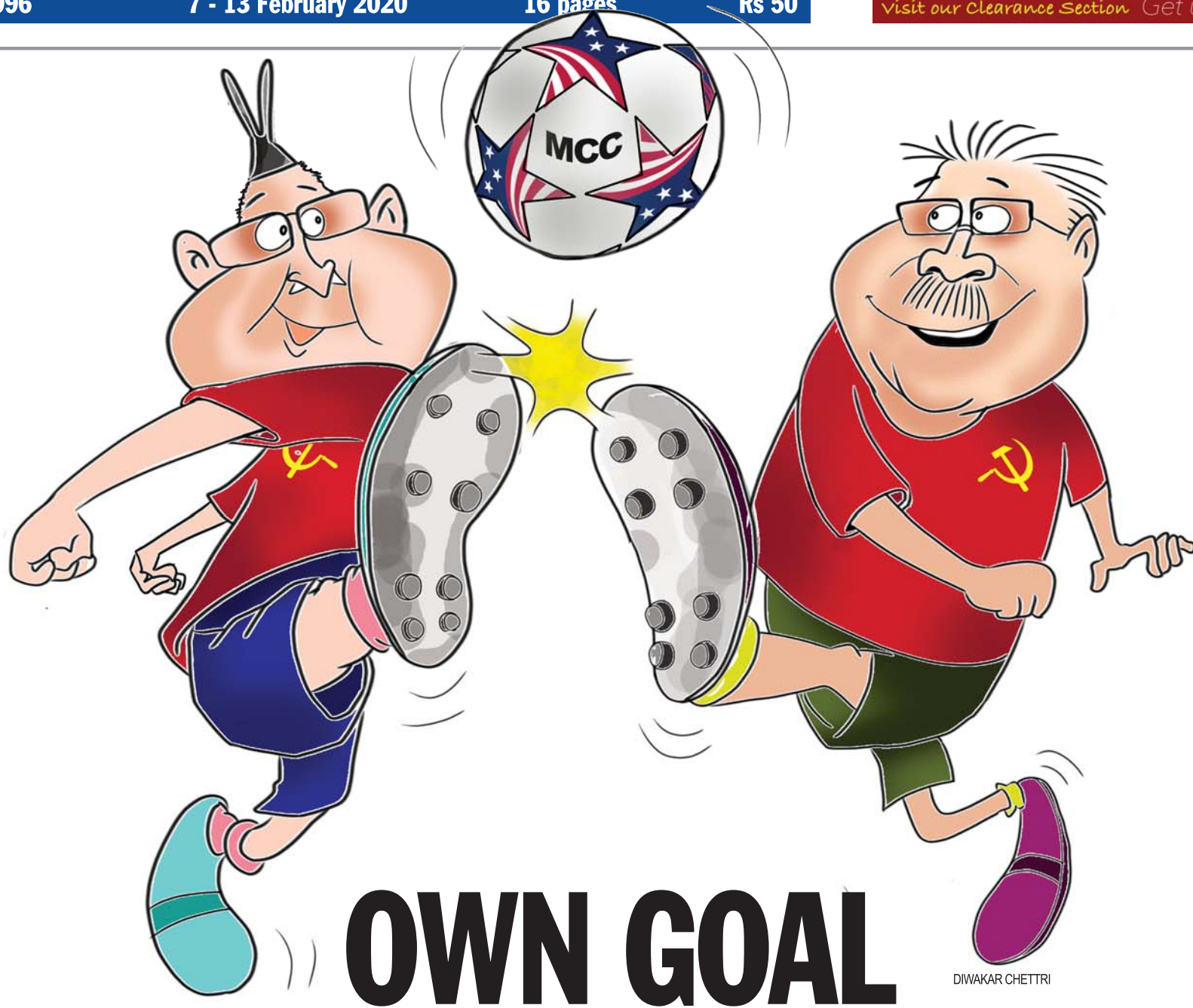



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OWN GOAL

DIWAKAR CHETTRI

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

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

Prime Minister K P Oli and former Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal are competing for power, influence and succession within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP). Disgruntled former UML leaders like Bhim Rawal say the MCC is a sellout to the United States. Geopolitics is a factor because the MCC is seen

as America's response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

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

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

"We have a huge resource gap, and we have to trust Parliament to make the right decision, but

there are NCP members who have vowed to never let it pass, and other NCP are strongly backing it," MP Gagan Thapa of the opposition Nepali Congress told a roundtable on the issue organised by Himalmedia on Wednesday.

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

undermine the prime minister.

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

Most former bureaucrats agree that the MCC is a catalytic

project to jump-start the economy through grid and highway connectivity. In fact, all major power purchase agreements with private sector developers need the MCC's planned 400kVA transmission network to evacuate the electricity they generate.

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

Former finance secretary Rameswar Khanal says the US has used the same legal template for agreements with all 38 other MCC partners, and sums up the reason for the deadlock: "The MCC is victim of an internal party dispute."

Kunda Dixit

AWESOME PARTY EDITORIAL PAGE 2

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

AWESOME PARTY

When the CPN (UML) unified with the CPN (Maoist) two years ago, most hoped that it would lead to the UML-isation of the Maoists, steering them towards democratic norms and values. Instead, we seem to be witnessing the Mao-fication of the Nepal Communist Party.

Evident proof of this was the first Central Committee meeting of the unified party last week — nearly two years after it was formed. The meeting of the 445-member jumbo Committee at the City Hall happened even as divisions sharpened between the party's two top leaders: Prime Minister K P Oli and his co-chair, former Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

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



PMO

The Central Committee gathering itself was structured like an NGO annual general meeting, complete with a review paper and 15 thematic breakout sessions from which hand-picked spokespersons reported on conclusions to the plenary. This allowed the leaders to keep a tight lid on dissent. The merits of issues and problems of internal party decision-making were therefore sidestepped, and the discussion reflected the party's deep polarisation.

The other tactic that Oli and Dahal effectively employed was of scathing self-criticism on issues on which they expected to be censured by members. Oli's more than two-hour-long review was a mea culpa, admitting to delays in reorganising the unified party, failure in delivery of services by the government, and unconstitutional behaviour by the same.

This is a trick often employed by communist parties elsewhere when faced with severe criticism for failures. And it worked. There was no real debate on issues, and Oli managed to deflate and defuse most of the criticism of his leadership.

However, the prime minister is getting

We are seeing the Mao-fication of the Nepal Communist Party.

physically weaker and politically more isolated. At a three-hour tête-à-tête with editors at his residence on Tuesday, Oli said he was going to get another kidney transplant soon, and exuded confidence about serving out the next three years in office. But a transplant would keep him away for at least two months, and Dahal is waiting in the wings, becoming increasingly impatient.

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

This block vote was seen most clearly in the MCC controversy. Dahal himself did not even mention the \$500 million American grant aid project in his 32-page report, although he praised the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), criticised the US Indo-Pacific strategy, and took the populist stance on the Lipu Lekh territorial dispute with India.

However, he got his faction to oppose the MCC tooth and nail, accusing it of being a US military plan.

The MCC became the focus of much of the discussion at the Central Committee because Dahal remained silent on it and Oli spent so much time defending it.

This exposed the rift at the top of the party, and allowed former UML leaders like Bhim Rawal make a scathing attack on the grant. In the end, the Committee decided to form a Taskforce that has to present an evaluation of the MCC by next week.

Signs of the former Maoist leader Dahal starting to wield an upper hand can be seen in the revival of the proposal that Nepal's Constitution be amended to allow for the abandonment of the parliamentary system to be replaced by one with a directly-elected executive president. This has been Dahal's long-standing wish for himself ever since the end of the conflict.

There are other signs of the NCP accumulating Maoist traits. The drift towards a personality cult were clearly visible at City Hall with Oli and Dahal's portraits on prominent display on the stage.

And despite all the rhetoric about inclusion, the party made a mockery of the Constitution because the nine senior leaders on stage were all men, and mostly from a dominant caste group.

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And despite all the rhetoric about inclusion, the party made a mockery of the Constitution because the nine senior leaders on stage were all men, and mostly from a dominant caste group.

Times.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



BIMALA TUMKHEHWA

Listen to the Limbu poet speak about her upbringing in Terathum. About patriarchy, the domination of the state over culture, and how her activist writing gets her into trouble with both Nepali-speakers and Limbu-speakers. Story: page 13



NEPALI WORLD MUSIC

Bengali musician Arko Mukhaerjee performs beloved Nepali songs such as *Resham Firiri* and *Mohani Lagla Hai*. Gauley Bhai, an Indian-Nepali band from Darjeeling, is known for its intense, angst-ridden compositions about migration, regrets and wanderlust. Story: page 6-7.

KHAALISISI

It's very inspiring to see millennial entrepreneurs creating opportunities in Nepal ('Nepali entrepreneur turns trash into cash', NareshNewar, #995). She makes me believe that every place has opportunity, it's just that we need to dare to dream and most of all stand up for it with all our patience.

Tamang Manisha

CORONAVIRUS

If politicians don't trust the Nepali healthcare system even for innocuous problems, why should they come to Nepal where they can't even treat a cold properly ('A Nepali in Beijing during coronavirus scare', Rastraraj Bhandari, #995)?

Nishan Kafle

■ They should stay put instead of returning back here where there's not even an isolation ward to start with let alone treatment.

Vairochana Sherpa

NEPAL'S NIGHT SKY

Thank you for covering this topic, *Nepali Times* ('Nepal's other attraction: the night sky', Himali Dixit, #995). It is worth a read. I did a presentation on "light pollution, dark sky and astrotourism" in Kathmandu recently. Glad it was well received and got picked up quickly by the media. There will be more coming. Please share your thoughts.

Gyan Nyaupane

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

Rojan Baniya

IMPUNITY IN NEPAL

It is imperative that they understand that the world is watching them, and attacking the press for fair criticism is very wrong in a free and democratic country ('Amnesty on Nepal impunity', Shristi Karki, nepalitimes.com). I personally feel that a number of members of the government are "not up to the mark" and electing a Speaker of the House who is accused of murder, well that speaks volumes.

