

New year challenge to new government

The year end coincides with Nepal getting a strange new government that is an amalgam of right and left, monarchist and republican, secularist and pro-Hindu state, those who fought for federalism and against it.

Still, let us hope that in 2023 they can improve health and education, work on jobs at home and on migrant workers welfare. The need for better protection for migrant workers was spotlighted during the World Cup in Qatar this year.

In 2018, K P Oli of the UML launched Nepal's contributory Social Security Fund (SSF). To say that it was a damp squib would be an understatement.

Now, there is news that the SSF will be extended to migrant workers, effective March 2023. This is a positive and welcome step that (as always) will rest on implementation. This means migrant workers will be eligible for old-age pension, accident benefits, and support for dependent families of the deceased.

Workers have to contribute a minimum of 21.33% of prevailing monthly minimum wage. The extension of the SSF scheme to Nepali workers overseas is important because of the sheer numbers of workers involved, and also the lack of a social safety net for their families.

The government already has a Migrant Welfare Fund (MWF) as well as a mandatory insurance scheme for families of deceased migrant workers with valid labour approvals.

A handful of migrant workers have also got medical expense benefits for grave injuries or illnesses that they returned with. Just in the last fiscal year, 1,243 families got death benefits while 143 received accident benefits.

Of the total 1,089 fatalities of migrant workers (see graph breakdown) 104 were attributed to cardiac arrest, 427 to 'diseases', 171 were 'natural' deaths, 248 were 'others'.

Non-work related fatalities are generally not eligible for compensation for families. But

Nepal's own MWF provides critical support for deaths abroad that are un-investigated and un-compensated.

But because these are one-time transfers, they do not take into consideration the long-term vulnerability of families even though they might provide some cushion from immediate shock. The SSF could change that since families will be eligible for a lifetime of monthly support.

The lyrics of the popular Nepali song by Hemanta Rana 'चलिस कटेसी रमाउला' (Rejoice after 40) brought home the plight of migrant workers who spend the best part of their young lives toiling overseas. What happens to workers after they return is not meaningfully prioritised in government policy.

For many migrant workers, overseas employment is their only formal wage, and the option to be able to contribute to the SSF while they can is important.

Families rely on earnings to meet immediate needs, and there is seldom enough for old-age. Even with formal employment abroad, they are often not a part of contributory social security systems. The only support is the lump-sum end of service benefits

overseas migrant workers get.

But with the SSF, contributors can choose between lifetime monthly support after they turn 60 or take a lump-sum amount upon return.

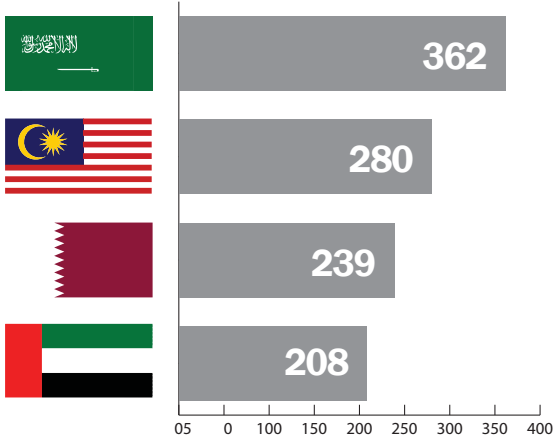
The new government, especially the entrants like the RSP, RPP, Janamat and Unmukti, are under pressure

from voters to perform. An effective implementation of the SSF for migrant workers can be truly transformational — not just for the workers but for families right across Nepal.

The outgoing government deserves credit for introducing this much-needed initiative. For millions in Nepal, emigration and the subsequent remittance is the only safety net, and this important initiative, if done right, will ensure that there is at least something for the family (and by extension the nation) to rely on when the remittance inevitably stops.

DEATH DO US PART

Total fatalities of Nepali migrant workers by country in 2020-21



20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Then and Now

2002 was the most violent year for Nepalis. The Maoists were increasingly starting to feel the pressure to end the war that served no purpose.

The fact that the Maoist supreme Pushpa Kamal Dahal with his violent past is once again the Prime Minister could be an indication of reconciliation, but he also hasn't answered for his party's war crimes. But there are hopes that Dahal will finally see beyond his personal ambition at the start of a new year.

Excerpts of a year-end editorial from #125 27 December 2002- 2 January 2003 20 years ago this week:

The only good thing we thought we could say about 2002 is that it was perhaps not as bad as 2001. After the royal massacre, street riots and the army getting sucked into the conflict, we really thought that things in 2002 couldn't get much worse.

But they did. More Nepalis were killed in 2002 than have ever been killed in our nation's history in one year. As many people died in the past year as were killed in the previous five years of the insurgency. And, as the recently

released report by Amnesty International points out: more than half of the "Maoists" the security forces claim to have killed were actually innocent civilians. As for the Maoists, their brutality, arbitrariness and targeting of the innocent only shows that "the peoples' war" is indeed what it claims to be.

There are indications that the Maoists are now being forced into an endgame. The internal dynamics of the party, the need to keep the cadre occupied and show results means that it can't go on like this. Matters are coming to a head. The comrades are now on a do-or-die trajectory.

Revolutions put concepts like humanity, compassion, conscience and rationality on hold. But it is up to the state to show restraint, accountability and a willingness to abide by basic humanitarian norms.

This they must do not just because we are signatories to the Geneva Convention, but because it is militarily the intelligent thing to do.

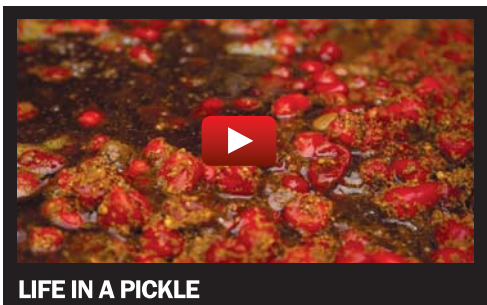
From archive material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

Analogue photography is staging something of a comeback worldwide, and there are aficionados in Nepal also trying to keep the technique alive. In the darkrooms of Kathmandu, photographers are reviving the lost art of film developing. Read the story on pages 6-7 and watch the video. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.



LIFE IN A PICKLE

For Parbati and Bheshe Raj Giri, what started as a last-ditch attempt at financial independence has grown into a booming pickle-making business. Parbati's special recipe for homemade pickles has provided steady income for the family, allowed the couple to send their children to school and convinced her husband to return from the UAE. Read the couple's story on our website and watch the video on YouTube.

NEPALI POLITICS

There are some new faces in Nepali politics now ('Left-led coalition upturns Nepal politics', Shristi Karki, nepalitimes.com). There will definitely be a change, either in the system or within them. Let us hope there will be positive changes in our policymaking and in the country.

User123s1237

■ I hope to see a new Nepal set up by the new faces. Heartiest congratulations to all the new MPs.

Shrawan Goodman

■ Whoever is the Prime Minister of Nepal, work for the development of the country in every way, not the vested interest groups.

Bishal Thapa

■ The sad state of our nation. Political Russian roulette.

Satyajit Pradhan

■ And now Pushpa Kamal Dahal goes and sides with K P Oli who he himself called retrogressive.

Mukesh Lama

■ None of our leaders will do any good for the society or country. They are just a factory producing prime ministers.

