

NEPALI Times

#877

22 - 28 September 2017

18 pages

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जय होस

Nepali Times wishes its readers and partners a joyful Dashain holiday. The paper will take its annual break next week. The next print edition is on **Friday, 6 October**. Follow us online wherever and whenever on: nepalitimes.com



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

SEPTEMBER FEST

Dasain probably has its origins in a proto-Hindu harvest festival, hence the priority given to food, family and festivities. The myths came later. The weather adds to the joyous air, the clouds have parted, there is a nip in the air, the hills are emerald green, and the mountains wear fresh new coats of snow. Together with our shared history and the Nepali language, Dasain is what binds Nepal together. The festival has transcended its religious antecedent to become a time for families and for the nation to unite in common celebration, and revive our collective hope for the future.

This year, Dasain was preceded by the third phase of local elections in Province 2 and will be followed by preparations for provincial and parliamentary elections in November and December. Many had expected turnout in the Tarai to be low because of the devastating floods, and its grudging acceptance by Madhes-based parties. The results are trickling in, but the 77% turnout shows the Tarai public is in favour of moving ahead. Since these were elections for local governments, it can also be a referendum in favour of autonomy.

From the results so far, in which the combined total of the Madhes-centric RJPN and FSPN, as well as the NC and the Maoists who say are for changes in the Constitution, means that voters in Province 2 have sent a strong message that they favour amendments. As expected, voters in the Tarai have told off the UML and its brand of nationalistic politics. The Maoists appear to have done well in the Highway Belt where there are larger pockets of mountain settlers.

The results therefore are a warning to Kathmandu not to mistake taking part in elections as a rejection of the demand for amendments.

However, the heavy turnout as well as the strong showing of the mainstream national parties, especially the Nepali Congress, is a sign that while voters of the Tarai may not be completely satisfied with the Constitution, they reject the politics of confrontation and have given a mandate to their leaders to fix things as we move along.

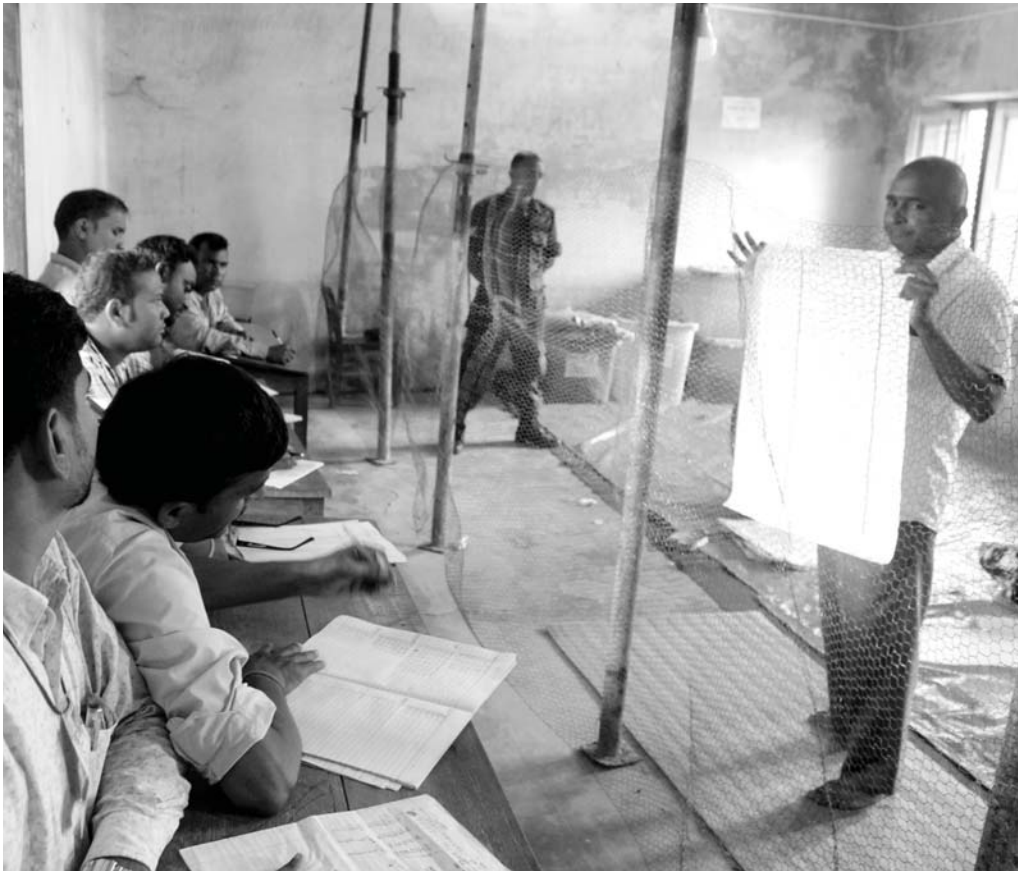
We are now finally nearing a two-

decade long political transition. The peace process has dragged on, and we waited years haggling over the kind of federalism, the names of provinces and their borders only to find out now that all the people wanted were jobs at home so they wouldn't have to migrate, affordable education and medical facilities, electricity and fuel, and to be left alone to pursue their own happiness.

Since we do not expect much from a government led by a fourth-time prime minister, we are not disappointed when he does not perform. A few eyebrows were raised last week when Prime Minister Deuba expanded his cabinet to 54 members, and when he added two more ministers this week people just yawned. The PMO has shown that it has nothing but contempt for the Constitution which mandates a maximum of 25-member government. It has violated the Election Code of Conduct, blatantly transferring and promoting civil servants, doling out funds and behaving as it is a law unto itself. Deuba's ministers are all out to rake it in while the going is good, as was seen by high profile scandals. Now, the prime minister is off to New York even as the three-party cartel passes bills on education and health that would be detrimental to the welfare of citizens. Newly-elected local governments have not yet been given the authority to run their villages and municipalities, and the government is planning to centralise taxation and cutting off their money supply.

Nepal's economic growth rate has been scaled down to 4.5% after this year's floods, but the structural problems with investment and job-creation have more to do with the collapse of the rule of law, corruption and impunity. Nepal's three-party syndicate has taken it upon itself to command our destiny, but it has proved itself incapable of thinking beyond tactical moves to outsmart rivals within their own parties, or in other parties.

For this Dasain, we can only hope that Nepal will muddle through despite its feckless and reckless rulers, and the coming elections will give the people the chance to vote in real change makers.



JYALAL SAH

Times.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



GREEN DASAIN

Dasain is a time for carnivorous bingeing, but let's add a lighter touch to the festival this season with Nepal's favourite veggie dishes. Join Sobhana Shrestha in her kitchen to prepare popular vegetable dishes that will be seen in Nepali homes across the world this Dasain. Try this at home.



COSTLY CUPPA

Nepali Times readers have sent feedback to the viral video of a Nepali tea shop owner threatening a British trekker for bargaining over the Rs150 she was charged for a glass of tea.

A sample of comments received:
I have seen a few crazy Nepalis over the years, but I have seen far more crazy tourists who act like self-righteous beggars. Tourists screaming for discounts at the bank counter when changing money, tourists touting waiters, tourists acting as if they own the place. I am actually surprised not more Nepalis working in the tourism service industry don't lose their minds. A cup of tea at sea level in my country costs about Rs350 up. This episode touches on fundamental ethical issues of tourism not being properly addressed by either incoming tourists and their sending agencies, nor the receiving operators in Nepal. Time to fix that is now. At a superficial level it begins with 'In Rome do as the Romans' and 'If you don't like it, leave it'. Key words will be 'knowledge of where you are going' and 'principles of ethical travel'.

Olav Myrholt

One thing that puzzles me about the video is why the British woman shared it with the media. Was it to expose how violent Nepalis are? If so, it has backfired badly and actually shows how callous and cowardly she is.

T Skinner

The British woman in the video is crazed. But so is the Nepali woman.
Rabi Basnet

BHUWON RATNA STHAPIT

Our hearts and thoughts go to his near and dear ones ('Bhuwon Ratna Sthapit, 63', Yuvaraj Shrestha, nepalitimes.com). Let us all salute him for the heroic and innovative work he has undertaken and recognise his research. He was a jewel in the crown of Nepal and the rest of the world.

