Musical chairs

When it finally happened Wednesday night, the much awaited ministerial reshuffle was a more shuffle. Prime Minister KP Oli presided over a game of musical chairs in which many ministers kept their old seats, others swapped them, and some were unceremoniously unseated to be replaced by newbies.

The reshuffle, as well as the mass resignation of a dozen prime ministerial advisers last week, was a deccy more than a genuine attempt to assuage public dissatisfaction with the NCP government’s non-performance. The real purpose was to defuse discontent within the party, and put loyalists in charge during Oli’s prolonged absence for kidney treatment abroad.

The two alpha males of Nepali politics, Oli and NCP Co-chair Pushpa Kamal, also agreed to divide up their work. Dahal will now be caretaker chair of the NCP, and has agreed to let Oli serve three more years. He knows the prime minister may not be able to serve his full term.

After letting go of his advisers, Oli brought back three of the most influential ones to the Prime Minister’s Office. In the reshuffle, those with the most important portfolios were retained: ministers of home and foreign affairs, finance and defence have kept their jobs, while the health and law ministers have swapped portfolios for reasons unknown.

Two popular ministers with relatively better reputations for integrity were sacked: Minister of Federal Affairs Lal Bahadur Pandit and Labour Minister Gokarna Bista, who dismantled the mafia fleecing Nepal of overseas contract workers. Within months of being appointed labour minister two years ago, Bista shut down Malaysian companies and their Nepal-based affiliates for exploitation of workers.

Ironically, the very day that Bista was removed in Kathmandu, in Kuala Lumpur a high court was conducting a trial of Malaysia’s former interior minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for involvement in the migrant Visa scam, which included getting kickbacks from companies overcharging Nepali workers.

Hamidi was arrested in June 2018, soon after a cross-border investigation by this newspaper, Himal Khabarpatrika and Malaysian investigators nabbed corrupt Nepali and Malaysian officials and private companies earning more than $450 million from over 600,000 Nepali workers between September 2013 and April 2018.

In Nepal, police arrested 44 individuals involved in the Malaysia visa scam, but they were either released on bail or cleared by the Supreme Court. No former minister, MP or party leader was ever investigated, and it was Gokarna Bista himself who eventually lost his job.

Labour cartels with political protection had lobbied in the corridors of power to have Bista removed.

Oli sacked Infrastructure Minister Raghubir Mahaseth for delays in road and other projects, but Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, who failed to break up bus cartels, and Water Supply Minister Bina Magar, who let the Melamchi project lapse, were retained. Nepalis hoping that a change of guard at Singa Darbar will improve governance may be disappointed yet again.

Ramo Sapkota

Malaysian
Nepali
MAKING NEPAL POWERFUL

It is that time of year again — another Power Summit is taking place. The agenda and content of this conclave 21-22 November was too different from all past summits: the need for large reservoir projects to meet winterdemand and river regulation, peak power for export, and balancing supply-demand. And as always, the talk in the room is about how to make strategic interest in Nepal’s water resources.

Going back to the Nepal Times archives for coverage of past summits, we noticed a pattern. None of the big reservoir projects like West Setu or Tama Koshi A, designed primarily to export power to India, ever got off the ground. In fact, the state actively sabotaged them. It is an open secret in trade circles that regulated flow of water from the Himalayan tributaries of the Ganges, and the involvement of Chinese contractors, raised hackles down South.

Similarly, attempts to invest in large solar farms in the trans-Himalayan region of Upper Mustang were abjectly stalled by the PMO this year, apparently due to opposition from up North. So far, we have just two, but two elephants in the room. The inability of successive Nepali governments to steer an independent energy policy and gain backing of its large neighbours mystified large projects. Investors were also deterred by government indecision, red tape and blatant extortion.

The Power Summit this week, organized by the Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPN), with the motto ‘Powering the Asian Century’, is shining out these same issues. At a time when Nepal needs a new paradigm and strong political will for energy security, the same politicians who failed to deliver since 1980 are in power. It would be naive to expect much from them.

The miracle is that despite governments actively discouraging investors, Nepal has now emerged from a decade of power cuts, new energy projects are coming into operation every month, and the popular head of the Nepali electricity Authority (NEA), Kulma Ghising, is saying that the problem needs not lack of electricity but people not using what is generated.

Indeed during this monsoon, Nepal actually exported power to India for the first time. Yet Nepal’s widening trade deficit with India will not be redressed by exporting power, however much paralleling like to boast that we can. The country’s national strategy should be to generate enough power to slash deficits so that Nepal can afford electricity for cooking and setting up small and medium-scale enterprises.

As energy entrepreneur Gyanendra Lal Pradhan argues in his commentary ‘Reassessing hydropower potential’ in this issue (page 14-15), the PMO must fast-track its plan for 6 GWh power projects in 6 governorates in 6 years. This would generate enough electricity for Nepal to phase out power imports from India, which this fiscal year accounted for Rs2 billion. LGP imports could be cut by Rs60-70 billion if enough Nepal switched to cooking with electricity rather than kerosene, which would cut diesel imports by Rs10 billion. In total, Nepal would save Rs20 billion — a third of its total trade deficit with India.

Similarly, the potential to generate 3,000MW from solar and wind projects. Transporting 60km turbine towers to remote areas of the country will present a problem, and generating power only in the afternoons when demand is lowest. Solar will not address evening peak demand. Even so, these two renewable energy sources can be built much faster than hydropower, and are becoming cost-effective for battery storage.

But there are several things that need to happen before that. First and foremost, Nepal’s politicians need to get their act together — all a fist at a time when they are pulling in different directions, and the Prime Minister is going to be absent for an extended period. Extortion, corruption and local opposition to large projects need to be urgently addressed. Prime Minister is going to be absent for an extended period. Extortion, corruption and local opposition to large projects need to be urgently addressed. Prime Minister is going to be absent for an extended period. Extortion, corruption and local opposition to large projects need to be urgently addressed. Prime Minister is going to be absent for an extended period. Extortion, corruption and local opposition to large projects need to be urgently addressed.

The NEA unbundling has to be implemented as that reforms like time-of-day pricing, in-house consumption, further reducing system loss and pilferage, and aggressive grid expansion are needed.

As with everything else in Nepal, the answer to expelling our vast energy potential lies in governance and vision. We need a clear business strategy for import substitution through energy self-sufficiency.
RELAX MORE

Freshen up and relax before your flight, taste some exceptional dishes, have a massage. More to discover in Istanbul Airport Turkish Airlines Lounge.
Rupesh Shrestha was nearly paralyzed after a spinal injury, and his business was on the verge of bankruptcy, but when he thought things could not get much worse, he lost his wife to cancer.

