WASTED POLITICS

Shristi Karki

R
ing garbage on Kathmandu’s streets may
tially start being cleared
after a meeting of officials
of Kathmandu, Thaialing and
Nawakot reached an agreement on
Wednesday with locals to allow the
trash trucks passage in return for
safe transport to the landfill site.

But there have been many
agreements like this before and it
could only offer temporary respite
from the problem that has plagued
Kathmandu for decades.

Politicians allowing garbage to
pile up on the streets of the capital
to expose the ‘inefficiency’ of
rivals is nothing new.

With federal elections around the
corner, mainstream parties are
worried about the popularity of
independent candidates like Mayor
Baldev Shah and are resorting to
their old tactics.

Kathmandu Valley generates
1,200 tonnes of waste daily, most
of which is biodegradable and can
be turned into valuable compost or
gasified. Plastic, glass and metal can
be recycled to reduce the volume
being dumped at landfill sites.

Mayor Baldev wants to address
this by segregating rubbish at
source. But first, he needs to clear
the streets of accumulated trash by
transporting it to the new landfill
site at Ranicheh Danda, 27km west
of Kathmandu.

On 8 August, 14 garbage
disposal trucks were
vandalised by local
protestors belonging to
the three parties of the
governing coalition as
they headed to the new
landfill site.

The mayor, who swept
elections in May after
defeating candidates from the
main parties, did not mince his words
in a Twitter video, and directly
blamed Minit Leader Dahal for
trying to score brownie points.

What moral high ground do
you have to talk about
development... when you back those who have
kept the Kalanri road in the state it
is left?” he Tweeted.

As an independent candidate
for mayor, Baldev Shah made the
capital’s garbage disposal his
primary election agenda, visiting
landfill sites in Nawalok after
his win to convince locals. He
has since been trying to get to
the root of the garbage management
problem, instead of temporary
fixes. “Our solid waste system is
just collecting and dumping, not
processing and management,”
explains environmentalist Shilshila
Acharya. “We are landfill-
dependent, which means if roads
are blocked by riots or politics, it
affects waste collection in Kathmandu.”

She adds, “Not
enough people are
committed to solving
the problem because
they are unwilling to change a
system that benefits them. So, now,
they have resorted to a political
shame game.”

In June, former Urban
Development Minister Ram Kumari
Bairagi of the Unified Socialist
blocked the KMC for the
problem, accusing officials of colluding
with locals at the dumping site.
She resigned in July following

a cabinet reshuffle, and her
successor Melamani Chaudhary
vowed this week to crack down on
“syndicates and gangs obstructing
waste management.”

An unexpected Baldev Shah
posted on Facebook: “Our state
mechanism envisages coordination
between all levels of government,
but one level of government is
trying to ensure the failure of
another. Let us not play dirty
politics.”

Shilshil Acharya
thinks fatalism has set in
because everyone thinks
Kathmandu’s garbage crisis is
an intractable problem. She adds:
“Solid waste can be managed if
we do things right. And if there
is political will we can solve the
problem in the next five years.”

nepalitimes.com
Photo gallery of Banchari Danda landfill

Next level electric performance.
All new Hyundai IONIQ 5.
**Young Turks not getting their turn**

A citizen's campaign to defeat all elder politicians and their minions in elections is going viral in the Nepali cybersphere, and reaction from the ageing elite and political parties show that they are starting to fret. But do we expect the Young Turks in the main parties to behave any better?

One of the most charismatic members of the younger generation of politicians in Gagan Thapa, but even he is nearing 50. In televised Parliament proceedings, he usually gives fiery speeches.

Even though his Nepali Congress (NC) is leading the 5-party condition, Thapa has been critical of the government. He is in the dissident group opposed to the NC contesting the elections in an alliance with the Maoists.

These days, Gagan Thapa is muted when he speaks in Parliament about the possiblity of Nepal being blacklisted for money laundering.

As General Secretary of the NC, Thapa wanted answers on Maoist Finance Minister Shanker Sharma secretly involving a corporate middleman in the budget drafting process. But by reinstating Sharma, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba ignored and demeant his own party colleagues.

Since then, Thapa has spoken up about the scandal. This is very unlike the politician and probably indicates fear of being refused a ticket for elections three months away.

When more independent-minded Gagan Thapa, Nisharkosh Sharmas and Bhuram Bhattas were elected to senior NC posts last year, there was optimism that Nepal’s feudal democratic political party would now see fresh direction.

Many thought the superannuated old guard would now be swept away, and under Gagan Thapa’s leadership the party and country would turn a new leaf towards better governance and transparency.

Also, we have not seen much of Thapa’s influence on the NC’s functioning. In fact, Prima Minister Deuba prefers to take advice from Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal rather than his own party general secretary. Deuba, who has been the NC’s general secretary for the fifth time. He has teamed up with Dahal, and spends most of his time these days parcelling out patronage commitments to his NC partners than to the NC’s own leaders like Gagan Thapa.