Dinesh

FLAWED CONSTITUTION

Flawed editorial. ('Last but not the least', Editorial, #876) You can justify it however you want, but this Constitution is flawed. And Madhesi like me will keep on raising voice against it until amended. First: Only UML is against Constitution amendment, so if NC, Maoist, RJPN win, then people want Constitution to be amended. Second: Amendment for Hindi language is a media created hoax (to fulfil their vested interests), not a demand of Madhesi. Third: The Constitution set the ground rules for election. When the rules are unfair, the results are obvious. Period.

Anshuman

It is not clear whose demands these are for amendments to the Constitution. Demands of the local Madhesi parties or demands of the people of Madhes? Also a Madhesi is not a homogeneous entity, in terms of languages, caste, class, or religion.

K K Sharma

WHAT'S TRENDING



Kirtipur in slow motion

by Sebastian Wolligandt

Our multimedia package with drone footage of Kirtipur, the ancient town tucked away in a corner of Kathmandu Valley, was the most viewed last week. Go online to share a bird's-eye-view of the historical hilltop town, then alight for a street-level tour of its temples and eateries. This was also the most shared on Facebook and most visited online page last week.

Most reached and shared on Facebook
(10,258 people reached, 18 shares)

Most visited online page



Friends in deed

by Namrata Sharma

A field report from Banke on how women in a village without men didn't wait for the government to rebuild their flood-hit homes was our most popular on Twitter.

Most popular on Twitter
(52 retweets, 83 likes)

Last but not the least

Editorial

The content that generated most comments last week was the editorial on local elections in Province 2, which argued that the polls would be a referendum on the issues raised by Madhes-based parties. Some readers disagreed. Visit nepalitimes.com for the discussion.

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
GUEST EDITORIAL The checks and balances no longer work & politicians are just puppets in hands of Nepal's mafiocracy http://bit.ly/2xoQBKM

Airline Guy @GuyAirline
If bureaucrats refused to play ball, corrupt politicians & crony capitalists would be helpless. @nepalicaa could weed out the bad ones.

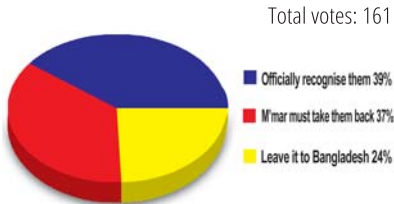
Nepali Times @nepalitimes
See for yourself how much Nepal has changed in the last six decades in a photo exhibition commemorating Toni Hagen. http://bit.ly/2ypfNPt

Kerry Lucinda Brown @moti_eats
A fitting tribute to the work of Toni Hagen @nepalitimes

Times

Weekly Internet Poll #877

Q. How should Nepal deal with the current wave of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar?



Weekly Internet Poll #878
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should Nepal reduce the number of annual holidays?

Times

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER  

Who teaches us democracy?

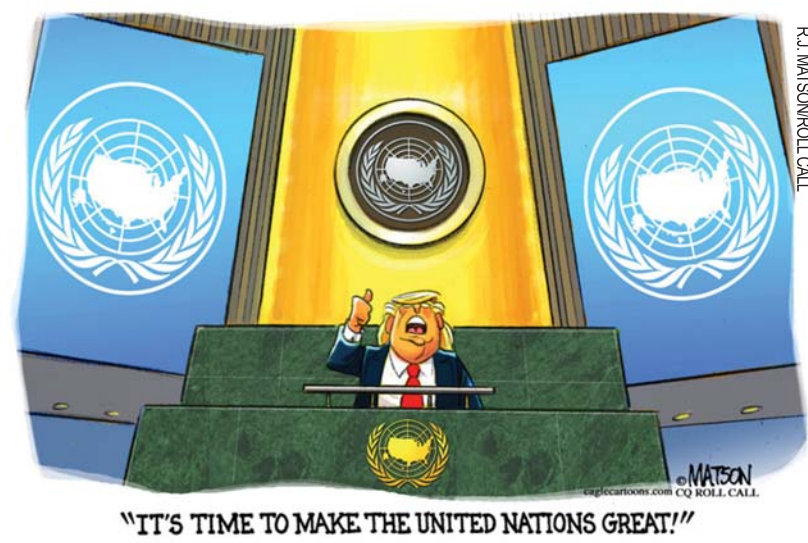
Obfuscation and hand-wringing will not help as we prepare to face the world

While at the United Nations Secretariat two-and-a-half decades ago, my work station was the press officer's desk some steps down to the left from the main podium from where the world leaders speak. If I were there this week when the American president came to address the General Assembly, I would have fallen off my chair.



ON THE WAY UP
Kanak Mani Dixit

Donald Trump, reading from script rather than adlibbing, which made his message all the more ominous, threatened to blow North Korea off the map. For a country that dropped bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, even the willingness to talk of a strike that would kill millions was shocking. The United States is saddled with a president who is a drag on a country that has defined global relations since the beginning of the 20th century. Under Trump, the United States is in rapid deceleration, unable to address critical issues confronting the planet: climate change, denuclearisation, ending hunger, preventing wars and fighting intolerance. The loss of America's credibility must hit all its



embassies around the world. On Wednesday, Ambassador to Nepal Alaina B Teplitz wrote an op-ed in *Republica* titled 'Cleaning Up Government', flagging the corruption that is rapidly devastating the polity. The Ambassador could have gone deeper than the call to arms against corruption, but Trump's shadow loomed over the commentary, as it looms over pretty much everything America does these days. Donald Trump is vain, petulant and reckless, and his speech from the UN rostrum brought out the worst in him. His isolationist diatribe calling for unrestrained sovereignty was not even logical, as it would allow despots of powerful countries to

use the same argument. Trump is a businessman who worked the weaknesses of the US regulatory regime rather than display entrepreneurial genius – hardly the kind of person on whose behalf an ambassador would be making the call to end corruption in Nepal. We should certainly heed Ambassador Teplitz's note of caution at a time when corruption has become endemic. But who will say that Nepalis are unaware of the problem, as exemplified in the successful fight against the agenda of Lokman Singh Karki, Dr Govinda KC's crusade, the writings of journalist Hari Bahadur Thapa (including his just-released book on corruption in Nepal *Rajga*), and the slew of recent investigative

reports in the media? Rather than make a generic call against corruption, the question to ask is: what is it that ails the polity so that these media exposes only seem to further embolden the politico-bureaucratic-mafiosi nexus. We have to be corruption free not because anyone else tells us that it is important. We have to be a corruption-less society because it is important for growth, equity and social justice. Likewise, we need democracy not because other democracies tell us to, but because Nepalis know it is good out of our own understanding and lived experience: the people's steadfastness in overcoming the Great Earthquake, the Great Blockade, the shackles in implementation of the new Constitution, and the attempted sabotage of the local elections by pushing them into three phases. Finally, the people of Province 2 made it to elections with 77% turnout, took matters into their own hands, and put their stamp of approval on local government as proposed by the Constitution. No one should think she/he needs to show Nepal the way, though the occasional reminder of higher philosophical principle and rationale is not a bad idea as long as it is made with humility, without trans-global superiority. In this post-development world there will be fewer 'diplo-

donors' to constantly provide formats and projects, and report us to the world. It is time for local values to define Nepal's international projection. The world is the poorer for not knowing the socio-political churning this society is undergoing, nor what can be learned from Nepal. Nepal's diplomatic posture of these past two decades has been to stand still as if no one will notice we are there, and successive foreign ministers have been bound by obeisance to the Cult of Obfuscation and Hand-wringing. In future, Nepal should not have to meekly take the advice of plenipotentiaries about the delights of democracy. With the Constitution in the bag and various elections conducted, the next big fight is to prepare for corruption-free governance. And when push comes to shove, and as the needs of geopolitics trump the values of good governance, you can be sure there will be no ambassador standing by the side as we confront the carpetbaggers and power brokers. For now, I only wish that Nepali diplomacy had the gumption to support Qatar as it resists the Saudi-led blockade, and to critique Aung San Suu Kyi while vocally supporting Bangladesh as the country having to host the outflow of Rohingya people. 🇳🇵

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Forecast falls

Closer attention to sequencing political, financial and administrative decentralisation will be key as Nepal prepares to shift from a unitary to a federal system of government, says the World Bank in its latest Nepal Development Update. Economic growth will be lower than expected due to the floods that affected over a third of the country in August, and will average 4.5% over the next two fiscal years.

