Alpha males

There are signs that the power struggle between Prime Minister K P Oli and co-Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal is now reaching a climax. After two years of cohabitation with the tussle between them increasingly playing out in public, the two top leaders of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), are now on a head-on collision course. The outcome of this final bout will determine whether or not the NCP will split along its UML-Maoist fault line, who will become the next prime minister, and whether the spat will drag in the office of the President.

Primarily, it is an ideological struggle between the social-democratic UML and the Maoists — the two parties that had a gunshot wedding for the 2017 election, after which conjugal relations have been rocky.

Prime Minister Oli thinks Dahal is in the pockets of big business, is anti-democratic and has ambitions of becoming a strongman. Dahal, has publicly declared his support for a directly elected executive presidency, obviously with himself as head of state and government. Hence, Oli wants to prevent Dahal from succeeding him at all costs.

The problem is that Oli is now morally, politically and physically weak. Scandal after scandal involving his coterie have tarnished the prime minister’s image, and undermined his nationalist credentials. Dahal has managed to wean away former UML leaders like Madhav Kumar Nepal, Jalaluddin Khanal and Bam Dev Gautam, and left Oli with only two loyalists in the nine-member NCP secretariat.

Dahal’s strategy is to keep chipping away at the UML carded because without weakening it he cannot be the supreme leader of the united party. He is exploiting the disaffection towards Oli among the UML rank and file, as well as dangling carrots in front of the prime minister’s erstwhile colleagues to get them to defect.

Dahal has used every trick in the book deploying the media to systematically denounce Oli and isolating him on matters like the US-Funded Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the selection of a new speaker, and the nomination of Garnam to the Upper House.

The prime minister has not exactly helped his own cause by the lack of transparency of his business dealings, and other scandals involving trusted comrades like Gokul Baskota, who resigned last week as Information Minister after an inordinating Kickback tape was made public.

Surprisingly, Pushpa Kamal Dahal has managed all this by staying out of the limelight, lobbying influencers from the shadows, and avoiding blame for his machinations — including getting the secretariat to install Garnam into the Upper House. Oli wants to ensure Dahal doesn’t pull a fast one during his kidney transplant hospitalisation, even if it is by giving his ally President Bidya Devi Bhandari emergency powers.

Party insiders say Dahal’s strategy is to take full control of the NCP, make Bam Dev Gautam prime minister, replace Bhandari with either Nepal or Khanal as president, and then amend the constitution to declare an executive presidency.

Both factions of the NCP now have a few more days before President Bhandari returns from a trip to the far west, after which a fine showdown is expected, possibly next week. Kunda Dixit
THE OLIGARCHY

There is an old Hungarian proverb: "If you don't bite the hand, you keep quiet; that makes you a thief as well." The saying does not hold much weight in Nepali politics, where impunity has now been elevated to this government's mission statement. There was the lack of rule of law before, but never has it been as blatant as it is today.

A Speaker of Parliament accused of attempted rape is the same man who as Finance Minister two years ago was caught on tape asking for Rs100 million from a Chinese contractor to buy off opposition legislators for a non-confidence vote. Newspapers had to never have answered for the leaked tape, and two weeks ago he was acquitted by a district court on the rape charge as well.

Meanwhile, a murder-accused who was freed last year for the war-era crime, replaced him as Speaker.

The Ministry of Information and Communication is caught in tape bargaining for a $670,000 kickback from a contractor. The scandal suggests representing a Swiss security printing supplier. He is forced to step down, but questions have arisen about his political patron, Prime Minister K P Oli. What did he know, and when did he know it? The scandals are coming thick and fast. Nepal has become a one-act-a-day country. The Kathmandu wetland is blooming and the melodious dials that gave Yeti Holdings unprecedented access to royal assets administrated by Nepal Trust have added to cumulative public disillusionment with the Oil administration.

At a time when all these scandals are swirling about, and tending on social media, Prime Minister Oli staged a lavish birthday bash in his hometown at state expense this week picture, albeit, Dhimalyanas fly over from Kathmandu in five helicopters, and even before the dust from the landing pad had settled, another Dyna Air chopper arrived with an enormous birthday cake in the shape of a 3-D map of Nepal strapped to the back seat.

We are living in a chronically-Communist Oligarchy.

There is nothing wrong with a prime minister celebrating his 69th birthday, but PM Oli has done himself no favours by not paying attention to the optics. The Alpine backdrop was timed badly and was in bad taste. And it like Dahal has the upper hand. A morally weak, politically unprepossessing and criminal prime minister. But Dahal is determined not to let that happen.

In this elaborate chess game, Dahal’s primary aim is to undermine the foundation of the former UML, RNP and RCP, who still make up a significant block in the NCP. He knows he cannot make a dent at the cadre level, which is why he is pulling away top leaders like Bimalendra Nautika, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Bimal Dev Gautam from the OML camp.

Dahal advanced former UML leader Bimal Dev Gautam into the Upper House this week. Gurung has been home minister before, and has a barely concealed ambition to be prime minister. The trouble is, he lost in the 2017 election.

But Dahal’s move has spoiled Oli, who has got Defense Minister Ishwor Pokhrel to deliver some Twitter broadsides, and to keep Khabar Kathmandu out as Finance Minister till the announcement of the annual budget even as his Upper House seat is expiring on a March. Former Speaker Subhas Negi has also come out strongly against Gautam being inducted into the Upper House, saying this is a bad precedent.

One danger is that President Bidya Devi Bhandari, who is close to Prime Minister Oli, will be dragged into the fray. The sooner this paralyzing power struggle in the NCP is resolved, the better it is for Nepal, for whom the electoral promise of ‘stability and prosperity’ has become a joke.

WHAT'S TRENDING

Nepal's baby export

A major dispute between government and foreign record of the number of Nepal’s child adopted in North America and Europe has acquired a serious dimension following the Telecom Welfare lawmakers in Kathmandu. Visit nepaltimes.com for this feature story.

REPLICATING NEPAL'S STOLEN GODS

by Deepak Paudel

A 70-year-old statue of Lord Narsingh was recently stolen to the landscape Museum of Art after it was stolen from Vanishing in 2014. It is a fetish of western museums to return stolen artifacts, so Nepal is making a desperate attempt. The statue may find its way to the First Museum of the Vanishing, set up in 2013. Watch out for our full story.

