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SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019 (30-12-2075)

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NEW YEAR
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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2076

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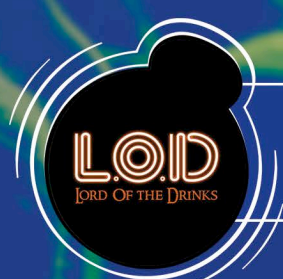
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THAMEL



NYE EVENT
MOKSHA LOUNGE
BANESHWOR



NYE EVENT
GREEN PLANET
MAITIGHAR



NYE EVENT
80'S CAFE
MAITIDEVI



NYE EVENT
MICHEAL GRILLS
BANESHWOR



NYE EVENT
NPP BURGER
MANGALBAZAR



NYE EVENT
ARYAL INTERNATIONAL
HOTEL
BANESHWOR



NYE EVENT
BURGER CLUB
SHANKHAMUL



NYE EVENT
MAIMI LOUNGE
SHANKHAMUL



NYE EVENT
JALAN JALAN
KUPONDOLE



NYE EVENT
FOYER
JHAMSIKHEL



NYE EVENT
MOONWALKER
MAHALAXMISTHAN



NYE EVENT
LE BAGAINCHA
JAWALAKHEL



NYE EVENT
THE HEADQUARTER
RESTAURANT, LAZIMPAT



NYE EVENT
SISHA
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
HOUSE OF MUSIC
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
PADDY FOLEY'S IRISH PUB
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
REGGAE BAR
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
GUITAR LOUNGE & BAR
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
CLUB CNI
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
FIESTA PUB
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
RED LION RESTAURANT
THAMEL