Note 8 arrives

Samsung Electronics has launched Galaxy Note 8 in Nepal. The phone has a 6.3-inch Quad HD+ Super AMOLED infinity display, enhanced S Pen, and dual camera with dual optical image stabilisation. Galaxy Note 8 is priced at Rs102,990 and will be available from 10 October.

Khukri cocktails

Nischal Gurung, internationally famous mixologist recently introduced Khukri Cocktails by Khukri XXX Rum during an exclusive musical event in Kathmandu this week.

Qatar's chauffeur

Qatar Airways has launched global chauffeur service under which all passengers can choose from a wide range of high-end vehicles to take them to and from their chosen airport. The new service can be booked for a fee online through qatarairways.com and through the Qatar Airways app

Business with Aaron'. Ayçi highlighted the airlines' growth and service improvements as well as Turkey's economic growth prospects.

prabhu BANK

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Run like hell

The Ass has been reminded that this week's Dasain issue of the paper carries the 900th edition of this column. I didn't know anyone was counting. All I can say is that time p-asses really quick around here.

It is therefore incumbent upon yours sincerely to mark this milestone with the solemnity it deserves, because the Editor has decided to sell his soul to Mammon and sacrificed the donkey's designated space on the back side and squeezed the Ass

into one of these inside pages. I will therefore not beat around the burning bush indulging in the usual idle banter, frivolous chitchat, supposedly witty repartees, innuendos about the Ministry of Interior Decoration, or allegedly humorous asides about the posterior body parts of those currently holding the highest office in the land.

No, today we shall tackle deadly serious national issues so that we can roll up our loins and gird our sleeves to ensure

that Fedex Elections are held as scheduled in November. We should doubly redouble our efforts to pooh-pooah a new Constitution that suits the glorious Nepali mud. It protects everyone's equal right in our democracy to pillage and plunder, which is why the Prime Minister was not satisfied with 54 ministerial berths, and last week gave birth to two more out of immaculate conception.

Some of us have fond memories of the Punchayat, when there was iron discipline and obedience throughout the land, the Jayanagar-Janakpur train was still getting derailed, momos

were all non-veg, and although political freedom was curtailed, we were free to drink and drive. Some of you will find it hard to remember those days because as a matter of fact, and for all intents and purposes, you may not have been born as yet. Corruption then was not as pervasive as it is today and was carefully centralised.

But enough of this nostalgia, there is too much talk, we need action. "Your Excellencies, Dishonoured Ministers, Outlawed Parties and In-Laws in the Cabinet, tax officials out on bail, sacked head of the Nepal Oil Corruption, friends and foes, gentlemen and the lady at the

back who is getting ready to hurl a rotten egg in the general direction of the podium.

The title of my talk today is 'The Present Predicament and How to Get Out of It'. Here is what you do if you want a way out: get up slowly without anyone noticing, walk in single file down the aisle as unobtrusively as possible towards doors marked 'Exit' of which there are two in the front and two at the back. When you are outside, run like hell. Thank you for your attention, and see you all on the outside."



The Ass



*Wishing you and your family a
Happy Vijaya Dashami &
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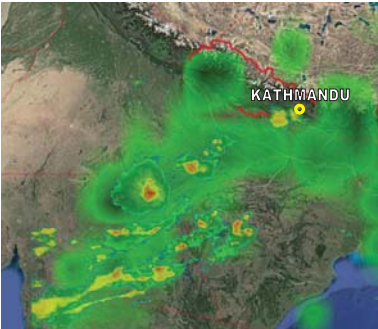
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An enormous low pressure front has wafted in from the Bay of Bengal taking advantage of a weakened jet stream and the monsoon to reassert itself. It has brought copious amounts of rain to North India and Central Nepal. The clouds will clear by Saturday, but we are still looking at a somewhat wet weekend with the sun peeping out from time to time. We may have to wait till early next week for more Dasain type weather. Trekkers should expect light snow on the high passes, with lots of wind and afternoon buildup.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26° 18°	28° 18°	28° 19°



Shailee on top of the world again

BHRIKUTI RAI
in NEW YORK

“Hello, I am short.” Shailee Basnet adjusts the microphone to suit her height as she begins her stand-up routine at the Gotham Comedy Club in New York on Wednesday night. Even before she starts her act, the audience is in stitches.

Poking self-deprecating fun at her diminutive stature goes down well: after that the audience is eating out of Basnet’s hands. The Nepali ex-journalist has climbed Mt Everest and the highest mountains on four continents, and here in Manhattan she is on top of the world again.

This is her second show in New York this month and she is a lot more confident delivering punchlines about Trump, Kim Jong Un and the cross-cultural travails of being married to a white guy (avid mountain biker and water conservationist Tyler McMohan).

Basnet has been doing the rounds of the comedy circuit with shows at venues including the Broadway Comedy Club and here at the Gotham Comedy Club, which has hosted celebrities like Jerry Seinfeld and Chris Rock. The 34-year-old is used to the limelight: she was a reporter at *Himal Khabarpatrika* and *Nepali Times* when she joined an all-women Nepali expedition that climbed Mt Everest in 2008.

“I couldn’t sleep the night before we set out, all I could think was about finally seizing the opportunity to explore the outdoors,” she remembers.

But the ‘seven sisters’ did not stop at Mt Everest, they formed the Everest Women Seven Summit team



BHRIKUTI RAI

to climb the highest mountains on all seven continents. Their last stop was Mount Vinson in Antarctica in December 2014. Since then, the team has been training young women survivors of trafficking in Nepal to earn their living as trekking guides.

Basnet grew up in Kathmandu enjoying slapstick Bollywood comedy and doing caricatures, but never

knew about stand-up as an art form.

“After watching [Jerry] Seinfeld, Ellen [DeGeneres], Louis CK and Russell Peters on YouTube, I became fascinated and wanted to try stand-up too,” she recalls. She organised several shows in Kathmandu, including one with Manoj Gajurel. This experience paid off when she started performing in the US for the first time a few

years ago.

It is a challenge performing in a place with a different sense of humour, Basnet has found. Jokes that work in Nepal fall flat here. Her satire on political corruption in the US and Nepal doesn’t get the same laughs as in Kathmandu.

“Maybe the cultural translation doesn’t come across, so I stick to what has worked in New York so far,” she said, testing Trump and China jokes with friends before the show.

One thing is the same in Kathmandu or Manhattan: pre-performance jitters. “I can’t sleep the night before and these under-eye circles become even more pronounced,” she says, dabbing a concealer. “Scaling mountains made me stronger physically and mentally, but conquering the anxiety of a stage performance takes a different kind of courage altogether.”

Basnet explains: “Every step of the way to the summit is calculated: you have to prepare for the worst, but in comedy you have no control over how people will react.

Tonight it worked brilliantly. After her set, Basnet is ambushed by a group of cheering women as she makes her way back to the dressing room.

One of them is Megha Lama, a student in New York, who tells us: “Being on stage in front of such a diverse audience is not easy, so watching a Nepali woman on stage in Gotham is absolutely inspiring.”

Basnet herself is ecstatic. “This is amazing,” she says. “No wonder getting up there on stage is so addictive.”

What’s next? She is hoping to work on a movie script, and is returning to Nepal later this month to do more shows, for which she hopes to be paid: “After New York, it’s about time they did, right?” 🇳🇵

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KIRTIPIR WITH THE BACKDROP OF LANGTANG, AND BHAKTAPUR SURROUNDED BY RICE FIELDS, IN THE 1950S



TONI HAGEN AND FAMILY, INCLUDING DAUGHTER KATRYN, ON HATTIBAN IN THE 1950S



THE WIDE AND CLEAN BAGMATI DURING THE MONSOON, FROM THE THAPATHALI BRIDGE

HAG KATHM

On the 100th birth anniversary of the Swiss geologist and development activist Toni Hagen, his daughter Katryn, together with the Nepal Heritage Society, has put up a retrospective of photographs of Nepal in the 1950s at the Nepal Art Council. See for yourself how much the country has been transformed in the last six decades. Many of the changes are for the better, but there is also a sense of loss of Nepal's precious natural and cultural heritage.

