Culture revolution

Foreigners are often puzzled why Nepalis never take to the streets despite the chronic failure of the government to provide basic services. It is true, Nepalis are a tolerant lot. But this week, something snapped.

Citizens have been gathering on the streets, waving water cannons and tear gas to oppose a bill in Parliament that would dismantle the centuries-old tradition of guthi/community trusts to manage religious sites and festivals.

Coming soon after the Media Council Bill, and detention by police of a YouTuber for posting a satirical review of a bad movie, the slew of recent street protests reflects growing disillusionment with and defiance of a powerful Nepal Communist Party (NCP) government that is perceived to be corrupt to the core and uncaring of the public interest.

In the past months, citizens of Chhapari, Baudaha and Thali have spontaneously risen up to blockade roads, demanding that they be repaired. Journalists took to the streets last month to protest provisions in the draft Media Council Bill that could lay hefty fines on journalists found to be violating officials guidelines.

But the most organised protests so far have been against the Guthi Bill, and clips of Police attacking demonstrators with batons, kicks and water cannons have gone viral on the very media that the government seems intent on controlling.

There are more than 2,000 guthis all over Nepal, and they collectively own nearly 150,000 hectares of prime real estate. The management of such entities is traditionally passed down from one generation to the next.

The Guthi Bill would create a central government authority to manage community trusts all over the country. It would have more executive powers than Guthi Sansthan, the current body that oversees trusts. Guthi members and heritage conservationists say the government is working with the land mafia to take over Guthi property.

"The government doesn’t understand how the guthi system works," said activist Alok Tuladhar, "We just want to uncurt the land. The government’s intention is total control, not just the guthis, but also free speech and other rights enshrined in the Constitution."

The protests that began on 9 June have snowballed with more groups and activists joining in. In Parliament, the opposition Nepal Congress hailed proceedings on Tuesday, calling for the bill to be scrapped.

Minister for Land Management and Cooperatives Fedha Kumar Aryal defended the Bill in Parliament, saying it was intended to bring uniformity to guthi administration in order to protect heritage and culture. He says many trusts do not keep proper accounts and are not answerable to anyone.

Minister for Home Affairs Ram Baburam Thapa said the government accepted moral responsibility for the street violence, and promised to investigate. But protests escalated Thursday with a large demonstration in Kathmandu's Mangal Bazar (pictured above). 

Sewa Bhattarai

SAY CHEESE

Yak Blue cheese from Ramechhap bags a prestigious gold medal at a cheese media in France. PAGE 5

Unparalleled luxury. Incredible savings

Enjoy an unforgettable journey with our exclusive premium offer.

Save up to 25% in premium

Book by 15 June for travel until 31 December 2019.

qatarairways.com

Contact our Qatar Airways sales office at 977 1444624 or your preferred travel agency.

Terms and conditions apply. Please review them as the time of booking.

INSIDE
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

A 10-year ago article by Patrick Po in Nepal Times (issue #555, dated 12-18 June 1999) talked about the potential of the region. Excerpt:

"Since they resigned from government, the Maoists have tried to play an anti-Indian role. But leaders now admit there is no alternative but to negotiate with India."

"We made mistakes in handling trade," confessed one Maoist secretarial member. "But I also can't deny that we are the most powerful party here."

Ahead of a political meeting today, the Maoists will have to face crucial decisions about their future. It's getting to be too easy to label this new breed as a rival sect that doesn't want the mainstream to exist."

**ONLINE PACKAGES**

**WHATS TRENDING**

**Buddhist relics in Western Nepal by Tara Pradhan**

The Kathmandu Valley is being discovered 10 years ago by tourists and pilgrims from across the world. What are the secrets of the 1,000-year-old empire it is now? Find out in this article that was widely shared on social media.

Most read and shared on Facebook

**Drones battle TB by Tara Pradhan**

11 Nepalis die every day from tuberculosis for lack of access to effective treatment. Drones are now being used for the first time to deliver oxygen supplies and medicines to 16 patients in remote mountain ranges of Butwal, central Nepal. Watch the video with Dr. Pushpa Subedi at times.com.

Most popular on Twitter

**Prabhakar Rana, 84, dies**

Prabhakar Rana stood out as a beacon of the Himalayan belief, dreaming and dreaming in public life. He passed away on 21 May 2009. Here is a summary of his life as a writer, business and social activist. Read this new brief on the 16th.

Most commented

**Aquaculture**

Nepalese were interested to learn about a new method that is a reliable, resource and labor-saving method. Aquaculture could help Nepal to improve agricultural productivity and income through reducing manpower and inputs. More on our website.

Most visited online page

**QUOTE TWEETS**


"We must act on climate change now. The government is irresponsible. Kathmandu is a city of 1 million people. It is a problem and we need to act now." — Michaela A (Michaela) (Michaela)

*Weekly times Full #963*

*Weekly times Full #964*

*Weekly times Full #965*

*6. Why did the government issue such a daring directive to the examiners?*

'Total votes: 119'

"Yes: 216%
No: 0%
Can't tell: 0%"
DISCOVER MORE: NEW YORK

with the airline that flies to more countries than any other
Firing up Nepal’s democracy

Announcing election dates would focus the minds of politicians on the fact that voters are watching

Nepal’s Parliament has just voted to gift each of its members Rs60 million to ‘do development’ in their constituencies. Now that official profligacy has been sanctioned by the federal legislature, all we citizens can do is follow the money and keep track of where it is spent.

On the bright side, this gives us an opportunity to gauge the impact of our tax revenues so we can vote properly in the upcoming election by rewarding those who perform and punishing those who don’t. Rs60 million per year can and will buy a lot of votes, but doing good work should also get good candidates elected. That’s what democracy should mean.