NYE EVENT
UPSTAIRS HOOKAH
& LOUNGE BAR
JHOCHHEN



NYE EVENT
SECRETS
JHOCHHEN



NYE EVENT
DE PIRATES
JHOCHHEN



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
POKHARA



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
BUTWAL



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
SUKEDHARA



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
BATTISPOTALI



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
SORAKHUTTE



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
GONGABU



NYE EVENT
MOJO BOUTIQUE HOTEL
OLD BANESHWOR



NYE EVENT
PUSPALAL PARK
KIRTIPUR



NYE EVENT
BHAKTAPUR



NYE EVENT
SYANGJA MARKET



NYE EVENT
ARAMBHA
RUPANDEHI



NYE EVENT
HOTEL TULIP
RUPANDEHI



NYE EVENT
SHREE INDRARAJYA
LAXMI, LAMACHHAUR



NYE EVENT
CHHAHARI CLUBHOUSE
BHAIRAHAWA



NYE EVENT
SIDDHARTHA STREET
FOOD FESTIVAL
BHAIRAHAWA



NYE EVENT
BHAIRAHAWA



NYE EVENT
BHAIRAHAWA



NYE EVENT
BHALLWARI



**DEEPAK
BAJRACHARYA**
VIEW SIDDHARTHA HOTEL
NEPALGUNJ



NYE EVENT
SIDDHARTHA COTTAGE
NEPALGUNJ



NYE EVENT
KITCHEN TOP RESTAURANT
NEPALGUNJ



NYE EVENT
GROUND ZERO
NARAYANGHAT



NYE EVENT
MUGHALS KITCHEN
NARAYANGHAT



NYE EVENT
GALAXY EMPIRE
NARAYANGHAT



FOOD COURT
NARAYANGHAT



NYE EVENT
SNOOKS CAFE & PUB
NARAYANGHAT



**MONGOLIAN
HEART LIVE**
NARAYANGHAT / BUTWAL



**MILLENNIUM
BISTRO**
BUTWAL



GALAXY CAFE
BUTWAL



**CITY VILLAGE
LOUNGE**
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**CLUB
CONCEPT**
BUTWAL



**GARDEN
CAFE**
BUTWAL



KFC CAFE
BUTWAL



OJAS LOUNGE
BUTWAL



NYE EVENT
EXPERT JAVA
POKHARA



NYE EVENT
BHANDYANG VILLAGE RESORT
POKHARA



NYE EVENT
STAR LOUNGE
POKHARA



NYE EVENT
BAJEKO SEKUWA
POKHARA



NYE EVENT
MUGLAN RESTRO
POKHARA



NYE EVENT
MANDALA LOUNGE
AND BAR
BIRTAMODE



NYE EVENT
MANDRO RESTAURANT
AND BAR
CHARALI



NYE EVENT
ANGRY BOY RESTAURANT
AND BAR
BIRTAMODE



**MUSICAL
NIGHT**
SURUNGA



**NY MUSICAL
EVENT**
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KAKARVITTA



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WITH LEZARD BAND**
DINING & WINING LOUNGE
BIRTAMODE



NYE EVENT
JANATA GROUND
ITAHARI



NYE EVENT
LAXMI MARG
FOOTBALL GROUND
ITAHARI



NEXUS BAND
BOOMERANG
DHARAN



NYE EVENT
LINGBARI HOTEL
DHARAN



**BUZZ PUB
ANNIVERSARY
& NYE**
BUZZ PUB
DHARAN



NYE EVENT
VINTAGE CAFE
DHARAN



**RHYTHM LIVE
MUSIC**
HOTEL GAJUR PALACE
DHARAN



NYE EVENT
SMILE FUN PARK
DAMAK



NYE EVENT
FUN N FOOD
VILLAGE RESORT
BIRATNAGAR



**NEW YEAR
FEST 2076**
SURYODAYA HOTEL ASSOCIATION
FRIKAL BAZAR



**THE NEXT
LEVEL FEST**
SARASWATI GROUND
ITTABHATTA



NY EVENT
UPLUNGE RESTAURANT
DHANGADI



NY EVENT
RAJ DURBAR MUSIC
LOUNGE AND BAR
DHANGADI



NY EVENT
JAPANESE FRIED CHICKEN
DHANGADI



**HAPPY NEW
YEAR 2076**
TIKAPUR



**MUSICAL
NIGHT 2076**
RAJAPUR



**HAPPY NEW
YEAR 2076**
DHANGADHI



**LIVE IN
CONCERT**
BHANU PARTY PALACE



**DEEPAK
BAJRACHARYA**
SUBHASHREE PARTY
PALACE, DHANGADI



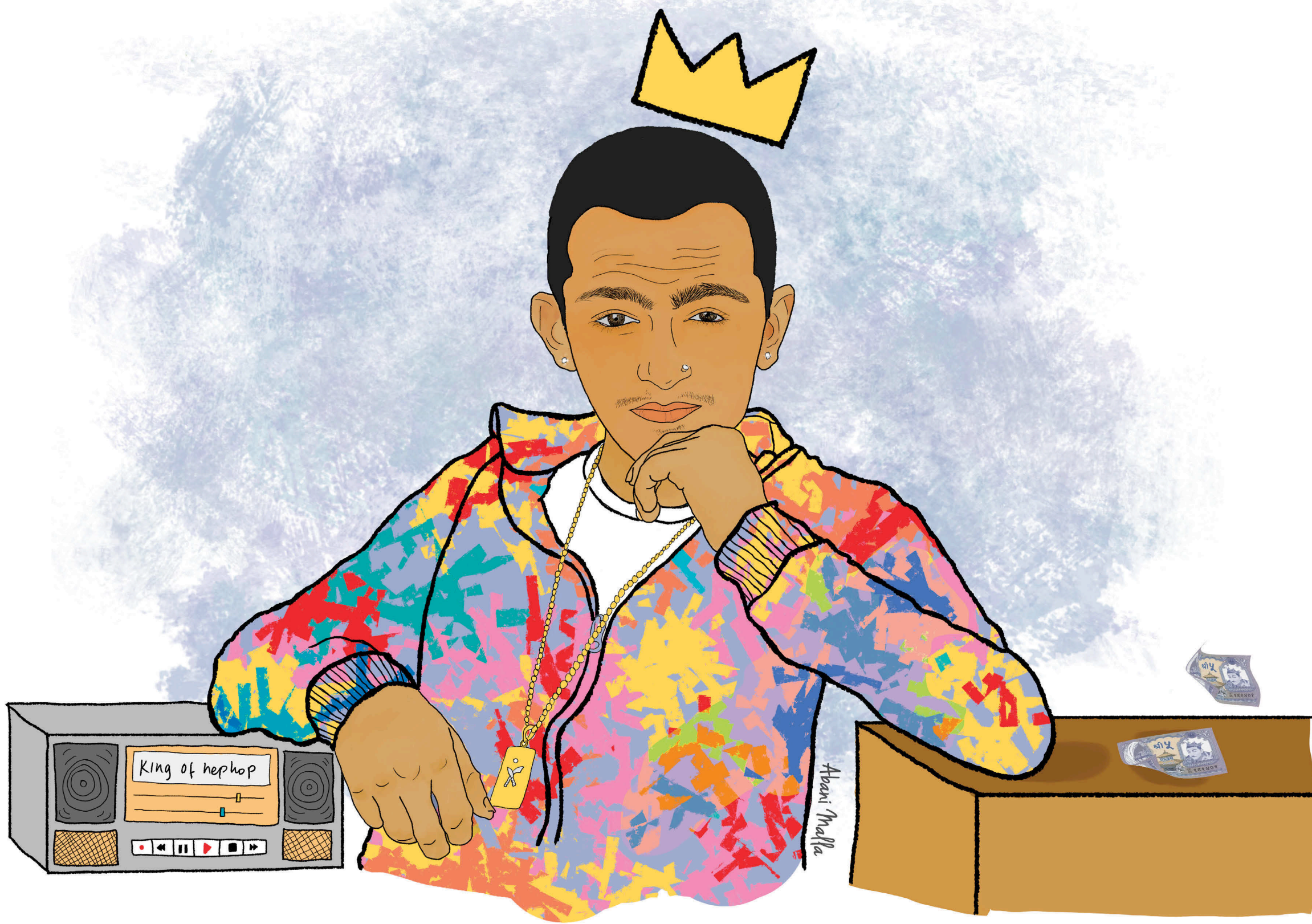
NYE 2076
HOTEL HIGHWAY
JHALARI



The return of Lil Buddha

Sacar Adhikari is emblematic of the new generation of Nepali rappers—brash, arrogant and ambitious

STORY & ILLUSTRATION: ABANI MALLA



Sacar Adhikari is angry. He's shirtless, tattooed and he's cursing. He's live-streaming on his Facebook page and within minutes, hundreds of people are watching the video. Sacar is attacking everyone, from then Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal to rapper Laure.

