat and neglect.

There are first-hand accounts of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign and of the various battles in Palestine and Mesopotamia, and particularly of the defeat of British and Indian forces at Kut, and the long march afterwards to concentration camps in central Anatolia, where the Ottoman Turks fighting on the German side incarcerated thousands, including Gurkhas.

The Gurkha regiments officially suffered over 20,000 casualties, and together with the influenza epidemic of 1917, led to the apparent declines in the population of Nepal between 1911-1929 from 3.6 million to 3.5 million.

Even though 10% of the recruits were casualties, there has been no detailed study of the social impact at the local level in these communities from which the majority of troops were recruited.

Already suffering from the absence of their husbands, brothers, sons and fathers for years on end, those who remained to 'keep the home fires burning' (the women, the children and the elderly) also had to cope with the fact that many failed to return, and many more came home with debilitating and disabling injuries or conditions.

There was little in the way of public 'welfare assistance' for these casualties of war and for their families who were obliged to look after them, and also ensure their livelihoods when men were physically unable to work. There was little or no recognition of what today is referred to as 'post-traumatic stress disorder', and only the loving care of family members of affected individuals.

The economic impact of the war must also have been considerable.
Thousands of able-bodied men were taken away not only from their families but also from fields, leaving those left behind to cope with the demands of farming and with a reduced labour force, and one which relied more heavily than ever on women, children and the elderly.

The cost in terms of loss of production, as well as loss of income at the local level, as a result of the absence of so many men for four years is incalculable, but was undoubtedly felt acutely by those affected. There must have been serious additional costs of supporting those who remained and the loss of commodes. But they also came back with experiences of mixing with soldiers from other cultures and backgrounds, facing daily challenges, travelling and visiting places in far-off countries across the sea. All this had a dramatic impact on social and cultural awareness in the local communities to which they returned.

Ultimately, this greater consciousness was to play a part in a growing dissatisfaction with the poverty and underdevelopment of Nepal, and to increasing demands for social, economic and political change in the 1960s and 1980s.

**MARKING TIME:** A British officer performs a AVI inspection of a Gurkha unit in France in 1915 (above). Nepal soldiers and porters assembled in Kedarnath in 1915 before marching down to Nara to join the Allied forces in Europe. Photo and West Agra. Of the 200,000 people conscripted, about 20,000 were killed (above, top right).

Gurkhas standing in a German trench at Neuve-Chapelle in France during World War I (above, 1916). The military hospital gGifted to Britain in 1915 in recognition of the sacrifices made by Gurkha troops in World War I (right). After the original structures at Kedarnath in Kumaun, was damaged in the 2015 earthquake, the hospital was reconstructed in the original style with a modern annex.

Dr. David Seddon is Director of Critical Cauca, author/co-author of many publications on Nepal, and currently writes a three-part book on ‘Nepal and the Great War’.

**11 AM, 11/11/1918**

As the world commemorated Armistice Day on 11 November to mark the creation of Armistice, on the Western Front, there was no much done in Nepal to commemorate a war in which so many Nepal soldiers were killed, and one that had such a historic impact on the country’s political, socio-economic and cultural life.

The Armistice took effect at 11.00 am on the morning (the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918) and initially expired after 24 hours. A formal peace agreement was only reached when the Treaty of Versailles was signed the following year. In other spheres of the war, including the Kaiser’s side, fighting continued.

The date is a national holiday in France, Belgium, and in many Allied nations. In some countries, Armistice Day coincides with Remembrance Day and Veteran’s Day, and other public holidays. In Italy, by the end of World War I was commemorated on 4 November, the day of the Armistice of Villa Giardini. Armistice Day has been a statutory holiday in Serbia since 2012, and Poland celebrated National Independence Day on 11 November to commemorate the anniversary of the restoration of Poland’s sovereignty in 1918 from the German, Austrian and Russian Empires.