Today, Shrestha is a living example of someone who turned adversity into accomplishment, using a positive mental attitude and persistence to transform a small bicycle shop into one of Kathmandu’s top mountain bike stores.

“When you see on the edge, you learn so much about life, and it was my passion for business that drew me to success,” says Shrestha. “You can either get stuck or move forward.”

Five years ago, after suffering a paralysed disc, he was hospitalised then bedridden at home for months. It was rigorous physiotherapy and yoga that saved him from paralysis.

Against his father’s advice, he had set up Epic Mountain Bike in 2009, when he was just 20. Shrestha was ahead of his time because Kathmandu was not yet ready for mountain biking, and the business did not do well.

Then tragedy struck: his wife was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and despite treatment she died in 2013.

“This was a very difficult time for me, but during the 13-day mourning period I did a lot of self-reflection about life. It was the support and encouragement from my friends and family that helped me to move on,” recalls Shrestha.

The trick was to put the energy completely into his mountain-bike store, understand the market, promote cutting-edge technology and focus on making the venture successful.

“At that time, 80% of my clients were westerners and 20% Nepali — today it is just the reverse,” says Shrestha, who sees many young Nepalis now adopting the sport, taking advantage of the country’s challenging topography and stunning scenery to undertake adventures on two wheels.

He went to Singapore to train himself in the potential for mountain biking, and read and researched the subject starting with the Bible of the sport, The Complete Book of Mountain Biking by mountain biking pioneer Gary Fisher.

Back in Nepal, Shrestha restructured his shop in Thamel and trained staff to become mechanics. “I was very passionate about this business, not only to sell bikes but to get more Nepalis interested in going out to the great outdoors. This is both fun and environment-friendly.”

Shrestha started mapping mountain-biking routes around Kathmandu Valley, giving enthusiasts on-the-spot training to develop biking skills and techniques. Outside Kathmandu, his sister company, Epic Rides Nepal, started guided tours, taking cyclists for one-day trips to Ghairab and Chandragiri Ridge, and then longer and tougher 10-day grinds in Mustang and Annapurna.

The company organised even longer 21-day trips to Lake cycling 1,000 km. This September, Shrestha’s team organised the first of a kind, 12-day biking trip for Nepali riders in Colorado and Chile.

“Since the beginning we targeted Nepalis because that made the business sustainable,” says Shrestha, adding that his Nepali customers have helped his company grow to an annual turnover of $20 million today.

Shrestha is also involved in various charities, organising awareness campaigns through annual bike rallies on Breast Cancer Day in memory of his wife, donating the proceeds to hospitals to treat cancer patients who cannot afford treatment. He also helps with an HIV/AIDS treatment centre in Kathmandu.

Rupesh Shrestha’s advice for success is to muster courage, patience and passion, and learn from failures. And finally: “Only get into a business doing something you are really passionate about, and don’t rush it. Never give up.”

PEDALLING SUCCESS

Meet Rupesh Shrestha, who conceived the idea of turning his small shop into one of Nepal’s most successful mountain bike companies.

Epic Mountain Bike is one of the pioneers of mountain bike adventures in the country, with many Nepali taking up tours organized by the company.

Nepal bikes in the Himalayan period, one of the world’s most thrilling mountain bike routes. The company has been recognized for various trips for Nepali riders in Colorado.

This is a story of success in Nepal’s mountain biking industry, with Rupesh Shrestha’s passion and determination bringing new horizons for the sport in Nepal.
Using numbers to fight gender-based violence


Lisa Honan

A horrific incident on the morning of 6 September 2019 changed Muskan Khan’s life forever. The 14-year-old was attacked with acid on her way to school. Images of a recovering Muskan went viral on social media. Messages of support poured in from strangers, celebrities visited her bedside, popular Indian actresses called her on video.

Muskan, which means smile, might be one of the luckier survivors. Her family supports her wish to get an education, the Nepali public has praised her for staying positive and despite her harsh scars, she remains hopeful for the future.

Between 2010 and 2017, Bura Violence Survivors (BVS-Nepal), a Kathmandu-based NGO, has recorded about 40 cases of acid attacks annually. On several occasions, these attacks have led women to develop depression. Half of the suicide cases in Nepal women aged 15-49 follow burn violence.

On 25 November, as we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, we must remember Muskan’s plight and think about what more we can do to help end all forms of gender-based violence.

I am encouraged that the Government of Nepal has declared Nepal’s 2057 as the year for ending gender-based violence. The federal government, along with provincial and local authorities, is working to ensure that the campaign’s messages trickle down to the local level.

Gender-based violence has many different forms and varies in magnitude. To make sense of it all and support the government’s initiatives, having good data is crucial. This gives the world better direction by identifying pertinent issues and informing good decision-making, especially where resources are limited.

In my short time in Nepal, I have been fortunate to engage with heads of governments at all three levels, as well as with women human rights activists and community leaders. I am convinced that the Government of Nepal has taken ending gender-based violence seriously.

The UK is happy to be supporting this work in Nepal, along with several other donors, multilateral agencies and civil society actors. Our global strategic vision for gender work has five main components, all of which need to be underpinned by good data if we are to be successful in eliminating gender-based violence.

Data shows that education plays a critical role in helping reduce the instances of gender-based violence. While 69% of Nepali women who experienced gender-based violence at home were illiterate, only 11% who had higher than secondary level education had similar experiences.

The UK’s Girls’ Education Challenge focuses on communities that have fallen behind in educating the girl child.

There is lots of room for progress, but data shows that overall, only 53% of currently married women use a method of family planning, with 29% using a traditional method. Three out of every 5 women who began using a contraceptive method in the 5 years before the survey discontinued the method within 12 months.

Because there are more new stories around gender-based violence, it tends to give the impression that people’s awareness has also improved. However, data has helped us identify that we need to do more work around building awareness of violence against women and girls. 78% of Nepali women and girls survivors of gender-based violence have never sought any help, including from the police or even getting checked by a doctor. 60% of survivors remained completely silent about the violence.

In Nepal, women spend more hours doing unpaid work and shouldered more than three times the amount of unpaid labour as their male counterparts. Despite this, women earn less money and own but a small percentage of the country’s wealth. Although Nepal has one of the highest rates of economic participation by women in Asia, most women do lower skilled, insecure jobs that pay less than men. Only 11% of women own their piece of land, while only 8% of women own a house.

Nepal’s new Constitution has put more women in decision-making roles than at any point in its history. One way for these decision-makers to be effective at their roles is by being able to understand and use data to make evidence-based decisions. Our Evidence for Development program (EDP) aims to improve the quality of such data, including better data disaggregation, to provide better information to policy and decision makers on specific groups of people, including women. It also trained civil servants to understand and use data better.