Deuba’s condition is sticking deeper in a quagmire of corruption and impunity. As a young leader, he makes the Panchayat system and did not compromise on principles. Seeing what he is up to now, one wonders what he was all for.

The track record of the NC’s younger leaders is making us rethink the consistency of passing the torch to a new generation of leaders (see page 26). Just because a politician is young does not seem to have anything to do with governance ability. Elders have got a bad rap because of the septuagenarians who have messed up the country, but we have plenty of examples of exemplary, greige leaders who are in the prime of their lives.

Instead of expecting youth leadership to be a panacea for all ills, we would be better off on the lookout for competent, honest leaders with a wealth of experience in governance — even if they are long on the tooth.

In fact some of the best-liked prime ministers this country has ever had were nearly 80 when they held office: Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Manmohan Adhikari.

Then how is it that all the parties in the alliance and independents should patiently wait till they also get to age 80? It is understandable when aged politicians exhibit chronic incompetence even when they were repeatedly given the chance at leadership positions, Nepal will banker for a generational change. But the grazled leaders are not going to just hand over the baton to young leaders. The youth have to show that they have what it takes. After all, Deuba was 49 when he became prime minister for the first time in 1985, by challenging the leadership of Girija Prasad Koirala.

At the rate we are going, when these ‘Young Turks’ finally get to leadership positions, they will be old. Leaders like Gagan Thapa will then be challenged by 30 something leaders telling them to step aside.

**YARSA GOLI**

Highly prized in traditional Chinese medicine, yarshagumba has held up to $10,111 per kilogram internationally. It is extensively traded across the Himalayas of Nepal. People from rural villages move to the higher elevations to follow the perennial pastures (yarsa) for yarshagaum. This video shows and learn about this unique Himalayan fungi. Read story on page 7.

**HIMALAYAN MELTDOWN**

It’s happening. As the ice is melting (if the ice is gone, we are done), the world seems to be quickening. Winter change is real. A Himalayan peak this month was reported as warming to 3°C.

Akkal Chaudhary

Before the ice is completely gone there will be tremendous losses and water bodies will be affected due to one million people downstream depends on the glaciers. Ed Mishram

**ANGOR WAT**

Regardless of our religious beliefs and status, the anger we bear is an ever-lasting deadly weapon. So we must learn to love. Dilli Bahadur Pradhan

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

The youths are the country’s playing musical chairs for prime ministers by ‘Youth Turf’ not forgetting their time in the flood gate, April 13. We are young people, educated, and have a lot of knowledge when it comes to environmental issues, education issues, the issue of youths, and the way we are. Dharka Beagiri

**FOREIGN LABOUR**

Another exceptionally well-written and deeply moving story on how ‘A Nepalese migrant worker in Italy has been found dead’ and ‘A Nepalese migrant worker in Italy had died’. Greg Nelson

**POKHARA AIRPORT**

Pokhara airport is one of the most picturesque airports in the world. It’s easy to see why it’s becoming a popular destination for tourists. Marc McConnell

**Nepal’s 2022 budget**

Nepal has announced its budget for 2022, which focuses on economic recovery and social development. Tsering Tobgyal

**Most popular on Twitter**

The trail builder of Everest by Iroha Navkar

70-year-old Yama Limsu Sherpa has developed a route to build the Everest trail for thousands of trekkers and climbers, and the first trail to leave the world’s highest mountain. Tsering Tobgyal

**Most commented**

Nepal’s citizens scientists track climate change

The Himalayas of Nepal are one of the best places to study the effects of climate change. Nepal’s citizen scientists track climate change

Nepal’s 2022 budget

Nepal has announced its budget for 2022, which focuses on economic recovery and social development. Tsering Tobgyal

**Most read and shared on Facebook**

Peddling the Great Himalayan Trail by Iroha Navkar

Nepali Mountaineer Pemba Lima is the first person to scale Mount Everest without supplementary oxygen. Nepal’s mountain guide leads the way in the Himalayas. Iroha Navkar

**Most viewed online page**

Nepal’s 2022 budget

Nepal has announced its budget for 2022, which focuses on economic recovery and social development. Tsering Tobgyal

**QUOTE**

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The trail builder of Everest by Iroha Navkar

70-year-old Yama Limsu Sherpa has developed a route to build the Everest trail for thousands of trekkers and climbers, and the first trail to leave the world’s highest mountain. Tsering Tobgyal

**TWEETS**

Nepal Times (@NepalTimes)

Nepal has announced its budget for 2022, which focuses on economic recovery and social development. Tsering Tobgyal

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Nepal has announced its budget for 2022, which focuses on economic recovery and social development. Tsering Tobgyal

