



Dangerous driving

All three senior leaders of the Nepal Communist Party have the travel bug. Prime Minister KP Oli is off for a health check-up in Singapore after his transplanted kidneys reportedly started over-performing. Although his spokesman announced that Oli was paying his own hospital bills, the presence in Singapore this week of well-known medical industrialists raised questions about favours being exchanged.

Oli's party co-chair, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, just returned from the UAE after another of his mysterious visits. And Madhav Kumar Nepal has also been clocking frequent flier miles.

Nepal's cybersphere bristled with irreverent criticism of leaders gallivanting around while citizens back home suffer from the ravages of the monsoon, and contractors with political protection go unpunished for uncompleted infrastructure.

Nepalis had expected the NCP, with its two-thirds majority, to deliver stability and better governance, but disillusionment is growing about the paralysing

factionalism within the ruling party, as well as over provincial and local spheres of government being unable to deliver. An investigative report this week showed provinces spent Rs25 billion buying SUVs to travel on roads and bridges that are falling apart because of corruption.

Normally a government that faces such widespread criticism for non-performance would do a cabinet reshuffle to divert attention, but PM Oli is said to want to let the Dasain fever set in.

Meanwhile, the three leaders are playing Chinese checkers, wooing each other's loyalists — blurring the lines between former UML and former Maoists in the party. Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa and Narayan Kaji Shrestha have been neutral, saying party unity is more important than joining any one faction. Even Bam Dev Gautam, who was firmly in the Dahal camp, appears to be wavering, and there is speculation Oli offered rewards.

Oli could be waiting for the Dasain hiatus to get down to brass tacks on his reshuffle. The word is that heads will roll after the holidays, and the names Oli wants struck off include Water Minister Bina Magar, Infrastructure Minister Raghbir Mahaseth, Industries Minister Matrika Yadav and Labour Minister Gokarna Bista. Dahal has his own list of ministers to be sacked, or inducted.

By bringing in Madhav Nepal loyalist Yogesh Bhattarai as Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation last week, Oli killed three birds with one stone: added a politician with a reputation of being honest and a do-er, placated Nepal and thumbed his nose at Dahal.

Meanwhile, in an effort to address its bipolar character the party finally passed a political document clarifying its ideology. However, the statement does not completely remove the NCP's conceptual confusion. There is

no mention of the UML's long-held principle of 'pluralistic open society'. 'Socialism' is mentioned, but without the adjective 'democratic'.

In the UML's sacrosanct principle of 'multi-party people's democracy', the document has tellingly dropped the word 'multi-party'. And even though the Constitution says Nepal will be 'socialist oriented', the document uses the 'C' word: communism.

Kunda Dixit

buzz



BUILDING WALLS

How a Khumbu village is adapting to frequent glacial floods, by Alton Byers

PAGE 8-9



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

GENEVA, OR THE HAGUE?

On paper, the Government of Nepal’s human rights pledges are exemplary. In practice, the two warring sides in the ruling party, the opposition and the security forces are all intent on sweeping wartime atrocities under the carpet.

Even though it is one of 47 member countries of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Nepal’s own track record on transitional justice has been far from satisfactory. The mandate of the HRC is ‘the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe’.

On 15 July, six human rights experts wrote to the government with concerns about proposed changes to the law governing the National Human Rights Commission, the NHRC Act.



SUBASH RAI

The experts zeroed in on three of the government’s suggested revisions: 1. Giving the Attorney-General explicit power to approve NHRC investigations, 2. Barring the NHRC from receiving funding from sources other than the government, 3. Preventing the NHRC from opening offices outside of Kathmandu.

Noting that the Attorney-General is appointed by the government, the experts said the first proposal ‘raises concerns over the independence of the NHRC and its ability to address and take action on cases of human rights violations, without undue interference of the executive power through the attorney general. Overall, this may negatively impact the ability of the NHRC to protect and promote human rights in Nepal’.

The suggestion of limiting NHRC funding ‘would in practice enable the Ministry of Finance to control the work of the NHRC, and ultimately limit the independence and efficiency of the NHRC’s programmes’, wrote the UN experts. While the revised law would prevent the Commission from opening new offices, they are concerned it could also lead to closure of the NHRC’s 10 regional and sub-regional offices.

‘Taking into account the extremely low rate of implementation of human rights-related recommendations of the NHRC, we are concerned that the new requirements may negatively affect the ability of victims of human rights violations, their families

and human rights defenders to access justice in Nepal,’ notes the letter.

Since the NHRC came into being in 2000, just 12% percent of its 810 recommendations have been fully implemented, 48% were implemented partially and 39% are under consideration. These statistics are misleading as the only recommendations acted upon concern compensation — those calling for action against perpetrators have been ignored.

While the current government often repeats that it can complete the transitional justice process without outside help (read ‘interference’), it continues to engage with the UN experts, which is a positive sign. In a 7 June letter, the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the UN in Geneva responded to an earlier letter from human rights experts, which critiqued the current transitional justice process.

In their letter in April, the experts noted that Nepal’s two transitional justice commissions were working too slowly, that the procedure for choosing new commissioners was not impartial, independent or transparent, and that the transitional justice law did not meet international standards.

The Permanent Mission responded by quoting various excerpts from the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2014 (TRC Act), assuring the UN

that the commissions would be totally independent. But you would have to be living in a Google-less cave to not know that one reason for the delay in naming the commissioners and other members of the commissions is that the governing NCP and the opposition NC are negotiating which, and how many, of these positions will go to their own members.

On 29 July, four international human rights groups criticised the government for the lack of progress on transitional justice, including the current process of naming new commissioners and members. ‘Nearly 13 years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, political leaders inside and outside of government are still playing games by politicising the process,’ said ICJ Asia-Pacific Director Frederick Rawski. ‘It is about time that they showed some courage, and took action to ensure access to justice, instead of continually looking after their own short-term self-interests.’

Nepal has announced its candidacy for a second United Nations HRC term from 2021-2023. While geopolitical considerations will play a major role, it is hoped that countries’ records human rights – not only their promises – will be taken into account. It is not too late for the government to live up to the lofty speeches of its ministers in international fora, and to start delivering truth and justice at home. Leaders with blood on their hands might find Geneva a much more attractive destination than The Hague.

Even though it is a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Nepal’s own track record on transitional justice has been far from satisfactory.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Issue #463 (7-13 August 2009) of *Nepali Times* addressed the drought and delayed monsoon 10 years ago that pointed to severe food shortages the coming year. In a page 1 story titled ‘Early warning’, the paper warned:

‘The food emergency facing Nepal this year is so serious that the country’s political leadership needs to immediately start working together to address its consequences.

In addition to writing a new constitution and keeping the peace process on track, a consensus is now needed to meet a nationwide food shortfall this winter because the crisis could have serious political and social repercussions.

Some 3.4 million Nepalis will be directly affected and need urgent food aid. Investment in agriculture, which has been stagnating, needs to be raised, especially by irrigating more farmland.’

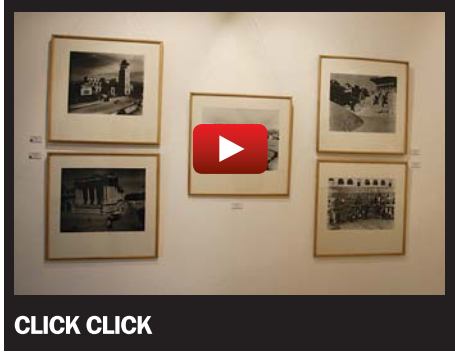


ONLINE PACKAGES



TB TV

Preliminary results of a new nationwide survey show that there are about two-thirds more TB patients across Nepal than previously estimated, confirming that the notified 32,000 cases were just the tip of the iceberg. Watch how innovative approaches, like use of drones, can be used for treatment of TB. Story: *page 14-15.*



CLICK CLICK

Time-consuming analogue photography is almost forgotten today, but an exhibition by Film Foundry is trying to revive it. Watch video of the exhibition and see photos that stir up nostalgia about an old Kathmandu. Also watch young analogue enthusiasts explain why the technique is still relevant. Story: *page 6-7.*

NEPALI MIGRANT WORKERS

We salute *Nepali Times* for this video about a young man who migrated to work and returned 10 months later as a statistic (‘His last journey home to Nepal’, Shankar Dahal, #971). Share if you want this to end.

First Steps Himalaya

■ Sad and harsh reality. We must create more opportunities for our youth in Nepal. Migrating will always be an option, but returning home in a coffin must be stopped.

Charu Chadha

■ At least the mortal remains of the dead migrant workers deserve respectful handling at Kathmandu airport.

Ashim Raj Muktan

■ Totally heartbreaking to see how migrant workers are treated in the Middle East without a transparent mechanism to govern them. There is absolutely no accountability and every death is ‘heart failure’.

Samir M Panthi

■ Disgraceful. I can’t travel to these countries knowing this. It’s sad that Nepali men need to leave Nepal to work in these conditions for a so-called better life.

Rochele Thorpe

NEPAL AIRLINES

The widebody planes have become white elephants for Nepal Airlines and will probably push it to bankruptcy (‘Nepal Airlines has new planes, but no new plans’, Sharad Ojha, #971).

Bali Hang Sambahangphe

RANI POKHARI

Rani Pokhari is looking good finally with sustained and active public participation (‘Resurrecting Rani Pokhari Right’, AlokSiddhi Tuladhar, #969)? .