Alan Roadnight

YETI OR NO YETI

There is no art in this illogical yeti statue ('Love it or hate it, it's abominable', SanghamitraSubba, #995).

Shishir Shakya

■ It's at best a Franken-Yeti, depicted in a squatting position - probably to relieve itself of the suspect dinner it had last night.

Sameer Singh

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

Niall O'Caomhanach

WHAT'S TRENDING



Nepali entrepreneur turns trash into cash

by Naresh Newar
Khaalisisi is a recognised brand in Nepal and abroad today for its novel approach to sustainability. Forbes, World Bank and the Asia Society have felicitated its founder Aayushi KC. What is the story behind her success?

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Nepalis caught up in Hong Kong protests

by Will Patterson
Many left Kathmandu because they were fed up with protests, but some Nepali students have joined demonstrations. Jenny Rai speaks about spending 48 hours in police custody and facing derogatory remarks about her status as an ethnic minority. Read full story only at nepalitimes.com

Most popular on Twitter



Love it or hate it, it's abominable

by Sanghamitra Subba
The Visit Nepal 2020 mascot has generated much debate - some criticise its use of religious motifs and some defend artistic freedom. We gauged public reaction to the painted yetis and the resulting video and story generated many comments. Join the online discussion.

Most commented

Why Nepal must watch Coronavirus, but not panic

by Sameer M Dixit
Wuhan coronavirus has already claimed 563 lives and there are close to 30,000 confirmed cases worldwide. Thousands of concerned readers read this analysis that summarised Nepal's vulnerable position as a neighbouring country to China as well as the nature of infection that shows no symptoms yet transmits disease.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
@VisitNepal_2020 mascot yeti is in the news, but for the wrong reasons. What do people really think about the snowman mascot? We ask the people in Thamel, Jamal, DarbarMarg&Labim Mall what they think of 'The Thing.'



Bobby Basnet @bobbize
I for one like how the Yeti has been artistically re-imagined. And start of culture of art installation in public places.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Jenny Rai who was arrested during the #HongKongProtests speaks about spending 48 hours in a police custody and facing derogatory remarks about her status as an ethnic minority. Read full report by Will Patterson.



MoodyBlues @moodyblues612
It's not easy to be a minority, even more so to give up stability. Thank you for loving #HongKong.



Wendyli @Wendyli1711480
Thank you so much for supporting #HongKongProtests. Like everyone, we take to the street because we love the city. We want a bright future for all our next generation with a democratic and free society!

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

In a report aptly titled 'Snailport' by Dewan Rai and Suvayu Dev Pant (issue #488 5-11 February 2010), *Nepali Times* looked at the congestion in Kathmandu airport on the occasion of Visit Nepal 2010. 10 years later and as we mark another Visit Nepal Year, unsurprisingly, the state of the country's only international gateway remains the same. Excerpt:

International aircraft arrivals increased by 8.41 per cent and domestic aircraft arrivals by 19.72 per cent in the first nine months of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008. Yet there have been no major additions to infrastructure. "Our airport doesn't meet the requirements for an international airport, so it is very difficult to accommodate all the tourists," says Amar Bahadur Shakya of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN). Although the airport was designed for only 1000 passengers daily, the actual turnover today is close to 2000. Likewise, the departure lounge was designed for 350 but sees up to 1000 passengers daily. Congestion at the air terminal may even have contributed to the death of a Korean woman, of a heart attack, three weeks ago.

Such problems were anticipated long ago, but officials have been slow to respond.



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Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Digital Producer: Sonia Awale, Design: Kiran Maharjan
Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma rachanas@himalmedia.com
Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal santosha@himalmedia.com
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Read and let read

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

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



1/2 FULL
Anil Chitrakar

However, the reading public is still limited to those who can afford to buy books, or have access to them. And now comes news that the same government that wants to take mathematics out of the school curriculum for biology students in Grades 11-12, is taxing the import of books.

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

So, do Nepalis actually read or not? There is evidence that with the spread of smart phones, people with shorter attention spans have no time to read. And the erosion of a reading culture does not bode well for Nepal's democracy.

How many have actually read the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty to publicly support or oppose it? How many have seen or heard of the Anglo-Nepal Sugauli Treaty of 1816, or the treaty with the Chinese



BIKRAM RAI

emperor signed on the banks of the Betrawati River in 1856?

More recently, how many have actually read detailed project documents of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to support or oppose it? Do they know enough to distinguish between the MCC and the MCA (Millennium Challenge Authority)? Or is the

opposition solely based on which side of the faction fence party members sit on?

In a country where communists have a majority, one would think that books by and about Marx, Lenin, Mao and Castro would sell like hot cakes. People do read newspapers and the numerous on-line news outlets on the social

media, but not too many books.

Do Members of Parliament carefully read the draft laws they vote on? Evidence suggests they just don't bother, and just vote along party lines. Why not make MPs actually read all proposed laws, sit for and pass a written exam before they are allowed to vote on them.

To be sure, book launch events are becoming more frequent and there are numerous literary festivals which promote a reading culture. Perhaps we could combine the growing business of home delivery of food and vegetables with a simple question, "Would you also like a book? Can we send you the best seller list?"

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

Nepalis generally know what the Mahabharat, Ramayan, Bhagawat Gita and the Swastani Brata Katha contain, relying mostly on oral tradition and not reading. The bahas of Patan are an exception where we can see the Pragma Paramita being read each morning by the members of the Sangha.

This may be the reason why story-tellers and speakers are still given more importance than writers. The rise of the Toastmasters network may be attributed to this same phenomenon. However, a

good speaker will still have to rely on good books for content, creating a real win-win. At a recent event they did present books to speakers.

While Kathalaya is trying to get children across Nepal to read paper books, Open Learning Exchange (OLE) uses its e-patti to promote electronic books and library. All government schools have a budget to buy library books but there are many cases where bills are made but books are never bought.

Recently we presented our neighbour's child with a book on the occasion of her Bel Bibaha and her eyes lit up with gratitude. She remarked that she loved to read and this was her first gift book.

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

More people are buying, reading and writing books than ever before. The trend for publishing memoirs and biographies is on the rise. Mani Lama who dedicated himself to taking one picture of Boudha stupa from the day of the earthquake to its restoration has shown us what creativity and perseverance means as book author. The demand for old and not so old photos of Nepal also seem to have a good demand as one sees in the reprints of Toni Hagan's books.

On 22 February, the annual Bal Sahitya Mahotsav is being held at Rato Bangala School with a fun event to promote children's literature and get students to enjoy reading from a young age.

As Jhumpa Lahiri writes in The Namesake: "That's the thing about books. They let you travel without moving your feet." 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharthinc

A taste of India at the Spice Room



MONIKA DEUPALA

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

Spice Room replaces Yak & Yeti's 42-year-old Sunrise Restaurant. Sunrise also served Indian food, but did so buffet-style. In contrast, Spice Room is a proud fine-dining establishment.

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

The *murgh kali mirch ka shorba*, a thin soup with a strong chicken flavour and spiced with tellicherry peppercorns, is a fantastic start to the meal. Servers carefully pour the soup from a stainless steel teapot into the shallow clay bowl



SANGHAMITRA SUBBA

decorated with aromatic garlic garnishes of fried garlic -- adding a performance aspect to the otherwise simple dish.

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

The chef recommended *masala ojhari*, a Punjabi spiced pork belly served on a roti. The rich dish can be overwhelming on its own, but give it a good squeeze of lemon and the acid will cut through the fat and bring out the sweetness of the tomato masala.

Perhaps no visit to a restaurant serving Mughlai food is complete without *biryani* and the *pardanashi murgh biryani*, cooked *dum*-style, is faithful to its traditional form. Alternate between bites of the mildly spiced *murgh peshawari lababdar*, a chicken dish stuffed again with minced chicken and covered in a house blend spiced sauce, and the classic, no-nonsense, creamy butter chicken as you go through the earthen clay pot of *biryani*.

South Indian flavours also have a place on the menu through seafood dishes like the shrimp *moilee* and crab *chatpata*. In the *karavali* shrimp, the heat of peppercorns and spices pairs well with the coconut cream, tangy turmeric sauce and crunchy salad.

The fine dining adventure continues with an exciting assortment of Indian-influenced dessert. The trio of *kulfi* -- which the chef advises strongly to eat in the order of chilli-and-black-salt infused guava, lychee and pistachio *khuwa barfi* -- is a refined version of childhood on a plate.

For those who love desserts but can't take too much sweet, the lychee chilli mousse is perfect. The mousse, suffused with spices like cinnamon, has a mild heat that shows itself after a couple of bites. 🇳🇵

Sanghamitra Subba

BIZ BRIEFS

Turkish Airlines

BVMW (German Association for Small and Medium-Sized Businesses) held a General Assembly on 27 January for entrepreneurs, political leaders and CEOs. Following

the declaration of intent signed between Turkish Airlines and BVMW last year, BVMW and its vast network of members can enjoy the exclusive advantages when flying with Turkish Airlines.

TATA Nexon

TATA Nexon has received an increasing number of bookings from banks in Nepal, becoming one of the favourites in the

financial sector. The compact crossover SUV has also received a 5-star safety rating from Global NCAP.

NIBL

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd. is offering 9.25% on Recurring Fixed Deposit with a minimum recurring deposit amount of NPR 333 for a minimum tenure of 33 months.

NIBL has also launched a green initiative product Green Double Fixed Deposit (GDFFD) in which deposits collected from this product are invested in sustainable, environment-friendly green projects.

Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways is the Official Airline Sponsor of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to support its efforts

towards cancer prevention and control. The announcement comes on the 20th Anniversary of World Cancer Day on 4 February.

Ruslan

Jawalakhe! Group of Industries is taking Ruslan Vodka international. The company will be importing the vodka to Australia, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Belgium.

Zero-sum game in zero-cost migration

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

Nepal’s overseas migrant workers shoulder high recruitment costs. A 2016 survey by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows that average recruitment costs to the Gulf ranged from \$1,083 to \$1,172, while workers going to Malaysia had to pay \$1,388.



