A ceremony of national importance was held in Kathmandu on 27 April, and by sending a ceremonial bow of state instead of the chief executive, Nepal has tried to assuage Indian sensitivities, given that Delhi takes a dim view of the initiative.

In the same times, Nepal has been trying to find alternative routes to the sea. Nepal has been challenging the bit to find alternative routes to the sea. Although the country will be on the proposal for multi-modal, China-Nepal transportation corridors, roads, railways and air connectivity. For most of its history, Nepal was protected from the north by thick mountain ranges and from the north by the great barrier of the Himalayas. The jungles were cleared and malaria eradicated in the 1960s. Meanwhile, the first trans-Himalayan flight was established in the 1950s through Kathmandu, and the Tibet Railroad will arrive in Kunming, 60km north of Himalayas, by 2021. The new motorable roads to the Chinese border from the south of Himalayas, Korala, Rasuwa and Khotang, and soon many more will be added. There are now more trans-Himalayan flights per week from Kathmandu to Chinese cities than there are to Indian airports. All these links will help Nepal capitalize on the potential between two of the world’s economic powers. Nepal will benefit from the increased trade, more transit options, and smoother transport which will boost tourism. However, this closer geographic proximity coincides with the sharper geopolitical polarization between the United States and China on the one hand, and between China and India on the other. To paraphrase our founding king, Nepal is now a yam between three boulders.

Some of the shadow boxing has been playing out in Kathmandu, with the American Ambassador publicly urging Nepal to avoid the ‘debt trap’ (without naming China). The Chinese ambassador countered this week with op-eds in English and Nepali newspapers in which he categorically denied that the BRI was a geo-strategic tool for China to pursue its interests.

Three recent books about geopolitics in the region, while dealing only tangentially with Nepal, reveal some lessons for Kathmandu’s foreign policy establishment about how to conduct this triangular balancing act between India, China, and the United States. There are two ways to do this: first, be wary of Nepal’s soft diplomacy whose characteristic high-mindedness and low, if any, sense of sovereignty allow the country to be co-opted by the superpowers of the region. Second, take a more secure, assertive, and independent foreign policy that is not simply a proxy for the great powers in the last two years. In fact, the times that lie ahead for the Nepalese, and for all South-Asian states, will be critical.

Anita Tuli

In this month’s Lijahsun… Epistles on writing, the New York Sun, the editorial, ‘The Lijahsun, #956’ is much appreciated. However, we need to really understand the actual requirements of reformation and what is really involved in this process. We need to ensure that retribution solutions in Nepal are done properly with forensic studies, soil studies and research mechanism. Safety first always.

Ananta Bairagi

SAD REALITY

Great work but sad reality ‘Nepal is being loved to death’. Anil Chitrakar, #956. Nepal just want someone to do for them so they are looking up to that kind of system. We also choose the same no-good leaders again and again. Sunit Gurung

WHATS TRENDING

Nepal Art Going Places

The Augmented Exhibition of Nepal’s contemporary art opens at the Upstrokes ethnographic museum, Weimar, in Germany, and will go on to Copenhagen. The news was widely shared. Go online to see how Nepal’s art is being curated in museums abroad.

Most popular on Facebook

Nepal is being loved to death

Every Nepali knows that one day the free ride era is going to come to an end. They won’t be able to do what they want. In the end, we are trying to find ways, and we are getting ready as fast as we can. Most readers agreed with Chitrakar’s sentiment and the article generated considerable discussion. It seems that Nepalis want to shift the paradigm.

Most commented

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Nepal Times

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Life in the time of tornadoes

Climate change carries with it huge costs that we cannot afford to pay

This is the season for windstorms, and even though the whirlwind that hit the central Tarai on 31 March killing 19 people was a freak event, it was not the first to touch down in our part of the world.

Novelist Amitabh Ghosh begins his 2016 non-fiction book, The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, with his personal encounter with a funnel-shaped tornado that struck New Delhi on 17 March 1978. It killed 70 and injured 700 in just 2 minutes.

Ghosh writes that the Indian Meteorological Service predicted at the time: "This was, in effect, the first tornado to hit Delhi—and indeed the entire region—in recorded meteorological history."

Srikanth-based journalist Chandra Kishore remembers a similar devastating vortex that destroyed parts of a Tarai village in the mid-1980s. In Phtha on the night of 31 March, most of the deaths were due to poorly built structures, not the actual tornado, proving once again that it is shoddily-built houses that kill people not natural events.

When Ghosh encountered the tornado in 1978 in New Delhi, the Earth’s atmosphere had 344ppm (parts per million) of carbon dioxide. In the 1990s, before the industrial age, it was 280ppm. By 2016, the CO2 concentration in the atmosphere has increased to 411ppm, most of it because of fossil fuel emissions.

With so much carbon in the atmosphere, climate change is no longer something that will happen in a distant future — it is happening now. Events like the Tarai tornado are our new normal and highlight the growing impacts of an erratic climate and its rising social and economic costs. No country is immune, all countries have to adapt and also cut their emissions by switching to renewable energy (see story, alongside).

Nepal’s Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) collects wind speed data at the airport to assist flight operations, for academic assessment of wind energy potentials and for designing buildings and infrastructure. Wind hazards have always been there, but death and destruction of the scale that Phtha witnessed has not been part of our understanding.

As an under-budgeted and under-staffed entity, the DHM has the lowest priority from the Nepali state, preventing it from becoming a repository of climate knowledge. As one of the least vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Nepal needs to upgrade its weather forecasting and early warning systems.

The Phtha tragedy revealed a major gap in the DHM’s ability to forecast weather, the absence of warning people about what is likely to happen in the next few hours at a spatial resolution of a few square kilometres. The department needs to be able to provide local, accurate forecasting, perhaps by collaborating with others like Tribhuvan University’s Physics Department.

The twisted also exposed gaps in our disaster management institutions. Nepal’s 2017 Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act has replaced the 1982 Natural Calamity Relief Act, so there are now 15 legal tools and guidelines covering the entire disaster cycle. However, these have not been contextualised for our local situation, where the understanding of national policies and laws is still limited.