Amoolya Tuladhar

CLIMATE CHANGE

It’s not only snakes. Vegetation has also moved up, creating new habitats for lowland species...bringing new opportunities and challenges like vector-borne diseases (‘Hiss’, Sonia Awale, #971).

Arup Rajouria

Read more letters on **page 13**

WHAT'S TRENDING



His last journey home to Nepal

by *Shankar Dahal*
Bishnu KC left for Doha 10 months ago in hope of a better life, but returned home in a coffin. This story of KC’s final journey moved many readers to tears, and generated much debate. Visit nepalitimes.com for the full report and video.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

“ ” Most commented

Resurrecting Rani Pokhari right

by *Alok Siddhi Tuladhar*
After much controversy, Rani Pokhari is finally being rebuilt, using traditional methods. But getting water into the pond is another story. Go online for details and send your comments.

🐦 Most popular on Twitter

Nepal Airlines has new planes, but no new plans

by *Sharad Ojha*
The woes that plague Nepal Airlines Corporation are not new: mismanagement, political interference, incompetence and inability to compete internationally. Can newly-appointed Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism Yogesh Bhattarai rescue Nepal’s flag carrier? Find out more in this story.

🔴 Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
An increasing number of Nepali workers in the Persian Gulf and Malaysia are dying of heat stress, reveals a new report. Experts warn that the fatality rate could go up as the global average temperature rises in coming decades.

Purnima Sreenivasan @healthaiminc
This is not humanitarian or legal. Is there no solution to this? Laborers must be treated with respect and dignity. How about installing cooling devices and providing them with access to health & safety? Please kindly look into this @UNHumanRights

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Bishnu KC’s final journey from Doha to Kathmandu and overland to a remote village in Piuthan. @Dahal_Shankar follows one of 700 Nepalis who died working abroad this year. Video and photo report in @NepaliTimes.

Narendra Khadka @NKhadka
How ironic is it that some Nepalis go to foreign lands for annual checkups and some come back in a box, in a #new democratic Nepal.

Rabindra Singh Thakuri @RabindraRST
So disheartening to see this. Till when will this continue? Aren’t government and concerning bodies answerable?

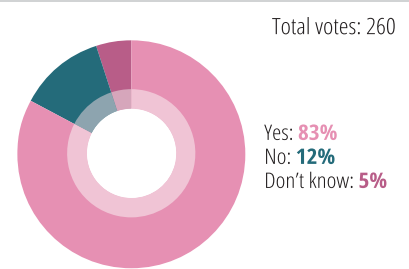
Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
For now, ancient pond construction methods are being used to rebuild Rani Pokhari. But getting water into the pond is another story. NRA is thinking of a deep well and a dedicated Melamchi pipe to fill the pond, a solution that is contested by experts.

madhukar upadhyia @madhukaru
This is like taking the foundation stone to make roofs.



Weekly Internet Poll #971

Q. Is climate change affecting your life?



Weekly Internet Poll #972
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Would you go back to using film photography or vinyl records?



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TURKISH AIRLINES

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Look what's cooking in Nepal

Using electric rice cookers instead of LPG could save the country a whole lot of money

The import of LPG cylinders has grown 4-fold in the past 10 years. Even remote areas of the country now have shops that stock the red cylinders. This has reduced the pressure on forests and cleaned up indoor air pollution that was making many sick.



1/2 FULL
Anil Chitrakar

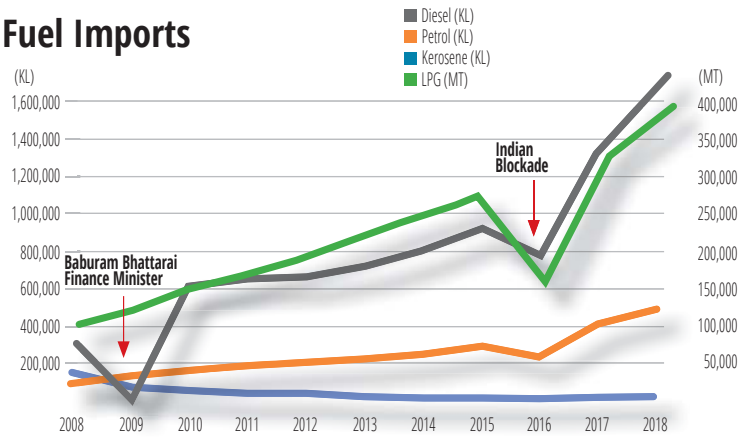
However, the payment for every cylinder goes to the Nepal Oil Corporation, where corruption is rife, and a sizeable chunk goes to the government as tax. The rest of the money goes to India and contributes to Nepal's huge and widening trade deficit with the southern neighbour. India buys the gas from the Gulf, so a chunk of the money that Nepali migrant workers send home goes to pay for the LPG we import from the countries where they work. Growing use of this fossil natural gas has also increased the per capita carbon footprint of Nepalis.

But there is a cleaner and potentially cheaper energy alternative: electricity. This year, the Kulekhani reservoir reached maximum level in a matter of days due to heavy rains. Normally, it takes months to fill this rain-fed hydropower storage plant. This is a real opportunity to wean Nepalis from their LPG stoves to cook with electric rice cookers, and use the induction stove at least during the day time.



ADAM STERN

Fuel Imports



There are many ways to define nationalism, and one simple action that could help make Nepal energy secure in light of the Indian blockade is to begin to cook at least one meal of rice in home electric cookers. Pre-heating the water using solar water heaters and soaking the rice and lentils a few hours earlier could save a lot of money we would otherwise spend on imported energy.

The Nepal Electricity Authority must introduce time of day metering. The cost of hydropower during the day, at peak demand hours in the evening and at night when the snow-fed rivers continue to flow, should not be the same. This will then serve as an incentive to cook with electricity at certain times of the day, and not others. We also need to use the power we generate and not export it, till we really have more than we can consume.

Differential tariff and real-time meters are soon going to become the norm. LPG now forms 2.5% of Nepal's total import bill of Rs1.5

trillion, and we imported 400,000 tons of it last year (*see graph*). Cooking rice with electricity may not contribute a lot, but every watt counts.

Nepal imported over 35,000 metric tons of LPG in February 2019 alone. Each cylinder contains 14kg of LPG and costs Rs1,375 rupees. That is a lot of money going out, and greenhouse gases being released. That is not counting the diesel that is burnt to deliver these heavy cylinders all over the country.

In addition, there is the cost of transport and the 'tip' to people who deliver cylinders. Then there is the initial deposit on the cylinder or the cost of owning one.

Nepal produces its own clean hydroelectricity, while we import all the LPG we use. All the numbers show that we are going to have more hydropower from an increasing number of power plants in the days ahead, and its reliability, both in terms of quality and cost, is looking good.

It is easy to hoard LPG cylinders but storing electricity in batteries and monsoon water behind dams is not cheap. If we all use electricity to cook during the day it will save Nepal billions. We can crunch the numbers, work on fancy economic models and have endless meetings, or for the sake of Nepal, let us cook our morning meals using the currently abundant clean hydroelectric power. 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharthinc





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prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS


New Turkish cabin uniform

Turkish Airlines cabin crew wearing new uniforms will now greet passengers on long-haul flights. Designed to mark the national flag carrier's 85th anniversary, the new uniforms, in flag-red and anthracite



gray, were first rigorously tested on long-range flights in different climates before being tailored for 25,000 employees.

Kumari ATM in Solu



Kumari Bank has opened its latest ATM service in Dingboche, Solukhumbu. At 4,410m, it is the highest ATM service counter in the country.

Qatar staff at Ehsan

Qatar Airways pilots and cabin crew visited and presented gifts to elderly residents of the Centre for Empowerment and Elderly Care, 'Ehsan'. The visit aimed to raise awareness of the empowerment of elderly people via the Centre, in the State of Qatar.

Ethiad on Booking.com

Ethiad Guest, the loyalty program of Ethiad Airways, has signed a frequent-flyer agreement with Booking.com, so that the airline's customers can earn Ethiad Guest Miles when booking accommodation through Booking.com.

Cathay winter service

The Cathay Pacific Group has added two seasonal routes, including the return of flights to Tokushima. Travellers looking to hit the slopes can take advantage of the new twice-weekly service to Niigata starting 30 October 2019. The route will be operated on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Annapurna CSR Award

Hotel Annapurna hosted its annual Princess Jayanti Achievement Award ceremony on 4 August, with prizes for the top four female students pursuing their bachelor degree in hotel management at Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management.

prabhu BANK

Best food forward in Sanepa

It has neither starched tablecloths, nor peaky napkins. But the air of haute cuisine is deftly conjured in the food that is served at Chimes, and in the attention of those who present it.

This new restaurant in Sanepa has guests returning again and again, not just for the excellent food and impeccable service but for its relaxed atmosphere, sophisticated background jazz, the occasional live music and event lineups and its many taste experiments.

“The closest we come to fine dining is dining fine,” says VK Kunwor, who runs the restaurant with Shikhar Pandey and TJ Limbu. They met in 2015 and collaborated successfully on a casual eatery in Thamel, but always wanted a focus on good food.

During their recce of establishments in the city, they found many venues focussed on music or events, drinks or vibe, but the food seemed to lag as a secondary consideration. Pandey is a foodie and both Kunwor and Limbu are chefs, the latter freshly back from the UK.