A German national day of mourning, Volksentschuldigung, has since 1919, been observed on the Sunday closest to 11 November. In Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway, the end of World War I is not commemorated as the three countries remained neutral. Denmark celebrates Danish Independence Day on 5 September in commemoration of both liberation and national soldiers who served in any conflict. In the Netherlands, 4 May is Remembrance Day.

In India, there is an official Armistice Day, but the day has been marked by tributes and ceremonies in army cemeteries and by memorial services in some churches. Prime Ministers have laid wreaths at the Indian National War Cemetery and the Delhi War Cemetery. Because the two World Wars were fought while India was part of the British Empire, the idea of commemoration was largely assimilated as an unwritten colonial relic. In July 2016, however, a campaign called India Remembers was launched to commemorate the sacrifice of Indian soldiers in various conflicts, including the First World War, with the proposal that the common man join the Gayatri as a symbol of remembrance.

The day chosen for the official day of remembrance was 7 December, to commemorate the anniversary of a historic casualty charge led by Indian volunteers in the German trenches on the Somme. The names and their roles did not fare well against German machine guns, but their sacrifice was something that those who launched the campaign wanted to remember as the epitome of the ‘national spirit in the face of war’.

The contradictions between the focus on ‘Vasudev’ on the one hand, and the reality of pain, suffering, injury and death in appalling conditions, on the other, are acute. One strategy that recognizes this, at least in part, is to emphasize the importance of commemoration for peace and reconciliation. This year, the British and German governments, using both at the same time in the same way, expressing the recognition of former enemies in sound, the return of France and Germany embarked each other at the commemoration in Passchendaele.
Walkathon
Walk with Rekha Thapa, a prominent actor and anti-drug marriage campaigner, and activists, academicians, students, mothers and people from all walks of life to bring attention to issues surrounding child rights and marriage.
17 November, 6:30-11:00am, Bhaktapur Mandap, (711) 555058

Dukuhchap-Tika Bhairab hike
Register before 6pm on Friday for 6:15am hike from Dukuhchap - Sarang Danda - Deurali - Tika Bhairab with an experienced guide.
17 November, 6:15am, Bhaktapur Mandap. Admission fee Rs. 300 (including lunch), 9500 030407, 9851 771625

Tuborg Open Fest
Watch the Bangalore spin prodicer board up for a 5-6 hour virtual event from Dukuhchap - Sarang Danda - Deurali - Tika Bhairab with an experienced guide.
17 November, 6:15am, Bhaktapur Mandap. Admission fee Rs. 300 (including lunch), 9500 030407, 9851 771625

Silent disco
As funny as it will be to see everyone dancing without loud music, there will be no complaints from neighbors. Bring along your fully charged phone, or a portable music device, and a good set of earphones.
16 November, 11pm-1am, Open Lamps, Holiday Inn, ‪(9860726044), events@holidayinnpual.com

16-19 November, 11am-7pm, Siddhi Art Gallery, Budhan Multiple, (714) 9719648

Opposite Dreams
Opposite Dreams: The Politics of Locality explores the realities of social hierarchies and invasive international influences in Nepal, by highlighting the misuse of power, and state-sponsored violence. The exhibition is an anthropological perspective expressed via mixed media.
16-17 November, 11am-7pm, Atrium Hotel, Samabhishek Mall, ‪(9851 280253)

Comedy Tuk Tuk
Comedy Tuk Tuk: A two-hour special stand-up comedy with Shuddha Bista, Aastha Shrestha, Budha Gurung and Rajina Shrestha. Music, drinks, food, socialisation and a lot of laughter.
11 November, 10pm, Mithila, Hotel, (9851 664496)

Social Science Baha
Dipak Khatiwada, an Associate Professor at the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, talks about Nepal’s development predicaments at Lecture Series 5 of the Lens of Cultural Theory, by Social Science Baha.
17 November, 6pm, Hotel, Mithila, Hotel, (9851 664496)