NEPAL'S MEETING WITH CHINA

by Anuradha

A Nepali herpologist (fossil of the carnivorous species) has been behind Nepal’s initial contact with China. A Nepali herpetologist (fossil of the carnivorous species) has been behind Nepal’s initial contact with China. This article was read by hundreds of thousands and generated the entire world about the image of Mao Zedong on China's 100-year banknote worth a huge.

NEPAL'S MOST ANNOYING PERSON

This author is an alien by Sanjib Choudhury

American author with over 100 books in the Nepali, Sushila Choudhary is a love for Bishnu Thapa and Krishna. The prolific dream of his memoirs that comes after the last author and his book.

REPLACING NEPAL'S STOLEN GODS

by Anuradha

A 70-year-old statue of Lord Narsingh was recently stolen to the landscape Museum of Art after it was stolen from Vanishing in 2014. It is a fetish of western museums to return stolen artifacts, so Nepal is making a desperate attempt. The statue may find its way to the First Museum of the Vanishing, set up in 2013. Watch out for our full story.

Bhutan's medical cannabis

by Ekatarina

A medical cannabis grower of the farming community, perhaps, the green cannabis that is grown to export to China, is being encouraged to take the initiative of this. But the current status of the cultivation rights to the produce.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

It is not our fault if we say, we are not happy about how policies instability and coping with power struggle now seem everywhere. Of course we have some development programme, but the power struggle is a part of it. The government can be a bit more incisive, but they are also in a difficult situation. We are trying our best to overcome these challenges.

The Times of Nepal (TON) 09-16 February 2015

In a recent comment, a government official, we know you are trying to fix the worse times to talk about the government. There is no need to mention its quarrel. The government is not the only one that can make the government effective. The economy is in the verge of collapse. The government is a big issue to fix. The Prime Minister is not the only one that can make the government effective. The government is in a difficult situation. It is trying its best to overcome these challenges.
DISCOVER MORE: USA

with the airline that flies to more countries than any other

TURKISH AIRLINES

WASHINGTON NEW YORK

01-4438363 | 01-4438436 | ktmseles@thy.com
Meet Bibhusan Raj Joshi, who worked as a chef and studied the hospitality business in Spain for ten years, and then returned to Nepal with a wealth of knowledge about the diversity of Spanish fare. El Mediterraneo has been a fixture of the Thamelite neighborhood for the past eight years, a favorite with local expatriates, tourists, and increasingly, young and upwardly mobile Nepali youth.

Joshi has trained several of his staff not just in the preparation of Mediterranean dishes, but in how to share their knowledge with guests while serving. “Most Nepali guests are still not used to European cuisine, and part of our job is to describe the items and how they are prepared,” explains Joshi, who can often be seen chatting with his guests, most of whom keep coming back. Running a restaurant like this is still financially challenging, and there are customers who come to El Mediterraneo and ask for momos, rice and curry. Joshi’s staff tells them to try out the paella, instead, describing it as “a Spanish bityaani.”

There may actually be a correlation because north Indian Mughlai cuisine shares the West Asian roots of the Muslim culture that helped shape the development of Spain’s culture, architecture, and food culture during the middle ages. The basic ingredient of running a restaurant is passion, Joshi believes, and owners have to give it all they have got. Then there is the knowledge and specialisation that translates into the unique selling point of an establishment. Decor and ambiance help, but customers mostly look for authenticity and a unique dining experience. “I don’t want us to be like other restaurants. But even when restaurants are still not keen to introduce specific Western cuisines to target the tourists, they can still make the effort of doing more research on Nepal’s diverse cuisines,” Joshi says. In fact, several restaurants in the Kathmandu area have already started to experiment with Gurung, Newa, Tharu, and Madhesi cuisines, and even fusing elements of these with Western dishes. Although not highly profitable, El Mediterraneo has earned a reputation among visitors to Nepal thanks to customers who have written positive reviews on popular online platforms including the TripAdvisor. But Joshi believes his best promotion is still word of mouth, which is why he has so many repeat customers. Nepal has no guiding system for restaurants, and there is no go-to food website that aggregates restaurants with information and menus. Joshi has no regrets about coming back to Nepal, and says the satisfaction of being in one’s own city and the fulfillment one feels by working here more than compensates for the lower income compared to working in Europe. Just like he switched on to the niche of Spanish cuisine, he feels there is a market for unexplored European, African and Asian cuisines in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

Journalism-turned-farmer Nareesh Newar contributes this fortnightly multimedia column in Nepali Times, a daily, to help young entrepreneurs.

Turkish Airlines and the Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) on Wednesday signed an agreement in which the carrier will provide special travel arrangements for members and employees of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce. The MoU was signed by Turkish Airlines general manager for Nepal, Abdullah Tuncer Kecceci and NCC President Rajeev Kari Shrestha facilitated the ceremony in which the organisation’s board members were present. “We hope that Turkish Airlines will help us make Vist Nepal Year 2020 a success,” said Shrestha before the signing of the MoU. “We were so happy to know that the airlines had partnered with the campaign.”

In response, Kecceci said: “Our main objective is to maintain a long-term relationship between Nepal and Turkey. We want this partnership to promote trade, tourism and business opportunities between our nations and help the Nepal Chamber of Commerce do more in terms of exports and imports.” Kecceci also added that since the Istanbul hub at the new airport has one of the biggest cargo capacities of any airport in the world, Nepali exporters and businesses would have no issues transporting a large volume of goods between Nepal and the rest of the world. Turkish Airlines, the national flag carrier of Turkey, was established in 1933 with a fleet of five aircraft. As of 2018, the airline has 358 aircraft to more than 175 countries and 319 destinations worldwide from its hub in Istanbul. Turkish Airlines began flights in Nepal in 2013 and has helped promote tourism in the country ever since. Nepal Chamber of Commerce established in 1962, is Nepal’s first business grouping. It aims to promote trade and support the formulation of commercial, industrial and fiscal policies by the government of Nepal. The NCC has more than 1,600 members and 8,200 registered firms affiliated to it.
The India, US, Nepal, China quadrangle

There are some takeaways for Nepal from Trump’s visit to India amidst communal violence

The leaders of the ruling Nepal Communist must take note of two events that unfolded in India this week: the roaring welcome to US President Donald Trump and the ongoing communal riots in Delhi’s northeastern suburb.