Like the joke goes: one day a jet plane and a rocket had a conversation. The plane wanted to know why it had to run down a long runway to pick up speed and finally take off, while the rocket was able to shoot straight up into space. The rocket told the jet: “You will know when you light a fire under you.” We need to make our politicians feel the heat.

A better Nepal is possible if we can build our politicians and their political parties accountable, and vote them out at election time if they are not. We need to build trust in the system, and continue to believe that prosperity is possible through the people we elect.

Turnout in Nepal’s elections has always been high, but there is a sense of disillusionment and many see already saying that they will not vote again, because it seems to make no difference. The Election Commission has its work cut out. It could start by announcing the date for the next elections for all three levels of government, which are scheduled for some time in 2022: that would focus the minds of our politicians like nothing else.

A firm date for elections would give political parties enough time to democratise themselves. They need to carry out, submit and publish their annual audit reports as all Nepali organisations are required to do. We need to know the sources of the parties’ income and how they spend the money.

They may also need time to pass a new law on how a Nepali political party should be governed and managed. A section of social media is encouraging people to launch political parties rather than invest in a business because they can prosper quicker.

Then there is the issue of the declaration of assets and property by candidates. All holders of public positions are required to declare their wealth. Announcing the election dates now will give the government, voters and the police time to verify this information so hopefully we can file their candidacy.

The office of the auditor general will need every accountant or chartered accountant to help check the financial history of the candidates, their partners and their businesses. Many will need to be credited in the process.

We know there have been new Election Commissioners who need to show that they are honest. He cannot be seen as a former bureaucrat just taking notes and orders from politicians. He is in a position to ensure that Nepal has a real chance at electing good people and if he does so, history will remember him.

Mark Twain once said that if elections could change anything, those in power would never allow us to vote. We have to prove Uncle Mark wrong. We have to send out the message that honest, hard working, skilled and results-oriented politicians and parties can govern this country. Medicorruption has to be replaced by excellence.

Nepal’s democracy will only thrive if the opposition plays its part. But the opposition is feeble, usually seen to be indifferent and perhaps even colluding with the powers that be. Announcing firm election dates will help light that critical fire under their bottoms and hopefully propel them into action. So many scandals, so many corruptive cases, so much mismanagement, so much poverty, so much out migration of the young, and the opposition seems to not see or care.

We say the opposition to oppose and we are not getting value for our money. Democracy is not cheap and every rupee that goes to keep it alive is money diverted away from more critical services for the people.

It is the opposition’s job to focus on elections that seems to bring out the best in people’s intentions. We prove that the next round of votes will make a positive difference in the life of the average citizen. The rulers and opposition must engage the government in a debate of ideas and options so voters are er to be become irrelevant in our young republic.

Anil Chitrakar is President of Sajha Party. 70 fall to the naturally column in Nepali Times.
Sheilin Teo

French cheesemaker and his team have put Nepal on the world cheese map with their prize-winning Yak Blue.

They did not just win a gold medal at the fourth Mondial de l’Fromage et des Produits Laitiers in France’s Loire Valley – it was a Super Gold Medal that Francois Driard won for the cheese from the mountains of Ramechhap district.

Hold over three days this month, the fair featured over 953 cheeses from 48 countries, and drew nearly 5,000 industry professionals to the historic city of Tours.

Driard is a familiar face of farmer’s markets in Kathmandu, which he has helped set up over the dozen years he has been in Nepal to bring producers and buyers together.

When he launched his cheese adventure in Nepal, Driard began with a Tommo, which was easy to make as it has a short maturing time and a reliable outcome. However, Driard’s cheese repertoire expanded as his customer base grew hungry for more variety. Now his business, Himalayan French Cheese, boasts 20 varieties of cheese made from cow, buffalo and yak milk.

“With this win, it means that now when I talk about Nepal cheese abroad, I can actually have this medal to be proud of, and it gives me recognition,” Driard says.

The Yak Blue is a new cheese, designed and created only last year and not regularly offered in the market. “But with the medal I don’t have a choice – I will have to make it more available,” Driard says, chuckling.

The Yak Blue came on the back of his efforts to create a mild blue cheese from cow’s milk, which was the response to the strong Danish blues being imported to Nepal.

Blue is a strong cheese and it is not to everyone’s taste. So I started making a mild cow’s blue, which I call BlueKrish,” Driard makes.

It was difficult because blue cheese requires colder temperatures for maturation than other cheeses, but by a stroke of luck Driard had a yak cheese factory in Soltang of Ramechhap, whose elevation is so high that it is naturally cold and ideal for blue.

The cheese maker says the most thrilling aspect of winning the medal for Driard is that the winning entry is made from yak milk, which is underappreciated in the cheese industry.

“We couldn’t make the Yak Blue without yak milk, so the medal is a validation of a product that is available only in certain parts of the world, Nepal being one of them,” he explains.

Yaks graze at up to 5,000m, and during the cheese production window between March and November they are not fed anything but wild grass and flowers, giving their milk a very Nepali territo.

A yak produces only up to 1.5 litres of milk a day, so the goodness of the Himalayan alpine is concentrated in the milk, giving the cheese its richness.

The farm in Ramechhap is providing local jobs, and yak herders who had migrated to the Gulf are returning because of the demand for Himalayan cheese.

Driard believes Nepal can provide organic premium food to the rest of Asia, and hopes that the country becomes synonymous with premium products like organic coffee, honey, vegetables, cheese and meat.

“From Shanghai to Singapore, from Bangkok to Hong Kong, people should know that Nepal’s pristine environment can provide very high, premium quality products,” says Driard. One major hurdle, he points out, is that dairy products from Nepal are banned in the EU because the country is on the red list for foot-and-mouth disease.