Chimes is nestled entirely in a garden setting, surrounded by low-rise buildings a stone’s throw from busy Sanepa Chok, evoking the ambience of an convent establishment with the same name (but not spelling) in Singapore. French, Asian, Nepali or American food, the fundamental focus here is the kitchen’s operation and ingredients. For staff, the experience at Chimes is akin to working to international standards, a rarity in the Kathmandu hospitality industry.



When the food comes, it is a treat. The Guacamole and Paneer is a delight to the tastebuds, comprising elements of sweet and salty, creamy and crunchy, and grounded by a herb pesto and the subtle earthiness of perfectly roasted potatoes. This dish seeks to delight with every bite.

Then come Chimes’ Chicken Momos. Momos can be a little ‘gluggy’, thick-skinned and drenched in sauce. Not here. These are thin-skinned and silky, and Limbu takes pride in the four condiments they serve with their bamboo basket of deliciously hot and succulent dumplings smeared with house made sambal. For someone with an acutely Southeast Asian palate, it is sublime. It is a taste of home.

No surprise then that TJ Limbu grew up in Singapore. Along with more sambal, pickled green chillies, roasted chili in oil as well as Chimes’ own tomato based momo sauce, you get to taste dumplings 10 different ways. Also presented is the caramelised Pork Belly, a popular main. Succulent and tender, it is slow cooked with reams of fat and juicy meat intact and buttery, with zero gristle.


Basted in a sweet and sticky sauce, the pork is accompanied by salted buttered bok choy, jus, caramelised cabbage and a mash puree, which complement the meat. I could have done with a bit more acid in the dish, but it’s a small slight, considering the very tender, tasty pork. The jus is just nice in

flavour, light and tasty, not heavy, and the dish is finished with a garnish of rose petals, microgreens and flecks of roasted chili.

Unbeknownst to many who may subscribe to its delivery service via Bhokmandu, Chimes also presents stay-at-home gourmands with good food delivered to the door till 2am. The menu is understandably distinct, and at a lower price point, but just as excellent in quality, if the samples are anything to go by.

Chicken rice that tastes like the chicken rice in Singapore, and curry puffs that rival my mother’s own (the very best). The thought given to the delivery dishes is as well conceived in terms of what types of food travel well and are cheaper to create without compromising on taste.

Chimes has somehow managed to source a biodegradable cornstarch-based container that is sturdy enough for reuse, unlike the monstrous aluminium/ cardboard/plastic hybrids that takeaways are usually carted in here. Toss in the use of fruits and herbs from its garden, and it is obvious that Chimes certainly knows how to get things right.

With its singular take on ‘dining fine’, the restaurant is seeking to up the ante on good flavours, and challenging as well as indulging those with fussy tastebuds.  **Sheilin Teo**



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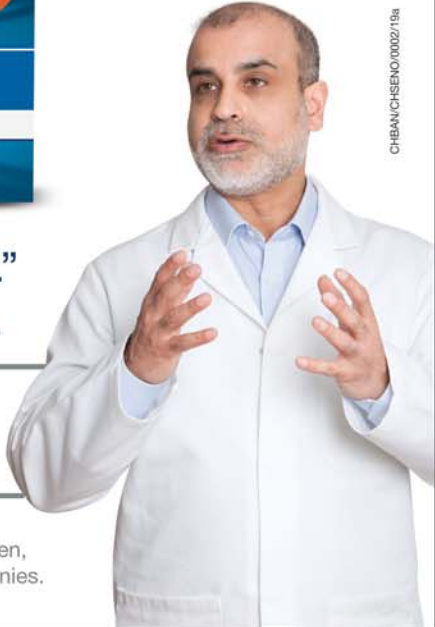
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Going analogue in the digital age

Sewa Bhattarai

In the selfie age, when all it takes is a click to create a picture and seconds for the world to see it, few people remember the age of analogue photography. Rolling up the film inside a camera, leaving it at a photo shop, and the anticipation of savouring the prints one by one is all a memory today.

Surprisingly, analogue photography still has many enthusiasts in Kathmandu, who find the darkroom developing process delightful, or seek out treasure troves of nostalgia in old prints. Some of these old photographs are up at an exhibition by Film Foundry at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal.

"We found that there was not much awareness of analogue. It was like a lost craft.

So we gathered analogue enthusiasts to share knowledge about this art form," says Jagadish Upadhyaya of Film Foundry.

The exhibition displays black and white works by over 40 artists, including young enthusiasts, veterans and others who have passed away. On the ground floor are nostalgic black and white prints of a bygone Kathmandu. Open spaces, fields and hills stand out, landmarks like Swoyambhu, Boudha and Dharahara gleam instead of being shrouded by the city as they are today. Shreedhar Lal Manandhar, Bakhat Bahadur Chitrakar and others are considered pioneers of Nepali photography.

Photos from the Chitrakar family collection show men and women in traditional costumes, army uniforms and voluminous skirts. In one posed shot, a woman in flowing hair and graceful sari reads

a book under a tree, and one wonders who she could be.

"We found the negatives of these images in the wreckage of my sister's home after the 2015 earthquake," says Pawan Chitrakar, who provided the images. "Obviously, they are valuable as photographic history and document old lifestyles. But sadly, we don't exactly know who took them, though we can guess that they were my brother-in-law's ancestors."

Ashoke Rana, CEO of Himalayan Bank, inaugurated the exhibit and said there must be treasure troves of negatives and glass plates still hidden in attics. "I have come across many wonderful catalogues and been fascinated. They show us so much about our history, and provide us with a window through time, of days gone by," Rana said.

A floor up at Siddhartha are works by

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The long-term prediction for the monsoon over the Subcontinent is that despite the deficit so far in large parts of India and Nepal, over the next month-and-a-half total precipitation levels will be back to normal. However, total precipitation is different from where and how the rain falls. Kathmandu Valley will get copious rainfall Friday into the weekend, most of it isolated showers with more sustained rain at night.

Going places together - qatarairways.com

Shreedhar Lal Manandhar

At 80, the silver-haired pioneer of photography in Nepal is semi-paralysed and homebound. But it is clear from his photographs that Shreedhar Lal Manandhar (*left, above, with his grandson*) lived a full and active life. On display at Siddhartha Art Gallery are his photos of many festivals in Kathmandu.

“Back in the days when there were no cameras and I could not afford to import them, I bought everything second-hand, things that tourists left behind,” recalls Manandhar. His first camera was a Bobby Brownie that his father gave him when he was 10. Next, Manandhar acquired an expensive Leica from an expat.

Eventually the photographer acquired many such cameras, and only realised how rare his collection was when a foreigner came into his studio and asked to see a Hasselblad. He told Manandhar he would never get to handle such a camera in his own country.

Manandhar has a collection of over a dozen cameras, including an antique piece made in England in the 1880s, and keeps them securely locked so that moisture does not ruin them.

His iconic photo of Balkrishna Sama is now so ubiquitous that one forgets who took it. Then there are the dreamy pictures of Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Nepal in 1961. But the one that seems dearest to Manandhar is the shot of his radiant bride that he took on their wedding day. Even as a bridegroom, he could not resist taking up his camera.

Manandhar refuses to use digital cameras, so he says he cannot compare them to his film equipment, but he speaks happily of the days when every frame was precious: “At King Birendra’s wedding I was sitting with ambassadors but people would not let me rest and dragged me to take photos. Dev Anand was here for the wedding too, and everyone wanted a picture with him. Not just a pose with him, but they wanted pictures of themselves feeding him sweets.”

young artists who have taken up analogue photography in the digital age, experimenting with materials like tea and turmeric to bring out different tones, and printing on Nepali paper for a distinctive feel.

“The purity of their intent struck me,” said Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha Art Gallery.

The photographers themselves say they are going back to an earlier technology because it forced them to think before clicking, getting the composition and light right. Today it seems like state-of-the-art equipment is all you need to create good photographs, but these analogue pictures remind us that it is the photographer’s eye that matters most, more than the equipment.

Life in Analogue
Siddhartha Art Gallery
4-21 August

CLICK CLICK

Time-consuming analogue photography is almost forgotten today, but an exhibition by Film Foundry is trying to revive it. Watch video of the exhibition and see photos that stir up nostalgia about an old Kathmandu. Also watch young analogue enthusiasts explain why the technique is still relevant.

nepalitimes.com

Film Foundry

Sabrina Dangol, 25, doesn’t have a darkroom of her own, but that has not stopped her from shooting on film and processing her own analogue prints, which are now on display at Siddhartha Art Gallery. The freelancer, who uses digital cameras for her professional work, started developing her own photographs after she came across Film Foundry.

“I used to play around with cameras when I was young, and was always curious about the process of developing photographs,” she says. “When I started

developing my own photos, I loved figuring out how different chemicals can bring out different tints, and how the type of paper makes a difference to the tone. Besides, holding a physical copy of a photo that you have made yourself is kind of magical.”

Dangol represents a younger generation of photographers who are keeping the spirit of analogue alive in Kathmandu. Film Foundry conducts workshops on creating and curating photographs, provides space for youngsters to satisfy their curiosity and revive a

technology considered to be on its way out. They buy chemicals in bulk and make their own mixture for the darkrooms, and experiment with colours, tones, and printing mediums.

“You would think that no one would be interested in this technology today, but that is not correct. We have so many young enthusiasts coming to learn all about analogue,” says Film Foundry’s Jagadish Upadhyaya. “You don’t waste time in the darkroom, you go there to spend time. Once you start working with analogue cameras, digital feels bland.”