The Narendra Modi government’s massive two-day show meant to woo Trump, who repeatedly praised Modi and said “America loves India,” has been overshadowed by the violence that has claimed over 20 lives.

The two events present contrasting pictures of India as an emerging power that engages with superpowers and even takes the lead in issues of international concern. The other is of an India engorged in violence between some Hindus and Muslims. The ruling BJP and Modi, supported by the right-wing RSS and VHP, find themselves in the vortex of this violence.

Trump reached India on Monday, and along with Modi addressed the “Namaste Trump” rally in Ahmedabad’s Motera Stadium, the largest cricket stadium in the world, attended by over 100,000 people. The two presented their visions for the next phase of Indo-US strategic partnership.

Although the much-awaited trade deal did not happen, the two sides put together a $35 billion military deal, sought commitments to fight terrorism, narcotics, and organized crime, and signed three memorandums of understanding in the health sector and in oil. A list of 65 triads in India that involve China’s Huawei technology company, Trump made claims about the importance of secure 5G networks, which he said must be “a tool for freedom, progress, prosperity, not a conduit for suppression and censorship.”

Important for Nepal to note is the dialogue between Modi and Trump around security cooperation. Besides reiterating that the two countries will work to combat “radical Islamic terrorism,” something which will clearly affect the functioning of SAARC, Trump promoted military cooperation and said that the US and India, along with Japan and Australia, should work together for security of the Indo-Pacific region as the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) grouping.

The diplomatic and military arrangements of the Quad are widely viewed as a response to the rapidly increasing economic and military power of China in the region. Sandwiched and landlocked between India and China, Nepal will have to balance its relations between China and a US-backed India.

As it is, a $500 million US-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) deal to improve Nepal’s connectivity is in limbo because of opposition from a faction of the ruling Communist Party that sees it as a part of the American Indo-Pacific Strategy. Parliamentary ratification of the project has been delayed.

The MCC is viewed with much interest by India’s civil society and academia lately, and is seen as a direct counter to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Sections of the Nepali establishment view India as an obstructionist power, and are trying to develop closer ties with China.

But India is finding more grounds of convergence with the US, which now views South Asia as a vital part of its Indo-Pacific Strategy. Smiles atinstein in India’s periphery are bound to be trapped in this rivalry. With pressing concerns at home over opposition to the Constitution Amendment Act, (CAA) India may play silent and quiet diplomacy, leaving the US and China to compete for influence in India’s neighborhood.

Trump and Modi are said to have discussed developments in South Asia at length during this visit, suggesting that they will collaborate and closely consult with each other on regional matters. Nepal must gear up to deal with a more forceful America in the near future even as it is already grappling with a dominant China.

It is in India’s advantage if the US temporarily fills the vacuum in Nepal, which New Delhi feels is its traditional sphere of influence. So, the foreign policy challenge for Nepal will no longer be to balance between India and China, but to have meaningful dialogue with China and the US to protect its national interest.

India considers the US as its natural ally. The Modi-Trump equation seen in Gujarat and Delhi this week speaks volumes of their friendship and desire to foster closer ties between the world’s oldest and largest democracies. Even in midst of communal riots in Delhi, Trump stated at a press conference that “it is up to India” to deal with the CAA matter, quickly adding that Modi is committed to “religious freedom in India.”

Most analysts conclude that if Trump is re-elected in November, India’s relations with the United States could be further strengthened.

The author is a Nepal journalist and researcher based in New Delhi.
‘Mainly fine throughout the kingdom’

When I first arrived in Kathmandu the government daily, with its carefully filtered news, was the only English newspaper in circulation. The Royals and their exemplary activities reliably featured in every headline. The depth of analysis could be summarised by the unavoidable daily weather forecast: ‘Mainly fine throughout the kingdom.’

Taking a lead from my boss Jim Edwards, the ruling Royals were never mentioned in those days except in terms of utmost respect and reverence. Political access was almost impossible. Jim’s and my bumbling being court advisors and bibliophiles, often over suspicious cups of tea at dawn, or covert early morning walks through the balmy streets of Kathmandu, avoiding the cow pats and stray dogs sleeping off a noisy night on the pavements.

Today’s range of English-language dailies leaves us foreign guests better informed and spoiled for choice, although we are aware that to understand really what is going on the local broadcasts, news sites, blogs, and web pages tell a very different story. And for those of us still in the dark, the Nepali Times provides an invaluable weekly summary, entertaining evaluations and informed opinions.

Kunda Dixit has come onto my radar long before he embarked on launching the Nepali Times as its creator, editor, and publisher. Whilst an unassuming young reporter with a passion for ecology, I had already invited him to write in those days about environmental issues in the Nepali Insight Guide which, by a series of random coincidences, I was the producer. He came highly recommended by the astrologer Elizabeth Hawley, Reuters correspondent in Kathmandu, with whom he had interned as a budding writer. With her vigorous reporting and uncompromising journalistic standards, this was high praise indeed.

The free style format of the Apa Insight Guide was invented in the 1970s by Hans Hoofer, a charismatic international photographer and publisher based in Singapore and originally from southern Germany. In our world of Trip Advisor and Lonely Planet, it is hard to appreciate how revolutionary was that cheerful travel guide design, taking over from the dry and photoless presentation of Brochures. Before he sold the Apa series, Hans Hoofer had created dozens of Insight Guide books throughout Asia but the very first were Bali and Nepal, his two favourite hang outs.

Tootie-haired and draped in scarves, I had been beguiled by Hans when we met early in 1974 at a Hindu ‘Thuipam’ festival in the Bagmati, a colourful melee of millions of devotees in the black blocks of Malaysia. A new arrival in Asia, I was susceptible to his enthusiastic energy and ability to translate his passions into successful businesses.

I was on my way to Nepal and soon settled in Kathmandu. I helped with other South Asian titles, contracting expert writers and identifying promising photographers.