The government could easily get Nepal off the list by lobbying. If that happens, Nepali dairy products like Chhurpi dog cheese, cheeses, milk and yoghurt could have access to the EU market.

But for now, Driard is preparing his next batch of Yak Blue, which should be ready in two weeks.

Nepal’s yak cheese is on world map

Yak Blue from Ramechhap awarded Super Gold Medal at French cheese mela

SAY CHEESE: Nepal’s award-winning Yak Blue cheese from Ramechhap at the competition this month in Tours, France. Francois Driard, the French cheesemaker celebrating after the win.
Sewa Bhattarai

Until she was 48, Tika Kumari Karki had never travelled alone. Then she heard of a unique project that is trying to encourage and empower women by giving them travel grants.

Karki got her daughter to fill out the application form for Solo Woman Travel Challenge (Sewa-Yatra), and was selected from among 500 applicants. Last year, the Solukhumbu resident completed a two-week tour of the eastern-most districts of Nepal on her own.

"Women don’t go out so easily in our society. So, if older women like me can do this, it will encourage younger ones to travel and become more confident," says Karki.

The challenge was set up by Nepali Travellers in 2015 and has so far helped 42 women like Karki tour different parts of the country. Applicants have chosen a variety of destinations, from popular treks like the Annapurna Circuit to more adventurous destinations like Dolpa and Upper Mustang.

"There are many ways to empower women, whether through protests or changes in the education system and laws. But since we are travellers ourselves, we thought travelling would be the best way to go about it," explains Pemba Sherpa, co-founder of Nepali Travellers. "Travel has no bias, has no other agenda, and through it you learn and grow."

The idea was born at the spot of the moment four years ago during protests against an acid attack. Sherpa says the challenge is not just about feminism: "Travel can be adapted to anything. If writers travel maybe they will write poetry, if a woman travels it becomes a woman’s movement."

But in its first year, the challenge was far from a movement. Nepali Travellers put out a call on social media, and selected only one woman as an expert, giving her Rs30,000 to embark on a trip to western Nepal.

Things are better organised now. A call goes out for applications, those selected upload photos to Facebook for voting. Last year, there were 500 applicants and those who got more than 3,000 online votes had to pay for an adventure. An average of 12 women are selected every year, based on their itineraries and level of preparation.

“We get a lot of applications for popular treks, but now we are trying to prioritise more unique destinations. Maybe those who want to do cultural exploration, or go somewhere where there are no trails at all," says Shriyal Shrestha who administers the challenge.

After being selected, the women are given training and resources. “They helped me refine my itinerary and book hotels and lodges every day so that I was not stranded. We were also given safety, self- defence and wilderness training, which was very helpful,” says Anugya Pradhan, 20, who explored remote Nar Phu village in Manang and on to Tillopo in 2017.

Participants agree the solo travelling has helped them in later trips and inspired confidence. In fact, it is also the other way around, people along the way were initially surprised to see women travelling alone, but eventually supported them.

"In the end, it’s about the freedom you feel and the challenges you conquer, and your confidence in making decisions for yourself. It’s also a way to prove that women can do it. I found out that it’s not as challenging as society makes it out to be, so why should we deprive ourselves the opportunity to travel?" says Poona Kijal, 23, who walked for more than a month to Everest Base Camp from her home in Bhaktapur last year.

Nepali Travellers hope that the Sewa-Yatra (‘self-travel’ in Nepali) initiative will encourage more people to travel. Says Pemba Sherpa: "In Nepal, we are ignored by the hospitality industry, while abroad we have visa and passport issues. We want to take steps towards changing these perceptions and establish Nepal as travellers worldwide."
Pooja Rijal, 23

Destination: Swiss Base Camp, on foot from Kathmandu

Best memories of travel: When I was hungry, tired and resting at a roadside, an old lady climbed up a gaura tree, plucked some guava and gave them to me. So many people invited me home and hosted me along the way because they were surprised to see a lone Nepali woman trekking.

Worst memories of travel: I realized too late that I did not take enough water with me. I was lucky to borrow some, otherwise I would have fallen on the ice.

Thoughts on solo travel: You learn to make your own decisions, so you should go. But also remember that it’s not going to be easy, so do your research before you leave. This is me on Gokyo Ri with Mt Everest at my back.

Anugya Pradhani, 20

Destination: Nar Phu Valley and Tilicho

Best memories of travel: City life is always noisy, but outside of Kathmandu it is different. Going on at its own pace. You feel light, there is a chance to get away from duties and responsibilities and also to inspire others to take on challenges.

Worst memories of travel: As a solo traveler, it is often difficult to get beds and rooms, which are designed for couples and groups, especially in peak season when it’s crowded.

Thoughts on solo travel: You have to figure out who to talk to and who to talk. Also, you get to meet a lot of people you would never meet in daily life, so that broadens your perspective.

Eka Kumari Karki, 49

Destination: Eastern Nepal

Best memories of travel: I saw the tea gardens of Ilam and the Shala weaving industries of Fanching. I found out the distinct identity of each district in eastern Nepal. I set out during the 16-day campaign against violence against women in December, and covered almost 15 districts.

Worst memories of travel: Some people assumed I was traveling alone because I did not have good relations with my family. People still are not used to the idea of women traveling alone.

Thoughts on solo travel: Everyone should travel, and women should be more confident about doing it on their own. Women aged 20-30 are at the right age to take off on their own.
A walk back in time:
Chandragiri-Hatiban

Historic hike on the ridge from where Prithvi Narayan Shah first laid eyes on the Kathmandu Valley in 1767

It may come as a surprise to many that trekking in Nepal does not always have to be Everest Base Camp or the Annapurna Circuit. The mountains that ring Kathmandu Valley offer some exhilarating walks with stunning views. They range from leisurely weekend strolls and day hikes to strenuous ridge treks that can last several days. The really adventurous can circumnavigate the Valley rim with three- to four-night camping along the way.

