After deciding that Nepal meets criteria for democracy, transparency and governance, a donor government wants to give the country $500 million to improve transmission lines and highways. Governments of major parties all enthusiastically endorsed the deal in the last eight years.

But now the grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is stuck because it has become a political football in the power struggle between two top ruling party leaders.

Prime Minister KP Oli and former Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal are competing for power, influence and succession within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP). Disgruntled former UML leaders like Bimal Ramal say the MCC is a sellout to the United States. Geopolitics is a factor because the MCC is seen as America’s response to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

At the NCP Central Committee meeting last week, Dahal praised the BRI but was silent on the MCC, while Oli spent 30 minutes of his two-hour speech defending the grant. He said: “We need transmission lines. If the Americans want to build them for free, what’s the problem? I want to assure comrades that there are no strings attached.”

Oli’s critics within the party also include former UML colleagues and ex-PME Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal, who have turned against Oli because he sidelined them. Co-chair Dahal is perceived to be actively undermining the MCC from behind the scenes.

“We have a huge resource gap, and we have to trust Parliament to make the right decision, but there are NCP members who have vowed to never let it pass, and other NCP are strongly backing it,” MP Gagan Thapa of the opposition Nepali Congress told a roundtable on the issue organized by Himalaya media on Wednesday.

Indeed, the most vehement criticism of the MCC is not from the opposition NC, but from the Dahal-backed faction within the ruling party itself. Dahal is impatient to replace Oli, and it is looking like he is scoring an own goal for Nepal by using the MCC to undermine the prime minister.

“A taskforce has been formed that will clear this up. It is not a big problem to pass this within the Parliament session,” a confident Oli told a gathering of editors on Tuesday.

Most former bureaucrats agree that the MCC is a catalytic project to jump-start the economy through grid and highway connectivity. In fact, all major power purchase agreements with private sector developers need the MCC’s planned 400kVA transmission network to evacuate the electricity they generate.

Nepal’s former ambassador to the UN Gyaw Chandra Acharya says all foreign aid projects have conditions. “It is in our national interest to improve energy security, so we have to decide where the US strategic policy intersects with our own long-term interests.”

Former finance secretary Ram Swar Khanal says the US has used the same legal template for agreements with all 10 other MCC partners, and sums up the reason for the deadlock: “The MCC is a victim of an internal party dispute.”

Kunda Dixit
AWESOME PARTY

When the GFP-UNM coalition unified with the GFP-Madad two years ago, most hoped that it would lead to the MPC-nation of the MNC, steering them towards democratic norms and values. Instead, we seem to be witnessing the Manifestation of the Nepal Communist Party. Evident proof of this was the first Central Committee of the unified party last week—nearly two years after it was formed. The meeting of the 445-member Jumlo Committee at the City Hall happened even as divisions sharpened between the party’s two top leaders: Prime Minister K.P. Oli and his co-chair, former Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

Dahal and Oli have tried to hide their power struggle, but their one-upmanship is on full public display in just about every noteworthy issue from the selection of Parliament Speaker to the controversy over the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

The Central Committee gathering itself was structured like an NCP annual general meeting, complete with a review paper and 15 thematic brief presentations from hand-picked spokespersons reported on conclusions to the plenary. This allowed the leaders to keep a tight lid on the morass. The issues and problems of internal party decision-making were therefore sidestepped, and the discussion reflected the party’s deep polarization.

The other tactic that Oli and Dahal effectively employed was of scathing self-criticism on issues on which they expected to be consumed by bearders. Oli’s more than two-hour-long review was a mess culpa, admitting to delays in recruiting unified party, failure in delivery of services by the government, and unconventional behaviour by the same. This is a trick often employed by communist parties elsewhere in the world with severe criticisms for failures. And it worked. There was no real debate taking place, and Oli managed to deflate and diffuse most of the criticism of his leadership. However, the prime minister is getting physically weaker and politically more isolated. At a three-hour sit-down meeting with editors at his residence on Tuesday, Oli said he was going to get another kidney transplant soon, and expressed confidence about serving out the next three years in office. But a transplant would keep him away for at least two months, and Dahal is waiting in the wings, becoming increasingly impatient.

Oli and Dahal had agreed to rotate two-and-half years each as prime minister, but Dahal agreed to let Oli to serve the full term—probably gambling on Oli’s health preventing him from doing so. Now, Dahal is stepping up the ante. He has wooed away former UML leaders like Mahvish Kumar Nepal, Bam Dev Gautam and Baburam Bhattarai who are disgruntled with Oli to his side.

This block vote was seen most clearly in the MCC controversy. Dahal had not even mention the $500 million American grant aid package in his 32 page report, although he praised the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), criticized the US Indo-Pacific strategy, and took the position of standing on both territorial disputes with India. However, he got his faction to oppose the MCC-tooth and nail, accusing it of being a US military plan.

The MCC became the source of much of the discussion at the Central Committee because Dahal —

We are seeing the Maoization of the Nepali Communist Party.

The Maoist faction has been busy undermining the leadership of Prime Minister Oli, and it is hard to see how this unity can be maintained.

Nepali World Music

Jangi Musarkot Allah Mulkencan performs beloved Nepali songs such as Raahum Khatam Matiha Lati Gaulty, Sial or Pardal Kheer Sujhaa. He is known for his unique, jingle-bell compositions along with mrganical, regal and worldlirely.

KHALILISI

It’s very tempting to see missionary entrepreneurs creating opportunities in Nepal (‘Nepal’s entrepreneur turns trash into cash’ TimesNepal, 8/9/9). She makes me believe that every time, they offer opportunities. It’s just that we need to dare to dream and most of all stand up for what we all believe in.

Tamang Manjha

Coronavirus

If politicians don’t trust the Nepal healthcare system even for innocuous problems, why should they come to Nepal where they can’t even treat a cold properly? (A Nepal in Beijing during coronavirus scare, Rashan Bhar, 6/9/9)

Nishant Kaffe

They should stay out instead of refusing to come here where there isn’t even an isolation ward to start with and face treatment.

Vairochan Sharpa

Nepali’s Night Sky

Thank you for covering this topic, Nepal (‘Nepal’s Night: Nepal’s other attraction is the bright sky’, Himal Dai, 9/9/9). It is worth a read. I did a presentation on ‘light pollution, dark sky and astrobiology’ in Kathmandu recently. Glad it was well received and got posted up quickly by the media. Be there more come.

Please share your thoughts.

Gyan Niyapane

This has amazing prospect for Nepal in terms of tourism, hopefully concerned authorities will take it forward.