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Nepal Times (@NepalTimes)

Nepal has announced its budget for 2022, which focuses on economic recovery and social development. Tsering Tobgyal

Mux Ports (@MuxPorts)

Nepal, a country of people and animals. We are the home of the majestic snow leopard and the home of the world’s highest mountain. Tsering Tobgyal

Bob Prasad (@BobPrasad)

Loddiga-Rotals: Rights for the people of many nations in Loddiga rights, nepaltimes.com. There is no family reformation. Pan Chy
WE’RE ALL CONNECTED: MALTA

Connecting more countries than any other.
Turkeytec’s new global repair agreement
Turkentec has signed a 5-year global repair agreement (including TRIMMIA, T21 next generation and T201/C81) with Gorgias and will supply parts to Turkentec which will then be distributed to all Gorgias sites worldwide.

Hospital discount
Cozy’s Angel will allow customers who have earned 50 or more points to receive a 15% discount on medical services to customers who use the bank’s card.

Daraz discount
The week-long Daraz Mid-Year discount offers discounts of up to 60% on Fashion, Electronics and Home & Kitchen. Customers can save up to 40% on mobiles and laptop deals, and 30% on select home appliances. Daraz also offers free shipping on orders over Rs. 3000.

Nabil in Khokana
Nabil Bank has announced a digital awareness program to boost awareness of digital banking. The bank offers cashback of up to Rs. 1000 and free credit card for those who sign up for mobile banking.

IME TMS
Customers of IME Bank can now conduct their transactions, including cardless and fund settlements through its Trade Management System (TMS). The system has undergone a major upgrade, and is now capable of handling up to 50 transactions per day.

Toyota contest winner
Sunita Thapa won the Toyota Corolla Altis with her work ‘Self-driving intelligence board car’. The contest received 300,000 entries from 70 countries.

IMF-ECB deal
IMF and ECB have signed a new 2-year, $1 billion money market facility to support both countries in times of financial stress. The facility can be accessed up to $1 billion for up to 2 years.

Veefood dealer meet
Veefood, the leading dealer of the vegetable market, has announced a new strategy to ensure the availability of fresh vegetables. The company will partner with local farmers to ensure a steady supply of fresh vegetables to its customers.

Gohriha Premium
Gohriha Cement has announced a new premium cement product, Gohriha Premium 53, which is designed to meet the needs of the construction industry. The company has also announced a new series of high-quality concrete products.

Nexon No.1
Tata Nexon has become the best-selling car in Nepal, with over 4,000 units sold in the first half of the year.

Turkish Technic
Turkentec has signed a 5-year global repair agreement (including TRIMMIA, T21 next generation and T201/C81) with Gorgias and will supply parts to Turkentec which will then be distributed to all Gorgias sites worldwide.

Says CEO of Turkentec: "While concentrating on long-term partnerships with Honeynet, our new agreement will allow us to support operators in their ARDF needs."

Yorkoma Premier League
Yorkoma Nepal and Baleshwor Sports have collaborated for the season’s Premier League. To participate, enter the Yorkoma Premier League app after registering a Yorkoma stadium. There will be a weekly draw where club owners will receive Yorkshire merchandise and the lucky winner can win a Yamaha YSR 125 cc scooter.
Coalition set to snub President Bhandari

They want to ignore her points of concern about discriminatory provisions in the Citizenship Bill draft

Santa Gaha Magar

The House of Representatives is set to pass an amendment bill to the Citizenship Act of 2014 after President Bidya Devi Bhandari this week returned it for a review along with a 15-point message. This is the first time the President has sent back a bill passed by both Houses since Nepal adopted a federal Constitution in 2015. She was using a constitutional provision that the President can notify a bill passed by both Houses of Parliament within 30 days, or send it back for reconsideration.

The Constitution has given the President the authority,” explains constitutional expert Bipin Adhikari. “Now Parliament must seriously deliberate on her 15 points.” In her nine-page message, the President raised concerns over the provision of self-declaration, the right to privacy, and dignity of mothers. She also supports a historical overview of the drafting process of the citizenship law and has requested a detailed study before amending the law.

President Bhandari also suggested discussing the report presented by the State Affairs Committee of Parliament before passing the amendment, pointing out the need for a long-term solution to the controversial issue of naturalised citizenship.

Seven years after the promulgation of the Constitution, Minister of Home Affairs Bai Krishna Khand registered the draft Bill in Parliament and it was passed by both Houses less than a month later. The debate on a serious issue like citizenship did not even last three weeks, and House Speaker Agni Sapkota did not think it necessary to send the bill to the parliamentary committee for discussion.

Speaker Sapkota appears to have followed the instructions of his bosses in the

Maoist party and other leaders of the ruling coalition.