Toni Hagen was keenly aware of how 'development' can change society, and tried to warn Nepal's rulers and donors about minimising the environmental and societal impacts of modernisation. He envisaged an electric train line running east-west along the plains, and north-south feeder roads that followed the main rivers to the mid-hills and mountains.

For remote areas, he recommended a network of cargo and passenger cable cars. All this would be powered by electricity, to be generated from the many sites he mapped out in great detail.

He identified Kulekhani as a feasible location for a hydropower dam, and even started a road to the site from Kathmandu, but it was abandoned by the government under pressure to build the Tribhuvan Highway. Kulekhani was finally built in the 1980s, while Hagen's plans for a cascade of high-pressure plants on the Karnali bends has still not been realised 60 years later.

Hagen came to Nepal in 1951 as one of the first technical experts sent by the just-established United Nations. The Ranas were still in power, and he saw many regime changes in the lifetime he consecrated to Nepal. As a geologist, he was first interested in the orogenesis of the Himalaya, and to find minerals that could propel Nepal's economic growth. But it was evident to Hagen after he traversed 14,000km of Nepal on foot over 12 years that it wasn't gold and oil that would lift Nepal up, but water.

"My father worked very hard: after a day of finding rocks and fossils, he would be up till late at night in his tent documenting and drawing them," remembers Katryn. His detailed geological map of Nepal still hangs today on the wall of the Department of Mines.

Says Katryn: "My father became less and less interested in rocks and more and more in people." That is evident in the final report he prepared for Nepal's development



THE ASHOKA STUPA AT LAGANKHEL IS TODAY SURROUNDED BY BUILDINGS



PASHUPATI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS FROM THE AIR IN THE 1950'S



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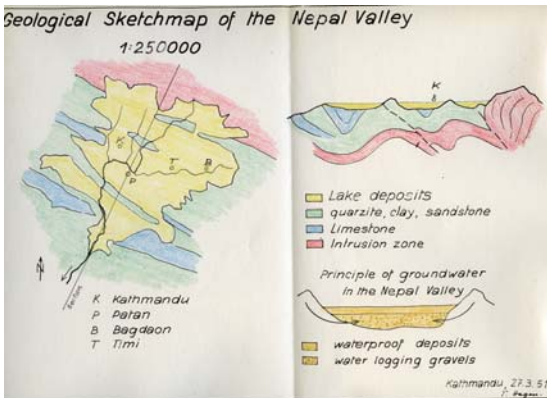
in 1962, in which he identified the most pressing need of Nepalis as connectivity: bridges and trails. Electricity and roads could come later.

It is clear from the exhibition that everything has changed in the last 60 years except the shape of the mountains. But even here, we can see that Machapuchre and other peaks had a lot more snow on them then. Today, the snowline has risen and the glaciers have receded and shrunk dramatically.

Toni Hagen introduced Nepal to the world with his picture book, *Nepal: A Kingdom in the Himalayas* in 1962. It has gone into several reprints including a Nepali edition. Many of the photos in the exhibition are from this book,



FARMERS PLOUGHING FIELDS WHERE TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY IS LOCATED TODAY, LOOKING NORTH AT SWAYAMBHU AND GANESH HIMAL



1950'S, AND HAGEN'S SKETCH OF THE GEOLOGY OF KATHMANDU VALLEY



GAUCHAR AIRPORT WITH DC-3'S PARKED ON THE GRASS, AND KATHMANDU VALLEY AS SEEN LOOKING WEST FROM SANGA



but Katryn Hagen has selected others from the family's archive. In this centrefold, we bring you some of Hagen's photographs of Kathmandu Valley that are in the exhibition. They show clearly the city's urban spread, and how fertile terrace farms have been replaced by houses. However, one also sees that due to community forestry, denuded mountains on the Valley's rim are now heavily forested.

Only by looking back at our past can we chart our future. And for that, Nepal may have to finally sort out its present. 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit



KATRYN HAGEN WITH SWISS AMBASSADOR JORG FRIEDEN AT EXHIBITION

**100 Years of Toni Hagen
Photographic Exhibition**

Till Sunday 24 September, 10AM-5PM

Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal

(01) 4220735

Entrance free



THE BAGMATI BELOW CHOBHAR REFLECTING THE BLUE SKY, WITH NAGARJUN HILL AND GANESH HIMAL IN THE BACKGROUND

EVENTS

MUSIC

DINING

GETAWAY



Dasain

The longest and biggest festival in Nepal, Dasain is celebrated by worshipping goddess Durga in all her manifestations. The 15-day festival started on 21 September, locally known as Ghatasthapana.

27 September, Fulpati: Seventh day of Dasain on which *fulpati* (jamara, different types of flowers and banana stalks) is brought to Kathmandu from Gorkha. Generally, families take *fulpati* to their prayer rooms.

28 September, Maha Astami: A day dedicated to the worship of Kali, a demonic avatar of Goddess Durga.

29 and 30 September, Maha Nawami and Dashami: Marks the victory of goddess Durga over the demon. The Taleju temple at Hanuman Dhoka is opened for the public only once a year, on this day. Factories, machinery and vehicles are worshipped. People receive tika, jamara and blessings from their elders.

5 October, Kojagrat Purnima: Tika giving goes on till this day, which marks the end of Dasain.

Rock climbing,

Explore the strength in you and try rock climbing organised by Astrek Climbing Wall. The package includes lunch, a bottle of water, and climbing and safety gear. No previous experience required.
Every Saturday, 8am-5pm, Rs5,500 per person, (01) 4419265, 9841313561, www.facebook.com/astrek.climbing



100 years of Toni Hagen,

Don't miss this opportunity to see Nepal through the eyes of Toni Hagen in an exhibition of his works marking 100 years after his birth anniversary.
16-24 September, 10am-5pm, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, (01) 4220735

Japanese art,

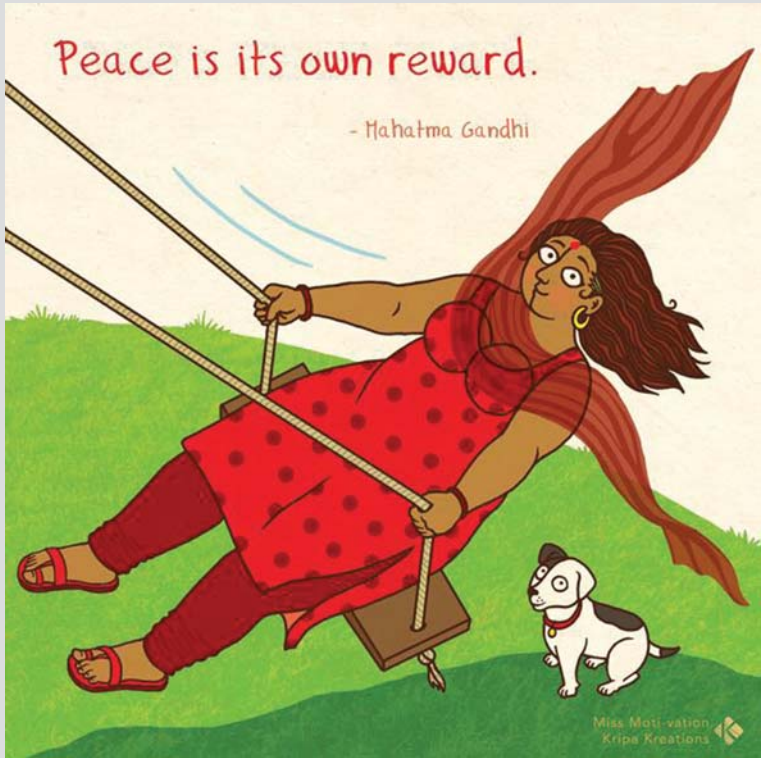
Visit this exhibition to view some of the finest paintings by Japanese artists Masae Suzuki and Setsuko Suzuki.
18-27 September, 11am-5pm, 12-5pm (Saturdays), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Kathmandu, (01) 4218048, (01) 4433930

Guitar workshop,

Register to participate in a free guitar workshop by famous Polish teacher Jacek Chmiel.
6 October, 5pm onwards, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Sanepa, Free, (01) 5013554, 9813556945, info@katijazz.com.np