Rojan Senya

Impunity in Nepal

It is imperative that they understand that the world is watching them, and attacking the press for criticism is very wrong in a free and democratic country (‘On nepal Impunity’, Shrimi Karna, nepaltimes.com) I personally feel that a number of members of the government are not up to the mark and are erecting a Speaker of the House who is accused of murder, well that speaks volumes.

Alan Roadnight

YES or NO YES

There is no art in this logical yes/no upset (‘It is off-limits, SangrannahSubba, 8995’).

Shahid Shakya

It’s as if a Tibetan-Nepali, depicted in a squatting position—probably to relieve itself of the suspect dirror. It had last lived.

Samsher Singh

I think they are cool. Lets not take life too seriously.

Niral O’Caomhnaich

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHAT’S TRENDING

Nepali entrepreneur turns trash into cash

Khalilis spent much of his life in Beijing and has made a fortune by turning trash into useful materials.

Times

Most Read and shared on Facebook

Nepal-U.K. relations

Many Nepalese citizens have been stranded in the UK due to the pandemic, and the Nepalese government is working to repatriate them.

Times

Most popular on Twitter

Wear it or hate it, it’s a beverage

Love it or hate it, it’s a beverage

Carolyn Reynolds

Nepal wants Myanmar

But why not

Nepal has had tense relations with Myanmar in the past.

Times

Most commented

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Times

Times

Times

Times

Times

Times
WELCOME ON BOARD: NEWARK

The airline that flies to more countries than any other now flies to one more destination. Flights starting from 25th of May.
Read and get read

The erosion of a reading culture in Nepal does not bode well for democracy

The past decade has seen a dramatic rise in the number of book publishers, book sellers and writers in Nepal. On the one hand this could be because of a rising population of literate people, but it has also become economically viable to publish and sell books.

However, the reading public is still not well equipped to afford to buy books, or have access to them. And now comes news that the same government that wants to take mathematics out of the school curriculum for biology students in Grades 11-12, is taxing the import of books.

Several book distributors have been forced to close shop because the books are being taxed on their dollar or euro price tags, and not the lower prices for their South Asian editions. This is probably the only country in the world that has excise duty on knowledge.

Is Nepal actually read or not? Is there evidence that with the spread of smart phones, people with shorter attention spans have no time to read. And the erosion of the reading culture threatens to do bode well for Nepal's democracy.

How many have actually read the 1890 hide-bound Treaty to publicly support or oppose it? How many have seen or heard of the Anglo-Nepal Sugauli Treaty of 1816, or the treaty with the Chinese emperor signed on the banks of the Betrawati River in 1856?

More recently, how many have actually read detailed project documents of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to support or oppose it? Do they know enough to distinguish between the MCC and the MCA (Millennium Challenge Authority)? Or is the opposition solely based on which side of the faction force party members sit on?

In a country where communists have a majority, one would think that books by and about Marx, Lenin, Mao and Castro would sell like hot cakes. People do read newspapers and the numerous on-line news outlets on the social media, but not too many books.

The idea of reading a book is that it takes over three hundred pages to explain, understand and be knowledgeable about a particular issue, idea, event or person. With the looming threat of all-time viruses at a time when we are just starting to manage water-borne diseases, how quickly can we get people to read up on the dangers of viral mutations?

Nepalis generally know what the Mahabharat, Ramayan, Bhagavat Gita and the Swastandit Katru Kattu contain, relying mostly on oral tradition and not reading. The babas of Patan are an exception where we can see the Pragya Paramita being read each morning by the members of the Sangha.

This may be the reason why story-tellers and speakers' events still give more importance than written events. The ICLP/Tastemasters network may be attributed to this same phenomenon. However, a good speaker will still have to rely on good books for context, creating a real win-win. At a recent event they did present books to speakers. While Kathmandu is trying to get children across Nepal to read paper books, Open Learning Exchange (OLE) uses its e-portal to promote electronic books and library. All government schools should be encouraged to buy library books but there are trade-offs when books are e-books but books are never bought.

Recently we presented our neighbour’s children with a book on the occasion of Bal Bibaha and her eyes lit up with gratitude. She was this new gift book.

We all have books that sit on shelves gathering dust. Why not donate them to a school or college library? We could indeed second hand book stores into a network. We could leave books on the seats of the Sitala bus with a request for all to do the same after reading them.

More people are buying, reading and writing books than ever before. The trend for publishing memoirs and biographies is on the rise. Muni Lama who dedicated himself to taking pictures of Buddha statues from the day of the earthquake to its restoration has shown us what creativity and perseverance can be as book author. The demand for old and not so old photos of Nepal also seem to have a good demand as one sees in the reprints of Tika Hogan’s book.

On 23 February, the annual Bal is celebrated in Kathmandu being held at Ram Bhaktapur School with a event to promote children’s literature and get kids a book on enjoying reading from a young age.

As Sumitra Lahiri writes in Times Nepal that this should be read to and about books. They let you travel without moving your feet.

Anil Chitrakar, President of Sushodhini

Kathmandu does not lack good Indian restaurants, but Spice Room, the latest addition at Hotel Yak & Yeti, brings us what we have been missing: carefully curated multicourse meals that command your attention and take you on a true culinary journey.

Spice Room replaces Yak & Yeti’s 42-year-old Sangeeta Restaurant and serves traditional Indian food, but did so buffet-style. In contrast, Spice Room is a proud fine dining establishment.

With table settings that change according to meal times, copper pots lining shelves as decoration, and large windows looking out on green lawns and the Lal Bahar, Spice Room is unapologetically upscale.

The mung kali mirch ka xabre, a thin soup with strong chicken flavour and spiced with whole cardamom, pepersicorns, is a fast start to the meal. Servers carefully pour the soup from a stainless steel teapot into the shallow clay bowl decorated with aromatic garlic garnish of fried garlic – adding a performance aspect to the otherwise simple dish.

Spice Room’s menu heavily favours northern Indian flavours, featuring an extensive list of tandori dishes, naan, roti and chapati.

Spice Room (Spice Room Association for Small and Medium-sized Businesses) held a General Assembly on 27 January for entrepreneurs, political leaders and NGOs. Following the declaration of intent signed between Turkish Airlines and BMAN last year, BMAN and its unit members of BMAN can enjoy exclusive advantages when flying with Turkish Airlines.

Qatar Airways Qatar Airways is the Official Air Sponsor of the FIFA World Cup (2022) in Qatar, the tournament will take place from 21 November to 18 December 2022.