“It was wrong to just lock a subject like citizenship,” says Adhikari. “It isn’t something that should have been passed without proper discussion.”

The matter is further complicated because the coalition partners see President Bhandari as being close to former prime minister KP Oli of the opposition UML.

The amendment itself has become a partisan issue. Although thousands of Nepalis, mostly living in the Nepal, will finally get their citizenship papers, critics have said the coalition has tried to appease the plains’ vote bank ahead of elections. But the amendment also makes it more difficult for Nepalis to get citizenship in the name of their mothers, whereas it is easy to get one in the name of their fathers.

“We cannot say that the President has taken a position. She has not issued an order, she has sent the legislative branch a reminder. We cannot compromise on national issues for the sake of speeding things up,” Adhikari said.

The Office of the President maintains discussions were held with Prime Minister Deuba, Law Minister Khadka, the Attorney General, leaders of the ruling party, as well as 30 other stakeholders.

“The President consulted people without citizenship, experts, supporters and opponents of the Bill,” says Tha Dhakal, the President’s communication adviser. Advocate Satish Krishna Koirala adds that the draft Citizenship Bill is progressive because it addresses the problems of non-resident Nepalis. “However, the bill is flawed in terms of gender equality,” he adds.

The Bill sent back to Parliament for reconsideration states that children born to a Nepali mother whose father cannot be identified can get citizenship by descent only when a self-declaration is made that the father ‘is not known’. Experts say that this clause holds stigma and is an insult to mothers.

Likewise, whereas a foreign woman married to a Nepali man will be granted citizenship immediately, there is no provision to grant citizenship to foreign men living in Nepal after marrying a Nepali woman.

Advocate Meena Dhungana says that naturalised citizenship should be given to foreign men married to Nepali women even if it means having criteria such as minimum period of residence in Nepal and renouncing the citizenship of the country of origin.

“The bill should be rectified only after removing these gender discriminatory sections,” she says.

It also seems that some coalition leaders want to make the rejection of the Bill a political matter, and want re-verification without addressing the President’s concerns.

However, legal experts say President Bhandari’s letter is an opportunity to improve on the draft Bill and address shortcomings.

Former Speaker Daman Nath Dhungana says that rectifying the Bill as it is could backfire on the ruling coalition. He suggests having proper discussions over the points sent by the President, and adds: “Trying to send a Bill without addressing the President’s 15 points of concern is against the dignity of both the President and Parliament.”
Mustang forced to adapt to climate crisis
Floods threaten not just the livelihoods of the inhabitants of Lubra, but also the village’s unique Bon Po heritage

As weather patterns change across the world, many communities impacted by the climate crisis go unnoticed, or are disregarded. Himalayan villages are suffering an increase in flash floods and droughts.

One such community is Lubra village in Lower Mustang, one of the few villages in Nepal fully practicing the Bon Po faith. Lubra has over 800 years of cultural and ancestral significance. Established in the 12th century by Lama Yangton Tashi Gyaltshen, who is said to have crossed over from Tibet, made the area suitable for settlement by subduing the land’s unruly local spirits and ensured the survival of the Bon belief. Situated at 2,800m, the village today is home to over 150 inhabitants, and has a school with 90 children. Farming their own land, they also carry community responsibilities involving one member from each family.

There are a handful of mad buildings, guesthouses and fields at the edge of Lubra River. A school, two monasteries, several chortens, a children’s hostel and water tanks

Yak Khurka in Lubra and people searching for yarsagumbas in May 2022.

Over-harvesting and climate change affect yield of the prized Himalayan fungus

A young girl in Ray-Ban sunglasses is singing along to a portable woofer. “She has just come out of Yak Khurka lodge in Upper Manang and is on her way to collect yarsagumbas for the day.” Throughout the yarsa-picking season from March to June, Tashi Gurung has been going to the meadows daily to pick the valuable caterpillar fungus. “I feel energized and happy when I manage to gather 50 or more pieces in a day but when we pick only a few, my friends and I have to go hungry,” he says. Highly prized in traditional Chinese medicine, yarsagumba is supposed to have health benefits and once fetched up to $10,000 per kg in Beijing in 2012. It is extensively hunted across the Himalayas and in Nepal, caravans of people in remote areas move to higher elevations to follow yarsagumba, ready for packing and sale. The caterpillar fungus can get fishermen up to Rs1,000 per piece but internationally has been sold at $110,000 per kg.
the riveted to meet the Kali Gandaki downstream. This turns the valley into a concrete mix, as the sediment-water turns into a viscous sludge. Higher up the valley, the water may not always be able to find passage through the sludge, causing it to be dammed. Eventually, the blockage gives way, bringing down a rush of smoggy concrete. These flood bursts repeat without fail over two months and swallow any obstacles in its path.