The Ministry of Home Affairs held a meeting of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committee on 1 April, chaired by the Home Affairs Minister himself. It issued a 13-point decision to expedite relief and increase preparedness for the coming monsoon season.

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has also taken a number of decisions including the one to build prefabricated houses for the Phtha victims within four months. The government in Kathmandu, however, decided to assign the Nepal Army to rebuild the damaged houses. The army played a commendable role in rescue and relief efforts during the 2015 earthquake and in other disasters, but it is worth asking why it needs to be involved in reconstruction of private homes.

The Nepal Army is there to defend our borders and as the first responder in a disaster; building houses is not its job. Reconstruction requires working iteratively with local governments to support victims in a manner that they can build back their own homes and thus build back their own vulnerabilities.

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) already has a track record of helping earthquake-affected families build houses, and has even been assigned the responsibility in Phtha. Such complex institutional dynamics often create more constraints than solutions. At a time when there are new challenges due to climate change-induced disasters, Nepal’s national, provincial and local governments, and society by and large, do not have the necessary wherewithal to adapt and are the least prepared. The poor are the most vulnerable, and as Phtha proved, are likely going to pay the highest price.

Ajaya Dixit: Executive Director of Kathmandu-based IUSTI Nepal. His monthly column Change for Change deals with the impact of global warming in Nepal.

Nepal’s electric

Once seen as a quaint option, electric vehicles promise ecological and economic benefits

Sonia Awale

Residents of Kathmandu by now know that they breathe a mixture of dirt, fuel, and diesel smoke in the world. But unlike elsewhere, that awareness has not created the public clamour to force politicians to act.

Up to 30,000 Nepalis lose their lives annually due to disease caused by air pollution. One in every 14 people in Kathmandu suffers from a condition like COPD, bronchitis and emphysema. The average life expectancy of Nepalis is reduced by over two and one-half years because of air pollution.

"We have seen that electric public transportation can improve public health by reducing pollution," says Saiva Yatayat Executive Director Rishikesh Tuladhar. "Recent advances in electric transport provide the solution. What is sorely lacking in Nepal is political will, long-term coordination and strategic planning for electric mobility."

Indeed, Nepal’s policy makers no longer have an excuse to do nothing about air pollution: they can follow the example of China and India and announce a national campaign to switch to electric public transport. India is rolling out 7,000 electric buses this year. The Delhi Metro is now powered by solar energy and plans to go fully solar by 2021. All 18,000 public buses in Shenzhen are electric. China has replaced all its petrol two-wheelers with electric motorcycles and scooters.

Global demand for electric vehicles is rising rapidly, and manufacturers are having a hard time meeting demand, mainly because of the shortage of lithium-ion batteries. The sale of electric

Investing in renewables

Frank Rijsberman of the Korea-based Global Green Growth Institute was recently in town to sign an agreement with the government and Saiva Yatayat on electric mobility. Nepal Times asked him about the future of electric public transport globally and in Nepal.

Nepal Times: Why is your Global Green Growth Institute so involved in electric mobility around the world?

Frank Rijsberman: We are a young intergovernmental organisation set up in 2012 with 32 member countries and 20 more in the process of becoming members, like Nepal. We help governments plan green growth, a model of economic development that is both more environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. In Nepal, we helped the government develop a national electric mobility strategy, and we have also helped members mobilise $1 billion in climate finance.

We are also working to make cities clean by managing waste, sanitation and solid waste, I met with Nepal’s Minister of forests and environment and he asked us if we could start working on forests and we said yes. We are looking at the likelihood of being your next priority here.

Do you see Asian countries moving towards renewable energy?

It’s challenging to switch from big investments in coal and nuclear energy, because all those investments have become stranded assets. China and India are making enormous progress in renewable energy. Many other Asian countries are a bit behind — Vietnam is still planning to build 25 new coal power plants. We are working with governments to introduce large-scale renewable energy sources. The private sector will invest only if the government has the right policy, so we work with governments for that.

ECOLOGY

24 APRIL 2023 10:57
transport future is here

vehicles overtook fossil-fuel cars in Norway last month.

Here in Nepal, electric cars are now making up 10% of all new sales. The first 40 Hyundai Kona EVs were delivered so as to arrive, and the next batch of 40 are already booked. In fact, Hyundai launched Kona in Nepal before it did so in Australia and the US. The Korean car-maker listed Nepal as a top priority market in the Asia-Pacific because of tax breaks for electric vehicles here.

"We were able to convince the manufacturers that Nepal was ready to go electric because of our hydropower potential and the tax difference between electric and non-electric vehicles that showed a strong government." The spokesman explained Nitesh Shrestha of Laxmi InterContinental, which represents Hyundai in Nepal. While the retail price of petrol diesel reaches up to 26% above the cost price, electric vehicles carry just a 10% tax on the purchase price. Electric cars are exempt from road tax, which can be Rs30-35,000 per year for fossil-fuel cars. Nepal is the only country in the world with such a huge relative tax difference.

However, there are still challenges to overcome before electric vehicles gain greater public acceptance, including the lack of charging stations, insufficient electricity supply, and inadequate parking lot. A fast-charge electric vehicle needs to be charged at least 80% before it can travel 250 km. Establishing one requires a government subsidy as well as a rule maker to permit the charging of different EV models.

Kathmandu Valley alone has 750,000 motorcycles, which are a major source of toxic gases like carbon monoxide and ozone. Introducing tax incentives for bikes and scooters similar to those for private cars could be a pivotal move. Also, at the moment there is no registration policy on electric two-wheelers, discouraging buyers.

In October last year, Prime Minister KP Oli unveiled an electric mobility action plan, prepared to perform at least 20% of the fleet of public vehicles into battery-operated ones by 2022. Amidst much fanfare he inaugurated the first zero-emission electric bus model in the country, which was in Kathmandu last week to sign an agreement to implement e-mobility in Nepal. GGGC is keen to help Nepal with its first purchase of 500 electric buses for cities across Nepal. (See Interview below)

"Operating an electric transport fleet in more complex, requires higher initial investment and more infrastructure than traditional buses, but the long-term, renewable energy sources are not only environmentally friendly but also economically viable," said Kishor Paudel. "We believe that it is not only the right thing to do but also the best way of growing in the 21st century. In the coming years we hope to see a breakthrough and electric buses on the streets of Kathmandu."