Som Khadka

■ K P Oli cheated his supporters by siding with Pushpa Kamal Dahal ('Oli-Dahal political déjà vu', Santa Gaha Magar, page 10). The people do not want Prachanda as the Prime Minister. If they did, his party would not have collapsed like this. This is Prachanda's last chance to bring his party back to a respectable state. For this, hard work and rapid development has to be done in these two or three years.

Nilendra Pyakurel

MIGRATION

Series of *Nepali Times* articles worth reading in this focus on overseas and migration stories (International Migrants Day Issue, #1140). First, we have Nepal's hard working students overseas. Then, seasonal worker Manoj Bhusal writes about his experience picking berries in UK. Always good to have a person with lived experience telling their story. Then there is an article that follows Joy Stephens as she tries to navigate the seasonal worker's visa application process, without paying agents any fees. These stories should also be translated into Nepali.

Lex Limbu

■ Nepali workers should explore harvest work in beautiful, peaceful New Zealand ('Nepalis picking berries in Scotland', Manoj Bhusal, #1140). They welcome workers from many nations.

Shawn Marie Duntz

DALITS

How poorly educated do you have to be, to believe that caste has any bearing on intelligence ('Bigotry of low expectations', Tom Robertson, nepalitimes.com)? So sad to hear and see these attitudes in modern Nepal.

Slow Trekking

■ Not just in Nepal and with a caste system. Here in America, and I am sure in other countries too, low expectations, patronising, and ingrained stereotypes work to undermine various ethnic/racial groups. They are considered less capable and need help and special consideration and measures. This just further ingrains a feeling of being inferior.

Roger Ray

FOOD PRODUCTION

Landlocked countries like Bolivia and Nepal need to find solutions, especially in local food production, to reduce dependence on other countries ('Pigs fly and fish climb trees', Sahina Shrestha, nepalitimes.com). An affordable solution is modern aquaponics (fish + plants). Egypt was once the most powerful nation on the planet, thanks to the floods of the Nile, a natural aquaponics. Congratulations to the couple, it is a fascinating story.

Luis Bap

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Gurja Khani

by Sonia Awale

A former copper mining village at the foot of Dhaulagiri is the focus of social researcher Joy Stephens' new photo book. This hidden village is a microcosm of rural Nepal: the epitome of a beautiful but difficult life. Full review on nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Oli-Dahal political déjà vu

by Santa Gaha Magar

Pushpa Kamal Dahal may be Prime Minister, but K P Oli is the one calling the shots in a repeat of 2017 when the two leaders formed a pact for the election and later set up the now defunct but powerful Nepal Communist Party. Read the analysis and join the online discussion.

Most commented

Left-led coalition upturns Nepal politics

by Shristi Karki

Two estranged Communist parties reunite to form the next government by dumping a pre-election alliance with the centrist Nepali Congress. Follow us on our social media platforms for the latest updates on this ongoing saga.

Most popular on Twitter



Back to Manang after 43 years

Nepali Times

Czech Zdeněk Thoma spent three weeks photographing the scenic trans-Himalayan valley of Manang in 1979. In 2008, he got his son Michal to retrace his steps to Manang, carrying with him an album of black and white photographs taken thirty years earlier. Story and photos on page 9.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Meet some of the people who worked to restore Patan after the 2015 earthquake: <https://nepalitimes.com/banner/preserving-patan-post-earthquake/>



Aashish Mishra @AasMishra

"For hundreds of years, the relatives of Bandana Jha performed daily ritual puja at the temples in the square." Thank you @NepaliTimes for featuring our Guthi members. Ours is a Guthi that doesn't bar women from participating in religious functions.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

"In general," one Dalit friend told me, "conservative Nepalis agree that Dalits' fate — their Karma — is to serve non-Dalits with manual labour. They consider that Dalits have unintelligent minds — moto buddhi."



Arne Walderhaug @arne_walderhaug

It's not very smart to think that Dalits are less smart.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

#review After reading Ed Young's spellbinding new book 'An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us', we will not think of ourselves the same way again.



Forester @kuenvmgt504

Ed Young is one of the best science writers around! I have been reading his pieces in The Atlantic for a long time.



HAPPY NEW YEAR

May this be a year of connecting to
happiness and health with your loved ones.



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China's surge: should Nepal be worried?

Beijing is allowing citizens to travel abroad again even as Covid returns with a bang

● **Sonia Awale**

It was exactly three years ago that the novel coronavirus first emerged from Wuhan. SARS-COV-2 has now come full circle as cases soar and hospitals are overwhelmed across China.

Beijing abandoned its zero-Covid policy after protests, and stopped registering fatalities from Covid-19. Official case load and death figures are said to be underreported. Health experts believe more than 1 million people in China may die from the disease this winter.

Several countries now require mandatory Covid tests from passengers arriving from China, after Beijing eased travel restrictions in the new year. Countries in the region, including Nepal, are on high alert.

The Health Ministry last week made masks once again mandatory in public places while appealing to people to resume hand washing and social distancing. On 28 December Nepal reported only 8 cases and zero Covid deaths.

The Ministry has also urged the public to take booster shots, and second boosters for people above 55 and the immunocompromised. The Drug Advisory Committee on 27 December granted emergency use approval for the Pfizer-BioNtech bivalent vaccine of which Nepal is set to receive 1.5 million doses from the COVAX global initiative by mid-January.

"What is of utmost priority now is to protect our elderly and vulnerable populations. We need to fully vaccinate them if they have not or give them a booster, bivalent would be even more effective as it can fight both the original and Omicron strains," explains Sher Bahadur Pun at the Teku Hospital.

Pun likens what is happening in China now to the Omicron surge in Hong Kong earlier this year which also saw a significant rise in hospitalisations and deaths. Nepal also suffered a spike in fatalities among the elderly towards the end of the Omicron third surge in 2022. In both cases, the unvaccinated were victims.

"Omicron might be less severe but in vulnerable groups who have



Health workers transporting Covid-19 vaccines in rural Nepal in 2021.

NARENDRA SHRESTHA/ADB NEPAL

not been vaccinated, even this strain can cause complications," he warns.

More than 80% of Nepal's eligible population (above 5) have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19. But the booster uptake is much lower at only 27%. There is also concern that it has been more than a year since most Nepalis got their last shots, and their immunity might be waning. Officials recommend a booster even though memory cells could provide some residual protection.

The WHO has asked China to reveal its true Covid figures, and the nature of the prevalent strain. Experts attribute its surge to vaccination hesitancy among the elderly, stringent zero-Covid strategy which suppressed natural immunity, and Chinese vaccines like Sinovac being less effective than mRNA jabs.

"China did great with lockdowns and restrictions but took it to unnecessary levels, which means the population is Covid naïve compared to other countries. When they reopened, the variants already present multiplied rapidly," explains Buddha Basnyat, physician at Patan Academy of Health

Sciences. "It also seems they did not learn from the rest of the world, did not vaccinate their elderly sufficiently and relied only on their own vaccines."

The efficacy of Chinese-made vaccines has long been debated, but there are no studies to prove their efficacy, or lack thereof. However, experts agree that all the available vaccines recommended by WHO considerably reduce the severity of the disease.

Media amplification of the China surge has caused some panic in the neighbourhood. Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan and India are the latest countries to require Chinese passengers to have Covid tests. India has also introduced nasal vaccine this week, those who had taken Covishield and Covaxin can take it as a heterologous booster dose.