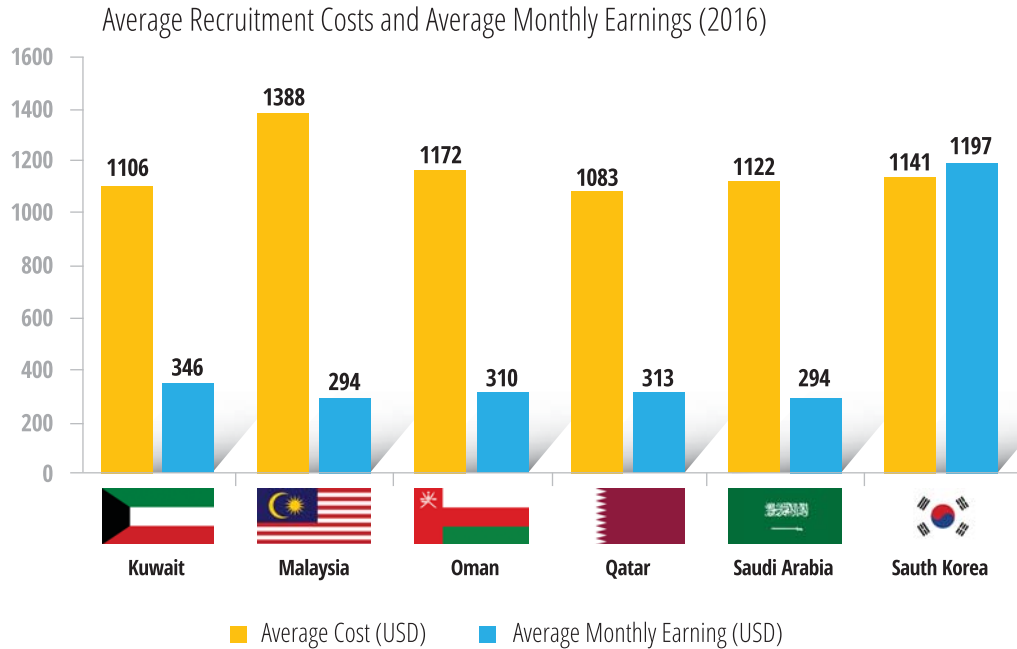
LABOUR MOBILITY
Upasana Khadka

Compare this to average monthly salaries in the destination country of \$294-\$346. Out of a two-year contract, workers therefore spend the first few months just paying back recruitment costs. This is why zero-cost migration has received so much attention in Nepal.

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

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

But implementation of this policy is a whole different story. Workers are willing to pay for stints abroad, recruitment agencies



outbid each other by buying visas from employers and transferring that cost to workers, and transactions between workers and recruitment agencies are difficult to monitor in the current state of affairs. Even the strongest advocates of no-cost migration realise there are practical challenges.

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

The Province-2 program recognizes that workers are paying local loan sharks interest rates as high as 36% because they don’t have access to formal channels for credit. It recognizes that the cost of migration is prohibitively high for the poorest, who therefore cannot benefit from it. It also takes into account that migrant workers are assessing the options available to them before choosing to pay for the service provided by the recruitment agencies.

Nepal used to have a government-backed migrant loan scheme but it failed because of the high rates of default. Bangladesh has a migrant loan scheme through the Probashikallyan Bank and BRAC. Low-cost

migrant loan schemes, however, are new in today’s Nepal, where the free-visa-free-ticket policy has dominated the discourse.

The reaction in social media is quick. ‘There is a contradiction. Why do we need loan when there is a free visa free ticket policy?’ writes Ashim. Binita comments: ‘Very good. This means even the poor can now go for foreign employment.’

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

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

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

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

Upasana Khadka writes this column Labour Mobility every month in Nepali Times analysing trends affecting Nepal’s workers abroad.

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Enjoy responsibly.

If you like Nepali folk songs, you must have come across a hirsute man on Youtube, singing old, familiar songs with an unusual accent and lilt. The backdrops to the music videos are always mountains wrapped in clouds and B rolls of smiling Nepali children. The singer strums his ukulele gently, and through melancholy spreads calmness and positivity.

Bengali who grew up around Darjeeling, walking the mountains and dales on the other side of the border from Ilam and Sandakphu. The hills were alive with Nepali folk music, and he grew up steeped in its melody and beat.

“As a boy, I hiked along the border with Nepal and have done the Singalila trek, walking up to the base of Kangchenjunga many times,” recalls Mukhaerjee, who has fond memories of tongba and sukuti sessions with Nepali-speaking friends who remain his best friends. He came to understand the difference between dai (brother) and daju (respected brother). It helped



Nepali World

Given the vibrant art and literature scene in Nepal, we tend to forget that there is a whole Nepali-speaking world out there. At least 5 million Nepalis live beyond the country's borders, performing songs and plays, writing books and making films.

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

One of the new treasures is Gauley Bhai, a recent band of four musicians. Veecheet Dhakal, 31, his brother Anudwatt Dhakal, 28, and Siddhant Chettri, 27 are from Kalimpong, and Joe Panicker, 36, is from Kerala.

A filmmaker, a sound engineer, an engineer, and a drummer by trade, the four were jamming together in Bangalore when they realised that they and the sounds they produced gelled well. They began playing at festivals, and three years ago formed Gauley Bhai which now has a cult following for its eclectic compositions that cannot be traced to any one geographical location.

“We like all world music, including African, Japanese, Korean, and western,” says vocalist

Veecheet Dhakal. “Maybe our strongest influence is African music, but each of us has unique preferences.”

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

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

The song *Sim Rayo* describes picking wild vegetables in the wetlands, chasing hares that disappear into burrows, and longing for *maichyang's* flowered beauty. It is about desires one cannot have, wanting things that are fleeting.

Many of Gauley Bhai's lyrics are shaped by the collective experience of India's Nepali diaspora, and deal with migration and belonging. Nepali ko Rela is one of them, born from the impact of the Gorkhali movements in the Darjeeling Hills.

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

*Where humans eat humans
And drunkenly wash worries
away.*

“These songs are about a home. But a home may mean so any different things. A home may not be permanent. It may be about missing a person or a place. It may be a state of in-betweenness, or even an encounter with death. At the end of the day, home might be never feeling at home,” says Dhakal.

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

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

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



Moving songs from

बालबालिका माथि हुने हिंसा, दुर्यवहार, शोषण भएको, जोखिमपूर्ण अवस्थामा रहेको वा बालअधिकारको उल्लंघन भएको छु भने बाल हेल्पलाइनको पैसा नलाग्ने फोन: नं. १०८८ मा खबर गरौं।



नेपाल सरकार
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग



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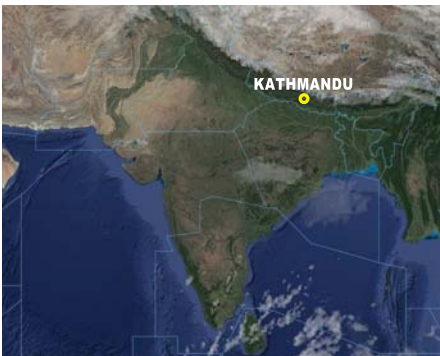
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The low pressure circulation over the Bay of Bengal will draw in cold dry air into Central Nepal, keeping temperatures below normal for this time of year. Minimum will stay at 3-4 Celsius over the weekend in Kathmandu with frost in the Valley rim. However, a high pressure will be firmly in control into next week, sending maximum temperature to more usual levels of 17-18 C. May have to wait till mid-February for the first signs of spring.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 15° 4°	 14° 4°	 15° 3°



that his name ‘*Arko*’ (‘sun’ in Bengali) means ‘next’ or ‘another’ in Nepali, an icebreaker that is still the subject of endless jokes.

Mukhaerjee was 11 when he heard his first Nepali folk song, *Resham Firiri*, from his trekking guide Arjun Sherpa. The whole village of Mane Bhanjyang, where the India-Nepal border runs through a house, would shut down for evenings of song and merriment, and people would dance to *Mohani Lagla Hai* and *Tulsi Aagan ma Ropaunla*. Because of Mukhaerjee’s background in Bengali music, it was easy for him to learn the songs from Sherpa.

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

But Mukhaerjee rebelled against the regimented nature of the classical tradition and turned to exploring and experimenting with melodies that touched his soul. He gave up formal training and learnt music by jamming and practicing. Today, he performs folk music in more than 20 languages and plays five different folk instruments, but he keeps coming

back to Nepali music.

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

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

Among Nepali singers, Mukhaerjee is fond of Jhalakman Gandharva, the pioneering minstrel. He first heard a Gandharva song on a taxi ride from Tribuvan International Airport to Thamel. “Jhalakman’s voice is unique not just in Nepal but in the whole world,” he

says. “When you sing to the accompaniment of a single instrument for many years, your voice automatically follows the instrument. Jhalakman sang with the sarangi, and his voice had acquired some micro tonal aspects of the sarangi which are impossible to replicate.”

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

Mukhaerjee has sung many of Jhalakman’s songs, including *Timro nai Maya*, *Allare Nani Kesi*, and *Bala Joban*. He understands some of the lyrics, but gets a native speaker to transcribe the correct pronunciation. Ultimately, though, what matters to him is the feeling that the music inspires. Mukhaerjee recently discovered Mitraser Thapa, and has started to upload videos of his renditions of the master’s songs.

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

 nepalitimes.com
Go online to watch video

Music



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

*Hope in my mind, I could not find.
A shadow stared back at me in the mirror.
The blue youth of the sky is covered,
By a dark grey cloud.
Surrounded, I sulk.*

Says Dhakal: “Where we are from gets caught up every ten years in political movements. There is little support for the arts. Every ten years things are destroyed and we

have to start all over again. Nepalis in India live a fragile, fragmented reality. But somehow, despite the lack of stability and physical infrastructure, we keep the spirit of the arts alive.”

Gauley Bhai stands out for its intense, angst-ridden compositions. But like their songs of migration, the four band members are also wanderers. That is why their audiences are also mixed: people speaking difference language united by a love for music. But it is always extra special when they perform at home.