Electric vehicles are now a necessity, not just an environmental statement. Neighbouring India and China have committed to manufacturing only electric automobiles by the year 2020. Nepal faces similar challenges.

Saiful Azad, a district officials, said: "E-charka will help to go electric since most vehicle imports are from these two countries."

PPPs in Province 3 Province 3 organized an interaction in Bharatpur on 10 April focused on making the province more investment-friendly for public private partnerships. Chief Guest Prakash Koirala said Nepal's national transition has made PPP possible. KP and industry to co-operate (May 8 2020) Deduction of the NIC also participated. "The state must provide a clear incentive package and encourage special products to attract domestic and foreign investors," Dahal said. The conference identified five priority areas: heritage tourism, industrial, and tourist industry manufacturing, energy, agriculture, and in skilled and small industries. The interaction was organized by Wox & Co.

TO STOPPERS AT ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI) - American Airlines is offering six free nights of hotel accommodation at Abu Dhabi for all passengers booked flights to and from Al Eithad destinations via Abu Dhabi until 31 March. Guests can choose from a range of 20 hotels.

White Walker Whiskey Jon Snow has launched the new White Walker Whiskey in collaboration with HBO and Game of Thrones. The limited edition 50cl Whisky is inspired by the White Walkers' characters in the series.

How can Nepal mitigate on carbon, while adapting to climate change? As we are still very much behind in number one priority for Nepal but it must grow to middle-income status by 2030, without increasing emissions, by investing in renewables-energy. This is now the cheapest form of energy and decentralised solar energy is a much easier way to reach remote communities that were very poorly served by a central grid.

So I would call it adaptation with mitigation co-benefits. It may well be possible to trade those emissions with countries that should reduce more but can retain their own. You can have mitigation measures too, but the first priority for countries like Nepal that rely on agriculture to make sure that society is no longer vulnerable and is more resilient to climate change. Also, many governments still need to work on the quality of growth really matters; it should be environmentally sustainable, used to be the right thing to do, but being sustainable is also commercially attractive.

What progress are other Asian countries making to become low-carbon economies? China has become a real leader in electric transport. Shenzhen is the first city in the world with an electric fleet of buses. Beijing has also taken big steps in cutting air pollution. India has also made considerable progress in renewable energy. The next big thing will be energy efficiency in buildings.

What are the prospects for electric public transport in Nepal? We have done electric bus projects in a number of countries and while it is more expensive initially, and also for infrastructure like charging stations and battery, its operational cost is much cheaper. We are helping the Nepal Government find untested investors, and hope to see a breakthrough in coming years with electric buses on the streets of Kathmandu.
the judges table. The moments lengthened, the beakling increased and the beautiful girl immobilised on stage stayed silent, penulysed. I was frantic, the poor thing.

We were at the final galit night of judging of Miss Nepal 2004 in Kathmandu, six with maturem and televed live n every eager household in the still-Kingdom. Beside me, SK Singh and Captain Vijay Lama sat super cool in their crab suits and snowy white shirts, and even I was dressed up for Kathmandu’s most glamorous evening, poured into a borrowed, low-cut sequined jacket,比起 too small around the shoulders. It was question time during the pageant, a trickly minute when the finalists are called upon to respond to the judges’ questions.

My Rotarian friend Gopal Sundar Lal Kaphabat had honoured me with an invitation to join the panel of judges, rubbing shoulders with Sweta Colcha, Nalina Chitrakar Mithra, Melinda Maunstallher and other social acolytes. I had enjoyed the camaraderie of the convivial selection process that precedes the plush and glittering final event.

From thousands of applicants auditioned in 8 regional centres, a select 25 contestants progress to 6 weeks of coaching and team building. For us, a full day sitting through the extracts with one-on-one interviews to come up with the final five who proceeded at the highly publicised pageant.

Personally, praise, ambition and intention were more important than looks, according to the criteria by which we were changed, and I saluted the women’s theme that under-ran the event.

In those gushing days, I specially liked the Shikastapur lady who proudly proclaimed her lyric heritage and how much time she spent in the fields, the Patan beauty who helped in her parents’ tea shop, and the Tibetan girl who, when asked how she would spend the prize money, encored all political correctness by boldly (and honestly) proclaiming that she would use it to emigrate to Canada.

And 2004 is missing from the galaxy of glittering tarts and radiant smiles that make one’s fave ache in sympathy. Over 100 girls from all corners of the country have been groomed to gorgeousness over the decades to make Nepal proud, some of them going on to greater heights in the ravished international atmosphere of Miss Universe, Miss World, Miss Earth and Miss Asia Pacific pageants.

Chairman Gopal smiles shyly behind his must grey beard. “We are more professional these days, but Miss Nepal is the longest running precursor event in Nepal, second to none.”

A fine succession of Miss Nepals have evolved into vocal role models — spokespersons on any number of issues — and successful career women, nurtured by the Hidden Treasures organisers. We used to welcome them to Chitwan for celebrity events and they never failed to add glamour and charm to any occasion, to not mention constellation amongst the premier naturalists juggling for attention, despite the defensive patrol of a watchful chauvinist. On one occasion his vigilant protection backfired when Miss Nepal was inadvertently locked inside a sultan’s tent — it ended harrassly when I found them copulating in giggles under the back flap.

Why can’t today’s participants wear makeup, contacts or show their teeth to show respect?

“Beautify both inside and out”, and “purposed for empowerment”, are in danger of being trapped by good looks alone in the popular staples onto the stage.

Back in 2004, my poor contestant remained motionless in her embroidered gown and stilletos, alone in the midst of the huge theatre. Vijay Lama helpfully asked the question again in Nepali, though I knew she spoke excellent English. I had especially liked her, which made it even worse, and my question: “Is tourism good for Nepal?” seemed bland enough not to cause trouble. I was told later the camaraderi was switched between our faces, hers a fixed mask and me desperately encouraging her to say something, anything.