However, the BF.7 Omicron strain has already spread around the world and it is not virulent, and does not seem to adversely affect vaccinated individuals. Experts also caution that although 1 million deaths sounds like a lot, it is a tiny fraction of China's population. The Chinese

government has accused the West of 'hypocrisy and hyping the threat'.

"The BF.7 is not a new variant, it has been around for a while. It has been circulating in Europe, America and parts of Asia. It has been reported in India and chances are high it is in Nepal too, we probably just haven't detected it yet," says Sameer Mani Dixit of the Centre for Molecular Dynamics Nepal. He adds: "Nepalis have developed enough resistance through reinfections and vaccinations, especially as subsequent strains have been more contagious but less virulent."

The WHO says it is concerned about further mutations and the emergence of new variants, but mutations do not necessarily mean increased severity. Just like Omicron is more contagious but less severe than Delta.

Says Pun: "There are at least 17 sub-variants of Omicron in Nepal. This means we have had enough immunity gained via reinfections. We also have protection from vaccination and the proof of this is how we marked our festivals, and elections without following safety

measures and without any resulting surge."

Having said that, the pandemic is not yet over. China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan which have high mobility of Nepalis are also seeing a Covid-19 surge this winter.

The health desk at Kathmandu airport is not strictly checking vaccination or PCR tests anymore, and some experts say it should increase surveillance — especially when flights from Chinese cities resume on 8 January. After being locked down for so long, many Chinese citizens are already booking holiday travel to Asian destinations.

The Rasuwa border post also reopened this week to resume the cargo transport at Kerung and the trade between the two countries. The checkpoint had been shut due to the pandemic since early 2020.

Says Buddha Basnyat: "There is no harm in continuing to follow safety measures, it is now proven that masks and hand washing saves lives. It also protects us from a host of infections including typhoid and TB and more importantly from air pollution, all non-Covid silent killers." 🇳🇵



NMB BANK
एनएमबी बैंक

Pokhara takes off

Domestic flights from the new Pokhara International Airport will begin from 1 January, 2023. The \$200 million airport whose construction was delayed by the Covid pandemic will operate from sunrise to sunset for smaller aircraft, ultralights and helicopters. The government has not decided what to do with the old airport, but there are calls to make it a public park.

Foreign trade decline

Nepal's foreign trade declined significantly from the previous year with up to Rs600 billion deficit. In the past five months, Nepal imported 20.71% less goods than the same time period last year. The country's recent exports are at Rs6.7 trillion which is 34.61% less than the same period last year. Although



trade deficit has decreased by 18.77%, reduced demand for goods and services could lead to an economic recession. Nepal has imported agricultural products, food, vegetables, petroleum products, machinery and electrical equipment and iron worth Rs 2.3 trillion, Rs2 trillion, Rs2.4 trillion, Rs134 billion, Rs84 billion and Rs64 billion respectively.

Financial literacy



The first financial literacy survey carried out by Nepal Rastra Bank shows that 57.9% of Nepalis are financially literate with Bagmati province scoring the highest at 64.5% and Madhes the lowest at 52%. The survey carried out among 9,361 participants above 18 years of age also revealed that of the 46.34% who had taken loans, only 17.6% did so from a bank.

Toyota upgrade

Toyota customers can exchange their cars with new models Raize, Hilux, Corolla Cross, Fortuner and Prado at the Toyota upgrade event in the Dhumbarahi showroom.



Smirnoff vodka

Nepal Liquors has launched Smirnoff vodka under license. Priced at Rs550-2,200 for 180-750ml, the famous international vodka will be manufactured at its Biratnagar factory.



Khukri for Gurkha

Nepal distillery, the authorised manufacturer of Khukuri Rum, has felicitated 120 Gurkha soldiers. The company is also providing scholarships for two children of soldiers.

Embossed plates

The Department of Transport has instructed embossed numbers to be installed on government vehicles by February. Fines up to Rs2,000 will be imposed on vehicles with old plates. All vehicles must have paid taxes while installing embossed number plates.



Old Durbar



Yeti Distillery has launched the Old Durbar 12-year-old blended Scotch whisky in a ceramic bottle designed with Nepali motifs. Says Abhishek Shrestha, MD of Yeti Distillery: "As

a brand, we always want our consumers to learn and experience new products. This latest release is a result of that commitment."

Tata camp

Tata Motors has launched mega service camps across 12 service centers in Nepal. Customers can take their



vehicles for repairs and maintenance and also get vehicle parts on discounts.



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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2023