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



Live with Bipul,

Don't miss this live performance by your favorite singer Bipul Chhetri. Tickets available at BaseCamp (Arun Thapa Chok), Durbar (Durbarmarg) and Calm (Tangal).
14 October, 5pm, Hotel Annapurna, Durbarmarg, Rs2,000, Rs 1,500 (pre sale), 9841226397, 9801111406, 9801057609

The Wayfarers,

Relive memories with duo The Wayfarer performing some of the greatest hits of Eric Clapton and The Beatles.
22 September, 6:30-10pm, Social Café, Gairidhara, (01) 4427370

Musical Dasain,

Unwind your weekend by joining singer Sanjeev Singh and The Dexterous band for a musical Dasain celebration.
22 September, 6:30-10:30pm, Genesis Café, Panipokhari, Rs1,000, 9841466304, info@genesiscave.com.np



Mongolian Heart,

Raju Lama and his band Mongolian Heart are back to rock the stage.
23 September, 6-11pm, Trisara, Lazimpat, (01) 4410200, www.trisara.restaurant@gmail.com

OUR PICK



YETI OBHIJAAN

Opens in Kathmandu on 22 September

This snowy, adventure-filled thriller, based on Sunil Gangopadhyaya's novel *Terror On The Mountain Peak*, will keep you on the edge of your seat as it follows the quest of fictional adventurer Kakubabu to uncover the mountain-roaming yeti. The stunning and deceptively dangerous Himalayas provide the backdrop for the film, directed by award-winner Srijit Mukherjee.



Momo mania,

Exotic varieties of vegetarian and non-vegetarian momos with specialties from Shanghai.
18 September onwards, 3-7pm, The Lounge, Hyatt Hotel, Baudha, a la carte menu, (01) 5171234

Embassy,

Positioned at Lajimpat's embassy-laden lane but away from the hustle and bustle of the main road, this restaurant has a menu with Nepali, Indian, Italian, Thai and Japanese dishes on offer.
Lajimpat, (01) 4424040



Café Jireh,

Escape the hustle-bustle of the city and enjoy firewood pizza.
Bhaisipati, (01) 5592102

Hello Café,

Enjoy Korean, continental and Italian dishes with a magnificent view of Boudha stupa and free wifi. Open throughout Dasain.
Boudha, (01) 4916218

Falcha,

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Last Friday Bar & Grill,

Indian cuisine, anyone? Tip: try the kabab. Lazimpat, (01) 4002170



Himalayan Java,

This Thamel establishment, well known for its coffee, serves excellent sandwiches too.
Tridevi Marg, 4422519

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Lakeside Pokhara, (61) 462908, 9851059096

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Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818

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Rupakot Resort,

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Maidan-6, Rupakot, Kaski, (61) 622660 / (01) 4004687 / 9856038043, www.rupakotresort.com

Global Dasain

Two reports on how festival time is celebrated by Nepalis abroad and foreigners in Nepal

Dasain, the festival that unites Nepalis all over the world, is upon us. With about 3.5 million Nepalis living outside Nepal, it is also the season when families who cannot physically get together make a special effort to be in touch through social media. There are an estimated 60,000 Nepalis in the United States alone, and because it is not a holiday here most Nepalis have to juggle festivities with their busy schedules.

Says Kusum Pradhan of Iowa City (pictured at left, right): “I try my best to follow our culture, but the difference with celebrating in Nepal is to get time off from school and work.”

Whatever precious time is set aside for Dasain is used to the fullest by Nepalis abroad. Most have to wait for the weekend to dress up, grow *jamara*, put *tika* and re-enact what they would do back home.

In Cincinnati, IT professional Suraj Adhikari says Nepalis use a weekend close to Dasain to gather. Another organisation in Iowa uses the occasion to hold its annual blood drive in Des Moines.

Born in Kathmandu but raised in America, Alpesh Chapagai is a high school senior in the suburbs of Chicago. Feeling a disconnect from his heritage, he uses Dasain to reconnect with his Nepali-American identity.

“The experience of Dasain events has left an indelible mark on my consciousness about my Nepali cultural identity,” Chapagai told *Nepali Times*.

Fond Dasain memories of flying kites and playing cards have inspired Chapagai

to share his Nepali heritage with his peers. “In future I will invite non-Nepali friends to these events so they also learn about Nepali-American culture,” he adds.

Not everyone is making that effort. Whether they are recent diversity visa arrivals, students or undocumented workers, life is just too hectic and Nepal



too far away to make the connection.

Despite the distance, Dasain holds a special meaning in the hearts of Nepalis across the world. Here in the US, some are making an extra effort to revive the joys of being with family and friends.

Chapagai sums it up: “Dasain is important because it is an annual reminder for me and other Nepalis that we are still connected to the traditions of our forebears back in Nepal.”

Shawn Thacker in Iowa City

The pile of shoes by the front door kept growing outside the house of Jennie Sheldon’s ‘Ama’ during Dasain, as relatives came to Kathmandu in great numbers to celebrate the 15-day festival. She had arrived just weeks before, in the fall of 1983, a young American commuting on bicycle to work as an intern at an erosion-control project. She recalls most the generosity of her hosts, who invited her to pass the holiday with them.

“It was a big family event,” Sheldon recalls. “So I felt so lucky to be there with them.”

Dasain offers Nepalis abundant time to spend with family members and in some cases, return to their hometowns.

Expatriates in Nepal, however, spend the festival in a range of destinations: from domestic to international locations and from trekking to chilling out at home. The lucky ones get to celebrate Dasain with Nepali friends.

Sheldon remembers well the annual traditions, such as the appearance of temporary swings made of bamboo above ridge lines, the kite-flying, and the giving of the tika on the 10th day of the festival. But she most vividly recalls,

“overwhelmingly, their generosity of including us”.

She says the animal sacrifices were at first difficult to witness, but remembers watching a goat sacrifice in which water was sprayed until the animal shook, which was taken as a sign that it was submitting to sacrifice its life. She says: “For a newly arrived westerner, animal sacrifices were hard to understand, but at some level, I felt like it was celebrating life by offering life.”

Marty Logan, a Canadian who married into a Nepali family in 2003, has become the designated driver when the family goes to visit relatives around the Kathmandu Valley during Dasain. After 14 years, he says he has learned to pace himself during the week of “greeting and eating”. This year, however, he plans to leave the driving to someone else: the family is going to Delhi for the holiday.

Josh Ryan, an Australian freelance journalist, is about to spend his third Dasain in Nepal. Last year, he celebrated the entire holiday with his Nepali fiancée’s family. This year, he is getting married and celebrating afterwards with a family gathering in Pokhara. He will spend the remaining days of Dasain in Kathmandu, where his Nepali family’s relatives and friends typically come to visit his wife’s grandfather.

“Getting involved with a family is the best way to experience Dasain, and of course being part of one is even better,” Ryan told *Nepali Times*. “It’s very much a family time. There are so many practices that have been followed for years and years and years.”

Julia Thomas

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Jeddah	NPR 44,076	NPR 132,015
Moscow	NPR 45,448	NPR 169,891
Prague	NPR 52,851	NPR 229,417
Entebbe	NPR 43,592	NPR 161,091
Amman	NPR 38,279	NPR 138,184

flydubai

This Dasain, vegetate

Add a lighter touch to your festival this season with Nepal’s favourite veggie dishes

SONIA AWALE

Dasain is a time for carnivorous bingeing, but the festival could also be the time to introduce your taste buds to the rich variety of vegetables in Nepal.

Many of the veggies that have medicinal properties and are indigenous to the country don’t even have English names, and are in full display in the market: *niuro*, *jimbu*, *tama*, *tusa*, *sisnu*, *thotne*. It seems as if Nepal’s will eat anything with chlorophyll in it, even nettles.

The easy availability of fresh vegetables also makes it possible to cook the Dasain mutton and chicken curry with veggie ingredients. In fact, Nepal’s are so fond of vegetables that some of the more popular dishes mix the meat with cauliflower, potatoes or peas.



Nepali cuisine can be distinguished from what is described as ‘North Indian’ fare by its reduced use of spices and oil, and indigenous dishes like *alu tama*, *kwati*, *gundruk bhatmas*, *maseura* and spices like *jimbu* and *timur*. Many of these vegetarian dishes can be seen in Nepali homes across the world this Dasain.