Vijay told me it was a classic case of stage fright, and he should know — I last saw him in his role as the heroic helicopter pilot in Hollywood’s “Divergent”, moulding his profession as pilot and actor. He perfectly glossed his disarmingly delicious as he leaned into my ear: “You could have asked her to say her name, and she would not have been able to answer.” That made me feel better, but not her.

The poor girl eventually succumbed. As the audience became more vociferous, the lights brighter and the cameras less forgiving, she threw up her hands and faded off into the wings in floods of tears.

And I was never again invited back as a judge for Miss Nepal.
Kathmandu’s heritage is a game

In a new board game, even if players lose they win by learning about Nepali history

Many Nepalis grow up playing Snakes and Ladders, a board game made popular by its simplicity. At the throw of a dice, a player could climb up a ladder, or make a long descent down a snake.

Now, Kathmandu-based Kazi Studios has launched a board game inspired by Snakes and Ladders and Ludo, but with a Nepali flavour. Samrajya (Empire) follows Prithvi Narayan Shah’s journey to conquer Kathmandu Valley through Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Patan and finally Bhaktapur.

Replicated in 100 squares of a board, the journey is filled with twists and turns. Players can find themselves trapped in cages (cave) shrines or if they are lucky, catch a ride on a horse or chariot. Busy streets such as Bhagwati and Bisket might make you skip a turn. The board has five bases: Jaiyana Khum, Bhakti, Hanuman Dhoka (Jail), Bungam Bahal and Anandchoki Pashupati, all popular Kathmandu Valley landmarks.

These days, adults and children often spend most of their weekends on mobiles, but playing Samrajya promises quality family time, and laughter with friends. Kazi Studio founded Kazi Studios with Mukhlis Shrestha says, “As board game lovers ourselves, we wanted Samrajya to be a social game that fostered more face-to-face interaction between Nepalis.” If sales of the board game are anything to go by, say the creators, their plan is working.

What elevates Samrajya’s fun quotient are the beautiful design and illustrations of temples, ghosts and chariots. Shakyasays design was a key element of the project: “We have been brought up with great heritage, culture and traditions that have a lot of design elements in them, which is why we chose to have high production values and world-class design.”

Kazi Studios spent over seven months producing Samrajya and its latest board game Jatra, with most of that time devoted to perfecting design. “With the graphics, we wanted to provide something Nepali and unique and associated with our culture, but also with a modern touch,” Shakyasays.

The new game, Jatra, is for children. The backdrop is the folklore of Gai Jatra, which features a sad queen. Depending on the card they draw, players need to perform different activities to cheer her up. They might be asked to create stories based on items on a card or to find objects on the vibrant board replete with diverse characters, people and animals.

“As children make stories and engage in activities through a fun game, it could really boost their creativity,” Shrestha says.

With the success of Samrajya, Kazi Studios has launched Kazi Fay, which is dedicated to games. It has also created the brand Atara (wonderful) which offers 17 high-end handicraft products inspired by elements of Nepali culture, like bookmarks based on Newari building etiquette and earrings shaped by damaru (traditional drum).

Beyond design, the company provides technical services in hardware, data visualisation, web design and the Internet of Things (IoT). After Samrajya was released, the company discovered that many Nepalis living abroad bought the game for their children, because it helped them connect with the mother country. “We found out that kids were asking their grandparents about ancient cities, about what jujur dhau (yogurt from Bhaktapur) and other cultural elements were,” Shakyasays.

So, even if you lose in Samrajya, it is a win-win.

Prakriti Randel
Nepali Times mailed itself a letter 6 weeks ago from a post office 15 minutes walk away in Kathmandu. It has not yet arrived.

Aashish Mishra

Six weeks ago, this newspaper mailed itself a registered letter from Nepal’s General Post Office (GPO) in Swayambhu to an address a 15-minute walk away. The letter has not yet arrived.

Walking the corridors of the GPO, it is hard to imagine why the system is failing.

Halls that were once busy with people mailing or collecting letters are quiet. The counters are mostly deserted. The iconic red, temple-shaped post boxes outside are hardly used.

People still enter the post office, but mostly to ask for directions or to buy stamps and seals or in need of books. Nepal’s GPO is a shadow of its former self.

In 2017, the GPO had total mail turnover of more than 10 million letters, with almost a 5% drop from 2016 and a 16% fall from 2015. That figure is expected to decline further in 2018, even as Nepal’s population and literacy expands.

“People are just not writing letters any more,” lamented Chief Postmaster Neel Prasad Brahmati, who has all the time in the world to chat with a visiting reporter. “People choose the ease and instantaneity of a text or a message over an old-fashioned letter. It has made post offices redundant.”

Mailing letters is not the only service the post office offers. It has parcel delivery, postal circulation of newspapers, domestic and foreign money orders, and even the EMS courier service, which ought not to have been so affected by digitalisation.

Yet, even there the numbers are rapidly declining. According to Dinesh Prasad Upadhyaya, Director of the Postal Services Department, business is falling because Nepal Post is not promoting itself. He says, “We face a serious lack of public trust. People believe that Nepal Post does not deliver their mail on time and that we lose or damage it.”

Indeed, this belief is not unfounded. Sunil Pahal, a member of the Rotary Club of Kathmandu, sent a package from the capital to Mexico City a little over a year ago thinking delivery would take a couple of weeks. It took four months. Pahal says he is switching to private courier services from now on even though they are more expensive.

Still, there are people like Naresh Banstola who use the post out of official compulsions. “The government still uses the post to mail official letters,” he explains while waiting at the counter one recent morning, “so, as a

How others countries saved their postal systems

Faced with a decline in the use of the postal service, countries have adapted their framework of post offices to modern needs. Japan has new providers banking and insurance services, and is the world’s largest financial institution with assets of $3.3 trillion, which is used to subsidise mail delivery services.

Australia’s postal system was also in similar decline but now offers private post offices in small towns to operate like franchises, with owners purchasing licences to provide official postal services. In India it’s online stores, hotels, offices, suppliers, coffee and tea. Australia Post has also partnered with banks to provide financial services in rural locations.

Closer to home, China’s Post Office has also branched out from mail and in today a bank, a life insurance corporation and a security and holdings company.