Working with data helps us to continuously assess our work to tackle gender-based violence, better understand the current challenges and empower women and girls to take control of their lives. This is why DFID is supporting the upcoming 16 days of activism, with a social media campaign focusing on how data can help us address gender-based violence.

Publishing this data helps us work in an open and transparent manner. The numbers hold us to account for the state of things and push everyone to do more.

Lisa Honan is the Head of Office for the UK Department for International Development (2010 Nepal) in Kathmandu.
The trips before TripAdvisor

Media promotion and press freedom were done differently then

In ancient times, prior to the advent of social media and the Internet, we did well using traditional print, newspapers and magazines to spread the word that Nepal was the fashionable central destination of choice and a must-visit for discerning adventurers.

SO FAR SO GOOD

Lisa Choegyal

It was my job to brief the press and ensure a constant stream of travel, wildlife and adventure articles made Tiger Tops and Mountain Travel Nepal. Those distant days of innocence preceded the invention of fake news, Twitter storms, Instagram poses and Facebook rants.

As tourism operators were not forced to worship at the altar of TripAdvisor ratings, Enchil before the terror of instant online feedback, or tremble at deliberate disinformation by a disgruntled customer.

Disregardment with a published opinion resulted at worst in throwing the offending journalist across the room in disgust or, if you were British, in a restrained rant of newspaper to express your irritation. There was time to captivate and seduce before a response was required, not the instant flick of a ‘like’ button or the slamming of a door.

Waxer-thin blue airletters were written to parents and friends, and spoken exasperantly and often disappointed at posts restating near Sandhur was part of a backpacker’s routine.

Not that I’m regretting the communication limitations of the old days, as the daily hours spent maternal at the desk black beauty of my i-Phone will testify, but a different approach was demanded in the 1980s when we had to laboriously punch a tape to a message for visas, or wait for a cable telegram to be delivered to our Burbur Megollon. Telephone was confined to a croaky line via India, if you were lucky.

Often guests would walk in through the glass-panelled front doors, adorned with tiger head logo and the blue Pan Am symbol, before news of their arrival had landed on our desks. All reservations lists and correspondence with the outside world from our Chitwan lodge was by hand copy in a vivid green disintegrating cloth handing carried on the daily flight.

To see the famous Nepal tours and trek, we wove editors, writers and journalists with tempting free trips and unusual story lines. All kinds of clever ideas were dreamed up to cost-effectively achieve the column inches and even multiple pages of coverage coveted to encourage international markets to visit our remote Himalayan kingdom.

I soon learned that fashion magazines appreciated an exotic jungle backdrop to contrast with haute couture and evening gowns, and so Tiger Tops achieved many pages in Vogue, Harper & Queen, Town & Country and the like by hosting supermodels and fashion photographers, with their entourage of stylists and wardrobe of clothes.

We persuaded outdoor adventure clothing companies to shoot mail order catalogues along Himalayan trekking trails or draped over jeeps, and gained greater editorial by winning awards from travel publications. Luxury names such as Tiffany, Cartier and Louis Vuitton brought their exquisite collections to be photographed amidst the bamboo and thatch of our wildlife camps, resulting in glamorous printed advertisements and coffee table books presenting their brands to a target audience we sought to attract to Nepal.

Royals, celebrities and special events were particularly helpful in creating a media frenzy that we could leverage to promote the country. During the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1980 we achieved great coverage of the Royal Trek until the murder of John Leennon knocked Nepal off the front page of the world’s newspapers.

Commissioned by a UK glossy, Don McCullin, arguably last century’s most celebrated war photographer, frolicked on the Meghauri polo field capturing unique images of elephants and personalities posing happily around the pitch in pursuit of a very small ball with very long sticks. Don not only helped put Chitwan on the map during an early world elephant polo championship but also trekked into the Annapurnas, then returned on holiday to Kathmandu on one of his honeymoons.

Even though we nurtured and cherished our visiting media guests, we had no control over what they would actually write. Freedom of the press is an essential central pillar of a functioning democracy, but that did not stop us from influencing media with series of carefully supported suggestions that supported our market image. It DID not always work.

Nepal has long been relieved from the Diwali, biggest rubbish dump in the world’s worktop, even long after the Sherpa organised the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee to solve the problem.

“Good news,” I greeted a newspaper journalist as he prepared to fly to Lukla. “The Khumbu is now clean and free of trash.” Chris Rowson told us last week he saw more rubbish on the streets of London than on the trails of the lowest region.

“That’s nice,” retorted the writer, doubtless. “But my editor has told me to write a story about the rubbish on Everest, so that’s what we will publish.”

Despite such frustrations, I enjoyed dealing with the vagaries of the press corps. On one memorable occasion I found myself in the last of one of the most notorious media barons — the Murdoch empire headquarters in Sydney. But I was not at News Corp Australia to generate copy. Patrick Rupert Murdoch’s eldest son, Lachlan, had asked me to step by to discuss arrangements for his honeymoon.

Graduating to the inner sanctum, I was ushered into a blindfolded suite office. Lachlan was an engaging kid in 1999, with an athletic build and thick brown curls, his deck shewn with photos of Labrador. We talked dogs and trekking and it soon transpired that after Nepal he was keen to include Bhutan to wear his blinding British model Fanci, Sarah O’Hare.

“Because it’s the one place our private plane can’t reach — due to the pilot restrictions landing into Paro. I want to take her somewhere special. It will be fun for us to fly commercial.”

It turned out to be a memorable honeymoon as the couple arrived from Sydney economy class on Thai International — despite our best efforts we were unable to clear business seats. Lachlach after dinner on our Kathmandu soja, Lachlan and Sarah held hands and laughed at our concern. “It was a novelty for us to fly commercial and to fly economy. No worries.” I sighed with relief.

Freedom of the press took on a whole new perspective.
Nine-year-old Jeevika Rajpacharya, the current living goddess of Bhaktapur, enjoyed all the attention she got when dressed as the Kumari. Clothed in dark red, vermilion covering her forehead and her eyes accentuated by gold stretching to her temples, she made a dramatic statement — especially as she is walking.

In contrast to the living goddesses of Kathmandu and Lalitpur, the Kumari in Bhaktapur has much more freedom. In Kathmandu, she is rarely allowed to leave the Kumari Ghar sacred house for the living goddess, and when she does, her feet are not supposed to touch the ground.

Bhaktapur's Kumari however, casually strolls around the city to meet friends and family. She lives with her parents, goes to school, enjoys shopping with friends, and plays outdoors with other children in the area, like any other regular girl child.