For beginners, a good place to start is the Chandragiri-Hatiban hike. It is a good idea to take the Chandragiri Cable Car up to the summit at 2,579m and walk the 10km ridge trail to Hatiban. This obviates the need for a steep hard climb at the beginning of the trek, while offering a five-hour hike along the long ridge that spans Kathmandu Valley’s southwestern edge.

The trek begins with a 15-minute cable car ride that takes off from Thankot base station, and generally follows the ancient trade route between India and Kathmandu. The trail is still visible in places, but most of it has been ruined by a new motorable road with multiple hairpin bends that climbes up the impossibly steep flanks to Chilang Pees. This was how kings, soldiers, traders and students, used to go in and out of Kathmandu before the first motorable road to the capital, the Tribhuban Highway, was built in 1972. The Himalshahi-Kulakhan-Chitlang-Thankot trail along which the Ranas had their first automobiles ported carried up and down the steep trails is now only a distant memory.

An adjacent path still has relics of Nepal’s first cargo ropeway, built by British engineers brought in by Chandra Shumsher Rana in 1922. Later, the Americans helped build the 42km Jatada-Thankot ropeway in 1964, to ferry essential items to Kathmandu from the plains. The rusted hulks of both ropeway towers stand like silent sentinels to history. Visible on a far ridge, the red gondola of the modern cable car can be seen going up and down from Chandragiri.

The cable car company also runs Chandragiri Resorts (see box), which has been partially opened, and can serve as an overnight base camp for the hike. Located on a spur, the resort offers a panoramic view of the city below and a sweeping 300km of horizon from the Annapurnas to Mt Everest.

The cable car terminal at the summit also has historical significance because this is where Nepal’s founder, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, stood in 1767 to look down at the kingdoms of Kathmandu Valley that he would soon conquer. The resort has put up a bronze statue of the king with one of his famous exhortations written across the base: ‘Let’s thrash those who take bribes.’

It is a good idea to take the first cable car from Thankot which opens at 8AM and start walking from the summit terminal. Alternatively, you can take the cable car up the previous afternoon, spend the night at the resort, and get an early start after breakfast.

The trail descends along the ridge down to the first of four passes that it traverses during the hike. There is now a motorable road from Mata Tirtha to Salleri that follows the ropeway routes.

From here, there is a pleasant 45-minute climb through meadows and along thick forest paths to a tea shop that also offers tented camping for the night. The owner has just completed a 1+2 in hospitality studies and has thoughtfully put up signs along the trail so hikers do not get lost.

The path then follows a steep ridgeline through forest and bush until you intercept stone steps that line the trail right up to our destination on the other side of the mountain. The next stop is on the buffalo-grazing meadow below the east summit of Chandragiri (2,500m) which is prominently visible from Kathmandu whenever it snows. From up there, the city looks a long way down, and the view of Langtang, Dheri Laka and up to Guri Shankh are so inspiring.

Descending along the stone steps can be exhilarating on the knees, so it is advisable to take along a walking stick. The third pass now has a motorable road from the Pharping side, which has not yet connected to the trail descending to Machheshwar.

The trail then climbs again to reach the long ridge to the summit of Champanbegi, and then down the other side. Another hour of descending steps and we are in the pine forests near Hatiban, fastened with prayer flags.

Pharping is a holy site because it is one of the places in Nepal where Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated, which explains why so many monasteries and caves dot the valley.

Hatiban is ideally situated for a relaxed lunch and refreshments before taking a jeep back down to the city.
The hotel on the hill

When Hem Rai Dhakal was working in Malaysia, he used to travel to Genting Highlands on weekends, and often wondered why there were no resorts like that in Nepal where the scenery is even more dramatic.

On trips back home, he walked among the peaks and ridges on the Valley rim from Lakuri Humjiyan to Sinpila looking for a site for a future resort. Eventually Dhakal found the perfect spot — on the highest point on Chandragiri ridge, at 2,500m.

The Chandragiri Cable Car opened in 2017, and an adjoining five-star resort was planned on a ridge below the summit.

"As soon as I got to the top, I knew this was what we were looking for. This view of Kathmandu below and the panorama of mountains to the north was unparalleled," Dhakal recalls.

The summit also had historical significance since it was the place from where Prithvi Narayan Shah gazed down at the Nepa Valley 260 years ago and felt the urge to conquer it. The cable car got built, but the earthquake and subsequent upswill delayed the hotel project.

Although behind schedule, Chandragiri Hills Resort has had a soft opening, and even though only two of the four buildings are in operation it is already getting guests eager to get above overcrowded Kathmandu’s pollution.

The resort’s target group is Nepali tourists who take the cable car up and want to spend a weekend to unwind, Kathmandu-based expats and — when the facilities are completed — conferences and destination weddings.

"Just imagine flying to Kathmandu and taking the cable car up here when it is 46 degrees in New Delhi," says Abhishek Jung Thapa, "or guests from the Gulf who want to know what’s monsoon in the Himalaya feels like."

Indeed, Chandragiri’s stunning location amidst lush, forest-covered mountains teeming with birdlife means that even if the mountains are not visible, it is a nature retreat that allows guests to recharge their batteries.

The buildings are named after the mountains visible from the hotel: Ganesha Himal, Gang Shingkhar, Manaslu and Sagarmatha. All rooms have private balconies that offer views of either the western Himalaya or the mountains to the east. In addition, the rooms also have views of either the city below or the surrounding forests, or both.

The hotel can also serve as an excellent overnight stop for hikers who come up on the cable car and want to cross over to Chilling and Kulekhani, or see doing the scenic ridgeline to Hatiban (see main article). Since the hikes are along heavily forested trails, the region is also a paradise for bird-watchers.