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SNAIL MAIL

Nepal Post is a shadow of its former self as people turn away from writing letters to using social messaging sites. Nepal Post’s annual loss in 2017 was Rs2.4 billion. Staff retention and low morale are problems—most employees feel the postal service will not survive. There is also the problem of insufficient budget. Bhattacharya says, “Every time we try to do something innovative, we face a problem of funds. If something is not done, there won’t be post offices anymore.”

At the Postal Services Department, director Upadhhyaya is equally dependent: “The government itself does not see a future in the postal service, and is reluctant to invest in it.”

One way to sustain the postal service would be to commercialize it so it can compete with private providers. A Ministry of Information task force recommended a slimmer bureaucracy, more autonomy from the government, and transformation of Nepal Post into a corporation.

Nepal Post is in a shadow of its former self as people turn away from writing letters to using social messaging sites. Watch Nepal Times post a registered letter to itself, which hadn’t arrived after six weeks. Join us on a trip inside the General Post Office in Sundhara.
Storytellers

The 110th edition of Storytellers will feature Sunando Sinha, Karuna Nair, Nandita, Navin Narain and Mamata Mahajan. It’s about what dipped changes in their lives in this story-sharing platform. For tickets: bit.ly/1FY1V3Q

Opening the Space

The opening of the new, renovated space at Koda 11 will feature a full day of fun and fusty activities like calligraphy customising of your old school dresses, opening of an area full of dust-bins, book exchange, tea and homemade cake, exhibition by Italian photographer Margherita Labia Armato and much more.

Puzzle Hunt

27 April 11:30-1pm, Koda 11, Kalka Bagh,凭什么， avoidance, 8005731212

Folk Music

The second episode of Nepal folk music. Songs will feature the groups Mumuda. Free invitations available at just upstairs Laskipt, KIC, Gamlakhet, Yamaha Music, Naresh. 27 April, 6-7pm, Empress Temple House, ghati, kathmandu, 8009114190

Sunday Social

A mix of young Sunday evening with a mix. House and police music by anishkhali. 28 April, 4-8pm, Director, Main market, Kathmandu, 8008464013

Blood Donation

Huma Lalbari, who is working for an efficient blood management system in Nepal, will join a special blood drive for this mother’s day in partnership with Tansen Manipuri hospital.

28 April, 11am-2pm, lab in the school, Hospital, Hamro Jeevan phone, for details: 800106281, 9817181204, 8007197102

Canadian Film

On the occasion of Canada’s National Film Day, Canadian moose, Moselwell, performed in Kathmandu. The movie is inspired by the true story of pastor Bruce Leach, who battles an uncertainty to become a celebrated pianist.

27 April, Film Development Board, Chabini, 8004751330

Start-up Huddle

A monthly workshop where start-ups get live presentations about their ideas and engage in a QA session. An opportunity for you to learn about some great startups as we meet startup leaders. More about: www.chabini.com, 8004453638, events@chabini.com

30 April, 5pm, Trongsa Museum, junag Regency, Bhaktapur

Board of Harmony

Board of Harmony, a deprived music institution, invites original songs and poems performed with three personal touch. An audience distributed in Kathmandu. Board of Harmony is travelling the world to bring music and show more music.

28 April, 9-11.30am, Tansen, Nepal

Paleti Series

A collection of Chaitnya (Nepali poems) recited to the music of Avishwa Khaits. Featuring reciters of works by nationally renowned poets.

28 April, 1pm, Tansen, Nepal Museum, Chaitanya Regency, Bhaktapur

Getaway

Buridaha Maya Garden Hotel

Wake up to the sounds of birds in the morning and relax in the beautiful garden. The rooms are comfortable and well managed. A major bonus is the Maya Devi Temple is within walking distance from the hotel.

Lumbini, (980) 7947245, 8000700717

Borderline Eco Resort

Enveloped in the natural Himalayan splendor, the resort is located a mere three hours north of Kathmandu. A quick getaway to wild nature – celebrate the weekend with its amenities. 

Borderline (Ex Adventure Resort, Sindupalchok) (5) 8418425, 8007957117

Shangri-La Village Resort

The resort offers beautiful, spacious rooms and a gorgeous garden where you can relax and enjoy complete serenity. Enjoy shopping in the local market, tasting the local cuisine, and the restaurant’s variety of dishes to complement your stay.

Chorten, Patha (981) 6022233

The Old Inn

This 360-once hotel is located in the quiet and brick Newar townhouse in traditional design, overlooking a serene, traffic-free Bauza. The hotel offers a free breakfast, bicycle rental, and the restaurant’s variety of dishes to complement your stay.

Chorten, Kathmandu (981) 6021801

Chhaimeale Village Resort

Adorned with your theme, the Resort is an ideal destination for anyone seeking to escape the madness of Kathmandu city. Chhaimeale (981) 6067197

Music

KatJazz International Festival

Don’t miss the last blast and exiting performances that will close out the KatJazz festival. April 30, Aarshottam Jazz, Conrad, kathmandu, 8005455454

Highlight:

A live concert by Wij Opione Students, Sinamannya, 27 April, 10-11pm, Jodia Hotel & Spa, Basantapur, Switzerland, 8006714070

Taza

Serving glasses full of Middle Eastern delights, this restaurant is known for its signature flavors and it’s allure. You will always bring back for more. The Syrian owner and chef serves delicious Middle Eastern food, such as falafel and shawarma. worldclass, tazalounge, 8006407900

Punj Tatka festival

A festival of colorful Punjabi bunr that is rich, creamy and made with the finest ingredients. Learn this festival in one of the best restaurants for Indian cuisine in Kathmandu. Dine with Mr. Mohan and his staff, Heemans santa, Kumar, 8005563357

Muse Bestobar

A multi-service restaurant and bar with a sophisticated modern interior, providing a complete family environment.

Uttarkhet, Lamjung, 8004103333

Achaar Ghar

Translating to “House of Pickles” in English, Achaar Ghar is special because of its pickles produced under the proprietorship of the “pickle lady of Nepal,” Nalini Bhatti. It serves delicious homemade pickles along with the season, for an authentic Nepali taste.

From 8am, Darjeeling, 8007541952

The Bent Fork

This European style restaurant offers the best salads and selection of continental dishes. Try their signature “Red Chicken Burger” or Beef burger. Enjoy easy evenings with family and friends.