DRINK RESPONSIBLY

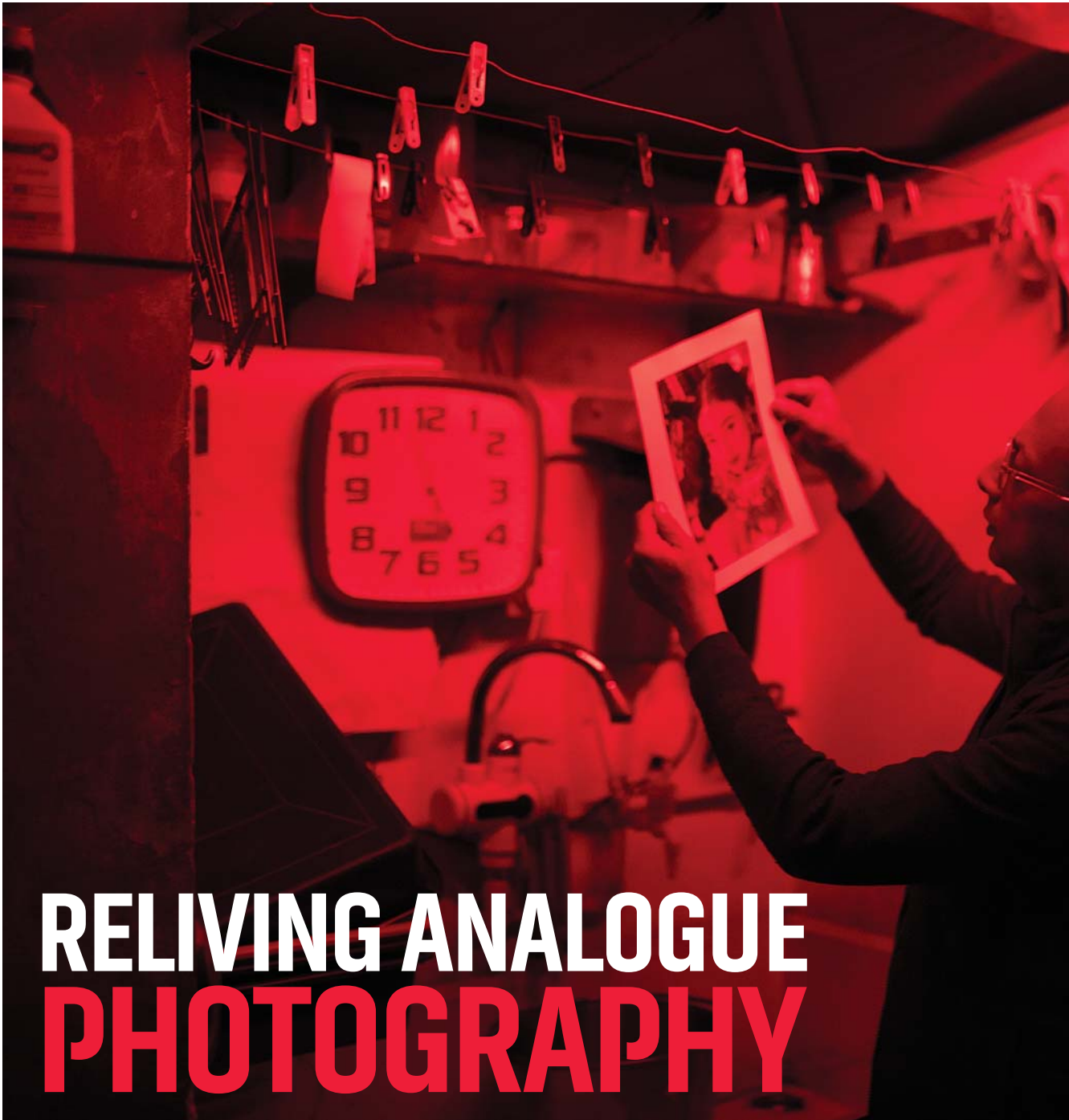


In the darkrooms of Kathmandu, photographers are reviving the lost art of film developing

● Suman Nepali

Under the dim red light of a darkroom, Jagadish Upadhyaya is getting ready a tray for the stop bath and fixer to print photographs from an exposed negative film reel. He sets the developed negative on the enlarger, alters the aperture ring and checks the sharpness before masking the frame. He then carefully places the exposed paper in a shallow tray of developer and gently rocks the solution back and forth so the chemicals slowly bring out the image in black and white. Once it appears, Upadhyaya puts the paper in the stop bath before removing and draining it. He moves the print into a tray of fixer, gently rocking it again, and inspects the print under a white light and

washes it thoroughly before hanging it up to dry. All this may look archaic to young Nepalis used to snapping away with their mobile phones, applying filters and posting images on Instagram. But before photos went digital, there were film reels, darkrooms and prints — technology that had not changed since photography was first invented 150 years ago. But analogue photography is staging something of a comeback worldwide, and there are aficionados in Nepal also trying to keep the technique alive. “The entire process of working in the darkroom and playing with chemicals is like cooking,” says Upadhyaya, who founded Film Foundry, a collective learning and sharing their knowledge of film photography. “I still get fascinated every time I go into the darkroom, I feel like I am in a different realm.” The phone killed the point-and-shoot camera years ago. Even before that, digital cameras were pushing analogue cameras into obsolescence. But as the world of photography becomes more digital-focused, photographers like Upadhyaya look to conserve its purist form. “Film will never die,” says Upadhyaya. “It is like reading a book. A tablet may be easier to carry



RELIVING ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHY

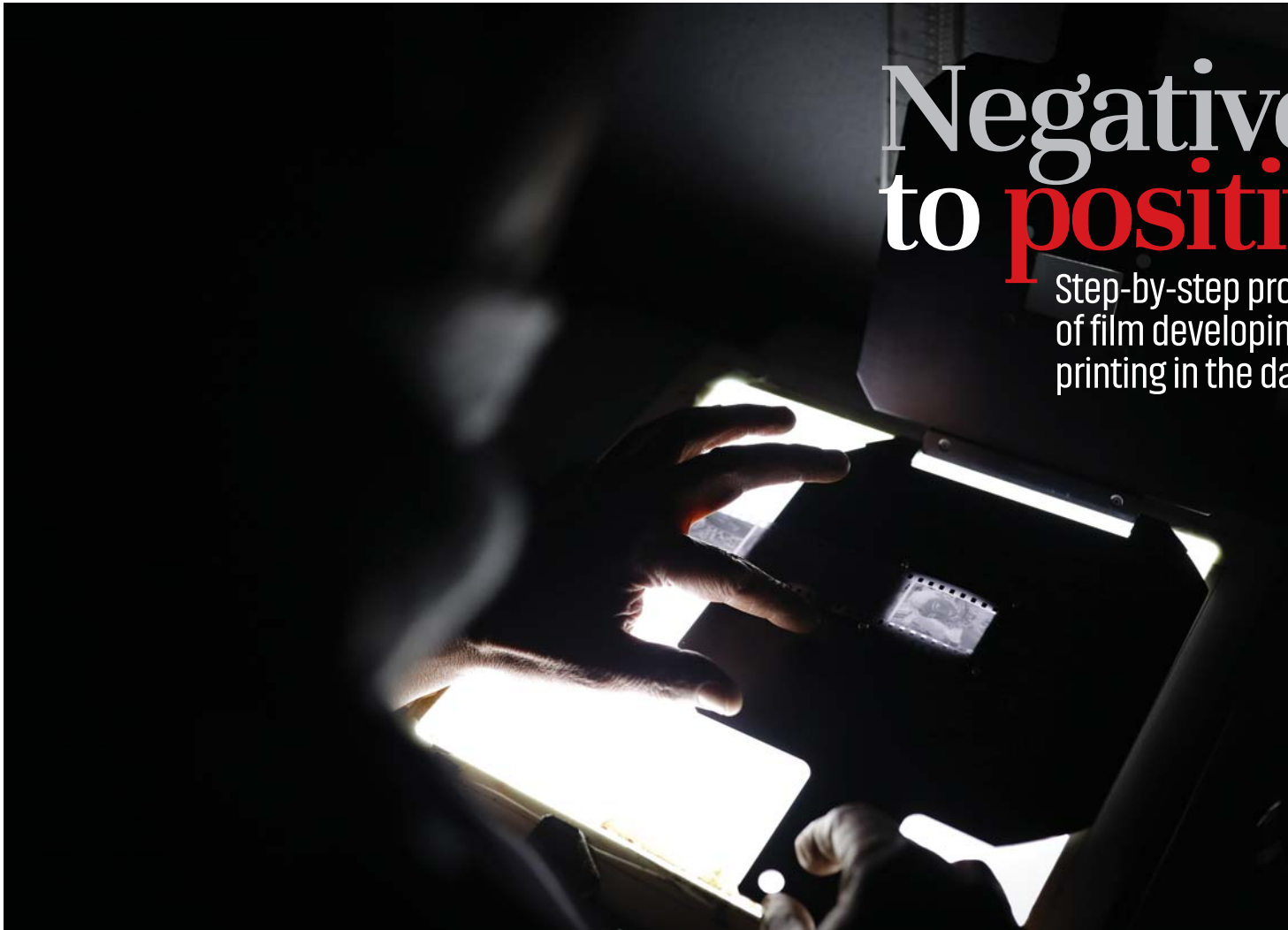


Negative to positive

Step-by-step process of film developing and printing in the darkroom

The magic of analogue photography takes place on a strip of plastic coated with a light sensitive emulsion of silver halide, with which the exposed parts react. When processed, the lit bits blacken the silver on the film.

- After all 24 or 36 exposures are done, the film is rolled back inside the camera with a small pull-out spool. The camera should not be opened until the negative is inside the roll which is then taken to the darkroom to process.
- Darkroom equipment includes a dark bag, scissors, a daylight developing tank, film reel and chemicals.
- The negative from the exposed roll is loaded on to the film spool inside the dark bag, and the daylight developing tank which is designed in such a way that light does not contaminate the film while the chemicals are being poured in. The lid on the developing tank is there only to cover the tank in case we require agitation in the developing process.
- The choice of chemicals depends on whether the film is black-and-white or colour, which brand it is, the speed of the film, or the preference of the photographer. The temperature of the chemicals also has to be taken into account as it can lead to a difference in the developing time and ultimately the final product. Many senior





around, but you cannot compare the joy of touching the printed pages. Similarly, there is a different sense of satisfaction in physically holding and seeing photographic prints.”