“It is magical playing to Nepali audiences. Elsewhere, people enjoy

our performances, but only a Nepali audience sings along,” says Dhakal, who plans to bring the band to Nepal soon.

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

*We took shelter
at the chance of rain,
But the sun smiled
and shone instead.
Before the distant horizon of
sorrow,
We ask for a night of rest.*

Sewa Bhattarai



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Sewa Bhattarai

Because Nepal is located at the confluence of four eco-biological domains, and because of its vast altitude difference, the country has the greatest variety of birdlife for its area in all the world.

Terrain soars from 70m above sea level to nearly 8,850m within a horizontal distance of barely 100km, so Nepal's biodiversity is as rich as in countries that span thousands of kilometers. Indeed, 880 species of birds have been recorded in Nepal – more than in the continental United States.

Among these, 150 are migratory birds that winter in Nepal's wetlands across the Tarai. They are mainly water fowl, but include eagles, storks and cranes that fly down from Mongolia and Siberia.

Some of these birds have a brief stopover in Nepal and fly on to India, and even to Africa across the Arabian Sea. When tracked by satellite, bar-headed geese (*like the ones, right*) take return flights from India to lakes in Tibet at altitudes above 6,000m, using the westerly jet stream to push them over the Himalayan mountains.

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

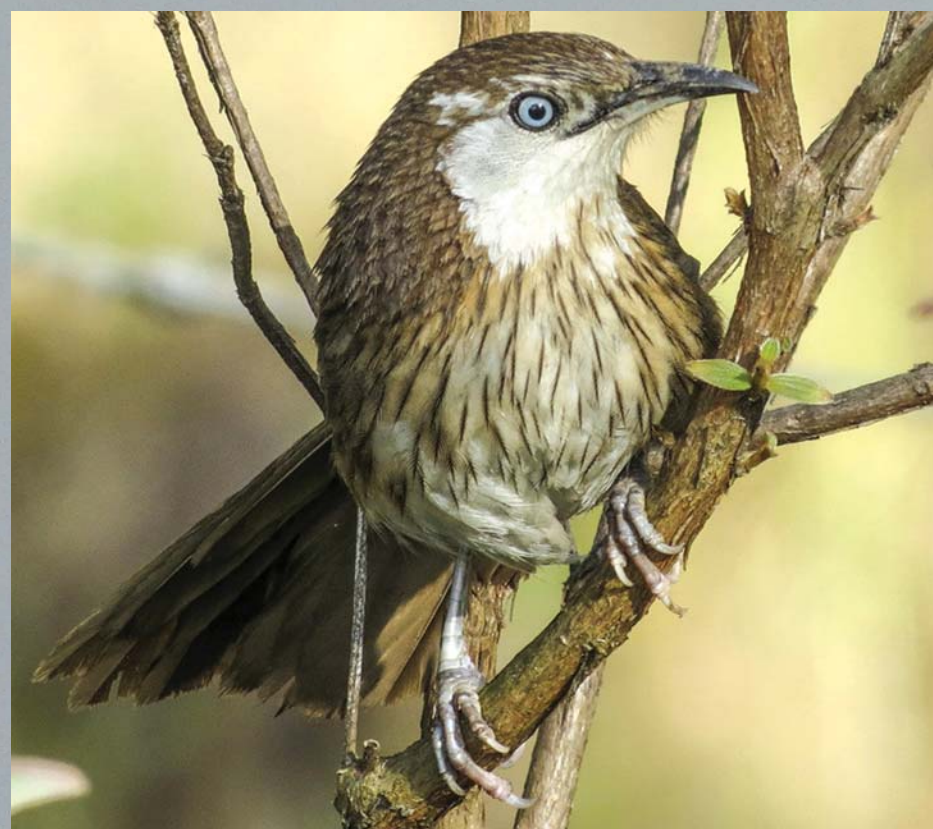
"We have seen a gradual decrease in the number of birds coming to Nepal over the years, and the consequences for the environment are serious," says Hem Sagar Baral, national coordinator of the annual bird census conducted by Himalayan Nature.

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



The Great Trans-Himalayan Bird Migration

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



HATAN CHAUDHARY

Spiny babbler tourism

Kamal Maden

Carston Involson from Denmark arrived in Kathmandu in the first week of January. Recently retired from the Danish government service, his objective in coming to Nepal was an unusual one.

He wanted to see the spiny babbler in its natural habitat. Involson went to the World Peace Stupa in Pokhara with Sanjeev Acharya, a bird researcher from Himalayan Nature, and observed the only bird species indigenous to Nepal to his heart's content. He was ecstatic.

Hundreds of other birders come to Nepal just to see the rare spiny babbler, which is found nowhere else in the world. It was first recorded as a species by British resident in Kathmandu Brian Houghton Hodgson, who in 1830 gave it the Latin name *Timalia nipalensis*.

At the time, Edward Blyth – remembered as the father of Indian ornithology – was curator of the zoological museum in Calcutta. In 1855, he determined that the bird Hodgson had described was of not the *Timalia* but the *Acanthoptila* species. At one time the spiny babbler was also called *Turdoides nipalensis*, though today most scientists agree on *Acanthoptila*

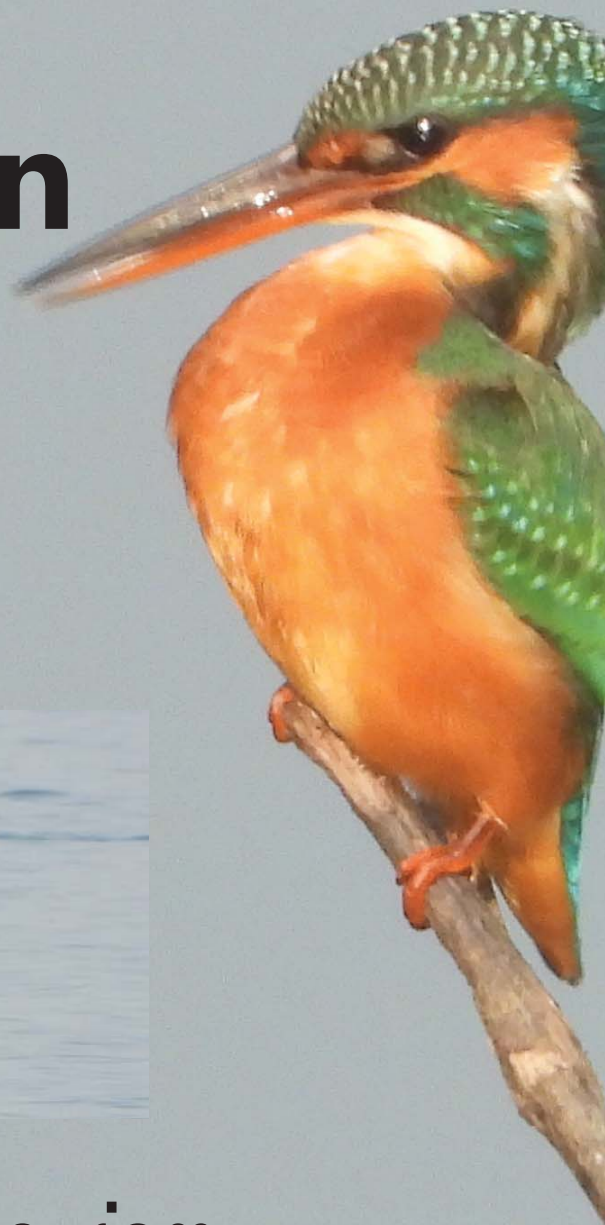
nipalensis.

The spiny babbler is on the endangered list, and lives at 1,500-2,135m elevation in summer and at 500-1,830m in winter. It normally stays in thick bush, away from farmlands. According to *The Status of Nepal's Birds: The National Red List Series Volume VI*, spiny babblers have been found all over Nepal, from Taplejung in the east to Baitadi in the west. They are frequently seen around Khaptad National Park and in Pokhara after the spread of community forestry. But there have been no detailed studies about its numbers.

Hodgson first found the bird in Kathmandu Valley. In an article titled Notes on the Spiny Babbler, *Acanthoptila Nipalensis* (Hodgson) in Kathmandu Valley, published in Journal of Bombay Natural History, D Proud mentions that the spiny babbler was found abundantly in Kathmandu Valley until 1950. Due to rapid urbanisation, that is no longer the case.

Protecting Nepal's birds is not just good for the planet's biodiversity, but also for Nepal's tourism so as to attract enthusiasts like Involson.

Kamal Maden is a botanist and biodiversity researcher.





HEM SAGAR BARAL

January. The data for this year is still to be tallied, but preliminary findings confirm the fears of ornithologists that the numbers continue to fall.

Some of the counting locations include favourites of migratory birds like Kosi Tappu in the east, Bis Hazari lake in Chitwan, the crane sanctuary in Lumbini, Ghodaghodi Lake in Kailali, and Bardiya National Park. Aside from the Tarai, this year the bird counting was also done at Rara Lake.

Birds have also stopped coming to Kathmandu locations including Taudaha for many years now. Though the number of migratory birds is stable in Chitwan and seems to have grown in Ghodaghodi Lake, the decline across Nepal is notable, and worrying.

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

“The habitat of birds are shrinking along the migratory routes and in our own

wetlands,” he explains, “rapid urbanisation and the increasing use of pesticides could be other reasons. On top of that, we now have climate change that impacts on birds, as it does everything else.”

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

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

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

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



Owl Festival

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

Twenty two species of owl are found in Nepal. Eight of them are endangered, because owls are hunted and traded for medicinal properties of their body parts.

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



Friends of feathers

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

BCN also conducts basic ornithology training, instructing freshers in watching, recognising, documenting, and photographing birds. This year BCN published the Pheasant Conservation Action

Plan for Nepal (2019-2023), developed the Biodiversity Conservation Education Curriculum for schools and created long-term strategy for the Nepal Bird Conservation Network (NBCN).

Vulture conservation has also been part of BCN’s work since the raptors went into steep decline in South Asia, poisoned by steroid-laced cattle carcasses. BCN is tracking 61 white-rumped vultures -- 31 captives that have been released and 30 wild -- through satellite tags. The understanding of bird behaviour that gained through this helps conservation efforts.