8848 Mt Bar
Offering a selection of world-class beverages at a reasonable price. The interior is well designed to provide a cozy and comfortable ambience. Enjoy your favorite drinks at the bar, patio or even in the resort’s main courtyard.
17 November, 6pm, Kathmandu Forest Resort, Tholl, (711) 476077

Bayleaf
Drop by the garden restaurant for Burmese dishes, such as tofu thoke, khow sel thoke (snail salad), morungs (fish noodle soup) and other signature dishes. For starters, try their fish thoke, pork and chicken rice, (9860726044, info@bayleaf.com)

Harmony Spa & Health Club
Amongst the best on the edge of a plateau overlooking Kathmandu Forest and the grassed valley below, Harmony Spa combines therapeutic care within a natural environment {impossible} to recreate elsewhere. Included are a range of rejuvenating courses, including Ayurvedic treatments to within Ayana, the Asana & Eto, and a new treatment with a new range of massage therapies.
6:30pm-10pm, Kathmandu Forest Resort, Tholl, (711) 476077

Hotel Annapurna View
The boutique hotel situated at 1,500m in Sarangkot offers everything, the Annapurna, view of the Himalayan and Annapurna views, serenity, and luxurious accommodation. It’s a perfect setup for amzing views of the Himalayas. Don’t miss Shringadh, Pokhara, ‪(9851 974087)

Bhaktapur
For all the Mithila’s favourite getaway places.
‪(9851 974087)

Namo Buddha Resort
Catered in traditional Newari style and surrounded by lush greenery, the resort is an oasis of peace and tranquillity, offering a combination of all the elements of a spiritual journey. Take a short trek to Namo Buddha and Thirang Da Jhanti Temple for a pure refreshment and retreat from the city stress.
Namo Buddha, Pharping, (9851 516280)

Milla Guesthouse
If you prefer the quiet and admire a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far from the city, yet far away from it all.
Bhaktapur, (9851 516280)

Kathmandu: My Fascination
A novel exhibition showing Prabod Shrestha’s pixel-art silhouettes prints with sound installation, on the lifestyle of modern Kathmandu, juxtaposing the old and the new.
16-20 November, Bikashna Art Center, Pulchowk, (9851 974087)

Muse Restobar
A multi-cuisine restaurant and bar with sophisticated wooden interior, providing the perfect family environment.
Ultrafarms, Lamps, (9851 516280)

Nyla
Sangat based singer-songwriter Nyla brings her pop-compositions to Nepal for the first time. With influences of jazz, R&B and soul, she will be joined by Kathmandu artist Nazo Vidya.
17 November, 6:30-9:30pm, Beer Camp Outdoor Lounge, Jomson, (9851 712557)

BBQ and blues
A night-long celebration with Bab-Baiser from the USA. Barbeque-roasted chicken with a plethora of other foods, with a classic pumpkin pie for dessert.
17 November, Swayambhu, Harvest’s Cafe, (9851 516280)

Viva con Agua
Rastri Yudhistir, Pratap Pathak, Dubai. Fantastic and Pablo Charlotaine will play an evening of Rajasthani, English and German songs of different genres. Like rap, reggae, reggaeton pop and blues, to raise funds for water projects through Viva con Agua.
16-17 November, 6:30-9:30pm, The Yardly Class Garden Flowers, (9851 516280)

8848 Mt Bar
Offering a selection of world-class beverages at a reasonable price. The interior is well designed to provide a cozy and comfortable ambience. Enjoy your favorite drinks at the bar, patio or even in the resort’s main courtyard.
17 November, 6:30-9:30pm, Beer Camp Outdoor Lounge, Jomson, (9851 712557)

BBQ and blues
A night-long celebration with Bab-Baiser from the USA. Barbeque-roasted chicken with a plethora of other foods, with a classic pumpkin pie for dessert.
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Viva con Agua
Rastri Yudhistir, Pratap Pathak, Dubai. Fantastic and Pablo Charlotaine will play an evening of Rajasthani, English and German songs of different genres. Like rap, reggae, reggaeton pop and blues, to raise funds for water projects through Viva con Agua.
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Don’t go quietly into the night