Unlike digital cameras where one can snap away without worrying much about cost, film requires a much more deliberate approach. Each frame costs money to develop and print, and this forces the photographer to be mindful about clicking the shutter button.

The nostalgia associated with the film camera and film rolls is what seems to have pushed the growing trend among photographers to time-travel back to the age of analogue.

In the mid-2010s, when Rupesh Singh’s family was packing up to move house, he stumbled upon an album filled with black and white photos of his father’s childhood. Being a digital native, he had only seen photographs on phones or computers before, but holding family memories in his hands was a defining moment for Singh, who now teaches photography at Kathmandu University.

“The medium is unique. It requires a lot of patience and attention. If you make one mistake when developing it, the print turns out blank. But the anticipation of seeing the end-product is what makes it worthwhile,” Singh explains.

When Abishek Shah started his photographic journey, film was the only medium. Photo studios in Kathmandu Valley then were as common as mobile phone shops are today. Over time as things went digital, it became harder to buy film and chemicals. But his love for analogue never faded.

“Unlike digital, film has

its own restrictions, but that teaches us to do even more, go even further, learning every day. The importance of film can be conveyed in just one word: patience,” says Shah.

The joy of developing prints is when he processes photos he took months ago in the darkroom. It is not instantaneous like in mobile or digital photography where you can check the screen immediately after taking a shot.

The curiosity about how film cameras work, how an image is formed and how a blank sheet coated in a photosensitive chemical emulsion captures an image of an instant already passed is also what attracted Sanjog Manandhar to film photography.

He had an old point-and-shoot camera at home but there was nowhere to buy film rolls since studios had all gone digital. He got some film reels from his brother in Japan and started clicking.

“Seeing the mistakes I made after the negatives were developed has made me a better photographer,” says Manandhar, a photojournalist with *The Kathmandu Post*.

In 2019, he founded the Analog Club with Niva Rajbanshi to create a community and a space for photographers to experience the whole process of film photography. One by one they collected films, chemicals, tanks, enlarger, and set up a darkroom. Under the mentorship of Jagadish Upadhyaya, they taught themselves by trial and error.

“Film photography slows me down in the rush of the digital world where we take hundreds of pictures every day. Yet, we lack learning. What is the point

of being happy with just one good photo from hundreds you have taken?” says Niva Rajbanshi. “Film photography slowed me down and gave me time to really understand image processing. It made me pause and think about what I am shooting. And ask: why am I shooting this?”

For commercial photographer Bibash Maharjan Suwal, the joy of shooting in analogue is not only in taking pictures and developing them, but also archiving.

“I take a lot of photos every day, but I have a fear that one day my hard drive gets corrupted. Films, if stored properly, will last in a physical form for a long time,” says Suwal, who started film photography when in school in India.

With film staging a comeback, French photographer Alexandre J Henry came recently to exchange notes with Nepal’s analogue community. Henry says he fell in love with the grain and texture of the analogue prints and started shooting in the format five years ago.

“You can have some deeper layers of black and the contrasts are just amazing in film prints, it is unique compared to digital prints,” he says.

The renaissance of print has also allowed the photographers to experiment with the medium. At Film Foundry, photographers are testing prints in different mediums including wood, canvas and Nepali paper.

Says Abishek Shah: “Back in the days, photos were more for household documentation. People took family portraits, studio portraits, and photos of outings and gatherings as mementos, but now we can be more creative and try something new every day.” 🇳🇵



photographers in Kathmandu swear by the D-76 formula by Kodak as the go-to formula for the most.

- The film, after remaining in the developer for the specified amount of time, will have thrown away excess emulsion and developed images on it. Diluted developers are usually disposed of after the use, and stock chemicals are retained and replenished for future use.
- But the film is not yet ready to be out in the light. It needs to be cleansed with fresh water, which should be the same temperature as the developer with the final couple of minutes in the fixer. This will fully desensitise the remaining silver and make the images permanent allowing us to view it in bright light.
- The image on the film is inverted which is why the film is called a negative. A positive is then obtained by either enlarging the image onto a photographic paper or by scanning and inverting it digitally.
- The dark room has red light, and some photographers first make a contact print of the negative to see which ones should be enlarged.
- The exposed photographic paper is first immersed in a developer, and halted with a stop bath. The paper is then immersed in a fixer solution after which it is washed and hung up to dry. 🇳🇵



EVENTS



Galpa

‘Galpa’ by artist Suresh Basnet, recipient of the Himalayan Light Art Award, is an exhibition of paintings on the immediate socio-political reality influenced by the artist’s life experiences.

30 December – 17 January, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery

Chimkeshwori Trek

A hike is just the thing to welcome 2023 with open arms. Enjoy the 6-hour two-day hike to Chimkeshwori with scenic views and a rich culture.

31 December – 1 January, Rs6000, 9801910218



Bye bye 2022!

Celebrate the new year with live music and barbeque at Pauline’s rooftop.

31 December, 6:15pm onwards, Pauline’s Rooftop, Panipokhari

Global Village

Celebrate our differences as cultures and countries as one humanity at Global Village where people come together, interact, share diversity and promote peace.

30 December, 1pm onwards, Chhaya Center, Thamel

DINING



DanRan Restaurant

Enjoy a truly Japanese meal at DanRan. Try the soft tofu, pork cutlets and don varieties offered.

Jhamsikhel Road (01) 5521027

MUSIC

Tribal Rain

Enjoy a soulful musical show by Tribal Rain this weekend.

1 January, 6pm onwards, Club Fahrenheit, Thamel



New Year and Music

Welcome 2023 with loved ones and listen to musical acts by Acoustic band Two Tone, Abhaya and the Steam Engines, and Balloon Drop.

31 December, 7pm onwards, Hard Rock Café, Darbar Marg

Prateek Kuhad

Book tickets now, Prateek Kuhad is dropping by next week as a part of his ‘The way lovers do’ tour.

7 January, 2pm-9pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna



Sujan Chapagain

Walk into 2023 with musical performance by Sujan Chapagain at Calm Tangelwood.

1 January, 6pm onwards, Rs1500-2000, Calm Tangelwood, Naxal

New Orleans Café

Celebrate the coming of 2023 with Live Music at New Orleans Café. Enjoy the New Year Special Dinner with winter special mulled wine and rum punch. Book Now.

Thamel (01) 4700736



Tukche Thakali Kitchen

What about a full thaal of mouth-watering and filling Thakali to end 2022? Tukche is just the place.

Darbar North Gate (01) 4412462

GETAWAY



Barahi Jungle Lodge

Enjoy a warm stay in the individual or two-in-one private villas in Barahi Jungle Lodge. This eco-jungle lodge offers memorable hospitality amidst the breathtaking beauty of the surrounding Chitwan National Park.

Megauli, Chitwan (01) 4429820

Kathmandu Guest House

Enjoy a rejuvenating stay after a trek, at KGH. The buildings offer hospitable, comfortable accommodation, serene gardens – all a short walk away from Kathmandu Darbar Square.