“Let’s not forget to eat plenty of green vegetables and lentils while also enjoying the

festival,” advises nutritionist Aruna Uprety. “These can easily be your side dish and snack option so that your food intake over the festival is balanced.”

Many vegetables, lentils and spices act as herbs, have medicinal value and are rich in vitamins, minerals and fibre.

“Some vegetables are rich in iron, folates and magnesium, while others are rich in vitamins K, C and A. For instance, spinach contains vitamin K, C, lutein and

potassium. Broccoli contains carbs, protein and fibre, among others,” explains natural resource expert Bhawana Upadhyay (*see adjoining piece, right*).

Black dal, probably the most nutritious of the pulse varieties, is rich in fibre, magnesium, iron, protein, calcium and potassium, and is also used in many Ayurvedic medicines to improve



digestion, balance cholesterol and reduce inflammation. It is recommended for diabetes patients and those with cardiovascular ailments. This dal is cooked in an iron vessel, giving it a distinctive black colour because some of the metal seeps into the food. Those who cook black dal in pressure cookers add a lump of wrought iron to give it that traditional flavour.

Bitter gourd is an acquired taste for many, but it is a popular vegetable and pickle in Nepali cuisine. It is rich in



vitamin C and A, antioxidants and essential minerals and other micronutrients. The vegetable is actually an ingredient in traditional Ayurvedic medicine, used to treat a whole range of digestive and autoimmune diseases.

Coriander is also an antioxidant herb. It can be used for joint pains, digestive problems and to treat toothache and measles while doubling as a spice to add flavour to any delicacy on the Dasain



menu. Even wild fiddlehead fern is therapeutic. It’s used to treat cancer, anemia and eye ailments, cure migraines and reduce bone disorders. It is low in calories and rich in vitamins, minerals, riboflavin and iron.

Asparagus, nettles, okra, zucchini, pumpkin and mustard greens are other vegetables with medicinal properties



Mom’s kitchen

Nepali vegetarian cuisine to serve six

Kalo dal

Ingredients: Black pulse, salt, ginger, turmeric, *jimbu* and mustard oil

Put one teacup full of split black lentils in a pressure cooker and add 6 glasses of water, depending on the texture preferred. Add a teaspoon of salt, a pinch of turmeric and half-an-inch of ginger. Put the lid on and cook over low heat for 30 minutes (whistle at 3 times). Meanwhile, heat oil and fry *jimbu* in a pan. Once the black lentil is cooked, drop the *jimbu* in oil into the dal. The black dal is ready to mix with rice.



Gundruk bhatmas

Ingredients: Fermented vegetable (*gundruk*), soybean (*bhatmas*), *lapsi* or lemon, tomato, mustard oil, salt, roasted chilli, garlic, ginger

Roast dried gundruk and soybean separately, and while it cools take 2-3 roasted red chillis, 4 cloves of garlic, half-an-inch of ginger and a half-teaspoon of salt, and grind into a paste. Add the soybean, then the crispy *gundruk*, and even *maseura* if you like into the mix, and crush lightly. Bring in chopped tomato and squeeze half a lemon or a few *lapsis* into it. Add one teaspoon mustard oil and marinate the ingredients. Boil everything until the distinctive aroma of *gundruk ko jhol* wafts up and the soybeans are cooked.



Alu tama

Ingredients: Potato, fermented bamboo shoots (*tama*), radish, long bean, coriander, onion, tomato, roasted chilli, cumin, garlic, ginger, turmeric, mustard oil, salt, bay leaves (*tej pat*)

Make a paste of 2-3 roasted red chillis, a teaspoon of salt, 4-5 cloves of garlic, half-an-inch of ginger and a quarter teaspoon of cumin.

Heat two teaspoons of oil and fry fermented bamboo shoots, take them out of pan. Add 2-3 bay leaves (*tej pat*), followed by a pinch of turmeric. Sauté chopped onion and tomatoes in the mix and then add the spice paste made earlier. Add chopped potatoes, long beans and radish and fry for 15 minutes. Add the fried bamboo shoots and half-a-cup of water. Pressure cook for six whistles. Sprinkle coriander before serving.

Sonia Awale

Alu gravy

Ingredients: Potatoes, onion, tomato, bay leaf (*tej pat*), coriander, fenugreek, mustard oil, salt, turmeric, roasted red chilli, garlic, ginger, cumin

Clean 7-8 potatoes, put them in a pressure cooker and leave to boil (whistle 2-3 times). Take roasted red chilli, a half-teaspoon cumin, 4-5 cloves of garlic, half-a-thumb sized ginger, and grind them all, add water

and mix well. Once potatoes are boiled, let them cool, peel and slice.

Heat oil in pan. Fry a half-teaspoon of fenugreek until it’s dark brown and add 2-3 bay leaves (*tej pat*) until it is brownish-green. Add a pinch of turmeric, followed by chopped onions and tomatoes and sauté it. Then add the spice paste made earlier and boil for 5-6 minutes. Add one and a half teaspoon of salt and the chopped potatoes and leave it to boil for another 20 minutes. Add chopped coriander for the flavour and presentation at the end.



Join Sobhana Shrestha in her kitchen as she prepares some of the recommended popular vegetable dishes to add a green touch to your Dasain. Try this at home.



Eating green

available fresh in the market. The only danger is that vegetables bought in city markets can have pesticide residue.

As in the rest of the world, an affluent urban lifestyle means that meat intake is rising. Senior cardiologist Prakash Regmi says that in the past decade he has seen a five-fold increase in heart and chronic diseases in his Kathmandu clinic: “Our dietary habits now mean increased consumption of junk food, but lowered intake of fresh vegetables, fruits and pulses, and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle.”

Public health experts advise moderate meat intake, and to be wary of the antibiotic and hormone content of industrial poultry. Meat should not be refrigerated for too long, and its preparation should use oil and salt sparingly.

While the scientific debate about whether the digestive tracts of human beings are designed for meat or vegetables will drag on, the question isn't an either or, but about eating meat in moderation, not overindulging and supplementing festival feasts with lots of vegetables. 🍅

BHAWANA UPADHYAY
in POKHARA

Our 8-year-old girl grumbled as we bought fiddleheaded fern and bamboo shoots at a vegetable vendor in front of Tal Barahi temple, Pokhara. I grew up helping my mother tend vegetables and herbs in our backyard. My daughter has not had that opportunity yet.

During our stay in Vietnam, I got a chance to learn more about fresh vegetables grown by women in the highlands. Some I had never seen before, others were more familiar: tapioca, cassava leaves, banana blossoms, creepers of chayote, cow peas, sweet potatoes, leafy brassica, unfolded cabbage, taro leaves, water cress and many more.

These women are not just involved in growing those vegetables, but had found a niche market where, because of their rarity, the vegetables fetched higher prices. The women were being helped by an Australian-supported initiative with the Vietnam Women's Union to revive indigenous vegetables to generate cash income and address

micronutrient deficiency in the interior.

Back in 2007, during an Oxfam field visit to Dailekh in western Nepal, I was surprised to not find any green leafy vegetables in the food served at a local hotel. Things have not changed much. Often it is still rice, dal, potato gravy and fermented pickle for vegetarians, and meat as an additional item for non-vegetarians.

Nepal is blessed with an ideal climate range for various types of traditional and new vegetables: these have not been tapped fully. In fact, nutritious traditional greens are being replaced by meat and other items. Although there is growing self-sufficiency, Nepal imports Rs3 billion worth of vegetables from India every year. We produce 2.8 million tons of vegetables annually of which more than 60% is grown to be sold. It has been noted that the limited production is due to the lack of improved seeds and low investment in research and development of both hybrid and traditional vegetables.

Another challenge for Nepal's vegetable

farmers is low productivity due to poor inputs. The Feed the Future program supported by the US government is helping farmers grow high-value and nutrient-rich vegetables, among other crops. It reports that the gross margin of vegetables increased by 161% in its working areas in 2014. Better techniques and practices led to a 91% increase in vegetable yield. The Nepal government's role would be to emulate the Vietnam model to link such programs to improved nutrition while ensuring sustainability.

Given the demand for fresh vegetables in Nepal, this could be a lucrative cash crop to engage women and youth in income generation on rural farms. We all need vitamins and the other essential micronutrients found in vegetables for our health. But first, I will have to convince my daughter to start eating fiddleheaded fern and bamboo shoots.