Hotel Manager Shyam Thakur says this is the most exciting property he has looked after. "We have a health centre and spa, but even if you just want to be with nature amidst the forests and mountains, this place has healing properties."
Events

Climate Change Hike
Hike against climate change. Enjoy the beautiful nature and plant trees along the way from Jomar Bisparka to Lakhu Bishyang with your family and friends. Spend a fun weekend and do something for the environment. Call to participate: 15 June, 6:30-10:30 pm, Tilganga Chowk, Gachchhaff (meet up), Lakhu Bishyang (ph: 471-0000, 9844788751, 804849844).

6:55

365

Book launch
Judith Ona Chaise is launching the book ‘The Beauty of Purposeful Living’ this Saturday. An exhibition of the collection of the Living ‘Truly’s Museum, Chang, Narayani, will take place at the same location. 15 June exhibition and sale, 4 pm, Taranga Marun, Barabise (ph: 9869416165).

The Eyestone Anthology
There are just a few days to meet the funding goal for the South Asian Comics Anthology. Visit kickstarter: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/eystone/the-eyestone-anthology

Garage sale
Don’t miss another great treasure hunt. Come early to find your treasure in the June garage sale. 15 June, 7-11 am, Cafe ‘O’ Barabise (ph: 9863537200).

Music

Acoustic Friday
Enjoy a musical evening every Friday with the Gantesh Band featuring Mr. Gantesh, Mr. Jyoti, and Mr. Dipak Tamang. They will be joined by another prominent singer, Ratuliza Shrestha. Music, drinks and a charming atmosphere. (ph: 9447002950).

Dining

Da-Pow
Bali Flows is turned after the dish ‘Da-Pow’ goes customarily to your home every Sunday. You can take a trip in the pool and enjoy a relaxing weekend meal. 11 am-9 pm, Hotel Siddhartha, Bhadrapur (ph: 4327429).

GETAWAY

Belgian Waffles
BMC offers delicious, eggless, freshly baked Belgian waffles with premium toppings, smooth, affordable & delicious. 10:30 am-8 pm, Dadar Mok, (ph: 9868367973).

Lucknowi Food Festival
Enjoy the Lucknowi delicacies at the splendid Kawa restaurant of Farida by Monro and have a memorable gourmet dining experience. The festival has invited exotically Chef Quezette from Ludhiana, who specialises in Lucknowi food. 6 am-11 pm, by field trip by Monro, (ph: 986217609).

Hernya Vyla
Get a genuine feel of authentic Newari heritage by staying right in the centre of Mahabodha and the Hernya monastery. The hotel provides a complete tour package to immerse yourself in the rich cultural heritage of Patan. (ph: 985127568, 986196766).

Retreat at Damaar
A serene sanctuary for everyone looking to exempt their minds, passates and inner self. As part of the retreat, you will also be supporting local tourism and culture. (ph: 986013424).

Hyatt Regency
This exclusive 5-star hotel and resort is spread over 57 acres of land, where you can enjoy activities like tennis, yoga and jogging. The hotel is built in traditional Newari architecture and is walking distance from Boudhanath Stupa, the holy Tibetan Buddhist Shrine outside of Kathmandu. (ph: 984167106).

Hotel Barahi
Enjoy a great view of Phewa lake and the cultural stawns, or indulge in the scrumptious platters from the German Bakery on the hotel premises. (ph: 9841408119).

Doolee-Poodle
If you feel a stress weld, doo lee your stress away in a creative art workshop for both adults and children. Basic drawing for children and advanced techniques for adults. 2 pm-5:30 pm, July 3, balcony, Hotel, (ph: 9863174468).

Yogamaya
This weekend learn about religious leader and women’s rights activist Mafjuma through drama, ‘Yogamaya’, an adaptation by Tanu Chaujani of Neem Ram. It’s a fun kick off event. (ph: 9845226132).

Sabin Rai and The Pharaoh
Sabin Rai and The Pharaoh are coming out with their first studio album ‘Dhurwaat’. Drop by this musical event where they will deliver their diverse influences that make up their sound. 25 June, 8-10 pm, 1001 with album.com, Main road (ph: 986317459).

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 7-13 June

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>AQI 100-260</th>
<th>AQI 261-350</th>
<th>AQI 351-500</th>
<th>AQI 501-1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>100-260</td>
<td>261-350</td>
<td>351-500</td>
<td>501-1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The daily weather forecast from the Department of Meteorology and the air quality index is closely monitored by the Himalayan Times. The air quality index is a measure of air quality using a scale of 0 to 500, with 0 being the best and 500 being the worst. For more information, visit AQI at: www.nepaltimes.com

info@hotelheranaya.com | www.hotelheranaya.com
Monika Deupala in Kavre

Four months after Rabin德拉 Puri launched his Nepal Vocational Academy in Panauti in January 2015, the earthquake hit and his plans were completely shaken up. The architect’s buildings were intact, the students were safe but the quake opened up a huge new demand for skilled carpenters, plumbers and masons.

One later year, Puri saw the need for another training institute, and started work on a new centre in Bhaktapur, where carpentry lessons have already begun. When finished the school will have the capacity to train up to 200 students at a time.

“When we started, we could produce 60-70 artisans annually but after the earthquake, the demand boomed,” recalls Puri. “We had to work day and night to expand capacity.”

Puri’s centres offer not only standard construction skills but also traditional wood carving, a craft that was being displaced by modern techniques. They have already produced 256 artisans, who are now equipped with the temple-building skills of their forebears.

The Panauti academy started with training in metal casting, stone carving and carpentry, and there was a demand from local women for batik and tailoring courses. Others sought bakery training, and some even wanted to learn the basics of designing small hydro-power plants.