Thamel (01) 4700632

Sapana Village Resort

Wake up to witness elephants lumber through the forests and immerse respectfully in the rich Tharu and Chepang culture at the heart of Sauraha.

Sauraha, Chitwan (56) 580308



Dhulikhel Mountain Resort

The blend of bungalows with Newa influences coupled with the views of majestic mountain ranges make Dhulikhel Mountain Resort a perfect place to spend the weekend. Enjoy the relaxing body massage and spa services, evening cultural dance programs, and the appetizing multi-cuisine food.

Dhulikhel (01) 4420774

Namo Buddha Resort

The traditional Newa-style resort is perched on a hilltop offering an amazing view of the Himalayas each morning. The peaceful, tranquil environment is also perfect for short hikes.

Namo Buddha, Phulbari, 9851106802



Turkish Kebabs

Head to Turkish Kebabs and Pizza Hub to try authentic Turkish cuisine. Choose from the delicious kebabs to the Turkish street food Dhurum.


Ekantakuna (01) 5439733

Hermann Helmers

Craving pastries, cookies, biscuits or cake to celebrate this weekend? Hermann’s got it covered. Don’t forget the delicious hot mug of hot chocolate.




Jhamsikhel Road (01) 5424900

WEEKEND WEATHER

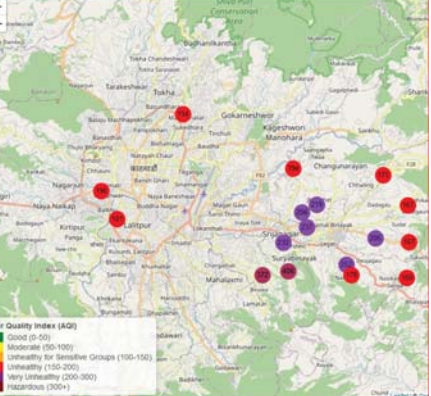


Fog and snow

Dense fog in the Trisuli and Seti Valleys, and a westerly bringing fresh snow down to 4,000m will be the weather features over New Year’s day. Both are visible in this satellite image from Thursday morning. The foothills may get light showers, and the cloud cover will bring chilly weather. Maximum temperature will be down to the mid-teens and the minimum may be as low as 4°C in Kathmandu Valley. So, bundle up to welcome 2023 because the clouds are likely to persist till next week. Jomsom will see a minimum of -9°C with wind chill, Namche -4°C and Jumla -3°C. Tarai towns will be in single digits due to morning fog.


FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 16° 5°	 14° 6°	 16° 5°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



The relatively cleaner air this week will be replaced by smog buildup in Kathmandu Valley over the weekend which will be compounded by cloud cover preventing the sun from burning off the inversion layer trapping the pollutants. The stagnant air will also mean suspended particles will not be blown off in the afternoons. We are not sure how long this phase will last, but with the temperature staying low the Valley’s AQI will remain high – especially in hotspots like Bhaktapur-Sanga, Kalanki-Thankot and Maharajganj-Ring Road intersection because of heavy traffic and brick kilns.


OUR PICK



The White Lotus is an electric black comedy anthology series from the mind of Mike White set in the fictional White Lotus resort chain as it follows the guests and employees whose stay is affected by their various psychosocial dysfunctions. From Hawai’i to Sicily, the series is powered by memorable performances and witty writing, detailing a week in the life of picture-perfect vacationers as each passing day reveals a darker complexity in them, the hotel’s cheerful employees and the idyllic locale itself. While the first season asks how money can pervert even our most intimate relationships, the second season is a bedroom farce with teeth. A third season, set in Asia, is currently in the works. The ensemble stars Murray Bartlett, Connie Britton, Sydney Sweeney, F. Murray Abraham, Meghann Fahy, Aubrey Plaza, Will Sharpe and Jennifer Coolidge.

सम्पत्ति विवरण समयमै बुझाऔं,
जरिवानाबाट बचौं

- सार्वजनिक पद धारण गरेको व्यक्ति तथा राष्ट्रसेवकले आफ्नो व्यक्तिगत विवरण अद्यावधिक गरौं ।
- आर्थिक वर्ष शुरू भएको साठी दिनभित्र आफ्नो सम्पत्ति विवरण तोकिएको निकायमा पेश गरौं ।
- भ्रष्टाचारमा शून्य सहनशीलता अपनाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

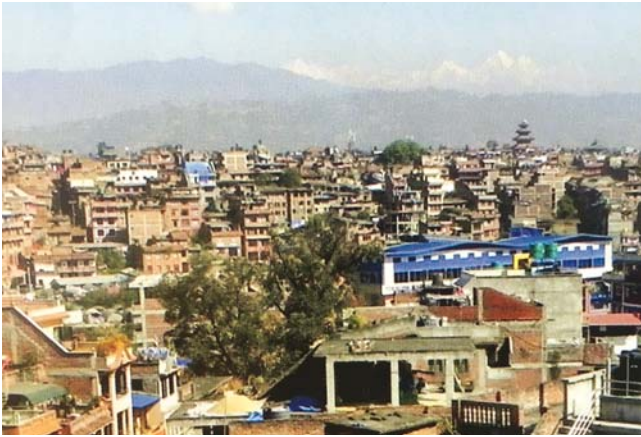
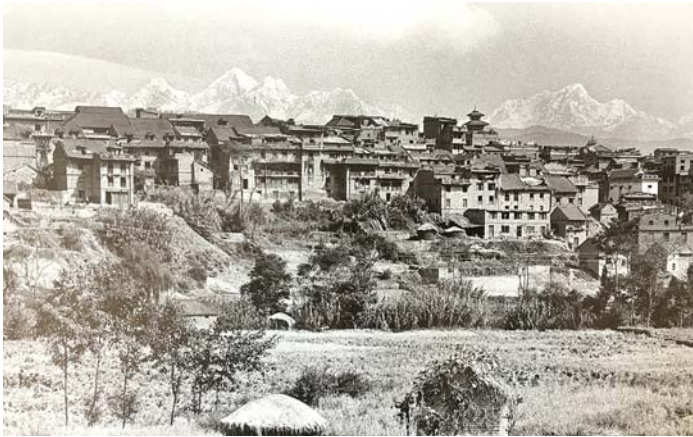


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Kathmandu Calendar 1979 – 2023

Czech photographer Zdeněk Thoma first visited Kathmandu in 1979 in his overland travel from Prague to Singapore. But that brief visit to Kathmandu Valley fascinated him, and he returned several times after that.

The photographs he took of Manang are part of a father-son exhibition with his son Michal of the transformation of the Himalaya (*see below*). But the Kathmandu photographs represent a valuable archive of the Valley then and now.

The changes in the architecture, the skyline, the people's attire and livelihoods is documented in black and white photographs taken 50 years ago, and colour ones today.



Nyatapola Temple Square in Bhaktapur has not changed much in 43 years, only the dresses of people. An ancient Hiti in 1979 is also unchanged, and water still flows from the spouts.

Now, Zdeněk Thoma has

brought out a 2023 calendar where he has juxtaposed some of the photographs with more recent colour images of the same places or street scenes by Tomáš Beránek and Jan Zalud.

Proceeds from the sale of the calendars will go to Namaste Nepal, a Czech non-profit that focuses on development aid to Nepal and helps underserved children with education. It has also helped with rebuilding primary schools after the 2015 earthquake.