A taste of India at the Spice Room

The chef recommended masala gobi, a Punjabi spiced park belt served on a roti. The rich dish can be overwhelming on its own, but give it a good squeeze of lemon and the acid will cut through the fat and bring out the sweetness of the tomato masala. Perhaps to visit to a restaurant serving MughalAli food is completely without biryani and the parsi/dadu mutton, is faithful to its traditional form. Alternates between hits of the mildly spiced mughal patthar daal, a chicken dish stuffed with minced chicken and covered in a house blend spiced sauce, and the classic, on-case, creamy butter chicken as you go through the earthy lentil pot of haryali.

South Indian flavours also have a place on the menu through前瞻 dishes like the shrimp, mussel and crab chaatpata. In the main course, the shrimp, the beef of pepper on and spices pairs well with the coconut cream, tangy turmeric sauce and creamy saled.

The fine dining adventure continues with an exciting assortment of Indian-influenced dessert. The item of kulf – which the chef advises strongly to eat in the order of chilli and black salt and saffron infused. The dessert is set in a chic golden bowl – a selected version of childhood on a plate.

For those who love desserts but can’t take too much sweet, the lychee chilli mousse is perfect. The mousse, smushed with spices like cinnamon, has a mild base that shows itself after a couple of bites.
Zero-sum game in zero-cost migration

Migrants get mixed messages in Nepal’s promise of zero-cost recruitment

Nepal’s overseas migrant workers shoulder high recruitment costs. A 2016 survey by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows that average recruitment costs to the Gulf ranged from $1,983 to $1,172, while workers going to Malaysia had to pay $1,388.

The Government of Nepal has been advocating for zero-cost recruitment, and it is also pushed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) which last year approved the definition of recruitment fees and related costs of worker placement to be borne by employers.

The bilateral labour agreements between Nepal and Malaysia, UAE and Mauritius have adopted these principles, and have received accolades. When high level managers of the same employer get all recruitment-related fees refunded, including generous ‘relocation costs’, it is only fair that Nepali labourers be provided a similar facility. On paper, it is against the law of countries like the UAE for a worker to be charged any cost related to recruitment.

But implementation of this policy is a whole different story. Workers are willing to pay for stints abroad, recruitment agencies outbid each other by buying visas from employers and transferring that cost to workers, and transactions between workers and recruitment agencies are difficult to monitor in the current state of affairs. Even the strongest advocates of no-cost migration realize there are practical challenges.

The Province 2 government recently announced a collateral-free, low interest loan program for outgoing migrant workers in partnership with the DPD-funded Skills for Employment Program and Prabhu Bank. While the program also works towards financial literacy and increased access to finance, the loan to migrants is what catches the eye.

The Province 2 program recognizes that workers are paying local loan sharks interest rates as high as 38% because they don’t have access to formal channels for credit. It recognizes that the cost of migration is prohibitively high for the poorest, who therefore cannot benefit from it. It also takes into account that migrant workers are assessing the options available to them before choosing to pay for the service provided by the recruitment agencies.

Nepal used to have a government-backed migrant loan scheme but it failed because of the high rates of default. Bangladesh has a migrant loan scheme through the Probandhikelay Bank and BRAC. Low-cost migrant loan schemes, however, are new in today’s Nepal, where the free-visa-free-ticket policy has dominated the discourse.

The reaction in social media is quick, “there is a contradiction. Why do we need loan when there is a free visa free ticket policy?” writes Asitam Bhatta comments “Very good. This means even the poor can now go for foreign employment.”

Indeed, there are contradictions. For example, will an aspiring migrant worker going to a local government office or a Migrant Resource Center in Province-2 for advice on safe migration be referred to the loan program or recommended for the central government’s zero-cost recruitment? Will she or he be advised to reject any placement after demanding payment?

Do the loan programs undermine other efforts attempting to adopt a zero-cost principle or are these principles just an end goal that we aspire to while making incremental change in the short term?

The difference between informal interest rates and the low cost interest rate through the migrant loan scheme could make big difference in a migrant’s life, So do we adhere to principles or to what brings relief in practice?

Last month in this space, we suggested we move our discussion from whether the migrant (Nepal) is being exploited or not (because it is not) to the harder questions of why, how and if it can be enforced. The new loan program presents an opportunity for some more constructive debate.

Upazana Khadka notes this column labour mobilization every month in Nepal Times/angry melts affecting Nepal’s workers abroad.
Sewa Bhattacharai

If you like Nepali folk songs, you must have come across a hesitate man on Youtube, singing old, familiar songs with an unusual accent and tilt. The background to the music video is always mountains wrapped in clouds and 3 rolls of smiling Nepali children. The singer strums his ukulele gently, and through melancholy spreads calmness and positivity. This is Arko Mukherjee, a Bengali who grew up around Darjeeling, walking the mountains and delves on the other side of the border from Ilam and Sandakphu. The hills were alive with Nepali folk music, and he grew up steeped in its melody and beat.

“At a boy, I liked being on the border with Nepal and have done the Singshore trek, walking up to the base of Kangchenjunga many times,” recalls Mukherjee, who has fond memories of teanga and sakau sessions with Nepali-speaking friends who remain his best friends. He came to understand the difference between dui (brother) and daju (respected brother). It helped

Arko, the Nepali minstrel from Bengal

G
iven the vibrant art and literature scene in Nepal, we tend to forget that there is a whole Nepali-speaking world out there. At least 6 million Nepalis live beyond the country’s borders, performing songs and plays, writing books and making films.

In golden age of Nepal’s music culture, artists from Darjeeling and Sikkim dominated the music and literature scene in Kathmandu. Indeed, northeast India continues to nurture rich artistic output.

One of the new treasures is Gaurya Bhai, a recent band of four musicians: Veeraj Dixit, 31, his brother Anand Dixit, 28, and Siddhant Chhetri, 27 from Kalimpong, and Joe Panicker, 36, is from Kerala. A filmmaker, a sound engineer, an engineer, and a drummer by trade, the four were jamming together in Bangalore when they realised they had the sounds they produced gelled well. They began playing at festivals, and three years ago formed Gaurya Bhai which now has a cult following for its eclectic compositions that cannot be traced to any one geographical location.

“We like all world music, including African, Japanese, Korean, and western,” says vocalist Veeraj Dixit. “Maybe our strongest influence is African music, but each of us has unique preferences.”

The band also likes Nepali music by Cadena Collective, Axe, Mukti and Revival, and Bipul Chettri from their hometown of Kalimpong. Gaurya Bhai’s songs cannot be slotted in any particular genre, ranging from loud to mellow, folk to modern.