Only during Dasain, when her devotees came to seek her blessings, did she have to sit for hours in the Kumari Ghar. Throughout the festival, she stayed with the family of Kumari and Nupchhe Ratna Shakya, the hereditary caretakers of the living goddess in Bhaktapur.

A city enveloped in tranquility and traditional cultural values, Bhaktapur, embodied this unique tradition of worshipping the Kumari during Nepal's Malla dynasty. The practice of picking a Buddhist girl child as an incarnation of Hindu goddess Taleju is still considered an important one in Kathmandu Valley.

When asked if the freedom given to the Kumari has diminished the value of the living goddess in Bhaktapur, Nupchhe says, “We never had restrictions like that for the Kumari in Bhaktapur in the first place. We cannot preserve our tradition and the goddess' strength by confining her within a house or keeping her away from her parents.”

“Even on usual days, when she is not staying with us or is walking to school and playing outside with other kids of her age, our respect towards her is consistent. By giving her access to school and education, we are preparing her so that she will not find it difficult to return to normal life after the end of her tenure as a Kumari,” he adds.

Puspha Ratta Shakya, a professor at the Central Department of Buddhist Studies in Tribhuvan University, says next door to the Kumari Ghar in Bhaktapur. He explains some other ways that the city's worshipping of the living goddess differs.

“The everyday worship of Kumari is done at her home by her parents. The important rituals during Dasain were performed by priests in the Taleju Temple in the Malla Clock in Durbar Square, which is home to Goddess Taleju.”

“On Navami (the ninth day of Dasain) we worshipped our Kumari with 9 to 15 other girls who are also worshipped as temporary Kumari during the length of the festival. We worship them as the nine manifestations of Goddess Durga, as the Navadurga Gana,” Shakya says.

“It is our ritual and tradition that makes the Kumari of Bhaktapur special. I do not think these rituals are performed elsewhere to the living goddess in Kathmandu or Lalitpur,” he adds. “Our traditional rituals are more sophisticated, but left in the shadows.”

**THIS GODDESS LIVES DIFFERENTLY**
The art of living

Judith Conant Chase has lived in Nepal for nearly 50 years, and now has a museum and book to showcase her collection of household items

Kunda Dixit

Many of the everyday items Nepalis traditionally used in their homes are going as gone. So have the words that described them. Plastic buckets have replaced brass gago. Uranium flowers have taken the place of sauky straw mats.
Most young Nepalis do not know what paha, soka, chuli, dalu, diko, chhok, dihki, dhobi, khatlu, sandoor or mandoor means. Nepali words that described many of these objects are now extinct.
These words for utensils, Gurung vocabulary for household furniture and Rai or Limbu terms for farm equipment are all endangered.
Judith Conant Chase has been in Nepal for nearly 50 years, and has made it her life’s work to collect and preserve many of these traditional objects. In 2012, she set up the Living Traditions Museum at the Amritya Sabha in the Changu Narayan complex to house her collection, so it could be seen by as many Nepalis as possible. By preserving the objects she has also saved the Nepali words for them.

When the earthquake struck on 25 April 2015, Kathmandu Valley’s oldest monument zone was badly damaged. Some of the 1,300-year-old Lichchhavi era temples went down, the museum was damaged, but the exhibits were intact (including the Tharu clay pot hanging from the rafters in the photo, right). The structure has now been rebuilt, and Chase is trying to have the museum reopen in the new year.

Travelling across Nepal in the 1970s, Chase admired the simplicity of people’s lives, their cheerfulness despite hardships, and the everyday handmade objects they used around the house—a kaleidoscope that is the umbrella that Guru village wows from niggly strips and leaves, which Chase found ingenious because it also kept a farmer’s back dry while bending over to tend the fields.

Traditional jewellery fascinated her, especially the sculpted silver bracelets that had strips joined into a ripple pattern. Over decades of being worn during work, the metal was weathered and polished into a shiny metallic brilliance. Diko baskets are perfectly crafted through a technique handed down from generation to generation of Guru families, as are the folded carpets and capes of villagers in Ghandruk, and in Kathmandu the intricately carved stupa, used as a shrine in Newa homes. Another example, from Humla, was the colourful Nyimha woolen greatcoat.
A life in the most precious place on earth

Judith Grant Chase still remembers flying into Kathmandu in October of 1974, looking out of the window at the wrinkled terraces of rice fields, fomed hills and the snow-covered mountains beyond, and telling herself: “This is the place.”
The American had come to Nepal to try to climb a mountain in the Langtang Valley, and 45 years later she is still here. Along the way, she has done pioneering work to document Nepal’s crafts, joined an ashram, started an organic agricultural movement, collaborated on a project to market ceramic products and started a museum.

“Nepal was so casual, and of the earth. It connected to nature in so many ways in the puja and the way people worshipped,” recalls Chase, who resonated with the Hindu mantra ‘Om Namah Svayambhunath’ — truth is God, and God is beauty.

She travelled across Nepal, and while many foreigners at the time marvelled at the scenery outside, Chase was drawn to the interior of people’s homes and the everyday objects they used: wooden storage bins, straw mats, bamboo baskets, clay vessels, metal cookware.

Chase never mixed through the countryside. She lingered and learnt from families she stayed with, collecting beautiful objects and understanding their traditional use and significance. She kept a journal, knowing that one day she would want to write a book and perhaps set up a museum.

Both the museum and the book have happened. The Beauty of Purposeful Living and the Living Traditions Museum in Chane, Nepal, complement each other. The museum was badly damaged in the 2015 earthquakes (left), but has been rebuilt, and nearly five years later it is to reopen.

“It was so impressive to me that there were no roads, and yet people were so capable, so self-sufficient,” Chase recalls of her travels through Nepal in the 1970s.

Chase met and married Jim Danisch in a Hindu ashram in Banepa in 1984. Danisch worked on a ceramics promotion project in Thimi for the German agency GTZ, training locals to make glazed pottery and developing a new type of kiln. The two returned to California to set up a pottery business, but soon found they were getting too old to chop firewood and cut grass, so one day Judith told Jim: “Let’s go home.”

They returned to Nepal, where they worked on a farm in Kavre, and put together the Living Traditions Museum. (See review, opposite.) After Jim died in 2016 in Dhulikhel, Judith continued working on her book and rebuilding the museum.
All the while, the organic farm in Kavre demanded a lot of her time – helping villagers with pesticide and chemical fertilizer-free agriculture, preserving traditional seeds and the biodiversity of the forests.