All three levels of government were responsible for Shyam Sundar Shrestha’s death

Kunda Dixit

Hundeds of children had been walking past the gaping open drain outside the gates of Laboratory School in Kirtipur every day for the past six months. Teachers had repeatedly asked the Kathmandu Valley water supply utility to cover the ditch. A parent who complained recently was told to work: “Mind your own business.” A shopkeeper across the road has lost count of the number of motorcyclists injured trying to avoid the gutter at night.

On 27 October, yoga instructor Shyam Sundar Shrestha was spending the Saturday evening at his home in Chapal with his mother, Sabiti and sister, Shoba. He told them not to let his little nephews waste time playing with mobile phones.

Shyam Sundar had dinner, checked his laptop, washed his face, and said he was bicycling out to Chobhar. His mother wondered why he had to go out into the dark streets, but did not say anything because her 45-year-old son had crossed Nepal on his bicycle.

Shyam Sundar was an intervent since childhood, his mother remembers. He lived frugally, ate little, dressed simply and had a passion for materialism and bicycling. He loved the great outdoors, and had followed his guru, yogi Shiva, on pilgrimage from Kathmandu to Kenya’s Mount Kilimanjaro at the south tip of India, a distance of 4,800 km.

When he did not return till late that night, Shobha Shrestha tried unsuccessfully to call her son on his mobile. Even though she was not too worried, she called around to relatives who reported a missing person to the Police.

The call from the Police came early on Sunday morning. A woman had found Shyam Sundar’s body inside an open drain on the road to Chobhar. The family was in complete shock, as weeping neighbours gathered around. At the site, Police examined Shyam Sundar’s red bicycle and shoes, and sent his body to hospital for an autopsy.

It was the latest tragedy that brought into sharp focus the death trap that Kathmandu’s road have become, with open manholes and drains, gaping ditches on dark streets without pedestrian sidewalks, and the lack of warning signs.

Shyam Sundar’s death occurred down the road from where renowned conservationist Prabhat Yonan was killed almost exactly six years ago. Both were avid bicyclists, and their deaths have exposed the real state negligence about road safety and the lack of bicycle lanes that the city promised.

Friends, relatives, colleagues and bicycle enthusiasts gathered on 10 November at the spot where Shyam Sundar Shrestha died for his 41st day remembrance. They paid tribute to a quiet, spiritual man dedicated to helping others. Away from crowd, weeping silently was Sabiti Shrestha.

“I cannot describe to you what a decent man and devoted son he is,” she sobbed, still speaking in the present tense about her son. “He never says an unkind word to anyone, never raises his voice. He does not take sugar or white rice, eating only fruit and buckwheat, and has few cravings.”

After his two sisters got married, Shyam Sundar was taking care of his mother in their Chapal home. His father died when he was young. He worked as an English tutor and a yoga instructor, but never felt the need to make much money.

Shyam Sundar’s five-year-old nephew points at a photo of him and says, “Pai.” Carrying him on her arms, Shobha Shrestha says tearfully: “He had just started recognising his uncle, and and has been seeking where he is. What do I tell him?”

The ditch where Shyam Sundar died has now been covered with concrete slabs. But the night before the remembrance, an ambulance had tried to avoid the ditch but rammed into the side of the road, just next to the white ghost bicycle chained to a tree that serves as a memorial to Shyam Sundar.

As the small gathering observed a two-minute silence, Nepali pedestrians and drivers, rushed past, there was the sound of fire crackers going off nearby. An ambulance rushed past soon blazing.

Advocate Sunil Ranjan Singh’s son goes to Laboratory School, and he had complained many times to the authorities about the dangerous open drain. He said: “This is a failure at all three levels of government. They are all guilty, and the responsibility goes right up to the Prime Minister.”