In response, Puri donated his ancestral property in Panauti, to revive traditional craftsmanship wherever possible. It now helps locals learn new skills so they can find jobs and avoid migrating overseas for work.

The Germany-trained architect and entrepreneur says: “Many students in the institution were planning to go to the Gulf for work. Some of them were convinced to remain and now are getting free training with accommodation and pocket money.”

The entrepreneur is also targeting young people who have already gone abroad, upping them to return and learn the technical skills that would allow them to prosper independently back home in Nepal.

Indeed, surveys have shown that the demand for both traditional and modern skills after the earthquake is so high that Nepalis can earn as much here as in the Gulf.

Some of Puri’s interns make Rs20,000 a month during their apprenticeships, and with experience can earn double that. He now wants to train 1,000 youth a year, and hopes to set up similar training centres across Nepal. The academy is already self-sustaining, a year ahead of schedule. Its major source of income is tuition fees, and earnings from selling students’ products, including stone figures of gods and goddesses.

Learning by doing

The Nepal Vocational Academy in Panauti provides both theory and practical courses, and some faculty members are traditional artisans. Post-earthquake, a major part of the building is how to construct earthquake-resistant houses in the traditional style.

Nag Sethra, 29 from Panauti, gave up her fine arts studies due to family problems. She joined the academy after the earthquake, in the first batch. “At the academy I was doing what I loved, designing on wood, and was also learning carpentry. Even if I couldn’t continue my fine arts studies, I was close to art,” says Sethra.

She quickly found a job in a post-quake reconstruction of a large site in Panauti and Bhaktapur, and is now meeting other students who have learned the institute also provides philosophy classes on the importance of preserving local architecture and other cultural heritage, and building structures, earthquake-resistant buildings.

Priti Kalakar Puri says he also plans to construct a museum of art in Panauti, which will display examples of many skills that have been lost since the earthquake. His students are also making replicas of various stone idols.

Aga Soode, 25 from Kavre, used to stay at home after getting married. She then joined a broadcast at the academy, and now owns her own beauty parlour in Panauti. Says Puri: “Nepal Vocational Academy has changed what I am today, I’m much more independent and I am able to take care of my family.”

VOCAITION FOR VOCATIONS

Vesalika Puri has set up a training centre offering Nepal’s earthquake-affected an alternative to migration. The Nepal Vocational Academy in Panauti trains students in not only standard construction skills but also traditional wood and stone carving and carpentry.

nepaltimes.com

JUNE 24 - 29
Rhythms of Unity & Diversity

ARTISTS 2019

NAVIN CHETTRI DRUMS/PERCUSSIONS
RABIN LAL SHRESTHA TABLA ENSEMBLE
ESAD HALILIOVIC, AUSTRIA DRUMS
MANGAL MAN MAHARJAN SINGING BOWL
KIRAN SHAHI DRUMS

SALIL SUBEDI DIDERIKO
TAMBA GROUP DUMROI II VOCALS
ABHAYA SHRESTHA DRUMS/NEPALI PERCUSSION
KATHMANDU BAJA PUCA NEPALESE BAJA
DJ PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
NARESH PRAJAPATI MADAL TANTRAS
SPECIAL FEATURE: CADENZA COLLECTIVE

TIMES MUSIC
Jazz Room

EVENT PARTNERS

SURYA NEPAL DRUMJATRA

Kathmandu Festival 2019
Khukuri Rum is 60 years young, and is reinventing itself this summer with three new versions of the world famous Nepali alcohol brand.

Nepal Distilleries is one of the country’s first modern alcohol producers with three varieties of rum: Khukuri XXX Rum, Coronation Rum and Khukuri Spice Rum, so aficionados can concoct simple but refreshing rum cocktails at home.

‘Rum in the sun? Sounds cozy, tastes awesome’ is the tagline of Khukuri XXX Rum, and it seems Nepal Distillery is trying to remove the notion that rum is only a winter drink consumed to beat the cold, but can be enjoyed year round.

Among the three seasonal rum cocktails are Khukuri Lemon Fizz, which rum fans would never guess was made with rum; the lemon juice blends with the rum and syrup to give it a refreshing taste. Prepared with lemon juice, 75 p; syrup, a slice of lemon and ice over Khukuri Rum, it is easy to make at home.

Khukuri Cola is said to be the best option of the three for cola lovers, and looks like a fancy cola garnished with lemon. Prepared with Khukuri Rum, cola, lemon juice, ice and a slice of lemon to top it off, the fizzy adds to its uplifting character.

The easiest cocktail to prepare is Khukuri Ginger Ale, which is similar to the Lemon Fizz but with a stronger ginger flavor. Khukuri Ginger Ale is prepared with Khukuri Rum, ginger ale and ice cubes.

The summer drinks were introduced at Trissura Restaurant in Lazimpot on 3 June and the company says the response has been positive. Last year, Nepal Distillery had introduced summer cocktails by bringing in two experienced bar tenders to tailor-make designer cocktails using Khukuri Rum.

Shuvash Lamichhane of Nepal Distilleries told Nepali Times: “Gurwhal, rum-based drinks are popular at all times of the year. But in Nepal we label it a ‘winter drink’ because it is supposed to warm up the body, even though it is a good drink for the summer too.”

Although the response from customers was positive this summer Khukuri wanted to simplify the drinks for people to enjoy at home. Nepal’s most famous award-winning rum is distilled from fermented molasses and kept in wooden vats to age for eight months. It is exported to Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Italy, United States, Dubai and Australia.

M-Series Printers

Get the most ECONOMICAL B/W PRINTERS ever

Best for Office and Commercial purpose

Just 25 PAISA per print

8000 PAGES with initial starter ink kit

REGAINING TRUST: One of many protests against the Guthi Bill, this one on New Road on Tuesday.