Bhaktapur, 8009468888

Getaway

Kathmandu, 19 - 25 April

Air Quality Index

Kathmandu's air quality has been recorded periodically at the Red School’s yard. These are daily averages, which means that the Air Quality Index (AQI) during that 24-hour period, in a 12-month period, is also a daily average. As an example, if the average was measured from 6:00 am to 6:00 am, the average is a daily average. If the average was measured from 6:00 am to 6:00 am, the average is a daily average.

Anita Tuladhar was born in 1956 in Biratnagar, and published her first book in a short span of 12 years: Phul (Phul, 1977), Anita Sutradhar (Prithvi 1978), Sayon Gurung (Gold Golph, 1983), and Annapurna (Shenasi, 1989). But none of her books are found in shops. They appear on the shelf just by word of mouth. She is one of the rare authors whose work is distributed through word of mouth.

Anita Tuladhar wrote with fear, love, and sensitivity. She wrote with the desire to say something through her stories, but also with the desire to tell her stories. She wrote with the desire to share her experiences, her joys, and her sorrows. She wrote with the desire to touch people’s hearts, to make them laugh, to make them cry. She wrote with the desire to become part of the human experience, to connect with others, to feel understood.

In this month’s Lightroom Conversation, Anita Tuladhar and Muna Gurung talk about the craft of writing small stories, the politics of publishing books, darknesses, and how to come out of them.

**STORYTELLER:** Anita Tuladhar today (above) with her mother (off).

Nepali Times: At exactly 5 AM, we had to be woken in front of our house in the darkness to get to the school. We were never one minute late. BA would not come to your room, and if we were late, we would have to run to catch the bus. This tyrannical rule applied to me too — at 5:00 AM, she had to bring tea for all of us. It was complete military rule.

Muna Gurung: He was an army man!

A: No, he worked for Nepal Bank, and they gave us a house in New Road. We were in a house we were not schooled in, and when I finally went to school, I was enrolled directly into fourth grade at Kantil School. My father thought he would be harder for me, so he sent me to school. At that time, I was my brothers who failed seven times, I never failed a single class. After BLC, BA told me I was old enough to decide what I wanted to do. With some friends I enrolled in studies to become a teacher in New Road, and then I was married.

M: That is so open-minded of him. Usually parents tell you what you ought to study, do, be. Also, don’t confuse being interested in studying, but he never liked that later in life I became a mini professor of ANA that I would just take up a regular office job. My Ma, on the other hand, could not read and write, but she loved literature. She accompanied me to most of my readings and workshops. She even wrote tell your stories like sisters or friends. She married us to BA when she was 16 and by the time she was 18, she was born, so age difference was not that much. Your father must have read some of your work.

A: Not a single word. I guess he was not interested. He never praised me, but he also never discouraged me. I quickly continued writing. I was the first person in my family to study Nepal. BA thought it would be hard for me, but Nepal was not our language. We do not speak it at home. But I loved the Nepal language. Maybe it was because I was raised to write in Nepali that I always felt closer to it. But there was something about writing that drew you towards it.

A: In 7th or 8th grade, I wrote a poem about nature, hills, mountains. And when I was in Padma Khan, I began to write about people and places, these poems became little protests. Every Friday there was a literary program and I would recite poems. On campus, there was also a literary journal called Khatru. It was there, I published my first story. Amar Maiti Ko Dhoko (My Heart’s Desire). But that feeling that I can and should write, that what I am writing is important and true, came from one person: Hei Bhakta Khatru.

He had come from Assam looking for a job, so I took note. Bobo Jedka was the principal from him; she asked me to come to her office because someone wanted to see me. When I walked in, there was a man in her office with disheveled hair, crazy eyes, and I think he was staring when she spoke. I thought he was drunk, and I was a little afraid. Turned out it was Khatru dal, who had read my story in Khatru and had come to tell me that I should continue to write. It is the biggest boost I have ever received. A well-established writer had travelled long distances just to tell me that I was doing the right thing. It fueled me.

M: You felt seen.

A: Exactly. Later I sent my work to Madhuparka, Rupakathaa and other magazines and newspapers. Once these stories appeared in many places, they told me to create a collection — that was wahasaha Stairway come out. The day I graduated from Padma Khan, I was also the day I got married to a boy from another Tuladhar family.

M: How convenient, didn’t you have to change your last name?

A: (Laughter). Or religion. But it was hard at the beginning.

Tuladhars were mostly merchants and travelled to Lhasa for trade. I guess one did not need to be too educated to run a business. My husband’s family was not well off, but it was the only one in his family that was educated.

M: Your husband or his family never stopped you from writing.

A: My mother-in-law was the kindest person and my husband’s brothers ran a printing press in Nepal. I knew that it was Katwal dal, and other writers such as Upendra Ghimire, Ashok Malhi and Bishnu Bhatt Giwre came together. I got published.

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M: They are like flash fiction, or micro stories?

A: Yes. You had to learn how to write this kind of story. I didn’t understand the format before. I thought a short story was a summary of a longer story, but such stories are complete and whole. It is a story that may be small in format but stand independent on its own. It is very difficult to write one.

M: This reminds me of the well-travelled quote that has been attributed to many writers. It goes something like, ‘I’m sorry this joke is so long, I didn’t have time to write a short one.’

A: I think it is easier to write something short. It might be easier for the reader to consume, but it is much harder for the writer to create. But I also think these small formats been with writing skills, like magic. It just takes a certain kind of person with a certain kind of audacity to want to write, to be able to write.

M: I want to close our conversation by asking you to share with us your greatest regret? Your greatest joy?

A: Two regrets: I wish I had learned how to use a computer, and also how to ride a motorcycle. Today, I would have been able to type my own stories and send them out.

As for the motorcycle, I would be able to go wherever I want to go without depending on my son, or my daughter-in-law. As for joy, plants bring me the most joy. Do you know that I have 600 plants in this house? And I especially love lavender.

M: What do you love about it?

A: Like writing, it is an art form. There are many rules to follow—one has to identify the face of the tree, the back of the tree, how the branches move, which way to move them. You have to remember which part is back and front, left and right. We planted the tree, but I do not do that. It will hurt the tree. My only sin is to turn a big tree into a small tree.