“If the band’s sound is not pleasant, the lyrics are distinctly Nepali. The verses weave wide images into a gossamer thread, leaving listeners longing for love and nature.

The song ‘Sim Ramo’ describes picking wild vegetables in the wetlands, chasing hares that disappear into burrows, and longing for mahang’s flowering beauty. It is about desire one cannot have, wanting things that are fleeting.

Many of Gaurya Bhai’s lyrics are shaped by the collective experience of India’s Nepali diaspora, and deal with migration and belonging. Nepali ke Rona is one of them, born from the impact of the Gorkhaland movements in the Darjeeling Hills.

Life is cheap, Easily forgotten. It can be burnt off and erased.

Where humans eat humans 
And drunkenly wash worries away.

“Those songs are about a home. A home may mean no any different things. A home may not be permanent. It may be about missing a person or a place. It may be a state of in-betweeness, or even an encounter with death. At the end of the day, home might be never feeling at home,” says Dixit.

I place a stone on my heart, 
As I cross these mountains to a foreign land.
How are we going to row 
This ship we call life?
I place your photograph 
In the pocket of my heart...

“Our songs represent the urban reality of migration, and who may or may not have roots. India has seen waves of migration, but the question of who belongs and who does not has become politicised lately,” says Dixit.

Ten of these songs were released in the 2019 album Jero (fever) where the numbers speak of a time when youth are maddened by the alcohol in a funeral feast, and become intimate in a daze.

Moving songs from
that his name ‘Arko’ (‘run’ in Bengali) means ‘sneak’ or ‘smother’ (in Nepali), an assertion that is still the subject of endless jokes.

Mukhaeejee was 11 when he heard his first Nepali folk song, Bhanum Baru, from his trekking guide Atin Shrestha. The whole village of Mata Bhuntiyang, where the India-Nepal border runs through a house, would shut down for evenings of song and merriment, and people would dance to Mohan lal Mug and Tulsi Agarwala Rupaulami. Because of Mukhaeejee’s background in Bengal music, it was easy for him to learn the songs from Shrestha.

“My family came over to West Bengal from East Bengal, and as refugees we did not have much,” he relates. “Families like ours held on to the intangible heritage, which is all they bring with them. In my family that heritage was classical music.”

But Mukhaeejee rebelled against the regimented nature of the classical tradition and turned to exploring and experimenting with melodies that touched his soul. He gave up formal training and learnt music by jamming and practicing. Today, he performs folk music in more than 30 languages and plays five different folk instruments, but he keeps coming back to Nepali music.

Mukhaeejee’s connection to Nepal was forged in the Darjeeling mountains through his friendship with Nepali-speaking Indians who sang songs of migration and their motherland. “Nepali music contains traces of the places Nepalis have been — Burma, Malaysia, fighting world wars,” says Mukhaeejee. “Some Nepali musical instruments are similar to those found in Mongolia or Afghanistan, and there are some harmonic aspects from British influence on Indian music.”

And then there are the characteristics of Nepali music that are typical of mountain music around the world. The use of modal or major keys and fewer minor notes, as with Irish, Mongolian, South American, and bluegrass music.

Among Nepali singers, Mukhaeejee is fond of Shalikumar Gaadha, the pioneering nistrel. He first heard a Gaadha song on a taxi ride from Tribhuvan International Airport to Thamel. “Shalikumar’s voice is unique not just in Nepal but in the whole world,” he says. “When you sing to the accompaniment of a single instrument for many years, your voice automatically follows the instrument. Shalikumar sang with the sarangi, and his voice has acquired some microtonal aspects of the sarangi which are impossible to replicate.”

While in Pokhara to perform in January, Mukhaeejee visited Satata Chaur, the historical home of the Ghadhadars and says it was an emotional moment. “It gave me goose bumps,” he says.

Mukhaeejee has sung many of Shalikumar’s songs, including “Phire ni Mera, Albin Mati, Kali, and Haul Jhoom.” He understands some of the lyrics, but gets a native speaker to translate the correct pronunciation. Ultimately, though, what matters to him is the feeling that the music inspires. Mukhaeejee recently discovered Mithun Thapa, and has started to upload videos of his renditions of the master’s songs.

“When I sing to the Nepali communities in India, everyone sings along. That is so rare. You just forget all intellectual abstractions and enjoy the emotion the songs bring out,” says Mukhaeejee. “My objective in performing Nepali music is to spread love and connect people.”

---

The song explores their haste, but also their indecision. Will they regret it? The song seems an apt metaphor for our age, a feverish, int crashed time without a destination.

Steps in my mind, I could not find.
A shadow stood back at me in the mirror.
The blue youth of the sky is covered,
Dyed grey cloud, surrounded, I walk.

Says Dhakal: “Where we are from gets caught up in years in political movements. There is little support for the arts. Every ten years things are destroyed and we have to start all over again. Nepalis in India live a fragile, fragmented reality. But somehow, despite the lack of stability and physical infrastructure, we keep the spirit of the arts alive. Ganesh Bhatt stands out for his dense, angelic compositions. But like their songs of migration, the four band members are also wanderers. That is why their audiences are also mixed; people speaking different languages united by a love for music. But it is always special when they perform at home.”

It is magical playing to Nepali audiences. Elsewhere, people enjoy our performances, but only a Nepali audience sings along,” says Dhakal, who plans to bring the band to Nepal soon.

For now, the band continues to perform and to work on their second album, taking creative breaks when it can.

We took shelter at the chance of rain. But the sun smiled and shone instead. Before the distant batons of curfew.
We ask for a night of rest.

Sewa Bhattacharaj

---

**Music**

**The boys next door**

---

Subisu

- **25 Mbps Internet + Full HD Package**
- **@ JUST Rs. 1040 Month**
- **On the occasion of 15th Anniversary, Subisu presents**
- **Clear TV**
  - **@ JUST Rs. 221/ Month**
  - **GET 3 MONTHS FREE + 8GB EXTRA**
  - **3 Months Free Premium Package + 8GB Extra**
  - **Clear TV**

---

**nepalitimes.com**
B because Nepal is located at the confluence of four eco-biological domains, and because of its vast altitude differences, the country has the greatest variety of birdlife for its area in all the world. Terrestrial birds from 70m above sea level to nearly 8,800m within a horizontal distance of barely 160km, make Nepal a biodiversity hotspot rich in species that span thousands of kilometers. Indeed, 880 species of birds have been recorded in Nepal - more than in the continental United States.