“Nepal in the monsoon is just so intoxicating. There is all this variety of words in Nepal for different types of rain, and the vegetation is so lush because of the warmth and moisture – there is extraordinary growth, which you do not have in a temperate climate,” explains Chase.

In an experiment, she set aside a 1 sq m test plot in Kavre to study and classify every kind of plant that grew in it. There were 27 types, but she could identify only 18 of them. Chase thinks Nepal’s soil fertility is so rich that artificial fertilizers are not needed – all the nutrients are already in the soil.

Does it not rain her to see Nepalis not valuing nature, and the farms of Kathmandu Valley being replaced by urban sprawl? “It is not just Nepal, it is happening all over the world,” she says. “It is not exceptional, but it is tragic. Much is gone, but the vibrant traditions continue. Kathmandu Valley is one of the most precious places on earth.”


THINKING OF BOOSTING UP YOUR CAREER TURN DREAMS INTO REALITY

JANUARY INTAKE ADMISSIONS OPEN

MSc ITM MBA MORNING | WEEKEND

CONTACT US

39811001 | 39811002
**Events**

**Christmas Market**
Christmas is just around the corner and before the new year arrives, buy your loved ones something from this sustainable art market. 23 November, 5pm onwards, The Yellow House, Sospath (01) 546 9555

**Charial talk**
Charihs are one of the most interesting and strangest looking animals in Nepal. Few remain, despite immense conservation efforts. Wildlife conservationist Pradeep Grieff will share about their efforts to save the grilah in Chitwan National Park, and why you should love the animal as much as she does. Hosted by the Cultural Studies Group of Nepal. 29 November, 10.30am onwards, 8500 members (non-members), Hotel Shangri-la,-lopharp

**Air Quality Index**

**White Zambala**
Tucked away in a hidden alley in Boudha, White Zambala has the best Tibetan comfort food in the area, including sweet and sour pork, shredded potatoes and amazing dumplings. 5pm-10pm, Boudha, 044699999

**Dhaiba Festival**
Indulge in Punjabi food at the annual Happy Singh (S promoter) Dhaiba Food Festival. Dhaiba are raasinda restaurants in India that serve local cuisine, but this food festival creates the Dhaiba to gourmet level. 28-30 November, 10am-10pm, shot, Wolver Greenhouse Park (01) 424709

**The Little House**
A quaint stay in the middle of green rice fields. The Little House in a place to enjoy beautiful views, relaxing walks and scrumptious food. (044) 4727070

**Asphyxia**
Such a word he speak about race pollution? I don’t think so. This is the question explored by the drama Asphyxia. Produced by SDBS Performing Arts, Asphyxia’s show will engage the audience’s senses and thoughts. 22, 24 November, 1.30pm-2.30pm, 5-6pm, Kathmandu Theatre, Bhaktapur (01) 4760170

**SUCH**
SUCI is a Norwegian born, UK-based and Indian influenced DJ whose music is bound to get you on your feet dancing to the beat. 22 November, 5.30pm onwards, Lia 02, Jiban Mor, (01) 4760170

**Dhul**
Dhul is a Norwegian born, UK-based and Indian influenced DJ whose music is bound to get you on your feet dancing to the beat. 22 November, 5.30pm onwards, Lia 02, Jiban Mor, (01) 4760170

**HUB talk**
This week’s HUB Talk features Khesang Tsering, a Nepali filmmaker whose work has been screened at festivals worldwide. Come hear about his passions and journey making documentaries. 27 November, 6.30pm onwards, 604, Thamel, (01) 4760170

**Getting Away**

**Bairam**
Decades ago, in a time forgotten, Pokhara was called Bairam. It was quaint and a distant place to non-natives of the town. Prabodh Shrestha’s art exhibition depicts Bairam in all its glory through 31 pieces of screenprint works. 20 November-24 December, Bipasha Art Centre, Bahundanda (01) 5017524

**Dhul**
Dhul is a Norwegian born, UK-based and Indian influenced DJ whose music is bound to get you on your feet dancing to the beat. 22 November, 5.30pm onwards, Lia 02, Jiban Mor, (01) 4760170

**SUCH**
SUCI is a Norwegian born, UK-based and Indian influenced DJ whose music is bound to get you on your feet dancing to the beat. 22 November, 5.30pm onwards, Lia 02, Jiban Mor, (01) 4760170

**Techno Talk**
Delvin Dak kvinne of Turkeys documentary, French Websites explores techno music through the lens of the younger generation in France. After the film screening, enjoy a techno music set at the rooftop club. 26 November, 5.30pm onwards, Alliance Francaise Kathmandu, (01) 4760227

**Forever More**
The Forever More festival brings music lovers and enthusiasts from all over Nepal to celebrate a variety of genres, from RB to funk. 26 November, 5.30pm onwards, Alliance Francaise Kathmandu, (01) 4760227

**DZAI**
This has the oldest pita breads, perfectly seasoned flavors and an assortment of Middle Eastern dishes that will have you yearning for more. 11am-10pm, Patrick, (01) 4760177

**Our Pick**

### Relaxation & Rejuvenation

**Asphyxia**
Such a word he speak about race pollution? I don’t think so. This is the question explored by the drama Asphyxia. Produced by SDBS Performing Arts, Asphyxia’s show will engage the audience’s senses and thoughts. 22, 24 November, 1.30pm-2.30pm, 5-6pm, Kathmandu Theatre, Bhaktapur (01) 4760170

**HUB talk**
This week’s HUB Talk features Khesang Tsering, a Nepali filmmaker whose work has been screened at festivals worldwide. Come hear about his passions and journey making documentaries. 27 November, 6.30pm onwards, 604, Thamel, (01) 4760170
Activists decry animal slaughter at Nepal temple

Sewa Bhattacharai

Mahagadhimai Municipality of Baktapur district is preparing for an influx of millions of visitors next month for a once-in-five-year mass animal sacrifice that has tarnished Nepal’s image as a peaceful and compassionate nation.

The little town of Baruipur has gained international notoriety for the Gadimai Mela, where pilgrims from India and Nepal who have lost their wishes fulfilled congregate at a temple to sacrifice animals in gratitude. The blood-letting has sparked outrage, and activists managed to get Nepal’s Supreme Court to rule against the wanton killings in 2016.

“The animals are not even being killed for food. Nepalis take great pride in the Buddha being born in Nepal but such cruelty is against Buddhist principles. Despite the court ruling, the government has not banned the practice,” Bane’s Chief District Officer Phanindra Mani Pokhrel said. Nepal Times’s administration is trying its best to discourage the sacrifice.

“We have held discussions, and spread the message discouraging animal sacrifice through local radio and newspapers. But we cannot suddenly stop it right now. Activists also need to work on it constantly rather than just before the festival,” Pokhrel said.