Bhawana Upadhyay writes on natural resource management and sustainable development issues.

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The Handmaid's Tale

Having just given a glowing review to *Big Little Lies* in last week's column, I almost feel like I should eat my words. At the time I was only part-way through the spectacularly intense 10-part series *The Handmaid's Tale*, and I was somewhat ambivalent about continuing, considering how upsetting it was, even as it was



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

brilliant, in its realisation of a beloved, seminal novel by one of the greatest living novelists of our time: Canadian, Margaret Atwood. Now I feel alarmed at the idea that I might have discontinued watching something that has change my life.

I read *The Handmaid's Tale* (published in 1985) when I was in school, more as a thriller than as an indictment of the existing misogyny in the world. Watching it today, in a supposedly post-feminist world where inequality still exists at

every level, *The Handmaid's Tale* is painfully close to the heart at a time when women are still subjugated and treated as breeding cattle in some parts of the world but also demeaned, harassed and casually regarded as unequal despite our progress as a human race.

Set in a (not so) future post-war United States, Gilead, as it is called by its rabid extreme-right religious leaders, is what emerges after the world produces so much toxic waste that fertility (apparently the most sacred thing in the world is not compassion and kindness but procreation) is affected. The leaders of Gilead attack the government and take over the US. Most people with sense have fled before the real horror starts, unfortunately June Osborne (the phenomenal Elisabeth Moss) and her husband and little daughter literally just miss the boat to Canada: a safe haven for millions of refugees.

What follows after her capture, the shooting of her husband and forced separation from her child is a diabolical belittling of June's very identity

by a system that only cares for the continuation of the human race, motivated by a righteousness that is frightening to watch.

Further elaboration will take away from the gravity of this series, and while it may sound grim, it is also a superbly taut thriller, one where the heroines and heroes are unexpected and black humour seeps through the grey, making us grin elatedly despite our cracked hearts.

The Handmaid's Tale is a sublime, sometimes nightmarish work of art, unlike any other I have seen before. It will stick in your mind, the characters will lodge themselves in your being as you watch them flail in the face of utter hopelessness, recover, and walk forward, bravely fighting the grossest of prejudices.

There are many hard lessons here, but also moments of beauty. The series has been renewed for a second season, one that I hope will somehow compare to this unexpected, crucially important work that tells us the ugly truth about ourselves, but also celebrates the best parts of humanity by underscoring the people who combat bigotry and fascism with compassion, quiet courage, their own wits, and humour in the face of utter bleakness.

The Handmaid's Tale won the Emmy this week for Best Television Series and Elisabeth Moss was honoured as Best Actress.



Watch trailer online

nepaltimes.com

HAPPENINGS



RSS

ON THE GLOBAL STAGE: Foreign Affairs Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara addressing the ministerial level meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Wednesday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

HERITAGE ALIVE: Swiss Ambassador Jorg Frieden speaks at the inauguration of an exhibition of photos by Toni Hagen in Kathmandu on Friday. Also pictured (left to right): UNESCO Representative Christian Manhart, Katryn Hagen, Ambika Shrestha of Nepal Heritage Society, and Bhesh Narayan Dahal of the Department of Archaeology.



EMBASSY OF ISRAEL

BUSY BEES: Israeli Ambassador Hanan Goder launching a bee-keeping project in Ramechhap initiated by Israeli NGO Tevel b'Tzedek, on Wednesday.



KUNDA DIXIT

ART IN THE BLOOD: (From right to left) Japanese Ambassador Masashi Ogawa, Sangita Thapa of Siddhartha Art Gallery and Japanese mother-daughter artist duo Masae Suzuki and Setsuko Suzuki during the inauguration of the 'My Cities, Jukai from the Sky' art exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery on Sunday.



KUNDA DIXIT

ELECTRIFYING: Mahindra launched the four-door version of its E20 electric car, with longer range and more space, at Hotel Himalaya in Lalitpur on Tuesday.

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We are what we eat

ARUNA UPRETY

The synonym for “Hello” in Nepali is “*Khana khanu bho?*” The fact that asking people whether they have eaten is a form of greeting in our society indicates the importance of food in our daily lives.

As a doctor, I have seen Nepal transition from having a burden of communicable diseases to one where lifestyle-related ailments are becoming more common. Till two decades ago,



Nepal’s main health problems were diarrhoeal dehydration, acute respiratory infections and vaccine preventable diseases. Today, they are cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, hypertension and obesity.

The reasons are: a sedentary lifestyle, high intakes of salt and sugar and a diet of mostly junk food. Awareness about nutrition is the first step in combating these non-communicable diseases.

When I first told colleagues we were writing a book on nutrition, they laughed at me. I admitted that I was not a nutrition specialist, but I had treated too many patients in cities and villages across Nepal who had health problems directly related to their diet to keep quiet.

My knowledge about nutrition

is derived from being with my grandmother and my mother in the kitchen as they prepared meals, using fresh ingredients and healthy traditional recipes. I can proudly claim that the family kitchen was my university for nutrition studies.

Traditional grains, fresh vegetables and fruits are cheaper, tastier and healthier. Yet when I travelled, even to remote parts of Karnali, I noticed the steady inroads made by plastic and foil-wrapped junk foods. The people of the Karnali are malnourished because the region has been forced to depend on refined rice flown in by the government, abandoning their nutritious buckwheat, beans, barley and millet. The children are undernourished not because they lack food, but because of the proliferation of junk food and food lacking the proteins, vitamins and minerals essential for healthy bone formation and brain development.

Urban parents find it more convenient to put packaged food in their children’s lunchboxes, and undernourished children soon fall prey to pneumonia, respiratory tract infections, anaemia and other diseases.

The main point of my book is that healthy and nutritious food is cheaper, and easily available. I have cited my experiences in the Far West, where I knew mothers who sold millet to buy instant noodle packets for their children, thinking that would make them happier and healthier. One Female Community Health Volunteer, who should have known better, sold buffalo milk to buy Lactogen for her child who had malnutrition and diarrhoea.

She asked me for medication, and I had to tell her the best medicine for her baby was Jivanjal oral rehydration, *jaulo* porridge and fresh milk.

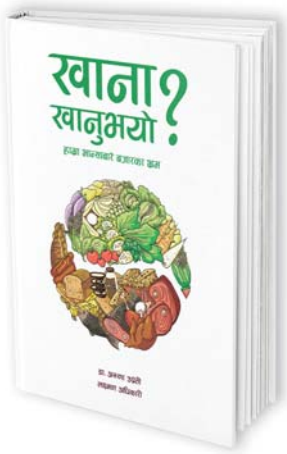
Our book also takes a critical look at advertising and commercials for food products that are misleading and creating a craving among children for junk food. It contains an illustrated nutrition table published by the Ministry of Agriculture that has never been used by health workers in the field.

Supposedly educated people

in Kathmandu pop Vitamin D pills thinking it will make them healthier, when all they need to do is spend more time in the sun. Just as the government has banned cigarette and alcohol advertising, it is time to phase out commercials for food products that addict Nepalis to junkfoods.

This book warns of the dangers of modern diets. My next one will offer solutions of how to stay healthy with indigenous foods that are fresh, non-toxic and nutritious.

“*Khana khanu bho?*” 🇳🇵



Khana Khanu Bho?
(in Nepali)
by Dr Aruna Uprety and Laxman Adhikari
nepalaya, 2017



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The dead, and

OM ASTHA RAI

Nanda Prasad Adhikari's frozen body has been lying for three years inside the morgue at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu. Nanda Prasad died on 22 September 2014, after 333 days of hunger striking, during which he was force-fed intravenously. His widow, Ganga Maya, has been on and off her own hunger strike at Bir Hospital in Kathmandu for five years. She is mostly alone, accompanied only by photos of her dead husband and son. This week, as activists mark the third anniversary of Nanda Prasad's demise, his yet-to-be-cremated body serves as a stark reminder that Nepal's transitional justice process is also dead. The men accused of murdering his 18-year-old son, Krishna Prasad, in 2004 enjoy political protection. The Supreme Court has ordered police to put Chhabi Lal Poudel, the main accused, in judicial custody until the final verdict, but he continues to walk free. Last month, when Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal's daughter Renu Dahal was elected mayor of Bharatpur after repolling, Poudel and his family members went to congratulate her (pictured).