MONIKA DEUPALA

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The climate threat multiplier

Local project-based adaptation may not be enough in dealing with the scale of Nepal’s climate emergency

Most of the recent talk within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process and elsewhere has focused on cutting greenhouse gas emissions to reduce the impact of climate change.

Mitigation was the buzzword, and any mention of adaptation was avoided because for some it meant accepting defeat. But today, driven largely by the concerns of



CLIMATE FOR CHANGE
Ajaya Dixit

developing countries, which bear the brunt of the climate emergency, adaptation is the key issue. But since adapting to climate change is so closely linked with issues of

implementation.

Nepal was late in preparing its NAPA, which turned out to be a temporary blessing in disguise. Using additional donor funding, the Ministry of Science Technology and Environment prepared a NAPA 'Plus' in 2009, which included a more consultative process to capture local nuances. In 2011, Nepal formulated a LAPA framework and also promulgated a climate policy stipulating that 80% of resources earmarked for the climate crisis would be allocated to local levels.

Donor support was available and the country implemented LAPA programs in a few selected regions. But we still don't know if the resources were really spent in rural areas, or if they made any difference.

There are three major challenges for successful adaptation to climate impacts. First is attribution: a localised weather



9 - 15 AUGUST 2019 #972

Living below Nepal's melting mountains

Khumbu villagers are adapting to more frequent floods caused by climate change without much



power, governance and politics, it is not well understood. Successfully adapting to climate change is often based on how individuals, households and communities switch and improve livelihoods.

Given Nepal's geographical, climate and ecosystem diversity from plains to mountains, the question is: what do people actually adapt to? Is it rising temperatures and heat, erratic rains, droughts, floods, forest fires or increased rates of diseases?

Families in high mountain valleys may not have to worry about floods, but are affected when roads are blocked, severing access to markets. Those in the mid-mountains may be badly impacted by landslides, drying springs, or declining agriculture production due to droughts.

An adaptation strategy that works in an isolated mountain settlement will not work in Kathmandu. Though climate change is a global problem, its impacts are very local and different. National-level attempts to adapt will thus be unsuccessful, yet global conversations and the resultant aid flows continue to ignore sub-national differences.

In 2001, the UNFCCC established a program for least developed countries that included financial and technical support to prepare National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPA) to meet 'immediate and urgent' adaptation needs. Today the conversation has moved to National Adaptation Plans (NAP) that focus on integrating climate risks into development planning and

event cannot be directly linked to climate change. Second relates to how people and institutions respond to new climate shocks, usually by local people meeting local needs (*see adjoining article*).

Finally, individual adaptation strategies are most successful and enduring when people have access to drinking water, clean energy, information, finances and alternative sources of income, as well as the right to organise, express their voices and access political outlets.

Given the rapid spread of the climate emergency, it is clear that existing project-based efforts cannot add up at scale. Our current understanding of adaptation offers very little by way of solutions for the scale of transformative shifts necessary now and into the future for Nepal and elsewhere. Based on the polluter pays principle, the developed world should indeed bear the cost of adaptation in developing countries to make up for historical emissions. But when our springs dry up, having more money may not be of much help.

Even without climate change, Nepal faced challenges managing disasters and development. The climate emergency is a threat multiplier that will seriously strain our socio-economic, political and ecological futures. 🇳🇵

Ajaya Dixit is Executive Director of Kathmandu based ISET-Nepal. His monthly column *Climate for Change* deals with the impact of global warming in Nepal.

Alton C Byers
in Khumbu

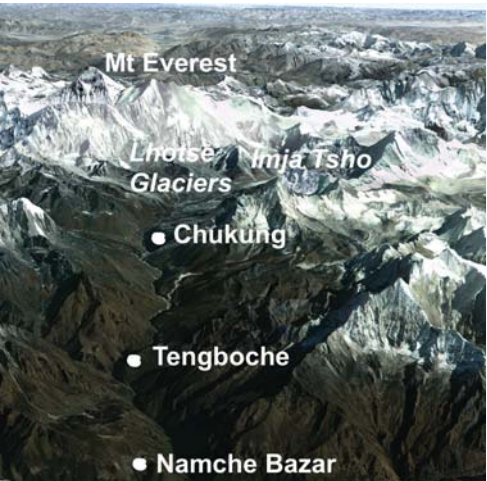
In an example of local people adapting to the climate crisis with little outside help, the people of Nepal's Khumbu region are building embankments to protect themselves from increasingly frequent floods pouring out of melting glaciers upstream.

While major glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) that destroy infrastructure get a lot of press, these local initiatives in remote and high altitude locations do not get much attention.

While on a field survey of the impacts of the 25 April and 12 May 2015 earthquakes on three of Nepal's potentially dangerous glacial lakes — Imja, Tso Rolpa and Thulagi — local lodge owners in Chukhung village (4,730m) talked of a mysterious flood from the Lhotse Glacier, immediately upstream, on 25 May that year.

The USAID-supported study followed our recently completed High Mountain Adaptation Partnership (HiMAP) program, which worked with communities in the Khumbu and Cordillera Blanca of Peru to develop local adaptation plans of action based on concurrent glacial lake and climate change studies, which were routinely shared with local people.

Further investigation revealed that the source of the Lhotse flood was the interior of the glacier itself, now similar to a massive piece of Swiss cheese, with hundreds of water-



GOOGLE EARTH

filled caves in the shrinking and rapidly ablating glacier. Many of the caves are linked to surface meltwater ponds that can drain rapidly, in some cases triggering the release of water from dozens of conduits that converge to create a major flood.

The 6m high wave generated by the May 2015 flood destroyed the bridge to Island Peak Base Camp and narrowly missed Chukung. It came in the middle of the night and, combined with the memory of the devastating earthquakes the month before, caused widespread panic. Cell phone messages were passed rapidly down the valley. People from Chukung to Lukla gathered their loved ones and, carrying the elderly, ran for higher

W elting s

requent glacial floods
outside help



ALL PHOTOS: ALTON C BYERS



ground. They feared it might be a massive GLOF from Imja Tsho (5,010m), but in fact it was a smaller flood that impacted only the uppermost settlements.

After the flood, local volunteers in the Khumbu Alpine Conservation Committee decided to begin building a dozen or more gabions, or rock-filled wire cages, immediately next to Chukung, on its southernmost side.

A year later, on 12 June 2016, a second and larger conduit flood from Lhotse occurred, this time headed directly for Chukung. But the flood waters were successfully diverted by the gabions built the year before, resulting in only minor flooding

of several lodge courtyards immediately next to the river. Armed with the knowledge of their successful action, the community continued to devote its resources to construct more gabion walls along the glacial streams that run on the north and south sides of the settlement.

Yet another englacial conduit flood — this one from the Lhotse Nup Glacier — occurred a few weeks ago. Once again, there was minimal damage to the village thanks to the new gabions.

With support from the Nepal Mountaineering Association, the Buffer Zone Council, local municipal government and their own resources, villagers have been able



LOCAL PREPAREDNESS:

(Clockwise from top left)
Gabions next to Chukung
village in Khumbu.

Lhotse Glacier, Chukung
village to the far left.

Englacial conduit flood just
after bursting.

Fritz Müller and the
Tengboche Rinpoche in 1956.

Lhotse Nup Glacier, which destroyed half of Chukung's grazing land as well as the prayer wheel ghatta at Phunki. They felt Müller had angered the gods by his research activities on the Khumbu glacier.

Fortunately, the then 14-year-old abbot of Tengboche Monastery, the Venerable Ngawang Tenzing Zangpo Rinpoche, intervened on Müller's behalf and all was forgiven. These days glacier floods happen nearly every year, but they rarely make the national news since they are so much smaller than the major GLOFs that destroy downstream infrastructure, they occur in high and remote locations, and sometimes escape the notice of even local people.

The climate change adaptation demonstrated by Chukung has yet to make global news, but it is one more example of how Himalayan people themselves, with little or no help from the outside, are quietly adapting to the impacts of climate change in real and effective ways.

Other initiatives include bridges being built higher to cope with more frequent and higher floods, and lodges and new infrastructure constructed well above floodplains that until recently were considered safe. Many gabions are being built along riverbanks that only 10 years ago had none.

And life in the high Himalaya goes on. 🇳🇵

Alton C Byers, PhD, is Senior Research Associate and Faculty at the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR), University of Colorado at Boulder, in the US.

to fund and use effective local technology in response to what appears to be a new era of fairly routine flooding from the glaciers.

Such phenomena have occurred for decades, but never with the apparently increasing frequency of the past 10-15 years. Chukung probably should never have been built next to a vulnerable flood plain, but when most of the lodges were constructed 20 years ago, glacier floods happened only every 30-60 years, not annually.