Increasingly frequent floods are directly attributed to climate change. Rising temperatures have been altering the water cycle across the Himalayas, including Mustang. The region is in the Himalayan rain shadow, and monsoon clouds are blocked by the Arun and Dhaulagiri massifs. However, rain patterns are changing, and what used to be light, seasonal rain has turned to destructive downpours.

Glacial runoff has also been increasing over the last few years. Rainfalls from the mountains are deteriorating, soil is easily carried downstream in sudden floods. For Lubra, this is disastrous. Living on the edge of the riverbank, families are sitting ducks. When the monsoon season culminates, new sediment sinks and hardens like concrete, increasing the height of the riverbed, making the village more susceptible to damage. The last decade alone, the riverbed has risen by an astounding 12m in elevation, and buried terrace farms.

In the 2021 monsoon, homes were damaged, leaving two families to take shelter in a guesthouse for three months. In 2022, a severe flood washed the families from their homes. In the entire Lubra valley, they felt the loss, but said: "It is what it is. If the next monsoon is like the last one, the rest of my house will be gone."

Because the majority of homes are stacked upon each other on the slope, the main village stands as one building, each home dependent on the other for structural and foundational strength. Damage to one home threatens the structural integrity of the entire village, putting families in harms way. The next two monsoon seasons could leave several families without homes. "In next ten years, the entire village could be gone," Jharkya says.

For over 20 years, families have tried to adapt by building rock walls using galvanized boxes and digging trenches to redirect flood. However, these walls are not as effective as they need to be, since floods flow over the barriers.

The community has discussed relocating the entire village to a safer place. However, relocation is too easy task. There are complexities in both rural engineering and the community’s opinion.

Moving the entire village means considering every aspect of Lubra’s way of life, and asking if it will thrive in the new location. Lubra is having to rethink hundreds of years of cultural and ancestral heritage. Much planning needs to happen, but time is running out.

Additionally, families face fears of land security, as allotted plots for personal use might not be guaranteed.

As the riverbed continues to rise, the need for an immediate, community-conscious solution is evident and imperative. Floods threaten not only the livelihoods of the community, but the security of both traditions as well.

Decades of culturally significant land is being wiped out, and many families fear that their ancestral heritage will go with it.

Karan Thapa
A chance for growth

the pre monsoon yarsa gold rush every year.

Demand has grown up during the pandemic due to the belief that the fungus has therapeutic properties.

Local collectors do not get anywhere near international prices, but the lucrative hunt has largely lifted many parts of rural Nepal from poverty, allowing them to afford food, healthcare and education.

This year the price of yarsa at the collection site is Rupees 300 per piece depending on the quality, but the caterpillar fungus can get harvesters up to Rupees 3,000 if it is larger and golden yellow in colour.

Local contractors usually buy the fungus from collectors as soon as it is picked. This ticks collectors of having to clean and dry it as well as prevents theft and bargaining. "We have more than 1,000 people this season in this area and over half of them are from Gorkha," says another collector Dhan Bhatti.

Dwindling harvests of the 'Himalayan viaga' can lead to conflict. In 2009, seven pickers from Gorkha were killed in Matange’s Nar Phu region in a dispute with locals. Six local people were convicted of the murders.

Tashi Gurung of Matang’s Nagawal is among more than 20 local contractors involved in yarsagumba trade from Upper Mustang and has a target of trading 10kg of yarsa worth 10 million this season. But over harvesting and climate change in the have meant that this unique Himalayan fungus is in steep decline. As it is, very little is known about the life cycle of this composite species which is a fungus that grows out of a caterpillar hibernating underground.

Now, intensified human activity during collecting cause digging soil and trampling, and increasing day temperature and early melting of snow have affected the regeneration of the fungus. Unseasonal spring blizzards due to climate change could also be affecting the life cycle of the fungus, heavy snowfall in May in Upper Mustang was unusual for the season and halted the yarsa hunt as 1,000 local collectors were stranded.

Yarsagumba (Ophiocordyceps sinensis) is the fungus that paralyses the larvae of swift moths, resulting in the development of fruiting bodies which is the highly popular herbal remedy. After the germination of the larvae by the fungus, the latter kills the insect and mummifies it. From the fruit body, a dark brown coloured stalk emerges from the dead insect and stands upright. Yarsagumba is found at 1,500-5,600m in upland meadows in Nepal, Bhutan, India and Tibet. In Nepal, it is collected in 12 districts and exported to Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Burma, Thailand, Singapore and Japan.

Harvesting and selling of yarsagumba was banned until 2001 in Nepal. But the government later re-allowed it as long as collectors paid a royalty.

This year there was a steep increase in the number of registered collectors in the Annapurna Conservation Area because of the pandemic pause.