Singh wants to take a legal precedent by taking the matter to the courts so it will set a landmark decision on responsibility and compensation for such negligence in future.

On Sunday after Shyam

INHERITANCE OF LOSS: Sabiti Shrestha (left) at the 13th-day commemoration for her son, yoga instructor Shyam Sundar Shrestha, on Saturday on the Chobhar Road. Police retrieved Shrestha’s body from the open drain on the morning of 28 October. Concrete slabs now cover the ditch into which Shrestha fell and died on 27 October. A ghost bicycle tied to a tree marks the spot as a memorial to a decent, spiritual man.

Sundar’s body was found, the Kathmandu Valley water utility (KTWU) covered up the open drain in half-an-hour. “If it was so simple to cover it and make it safe, why didn’t they do it earlier? Did someone have to be killed?” Advocate Sunil Ranjan Singh asked.

The police released the autopsy report over Titip, it was as everyone had suspected: Shyam Sundar was knocked unconscious after falling off his bicycle and drowned in sewage half-a-metre deep.

Despite the people consoling her, Sabiti Shrestha, looked alone and forlorn. She joined her hands in prayer, and said softly: “I used to tell him not to go where there are no roads, but he did a road on a road, right here in the capital. I hope no more Nepalis have to die like my son.”
The book, Another South Asia, with an assertive exclamation mark in its title requires one to pause and step back to reevaluate what South Asia is, before engaging with the idea of what it could be ‘another’.

The essays in this book explore institutional lapses, like SAARC which have not done much about the region, and includes the failure of academics. The book positions the possibility of exploring ‘another’: a soothing, disarming, and yet not credulous, utopia.

It is common to understand the region through the lens of “India’s hegemonic power” often provides for understanding everything bad in South Asia, be it the Indian Blockade of Nepal or the omnipresence of China’s influence in the region. The book makes one out of this intellectual stupor, rejecting not just the conventional approach, but also explores a tryst of lived history woven into the fabric of daily life. It begins to feel that there is more to the idea of South Asia than one realized.

The book explores South Asia through its fluid faiths and intellectual history, cross border bonhomie of artists, revolutionary poets of the region in the framework of ‘organic intellectuals’, and the Progressive Writers’ Association as a case for a South Asian literary imagination. That is not all. The dramatic and performative traditions of the region show them to be trans-local and deeply emblematic, without being Hollywood-like. It invites us to see, smell, and savour South Asia far beyond its cartographic territory.

Most importantly, this volume provides the idea that the region ought to be understood on its own, both as a World Region, a civilizational entity in its own right. It is a refreshing departure from the intellectual preoccupations of scholars, diplomats, bureaucrats, and officials, who tend to be in conflict about South Asia. It is not too concerned with finding the ‘other’, but in this strength lies also its weakness. Even while the book accepts the predominance of the state in South Asia, it resists an attempt to have a discussion about it. It is perhaps due to the objective of exploring a much needed utopian imagination.

The book can only be summarised in metaphor, which is also a metaphor for the history of South Asia. The Jinnah House in Bombay which Indians cannot understand why after insisting on a separate nation, Jinnah said he wanted to spend a peaceful retired life in it after partition. Pakistani diplomats insist that it is a sign of Jinnah’s generosity, and that Indians have misunderstood him. Meanwhile, the biggest builder of Bombay who is also a member of parliament wants to pull it down, and replace it with something ‘better’. If the gates of that abandoned house were to be opened for people to live in it, and the house was to have a library, one imagines that a copy of this book would find a prized place on the shelves of that library. Another South Asia offers that tantalising possibility. ☑️

Shray Mehta is a PhD candidate at the Department of Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi.

Trending

**Re-imagining South Asia**


**TRANSHIMALAYAN HERITAGE:** Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari and Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Lu Hong (left) at a presentation of culture and tourism of China, at Singha Durbar on Tuesday.