M: Just like you turn big stories into small ones?

A: (Laughter). I never thought about it that way. But yes, I guess that is what I do.

Lightroom Conversation is a monthly page in Nepali Times on interesting figures in Nepal’s literary scene. A longer version of this article is available online. The previous guest ‘keepers’ guests were Dursy Gayen and Myag Shrestha. Muna Gurung is a writer, educator and translator, writer for more of her work, visit mungurung.com.

Phul when light reaches the vegetable.

But it does not touch, colours of anger and shades of dark jewels.

Why don’t you do it? It does not mean you have to be alone or do it at night. The beauty you create, in its own right, can bring beauty and joy in how you write about the flowers, plants, nature.

You are working on two books. Have your writing process changed from your last book that came out 30 years ago?

A: All my stories are still inspired by real life events, things I have seen, experienced, or things people have told me, or a line or two I have heard while writing for a radio show. Once I catch a glimpse of an idea, a sentence, I build a plot. After that, I just polish it. To me, I finish all my stories in one sitting, but even if I have to go open the door, answer the phone, come back for my family. The story just sits and simmers in me and I come to it to get back to the page to continue it.

M: Do you think that writing can be learned?

A: It is useless to try to touch writing or go somewhere to learn how to write. If people ask me to teach them, I want to know what they want to say? Do I tell them to write what me? Or should I tell them to write like Parajit? I do not think writing can be taught. Do you write the way the teacher wants you to, or the way you want to? It is such a personal pursuit. But I also do not think writers are

ANITA TULADHAR

In this month’s Lightroom Conversation, Anita Tuladhar and Muna Gurung talk about the craft of writing small stories, the politics of publishing books, darknesses, and how to come out of them.
US–Nepali art

Under the US Department of State’s Art in Embassies (AIE) program, American ambassadors are loaned art works to display at their premises and residences as part of their country’s cultural diplomacy. This includes US Ambassador to Nepal, Randy Berry, who had a broad range of choices and decided to display his predecessor’s by including works by American artists of Nepali origin and from his own collection. No surprise, then, that the official residence of the US ambassador at Kamal Kunj in Kathmandu now looks like an art gallery.

“I have always had one foot planted firmly in Nepal because of my previous tenure in Kathmandu,” Berry told a gathering on Tuesday. “This is a collection of art from Nepal and the US that resonates with me.”

Among the works by American artists, Berry is most attached to a landscape of distant mountains of Colorado painted from the back porch of his house. But his favourite is an impressionist work, Gaeth in the Footstall, by Birger Sandzen.

The embassy collection also includes two works of art by a father-son, master-student, Nepali-American duo. Urgyen Dorje’s classic thangka done in 1988 hangs on one wall, while opposite it is his son Ang Tsering Sherpa’s impressionistic take on traditional Tibetan-Nepali art. Ang Tsering [left with Berry] learnt thangka techniques from his father, but after attending art school in the US he started experimenting with more modern forms of expression that challenged the pre-determined style of devotional art. Now an American citizen, Ang Tsering still carries with him the artistic influence of his childhood in Nepal.

Two other items in the collection also show a cross-pollination of US-Nepali art: this is a shiny copper Bhati by Rabindra Shaky, and on the facing wall is a modern take on the technique done by his American art student, Maureen Tindal.

Also on display is a replica of an Avadhutsala statue stolen from Patan in the 8th century, which Berry says is included to draw attention to the stolen relics of Nepal that “need to come back home.”

The public-private partnership Art in Embassies program strives to create cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding through the visual arts and artist exchanges. The program sponsors and presents roughly 60 exhibitions a year and has installed over 70 permanent art collections in the State Department’s diplomatic facilities in over 100 countries.

Sona Awale

TAKING IN THE DETAILS: Prime Minister KP Oli andbstmailto:OF Nato Recomnissioner Secretary Staf-132; on Thursday explored the progress in the restoration of Tripura Sundari Temple in Tripura on Thursday. The temple was damaged in the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

OPEN SPACE: People from various walks of life participate in a rally on Thursday to protest the construction of a bus park in Kathmandu.

ON THE WATCH: Nepali Army female UN peacekeepers provide security for visiting Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in the town of Yei.

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In 2014, Nepal’s 240-year monarchy came to an end. Citizens could be elected to lead the country. But today, there is no difference between how past kings and current presidents behave. The President moves around with the same motorcade as the kings used to.

Policie chief Basanta Kumar Panta says traffic arrangements for the movement of the President simply reflect respect for the office. It is only on certain days that such special arrangements are made and they also respect security concerns,” he said.

Adding that such measures are common in other countries as well. A VIP motorcade requires diverting traffic from certain roads, but Panta said the intention is to minimize inconvenience to commuters.

He added that the arrangements cannot be changed by any one person because they are stipulated by law, and were handed down from the royal days. He disclosed that since the security guidelines are being modified, the new political reality could be reflected in the rules.

There is growing and widespread criticism of Nepal’s leaders, especially the Prime Minister and the President, for the perks that they enjoy and their public display of power and luxury. While survivors of the earthquake still don’t have adequate housing, the President has bought an expensive new helicopter, worth tens of millions and other facilities that would put even the spending spree of kings to shame.

President Bidhya Bhandari has been criticized for not making funds but just chasing a narrative, with critics noting the behaviour has headed back to royal times. However, even though the President is criticized for her facilities, it is the Prime Minister who has been more harshly criticized for his use of power and has been compared to Nepal’s former kings. A Prime Minister who should be promoting the political rights and wellbeing of all citizens is squeezing civic rights and press freedom, and taking decisions on army deployment – including the direction in which his administration is headed.

Nepal’s republic is being mocked by leaders who surround themselves with unnecessary security forces and facilities that the country can ill afford. Analysts point out that this culture on the lack of democracy in political parties, which allow leaders to behave like they are from another planet. Nepal Community Party spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha admits that although the political system in Nepal changed, the norms and values of politicians did not.

“In this scenario, it needs a transformation of the mindset. Our political revolution should have been followed by a complete change in the culture,” he added.