Ashesh Tiwari
agriculture analyst at the Central Department of Forestry, Ministry of Forest Development in Kathmandu.
**Events**

- **Lakshmi Pyakha**
  - (on the cultural dancer of Kathu, Lakshmi Pyakha, this weekend)
  - Friday, 19 August, Kathu

- **Ghingh Ghisi Twak**
  - Head over to Shakpur and witness the Ghingh Ghisi Twak dance which is performed only once in a year in the cultural city of Kathu.
  - Friday, 19 August, Shakpur

- **Public Speaking Forum**
  - Interested in public speaking or want to learn? Find this week’s forum at your local library, join in, make friends, and learn how to give sound arguments to your audience.
  - Thursday, 18 August, 6 PM, Himalayan Academy, Patna, Bihar

**Music**

- **Kirtan Band**
  - Evening of soulful singing with sound healer and singer of Bhujpur and Kathu, Mantu, (Arjun) start with the Cacao midnight band led by Arjun in tracks and healing.
  - Friday, 18 August, 7 PM, Yum and Tea Kitchen, Kathu.

**The Elements**

- A live performance by Abhaya Sushma and the Mountain Singers, with opening act by Ashoka. For details, call Arjun.
  - Friday, 18 August, 7 PM, Yum and Tea Kitchen, Kathu.

**Air Quality Index**

- Shakti-The Indian Village Resort
  - Head to the idyllic Shakti Village Resort and indulge in the outdoor yoga class, indulge in a massage in Phewa Spa, and soak up the sun in the Sunny Garden. Perfect way to kick off vacation.
  - Shakti-The Indian Village Resort, Pokhara, (54) 142 122

**Bandipur Safari Lodge**

- White Bandipur is mainly known for its rich cultural heritage, it is home to a wide variety of wildlife. So, go beyond the temples and explore the beauty around the town with the Bandipur Safari Lodge.
  - Bandipur Safari Lodge, Bandipur, (54) 149 188

**Evergreen Eco-Lodge**

- Evergreen Eco-Lodge is a rustic stay in Chitwan. Unwind in one of the wooden tree-house cabins with thatched straw roofs and enjoy the tranquility of the dense surrounding forest.
  - Chitwan National Park, Chitwan, (54) 146 97

**Dining**

- **Mehrabha Turkish**
  - With over 50 items on their menu, Mehrabha offers the best of Turkish cuisine. The lamb liver is a winner, a dish that is glazed with tender meat, yogurt, cayenne and flat bread, as well as the Turkish Pizza is simply delicious.
  - (Kathu, (54) 146 97)

- **Kyubhi’s Kitchen**
  - For carbohydrate lovers of noodles, planters fill the menu with dumplings, spicy noodles, khinkali, corn dogs, and pork and more, and novices that pay homage to popular Chinese fare like Tsoi’s Kitchen, Kyubhi’s kitchen is not to be missed.
  - (Kathu, (54) 146 97)

- **Kaiser Café**
  - A very quiet restaurant with a nice menu and an attentive service hidden in the corner of Garden of Dreams. Enjoy fine dining after a relaxing walk around the serene garden.
  - (Kathu, (54) 146 97)

**Weekend Weather**

- **Bhadra Jhari**
  - A region known for having been inhabited by the numerous tribes and small and medium-scale industries, Bhadra Jhari is located in the Central Region.

**Our Pick**

- **Borgen**
  - The Danish pop icon’s second album, Borgen, debuted in Sweden. Stream the song, “Falling Down” on Spotify.

- **Nina’s Coffee House**
  - An oasis for coffee lovers and quirky smoothies. Nina’s got ya’ covered, top it off with unparalled service and unmatched quality – you have never tasted anything like this.

- **Mamagato Nepal**
  - Mamagato is a fun Pan-Asian restaurant that serves a variety of Asian fusion dishes. Enjoy Miso, Sushi, Dumplings, Ramen and more, all with a side of coolness in this new quirky venue.

**About Town**

- **SERIOUS ABOUT BEER**
  - Brewed from 100% German malted barley, yeast, hops and water.

- **Malted Barley, Yeast, Hops and Water**
Art for art's sake

Kiran Manandhar’s latest exhibition is a contemplative homage to artists, art lovers and Nepal as a centre of inspiration

in Nepal. Many, he says, especially young artists, are forced to stop because there is no immediate ‘sound and effect’ result in art. He recalls speaking to other artists who are now abroad and no longer painting, who lament the lack of support and opportunities in Nepal. "One works for so long as one can," he says. "Which is why a good support system is necessary that brings together artists, educators and patrons."

Samarpan
by Kiran Manandhar
SAIFART Art Gallery
Kathmandu, Nepal
Open: 11AM - 5PM
20 August 2022

Ashish Dhakal

Sailthrust Art Gallery is once again alive with a vibrant colour palette, meticulously textured on canvas. Renowned artist Kiran Manandhar’s latest show ‘Samarpan’ – his first in four years – adds a delectable frenzy of red, orange, blue, black and white to the space, where the canvases are each a window and the viewers stare directly into the eyes of providence.