**RECORD KEEPING:** The World Book of Records (WBR) on Sunday listed Nepal’s Padupathabali and umari in its big archive, and awarded teh Malayan Sam and Jawalki’s name for contributions to banking and tourism as a Junction in Kathmandu on Monday.

**DIVINE DANCING:** A 12-day-long annual Karak Nata started at Patan Durbar Square in Mangluld, Lalitpur on Monday night.

**15 YEARS FLEW BY:** Edilbert Airways celebrated 15 years of global operations on Sunday, honouring top travel agencies in Kathmandu on Sunday. The airline started flying to Kathmandu in 2007 and now operates two daily flights to and from Abu Dhabi.
Children and crime

Ramwor Bohara in Jhapa

Dhanusha’s Sunila Devi Yadav was alive; on 29 October night, police discovered that her seven month son, Shobhan, was missing. The police were baffled, and after two-weeks’ investigation, they found Shobhan being nursed by Leela Devi Shah in the adjoining district of Sisaha. Leela Devi was desperate to have a son after delivering four daughters, and decided to “buy” a son from kidnappers. She and her accomplices are now in police custody. Nepal Police reported 77 cases of kidnappings across the country in the past year. Most cases were for ransom, and young children were prime targets.

In all forms of heinous crimes, including rape, sexual assault, human trafficking or murder, the number of child victims is disproportionately high in Nepal. The figure of rape is particularly staggering. Of the 1,480 rapes reported to police in the past year (35% up from the previous year) 64% of victims were below 18.

Nepal Police has started a Community-Police Cooperation program in 77 districts since October, and spokesperson Uttam Subedi says it was because law enforcers were themselves shocked by the growing number of child victims. “We realised that the law alone was inadequate, and we needed the help of communities, especially schools,” Subedi says. There were 876 missing children in the past three months, and 664 have not been traced. Missing children are often assumed to have been trafficked, or sold for their organs. Hemanta Malla Thakuri, who was previously the chief of Investigation at the CBI, says: “The majority of lost children are from poor families. Parents report once, but are not capable of consistently following up. That is why it is hard to find most children.”

Criminals often target children because of their vulnerability and since there is little resistance from them. It is easier to convince innocent children not just through fear, but also attracting them with gifts. After the crimes, redacting their roles using threats is less challenging than for adults. Anthropologist Sunah Dhakal says children are more distant from their families these days, and the education system also does not teach children to protect themselves in risky situations.

Criminals against children are common in war-torn states, and where the social and state structures need to be rebuilt after conflict. Nepal’s own insurgency institutionalised impunity, which is directly reflected in the increased crime rate. The Nirmala Panta rape and murder case is a case study in the ineffectiveness of law enforcement.

With poverty and extreme physical pressures, there have been instances of mothers killing their own children. Tappajang’s Kamala BK strangled her one-year-old twin daughters in a toilet in July. Having eloped with a driver from Undiyyapur at age 18, who has left the house while pregnant.

Munangi’s Anamika Khabba had lost her husband two years ago and had been living with Ramesh Jha, whom she introduced to neighbours as her husband. When the two had a fight, she hung her 18- and 3-year-old sons, and committed suicide herself. Her older son survives because of a loan from his mother.

Children are also involved in crimes themselves. In July, a 13-year-old was found with prohibited drugs in Tanahun. In Rupandehi, a 14-year old boy lured a 7-year old girl into his room with chocolates and raped her. Police figures show that in the 2016/17 fiscal year, 7% of rape perpetrators were below 16.

Says Subedi: “With children being victims as well as involved in crimes, it is important for the communities and schools to assist the police.”

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

For full Nepali version of this piece, go to himalkhabar.com
defiscovergorkhas.com
Paying an arm and a leg

Nepali migrant workers are becoming disabled to enable the economy

Om Astha Rai

Hari Pun, 33, was working on the scaffolding of a building site in the Malaysian city of Penang last year. He was wearing a plastic helmet, but had no safety harness. As he leaned to reach out, he fell to the ground.