Among these, 110 are migratory birds that winter in Nepal’s wetlands across the Tarai. They are mainly waterfowl, but include eagles, storks and cranes that fly down from Mongolia and Siberia. Some of these birds have a brief stopover in Nepal and fly on to India, and even to Africa across the Arabian Sea. When tracked by satellite, bar-headed geese (like the ones right) take return flights from India to lakes in Tibet at altitudes above 6,600m, using the westerly jet stream to push them over the Himalayan mountains.

Every winter, Bird Conservation Nepal (see box) conducts a migratory bird census of Nepal’s nature reserves as part of an international exercise supported by Wetlands International. Its records show that every year there are fewer and fewer birds wintering in Nepal.

“We have seen a gradual decrease in the number of birds coming to Nepal over the years, and the consequences for the environment are serious,” says Hem Sagar Bhattarai, national coordinator of the annual bird census conducted by Himalayan Nature.

Every winter since 1987, more than 360 volunteers from Himalayan Nature have counted birds in 60 wetland spots across Nepal. They finish by mid-

The Great Trans-Himalayan Bird Migration

Waterfowl from Siberia winter in Nepal’s wetlands, but their numbers are declining

Spiny babbler tourism

Kamal Maden

Crested melibotes from Bhatibhati arrived in Kathmandu in the first week of January. Recently retired from the British government service, his objective in coming to Nepal was an unusual one.

He wanted to see the spiny babbler in its natural habitat. Trenchant went to the World Peace Pagoda in Phuket with Selina Adhikari, a bird researcher from Himalayan Nature, and observed the only bird species indigenous to Nepal in its natural habitat. He was ecstatic.

Hundreds of other birds come to Nepal just to see the rare spiny babbler, which is found nowhere else in the world. It was first recorded as a species by British resident in Kathmandu Brian L. Haviland, who in 1853 gave it the Latin name, Zemu spinosa.

At the time, Edward Blyth - remembered as the father of Indian ornithology - was curator of the zoological museum in Calcutta. In 1865, he determined that the bird specimen had described was not the Himalaya but the Austrinubian spiny babbler. At one time the spiny babbler was also called Tubulicola spinnosus, although most scientists agree on Aunthopeplus spinosus.

The spiny babbler is on the endangered list, and lives at 1,500-2,700m elevation in summer and at 500-1,800m in winter. It normally lives in thick jungle, away from settlements. According to a recent study by Aunthopeplus spinosus in Kathmandu Valley, published in the Journal of Bombay Natural History Society, it has been found in the Kathmandu Valley since the 1930s and has since spread to the Bagmati and other areas.

In 1950, Edward Blyth was able to observe the spiny babbler in its natural habitat, and in 1952, he recorded it as the commonest species in the area. Today, most scientists agree on Aunthopeplus spinosus.

Kamal Maden is a local and wildlife researcher.
January. The data for this year is still to be tallied, but preliminary findings confirm the fears of ornithologists that the numbers continue to fall.

Some of the counting locations include favours of migratory birds like Kosi Tappu in the east, Ravi Hemu lake in Sailub, the crane sanctuary in Lumbini, Ghothagodi Lake in Kathmandu, and Sundari National Park. Aside from the Tane, this year the bird counting was also done at Kosi Lake. Birds have also stopped coming to Kathmandu locations including Tundikhel for many years now. Though the number of migratory birds is stable in Chitwan and seems to have grown in Ghothagodi Lake, the decline across Nepal is notable, and worrying.

Bala says some rare species of geese have not been seen for several years now and that there could be many reasons for this.

"The habitat of birds are shrinking along the migratory routes and in our own wetlands," he explains. "Rapid urbanisation and the increasing use of pesticides could be other reasons. On top of that, we now have climate change that impacts on birds, as it does everything else."

The implications of this decline are far-reaching. Birds, especially water birds, have an important role in the ecological cycle. They also eat insects and rodents, protecting crops.

While yearly fluctuation of bird numbers is normal, and a slight reduction in two consecutive years is not cause for concern, experts say the long-term trend is disconcerting.

"We do not have much control over the birds' migratory routes, but even within Nepal, there is a lot we can do," says Bala. "We must control hunting and poaching and manage our wetlands better, keeping them free from pollution."

He says that if this is done, birds that have gone elsewhere this winter may come back next year.

---

**Owl Festival**

Friends of Nature (FoN), a youth-led conservation group, is organizing a two-day owl festival in Kathmandu Valley in collaboration with the International Festival of Owls. The event, in its ninth iteration this year, has previously taken place in Khotang, Binsidung, and other districts.

Twenty-two species of owl are found in Nepal. Eight of them are endangered, because their habitat is fragmented and cleared for agriculture.

"Owls are highly neglected fauna in terms of research and conservation in Nepal as majority of effort concentrates on megafauna like rhinoceros and tiger. This has left owls exposed and unprotected," says FoN, which wants to increase awareness of owl conservation. In addition to learning a lot about owls and their habitats, attendees of the festival will be entertained with games, face painting, and other activities. A temporary owl museum will be displayed and cultural arts performed.

---

**Friends of feathers**

Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) has been active in protecting and spreading awareness Nepal’s avian species. It conducts bird surveys, especially around proposed infrastructure projects like a transmission line in Central Nepal that passes through the habitat of spotted babbler and other endangered species. It found that the birds like white-rumped, slender-billed and red-headed vultures have recovered there in recent years, and other birds like suns cranes prefer the area. It recommends that the transmission line should avoid wetlands so the habitat is protected and the birds are not electrocuted.

BCN conducts regular bird counts in Kathmandu, and also surveys threatened species around Pokhara.

BCN also conducts basic ornithology training, instructing freshmen in watching, recognizing, documenting, and photographing birds. This year BCN published the Pheasant Conservation Action Plan for Nepal (2019-2023), developed the Biodiversity Conservation Education Curriculum for schools and created long-term strategy for the Nepal Bird Conservation Network (NBCN).

Vulture conservation has also been part of BCN’s work since the raptors went into steep decline in South Asia, poisoned by steroidal-based cattle carcasses. BCN is tracking 61 white-rumped vultures and 31 cormorants that have been released and 30 wild — through satellite tags.

The understanding of bird behaviour that gained through this helps conservation efforts. BCN also works in conservation of habitats. This year it helped stop highway road construction at Gaui Sinamchaur forest (recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area) and saved more construction at Tauchia.