NOT SUPPRESSED: Media persons including Narayan Kamble, Surendra Ashar and Gaurav Agarwal, at a program organised by Federation of Nepali Journalists demanding the withdrawal of the Media Council Bill.

HAPPY QUI: During a visit to the UK, Prime Minister K P Oli greets Nepal soldiers at the British Army’s Brigade of Gurkhas at Sandhurst Military Academy on Wednesday.

DEAL SEAL: Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security Gorkha Bista signs a labour pact with Malaysian minister Samahd Saloum Calihun in Geneva on Tuesday.

NAMASTE EID: Country Manager of Turkish Airlines Abdullaif Tunner Kenevi and Fiz Kenevi (right) at the Namaste Eid celebration in Laxmi Mall co-sponsored by the carrier.
Nepal has press freedom, but no freedom after press

The Kathmandu District Court on Thursday ordered YouTuber Pranesh Gautam, who was arrested for his review of the movie Bir Bikram 2, to be kept in custody for one more day. Gautam was arrested on June 7 and is charged with violating the Electronics Transaction Act.

Gautam, who was arrested for his review of the movie, uploaded a satirical review of the movie on YouTube channel Meme Nepal. He compared the film to the Hindi movie Sholay, criticized the acting of the film’s stars and called the direction weak.

The director-producer of the movie, Milan Chams, filed a police complaint against Gautam two weeks ago, claiming the video negatively impacted the movie’s sales and the director and actors’ reputation. The police arrested Gautam, and filed a case under the Electronic Transaction Act.

Cyber law expert and advocate Baburam Aryal calls this an extreme misuse of power. “This shows that the police administration is not adhering to the law,” he says. “This is an example of how the administration can misuse power. Such an action by the police is a travesty in a democratic society. Such acts decrease the creative potential of a society and push the country towards dictatorship.”

Nepal’s Constitution guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental right. Other laws address misuse of speech through slander and libel, so there should be no reason to resort to using the Electronic Transaction Act.

Citizens are free to react to subjects of public interest and to comment on other people’s creative outputs. Being arrested on the basis of such comments is nothing more than a way for the police to intimidate critics. Advocate Aryal claims that because a movie is a ‘product’, it is not considered slander to review it, since only negative comments made on a personal level can be libellous. However, the Producers’ Association accuses Gautam of undermining the movie industry. A group from the industry, including producer Akash Adhikari, actor Bhuwan KC and media-person Naresh Bhattarai, visited the Metropolitan Crime Department in Teku to support Chams.

The director had promised to withdraw the case if Meme Nepal was shut down, but is now demanding Rs10 million to withdraw the case.

Bir Bikram 2 was released on May 17, and Gautam reviewed the movie five days later. After complaints from the movie producers, Meme Nepal removed the video from YouTube.
Women hold up more than half the sky
The road to the last district in Nepal without one is being built almost entirely by women

Achyut Raj Bhandari
in Humla

Women may be treated unfairly by society in one of Nepal’s most conservative districts, but it is they who are at the forefront in linking roads to Humla to the rest of the country.
It is mostly women in yellow hard hats you see on the 7km stretch of the Mugo-Humla road that is presently under construction. Humla is the last district in Nepal not yet connected to the country’s road network, and the remote Himalayan district remains economically behind its neighbours.

After many years of delays, building of the road is speeding ahead. Construction of the 5.1km-wide road started in Gajgali of Mugo district in January, and more than half of the 7km stretch is now motorable. At this pace, it will reach Deuli of Humla by the end of the year, ahead of the completion of the other road linking Humla, the Karnali Corridor (see adjoining article).

“Our idea is not just to build a road, but create jobs during its construction and uplift the economy of the area it is serving when completed,” explains Ramil Tandukar, field manager of the Rural Access Programme (RAP) which is supported by the British aid group, DFID.

Some 52% of the workforce is made up of women. This is because RAP has a policy to empower women with employment, but also because many of the villagers along the way have seen an improvement of livelihoods in the cities or to India or work.

Unlike the indirect road-building work elsewhere in Nepal, RAP’s other emphasis is to minimise the use of excavators and trucks so as to create more rural jobs. There are now more than 1,500 women workers on the road that is being built at a cost of Rs1.7 billion. Women of Rara Municipality and other villages along the way in Mugo have been earning up to Rs700 a day for the past six months.

“She and my mother-in-law received Rs2,000 each in the first installment,” says a beaming Lach Budhwal, 42, of Boom village, who explains that she and her family have left farming for wage work in the towns.

“Our men used to migrate to India for work due to poverty. But this year me and my husband are working and earning together, I am happy about that,” says Budhwal. “We women were confined to the kitchen, but this road has given us the chance to come out and earn an income.”

Local elders are overjoyed to see rapid progress on the road. “It had never even dreamt that a road would reach my home, but now it is actually happening. And the villagers get employment too,” says Krishna Bahadur Deo, 64, of Boom. He says he will celebrate the completion of the road by getting on the first bus out to visit Kathmandu.

RAP was started in 2000 with the Hille-Bhurung road, but work stalled during the war. Resuming in 2006, it has provided employment to tens of thousands of farmers as it built roads in Lhugur, Khoteng, Sankhuwasabha and Terathum, and helped organise farmers into cooperatives. In 2011 the successful road-building model was extended to the remote mountain districts of western Nepal.

Gori Khadka, 63, is convinced the road will make the lives of next generations much easier.”