It was a collaboration that lasted for years and covered books on Senggama, Indian wildlife, bikes and bike routes in Nepal, as well as comprehensive guides to Bhutan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile in Kathmandu, the Nepali Times was changing the landscape of informed media. Kunda’s patron’s profile and starting white beard of hair is a familiar sight at newsworthy events and press gatherings around town. His fearless approach and relentless satire sometimes got him into trouble, but the paper could always be relied on for articulate opinion and a balanced view, highlighting issues where others feared to tread.

Kunda’s gravitas was also in demand at book launches and current affairs debates. He was an unoffending facilitator of a panel discussion that launched General Koiralal’s autobiography, probing the finer political points amidst Kathmandu’s literati. Five days prior to the 2015 earthquake, Kunda was with us on a sunny afternoon in the Dwarika’s Hotel courtyard to launch the bulky two volumes of Elizabeth Hawley’s chronicles that portrayed the evolving political and social scene in Nepal through some turbulent times from 1980 to 2007.

With Kunda’s assistance on finer linguistic niceties, Mike Dzuchan and I had edited his monthly journal, which faithfully recorded the recent history of Nepal in a fresh light with her relentless accuracy, and without the benefit of hindsight. It had been a laborious task sorting through his extensive dusty ring binders and ancient computer files, with many diary entries having to be transcribed by hand or digitised from obsolete soft wear. Dr Shubh Sukhdev Thapa wrote the foreword, and the Nepali Times gave the book extensive coverage.

It was several years later that Kunda cornered me on a chilly winter evening at an ambassadorial reception. Both being dog lovers, we chatted innocuously about our laboratories and our hounds but I sprang it on he. Would I like to contribute a fortnightly column about tourism and conservation? I had been asked before, but Kunda must have caught me at a weak moment, because this time I took a deep breath and agreed.

So, in this issue 499, I think the Nepali Times’ team for the opportunity, and for every Friday interpreting the news for us non-Nepali literate residents. And to say that we look forward to the next 1,000 editions.

NATION

SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

28 FEBRUARY - 5 MARCH 2020

6

Life and times of Nepal through the pages of 20 years of Nepali Times

WE HAVE A LAUNCH: Elizabeth Hawley is flanked by American Ambassador Peter Boden, Dr Shubh Sukhdev Thapa and Nepali Times editor Kunda (left at the launch of The Nepal Sonoran 20 April 2015, just before the 2015 earthquake).

A week later, as I stepped out of the hotel, I came across a man strolling down the street wearing a well-cut suit. His name, I was told, was Kunda Dixit. The man was the co-founder of the Nepali Times, a newspaper I had been reading for years. I introduced myself and asked him about his work. He was very welcoming and told me about the history of the Nepali Times and its place in the Nepali media landscape.

He explained that the Nepali Times was started in 1995 as a new daily newspaper in Nepal. The newspaper was launched with a focus on providing accurate, unbiased and informative news to the Nepalese people. The newspaper quickly gained a reputation for its well-written articles and in-depth reporting.

I was interested to learn more about the newspaper and its history, so I asked him about the challenges it faced and how it had overcome them. He explained that the newspaper faced many challenges, including political pressure and economic struggles. However, the team at the Nepali Times remained committed to providing quality journalism and content.

I was impressed by the dedication of the Nepali Times and its commitment to providing quality news to the Nepalese people. I asked him if there were any particular stories or issues that the newspaper had covered that stood out. He mentioned a story about a local school that was facing financial difficulties and the Nepali Times had worked to raise awareness and funds to help the school.

Overall, I was very impressed by the Nepali Times and its commitment to providing accurate and informative news to the Nepalese people. I left the conversation feeling inspired by the dedication of the newspaper and its staff.
Righting the wrongs done to India’s Chinese

A new book about Chinese imprisoned after the 1962 war documents this stain on Indian history

Kunda Dixit

Besides bad food, heat and boredom, what William Ma remembers about the Deoli concentration camp is the parrots. Ma was just eight when his family was rounded up from Kallipong along with 3,000 other Chinese Indians and transported by train to a former POW camp in Rajasthan. The 1962 war between India and China had just ended, and they were to be imprisoned in the camp for five years.

The parrots used to flock to the trees in Deoli, and Ma remembers thinking: “Even the parrots have more freedom than us.”

William’s grandfather worked in the gardens of Hasimars in Assam, and cleared the forest during World War II to build an air force base that is still in operation. His father was born there and later moved to Kallipong where William’s mother’s side of the family was involved in the tea trade.

There was no school in camp, so William and his brother Lynda were taught by their father, who made them memorize the Oxford English Dictionary. Another keyhole memory of William’s is the camp loudspeaker playing the sad Bollywood song ‘Sal Salish’ over and over again, as if to send the message that the inmates had no future.

The prisoners were released in phases. Some were sent to China where many of them had never been before, and did not even speak the language. Others returned home to Calcutta to find their houses and businesses looted or taken over. Most then migrated to Canada, Australia or the United States.

William found a job in Nepal’s nascent trekking industry, and moved up to Kathmandu from Calcutta with his family. His sister, Joy, born during the family’s detention in Deoli, has now co-authored a book with Dilip D’Souza, The Deoliwallahs: The True Story of the 1962 Chinese-Indian Internment. Tale is the story of some families, including her own.

As a young reporter on the front line in Kathmandu in the early 1980s, for me William was a trusted source of news. But over the 40 years I have known him, he never once mentioned his family’s imprisonment in Deoli. I found out about it only after reading his sister’s book for this review.

I asked William this week why he never told us about the internment. “After enduring, overcoming and surviving all that, many of us did not want to remember and relive the past. We want to embrace the future,” he replied. “My dad was psychologically scarred by the shock of being treated as an enemy by his own country even though he did nothing wrong.”

Even now, half a century later, many Deoliwallahs do not want to rake up the past. But some have begun to speak out and to document the injustice before memories fade and the older generation passes on.

Joy Ma, who now lives in California, said in an email: “I found it very difficult to tell the story because every time I brought it up I saw how much pain it caused my family and the people I knew. The breakdown for The Deoliwallahs was that it is the story of a community. It was a terrible shared experience that they had survived and it was time the world heard about it so it won’t be repeated.”