Mahagadhimai Municipality is preparing in earnest for the festival, scheduled to begin 3 December. Mayor Shyam Yadav says tents are being erected and toilet facilities will be built for the huge influx of devotees and their animals. In 2014, there were an estimated 6 million visitors, and roughly 210,000 water buffalos and goats were killed. This time, far fewer animals are expected to be slaughtered because of court decisions in India and Nepal and as a result of growing public awareness.

Activists have raised issues of not just animal cruelty, but also the lack of visitor accommodation, environmental impact, hygiene, pollution and the health and condition of the animals. This year, the government and the Gadimai Operations and Development Committee have promised to take care of most of these issues.

In earlier years, the Chamar community consumed the dead buffaloes, but younger members of the group are boycotting the meat this year. Says Dalit activist Manoj Ram: “It’s not just about the meat, but also self respect. Society looks at us with disgust because we eat leftover sacrificed buffaloes. We want to stop that.”

Gadimai Mela started over 200 years ago when a man sacrificed five drops of his own blood to the goddess for a fulfilled wish. Over the years people substituted defenceless animals for human blood.

The temple committee has refused to bend on the practice despite the outrage in Nepal and globally. “We do not sacrifice animals — people come from far away bringing their animals. If they are not able to fulfil their vow their faith is broken, and we cannot have that,” says Ram Chandra Shah of the temple committee.

While activists say the festival has brought shame on Nepal, the temple is proud that it has put Gadimai on the world map. Devotees see criticism of the festival as an attack on Hinduism, and accuse western activists of double standards for not being outraged when millions of turkeys are killed at Thanksgiving.

French actress Brigitte Bardot and British actress Joanna Lumley have spoken out against it, setting the festival further notice and international criticism.

Yet, the strongest voices against the bloodletting are from Hindus themselves, who say the festival is not an ancient tradition and not deeply rooted in religion. Animal rights activist Pramoda Shrestha says the sacrifice go against religious teaching.

She says: “The killings are carried out in the name of religion. But Hinduism does not teach people to torture animals. It is a religious mispractice, like sati and untouchability, and we need to reform it.”

The Supreme Court decision is not enough. We need stronger laws, and an effective awareness campaign among communities who practise it.
Feasting on documentary films

From the inaugural documentary Fiona Blues, it became evident that a lot of the entries at the Film South Asia 2019 festival this week in Kathmandu could not be shown in their home countries. Such is the overlap of the boundaries of the Subcontinent that Kathmandu became a relatively few space where the screenings could happen.

The documentary genre evolved to use film to explore, explain and expose facets of modern society largely missed out by fictional characters or mainstream journalism. It has got new life in the post-truth, alternative-fact age by daring to dig deep and shine a light through the dark, hidden corners of our societies, so that we can see, hear and act on the concerns of people and places in the periphery.

At a time when democracy, freedom of expression, pluralism, inclusiveness and non-violence are all under threat from elected demagogues in South Asia and beyond, the work of these courageous documentary makers is more important than ever. Whether or not it was deliberately so, the Film South Asia also delivered a number of striking pairings. Abo and The Next Guardian for instance, were screened on consecutive nights at Aya Maya Kendra, and both trace a family’s hope for their son and provide reflections on cultural attitudes towards sexual orientation. Abo is a portrait of a patriarch, and the tale of the elibs and flowers of family relationships seen through the eyes of filmmaker Ashok Khan. However, crippling the undertow of misunderstandings, secrets and lies that exist in his family, its members still drag close, bound by love but tethered in pain as they explore life as migrants and grapple with the politics of religion, sexuality and family expectations. The oppression felt by the filmmaker in his youth is palpable: we feel his father’s disapproval or his mother’s avoidance in the recordings of his well-documented childhood. In the end, fear and oppression might dissolve into love and forgiveness, but the family secrets and lies remain, settled deep into the fragile stillness of resignation and silence.

Silent too, and nodding to sleep, a young Lhasanese boy designed to be the next guardian of his family’s monastery suffers his father’s gentle verbal lashings and pressure to take on the role and become a monk. His sister’s sexual orientation is pragmatically and matter-of-factly attributed to her past life in a half-helped spirit the father delivers to the camera. A well-paced set of observations on India’s diversity was served with Chai Darbar, followed immediately by Growing up in Ladakh. Both are exquisitely filmed, and capture the inherent beauty of India’s varying lands: Ayodhya and Ladakh. Where Chai Darbar features busy westerly of various political positions jostling for a voice amidst the moments of clumsy and calm in an ancient city and bathed in conflict, the latter follows two young girls growing up in isolated desert mountains, nourished by familial love and community and supported by their school and elders as they undertake a grueling pilgrims’ progress called Gokakhe.

In another thematic pairing, Janani’s Juliet and Buddhal Leaver adaptations of two of Shakespeare’s most famous plays, and with aplomb they bring the Bard’s humanist drama to life in two different Indian contexts. Janani’s Juliet follows director Koushmane Valvanur and his actors as they skilfully weave the story of an over-crossed lovers from warring families into the fray of India’s caste system and the warped tragedy of so-called ‘honour killings’.

Two films featured bamboo. The one from Bangladesh, Bamboo Story, won the main prize at PISA 2019. A multi-layered ethnographic study using contemporary cinematography, the film provides empathy and respect for an unnoticed floating population struggling between a forest and an urban jungle. The other bamboo film from Nepal, Winter Tap, won in the student category, is a small-in-beautiful tale of how not to waste resources in the process of accessing water in a remote mountain village.

The festival closed with a screening of two films, one about a boxer running amok in a Mumbai household’s small flat, and the other featuring four dog-loving eccentrics in Kolkata. The human who adopt them exist precariously, whether on the cusp of life and death, sanity and madness, or crammed in cages and tethered to things they cannot control.

Pariah Dog cleaves into the underbelly of Kolkata, to show a world where people live isolated, desperate lives. Those caring for community dogs are doing so as much to assuage their own consciences as to address a yearning for companionship, purpose and recognition in a world fast atomizing into anonymity, where they themselves may be considered pariahs. Pariah is darkly comic as it traces the tale of a handsome broiler rooster who seemingly has good, ruling the roost and terrorizing the family. His fate is painfully bleak, in a scene at once comical and horrific.

Life and art are one. Art exists only with life and life thrives only with art. The festival with Asia 2019 was a documentary feast where the mind could comfortably satiate.

Sheenil Tea and Kunda Dixit

HAPPENINGS

22 - 28 NOVEMBER 2019 /

ALL THE PRESIDENT’S MEN: President Bidya Devi Bhandari administers the oath of office to cabinet ministers Thursday following Prime Minister KP Oli’s reshuffle on Wednesday. Two women ministers were removed, but none were added.