It is immediately difficult to group these artworks in a single genre. The softer lines, sharper angles and the curves are balanced by almost-distinct hues and amorphous flames and shadows. There is a certain vagueness about the paintings, and the details lack abstract enough, but Manandhar will not relent so easily. "I am like a bird," he says sitting under a parasol outside the gallery, as a sparrow skips across the courtyard paved with bricks into a nearby bush. "I don’t make art in one style or another, I like to hop from one branch, one tree to another."

Manandhar jokes that birds do not need visas to fly around. This desire for no restriction, to dissolve borders is strikingly conspicuous in ‘Samarpan’. Stylistically diverse, the paintings and charcoal drawings even transcend philosophies and the various global schools of art. Influences of the European masters, for instance, blend in with the traditional Nepali iconography and style. Nature and light also create an overall dream-like impression, always in motion, which may be explained by Manandhar’s own drive to understand what art is. He is not being coy when he candidly admits. “Even after all these years, I still don’t know what a painting is.”

Perhaps when one knows what painting is entirely, one does not need to paint anymore, but Manandhar has no intention of stopping. He describes the itch to make art, even at odd hours and places: working to figure out, to develop one’s skills and understanding. ‘Samarpan’ took four years to realise, and a couple paintings go far back as 2014. Much of the work was made during the Covid-19 pandemic and the title refers to the dedication and offering made to art, to inspirit, to the many artists who were compelled to give up by the pandemic and the constraints it invited, and to Nepal which Manandhar affectionately calls ‘deshthum? – land of gods. These paintings do not want to be tied down to a particular adjective or movement they are
After Balen, the Rabi Phenomenon

Nepali celebrity TV presenter-turned-candidate Rabi Lamichhane tries to find his political footing ahead of November polls

● Umesh Shrestha

While mainstream political leaders in Kathmandu were vacillating on a date for the upcoming provincial and federal elections, one Ram Bahadur Riwakarma was up on the stage of an open stadium in Nepalganj.

"May my country be like Rabi Lamichhane," said Riwakarma in a quivering voice. Lamichhane was speaking at a district meeting of the newly launched National Independent Party in Banke.

Another participant, Balkrishna Chapagain added: "May my country be what Rabi Sir has envisioned!"

Because the incumbent is old and incompetent, Lamichhane is using this public preference for independent candidates to his advantage to catapult his National Independent Party to prominence.

His personal brand as a well-recognized face has also helped.

According to John Street, English professor and author of "Mass Media, Politics and Democracy," it is very hard to have "celebrity influence" on politics through television. The reason is compared to any other mass medium, TV is more intimate and people feel they know the person. Lamichhane's News 24 show "Bheja" is a Straight Talk with the People! allowed him to generate a massive fan base after it was first aired in 2016.

He took on issues of public concern including foreign employment fraud, mismanagement of airport immigration and corruption.

Heed to political contribution in the studio, or live rescue of abused workers meant that people were now coming to him in the hope of solving their problems instead of going to the police.

Soon enough, Lamichhane was everywhere. At political party events, the crowd lined up for selfies with "Rabi Sir." On Facebook, he has over a million followers: more than Sher Bahadur Deuba, K P Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal combined.

But his influence was perhaps most visible when he was taken into custody by Chitwan Police in 2018 for the suicide of a former employee. Even then, supporters took to the streets protesting the sensitive campaign against their idol.

Which might be, but Lamichhane’s persona is based on sensational, clickbait journalism. His content is provocative and xenophobic, inciting nationalism against guests. Few anchors on national television have cursed as many invectives as he has.

But when the Press Council sent Lamichhane a warning letter, he wrote back, ‘I'm not a journalist, not yet, I would rather be a cab driver than apply for a press pass.’ There were howls of approval from fans.

For a TV presenter of his status, Lamichhane is quite fast and loose with facts. His file is not fact-checking, as exemplified by episodes on Nepal manufacturing its own Covid vaccines and a haunted house in Kathmandu which were baseless, problematic and promoted false narratives.

So, it is only natural to wonder if his politics will resemble his journalism. After all, a leader has the responsibility to forge a path without crowd pressure, having judged right from wrong.

Lamichhane accepts that he lacks leadership experience in Nepal, but claims to have led a large workforce in the US to improve customer service as a manager at a Subway sandwich outlet in Baltimore. It was the Chitwan incident that prompted Lamichhane to join politics, he has said. He had even announced a new reality show titled Sande to find candidates for his new political party but the pandemic intervened.