The British first brought Chinese people to India to plant tea in Assam in the late 19th century, and others fled prolonged war and poverty to settle in Penang, Singapore, and Calcutta. By 1947, there were some 200,000 Chinese in India with businesses spanning tea, tanneries and kimber. The brief Sino-Indian border war had already ended when Chinese families were rounded up in Calcutta. Departing and Assam and brought to Deoli. Like Joy Ma’s book, Yin Marsh’s Deoli Yin is with Emu documents the physical hardship and psychological torture of the discretionary time and the prison, which has strong parallels to the internment of American Japanese after Pearl Harbor.

Marsh was 13 when she was imprisoned with her family. Like William, she moved to Kathmandu after being freed. There are others like Wong Shiao Leong, whose family was also in Deoli and left Calcutta to set up a shoe shop in Bagh Bazar in Kathmandu.

There is a larger underlying lesson for the present day from this dark chapter of Indian history. The unwillingness of the Indian state to acknowledge the injustice, and its lack of remorse means this could happen at any time against anyone else. And in fact, it is now being done with the CA and IRNC.

For the imprisoned and their families, an apology from the state would bring some kind of closure. Co-author Dilip D’Souza describes former Deoli prisoners travelling by bus from Ottawa to Toronto in 2012 after the Indian High Commission refused to accept their letter demanding an apology from the Indian government, saying in pure Hindustani, ‘Aapko Dastan Hai Toh Yeh. He writes: “It is easy to say that such an occurrence can’t happen in 21st century India... then in 2019 the National Register of Citizens raised just this spectre.”
Hari Bahadur Karki was seven years old when he first tasted lapai in his hometown of Pharping. The raw fruit was very sour and at first he didn't like it, but over time the taste grew on him. Now in his 70s, Karki tends lapai trees on his two ropanis of land in Pharping. Though the family is involved in other farming as well, every February Karki's son Ishwor travels to Kathmandu with four sacks of lapai from their farm.

The Karkis' lapais are bought up in no time, and the family is happy with its sales. The demand for lapai in Kathmandu is so great, supply cannot keep up.

"When I was first introduced to lapai, I picked it from a tree," says Karki. "I didn't know the fruit would be so much in demand in the city, I was so surprised to learn that we could sell all sorts of spices, from sour to sweet, and consume it with our daily meal as a pickle, or that it could even be a candy," He adds, during the September-January lapai harvesting season, households all over Kathmandu make multiple varieties of homemade pickles and sweet-and-sour candies from this favourite fruit.

Lapai (Cheropspondias axillaris) is a true native to much of Asia, including China, India, Vietnam, and Thailand and as far east as Japan. According to botanist Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha, it comes from the Anacardiaceae family - the same genus as mangoes - whose fruits have moist, thick pulp on the outside and a hard kernel on the inside. In English, lapai are often called Nepali hog plum, but Shrestha avoids this term so as not to confuse it with the real hog plum (Spondias mombin) similar to the lapai but is native to the tropical Americas.

Lapais are cultivated particularly in hilly regions and the tree grows up to 30m high. Unlike other members of the Anacardiaceae family, Cheropspondias axillaris trees can be male or female, and farmers may not be able to differentiate between them until they have reached maturity. Female trees give more fruit.

Vijaya Shrestha of Machhindra Bhandari in Kathmandu always woke up to a house smelling strongly of lapai. Shrestha's maternal family, and especially his aunt, made mada and sitara from lapai peels and pulp. The mouth-watering candies were then sold at the family's Panu Bhandari in Ratna Park.

Opened almost 60 years ago, Ratna Panu Bhandari was once hugely popular. Business did so well that in 1957 it shifted production out of the family kitchen and into a factory in Maiti Bung, which now churns out more than 38 varieties of sitara. In 2017, the shop itself moved from Ratna Panu to New Road.
According to Vijaya Shrestha, lapsi is very popular and the supply falls well short of demand. The Panauti Bhandar needs 1,000 to 5,000 kg of lapsi a day to make four types of treats – dry titaura, meda, jhol titaura, and candies. A current favourite among customers is the recently introduced lapsi chhila titaura.

“The best thing about lapsi is, it can move between sweet and sour ingredients when used to make pickles, candies or jams. It can absorb any taste, making it an interesting food,” said Shrestha.

Lapsi also has health benefits. In Newar culture, after a heavy meal, guests are offered paan kawa, a thin lapsi gummy. “The purpose of serving paan kawa after a meal is for digestion. Lapsi helps prevent stomach ache,” says Shrestha.

Public health advocate Aruna Upadhyay comments, “The tanginess of lapsi helps in digestion and it has many micronutrients, including iron and vitamin C.” She adds that lapsi, as anything, should be eaten in moderation. “You eat to enjoy the taste, not to fill your stomach. If you go overboard, lapsi (meda) will give you a stomach ache.”

Lapsi is such a popular fruit of the Nepal hills that many carry it abroad with them when they leave. Lisa Sherchan, 27, has lived in New York for the past 10 years and every time she visits Kathmandu or has anyone visiting from here, she asks them to bring her titaura. “I particularly like the jhol titaura, but I ask for the spicy dry one as carrying liquid food items is restricted.”

Sherchan remembers buying titaura wrapped in newspaper for two rupees when she was a child. Now, five packets of titaura last her nine months, and if she has a stash, she will never feel far from home.

She adds, “Whenever I miss home, I plop a titaura in my mouth and this brings Kathmandu to New York.”