Such floods were so infrequent that in the mid-1950s, glaciologist Fritz Müller was nearly kicked out of the Khumbu by villagers angered over a large flood, most likely from

EVENTS



Bird Watch

Bird Conservation Nepal is organising a Saturday bird watching trip to the Suryabinayak Forest in Bhaktapur. This event hopes to spread awareness about some of the 800 bird species of Nepal. Binoculars and necessary materials will be provided.
10 August, 7am-12:30pm, Suryabinayak Forest, Bhaktapur, 9841136123

Bungalow Talk

Bungalow Talk, an initiative of Bungalow Bar and Kitchen, is a different kind of Ladies Night. It is a place for women to talk to each other about balancing their personal and professional life.
14 August, 6pm onwards, Bungalow Bar and Kitchen, Naxal, 9802032396

ZY Street Style Runway

Fashion takes to the cobbled streets of Basantapur in this street style runway. Work by Kichaa and Aid Ray, along with Paragon Protalus, will be showcased.
10 August, 7pm onwards, Basantapur Darbar Square, 9801020786



Queer Indigenous March

Queer Youth Group and the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities is organising a rally to celebrate International Day of the World's Indigenous People and spread awareness about queer indigenous people.
9 August, 11am onwards, Bhrikutimandap, 9808262699

Research Seminar

Join a research seminar by Jingwei Li, Anthropologist and Associate Professor at Sichuan University in China, titled, Imagining Communities through the Lens of Civilisations: Rethinking on People of Nepal. 11 August, 3pm onwards, Martin Chautari, Thapathali (01) 4102027



Mystic Himalayas

Mystic Himalayas, by Tenzin Doma Lama, remagines what artwork inspired by Himalayan culture would look like if it was never influenced by monasticism or the aristocracy of Buddhism and other large sects. The show will be inaguarated on 9 August at 5pm.
10-16 August, 11am-6pm, MCUBE Gallery, Chakupat (01) 5260110



The Storyyellers

Session 36 of the dynamic story-telling event, The Storyyellers, brings small incidents to life. Sit back, relax and listen to the extraordinary stories of ordinary people.
14 August, 5:45pm onwards, Rs200 (booking price) & Rs250 (door price), 25 Hours, CALM, Tangal, 9851242128

Period Workshop

Celebrate periods, discuss menstruation taboos, make your own reusable cloth pads and make one for a woman in need. Artists from Taiwan, Pakistan and Nepal will share their period experiences and the collaborative artwork that they have created to break menstruation taboos.
13 August, 2pm onwards, Rs500, NexUs Culture Nepal, Patan (01) 5522393

MUSIC



Trishna Gurung

Trishna Gurung, known for her hit songs “Khani Ho Yahmu” and “Maya Pirati”, will be performing with The Collab Band this Friday.
10 August, Play Boy Lounge and Club, 9843885050

Masquerade Night

Adrian Pradhan and Rajesh Nepali will take centre stage on Friday evening.
9 August, 7pm onwards, Prive Nepal, 9818123232

Charity Concert

Association of St. Mary's Alumnae Nepal (ASMAN), is organising a charity concert to raise money to build libraries in government schools. Featuring Abhaya and the Steam Engines, Salil Maharjan, Kutumba and more.
10 August, 3pm onwards, Rs1000, Chhaya Center, Thamel (01) 4245726



SICK Individuals

With #1 singles and performances at some of the most popular music festivals around the world, Jim and Ray, known as SICK Individuals, are in Nepal to perform their greatest hits.
14 August, Prive Nepal, 9818123232

Pranav Pracchai

Preparing to debut his EP, Pranav Pachhai will be singing covers of The Beatles and John Mayer, along with his originals.
9 August, 7:30pm onwards, Mamagoto Nepal, 9808155799

DINING

Singapore Special

Celebrate Singapore National Day and Lee Kwan Yew with the flavours of Singapore. The Singaporean Head Chef will be serving Chilli Crab, Hainanese Chicken Rice, Laksa, Curry Puff and a variety of SG vegetarian cuisines.
9 August, 5pm onwards, Chimes Restaurant, Sanepa (01) 5549673



Piano B

Taste the best of Italy at PianoB, one of the most authentic Italian restaurants in Nepal. Try the Caprese a modo mio and the Ravioli al pesce.
12pm-10pm, Bhanimandal, 9813449587

Aloft Kathmandu

Enjoy a lavish breakfast buffet at Kathmandu's newest hotel. Indulge in chocolate-covered waffles, sizzling sausages, baked goods and fresh juices.
Till 17 August, Rs1,200 for two, Aloft Kathmandu, Thamel (01) 5252000

Lucknowi Zaaika

Grab a glass of chilled beer and a variety of Lucknowi Biryani in the sunny Shambala Gardens.
11am-9:30pm, 1-16 August, Rs1,350+, Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, (01) 4412999



Waffle Love

Satisfy your sweet tooth with bubble waffles covered in chocolatey goodness, whipped cream, candies and even ice-cream.
10am-8:30pm, Basantapur, 9813415777

GETAWAY



Hotel Barahi

Located just beyond the banks of Phewa Lake, Hotel Barahi offers stunning views and luxury rooms. The rooms are decorated with rustic pieces, earthy tones and a clean design that will leave you feeling relaxed.
Lakeside, Pokhara (61) 460617

YMH Namche

Venture beyond the city right to the foothills of the Himalayas as you enter Namche Bazaar. Enjoy a homey stay at the Yeti Mountain Home, Namche. With its warm and traditional Khumbu designs, hearty foods, spectacular views of the mountains and Himalayan Healers spa, the 2-day walk is worth it.
Namche Bazar, Solukhumbu, 9813905863



Hotel Baha

The brick walls, wooden beams and cosy spaces of this Bhaktapur hotel are reminiscent of the cultural heritage of the old town.
Bhaktapur (01) 6616810

Summit River Lodge

The Summit River Lodge is an expansive 16-lodge property that boasts an infinity pool, semi-tropical vegetation and authentic Nepali cuisine made from local organic produce. The rustic lodge incorporates traditional wood designs with minimalistic accents.
Kurintar, Dhading (01) 4371397



Jal Mahal

Hotel Jal Mahal lives up to its name as it boasts three large swimming pools on its sprawling property. So even if you don't stay a night, a dip in one of the pools is a must to ward off the summer heat.
Gharipatan, Pokhara, 9851054404



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OUR PICK

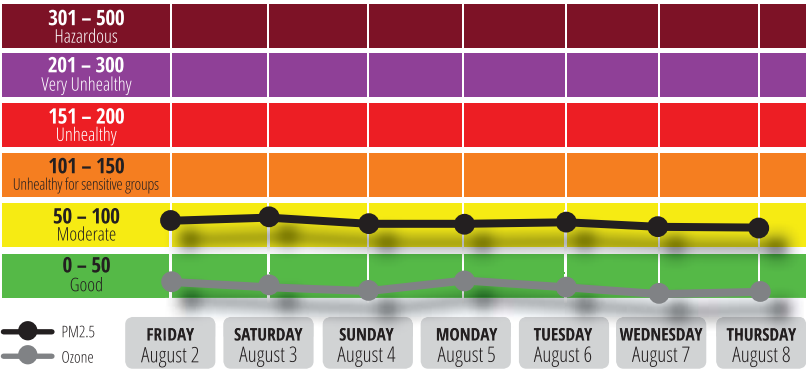


Opened in Kathmandu on 2 August

Khandani Shafakhana is the story of a perennially money-crunched medical representative who starts working in a sex clinic. While the movie takes a humorous approach to intimacy and the perils that come with it, it is also seen as an opportunity to break the taboo and stigma surrounding sexual diseases. Starring Sonakshi Sinha and directed by Shilpi Kapoor.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

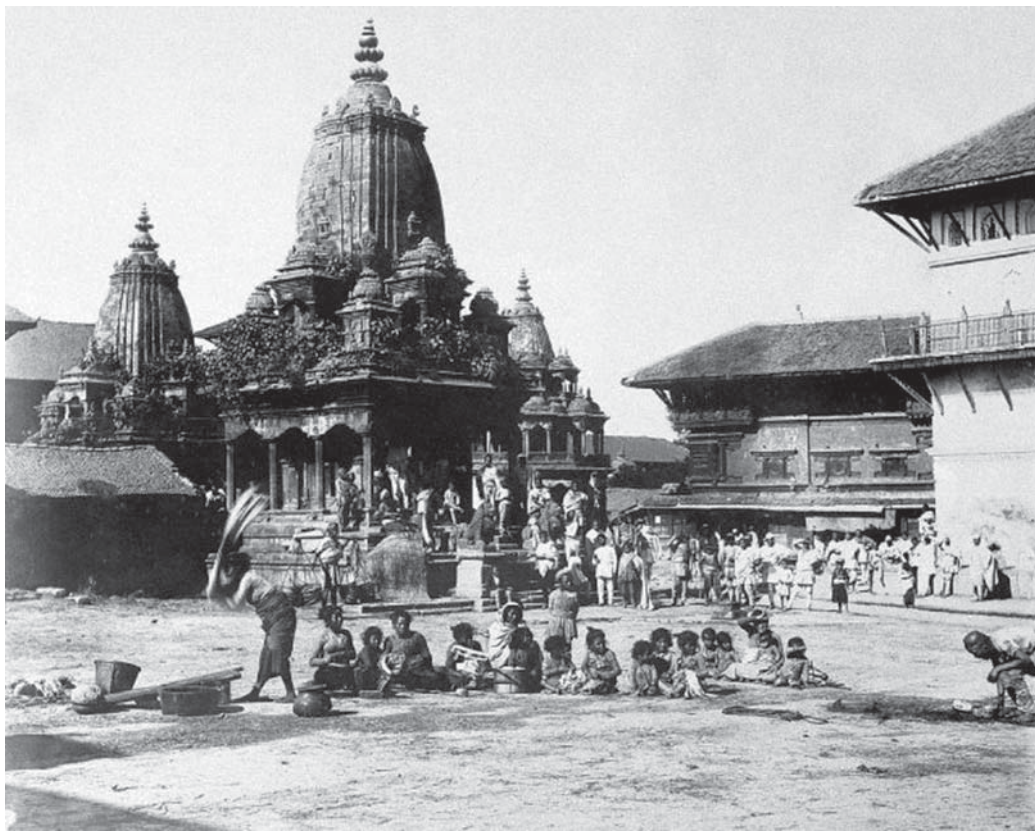
KATHMANDU, 2 - 8 August



Kathmandu's pollution level remained consistently in the yellow 'Moderate' zone throughout the week despite continuous rain every day. Remember, these are daily averages, so at rush hour the Air Quality Index went higher into the dangerous zone. It is clear that even daily rainfall in the monsoon is not enough to scrub the particulate pollution from Kathmandu's air. The pollution levels are highest at busy intersections, or along sidewalks. And we are not even talking about toxic gases.
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

Selective outrage about heritage loss

There is fury about cultural sites being defiled, but no protests to protect relics recently unearthed in Patan



DHARMA MAHARJAN AND OTHERS



MONIKA DEUPALA

Sewa Bhattarai

Contractors were using an excavator to dig a new community water storage tank in Patan's Mangal Bazar last month when they unearthed an ancient sunken water spout.