Pun had asked for a safety strap, but his Chinese supervisor had told him: “It is just a three-storey building. You won’t die even if you fall.” The supervisor was right, Pun did not die. But his fractured spine turned him quadriplegic.

Pun was working in Malaysia for three years, after spending two years in Saudi Arabia. Missing home and family, he was preparing for a return to Baglung to be with his wife and two little boys. When he did return home, it was with broken bones and shattered dreams. It has been a year since Pun was confined to bed, where he lies staring at the ceiling of his stone and mud house. His wife works on the family farm and looks after their livestock. She had been able to send their children to a private school with the money Pun sent home. Now, the family cannot afford it, and the boys will go to a government school.

“I did not die, but what I am going through now is like dying every single day,” Pun told Nepal Times over the phone this week.

When Kamal Khatri, 21, went to work at a rubber factory in Jelutong Bahru in Malaysia last year, he shared a room with an elderly Nepali migrant worker who had lost four of his fingers and warned him: “Be careful, those machines can swallow you alive.”

Khatri was careful, but during one late night shift, his right hand was caught in a latex grinding machine and torn to shreds. It happened at 5AM, and Khatri had been on the factory floor for nine hours. He was tired and sleepy, and had reached down to pull out a rod that had got stuck in the grinder when the machine suddenly restarted.

“It happened so fast it took me a long time to realise that my hand was gone,” he recalls. “For months, when I had an itch or when I wanted to hold something, I would reflexively turn to my absent hand.”

It has been a year since Khatri returned to his village in Bhojpur, but is still not used to being left-handed. “My aim is to look after my elderly parents, but they have to look after me,” he told us.

The Nepali media often print pictures of coffins of dead migrant workers arriving at Kathmandu airport, and the human cost of labour migration gets much attention. But the fatalities overshadow the plight of wounded migrant workers, and their lack of support back home.

Official records show that in the last ten years, 1,176 Nepali migrant workers returned home wounded. The actual number could be higher. Undocumented workers who have lost limbs are not counted, like Milan Karki whose right thumb was chopped off while working at a factory in Kuala Lumpur. He stayed back (pictured, below left) no midpoint even after his contract ended, and the wounds never healed.

Top five countries where most Nepali workers were wounded in the workplace in the past 10 years:

- Saudi Arabia
- Malaysia
- UAE
- Qatar
- Kuwait

Dangerous destinations

WOUNDED WORKERS

Annual figures of wounded Nepal workers receiving relief from the migrant welfare fund

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2008-2017: 361

Wounded workers receiving relief from the migrant welfare fund.
Watch video depicting the plight of Nepali workers who have returned wounded and disabled from overseas. Watch video to help raise awareness, and to help rehabilitate the wounded!

**Win Win migration**

As chair of the Colombo Process, Nepal is hosting the 5th ministerial meeting of this network of 12 labour-sending countries in Kathmandu on 15-16 November. Labour Minister Gokarna Bista spoke to *Nepal Times* about the recent labour pact with Malaysia, and how this loose forum can promote safe migration. Excerpts:

**Nepali Times**: How will Nepali migrant workers and Malaysian employers benefit from the bilateral MoU you signed?

Gokarna Bista: Malaysia had been hiring migrant workers from Nepal for over two decades, but the two countries never had a written agreement. Our workers therefore faced problems like lack of minimum pay, social security and workplace safety, Malaysian employers had their own grievances. But we never had a legal or policy framework to address those issues. Now, we finally have an agreement that not only protects Nepali migrants but also helps Malaysia manage foreign workers in a dignified way. The pact is even more important for us because it requires Malaysian employers to bear surcharges, insurance, visa and security clearance fees previously charged to Nepal’s workers. It also makes it mandatory for employers to deposit the minimum salaries into bank accounts of Nepali workers within the first week of every month. It binds employers to grant workers a 15-day leave if anyone dies in their families.