Back to Manang after 43 years

A Czech photographer's journey through time and space to Nepal

The Prague Spring democracy uprising had just been crushed by Soviet troops in 1968, and many Czechoslovaks fled the country. Photographer Zdeněk Thoma also left, but not as a refugee – he travelled overland to Istanbul, Tehran, Kabul and Kathmandu to discover the world.

He went on to Calcutta, and in Singapore hitched a ride on a Polish cargo ship to Osaka. Thoma's life-long love affair with Japan began then. He has been to the country 12 times and has since published three photo books, the latest on Japanese gardens.

But after Japan, it is Nepal that Zdeněk Thoma is most fond of, and especially the valley of Manang which he first trekked to in 1979. He spent three weeks photographing the scenic trans-Himalayan valley and on return to Prague, held a photo exhibition 'Village in the Shadow of Annapurna'.

Czechoslovakia was still one country then, and the Communist regime had made it difficult for citizens to travel abroad. Which is why the dramatic photographs from an exotic corner of the Nepal Himalaya were an instant hit, and were exhibited in galleries and museums in Czechia and Slovakia, inspiring a generation of mountaineers.

Thoma tracks down the three self confident girls he encountered while trekking Manang Valley in 1979. More than 40 years later the women are now living in Kathmandu (*pictured*).

If it was any other photographer, that would have been the end of the story, and Thoma would have gone on to explore and photograph other parts of the world. But in 2008, he got his son Michal to retrace his steps to Manang, carrying with him an album of black and white photographs taken 30 years earlier.

"The idea was to document and interpret the changes that had happened in Manang in the intervening years," Zdenek Thoma, now 84, said during another visit to Nepal last month. Thoma went back to Manang on this trip, and the transformation has been even greater. In 1979, he had to walk for



two weeks from Dumre up the Marsyangdi to Manang, today there is a road right up to Manang village. The road is rough, but has further altered the livelihoods and architecture of this once-quiet valley at the edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Even so, a lot of things have also remained the same.

"When my father first came to Manang in 1979, I was just six months old," says Michal. "I grew up listening to his stories about Nepal instead of fairytales. The photographs were imprinted in my mind, so when I finally got to Manang myself in 2008 I was already familiar with the place."

Michal went house-to-house in Manang and surrounding villages trying to locate some of the people in his father's photographs. A young Dalit girl carrying her baby brother on her back in 1979 was a young woman. Already in 2008, there were a couple of motorcycles in Manang that had been carried



over since the road to Besisahar had not yet been built.

Before the road (and concrete) got there, the terraced houses of villages like Braga, Chame, Humde looked unchanged in 30 years. But it has been 14 years already since 2008, and that is not the case anymore. In 2008, mobile phones had already got to Manang and Michal has a photograph of women carrying a load of buckwheat on their back, and one of them is texting while she walks. (*More photos online*)

The mountains seem eternal, and have not changed much. But the impact of the climate crisis are visible. The Gangapurna Lake at the terminus of the glacier did not exist 50 years ago. By 1979 it was a large pond. In another 30 years, the lake had expanded and the glacier has retreated up the north face of Mt Gangapurna. Today, the lake is gone — covered by debris after heavy monsoon rains



ALL PHOTOS: ZDENĚK AND MICHAL THOMA

in 2020 washed down fragile glacial deposits no longer held together by permafrost.

When Michal returned to Prague in 2008, he organised another exhibition 'Manang: 30 Years Ago' with before and after pictures by his father and himself. In 2010, Zdeněk and Michal exhibited the photographs at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF), and after that father and son took the photographs to Manang where the photos were entrusted with a family to be exhibited.

"When I first came to Manang, the people I photographed said they felt like the yaks that tourists took pictures of," recalls Zdeněk. "So we wanted to give the photographs to the people there. People could see how much their villages had changed, sometimes for better sometimes for worse, so that Nepalis could decide how its remote mountain valleys should be developed in future." 🇳🇵

An anti-establishmentarian in the establishment

The Independent RSP joins Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s government and faces backlash from voters

It has now emerged that there was disagreement within the independent RSP over whether the party should join the government or stay in opposition, with party chair Rabi Lamichhane having the final say. One party official who openly expressed dissent is Central Committee member Ganesh Karki.

‘We campaigned to disenfranchised Nepalis frustrated with Nepal’s opportunistic leaders who selfishly chase power on a promise that we would be completely separate from them ... How is our party any different now from the parties we criticised in the past?’ wrote Karki in a letter to party HQ.

The public backlash has also been sharp and swift, with many voters expressing betrayal in social media posts. In response, another RSP Central Committee member Arnico Panday tried to put a gloss on the decision: ‘To all the people disappointed in RSP’s decision to join a messy coalition: this was a decision that was debated and voted upon. Either coalition would have been messy. While staying in opposition would be safer for our reputation, joining govt [sic] challenges us to show good work.’

Even as voters continue

to express dismay on public platforms, the circumstances surrounding the RSP’s decision to join the government and Lamichhane’s interest in the Home Ministry have come under intense scrutiny.

Lamichhane, who was previously an American citizen, has been accused of not renouncing his Nepali citizenship while he was a US citizen, as well as having obtained a Nepali passport while having been a US citizen. The police had been investigating Lamichhane after a complaint about the validity of his Nepali citizenship and passport reached the Home Ministry.

Now, as Home Minister, Lamichhane is in charge of the very law enforcement institutions tasked with investigating allegations against him. On Wednesday, the newly-appointed minister made a round of the Passport Department in Tripureswor, and the irony of this visit was not lost on observers.

On the other hand, even if Lamichhane were to be given the benefit of the doubt and allowed to do meaningful work in government, the fact that he insisted on taking charge of the Home Ministry when he could have chosen other portfolios has raised a lot of red flags. At the very least, it speaks to a lack of political acumen and at worst it is an indication of recklessness and a cynical misuse of the public trust.

Indeed, many had felt that first-time MPs from the RSP and other

smaller parties which also joined the coalition should have used their election win to be in the opposition to fulfill their promise to hold the old guard to account and gain some much-needed political experience.

After his appointment, Lamichhane from his new office proclaimed that he would “play the role of the opposition from within the cabinet”. And even this statement was met with derision for exhibiting a singular lack of understanding of how parliamentary democracy functions.

‘There are a maximum of 25 cabinet positions in Nepal, while the House of Representatives is 275-strong,’ said RSP member Ganesh Karki in his letter. ‘If we perpetuate a narrative that meaningful work cannot be done unless one has a ministerial position, aren’t we then saying that the presence of 250 duly elected representatives in Parliament is useless?’

For now, the Dahal-Oli coalition considers Lamichhane and the RSP as both a threat, and an important player to appoint them to plum political positions. By acceding to his demand for Home Ministry, the wily politicians have attempted to keep Lamichhane under a right leash, and also hoped that his very presence in government will make him lose his support base.

As Parliament prepares to sit on, it remains to be seen to what degree the RSP can or will fulfil the promises it made to anti-establishment voters from within the establishment. 🇳🇵



Oli-Dahal political déjà vu

Pushpa Kamal Dahal may be Prime Minister, but KP Oli is pulling the strings

● Santa Gaha Magar

On 25 December, Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal was appointed Nepal’s Prime Minister by President Bidya Devi Bhandari with support from the UML, effectively putting an end to the very coalition government formed to oust the UML’s K P Oli from power in 2021.