BCN also works in conservation of habitats. This year it helped stop haphazard road construction at Gadi Siraichuli forest (recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area) and to halt more construction at Taudaha.

Bird Conservation Nepal
www.birdlifenepal.org



EVENTS



Pashupati Photowalk
Photowalkers are organizing their weekly walk at the Pashupatinath temple.
8 February 7:30am-11:30am, Pashupati, 9804116027

Object in focus
'Object in Focus' Series 4 features the work of Kathmandu-based visual artist Nabendra Limbu, titled Khaaja Gharma Muskan (A smile in a public place)
5-15 February, 10am-5pm, Taragaon Museum, Boudha (01) 6201035

Valentine Baking Class
Win your partner's heart with your baking! Learn some tricks at a class taught by pastry chef Deepak Shrestha.
13-14 February, 11am-5pm, Rs2000++ /person, Rs3800++/couple, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudha, 9801031236



In the sand and the snow
Watch One World Theatre Nepal's production of *In the Sand and the Snow*, a cautionary tale by Adam Rapp on America's drift to the far right. Pay what you can. Only 50 seats are available. See page 12.
9 February, 5pm and 7pm, Club 25 Hours, Tangalwood, 9823567346

Grand Dog Show
Show off your dog's agility and tricks at Companion Care's 12th Grand Dog Show.
8 February, 10am onwards, Satdobato Swimming Complex, Satdobato, 9851078032



Vertical Garden
Visit the Vertical Garden organic market at Dhokaima Cafe for fresh organic produce.
9 February, 8am-12pm, Yalamaya Kendra, Patandhoka, 9823558080

French movie and dinner
Bande de Filles (Girlhood) is the story of Marieme, who finds the opportunity to start afresh after meeting a group of three free-spirited girls. The film is followed by a special French dinner and a DJ set by Baba Selecta at Le Bistrot.
14 February, 6pm-11pm, Alliance Française Kathmandu, Jhamsikhel (01) 5009221



Affinity Aatmiyataa
Affinity Aatmiyataa is a duet art exhibition in which artists Ishan Pariyar and Sabita Dangol explore the themes of love and intimacy.
6-10 February, 5pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal (01) 4220735

Abha Kavya Lahar
Poets Shailendra Sakar, Shravan Mukarung, Biplab Dhakal and Navin Pasi will showcase their work on the eighth series of Abha Kavya Lahar.
8 February, 11:30am-1:30pm, Sarwanam Theatre, Kalikasthan (01) 4011027

MUSIC



Ben Böhmer
German DJ Ben Böhmer, known for his deep and progressive house music, is in Kathmandu as part of his world tour. Get your tickets from Ticketnshop.
7 February, 10pm-2am, Tickets: Rs1500++, Club 25 Hours, Gahanapokhari, 9801057602

Bob's 75th Birthday
Celebrate reggae icon Bob Marley's 75th Birthday. Live music from Joint Family Internationale.
7 February, 6pm-9pm, Musicology, Maitri Marg, 9860368061



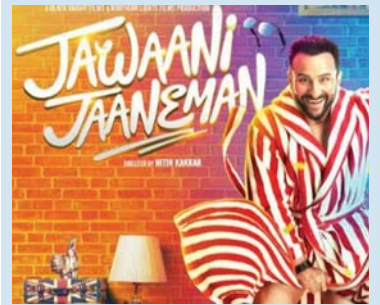
Live Music
Come with your beloved to enjoy a musical night with R&B duo Brijesh & Beyond at Privé Nepal.
14 February, 8pm-3:30am, Tickets: Rs 1500, Privé Nepal, Tahachal Marg, 9801090111

Funkiest Night in KTM
The band April Rush and other artists will perform live at Moksh.
8 February, 7pm-10pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel (01) 5528362



Friday with Five-O-Five
Join Five-O-Five for a musical evening as they perform covers and original songs.
7 February, 7pm-10pm, Social Cafe, Gairidhara (01) 4427370

OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu 31 January
40-year old bachelor and playboy Jaswinder "Jazz" Singh's (Saif Ali Khan) life is turned upside down when his pregnant 20 something daughter (Alaya Furniturewala), a child he didn't know he had, shows up unexpectedly at his doorstep. Watch Singh grapple with the responsibility of being a father and a soon-to-be grandfather.

DINING



Sweet Fix
A reprieve from the bustle of Basantapur, this is the place to be if you want your ice cream to be healthy. Try their handcrafted popsicles made with real fruit and natural ingredients.
11am-7pm, Nhoosa Marg



Chimes Restaurant
Celebrate Jamaican Food Night in honour of Bob Marley. Try the Jamaican Red Pea soup, Toto (Coconut Cake) and special Jamaican cocktails.
7 February, 6pm onwards, Sanepa (01) 5549673

Rox Restaurant
Treat your better half to a romantic five-course dinner served with paired wines. Take way a box of handcrafted chocolates.
14 January, 6pm onwards, Rs. 5600++, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudha (01) 5171234



The Cafe
Enjoy your winter evenings at the buffet barbecue every Friday until the end of February.
7 February, 6pm onwards, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudha (01) 5171234

Valentine's Day at Shangri-La
Celebrate this Valentine's Day with your loved ones at Hotel Shangri-La, Kathmandu over a romantic candle-lit dinner for couples along with a live performance by Tattwo Band.
14 February, 7pm-10pm, Rs.2500++, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat (01) 4412999

GETAWAY



Milla Guesthouse
If you prefer the quiet and admire a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far from the city, yet worlds apart.
Bhaktapur, 9851024137

Stargazing on Valentine's Day
Enjoy a romantic night under the stars with your loved one this Valentine's Day. Live music, buffet dinner, bonfire and more.
14 February, 5:30pm onwards, Club Himalaya, Nagarkot (01) 4442727



Balthali Village Resort
A small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of green, terraced fields dotted with ochre-painted houses.
Panauti, Kavre, 9851087772

Harmony Spa & Health Club
Amongst trees on the edge of a plateau overlooking Gokarna Forest and the grassed valley below, Harmony Spa combines therapeutic care within a natural environment for an experience unavailable elsewhere.
6:30am-10:30pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali (01) 4451212



Mount Princess Hotel
The hotel offers magnificent views of the surrounding valley and mountains and is a peaceful retreat amidst nature for those wishing to escape the city's madness. You can book your stay at OYO 256 Mount Princess Hotel through the OYO app.
Dhulikhel (01) 490616

ECOLOGIC WITH MISS MOTI

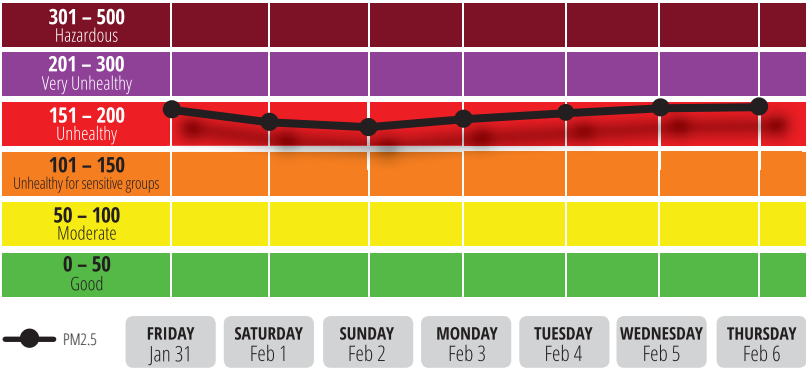
KRIPA JOSHI



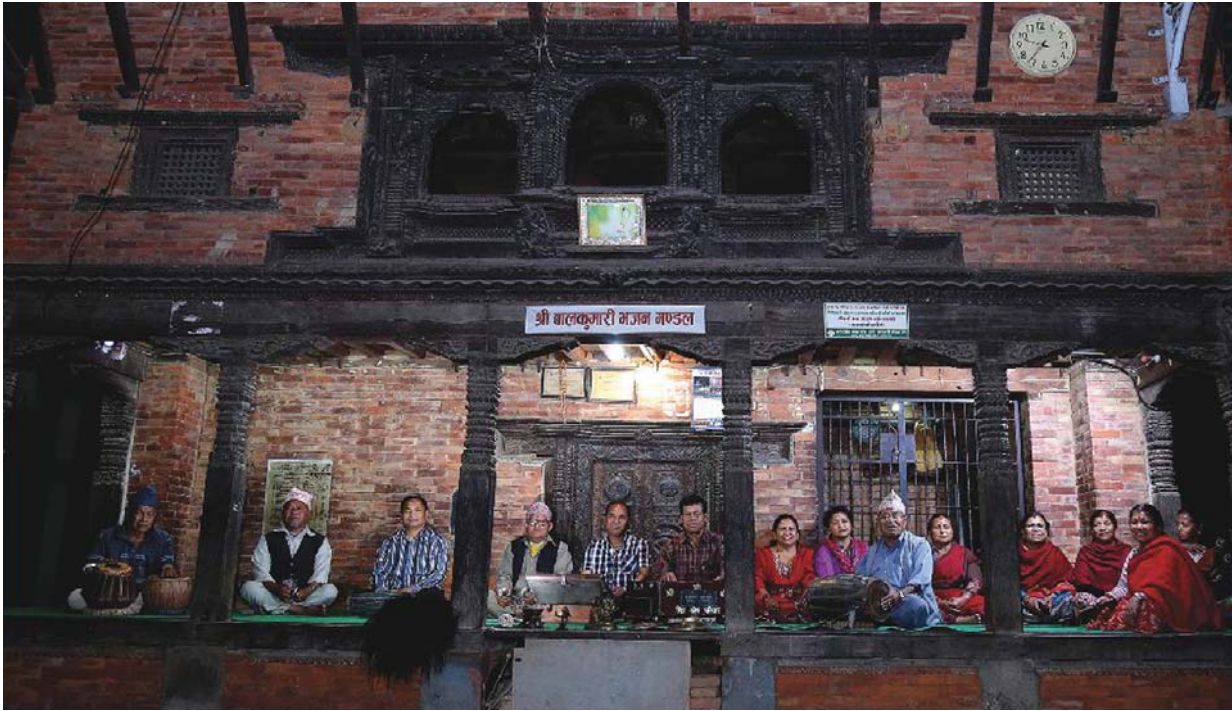
Dryers use a lot of energy and each one can emit more than a ton of carbon dioxide per year. Also, clothes last longer when you line dry due to less wear and tear. If you need to use a dryer then clean the lint filter frequently to increase efficiency, use moisture sensor if available and ditch dryer sheets which can contain harmful chemicals.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 31 January - 6 February



We have been seeing red and breathing unhealthy air all week long. Kathmandu Valley's average daily Air Quality Index (AQI) has reminded consistently above 170, higher during the nights due to bonfires and movement of trucks, and was very close to reaching purple 'Very Unhealthy' zone four out of seven days this past week. But as winter winds down, hopefully the inversion layer will dissipate, making the air marginally better. But not by much.
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>



Thimi's urban tissue

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

Mark Turin

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

Part ethnography, part archaeology, geography, history, architecture and planning, *Thimi: Community and Structure of a Town* is an updated and refashioned version of Pant's 2002 doctoral dissertation, whose stated objective was to provide a developmental account of Thimi in service of the conservation of the settlement's heritage.