SPORTING SHAKE: Former captain of India’s cricket team and ‘VCCT’ goodwill ambassador Sarfaraz Khan meets the former captain of Nepal’s cricket team, Bhinn Das, during a friendly match in Kathmandu on Saturday.

FOOD DIPLOMACY: Indian ambassador Manjire Singh Puri inaugurates the Punjabi Food Festival ‘Yugspur Singh’ at Basahi Chowk Plaza in Kathmandu on Monday.

VISIT NEPAL: Qatar Airways Country Manager for Nepal, Mohamed Elnamri (centre), with winners and dignitaries of Break on Fares, a joint promotion campaign of the airline and Saben Nepal to promote Visit Nepal 2020.

GREEN DRINKS: Yeti Airlines has replaced plastic cups with paper cups on all its flights. The Resident Representative of UNOSF, Nepal Ayushman Meshangpaola Lamsal (left) welcomed the move, which will eliminate over 50,000 plastic cups yearly.
Women dropped from cabinet, some cling to key posts

Shreju Pandey and Pushpa Dhungana in Naya Patrika, 21 November

The Constitution has ensured 33% participation of women in all government entities. But the percentage of women in the cabinet continues to decrease. While two women have been removed from the cabinet in Wednesday’s reshuffle, none have replaced them. With this, the representation of women in the cabinet falls to 4% from 16%. After Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare Thamraya Tange and State Minister for Agriculture Ramkumar Chaubary were removed from the cabinet, only two women remain. Minister for Land Management and Cooperatives Padma Kumari Aryal and Minister for Water Supply Rita Magar.

Setopati, 21 November

Deputy Speaker of Parliament Shivamaya Tumbahamphe has refused an offer from Prime Minister KP Oli to become a cabinet minister.

According to the Constitution, the speaker and deputy speaker must be of different genders and from different parties. When they were elected in 2017, Speaker Krishna Bahadur Mahara was from the Maoist party and deputy Tumbahamphe from the then UML.

Things changed after the unification of the two parties into the NCP. Now that Mahara is in detention for alleged rape, and the speaker’s seat is empty, the NCP cannot contest the post since the deputy speaker is from the NCP. Hence, Oli is trying his best to have Tumbahamphe out of her current post, so that NCP can announce its candidates for speaker.

According to sources, Oli personally called Tumbahamphe, but she refused on grounds that the move would leave the House of Representatives in disarray. “The deputy speaker will not go for a ministerial post immediately,” said Shekhar Adhikari, press expert of the Parliament Secretariat. “She informed the Prime Minister of the complicated situation in Parliament.” Oli is reportedly still trying to convince Tumbahamphe to take up his ministerial offer.

Meanwhile, one female minister kept her post despite being ranked as a low performer. The Prime Minister’s Office had reviewed the past year’s performance of all ministers, and Rita Magar, Minister for Water Supply, ranked lowest on the list. Yet, she has not been sacked as she happens to be the daughter-in-law of Prachanda, co-chair of the NCP. As speculation rose in the media that Prachanda was presenting Oli to keep Magar in her role, Prachanda’ssecretariat issued a statement saying that a cabinet reshuffle was the Prime Minister’s prerogative, and Prachanda was not acting to influence it. However, the reshuffle announcement proved everyone right: come hell or high water, the acting chair’s daughter-in-law Rita Magar would not lose her job.
Decentralising (hydro)

Gyanendra Lal Pradhan

Nepal has the fifth highest hydropower potential in the world, which can be used for peak energy supply. Hydropower reservoirs can also play a role in regulating water in rivers, flood control and irrigation.

With federalism, Nepal has the potential to decentralise hydropower along with other public projects in seven provinces, except Province 2 in the Tarai, have enormous capacity to develop hydropower to generate downstream benefits, such as increasing agriculture output, boosting tourism and generating employment.

The government’s current budget includes a provision to develop one hydropower project in each province. Prioritising water value first and peak energy second, Nepal can double its megawatt potential by maximising storage and daily peaking of run-off projects, while regulating river flow.

All this would allow 5.4 million households across Nepal to gradually replace imported cooking gas and traditional firewood with cheaper electricity, reducing Nepal’s trade deficit and improving health by eliminating indoor pollution from open kitchen fires.

If each family consumes 1KW of energy and if 3 million families switch from cooking gas and firewood, we will need 3,000 MW in the morning and evening peak hours, which can be provided by

An energy windfall for

Kushal Gurung

Last month saw the historic Indo-Nepal Energy Joint Steering Committee agreement to build the new Itahari–Gazipur 400kV cross-border transmission line. When completed, it opens up the possibility of Nepal exporting surplus power to regional markets like India and Bangladesh from power projects in the Marsyangdi, Kali Gandak and Buri Gandak corridors. With so many hydropower schemes in the pipeline, Nepal may soon have surplus power at certain times of the year, which makes cross-border transmission lines imperative. Discussions about Bangladesh’s desire to import up to 9,000 MW of electricity means Nepal must have a clear business model for the regional electricity market.

Besides hydropower, the new cross-border transmission line has also opened up the prospects of large-scale wind and solar farms in cold, windy and cloudy regions like Mustang and other trans-Himalayan districts.

The Global Atlas prepared by the World Bank shows Mustang is ideal for wind and solar energy development. Just using 2% of the district’s land area for solar could yield a generation capacity of 3,000 MW, along with 1,200 MW through wind energy projects. Use accompanying map.

Nepal will have to deal with the need to go for wind and solar in a country with such abundant hydropower potential. However, wind and solar are the fastest growing energy sources globally, accounting for more than 70% of new energy additions since 2012. Their low cost and speed of installation make them useful technologies attractive even in countries with hydropower. Some of the potential for wind and solar power in Nepal will be discussed at the Independent Power Producers’ Association, Nepal (IPPA) Power Summit 2019 in Kathmandu, 21-22 November.

Latest solar auctions have seen prices drop below two cents per kWh. In India, the Adani Group built the 846 MW Kani Kota solar power project in Tamil Nadu within one year. It is unimaginable to build a hydro project of such a size so fast.

To be sure, building wind and solar projects in Mustang will not be a cake walk. Transmission loss and road access remain challenges, although they are improving and could be surmounted if the resources are allocated. The 160 km wide Bensi-Kokila highway currently under construction would be a notable step forward.

A 230kV substation is being built in Dana, 40 km from Jomsom. But land acquisition and environmental approvals are major roadblocks. The entire district falls inside the Annapurna Conservation Area and existing rules require environmental impact assessments for new energy projects — even though nothing would be more environment friendly than renewable energy development.