[www.birdconservation.org](http://www.birdconservation.org)
Events

Grand Dog Show
Show off your dog’s agility and tricks at Campark ‘Cares’ 12th Grand Dog Show. 8 February, noon onwards, Sattalbota Swimming Complex, Sattalbota, 2081079032

Vertical Garden
Visit the Vertical Garden organic market at Dhaoka Cafe for fresh organic produce. 9 February, 9am-12pm, Kalpana Kendra, Pashupatinath, 2081079058

Object in focus
‘Object in Focus’ Series 4 features the work of Kathmandu-based visual artist Namendra Limbu. Until 14 February, in a public plaza. 5-15 February, 10am-6pm, Fangaree Museum, Boudhanath, 2081079501

Valentine Baking Class
Win your partner’s heart with your baking! Learn some tried and true techniques from pastry chef Deepak Shrestha. 13-14 February, 7am-10pm, Rs 2,000—per person, Rs 3,000—couple, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudhanath, 2081079135

In the sand and the snow
Watch One World Theatre Nepal’s production of ‘In the Sand and the Snow’, a cautionary tale by Adam Rapp on America’s shift to the left. Pay what you can. Only 50 seats are available. See page 72. 9 February, 6pm and 7pm, Club 15 Hours, Nagarkot, 2081079546

Getaway

Milla Guesthouse
If you prefer to live like a local and admire the mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far from the city, it’s warm and quiet. Wardhanepal, 2081079017

Stargazing on Valentine’s Day
Enjoy a romantic night under the stars with your loved one this Valentine’s Day. Live music, buffet dinner, bollywood and more. 14 February, 5.30pm onwards, Club Hinokiyo, Kirtipur, 2071004911

Balhai Village Resort
A small, easy retreat with a bird’s-eye view of green, mountainous fields dotted with strawberries, Paro, Khote, 2081079772

Harmony Spa & Health Club
Advance tickets on the edge of a plateau overlooking Gokarna and the green hills of Lalitpur. Harmony Spa combines therapeutic care within a natural environment for an experience unrivalled elsewhere. 6:30am-10:30pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thulo 20710045212

Mount Princess Hotel
The hotel offers magnificent views of the surrounding valley and mountains and is a perfect retreat amidst nature for those wishing to escape the city meath.
You can book your stay at DHO 056 Mount Princess Hotel through the DHO app. Subilale, 20710045016

Music

Ben Bohmer
German DJ Ben Bohmer, known for his cinematic and ambient music, will perform in Kathmandu as part of his world tour. Get your free tickets from Way2 nepal. 7 February, 5pm-10pm, BCL, fries Rs 200—cheese, Rs 300—chicken, Club Mosaic, 2081079628

Rob’s 75th Birthday
Celebration reggae icon Rob Marley’s 75th Birthday, live music from jam band and family international. 7 February, 5:30pm, Musiccity, Aloha Mogan, 2081079473

Sweet Fox
A rip-snorter from the bottle of Balsamique, this is the place to be if you want your ice cream to be heavenly. Try their handmade popsicles with real fruit and natural ingredients. 7pm-1am, Aloha Mogan

Chimes Restaurant
Celebrate jamison food Night in honour of Bob Marley. Try the jamison Red Fia soup, Toto (coconut care) and special jamison cocktails.
7 February, 5pm onwards, Signora, 2081079973

Rox Restaurant
Treat yourself better; fall in love with a romantic five-course dinner served with paired wines. Take away a box of handcrafted chocolates. 14 February, 5pm onwards, Rs. 500—Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudhanath, 2081079274

The Cafe
Enjoy your winter evenings at the buffet barbecue every Friday until the end of February. 7 February, 6pm onwards, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudhanath, 2081079474

Air Quality Index

KATHMANDU, 31 January - 6 February

We have been amazing red and breathing ultrafine particles at an all-time low. Kathmandu Valley’s average daily air quality index (AQI) is significantly below 100. Higher during the nights due to biotechnol and movement of trucks, and was very close to reaching people. Very unhealthy air on all seven days this past week. But as winds come down, hopefully the inverntor layer will dissipate, making the air marginally better. But not back to normal.
https://nepal.meteorology.gov.np/embassy/quality-monitor/
Thimi’s urban tissue

A new book describes the Kathmandu Valley town that was a planned settlement since ancient times

Mark Turin

In this impressively detailed and visually arresting study, Melanie Past makes a convincing scholarly case for why social and cultural traditions should be considered fundamental structures in shaping Thimi, a historic Newar settlement situated in the central-eastern segment of the Kathmandu Valley that dates to the early medieval period. In addition, the reader is shown both why and how Newar towns like Thimi should be considered to be planned settlements of historical consequences.

Part ethnography, part archaeology, geography, history, architecture and planning, Thimi: Community and Structure of a Town is an updated and re-fashioned version of Past’s 2002 doctoral dissertation, whose stated objective was to provide a developmental account of Thimi in service of the conservation of the settlement’s heritage. Past integrates ancient inscriptions and chronicles with contemporary oral histories, observations of ritual, household survivals, meticulous maps and elegant floor plans to create a complex and composite understanding of Thimi, one of 31 significant Newar settlements in the Valley.

Thimi is also the 11th publication in the Himalayan Traditions and Culture Series by the Saral Foundation that supports the Targum Museum, the Nepal Architecture Archive (NAA) and associated heritage activities of profound consequence and value to our understanding of the cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley.

A central message that comes across loud and clear from Past’s study is that in the case of Thimi, the nani—a Newar term to describe the socio-spatial unit of clan clusters—is the ‘urban tissue’ that bound the town together. Only by appreciation of the roles of dessa, ino, nani and cibaan can the configuration of dwellings and development of Thimi be properly understood.

Past argues that while the 2015 earthquake didn’t substantially damage the historical parts of Thimi, the reconstruction that followed has rapidly changed the ‘medieval townscape’. This rebuilding, together with the settlement’s changed status from village development committee to municipality, is resulting in a great transformation.

The deliberate and ritually-circumscribed planning of ancient Thimi stands in stark contrast to the haphazard and mostly unplanned construction of roads across the nation. When you next find yourself in a traffic jam in Medhikyupur Municipality, in that ever-expanding urban strip that links Kathmandu to Bhaktapur with barely a field in between, spare a thought for the intentional town of Thimi and its historic importance to the diverse and creative communities that have lived there for centuries.

Bridging Nepal and the US

Memorial of Sherpa climber who never climbed Everest just ‘because it is there’

A memento of the Sherpas’ contributions is held in a temple in Kathmandu. Its presence in the region is testament to Sherpas who are concerned about preserving their traditional culture. Such sentiments must be carefully nurtured, he says, for there is no substitute to Sherpas’ contribution to the Himalayan region. In fact, the Sherpa community has benefited from the tourism industry which has created employment opportunities for the Sherpas in the USA.