Pant integrates ancient inscriptions and chronicles with contemporary oral histories, observations of ritual, household surveys, meticulous maps and elegant floor plans to create a complex and composite

understanding of Thimi, one of 31 significant Newar settlements in the Valley.

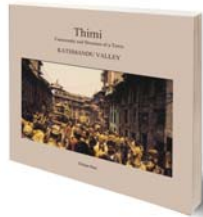
Thimi is also the 15th publication in the Himalayan Traditions and Culture Series by the Saraf Foundation that supports the Taragaon Museum, the Nepal Architecture Archive (NAA) and associated heritage activities of profound consequence and value to our understanding of the cultural history of the Kathmandu Valley.

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

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

The deliberate and ritually-circumscribed planning of ancient

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



Thimi: Community and Structure of a Town (Kathmandu Valley) by Mohan Pant
Saraf Foundation for Himalayan Traditions and Culture 2019
Distributed by Himal Books
181 pages Rs2,000



Mark Turin teaches at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He has lived and worked in Nepal for many years.

Bridging Nepal and the US

Memoir of Sherpa climber who never climbed Everest just 'because it is there'

In *Bridging Worlds*, climber, businessman and philanthropist Pemba Sherpa teams up with writer James McVey to share his rags-to-riches story. Sherpa went from being an unprivileged youth in Nepal's Khumbu region to becoming a successful entrepreneur based in Boulder, Colorado.

The idea for this book came about when Sherpa appeared on a radio show alongside climbing legend Reinhold Messner. While Messner was introduced as the author of a series of books, Sherpa had no publications to his name. In addition to being an autobiography, Sherpa's book is a cultural history of the Sherpa community from an insider's perspective. It seeks to bridge the gap in authorship and set some of the record straight.

Co-author McVey is careful to point out that 'Pemba's voice is but one of a multitude' and that his story is not 'representative of the entire Sherpa experience'.

At best, autobiography is a genre that offers insights into our shared humanity. At worst, as crisply distilled by Roald Dahl, it is 'full of all sorts of boring details'. All great autobiographies have a spark of transcendence, shedding light on an extraordinary life well lived. *Bridging Worlds* has a cheery cadence that makes for an easy read, but struggles to make the leap from personal publishing to fully-developed literature. Its readership will likely be friends and family of the author, patrons of his restaurant, and perhaps the occasional tourist looking for a safe story about Nepal that bursts no bubbles.

Sherpa (pictured, above) is strongest when he reflects on his surroundings with a critical lens. His abusive father dies when he is six and the author is contrite about the arrogant teenager that he briefly became. On the few occasions that Sherpa offers specifics, he leaves the reader wishing for more. Key moments like meeting and marrying his first wife in Nepal and then leaving to the States are passed over in a perfunctory manner, with little emotional texture.

Much of the book, however, is essentially 'anthropology lite', trading in cultural generalities and historical half-truths. *Bridging Worlds* would have benefited from a read-through by someone well-versed in the cultural history of Nepal, as infelicities such as 'Rais, Tamang and Lumbus chetree' would have been weeded out.

Pemba Sherpa describes his concern

about the 'sheer number of outsiders (Nepalis of other ethnic groups) presently living in Khumbu,' whose presence in the region is 'worrisome for Sherpas who are concerned about preserving their traditional culture'. Such sentiments must be carefully scrutinised: the in-migration of non-Sherpas into Khumbu is at least in part the result of Sherpa economic mobility and their own out-migration for better opportunities.

How might the author respond to citizens of Boulder, Colorado, let alone the original Native American groups who have lived there for generations before colonisation, raising concerns about the settlement of Nepalis in the United States, a land far from their own? When expressing unease about socio-cultural change, we must locate ourselves as participants and not bystanders in the process, and assume our share of the responsibility.



Overall, Pemba Sherpa emerges from this book as a kind and compassionate man. He makes a strong case for why he never climbed Everest: 'I believed an expedition on Everest ran counter to the spirit of climbing'. He is articulate about the inequities and destructiveness of the climbing industry as a whole.

Sherpa mobilised quickly following the 2015 earthquakes that rocked Nepal, raising funds for relief and reconstruction in his shattered homeland, and his writing becomes energised when he is emotionally invested in the outcome of this endeavor. The proceeds of *Bridging Worlds* are dedicated to improving the lives of Nepalis.

Mark Turin

Bridging Worlds
by Pemba Sherpa and James McVey
Sherpa Publishing, Boulder CO 2019
Distributed by Vajra Publications
205 pages

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FIRST LADIES: Germany's First Lady and the patroness of the German Committee for UNICEF, Elke Budenbender, greets President Bidya Devi Bhandari in Kathmandu on Monday.



NEPAL'S RISING SUN: Narayan Prasad Arjal, former Nepal ambassador to Japan (third from left), was conferred the Order of the Rising Sun by Japanese envoy to Nepal Masamichi Saigo on behalf of Emperor Naruhito at a function on Wednesday in the presence of their wives.

Dystopia is no longer fiction

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

The play *In the Sand and the Snow* being staged at Tangelwood this weekend is set in just such a world. Directed by Deborah Merola, the screenplay is adapted from the 2019 *New York Times* piece 'Imagining America in 2024' by Adam Rapp. Its name derives from its settings in the two Acts: the Arabian Peninsula (sand) and the Arctic (snow).

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

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

There are elements of the abstract and the absurd in this play, which meanders between disparate, unconnected incidents. We realise that the soldiers are actually actors, and that an audience of 12 people is watching the play. They sit in the front row alongside members of the real audience. But only they get an



intermission, and the real audience watches them take a break.

A disturbingly violent scene and another one with intense lovemaking in the restroom are accompanied by graphic descriptions that inject absurdity into the play and add elements of meta-commentary. The 'audience' gets back to front row seats and watches the beginning of Act 2, which is exactly like Act 1. A woman forces a baby on two soldiers, except that this time in an icy world.

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

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

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

This is a disturbing play. But we live in disturbing times. This is real escapism: where we escape from real-world dystopia to one on stage.

Sewa Bhattarai

In the Sand and the Snow
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Bimala Tumkhewa: Putting *kinema* on the map of Nepal

Born in 1978 in Tehrathum, Bimala Tumkhewa is popular for her hard-hitting journalistic articles on gender, literature, politics and society. But Bimala is at heart a poet and has written four collections of poetry. She also works as General Secretary for Sancharika Samuha (Forum for Women Journalists and Communicators) and is a core member of the Women Security Pressure Group.



LIGHTROOM CONVERSATION

Muna Gurung

What I admire most about Bimala's writing is that it is loud, fearlessly straight-forward and kind. She is honest and unafraid to question not only others but her own deeply held beliefs. In this month's Lightroom Conversation, Bimala and I talk about death, Radio Nepal, the madness that is love for poetry, ideas of beauty and disgust, and putting *kinema* on the map of Nepal.

Bimala Tumkhewa: I was born after my parents had been married for 19 years. By then my Aama had been called *baili*, *thaari*, and all sorts of names for being barren. I was a miracle, born when she went into labour after carrying 17 *doko* of straw. It was 7 in the evening. After me came two brothers, but both died.

Muna Gurung: How old were you when they died?

B: I was about five. I remember my mother holding my second brother's body in her lap for three days after he had died. She only put him down when his body began to smell. Dead bodies rot. Later, he was burned on top of a hill nearby. I could see the smoke rise from our home. Meanwhile, Ama was waist-deep in a pond next to our house catching small fish with her hands, and placing them into a pot.

M: I can see how focusing on catching fish can be easier than burning your dead child.

B: I can never unsee that image. But that was neither the beginning nor the end of our problems. My Buwa had been in the British Army and was one of the soldiers who were returned home empty-handed after 1947. His failure as a penniless *lahure*, now I see, had sent him into depression. But I did not know it then. In the middle of the night, Buwa would walk up to the cemetery near our home in Okhre, and sit there watching the moon, lost in thought. With two dead children and a husband who did not bring in much money, Ama traveled everywhere looking for work. By that time, Buwa had already brought a second wife. Ama wandered off to Pathri, where there were a few huts and a lush jungle. It was a place perfect for a woman with a broken heart. She settled there, and we followed her. We lived the life of squatters. Pathri today is a fairly large town.

M: How did you start writing?

B: My Buwa was a *lahure* who read literature, which is rare. He would tell me stories of Laxmi Prasad Devkota and and Bam Dewan. When I was around 10, Maxim Gorky's *Mother* and Parijat's *Sirishko Phool* fell into my hands. I understood very little of both books, but I still remember the cover of *Mother*, the son Pavel with his hands up in the air, something about that image stirred me. And at that age having seen all the financial hardship and experienced loss we had gone through as a family, I had begun to notice and understand certain things around me: like the fact that a social order existed, and some had more

than others. In 7th Grade, I started to write poems. My first one was called *Ma*, and it was about me. (*Laughs.*) I mean, what else would a 7th Grader write about? There was a big *pipal* tree in Pathri and there used to be cultural shows there sometimes, and I read my poem to a crowd of 1,500 people from nearby villages.