**But aren’t there challenges in implementing these points?**

Those who have been exploiting poor migrant workers probably want to kill this agreement, but I am sure it will be implemented because it reflects the common interests of Nepal and Malaysia, and both governments are committed to promoting safe and dignified migration.

**Is this model now going to be applied with Gulf states as well?**

We have labour agreements with a few Gulf countries, but they are obsolete. Some do not have provisions for social security, forcing Nepali migrants to work for less than minimum wages. They cannot return home because their passports are controlled by employers. We need to renew and update those agreements with Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait, incorporating new measures to tackle new challenges.

**How important do you think is the Kathmandu meeting of Colombo Process?**

It is very important. There is a sense that destination countries are hiring migrant workers out of charity, making sending countries feel humiliated about exporting manpower. We want to change this misguided notion, and the Kathmandu meeting of the Colombo Process will be crucial in making both sides feel respected. It may be a loose forum of 12 labour-sending countries, but it will certainly amplify the voice for zero cost and hassle-free labour migration. It can be a win-win.

**What is your take on the ban on Nepali housemaids?**

A parliamentary committee had directed the government in early 2017 to bar Nepali women from going abroad as housemaids. We need to review this, and have already begun discussions with the parliamentary committees. But before taking a decision on the ban, what we really want is to have exclusive MoUs with countries that want housemaids from Nepal. We want to ensure that Nepali domestics are paid well, have a safe place to live, stipulated working hours and a safe environment in which to work.

Many migrant workers return home wounded. How can we tackle this problem?

When Nepali workers get wounded or disabled while working abroad, they are simply dumped by their employers and they have to be taken care of by the Nepali government and their families. So we are holding talks with governments of labour-receiving countries to ensure that employers also take responsibility for wounded workers. Malaysia has already agreed, and I hope other countries will follow suit.
Gravity, and all that rubbish

The most trending topic in Nepal on social media last week was not (as many of you might have erroneously supposed) the sneaking news from the Prime Minister’s Office that gravitation was discovered by Sri Bhakti Adhikari, and not by Sir Isaac Newton. This extraordinary revelation turns western astronomy and geology on its head, forcing us to reformulate the 3 laws of Newtonian physics after seeing an Apple Macbook fall from a tree, this:

First Law of Thermodynamics: A body at rest in the Himalayas cannot offer any resistance to a sudden force. If suddenly shaken by a physical force acting upon it, for instance, a boulder hitting the concerned authority’s butt.

Second Law of Thermodynamics: Because energy cannot be created or destroyed. In an isolated system, power outnumbered for the ultimate fate.

Third Law of Thermodynamics: When one body exerts pressure on another body, it is actually exerting counter pressure with the same equal in magnitude and opposite in direction so that the aforementioned body is completely squashed.

Incidentally, the real breaking news was, in this economic crisis, this week, that Mt. Everest is the world’s highest pile of shit. Foreign correspondents just don’t get it, and what the reporter lied to mention was that since Mt. Everest is being weathered by wind and precipitation, it is incumbent on the Government of Nepal to ensure that it remains the paramount mountain on Earth. It is a matter of pride and nationalism for us Nepalis that we can always rely on the sun to melt the snow, but even a few more metres of ice can be difficult to raise because of global warming, and this means all the frozen yard long on the mountain by curing gypsies since Sir George Mallory is beginning to thaw out. This is a national emergency and calls for immediate action. Instead of asking excise duty down, it’s a much better idea to make every climber take a mandatory dump on top. Expeditions must also carry up from lower camps, so that the peak remains highest in the world. Our target should be to raise Mt Everest to at least 8,848m this fiscal year, and for that it must be made compulsory for all expectons to leave their trash on top as well. Any climber bringing rubbish down will be fined, and be asked to go down and leave the garbage on the summit. This way, we in Nepal can turn our attention to more pressing matters like determining conclusively who discovered gravity.

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