“The fear of reprisal within the party has silenced those who want change.”

**Why VIP movement torments citizens**
Sangita Magar: from

Animesh Shrestha

Four years after surviving an acid attack, and following 17 surgical procedures on her face, Sangita Magar and her family are re-traumalised by the pending arrest from jail of her attacker Jwan K K.

When K K was arrested days after the acid attack on his neighbour Sangita, then a high-school student, he threatened to kill the family after serving his sentence. Says Sangita’s mother Chameil Magar: “We take it they have killed him. He is powerful and could do it again.”

In 2015, Sangita Magar was 16, taking tutorials for her high school exam and dreaming of one day making it to Nepal’s national karate team. She was happy, had many friends, did well in school and wanted to become a doctor.

Those sunny days are reflected in Sangita’s small bedroom. On the blue wall is a framed photograph of a young girl posing with her art-clad mother. Several medals for winning karate championships hang between two flags of Nepal. On the bedside table sit various shades of nail polish, and beside them is a birthday greeting card urging the receiver to “appreciate the moments that have filled your life with laughter and joy”. Sangita and her friend Sima Bhandari were at a tuition centre in the Basantapur neighbourhood of Kathmandu when a boy in a hoodie entered the room, splashed a fiery liquid on them and fled.

Sangita first thought someone had thrown a balloon filled with hot water at her, but she felt her face, hands and body burn. Instinctively, she rushed out into the street and ran all the way home to her mother.

When she arrived, her skin was peeling off, and Sangita was screaming in pain. Chameil Magar poured water on her daughter, and with the help of neighbours rushed her to Bir Hospital. That is all Sangita remembers of the day.

Due to her critical condition, Sangita was referred to KMC Hospital, where doctors managed to save her life but not her face. After many surgical procedures in the past four years, despite bouts of depression and fear of

THE DAS SISTERS

It has been eight months since the rainy night when a neighbour splashed acid on the Das sisters as they slept in their home in Chandrapur of Sunsari.

Sambhava Das, 18, had burns to 30% of her body and was rushed to a hospital in Kathmandu, where she died an agonising death 12 days later. Her sister Sushmita, 16, survived but wears high-necked, full-sleeve clothes to hide the burn scars.

“I miss my sister a lot. I don’t want to go back to my village: there are too many bad memories and the same old questions that I am not ready for from people,” says Sushmita softly while waiting for a surgeon’s appointment (right).

She now lives with her aunt in Kathmandu because her mother is separated from her father and works in Malaysia.

It was Sambhava’s testimony from her hospital bed that led to the arrest of the family’s neighbour, Rambabu Pauwani, who she said used to stalk and repeatedly proposition her.

After the attack, Pauwani had helped the sisters’ father move the girls to Kathmandu for treatment. At the hospital he even told Nepal Times (right) that the girls “are like daughters to me”. It was all an act.

Pauwani is now behind bars in Rastahat Jail. Government lawyer Khadindra Raj Katwal, who has been handling the case, said that paperwork is taking time but added: “Pauwani will be in jail for life as this case is being tried as a murder.”

Sushmita is in Grade 8 at a Kathmandu school, and is hoping for a better life and future.

Manika Deupala
survivor to champion

... but brave acid survivor now dreads her attacker's release from prison

The Interrogation

T he acid attack on Sangita Magar was all over the news that week in February 2015. I used to live near the Major’s residence, and knew her family, so followed the news with interest. One morning after the attack, I received a call from Noor Ephraim, 

I felt a chill run down my spine since I had done nothing wrong, and wondered how the police treated her. They wasted time to talk to a man a few calls before releasing her. When I arrived, many other people were already in queue, all yelling to not let her go. The police seemed to know who had called me. I held them in my hands when I asked a cop who lived in the neighborhood where the attack occurred, asking me up to get my high school diploma. She shrugged, “but he got out of the house even before being questioned. It was too late, when they talked down to him, and he arrested him.”

Acid is a weapon

Acid attacker

Burning Violence: Survivors (BVS) Nepal has been helping an average of 40 patients with burns caused by fire and acid every year. Many are burnt for years for not providing enough dowry, but the organization has also been helping victims (usually young women) who have been subjected to acid attacks by their husbands and sisters-in-law. The attacks are mostly to prevent the victims from marrying by burning through the skin into the muscles and bones. The healing process is also longer for survivors burned by fire, and acid attacks survivors need expensive medical care. www.bsnpal.org

A BURNING SENSATION

Watch Sangita Magar and her mother Chameli speak about the horrific acid attack on the girl who physically survived the attack and went on to become a champion. Chameli says the attack made her daughter's life better, as she learned to write and to become strong. Sangita has studied and worked hard since her injury to become a leader in the fight against acid attacks.

nepaltimes.com
Kathmandu is bursting at the seams, there is almost no room left to move. A lesson from the 2015 earthquake was that survivors need open spaces for shelter and safety. Tundikhel housed tens of thousands and other green areas served as open-air shelters for months.

But in the four years since, the Valley’s open spaces have shrunk further. The Nepal Army has fenced off Tundikhel, and construction material is dumped on what is left. On Thursday, hundreds of activists staged a protest to ‘re-open the Open Air Theatre’ because the Municipality had allowed it to be turned into a parking lot.

Kathmandu’s air pollution is made worse by the loss of its green lungs. The earthquake was a wake-up call, but it did not reset anyone at the Municipality. The demand for real estate, soaring property prices, and collusion between the land mafia and local officials means the last open spaces—owned by government schools, community parks and gothi—are being sold off. When the Prime Minister’s residence at Baluwatar needed expansion, it found an adjacent government plot was already sold to individuals, including NPC General Secretary Rajhu Paudel.

Disaster management agencies have identified 83 open areas as refuges during future earthquakes, but they are also needed to make the city greener and to foster community interaction.

The national government has bungled, and elected municipalities have failed to improve the quality of urban life. It is now up to local communities and neighbourhoods to rally and protect their own open spaces. Namnyachaur in Naxal was upgraded by residents, proving that urban renewal by restoring parks is possible.

Activism to stop open spaces from being built up is gaining strength; public pressure can force the Municipality to act to save what is left.