Overall, Pemba Sherpa says that the time has come to think about the Sherpas’ role as climbers. He says that the Sherpas have contributed greatly to the development of the tourism industry in the Himalayas.

Mark Turin

Bridging Worlds by Pemba Sherpa and James W. McElroy Sherpa Publishing, Boulder CO 2019 Distributed by Mela Publications 200 pages

For the spring sale, Vesper Fine Wines are offering a 50% discount on selected wines. The sale begins on 12th February and runs until 9th March.

Vesper Fine Wines MEGA SALE

TIME & DATE: 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM
7th, 8th & 9th FEBRUARY
LOCATION: Vesper Cafe

UPTO 50% OFF
WINES START FROM RS. 1000

www.vesperhouse.com
Dystopia is no longer fiction

Dystopian fiction predicts a distant future where morals and ethics are forgotten and post-apocalyptic humans kill to survive. But what if dystopia is already our political present? What if we are already staring at a climate apocalyptic?

The play In the Sand and the Snow, being staged at Tangalooma this weekend, is set in just such a world. Directed by Debendra Mohla, the screenplay is adapted from the 2019 New York Times piece Imagining America in 2040 by Adam Rapp. Its name derives from its settings in the two Arab-A Emirates: the Arabian Peninsula (sand) and the Arctic (snow).

The curtains part on two soldiers guarding a desert. They are homestuck and singing songs to pass the time. An animal wanders between them, and a woman enters with a baby, bunting abuses. Finally the leaves, dumping the baby on them.

No spoilers, but tales of cossack youngsters killing innocents are a genre unto themselves. They include classics like The Lord of the Flies (1954) and the dramatized Hunger Games (2012). But seeing such violence acted out on stage is particularly chilling. It brings out the truth that such violence is being perpetrated in wars around the world even as we are in the theatre.

There are elements of the abject and the absurd in this play, which menders between disparate, unconstrained incidents. We realise that the soldiers are actually actors, and that an audience of 12 people is watching the play. They sit in the front row alongside members of the real audience. But only they get an intermission, and the real audience watches them take a break.

A disturbingly violent scene and another one with intense lovedkilling in the room are accompanied by graphic descriptions that inject absurdity into the play and add elements of meta-commentary. The ‘audience’ gets back to front row seats and watches the beginning of Act 2, which is exactly like Act 1.

A woman forces a baby on two soldiers, except that this time in an icy world.

The difference is that this time the performance is interrupted, by a stage manager who accuse a government officer — who can loosely be described as a curator — of not watching the entire play. The reference to government control on the arts worldwide is a raging issue of our times. The stage manager and soldiers forcibly take the officer offstage, raising doubts about whether the soldiers are actors.

In the Sand and the Snow raises more questions than it answers. The soldiers do not know what they are guarding, and here no idea what their orange flag symbolizes. The audience, both real and acting, do not know why animals wander into the play. Deaths of characters leave no traces, making you question if they actually happened.

These are the times we live in: violence changes relationships and sever connections, whether we are active or passive in our participation in this dystopian reality, whether censorship is increasing in our world, whether it could lead to use of force in retaliation, and whether that makes things any better.

This is a disturbing play. But we live in disturbing times. This is real occupation: where we escape from real-world dystopia in one stage. Sewa Bhattacharji

In the Sand and the Snow

SPM and PM, 5:45
Out 25 hours, Tangalooma
Bimala Tumkwa: Putting kinship on the map of Nepal

Muna Gurung

EVEN IN 1978, Teramala, Bimala Tumkwa’s village in Mahottari was popular for her human rights work. Gurung, a journalist, political activist, and the leader of the Surkhet Women’s Human Rights Organization, was also a member of the General Secretary for the Sanchari Samaj Podhini (Group for Women Journalists and Cadres). In 2017, she was a recipient of the Women Security Group’s Lightroom Conversation.

**INTERVIEW**

**Lightroom Conversation**

Muna Gurung

**What is your idea about Bimala Tumkwa’s writing?**

The way you have written the book, it is so intimate and kind. She has shared and explained not only her own but her daily life too. In the book, she says, “In the light of women’s leadership, I can talk about trust, faith, love, the meander that it takes to be pretty, ideas of beauty and dignity, and political activism.”

**Bimala Tumkwa:** I was born after my parents had been married for 19 years. By then my Ama had been raised by brothers, and all sorts of names for being barren. I was a miracle, born when she went into labour after carrying 17 days of stress. It was 7 in the evening. She delivered me in the same two brothers, but both died.

**Muna Gurung:** How old were you when they died?

I was about two. I remember my mother holding my second brother’s body in her lap for three hours after he had died. She only put down when his body began to slim. Dead bodies rot. Later, he was burned on top of a hill nearby. I can’t remember that or how they took him from us. Meanwhile, Ama was weak and she died in a pond next to our house, eating some fish with her hands, and placing them into a pot.

**Mina Can:** I see how focusing on catch-up work in the classroom can burn you out.

**Bimala Tumkwa:** I think so. As I still remember my mother holding my second brother’s body in her lap for three hours after he had died. She only put down when his body began to slim. Dead bodies rot. Later, he was burned on top of a hill nearby. I can’t remember that or how they took him from us. Meanwhile, Ama was weak and she died in a pond next to our house, eating some fish with her hands, and placing them into a pot.

**Mina Can:** I see how focusing on catch-up work in the classroom can burn you out.

**Bimala Tumkwa:** I think so. As I still remember my mother holding my second brother’s body in her lap for three hours after he had died. She only put down when his body began to slim. Dead bodies rot. Later, he was burned on top of a hill nearby. I can’t remember that or how they took him from us. Meanwhile, Ama was weak and she died in a pond next to our house, eating some fish with her hands, and placing them into a pot.

**Mina Can:** I see how focusing on catch-up work in the classroom can burn you out.

**Bimala Tumkwa:** I think so. As I still remember my mother holding my second brother’s body in her lap for three hours after he had died. She only put down when his body began to slim. Dead bodies rot. Later, he was burned on top of a hill nearby. I can’t remember that or how they took him from us. Meanwhile, Ama was weak and she died in a pond next to our house, eating some fish with her hands, and placing them into a pot.
Injured use Internet to reach physiotherapists

Sonia Awale

Last November, a speeding bus in Angakanchi lost control and tumbled down a mountain, killing 18 and injuring 18 passengers. Three weeks later, another bus careered off a serpentine road in Sindulpokhola, killing 14 and wounding 18.