Legend had it that the Sumangal Dhara spout had water with such miraculous qualities that kings who washed there were granted their wish. The kings of Bhaktapur got jealous and asked the Patan king for a favour: build a Shiva temple above the very spout.

Being a close kin of the Malla clan, the Patan royal ended up burying the spout to build the temple of Bhasmeswar Mahadev, thus depriving himself of the water that could deliver miracles.

The legend survives to this day, but neither the temple nor the water spout do. The small domed shrine replaced the grand shikhara-style stone temple destroyed in 1934, and the Sumangal Dhara was rediscovered last month only to be hurriedly reburied for the concrete lining of the new water tank.

At a time when there are protests about the *Guthi* Bill, Rani Pokhari and other heritage sites threatened by modern infrastructure, there has been little outrage about Sumangal and Bhasmeswar at the Patan World Heritage Site.

The temple was probably built in the 16th century, and after being destroyed in 1934 was hastily replaced by Juddha Shumsher's administration, smaller in size and different in structure.

"Back then, the principles of heritage conservation and reconstruction were not followed, and no one thought of preserving the original structure," said Kaji Pyakurel of the Department of Architecture (DoA).

The legend of the sunken spout that could perform miracles resurfaced this June as the government began digging up the area. The stone ruins of the Sumangal Dhara surfaced with a brick lining, a stone floor and two pieces of stone spouts.

"It seemed to be the historical spout, but the

dozer had already damaged some of the structure and it was monsoon season, so we could not investigate further," Pyakurel said. The historic site has now been covered with concrete to create a park on top of the reservoir.

"When the earthquake struck in 2015, we realised that open spaces are valuable," said Sumendra Tamrakar, who owns a tea shop next to the proposed park and did not seem unduly concerned about the historical importance of the site. "This open space was not being used. Once it is turned into a park with benches, tourists could enjoy the view of Patan Darbar Square from here, and that would be a boost for our business."

Ward Chair Narayan Lal Awale also did not seem much bothered. He told us: "Reconstructing that stone spout today does not make sense. The square has changed since the Malla era. If we have water coming out from there now, there is no place for it to flow. It would become a garbage dump. We want to be practical rather than sentimental about

what serves the needs of the people better."

Awale insists the DoA is responsible for conservation or reconstruction of the stone spout, and that the ward office has taken care to construct the water tank away from it so that the archaeological remains are undisturbed. The DoA claims the ward office was unauthorised to dig there in the first place, and Patan could lose its World Heritage listing with such development.

Asked why this Malla-era gem lies neglected, the ward office and DoA are in agreement — they say there is too little information to act on. "We cannot just start rebuilding this temple on a hunch. There were no remaining pieces, and no records of what it looked like," Awale claimed.

However, old photos and sketches of the temple do exist, and heritage conservationists say that the real reason behind this reluctance to preserve the temple and spout is that no one sees personal benefit in it.

"There were angry protests about the Guthi Bill because it involved expensive urban real estate. But there is no personal property or

PAST GLORY: Bhasmeswar Mahadev Temple before it was destroyed by the 1934 earthquake, with Uma Maheswar on the left and Patan Darbar behind it (*left*).

What remains of Bhasmeswar Temple this week near the Sumangal Dhara which is now covered up by a new water supply tank (*right*).

money to be made here, and no one cares about faith," laments Patan resident and culture expert Hariram Joshi, 84.

Joshi was born two years after the 1934 earthquake, so he did not see the temple and spout in their full glory. But he knows enough of local history to be sure that the Bhasmeswar and the Uma Maheswar temple next to it were grand stone monuments. With the nearby Radha Krishna temple, the three were the holy trinity of Patan.

"Of course, they both should be reconstructed so that our heritage can be preserved," says Joshi. "But our government has totally ignored this landmark of vital importance, which is a sad thing." ■



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Reclaiming singing bowls

A recent performance and book/CD launch helped to demystify the singing bowls that are today probably best known as objects for sale in tourist areas. Several metal bowls lined up on the stage were reminiscent of *jal tarang*, which produces music from ceramic bowls filled with water. However, the music that performer Aman Shahi created from the bowls was distinctly different. A tinkling sound reverberated when he hit the bowls, while a deep vibration ran through the crowd when he stroked them in a circular motion. Shahi performed at the launch of his CD, *Meditation vibes*, and a book by Salil Subedi, *Singing Bowl Sound Healing: The Swoyambhu Method of Aman Shahi*, in Kathmandu on Friday. The event also included a discussion that demystified a very new musical instrument. Although singing bowls seem to be popular with tourists as musical instruments, there are few historical

records of them being used to make music. Many sellers claim that the bowl is a Tibetan healing instrument that also aids meditation, but its actual origins are shrouded in history. Today the bowls are used across Nepal for cooking, eating, and making offerings at monasteries. During the hippie influx of the '70s, they were sold as souvenirs, and many claimed a Tibetan provenance for them to enhance their mystique. It is widely believed that one of these sellers, Jit Bahadu Shahi, coined the name singing bowl. Though the bowls may be associated with Kathmandu's Tantric mystique and Tibetan origins, Tibetan communities dissociate themselves from singing bowls. However, Nepali musicians have been quietly experimenting with them, formulating ways to use singing bowls in music as well as meditation. That is where the book comes in, exploring the bowl's history and practices in Nepal.

"It is time we claimed this instrument as ours, and named the various methods and practices in Nepal, or it will be too late. That way we will establish this instrument, as well as musicians who have mastered it," says the book's author Salil Subedi. Many methods of playing the bowls have developed in Nepal. The book focuses on the Swoyambhu method, which uses three bells and shamanic beating of the bowl. It was named after Shreekrishna Shahi, who lives in Swoyambhu, and is now popularised by his nephew Aman Shahi in Thailand. "I use this method for many kinds of sound healing," says Shahi. "Immersion in this sound has been known to cure ailments like insomnia, migraine, etc." While much research has been done on the singing bowl's healing properties and its use in meditation, it is rarer to find the bowls used only as a musical instrument. Shahi's CD includes many kinds of music played on the bowl, including eastern classical ragas and the bowls combined with classical instruments like flutes, and also as a soothing accompaniment to meditation. The event ended with a performance by the Trikaal band, with the singing bowl enhancing the melodious and soothing music, proof that its unique sound and wide range have plenty of potential in modern music.  **Sewa Bhattarai**

Book: Singing Bowl Sound Healing: The Swoyambhu method of Aman Shahi by Salil Subedi
Pages: 108, Price: Rs3,500
Published by: Singing Bowl Centre, Chiangmai

CD: Meditation vibes by Aman Shahi
Price: Rs300



NEPAL EMBASSY, INDIA

REST IN PEACE: Nepal's Ambassador to India, Nilambar Acharya, pays his final respects to former Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in Delhi on Wednesday.



ROBOTICS ASSOCIATION OF NEPAL

MAN VS ROBOT: Ambassador of Qatar, Yousuf Bin Mohamed Al-Hail, takes the controls during a friendly robot football match organised by the Robotics Association of Nepal in Kathmandu on Saturday.



DOEIA NEPAL

ACHIEVERS: Nepali students receive the Duke of Edinburgh's International Gold Award from British Ambassador to Nepal, Richard Morris, in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



UNFPANEPAL

YOUTH CHANGEMAKERS: Actor Reecha Sharma attends the 14th International Youth Media Summit held in Pokhara last week.

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His last journey home to Nepal

Bishnu KC from Piuthan becomes a mere statistic in the grim saga of migrant labour

Shrestha Dhar
A young man from Piuthan, a small village in the hills of Nepal, has become a statistic in the grim saga of migrant labour. Bishnu KC, 32, was found dead in a ditch near his home village. He was on his way back to Nepal after working in the Middle East. His family is now trying to get his body back home for a proper burial. The incident has once again highlighted the plight of Nepali migrant workers who are often exploited and abandoned by their employers abroad.

Plight of Nepali migrant workers

Our account of the final journey of Bishnu KC as his body was transported from Kathmandu to his home village in Piuthan left many in tears. He is now just one of 670 Nepali workers overseas who died in the last 12 months. Below, and on *page 2*, is a selection of the the online comments about this article and on the plight of Nepali migrant workers in general.

Avarice of government officials has destroyed the lives of the people in our country. It was heart-wrenching to read this article. Hope this moves the heart of these officials and that they work for the nation and create opportunities/awareness for people before it's too late.