MONSOON
Craziness

ST JUNE 2019 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

- Spend your coupons like Mad on all the F&B outlets
- Coupons are non-transferable and must be used within package duration
- Extension night on pre-rata basis
- Extra bed Rs.3499/- for 2 Nights/3 Days
- Valid from 1 June 2019 till 30 September 2019
- Valid for Nepalese and Expatriates only
- Inclusive of 10% Service Charge & 13% VAT
- Free 15 mins head and shoulder massage

Buy a package for Rs.7499/- nett per person (On Twin sharing Basis)
& get back coupons worth Rs.3000/ nett per person

Call: 9804116774, 981138613, 9835033855
E-mail: shangrilavillage@gmail.com
food@shangrilavillage.com
info@shangrilavillage.com
www.hotelshangri.com

For Reservation
Shangri-La Village Resort, Gharipatan, Pokhara, Nepal
Pokhara: 977-061-442222
Kathmandu City Office: 977-01-4412999
Cars in the Karnali
Humla and Mugu are finally being linked to the rest of Nepal, but with the road comes pollution

Prakash Singh
in Bajura

Humla is the only district not yet linked to Nepal’s national road network, but now for long.
The Karnali Corridor and another road from Mugu district will soon bring the motor car to the Karnali. But even before the road, plastic trash and other detritus of consumption has already arrived in this pristine yet neglected region.

Construction crews are hard at work blasting through rock faces along the gorge of the Karnali River, opening up a region that used to take weeks of hard trekking to reach.

The Nepal Army has been building the 143-km Karnali Corridor stretch that connects Kalikot’s Khululu with Salli Salla in Humla district. More than 70 km of the road has already been opened to traffic even though it is still rough and unpaved.

Once a bridge is built over a river separating Bajura and Humla by October, the Corridor will have reached roadless Humla for the first time from the south. The district already has a road from Tibet in the north.

Meanwhile, a 243 km section from Pitchchaur of Bajura to Kawadhi of Humla has been opened, bypassing the trail through the notorious Kangchenjunga, which used to be dangerous even for those on foot.

There is a great sense of excitement along the Karnali as locals await the completion of the Rs14 billion road. Previously to reach Humla, they had to walk for weeks, or travel to Bajura and Kalikot districts on rusty buses along dangerous roads, or pay a hefty airfare.

Locals were also forced to pay much higher prices for goods and many have lost their lives unable to access medical facilities on time.

“For generations we struggled to bring basic needs, take our sick to hospital, those days are thankfully over — the door to development has opened,” says the jubilant chair of Humla Rural Municipality in Humla, Gvendra Malla.

Jeeps and tractors have already started operating on the half-completed, 30km-section of the road from Bajura’s Naradhi to Pitchchaur. Tourism destinations in Karnali and the Far West, such as Khashiad, Ramanachan, Basmatika and Bane will now be easily accessible, and hopefully boost the economy and create jobs.

However, the arrival of the road has already started to impact the landscape of the Karnali, which had so far been untouched by modernity.

New roadside markets have sprung up every 3 km along the Corridor in Bajura where vehicles have started operating. Waste from these marketplaces, including plastic and liquor bottles, is being dumped on the riverbank, polluting the clear, green water of the Karnali.

Open defecation has become rampant.

Moreover, people from higher regions have started to migrate to areas closer to the road, adding to the problem.

“The only reason we settled here was because of the access to transportation. Up there in our village we had a difficult life — we had to walk for days just to buy food, but there was no garbage,” says Manish Budhathapa, who moved to Kewadi from Humla Rural Municipality.

Some here have taken the leaps of faith as a necessary price to pay for having the advantages of road access. Others feel the negative impact of the road should be minimized. If that is not done, they fear, the Karnali may soon turn into another Bajura.
All hunkydory in the boondocks

Let me play the devil’s ombudsman here this week and ask if any of you reading this feel that your freedoms have been constrained lately.

Just look around; no one is stopping you from singing h新赛季 about the grabberbem’s achievements, of which there are too many to list here because of space constraints.

There has been absolutely no attempt to muzzle reporters covering the Prime Minister’s success in getting Nepal to leap frog into the space age.

The Prime Minister assured Nepal this week they no longer have to worry about no water or muddy roads since Nepal will soon have its own satellite in geosynchronous orbit.

“Now that we are a glorious space nation, all those petty inconveniences won’t matter at all,” he said amidst wild and prolonged applause.

Despite all this, there are still nagging nabsos who can’t stop moaning and groaning. Nepalis already know how bad things are — there is no need for the media to rub it in and make them even more depressed.

It is in our national interest to lift national morale so we can at least pretend that everything is hunkydory in the boondocks. Nepalis want to believe they are aspiring towards a prosperous and happy future with our own satellites, ocean-going ships, bullet trains and Rik Rikams 2, which is a quintessential milestone in the annals of Nepal cinema for its exquisite cinematography, superb acting by a galaxy of stars, a mature masterpiece of film-making portraying witty and angst-ridden characters.

As the Minister of Information, Warfure rightfully said the other day, and I quote: “There is complete freedom of press in this country, because I say so. Journalists have to be objective, which is to say they must have the same objective as us.” The minister took the words right out of our mouths, we couldn’t have put it better ourselves.

But, there are worrying signs we are not being draconian enough in protecting our hard-earned curbs on freedom, and efforts to restore authoritarianism. Nepal has a long way to go to catch up with North Korea. This just won’t do, we must forthwith declare the following subjects out of bounds for newspaper pestsens:

- Anything concerning natural security, which means anything about politics, economics, culture, history, geography, ageing, current, N to airport, British wealth and more reviews.
- All news that may impinge Nepal’s bilateral relations with fellow-parish countries.
- Freedom of thought is not to be burned, and anyone thinking superior thoughts will be liable to persecution.
- Laughing in public is hereby burned with immediate effect until further notice.
- Weather forecasts about precipitous drops in the mercury are banned in the interest of national security.
- Media blockade of all Data Times news.

The Ass