Then he joined Galaxy 4K TV where he was also an investor, and there was a marked difference in the tone of his program. He was diplomatic with guests.

Lamichhane has said he thought of running for mayor of Kathmandu. And the result of the May election and Balen Shah's victory appears to have emboldened him to launch an entirely new political party.

Lamichhane set some ground rules during the campaign. At party functions, it is not the leaders who speak and make false promises but participants who talk about their expectations. But the Election Commission has disqualified him from provincial races because it has not fulfilled conditions in time.

Lamichhane’s unclear stance on federalism and secessionist sounds suspicious to many. He has been in the news for his soft-nepotism and anti-federal sentiment around the time Rajendra Lingdan won the NPRP chairmanship.

There was also talk of him joining the RPP prior to local elections in May. Lamichhane’s celebrity status combined with RPP’s stronghold could have been a powerful alliance, but by setting up his own party, it seems he wants to be his own boss.

We have already seen how Bihushilapha Party went from decline after its chair, also a former media personality Radhika Mishra, demanded a referendum on secessionism, federalism be scrapped and monarchy restored.

Will Lamichhane be able to connect to the people with his politics as he did with his brand of journalism? Will the voters amid their distrust for mainstream parties and the same-old leaders seek an alternative as they did with Balen Shah and Harsha Sharma in May?

So far, Lamichhane’s new party has witnessed large turnouts at its district meetings. But so do gatherings of rural cooperatives. And despite the Lamichhane Craze, his new party lacks candidates and leaders to properly contest federal and provincial elections.

Even Lamichhane’s otherwise TV presenter-style provocative rhetoric lacks substance at the hustings.

“Giving a public speech is much more difficult than speaking on tv where we talk based on facts,” Lamichhane admitted. But one cannot discount the possibility that the celebrity presenter could cut the vote bank of the established parties and even capture their strongholds.

Rabi Lamichhane’s transition to politics is an experiment. Voters will also be experimenting by voting for him. For now, he is in the current crop of aspiring leaders, that is worth a gamble.

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VALID TILL 31ST BHADRA, 2079
Nepal’s horoscope

It is only when people start worrying about their future that they strive for betterment. Contrary to what many pessimists think, Nepal does have a future. We just don’t know what kind of future it is.

And that is where astrologers come in: by divining what the coming years may hold, so that Nepal’s politicians can peer into the future and allow history to repeat itself. In being able to prophesy the future, we lag behind our neighbours India (the world’s foremost leader in fortune-telling) and China (the global fortune-cookie superpower). It is in Nepal’s geo-strategic interest to be able to predict what will happen the day after tomorrow, or to be more specific, on Election Day on 20 November.

After all, Prime Minister Dahya pushed the polling date by two days at the request of the Election Commission, but on advice from Astrologer General Surendra Rijal. That is the same astrologer who told Comrade Brave Lion he will be prime minister seven times. Two more to go.

Nations, too, have horoscopes. And in these uncertain times it is good to know what is pre-ordained, so that we can all sit back and relax, safe in the knowledge that whatever will be will be, and there is nothing we can do about it. Nepal’s horoscope is Top Secret Sensitive compartmented information, and we reprint it below only in the strictest confidence:

With the Moon in the Seventh House, Jupiter aligned with Mars, and the current Libra-Aries opposition identical to the placement of these constellations during the Peloponnesian War of 431 BC when the plague struck Athens and the Third Punic War when Rome sacked Carthage, war and pestilence are probable for Nepal. Luckily, a Neptune-Pluto conjunction means that nothing can go wrong, because nothing of any importance is going on anyway.

When politics get uncertain, Nepal’s leaders have often relied on Indian sages like Giri-Pati Baba and Shree 3 Ravi Shanker to plan their future political strategy. Not surprisingly, it is the atheist Communist parties who mostly rely on these aged gagging astrologers to appease the planets.

Manmohan’s leader Comrade Awesome often DIDS on the opiate of the masses: worshipping water buffalo, sacrificing black goats, and engaging the services of Tuscan voodoo consultants to cast spells on rivals. All the nine planets are in alignment with PKD’s constellation, so it will be smooth sailing for him after the elections. However, the James Webb Space Telescope has found another solar system 300 light years away, so those new planets may throw a spanner in the works for Comrade Stupendous.

In no way is Nepal a failed state, we are a fatalist state. This is why Kathmandu is the venue for the Asian Astrologers’ Convention in October, even though the organisers are waiting for the planets to align for the date and time to be set. Those planning a government reshuffle, announce elections, or stage a coup d’état should book seats at the conference in advance.

The conference will also spell out whether Nepal’s leaders should adopt Vasu or Feng Shui when greeting Indian or Chinese leaders.

As its advice: face north while meeting the Chinese, and hide under the table when the Indians come.
SUPERIOR TASTE

CRAFTED WITH PASSION