Evelyn Moktan

The sad thing is Human Rights Watch doesn't seem to exist in the Middle East. I wonder why. Where are the labour rights organisations when such staggering numbers of deaths are being reported from South Asia alone? Are we mere spectators and consumers of such news? There are stories of major funds being donated by East Sheikhs and Princes of the Middle East to human rights groups but sadly this is where the work begins and ends. For how long will we continue to keep quiet and count the number of coffins to put data on a sheet?

Haushala Zimba

I feel extremely sad that so many Nepalis are lured by these manpower companies in Kathmandu to work in Middle Eastern countries in extreme heat. Shame on our government and these manpower company owners who are enjoying the blood money.

Nishma Manandhar

Ministers talk about having signed labour pacts with Arab countries. Feel proud when you can create new jobs within the country and youngsters do not try to flee their own motherland for lack of employment and stability.

Pun Khagen

This is hard to watch as it is so heart-breaking — people leaving Nepal need to know their rights and be treated with respect when they are working overseas. This is nothing short of criminal. The government needs to make the companies accountable as it's basically a corporate crime but totally ignored.

Sara Parker

A very sad story. Many of these are caused by unscrupulous bullying employers, such as security guard firms across Asia. Work is made up of 12-hour shifts, no weekends, no public holidays. Pay is always late by 15 days at least. Passports are withheld to prevent escape.

Koh Celine

This is a murder, not natural death. He was promised work in food service but instead ended up on a construction site toiling in 50C heat. The Nepal government must take steps against the company that cheated KC.

Md Inam Siddiqui

This is such a niche topic not known to many people around the world: the reality of modern-day slavery. Unfortunate workers from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh travel miles away from their families after paying a huge sum and falling in debt to get a job and work in such a dangerous environment and inhumane conditions, but the power of the Middle East countries overcomes the voices of hundreds of thousands. How is this acceptable? Why are those lives worth so little?

Parisha Bishwakarma

At this rate we are going to have a huge problem of brain drain in Nepal — there will be no resources in the country. It will hit us hardest then. No one is concerned about it yet.

Sagar Sigdel

This is so sad, we must stop it. Youth have plenty of job in Nepal I believe.

Roshan Raj Shrestha

The next time people go ga-ga over the amazing architectural landscape of many Middle Eastern countries, don't ever forget their foundations stand at a cost of many human lives. It's terrible working at a construction site

when the temperature is 50 degrees. Respect for all our Asian migrant workers who go through that hell every day due to their weak economic conditions back home.

Sandesha Rayapa-Garbajal

Sad reality of Nepal. I wonder why these videos don't touch the hearts of our politicians.

Pramod Neupane

It is heartbreaking to see so many of our young Nepalis dying in such dire circumstances. Why are we not able to create jobs so that they never have to become slaves

in another country? Frustrating to see our government stand by and watch in complete silence.

Sunaina Saraf

My country and its status: one of my national leaders is having a rest in Singapore and another a vacation in Dubai. And my people are dying abroad for lack of basic needs.

Midesh Maharjan

Waiting for the day when each and every Nepali can earn and feed their families by working in their own land.

Ravi Khadka

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Nepal TB cases grossly

Paul Nunn and
Bhim Singh Thakuri

Tuberculosis remains a major public health problem in Nepal, with over 32,000 notified cases and an estimated 7,000 deaths per year.

Nepal participated at the United Nations High Level Meeting on TB in September 2018 and, with all the other nations of the world, committed to end TB as a public health problem by 2035.

In June, a team of international TB experts reviewed the country's progress against the disease, visiting five provinces. Their findings: Nepal is not on track to meet the 2035 commitment. What is more, cases of TB in the country are much higher than we previously estimated.

There had been concern that notified cases were just the tip of the iceberg, as there was evidence that many TB cases were being missed. The Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) supported by the Global Fund against AIDS, TB and Malaria and the World Health Organization, conducted a survey to measure for the first time the amount of TB in Nepal.

Despite the terrain, this was one of the most thorough surveys ever done. Final results will be published at the end of the year, but preliminary findings show there is about two-thirds more TB than was previously estimated.

How could this be? For over 20 years, Nepal has had a National TB Programme (NTP), which provided nationwide coverage of basic services for drug sensitive TB and, more recently, for drug resistant TB. Treatment results compare favourably with other countries.

The NTP has successfully introduced modern rapid

diagnostic technology (GeneXpert) and electronic reporting of cases, started a collaboration with the private sector to ensure proper management of patients, and begun a program to find and treat children with TB.

But long-standing weaknesses in management and organisation, compounded now by the federalisation process, have allowed some of the essential functions of the NTP to disintegrate, and others are at serious risk. The laboratory network for diagnosing TB and the system of supportive supervision that ensures standards are maintained through all levels of government should be restored immediately.

This is because district centres, key to TB control strategies, were abolished — and then reinstated — but with far fewer staff than previously.

Accurate surveillance of the cases notified and the flow of information to the centre is endangered. Federalisation has so far not created clear mechanisms that will ensure these essential functions continue. If decentralised procurement of drugs continues, it will increase procurement costs significantly and risk the purchase of poor quality drugs.

Successive governments have allowed the technical staff of the National TB Centre to be hollowed out, eroding its capacity to develop policies and lead their implementation. The National Strategic Plan, written three years ago, is underfunded and only partially implemented. Most staff responsible for TB activities are now not trained to carry out the work.

Diagnosis is mostly by outdated and insensitive sputum microscopy. Transport of specimens to laboratories is still inadequate. Consequently, GeneXpert utilisation has been slow to increase.



Communities against a communicable

TB testing by and for communities can free Nepal from its biggest infectious killer

Olivia Biermann

Ram, 65, from Makwanpur was nothing but skin and bones. He had lost his appetite and was coughing. His back pain made it difficult for him to walk and care for his chickens and buffalos, which were his main source of income. Ram was very sick, but his disease remained undiagnosed.

Over the course of a year, he had visited several private and public health facilities, and spent over Rs69,000 for different treatments. Nothing helped. Ram had given up hope of being healthy.

A partner organisation of the national TB program was targeting high-risk areas like Makwanpur for the disease by setting up neighbourhood camps to test people. Ram met volunteer Sangita, who collected his sputum sample and tested it. Ram had TB. He started treatment immediately. Six months later, the treatment completed, he was cured.

There are about 10,000 Nepalis like Ram, sick with TB but never diagnosed and treated. They continue to unknowingly transmit the disease to their families, friends

and colleagues — fuelling the epidemic. Poverty increases the likelihood that a person will get sick with TB. In turn, TB can make people and their families a lot poorer.

Worldwide, TB is the number one infectious killer. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 3.7 million people have TB, but do not even know it.

One strategy to find these 'missing' TB patients is community-based screening (active case-finding). Setting up a camp, as in Ram's neighbourhood, is only one of many examples of how this type of outreach screening can be done. It could also mean testing friends and family members of a TB patient or offering screening to high-risk groups, such as persons with HIV or diabetes, or people living in a homeless shelter.

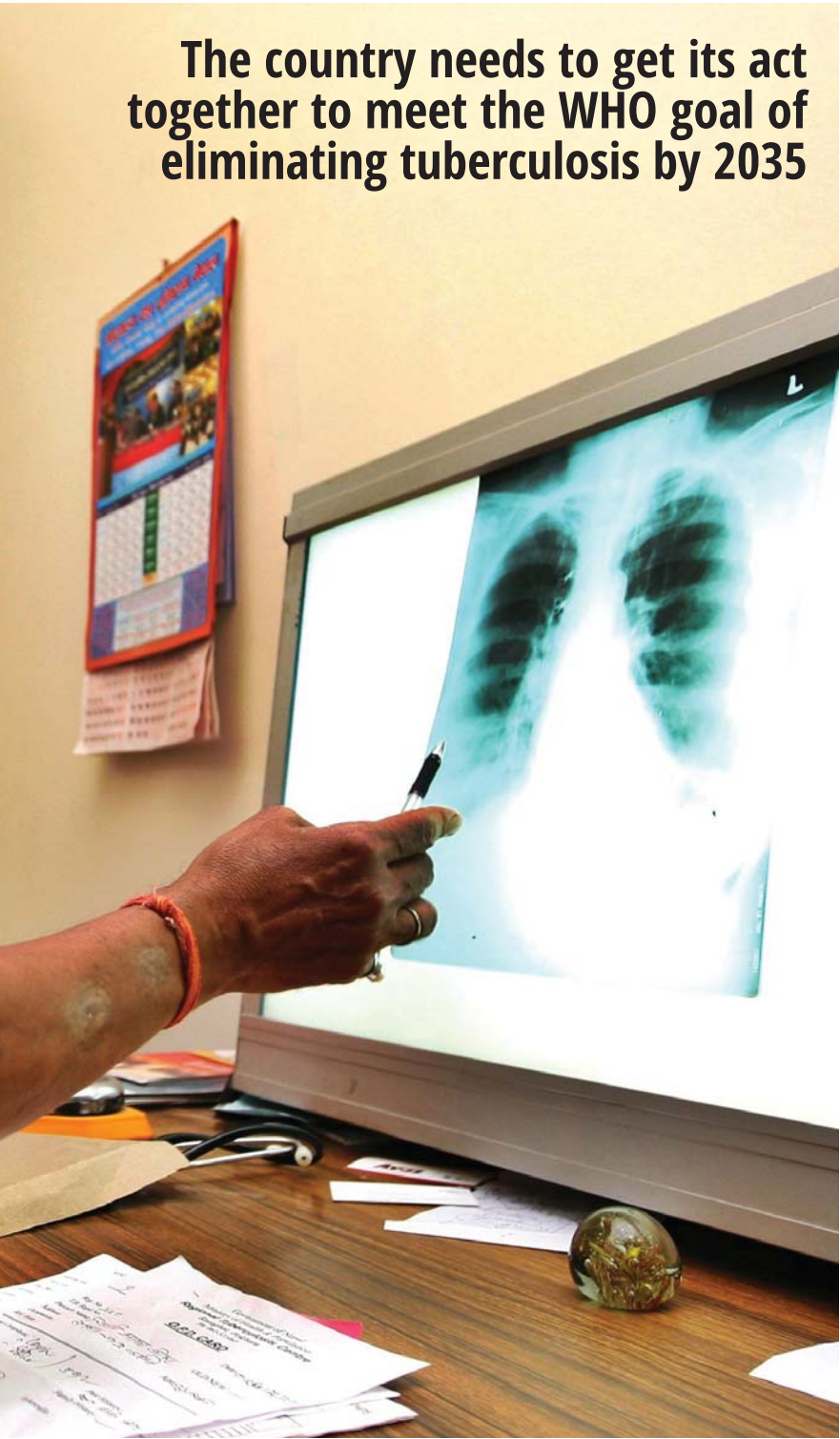
Active case-finding is not a silver bullet to end TB. There are no silver bullets, in fact. Consequently, in countries with many TB patients like Nepal, community-based TB screening is a necessary but potentially double-edged sword in the global TB emergency.