Nepal’s beloved lapsi comes in many forms, like sweet and spicy pickles. Watch how lapsi is what is prepared from start to finish as it is peeled, boiled in a sugary syrup and spiced to perfection.
Poetry Workshop
Participate in a poetry writing workshop inspired by the profoundinsky and bewildering samvred in Leonard Cohen’s songs and poems.
29 February, 11am-6pm, Tika’s, Room 200, House of Poetess, Kathmandu. 9841007712/8

Film Screening
A screening of A Five Senses of Everest, featuring Carroll Reisner and directed by Gauhar Latarre. Grab your favorite drink and food from the cafes at the entrance to the movie. Seating options are first come first serve.
3 March, 5:30pm-6:30pm, Outdoor Adventures Center Nepal, Thamel. (811) 4043355

Nepathya Concert
Join Nepathya for a charity concert “Music for Education”. All funds will go towards building a safe art infrastructure for a school in Diktel district.
29 February, 4pm-9pm, Refresh, Station 1, Diktel, Kathmandu. 9845296909

Barbeque at the Terrace Garden
Join the Terrace Garden for an engaging experience of fresh, grilled, smoky and flavorful barbecue and an all-India buffet menu.
23-28 February, 6:30pm-10:30pm, Station 1, Diktel, Kathmandu. (01) 4411818

Detox Cafe
Looking to kick start your health regime? Detox Cafe is the place to go. With their healthy smoothie bowls, quinoa salads and green juices, you can still eat out without eating unhealthy.
29 February, 8am-8pm, Pashupatinath, Kathmandu. 844597107

Shivapuri Heights Cottage
Immerse yourself in a spa and wellness experience at Shivapuri’s Spa. Followed by a healthy lunch at the Cottage.
Shivapuri Heights, Budhanilkantha. 9845787283

Patalebista Vineyard Resort
An outdoor event with great views, jungle walks, and picnics to rejuvenate from your tedious routine. Take a stroll through the vineyards of Patalebista, watch the panaromic view of Kathmandu Valley and sip aromatic winces during your stay.
Chapana (01) 4411817, 9845979664

Kantipur Temple House
With its rich brick wall, wooden flooring, cultural dances and traditional activities, Kantipur Temple House resembles the palaces of old Nepali kings at the outskirts of Thamel.
Thamel. (01) 4412577

ECOLOGIC WITH MISS MOTI
KRIPA JOSHI

CELEBRATE WORLD EARTH DAY!

MAKE COMPOST

Homes composting is the most environmentally-friendly way to deal with kitchen and garden waste. It reduces organic waste in landfills and their subsequent greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the compost that is produced is rich in nutrients and helps to improve both soil’s fertility and its ability to retain water and air. For small spaces you can try vermicomposting, using earthworms.

AIR QUALITY INDEX
KATHMANDU, 21 - 27 February

*Real-time data from https://epa.kathmandu.gov.np/air-quality-monitoring/
Last letter to Rolpa’s Nepali family

This month marks 18 years of the start of the conflict that left many Nepalis bereaved, like this family from Rolpa.

Tilak Ram Nepali was among the 600 teachers who were killed or disappeared during the conflict. He was arrested on 10 March 2002, interrogated for 18 days in custody before the rebels pronounced a death sentence on him. But before he was killed, they asked him for his last wish.

Nepali said he would like to write a final letter to his family. He was allowed to do so, and he wrote an eight-page letter dated 23 March 2002, at 9 PM, bequeathing an emotional goodbye to his family and friends. The pages were placed on his body after he was killed.

Sree Mina, on your lap is a part of my body, our son Jayendra. And in your womb is another baby who will be born in two months. It does not matter whether it is a boy or a girl, take care of it, protect the baby. Even if things get difficult, don’t lose hope.

Mina Nepali gave birth to a baby girl, Mamata, two months after her husband was executed by the Maoists. Mamata is now 18 years old and in Grade 11 at a school in the Rolpa district capital of Itahang. She wants to go to nursing school, but could not afford it. Her elder brother Jayendra wants to become a doctor, but she does not have the financial backing and medical school is too expensive.

In the letter that Tilak Ram Nepali wrote to his family, he was living in a body that night 18 years ago, he comes across as a completely rational person, and also shows the ability to provide adequately for his family.

The greatest regret for his widow Mina is not to have been able to afford medical and nursing school for their children. Like her husband, Mina was not involved in politics, and even now has little interest in it. There are many like Mina and her husband who lost their parents and therefore cannot afford to study a subject of their choice.

At three layers of government have promised compensation, truth and justice to families of conflict victims like Tilak Ram Nepali. But his family has not got any help. The recently reconvened Truth and Reconciliation Commission could provide relief, but it is led by political appointees, so there is not much hope for the Nepali family.

EXCERPTS OF THE LAST LETTER:

This eight-page letter was found on Tilak Ram Nepali’s body after he was killed by the Maoists. In it, he appears to be most worried about the welfare of his wife and son and a not-yet-born baby. He wants the rest of the family to treat them well, and not to quarrel. He leaves instructions about property, debts and house. He tells his family where to find his will, and to act accordingly.

12 Raishak 2068 (25 March 2002)

Time: 9pm

My Last Letter:

First of all, I would like to pay my deepest respects to my parents who gave birth to me. My blessings to my dearest sister, Durga, my younger brother Shrawan, wife Mina and my son Jayendra who carries on my bloodline. Blessings and remembrances to you all.

Please listen to me, my father and mother, my sister Durga and brother Shrawan, and Mina who gave birth to my son Jayendra – this is my last letter to you. I have not been able to write a lot of things, these are the times we live in. Till the time I am writing this letter, I am still alive. I expected the interrogation to continue, yet ...... Jayendra’s mother, my life partner, my wife Mina, in case I don’t ever return home you have in your lap a piece of myself. Take solace from my looking at him. You will be having another child within the next two months, on your lap is a part of my body, our son Jayendra.

And in your womb is another baby who will be born in two months. It does not matter whether it is a boy or a girl, take care of it, protect the baby. Even if things get difficult, don’t lose hope. Don’t get married again, because people will not respect you, they might hurt you. Protect the dignity of the children. Sell the goats, chickens and milk and given them a good education...

There have always been problems between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, between sisters. But we must resolve these. All of you must accept Mina, and not look at her as someone else’s daughter. Try to live well with each other and not oppose each other. Every family has quarrels, don’t make it a big issue. Even if I never come home, treat my son Jayendra like you would treat me. Treat my wife Mina well, she is not well-educated but she is innocent and straightforward. My life partner Mina, obey my parents and treat them with dignity.

Please look after my son Jayendra and wife Mina. If there are problems, try to resolve them amicably. My brother Shrawan, don’t mistreat your sister-in-law because she does not have a husband.