Red tape and overlapping jurisdiction between municipal, provincial and national government make the entire approval process more arduous than the construction itself. Likewise, almost 1% of the land in Mustang is government-owned, and buying or leasing it requires official approval, which could also take years. Without resolving these issues, it will be difficult to attract investment, domestic or foreign. The onus is on the federal government to come up with a
The Water Emergency

The climate crisis will force Nepal to rethink hydropower and cross-border river sharing

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was agreed in 1992 to deal with the increasing atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide. By 1992, carbon dioxide concentrations had reached 355 parts per million (ppm) compared to 280 ppm in the 1800s. Today, with 411 ppm of CO₂, we are facing a climate emergency. Despite advances in renewable energy technology, fossil fuel use has continued to rise and emissions are still growing. Moving the Paris Agreements goal, as agreed in 2015, appears increasingly hard.

Higher heat in the atmosphere due to increasing concentration of CO₂ has made the global hydrological cycle erratic, including over the Himalaya region. Seasonal rainfall patterns are significantly different than in the past. Local farmers already speak of having to adjust to commuter rhythms that differ completely from their past experiences. And this is only a part of the story complicating water management. Over the last 150 years, societies, cities and industries have significantly altered the natural hydrological cycle. High-capacity pumps also increasingly drain water from deep aquifers for the surface industry. Increased tourist water use from camps and effluent from industries are pumped into rivers and water bodies. Embankments already constrain the natural flow in many rural areas.

But flooding in no longer a rural phenomenon. Haphazard urbanizations block streams and rivers. Floods caused by short duration, intense rainfall inundate new areas because existing drainage systems cannot safely discharge them. With 70% of such areas expected to live in urban areas by 2030, urban floods will increase manifold.

Climate change induced impacts exacerbate these development challenges and create a bleak scenario for the future of water. The Himalayan ecosystem is a case in point. Examination of satellite images suggests that between 2000 and 2016, eight billion tonnes of all season snow, twice the amount between 1975 and 2000. Snowmelt sustains the low flows of the Koshi, Ganges, Karnali and Mahakali rivers, all of which feed the Ganga. Changes in snowmelt, dynamic and the hydrology of the Himalayan system will not only affect downstream water users but also significantly stress existing water-sharing treaties between Nepal and India.

Each of these four rivers has a barrier of the Nepal-India border, and Nepal and India have signed river treaties that specify the water allocation regime for all of them, except the Karnali. However, conflicts between Nepal and India are still not resolved, and could escalate. In Bihar, concerns about the diversion of Ganga waters by upstream bargains are rife. The changes in low flows will extend to the treaty between India and Bangladesh sharing the Ganges waters.

Changes in rainfall patterns due to climate change over the Nepal montane and Terai will also change the hydrology of Nepal’s rain-fed rivers. Dying coral springs and declines in groundwater levels across the Terai and safety due to excessive extraction beyond recharge rates will stress the provision of basic water services and make their management more difficult. Though it is unlikely that all Nepal rivers will dry up immediately, seasonal scarcity due to changes in the hydrological regime will significantly increase.

The prevailing water paradigm, which focuses on irrigation, hydropower and drinking water in separate silos, prevents the successful management of these development and climate-related challenges. The current response to food management, for example, is not only outdated but also obsolete. Once the monsoon seasons in September, we forget about floods. We skirt prior to consider the biodiversity in rivers to a country’s central role in nature.

Hydropower development and inter-basin water transfer projects dominate the Nepalese policy imagination and is the only way we visualise when the next supply of water will be delivered. The beds and banks of all rivers are unnecessarily mined to meet construction industry needs by a nexus of real estate promoters, truck contractors, politicians and business owners.

These complex challenges around water will require structural changes and societal level solutions very different from business-as-usual practices. For management of water we need a new social charter that adheres to the following principles as sacrosanct:

- Water has multiple meanings, uses and users
- Rivers must have enough water in them to sustain biodiversity
- Rivers need unimpeded access to safety discharge water including in urban areas
- Waste cycles and hydrological cycles must be different
- Renewable water has historic value and is not a waste

Without upholding these principles in all economic and social development activities, it is unlikely that we will be able to implement water policies at all. Commitment to their implementation will only be the strong point for balancing competing needs of multiple users of freshwater, connecting to quality and quantity and adapting to the impacts of climate change. When water is scarce, sustainable adaptation to the climate emergency will be only a mere aspiration. Its realisation will be close to impossible.

Ajaya Dixit is a researcher at the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET) and contributes this column ‘Climate Change Daily’.
Flog the flag

Eve"t since time immemorial people have felt a strong attachment to flags, draped themselves in them, waved them, waved at them, flown them at half-mast, lowered and raised them, and sometimes even turned them into umbrellas. There is no doubt that nothing stirs the super patriotic spirit in all of us more than gazing up at a flag fluttering proudly as we stand on the grave. That is why we never let our flag down. And when we get tired of singing the national anthem in front of the same flag, we try to break some records by making the biggest flag ever, and draping it over the side of a convenient mountain. Which is what the Kuwaitis did on Ama Dablam this month.

Speaking for my own patriotic self, I am a bit puzzled about the whole hullabaloo. What the Kuwaitis did was no different than what we Nepalis do all the time with our double triangle.

Look at our flag at Mandela, proudly waving in the polluted air even though its edges are fraying and the red has turned into a lighter shade of pink — the message it gives is that we may be one of the poorest countries in Asia, but we rank a glorious 124 in the Transparency International Corruption Index, even beating Ukraine.

What makes Nepal really unique is not Mt Everest, Lumbini, or even Pepsico Construction. It is our double triangle. So let us proudly tell the world that not all flags have to be boring rectangles. In conclusion, let me flag an important point: why not flog our flag at prominent landmarks around the world for WorldNepal2027!

Nabil Sajilo
SME Karja

Features:
- Attractive interest rate of 10.5% fixed for 1 year
- Loan Amount: Nrs. 5 lakhs to Nrs. 1.50 crores
- Loan approval within 5 days*
- Free issuance of credit card with limit of up to Nrs. 50,000
- Free SMS Transaction Alert
- Free monthly statement via email
- Get Nrs. 10 lakhs of accidental insurance coverage, Nrs. 3 lakhs of insurance coverage for 13 critical illnesses and Nrs 75,000 on death by any cause from personal account*

*Conditions apply. For more details, please visit your nearest branch.

Get easy SME loan at 10.5% Interest now

Insurance Partners:

Nabil Bank
Together Ahead

www.nepaltimes.com