Community screening can waste resources or increase stigma, but it can also decrease suffering



underestimated

The country needs to get its act together to meet the WHO goal of eliminating tuberculosis by 2035



NT ARCHIVE

The private health sector is massive and growing. Over 70% of people with TB first go to private clinics, yet diagnosis and treatment are of variable quality, leading to drug resistance.

The joint monitoring mission recommended the following:

- Stop the collapse of the NTP by engaging the MOHP in discussions on federalisation to ensure that the essential functions of TB control are preserved, with clear roles and responsibilities for the newly appointed staff.
- Increase investment to provide technical support to all levels of the NTP through teams of staff at central and provincial levels. Let a partner employ these staff if the government cannot do so immediately.
- Use these teams to address the massive training gap that hypermobility of staff and federalisation have created.
- Phase out sputum microscopy for diagnosis and move to GeneXpert testing, and make sure contracted organisations achieve case-finding targets. If they do not, stop the activities and redirect the resources to more effective areas.
- Fully engage with the private sector to ensure patients there are diagnosed and treated according to national guidelines.
- Similarly engage with community-based organisations to help find cases and ensure they finish treatment.

Nepal must act on all these recommendations without delay to get back on track to meet its commitments. 🇳🇵

Paul Nunn was Team Leader of the international mission and Bhim Singh Tinkari is a recent Director of the National Tuberculosis Centre.



PRAKASH SINGH

Environmental destruction is a medical emergency

Landslides can be deadly, but they also endanger lives of patients by preventing them from reaching hospitals

Bikash Gauchan and **Nathaniel Uchtmann** in Achham

Last month Kalpana BK delivered a healthy newborn baby on the way to Bayalpata Hospital in Achham, but her placenta did not come out spontaneously. As a female community health volunteer, she was usually the one providing support for women before, during and after they give birth. But when the road to the hospital was blocked for nearly 10 hours by a landslide (above) she became the emergency, bleeding massively and was increasingly short of breath.

Luckily, once she finally made it to the hospital near Sanfegagar, Kalpana BK's retained placenta was removed and she was transfused with blood. Today she is recovering from her life-threatening post-partum haemorrhage.

More recently at Bayalpata, a surgical team was preparing to perform an emergency caesarean section to save both the mother and foetus. But the surgery was delayed for 20 minutes because of lack of water needed for the surgical team to scrub in, protecting the patient and her baby against infections. The delay significantly heightened the risk that the two lives would be lost, not saved.

Across Nepal, traditional springs are going dry, and hospitals are also affected. Without adequate water, staff at health facilities are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain cleanliness and best practices for preventing infections. When this happens, hospital-acquired infections are likely to rise.

Due to a combination of factors, such as lower rainfall and rising temperatures caused by climate change, rampant construction of poor-designed roads, deforestation, overpopulation, overconsumption and inadequate maintenance of pipes and wells, Nepal's mountains are suffering water shortages.

Roads are supposed to improve access of patients to hospitals, but have themselves become killers in two ways. Haphazard construction triggers landslides that endanger lives, and roads are blocked, delaying patients like Kalpana BK from reaching hospitals in time.

These two recent examples of a landslide and water shortage in Achham reflect the adverse impacts of worsening environmental conditions on our health system and their possibly devastating impact on people who are already ill and often vulnerable. So-called 'natural disasters' actually have a strong connection to human decision-making and are frequently caused by reckless road construction that does not pay sufficient attention to environmental factors.

Navin Bhatt, staff physician at Bayalpata Hospital, says environmental degradation can undermine health care delivery: "Deforestation is one of the causes of landslides, which lead to roads being blocked, hampering the transportation of people who are ill to the hospital. Rising temperatures are resulting in more snake bite cases. The quality of healthcare services is affected by environmental pollution."

The urgency to recognise that health and the environment are strongly connected is growing worldwide. To raise awareness about the issue and motivate grassroots solutions to these problems, the World Health Organisation announced in its 'Ten threats to Global Health in 2019' that air pollution and climate change are the number one public health threats.

Nepal Government officials at all levels, health workers, environmental experts and development partners need to collaborate with advocates for ecological balance. Only when we work hand-in-hand rather than in isolation, can we take tangible steps to prevent environmental damage and restore healthy and resilient ecosystems. 🇳🇵

Bikash Gauchan is a doctor in Achham. Nathaniel Uchtmann is a medical doctor and lawyer.

disease



PROACTIVE MEASURES: Health care volunteers during an outreach screening program in Makwanpur as part of active case-finding for tuberculosis in local communities.

and transmission – it all depends on how it has been tailored and put into practice. That is to say that this 'sword' should be used carefully, and by those who know when, where and how to mobilise the community.

Tailoring outreach screening

approaches means considering a) global and local data and evidence, which are limited but steadily growing, and b) using the most accurate diagnostic tools, such as the molecular GeneXpert test not widely available in Nepal yet. (See article above)

Active case-finding is a balancing act. Tailoring and integrating outreach screening approaches implies that we must consider and strike a balance between:

- Focusing on transmission versus individual health outcomes
- Public health versus risk of harm for individuals
- Employing the necessary human resources versus relying on volunteers
- Achieving long-term success versus containing costs in the short-term
- Proactive prevention versus reactive medical interventions.

What Nepal needs to meet its 2030 TB target, contained in the Sustainable Development Goals, is a person-centred public health and sustainability mindset. This is not an oxymoron. We need to keep the big picture in mind so that the 10,000 missing Nepali TB patients like Ram can be identified and treated. Only then can we work towards ending the TB epidemic. 🇳🇵

Olivia Biermann of the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm used to work for the WHO and is researching health systems and policy in low- and middle-income countries.



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Guy Jatra

To commemorate the International Day of the Cow on 16 August, the Ass brings you this unabridged answer to an English school exam essay by a Grade 10 student that got the highest marks for originality, creativity and grammar:

Q: Write an essay on a domestic animal that you like the most (50 marks)

A. The international animal I like mostly is Kangaroo. But the domestic animal I like most is our she-cow. There are many holy cows in Nepal. One of them is our Armed Forces. The other is lying dead at Balkhu Bridge because it ate 350 plastic bags.

This female cow is a mammal and is full of many uses for man throughout our ancient history. A cow is giving curd for eating, and turd for burning. Everything cow does is useful: cow urine is healthy drink for some ex-prime ministers. Cow patty is full of antibiotics and hormones, and can be used as disinfectant inside household. Under cow are four udders, which is the most useful component. Cows have two horns on head top, and can be horny.

Because she is holy, cows are also good for worshipping. That is why we honour the cow one day every year on Gai Jatra by poking fun at our leaders. It is a very funny day in Nepal. Nothing is sacred to us on this day. We can poke fun at everyone and everything, we can even call our school principal a cow.

Sometimes, if we become very brave and foolish on Gai Jatra, we can make funny pictures about the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock by drawing him in newspaper without any underwear, so you can see his private sector. Hahahahaha.

Kathmandu's streets are made for cows, and their favourite snack is to eat the garbage. They like newspapers mostly because they are good for the digestive system. They also like to eat junk food like Wai Wai wrappers.

Another useful thing for cows to do is to act as traffic islands. Cows in Kathmandu regulate traffic by sitting on middle of road and serve as bovine road dividers. Without cow, traffic would be chaos. Kathmandu Metropolitan Council is paying strict attention to this by making cows wear reflective jackets so they can be seen at night.

A boy cow is called Bull. He is very useful in our agriculture society to pull hoe and for locomotion. Without bull, Tarai region will grind to halt. Even on bandh days bullock carts are allowed on the roads, so they are vital for public transportation.

Nepalis like very much bullshit because we have learnt to make fire from cow's backside. And this is why we have a Gobarment off the people, four the people, and buy the people.



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