My sister Durga, I thought I could help you if I had lived. But this is how it is. Try not to quarrel with Mina, try to talk it over with her.

You will find my will in that table. Distribute everything accordingly.

It was my great wish to provide Jayendra a good education. But even if I am not there, study well, and make me proud. Do not lose heart because you do not have a dad.

Some points I missed:

...I had a great hope to take care of my parents in their old age. But alas, I am no longer with you. I had to say goodbye to the world and leave. Durga and Shrawan, get married to good partners. I had to hope to be present for the wedding of my brother and sister, but I will never be with you again.

... take care of the debts.

This is goodbye. There will be no more letters. I was what I was.

My remembrances to all friends, relatives and neighbours in the village.

Your son,
Tilak Ram Nepali
Lhasing 5

Don’t ignore tooth sensitivity*

"You shouldn’t ignore this, always consult your dentist.”
- Dr. Subir Banerji, dentist practising in the UK.

Clinically proven sensitivity relief.

Sensodyne

GSK group of companies or its licensor. All rights reserved.
Reassessing Nepal’s ban on domestic work abroad and exploring employment alternatives

Activists decry the ban on migrating for employment in domestic work as it impedes a person’s freedom of mobility, freedom of work and freedom of choice. And women in particular continue to circumvent the ban, a testament to their determination to provide for their families despite restrictions.

LABOUR MOBILITY
Upasana Khadka

The ban removes the urgency to actually address the root causes of vulnerability. But let us pretend for a moment that the ban has achieved its desired goal – women have stopped going abroad to work in this sector in which they are highly vulnerable.

The focus should then have been on the alternatives to domestic work abroad. Women interested to engage in remunerative work either being absorbed into the internal labour market or migrating abroad for relatively safer, more-rewarding jobs in other fields. A ban in itself is an ineffective tool. A ban in the absence of alternatives, both domestically and abroad, is worse.

A substitute to the domestic worker ban that merits consideration is female labour out-migration for work in jobs in other sectors. While gender-based occupational segregation in a reality, should female labour migrants just be situated into domestic work?

There is no explicit ban on women’s mobility to fields of manufacturing, hospitality and services. Why are women who are willing to overcome cultural and familial barriers to use unskilled and risky channels for domestic work abroad not opting for legal channels to work in other sectors? The financial, informational or skills-related barriers they face need to be gravely considered and addressed.

The reality is women physically moving to where jobs are, even domestically, is not common. According to the latest Labour Force Survey, more than 90% of female internal migrants in rural areas and 70% in urban areas of Nepal reported marriage as their primary reason for moving.

In the case of foreign employment, given that an explicit ban is imposed on a sector that disproportionately affects women, explicit efforts targeting their access to other, safer jobs should have been considered.

The internal labour market.
options also remain bleak for women. The Labour Force Survey conducted for every 10 months in the working-age population, there were 125 females, whereas for every 100 employed males, there were only 69 employed females.

We often express concerns about Nepal not being able to capitalize on its youth dividend because of mass migration abroad. We like the idea of youth staying back and building the country. But what we mean is that we like the idea of male youth staying back and building the country because women are, in fact, not leaving. The number of legal female migrants has been around 20,000 annually, less than 1% of total male migrants.

Recognizing the potential of women would have meant addressing the barriers to their participation and flourishing in the labour market, which would have been further opportunities in the context of high male outmigration. Instead, the labour force participation of women is low at 26% (excluding work carried out for domestic production) while the share of female youth (15-24) not in employment, education or training is ever 47%. Among those employed, the median monthly earning of women is two-third of their male counterparts.

The ban on domestic work abroad is an easy fix that can be done right away. Not only it could boost the economy but also provide a means of living for an upcoming generation of migrants. Women can go abroad without being a burden to the family or to the society. Women are contributing in the field of economics by contributing significantly to the country’s GDP. Women employees are the backbone of the economy and should be encouraged to work in the domestic sector.

The ban on domestic work abroad would also help in reducing child labor. Many children are forced to work in the domestic sector due to poverty. The ban would help in reducing child labor and provide them with a better future.

In conclusion, the ban on domestic work abroad is a necessary step that can bring about significant changes in the lives of both women and children. It would not only help in reducing child labor but also provide a means of living for an upcoming generation of migrants. Women employees are the backbone of the economy and should be encouraged to work in the domestic sector.

Nepal’s women have made significant contributions to the country’s economy, and the ban on domestic work abroad would be a step towards ensuring their rights and opportunities.

---

**Above the clouds with Yeti Airlines**

Enjoy a panoramic view of the majestic Mountain Everest from comfort of the airplane, as you savour fine champagne served complimentary on the Yeti Everest Express.

One of the world’s most exclusive tours

---

**Lift the ban on household workers**

Instead of the ban on household workers, we should encourage them to work in the domestic sector, which is currently underutilized. The domestic sector is a significant contributor to the country’s economy, and lifting the ban would help in reducing poverty and increasing the country’s GDP.

The ban on domestic work abroad is a step in the right direction. However, we should also focus on providing better living conditions and opportunities for women in the domestic sector. This would help in reducing child labor and provide them with a better future.

In conclusion, lifting the ban on domestic work abroad is a necessary step that can bring about significant changes in the lives of both women and children. It would not only help in reducing child labor but also provide a means of living for an upcoming generation of migrants. Women employees are the backbone of the economy and should be encouraged to work in the domestic sector.

---

**Nepal where ever you are.**

Enjoy a panoramic view of the majestic Mountain Everest from comfort of the airplane, as you savour fine champagne served complimentary on the Yeti Everest Express.
Rastraj Bhandari

The impact of climate change on human health

The climate connection to

Marcia Chen

The yin and yang of

The yin and yang of

The yin and yang of
Covid-19

The release of these pathogens could unleash deadly epidemics. The notion of a single source in the Middle East is not endorsed by the World Health Organization, whose experts have stressed the importance of understanding the complexity of the virus's transmission pathways. The virus has been found in various parts of the world, including Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The spread of the virus has led to widespread restrictions on movement and social interactions, with countries implementing lockdowns and other measures to contain the outbreak.