Dahal finally has his coveted third term as Prime Minister, having last held the position in 2016. With support from seven political parties, his left-led alliance has a 169-majority in the House, even as it is only the third-largest in Parliament with 32 elected members.

Until Saturday last week, a day before the President’s deadline to form a majority government ended, Dahal had maintained his commitment to the NC-led coalition. But the Maoist supremo did a dramatic U-turn when he and NC chair and prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba failed to reach an agreement over which one of them would become PM first under the new government.

According to insiders Dahal said he was going off to lunch and would return to continue the negotiations, but instead Deuba and other NC members heard he had gone to K P Oli’s residence in Balkot to get his support.

Dahal’s desire to become prime minister seems to have overruled everything else — ideology, principles, and the ‘liberation’ of the people for which he waged a ruinous 10-year insurgency. As soon as Oli offered him the first stab at prime ministership on the condition of breaking away from the former alliance, all bets were off.

“The best interests of the party and party leaders have become secondary to the Chairman’s personal interests,” confided a Maoist official on condition of anonymity. “Breaking the alliance just so he could be Prime Minister was a shameful political act.”

Had Dahal been a bit more patient, not only would he have

been prime minister anyway in two years, his party’s nominees would also have bagged the posts of President and House Speaker, not to mention plum ministerial positions over the next five years.

A continued alliance with the NC would have benefited many more of the Maoist rank and file. With this deal, Dahal has rewarded himself only. Maoist Centre party vice-chair Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Rabi Lamichhane are twpo of the other deputy prime ministers.

The UML is the second-largest in Parliament, but may be the largest if it merges with the rump Unified Socialists. Oli has got the UML to shrewdly gain the upper hand once again, playing the long game by agreeing to give Dahal the first go at leading the government while bagging plum positions for his party.

Indeed, Dahal may be in the the prime minister’s seat, but Oli is the one calling the shots.

And with a left-led seven party alliance now in power, Sher Bahadur Deuba has been out-manuevered even though he has been considered to be a clever deal-maker, as evidenced by the five times he has been prime minister from the days of the monarchy in 1995.

Just like Dahal, Deuba’s quest to lead the government for the sixth time left him unable to make an objective assessment of his and his party’s political future. Now, Deuba, who once managed to become Prime Minister after winning only 23 FPTP seats in the election, finds himself and his NC in the opposition despite being the largest party in the House.

The big loser in all this has been Madhav Kumar Nepal who split from the UML to back the Deuba-led coalition last year, and was angling for a senior appointments for his CPN (Unified Socialist). Dahal and Oli largely ignored Nepal as being a bit player, his clout diminished further by his party’s poor performance in elections.

Nepal subsequently grew closer with Dahal, breaking from the UML to eventually launch his own political party. Now, his party after a poor show in the local as well as national polls finds itself without national recognition in Parliament or the backing of a multi-party alliance.

Had Nepal not put his entire weight behind Dahal and focused on an election strategy and party expansion, perhaps CPN-US would not have missed the chance to become a national party.

A secretariat meeting conducted after Dahal’s abrupt exit from the coalition meeting in Baluwatar and subsequent foray to Oli’s residence in Balkot was unable to dispel uncertainty about the future of the CPN-US.

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regarding recent political developments, we have decided to move forward in the best interests of the country, our people, and the party," read its vague statement.

The UML-Maoist alliance has also blindsided senior NC leader Ram Chandra Poudel, who had been banking on the coalition with Dahal as Prime Minister so that he could become President, making his own backroom deals with Maoist and CPN-US leaders since before the election.

In the aftermath of the election, as the top political leaders negotiated to form a government in the absence of a clear majority in parliament, there had been much discourse about how a more stable government could be formed through an NC-UML alliance. After all, such an alliance had

been possible in 2013.

The Maoists make up only 11% of the 275-member Parliament, so the appointment of Dahal as PM is contrary to the people's mandate. It has brought into question why elections should even be held when the results have no bearing on who leads the government.

But this is not the first time something of this nature has happened in Nepali politics. RPP leaders Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa were both elevated to prime minister in 1997 by the UML and NC respectively after the parties that fought to restore multiparty democracy polarised Nepal's politics.

In the next 30 days, Dahal will have to obtain a vote of confidence from the House per Article 76(4) of Nepal's constitution. So, there could still be some surprises. He will need support from all seven parties that were behind his bid to become prime minister, which means more wheeling dealing.

Dahal, whose idea of democracy was rooted in the armed struggle, does not have the best record with human rights, freedom of speech, and Nepal's larger political process.

As prime minister, he needs to see beyond his personal ambition and keep open channels of communication between Baluwatar, Balkot and Budhanilkantha. This will be in the best interest of Nepal's democracy. The elections in 2022 delivered a stark warning to the established parties about public disenchantment. The RSP, especially represents its protest vote, but 2023 will show how much its leaders Rabi Lamichhane (page 1, 10) can be a new kind of leader. 🇳🇵



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VACANCY

A volunteer Ass is needed with immediate effect for a newspaper of records in a federal democratic kleptocratic Himalayan republic in which the Buddha was born, and is situated like a yam between a rock and the deep blue sea, and has an area of 156,000 sq km, give or take 500 sq km or so.

Applicants must be willing to make complete asses of themselves, and show a demonstrable ability to kick and/or lick hind quarters of the powers that be. No previous experience necessary, since the much-coveted position comes with complete on-the-job training that includes undercover work, sting operations and how not to get caught plagiarising.

Incumbent donkey is quitting with immediate effect after 22 years of yeoman’s service to the nation at large to enter politics and joining other jokers already there.

There is now such stiff competition from the clowns in government and in-House comedians that the Ass stands no chance against them with its feeble attempts at eliciting lame laughter in this space every week.

For proof of the hilarious slapstick show Nepal’s serial politicians offer citizens, just look at the way they outdid even themselves in the past week or so with the torrid love triangle between PKD, KPO and SBD. The bromance blossomed and it was clear that what we were witnessing was the hand of geniuses in tickling our nation’s collective funny bone.

- No court jester can vie with such professionalism. They had us in stitches. We laughed so hard we cried.
- That is why we are seeking a replacement Ass for 2023 onwards.
- QUALIFICATIONS:**
1. Post-holder should have customary long ears, must come with a lot of baggage, have endurance and stamina for abuse.
 2. Must be able to go hee-haw and have a posterior motive to deliver a back-kick without any warning.
 3. Amazing opportunities for career progression as a part of the illustrious Equidae family.
 4. Candidate must be homely, convent-educated teetotaler, fair-skinned vegetarian DV-eligible upper caste Ass who is full of him/her/themself.
 5. Age, gender if any, marital status, eating habits, lack of morals, incontinence and incompetence no bar.
 6. Should have stamina and endurance to write purportedly humorous columns with flair and aplomb and not be deterred by a complete lack of feedback from readers.
 7. Must be a rude dude Has-been Wannabe.
 8. Must be able to push the boundaries, including in the disputed Limpiyadhura and Susta regions.
 9. Must have a Diploma in Lamponing and a Bachelor of Arse in Sycophancy from an unrecognised university.
 10. Candidates need not possess any verbal, interpersonal and communication skills at all, but a criminal record will be an advantage.
 11. Horses and Mules are not eligible to apply.

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