M: It must have been electrifying.

B: Yes, and it was precisely that feeling that made me chase after poetry for years. By the time I was in 11th Grade, I was seeking out poetry events. In Pathri, there was no one else who was writing and everyone used to say that Jettha Subba's daughter is completely rotten, that it is better to have a dead child than have a child like her at all. Growing up, I had a peaceful kind of nature, but I was also stubborn. I'm a Limbuni afterall. (*Laughs.*) Whenever I got a chance, I would read all the papers I could find to familiarise myself with the kinds of writing that were happening then, and the names of writers and poets. I used to have

called by the Maoists right before the Peoples' War started. And during that time, I remember them beating up anyone who was not Maoist. Pathri was no longer a safe place for me. Buwa had passed away, his second wife had gone missing. So I moved to Kathmandu in 2001.

M: And your mother?

B: After a month, she sold whatever little land she had and joined me in Kathmandu, but I quickly ran out of money. I also found out something strange about Kathmandu. The people who said they would help me suddenly had their own problems. I do not want to name names, but that happened to me when I went to a pretty well-known poet's home. In Kathmandu, people closed their doors in your face and ate.

M: The worst and the best things happen to you within minutes of each other in cities.

B: I spent all my days running from one literary event to another. I attended every one of them, these spaces gave me energy, I did not

and sit inside me for a long while, saathi. When I was younger, I used to write like a wild wind, aimless, directionless. But I realised that to be in literature is a huge responsibility. I have to understand the structures of the society I live in, the making of nationhood, love, religion, everything. Only then will anything I write mean something, otherwise, I might as well just open up a small roadside bar with dirty curtains.

M: Do poems come to you in Limbu?

B: I don't write in Limbu and before I used to think it was my problem, but I realise now that it is the state's problem. It is a type of oppression from the state that I have to write in Nepali. Even if I wrote in Limbu, the fact that I have to use the Nepali Devanagari script, already puts me at a disadvantage.

M: This system was never built for us.

B: Precisely. I came from a typical Limbu community and I am still someone who doesn't know how to use big Sanskritic words. I speak 'impure' Nepali for many, but it is not my fault that I think and feel in Limbu. I experience water not as *pani* but as *chuwa*. And by writing in Nepali, I am making their language richer. And still, I get so much criticism. My community thinks I am betraying it by furthering the hegemonic project of this Parbate language, while I am never enough for the brokers and keepers of the Nepali language.

M: I am also fascinated by the concept and politics of disgust, and who can be disgusted by whom. When disgust is othering, it is highly contagious and hard to reverse. And this is not only in beauty but also in food that different communities consume, the way they move, what they wear ... you have written about *kinema*.

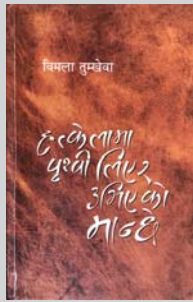
B: It is all about power. For me *kinema* is delicious, but for them, it smells like poop. For us, to serve pork with *kinema* to a guest is the highest level of respect that we can show. The logic is that pigs eat poop, and because we eat pigs, we are therefore equal to poop. The same with clothes. They can say all sorts of things about the clothes we wear, but I can never say that the woman who is dressed in red from head to toe looks like a sacrificial goat. To me she does, to me, she is not an image of beauty. But I cannot say that out loud without being accused of being an enemy of the state.

The religious texts of any community is crucial in shaping the way the men and women in that community see themselves. They are the first and most powerful forms of literature available. In the Limbu *mundhum*, which is a collection of myths and origin stories of the Limbu people, for any puja or ritual, Yuma, which is the woman of the house, always comes before Theba, which is the male figure. It is because of this that I feel that most Limbu women do not feel disempowered. So the issues of janajati women are different, and that it differs from group to group. Just like in our religious texts, what if in Nepali literature and in other Brahmanical texts, the women were to appear first and bold and respected? Don't you think that would slowly change our society?

In Kathmandu, I finally understood how strongly patriarchy is rooted in our society, both in men and women. A big gender revolution is pending. Women have to come together. We are too divided and too comfortable in our

own cliques. Look at how so many women in leadership positions couldn't rise beyond their party's beliefs and stand up for Shiva Maya Tumbahangphe. What we do not need today is someone to be a good wife, a good daughter-in-law, a good mother. But when she dies, she is nameless. Death is the ultimate silence. The question is what will you decide to do in this one life you have?

Lightroom Conversation is a monthly page in Nepali Times on interesting figures in Nepal's literary scene. Muna Gurung is a writer, educator and translator based in Kathmandu (munagurung.com). A longer version of this interview is available online.



Kinema on the map of Nepal

by Bimala Tumkhewa

Hau,
I have to say something no one long ago, or ever has said
How many poems about hunger can I write?
How much anger can I spew?
How many poems of love can I write?
Like a meal without salt,
like the incredible sight of *phedapeni kanchi*,
with half a headache, sitting on the belt of her house
muttering to herself.

What kind of game is my own life playing with me?
What kind of game is my own awareness playing with me?
What kind of game are my own tears playing with me?

Sometimes, I see the image of an old angry grandmother in my poems
Sometimes, I see the creator Tagera Ningwa Fumang
You might ask,
How dare you see images like that, so carelessly, in poetry?
Just because it's poetry, why only write about stifled knots of pain
sewn from a lack of comfort,
pain that no one has experienced?

Hau,
I'd rather write a poem about the rich taste of *kinema*
I'd rather write about the delicious sting of *akabare* chilli peppers
Why speak what Kainla has already said?
Why speak what Bal has already said?

Knowing-unknowingly, I will put forth my own words,
Hau,
If only in jest,
I have written now in poem, how the map of a country called Nepal
is smaller than my thumb,
right?
Translated by Muna Gurung



MONIKA DEUPALA

hair that went beyond my knees and when I was 19, I started wearing white saris to protest the practice that women had to wear white once their husbands passed away. They used to call me "The Widow".

M: Shortly after that, your first collection was published.

B: Two years later, in 1999, Dharma Rai helped me publish that book. I began to be established, at least in eastern Nepal, as a poet. Honestly, it was a kind of crazy love with poetry that I had developed. I knew very little about how to take care of myself but I was running around half of Nepal calling myself a poet. After that, I began writing for Dharan's *Blast Times*. When I saw my byline in the paper, the happiness I felt knew no bounds. Later, a group of us started *Hello, Pathri*, a newspaper where we reported on all sorts of things like deforestation, road accidents, animal grazing management. It all feels like child's play now. (*Laughs.*) But it was really from there that I began to get into the world of journalism and enter Kathmandu. The time was right because the Maoists were growing strong in Pathri. Not me, but my family had been strongly Congress, so we were a big target. I remember there was one *chakka jam*

think about anything else. Around that time, there was this craze of making a Hong Kong IDs. My uncle found four different IDs I could have used, I did not go because I would have to give up reciting poems. There were two proposals from *lahure* in the UK, and I turned both of them down because I knew getting married and going off to the UK would mean that I would not be able to recite my poems. It was a disease. A madness.

M: How did you make ends meet?

B: I became a journalist so that I could feed myself. I would throw out one article a weekend. *Rajdhani* used to pay Rs1,200 each, which was a lot for that time. But my true love had always been poetry. Because of that love and because I was slowly opening my eyes to a society that was rapidly changing, and by the beginning of the second revolution, I was able to write lines like:

*Even today, on Pashupati's banks of death
this heart, emptied of all senses, will spend yet another day staring off –
a cold wall, a night without you
and the life of a stateless person*

M: How does a poem come into being?

B: Something has to touch me deeply

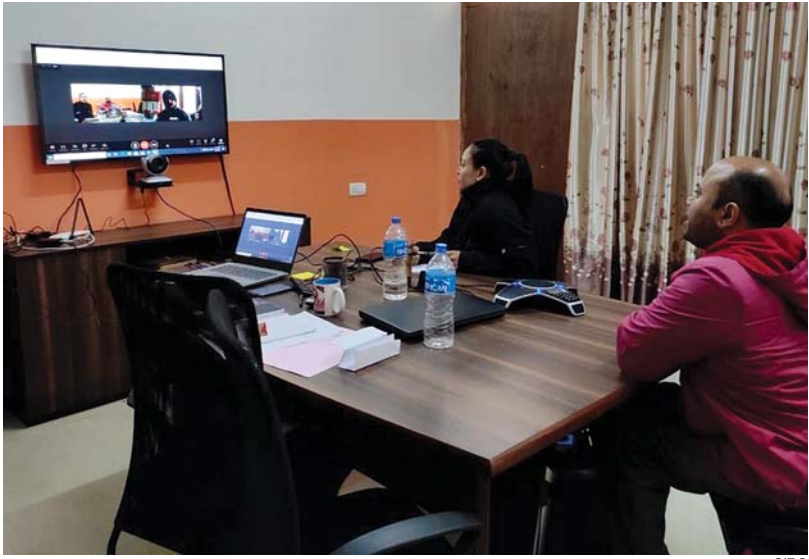
BIMALA TUMKHEWA



Listen to the Limbu poet speak about her upbringing in Terathum. About patriarchy, the domination of the state over culture, and how her activist writing gets her into trouble with both Nepali-speakers and Limbu-speakers.

nepalitimes.com

Injured use Internet to reach physiotherapists



SIRC

Sonia Awale

Last November, a speeding bus in Argakanchi lost control and tumbled down a mountain, killing 19 and injuring 18 passengers. Three weeks later, another bus careened off a serpentine road in Sindhupalchok, killing 16 and wounding 18.

Seven Nepalis die every day in road and highway accidents. Shocking though that statistic might be, the number of injured is much higher. On average, 40 people are injured on roads across the country each day. Last year, there were nearly 13,000 road accidents in which 2,736 people lost their lives and 10,731 were seriously injured.