Seven Nepalis die every day in road and highway accidents. Shocking though that statistic might be, the number of injured is much higher: On average, 40 people are injured on roads across the country each day. Last year, there were over 13,000 road accidents in which 2,756 people lost their lives and 10,731 were seriously injured.

Highway accidents are now the biggest killer of young men and women in the country. The causes are usually carelessness and speeding, and poorly maintained roads and vehicles. The number of accidents is rising faster than the increase in the number of vehicles.

Those who survive often have traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, requiring long-term or life-long rehabilitative care. But the state of rehabilitation in Nepal is nearly non-existent. There is no government rehabilitation centre, and while some private hospitals do offer limited physiotherapy, none have dedicated acute rehabilitation units and none employ physical medicine and rehabilitation consultants.

"Forget about prioritising it, rehabilitative medicine is not even included in the healthcare system of Nepal," laments Raja Dhakal, the only physical medicine and rehabilitation doctor registered in Nepal. "Every hospital has a cardiology unit, intensive care unit and even physiotherapy but no rehabilitation unit. This should be integrated in the healthcare system rather than treated as a separate entity."

The Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) in Kathmandu, founded in 2002, is Nepal's largest inpatient rehabilitation centre and the only one specialised in spinal cord injury. The 11-bed hospital treats patients from all 77 districts and provides inpatient rehabilitation for 300 individuals a year.

It also conducts outpatient care, home follow-up visits, community outreach programs, and a residential vocational rehabilitation program to help people with disabilities integrate back into society and to better equip their families to deal with their special needs.

The only other facilities with dedicated inpatient rehabilitation beds are Green Pastures Hospital in Pokhara and the Hospital for Rehabilitation and Disabled Children in Keventura.

"Usually two physical medicine and rehabilitation specialists are needed for every 100,000 people. This means we need 300 specialists in Nepal, and instead we have one," says Monir Nivan, associate professor of rehabilitative medicine at Leeds University in the UK, who says the gap in rehabilitative care can be bridged with telemedicine.

"Tele-rehabilitation can link the people in the community with specialists to provide necessary interventions remotely, allowing them to save time and money spent travelling to the centre," adds Nivan, who was in Nepal last month with a team of researchers to launch a six-month pilot project called Tele-rehabilitation Nepal (TEAM) in collaboration with SIRC.

Unlike other telemedicine consultations where a patient has to visit a health post to connect with doctors based in cities, in tele-rehab a social worker from SIRC visits patients, finds out their needs and then connects them with a specialist team that consists of a physician, physiotherapist,
It’s an emergency: Nepal needs to improve trauma care
A steep rise in road traffic accidents exposes the traumatized state of trauma care

Sanghamitra Subba

As the only physical medicine and rehabilitation hospital in Nepal, Dhaka Development Society (DDS) has a lot to be proud of. Its programmes with world-renowned medical institutions and its collaborative efforts with the government have made it a beacon of hope for people with disabilities and those who have suffered from road traffic accidents. However, there are several challenges that need to be addressed.

Over the past decade, Nepal has seen a significant increase in road traffic accidents, leading to a rise in cases of traumatic injuries. The Nepal Bureau of Statistics reports that in 2021, there were 60,000 road traffic accidents resulting in injuries, with 3,000 of those being fatal. The majority of these accidents occur on rural roads, where facilities for emergency care are limited.

DDS has been working to address this issue by providing rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and those who have suffered injuries. However, the demand for such services far exceeds the capacity of existing facilities. The hospital has a rehabilitation centre that provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological support. However, the centre is located in Kathmandu, which makes it difficult for people in rural areas to access the services.

DDS is working towards improving its infrastructure and expanding its services to reach more people. The hospital has recently launched a mobile rehabilitation unit that can travel to rural areas to provide care. This is a significant step towards making rehabilitation services more accessible to people in remote areas.

In conclusion, while DDS has made significant strides in providing rehabilitation services, there is still a long way to go to meet the needs of the growing population affected by road traffic accidents. The government and other stakeholders need to work together to improve the infrastructure and services available for trauma care in Nepal.
Things get better and better

SURGEON GENERAL’S WARNING
(REPORT TO FEDERAL LAW: WARNING: OR NOT TO REACH THE FUNDING)

An official fact-finding Task Force has presented this column on lab
rate and certified that it is fit for
human consumption provided it
is preserved before the date of
expiry of the reader. However,
one can’t be too careful during
these perilous times, as readers
are advised to wear masks and
use hand sanitiser after finishing.
Management is not responsible
for the consequences, especially
if eager readers are apprehended
perusing this column in the loco,
or other restricted areas where human-
to-human transmission can occur.
Perpetrators, if caught, will be
administered 38 lashes with a wet
rotan cane on each hind cheek.

Consumers are warned that if
symptoms such as nausea, vomiting,
dizziness and a loss of national
pride should persist, they should
immediately lodge an official
complaint. Management welcomes
suggestions via email attachment
which will be immediately
deleted because of the risk of virus
transmission. Fine print: Now
that the Media Council Bill is law,
anyone found taking any of this
stuff seriously should get their
head examined free of charge by
a member of the Head Hunting
Department of the Ministry of
Commerce and Entertainment.
Now that we have these legal
niceties out of the way which are
necessary to protect our asses from
being hauled over the coals (as it
were) we can get down to matters
of national importance that you
have all been impatiently waiting
for with barely-concealed boredom.
The great American
philosopher, Spiderman, once said
during an unguarded moment:
"With absolute power comes
absolute responsibility." And
that is exactly what is happening
with the awesome and/or glorious
Nepal Communist Party. In the
two years since it came to power,
our Great Helmspersons have
made the country take a dramatic
turn for the better. Every day and
in every way, things are getting
better and better and we can say
with confidence that everything is
so vastly improved, and we have
reached such a pinnacle of stability
and prosperity, that they just can’t
get any better anymore. In fact,
things haven’t stopped getting any
better, and from here on it is going
to be downhill all the way.
The grabbers are single-
minded in not letting petty issues
like the need to evacuate Nepali
students from Wuhan, finishing
Melamchi, passing the MCC, or
launching nationwide health
insurance, distract it from taking
a Great Leap Forward with urgent
reforms in the education sector like
burning maths in Grades 11-12,
and requiring all school buildings
to be painted yellow.

Hefty new fines are in
store for those who
do not maintain lane
discipline on streets
that have track-size
craters on them.

The Ass

The all new Tiago
Young. Premium. Fun

Sipradi Trading Pvt. Ltd., Thapathali, Kathmandu
Phone: 01-4250610/ 4250612