Nanda Prasad Adhikari is dead, but his family's quest for justice for his murdered son is not

Rights right here

Nepal government officials revealed last week that the country is bidding to become one of 47 members on the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), the pre-eminent global rights body where members are elected by the UN General Assembly (GA) for three-year terms. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is now in New York, where he is scheduled to address the GA on Saturday. He is also leading Nepa's lobbying ahead of the HRC vote, which is expected in October or November. While it pushes for a seat on the HRC, experts say the Nepal Government should also be strengthening human rights at home. "The National Human

Rights Commission believes the government should act on other issues before focusing on a seat on the HRC," says the Commission's Mohna Ansari. "For example, it needs to investigate recent killings of Madhesi people, implement the NHRC's recommendations and give the commission control over its budget." The NHRC, which has the status of a constitutional body, has had an uneasy relationship with Nepal's governments since it was created in 2000. For instance, just 38 of its recommendations have been fully implemented, 138 partially enacted and 214 await action. Others in the human rights community say the Nepal government must revise its



12-18 OCTOBER

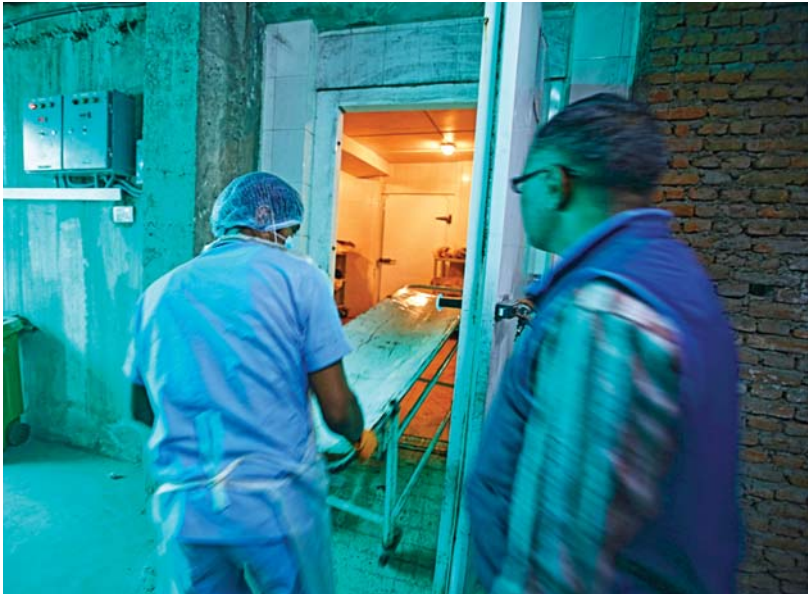
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KANTA DAB DAB NEPAL
RABIN LAL SHRESTHA TRIO NEPAL

EVENT PARTNERS



the dying



THREE YEARS LATER: After Nanda Prasad Adhikari's death, his widow, Ganga Maya, is battling for justice on her own (*left*). The morgue at TUTH where Adhikari's frozen body has been kept for three years (*top*). In this photo shared on Facebook (*above*), Chhabi Lal Poudel (*at left*), the main accused in the murder of Adhikari's son, poses with Bharatpur's newly-elected mayor Renu Dahal (*second from left*).

In Chitwan, where Krishna Prasad was abducted, tortured and killed allegedly by the Maoists, there is still so much fear that no one dares testify against the accused. Nanda Prasad's older son, Noor Prasad, has gone into hiding after being threatened by Maoists.

The district court is headed by Judge Kabi Prasad Neupane, who was appointed chief election officer for the local elections in Bharatpur. His famously contradictory statements in June allowed the Election Commission to conduct re-polling that resulted in Renu Dahal's win.

"There is no possibility of a fair trial in Chitwan," says lawyer Baburam Giri. "Witnesses are often turned hostile, and even lawyers are threatened."

Giri and his team of lawyers are now trying to transfer this sub-judice case to the Lalitpur High Court under a new federal law.

As the legal battle drags on, Nanda Prasad's body is slowly decomposing. The temperature inside the morgue (0-4C) preserves bodies for only a few months, not for years on end. He died in the same hospital at age 52 after refusing intravenous nutrients and medicines.

A few months previously, the Chitwan District Court had released everyone accused of

murdering Krishna Prasad. That legal setback further hardened Nanda Prasad's resolve: he rejected then-Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam's request to end the fast.

He told Minister Gautam angrily: "You want to buy me out? Tell me how much you can give me? I need Rs2 billion. Do you have that much money?"

Some newspapers manipulated Nanda Prasad's outburst, insinuating that he was only after money, not justice. The distorted coverage deeply saddened him, and he chose to die rather than compromise on justice.

Ganga Maya refused to perform her husband's final rites. Since his death, she has been fighting on her own against the Maoists who are now in the coalition government.

In their home village of Phujel of Gorkha district, the Adhikaris were feuding with Chhabi Lal Poudel, who headed a kangaroo court run by the Maoists. After the death of one of Adhikari's brothers, Poudel ordered Adhikari to transfer a share of his property to the brother's widow. He refused, so the Maoists cut off his water supply. They also warned local shopkeepers not to sell anything to him or his family. Nanda Prasad fought with everyone who supported the Maoist diktat.

Nanda Prasad's stubborn uprightness led to animosity, not just with the Maoists but also his neighbours. When locals needed to erect electricity poles on part of his property, he refused.

It was against this backdrop

that his son was killed in June 2004. There is circumstantial evidence of Maoist involvement in the murder. Poudel, the main accused, had enquired about the whereabouts of Adhikari's son, and learned he was in Chitwan. Poudel's son Parshu Ram, who was also close to the Maoists, was living in Chitwan at the time.

Krishna Prasad, then 18, was caught, tortured and killed after being dragged through the streets in a sack behind a motorcycle. Police were not willing to register a first information report (FIR).

After the war, when the Adhikari couple came to Kathmandu seeking justice, they were detained by the Baburam Bhattarai government. When Nanda Prasad and Ganga Maya staged a sit-in at Baluwatar, the Khil Raj Regmi government sent him to a mental asylum.

Bhattarai, who himself ran parallel governments and kangaroo courts across the country during the insurgency, has always defended the accused, referring to Krishna Prasad's murder as a war-era case that should be probed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

"Bhattarai is defending those who conspired to kill the Adhikari couple's son because he is not just morally but also legally guilty of this crime and all murders committed under his so-called parallel government," says human rights activist Subodh Raj Pyakurel.

He adds: "Bhattarai might not have pulled the trigger, but his guerrillas executed 'class enemies' or 'spies' only after being ordered to do so by the 'people's government' led by him."

at home

transitional justice mechanisms to meet international standards.

The two commissions created as part of the peace process — the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission to Investigate Enforced Disappearances (CIED) — have a 'deeply flawed legal mandate', said the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in a recent paper.

ICJ Asia-Pacific Regional Director Frederick Rawski told Nepali Times: "The UN General Assembly has made it clear that members elected to the Human Rights Council must uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. So the best thing that the Nepal government could do to strengthen its candidacy would be to take immediate steps to improve its own human rights record."

"This should include addressing the inadequacies of existing transitional justice institutions to ensure accountability for rights violations committed during the conflict, and properly investigating and punishing the excessive use of force in the Tarai," added Rawski. "The ICJ would also like to see the government issue a standing invitation to the Council's Special Procedures, and improve cooperation with the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights."

Suman Adhikari, chairperson

of the Conflict Victims Common Platform, revealed recently that many conflict victims and their families are deeply frustrated that they are still waiting for adequate compensation and/or recognition of their losses, but the commissions have been unwilling to listen.

"Nepal should utilise the opportunity to amend the legislation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons in line with the Supreme Court verdict. That would ensure the credibility and recognition of the TRC and CIEDP as well as collaboration from concerned stakeholders," he said in an email.

"Equally, Nepal has to reveal its road map that it would champion for the promotion of human rights in the world as a member of the HRC," Adhikari added.

According to human rights activist Mandira Sharma, the government "should demonstrate that it respects the recommendations of the HRC, including a credible transitional justice process that helps to establish the truth, justice, reparation and guarantee of non-reoccurrence."

She adds: "The complete impunity for those in power has weakened democracy and makes the achievements of the People's Movement very fragile."

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