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

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

“Forget about prioritising it,

Telerehabilitation now allows specialists to link with patients, saving time and money

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

The Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) in Sanga, founded in 2002, is Nepal’s largest inpatient rehabilitation centre and the only one specialised in spinal cord injury. The 51-bed hospital treats patients from all 77 districts and provides inpatient rehab for 300 individuals a year.

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

The only other facilities with dedicated inpatient rehabilitation beds are Green Pastures Hospital in Pokhara and the Hospital



for Rehabilitation and Disabled Children in Kavre.

“Usually two physical medicine and rehabilitation specialists are needed for every 100,000 people. This means we need 500 specialists in Nepal, and instead we have one,” says Manoj Sivan, associate professor of rehabilitative medicine at Leeds University in the UK, who says the gap in rehabilitative care

can be bridged with telemedicine. “Tele-rehabilitation can link the people in the community with specialists to provide necessary interventions remotely, allowing them to the save time and money spent travelling to the centre,” adds Sivan, who was in Nepal last month with a team of researchers to launch a six-month pilot project called Tele-rehabilitation Nepal (TERN)

in collaboration with SIRC (above, left).

Unlike other telemedicine consultations where a patient has to visit a health post to connect with doctors based in cities, in tele-rehab a social worker from SIRC visits patients, finds out their needs and then connects them with a specialist team that consists of a physician, physiotherapist,

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Wheelchair doctor treats patients in wheelchairs

As the only physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist in Nepal, Raju Dhakal (*left*) has a lot on his plate. His days are packed with back-to-back consultations with rehabilitation patients. The 37-year-old does this with ease as he moves about in his wheelchair greeting patients at Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) at Sanga, Kavre.

Dhakal himself was diagnosed with poliomyelitis when he was two-and-half years old. Originally from Gorkha, he came to Kathmandu and lived in SOS Children's Village while undergoing treatment. He started school at age seven, and learned to read and write at the same time as he learned to use crutches.

With an MBBS from Kathmandu Medical College, Dhakal went on to receive an MD in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Dhaka.

"At daily rotations during my internship, there was one patient that every doctor skipped. He was undergoing rehabilitation after treatment for a spinal injury. No one could do anything for him so he remained there in a corner of that ward," recalls Dhakal. "This opened my eyes to a gaping hole in medical care in Nepal."

Dhakal went on to become honorary clinical fellow at the Department of Rehabilitative Medicine at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Australia. He trained in Spinal Cord Medicine and Rehabilitation in Ireland, Canada and Switzerland.

"In Nepal we are still very focussed on diagnosis and acute treatment. But what about residual paralysis in case of trauma, traumatic brain injuries and spinal injuries?" asks Dhakal. "Long-term rehabilitative care for patients with disabilities is severely lacking. We need more facilities for specialised rehabilitation care."

Sonia Awale

MONIKA DEUPALA

occupational therapist, nurse and psychologist.

Patients with long-term disabilities and their families learn about better management of bladder, bowel and pain, as well as exercise techniques to help mobility.

The idea for e-rehab first came to Dhakal when a paraplegic patient from Surkhet visited SIRC and was unable to pay a minimal consultation fee. She had spent Rs45,000 to hire a jeep and had to pay for extended hotel stay for herself and two relatives. "It hit me hard," Dhakal recalls. "This country's topography makes accessing healthcare stressful for most Nepalis."

Besides those with spinal injuries caused by highway accidents, tele-rehabilitation is useful for those recovering from other medical emergencies like strokes and also for general medicine.

The Nepal Government's 2016 Policy, Strategy, and Ten Year Action Plan on Disability Management plans for every province to have at least one fully equipped rehabilitation centre and established orthotics/prosthetics workshop in the next ten years. SIRC is also working with the Ministry of Health to develop another 100-bed hospital to provide specialised rehabilitation care.

Added Dhakal: "Sooner or later the government has to take responsibility and decentralise rehabilitative care. This will allow us to train more people and supervise other centres to decentralise rehab." 🇳🇵

It's an emergency: Nepal needs to improve trauma care

A steep rise in road traffic accidents exposes the traumatized state of trauma care



NATIONAL TRAUMA CENTRE

Sanghamitra Subba

Speeding along a narrow winding mountain road in Dhading, a heavily intoxicated truck driver lost control of the vehicle and it overturned, killing seven and severely injuring 34 passengers hitching a ride.

This was a mass trauma incident that required immediate attention, but Nepal's only trauma care centre was located in Kathmandu, 90km away via bumpy roads jammed with traffic.

Most passengers from the truck accident were taken to nearby hospitals in Dhading, but the 21 most critical patients were airlifted or driven in ambulances to the National Trauma Centre in Kathmandu.

"It had already taken a while to bring the patients to the Trauma Centre, so we had to act quickly once they were here," recalls Pramod Yadav, acting medical superintendent at the facility.

The standard protocol for trauma care is the triage system -- determining the priority of treatment based on the severity of injury. Doctors at the National Trauma Centre quickly designated yellow, green and red codes to patients to ensure that those in critical condition were taken care of first, and fast.

On-call doctors were contacted and began assessing the patient's injuries. But without a functioning MRI and a faulty CT machine, some had to be sent to private clinics and later returned to the hospital.

This is a recurring event for patients seeking immediate care at the government-run Trauma Centre where patients in critical condition have to be moved about from one facility to another for tests.

"We cannot afford an MRI machine, it is very expensive to repair our CT machines, we have limited trolley beds and only 11 ICU beds when we need more than 50," says Yadav. "We are requesting

the government for Rs420 million to become a real trauma centre, especially since we are the only one in the country."

There were 60,000 severe trauma injuries in Nepal in the last year, a 3,000 increase from the previous year, and a whopping 27,000 over the year before that. Like with all government-run medical centres, the Trauma Centre lacks resources, is understaffed, and is incapable of handling this exponential increase.

"In the last two, three years, falls, physical assault, road traffic accidents, sports injuries and burns have been the leading causes of trauma," lists Siddhartha Dhungana, the Medical Record Officer at the National Trauma Centre. "Head injuries and multi-organ failures have been the highest causes of death in these cases."

Most hospitals in Nepal, like the National Trauma Centre, follow the World Health Organisation's trauma protocol. During a trauma case, medical personnel are contacted as soon as possible, patients are screened, their needs are identified and necessary care is given.

Although the government has not developed a standard care protocol for trauma like it has for cancer patients, private hospitals have implemented and refined their own systems based on WHO guidelines.

Om Hospital's Continuing Medical Education Program is at the forefront of teaching trauma care to new doctors and providing courses on improved techniques to existing doctors.

"We make sure that the ABCs of trauma care are followed strictly and that blood is readily available be it from our blood bank or staff-chain blood donors," says Binod Adhikari of Om, which handles dozens of cases every day and has systems in place to coordinate between doctors, nurses and critical care anesthesiologists to provide emergency care to patients. 🇳🇵



SANJAYA KARKI / FACEBOOK

Ambulance chasers

Most of Nepal's ambulances are just jeeps with stretchers, with no life-support systems or medical attendants. It was only in 2011 that Nepal's first emergency medical service was established. Supported by the Patan Academy of Health Sciences and the Stanford University School of Medicine, Nepal Ambulance Service (NAS) has since trained

more than 100 emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and ambulance drivers and operates the 'Dial 102' service. NAS operates mainly in Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara, Chitwan, Butwal and Bhairawa.

"Before this, only few private hospitals had ambulances and they were used mainly for patient transfer rather than pre-hospital care," says Hari

Khadka, a paramedic at Grande International Hospital and a member of the first EMT batch of NAS. "Ten years ago, there was simply no concept of pre-hospital care or paramedics in Nepal." Now, many hospitals have their own EMS systems with mostly Type 3 ambulances that have first aid kits and basic medical supplies. Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) operates 283 ambulances nationwide. Although not every ambulance carries a paramedic, every driver has received first aid training.

"We have five Type 2 ambulances and a paramedic in each vehicle," says Bipul Neupane of NRCS. "We send these ambulances to patients who need basic life support systems."

But for patients needing critical care in remote areas, there is no recourse but expensive helicopter medical evacuation.

Like Type 1 ambulances, some of these helicopters can have doctors, ventilators, advanced life support, and EMTs.

"EMS has helped save many lives in Nepal but it isn't always the best option considering the geography of Nepal and the condition of the roads," says Sanjaya Karki, Head of the Emergency Department at Nepal Medciti Hospital. "Helicopter Emergency Medical Services ensure that we can get to critical patients as quickly as possible and provide the best pre-hospital care."

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An official Fact-finding Task Force has pre-tested this column on lab rats and certified that it is fit for human consumption provided it is perused before the date of expiry of the reader. However, one can’t be too careful during these perilous times, so readers are advised to wear masks and use hand sanitiser after finishing. Management is not responsible for the consequences, especially if eager readers are apprehended perusing this column in the loo, or other restricted areas where human-to-human transmission can occur. Perpetrators, if caught, will be administered 36 lashes with a wet rattan cane on each hind cheek.

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Now that we have those legal niceties out of the way which are necessary to protect our asses from being hauled over the coals (as it were) we can get down to matters of national importance that you have all been impatiently waiting for with barely-concealed boredom.


The great American philosopher, Spiderman, once said during an unguarded moment: “With absolute power comes absolute responsibility.” And that is exactly what is happening with the awesome and/or glorious Nepal Communalist Party. In the two years since it came to power, our Great Helmspersons have made the country take a dramatic turn for the better. Every day and in every way, things are getting better and better and we can say with confidence that everything is so vastly improved, and we have reached such a pinnacle of stability and posterity, that they just can’t get any better anymore. In fact, things haven’t stopped getting any better, and from here on it is going to be downhill all the way.

The grabberment is single-minded in not letting petty issues like the need to evacuate Nepali students from Wuhan, finishing Melamchi, passing the MCC, or launching nationwide health insurance, distract it from taking a Great Leap Forward with urgent reforms in the education sector like banning maths in Grades 11-12, and requiring all school buildings to be painted yellow.

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





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