NATION

From Huber to Kathmandu

Shristi Karki

A Nepali medical student evacuated from Wuhan in China shares his experience of the Covid-19 outbreak

When Abhinav Shrestha, 23, saw the Nepal Airlines Airbus A330 jet land at Wuhan Airport on 16 February, the proud aun and moon flag of his country on its tail, his heart swelled with pride. It took until after boarding for it to sink in that, after three weeks of confinement in his dorm room in Jinhua in China’s Hubei province, he was going home. Shrestha was halfway into his one-year MPhil internship at the Jinhua No. 1 People’s Hospital when news came of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, three hours drive away. Doctors in Wuhan advised all students to remain in self-quarantine for two weeks.

Shrestha said that he had a low fever rate. He was in constant touch with his father, who reassured him, advising him to take the necessary precautions but urging him not to worry. “I knew the elderly were most vulnerable, and was aware of what to do to protect myself from the virus, but there was nothing to protect me from the boredom and loneliness of these three weeks,” Shrestha told Nepal Times over the phone on the fifth day of his quarantine at Kathmandu near Kathmandu. Of the 183 students in Hubei province who signed up to fly back to Nepal, six had a fever and were returned to the hospital from Wuhan. Shrestha said it was a matter of great pride for the Nepali students that their government had sent a plane specially to take them home. Many African students and those from other Asian countries are still in lockdown in various cities in Hubei.

It was surreal seeing the big Nepali Airlines jet taking off from the empty terminal in the snow,” Shrestha says. “Whenever I travelled between Nepal and China, it had always been on a Chinese airline.”

Shrestha had been back to Nepal just twice during his six years in China, and it was finding itself at the epicentre of the epidemic that brought him back home for the first time. He had completed his studies at Yangtze University in Hubei, and was doing his internship in gastroenterology.

Shrestha and other students had their temperatures checked five times during the three-hour bus ride to Wuhan airport, where they had a thorough medical exam one more time before boarding. After the five-hour flight to Kathmandu, Shrestha and his fellow passengers were quarantined at a converted Nepal Electrical Authority training facility at Kathmandu, where he shares a room with two other Nepali students.

“It was a great relief to be back home, and although our movement is restricted we feel much more free than during lockdowns in China,” Shrestha says. “It’s like being in a college hostel again, and the food is superb.”

The evacuees, some of them tears, have been spending time together singing themselves on the terrace and using the free SIM cards provided by the government. They play sports and watch movies.

Shrestha has also been studying at night. In case he can go back to Dubai to complete his internship and the exams at the end of it. However, it is unclear when his university is going to reopen, and he is trying to see if it might be possible to complete his internship in a hospital in Nepal instead.

For Shrestha and other students, though, China has become a second home. “I really miss China,” he says. Many Nepali students in China speak Mandarin, which allowed them to make Chinese friends and feel comfortable there. Shrestha’s experience of the outbreak has strengthened his conviction in his choice of profession. In the early days of the outbreak, he saw patients having to be sent back home despite Chinese health officials’ efforts, because they simply was not enough space to treat everyone. He also saw that people did not give up hope.

“They would walk outside the hospital all night,” he says. “My father is a doctor, so I had always wanted to be one, but in these moments I realized how much people expect people expect from doctors.”

Preliminary test results for all 175 students evacuated from Huber have come back negative for Covid-19. The evacuees will undergo another round of testing after the 2-week quarantine period is over on Sunday, and if they still test negative, they will be given the all-clear. Shrestha cannot wait to see his family. Because the news from China has focused on deaths from the virus and not recoveries, he says, his family has been very concerned about it. Seeing them after the quarantine period is over will be a tremendous relief for both him and them.

“The joy I will feel when I see them this time will be very different to the joy I felt when I came back home from China on other occasions,” he says.
PKD+BDG+MKN vs KPO+BDB

Some of you have taken The Ass aside at party palaces in the past week to ask: “What is the meaning of life?” Others have wanted to know: “Will the world end with a whimper or a bang?”

Such questions are easily answered, but there was one deeply philosophical query that flummoxed me: “Who will be the next prime minister?” To which my answer was: “How should I know. I am an astrophysicist, not an astrologer.”

It is natural for many of you to be confused by the conspiracies being hatched within the NCP. That is why, as a free public service to members of our loyalty card holders, let me simplify it for you.

KPO and PKD agreed to take turns being PM, but KPO changed his mind. PKD realised KPO’s kidneys were not packing up just yet, and got MKN and JNK to poke KPO. But that didn’t work, so PKD got BDG into the Upper House with the help of NKS, JK and MN. BDG said it was a terrible idea but didn’t stand in the way. KPO said No Way Jose, YRF is in, BDG is so desperate to be PM he will kowtow to anyone, even GIBSD. KPO is now isolated with only SN and JP on his side, even trusted lieutenant BP has bolted because of fear being blackmailed over Hallowater. MKN would rather back KPO as PM, but is miffed KPO hasn’t given him the respect he deserves. MKN knows PKD will dump him the instant his usefulness is over, but is angling for PKD to make him Prez. JNK also wants to be Prez. But neither has a chance because PKD’s top-secret goal is to be Executive Prez after KPO vacates party Chair.

And here is where the plot thickens: MKN meets KPO on Wednesday night, who tells him PKD will not keep his promise, but by now there is too much had blood between them. A weak NCP would have been a golden opportunity for the NC, but SSD and BGP are at each other’s throats, and cannot get their acts together. Intense behind-the-scenes manoeuvrings are going on as we speak, with the following meetings this week:

Tuesday:
PKD+BDG+MKN+JNK
Wednesday morning:
BDG+JNK+SN+JP
Wednesday afternoon:
NKS+PKD+MKN
Wednesday midnight:
BDG+PKD+JNK
Thursday telephonically in the wee hours:
BDG+PKD+JNK
Thursday morning at the crack of dawn:
KPO+SN+JP
Thursday noon:
BDG+KPO+SN+JP

The reason analysis gets it all wrong when trying to make sense of Nepali politics is they think there are rules. Actually, it is more like a cockfight. The gloves are off, and killing the opponent below the belt is SOP. We don’t bother with backstabbing, we just stab each other in the front. But the main rule is: the enemy of your enemy is your enemy.