In 2017, videos recorded from Sacar's Facebook livestream went viral, effectively turning him into a meme. Within the span of a day or two, 22-year-old Sacar went from being semi-popular to downright infamous. He'd asked his fans to shoot Laure with a 'katta', an improvised pistol, in return for a 'heera', a diamond. People on the internet lost it.

Over a year later, hands folded at the back, Sacar stood in front of a mic, wrapped in a thick winter coat with a fur collar. Even though he's inside a studio, he's wearing sunglasses that reflect the studio lights. He has a new look: he's pierced his nose.

With Uniq Poet and G.O.D. on The Beat beside him, Sacar steps up to the mic.

"Yo, Lil Buddha on the mic, what's up, what's up, been a long time," he begins, announcing his comeback to the Nepali hip-hop scene, locally referred to as NepHop.

On January 12, 2019, two days before the two-year death anniversary of Nepali rap pioneer Yama Buddha, Sacar—who now calls himself Lil Buddha—uploaded 'King of NepHop', the first song of his upcoming album *Shree Panch*, to his YouTube channel. In the 10-minute-long one-take freestyle cypher, Sacar addresses his mental illness and drug use, all while proclaiming himself the greatest.

Yeah I do it for the future, psychotic rapper, psychedelic user, getting many views huh / Everybody watching going real crazy, everybody laughing / Everybody asking, what the fuck happened? / They

say they see my name in them tabloids and magazines

Within an hour, the video was trending as number one on YouTube Nepal and already had 18,000 views; as of today, it has over three million views.

Since then, Sacar has started a vlog, 'Sacar ko Sapana', which again has accrued over a million views in just two months. His most recent vlog, with singer Neetesh Jung Kunwar, was trending at number nine on YouTube overnight.

Sacar Adhikari isn't angry anymore. He's successful.

...

Sacar has plans to make the industry bigger and better but most importantly, he aims to 'pave roads' for emerging rappers, just like Yama Buddha wanted to.

A few minutes have passed and Sacar is still reading the menu. At a rooftop lounge in Dillibazar, the 23-year-old rapper is not the arrogant, boastful Lil Buddha. He's Sacar Adhikari: average height, skinny, dressed comfortably in a black tracksuit. A few minutes later, he finally looks up, and orders a cup of black tea.

But he's still wearing the rectangular 'King of NepHop' gold chain from his latest music video—two khukuris crossed in the middle with a diamond above them.

Finally, he begins to talk, unhindered, as if rapping at a slower tempo. He starts at the beginning,

recalling his days as a child listening to Radio Nepal with his mother during school holidays.

"He would talk so much that I'd offer him five rupees if he just stopped talking for a while," says Radha Adhikari, Sacar's mother. "Yet he would refuse the offer and keep asking me more questions."

One afternoon, during a visit to his maternal home, Sacar found Saujan Sangraula—his youngest maternal uncle and a singer—ready with a guitar. His uncle's impromptu personal performances became a crucial factor for piquing Sacar's interest in music.

would discover new artists. I even started to play the guitar."

There weren't any specific genres or artists Sacar listened to, but growing up in the 90s, he admired The Doors, Limp Bizkit, Sabin Rai, Blink-182, Audioslave, Aerosmith, Bob Marley, Iron Maiden, Metallica, Avril Lavigne, Pantera—everything that a young boy growing up in Kathmandu, exposed to the radio and MTV, might listen to.

When Radha returned from Europe in 2008, Sacar, who was now in the eighth grade, could hum Nabin K Bhattarai's songs and perform the rap from Nepsydaz's remake of 1974 AD's 'Chudaina timro maya le'.

"At first, I was surprised to see my son—this talkative boy—sing so well," says Radha.

Sangraula, Sacar's uncle, eventually left for Europe, but that didn't discourage him from pursuing his music. Back then, Sacar was singing more, not rapping. His classroom was the audience and a chair his stage. By the time he was in the tenth grade, 15-year-old Sacar was performing verses he'd memorised from his favourite songs while his classmates circled him. It was also then that Sacar smoked his first joint, after his classes were over, again circled by his close friends.

By high school, Sacar's musical tastes had changed—he had now started listening to rap. Busta Rhyme's feature on Chris Brown's 'Look at me now' was one of the first verses he admired, for its frenetic pace, says Sacar. He practised and later performed the verse in front of his friends, leaving them impressed. It was this song that introduced Sacar to 'old school hip-hop', and soon, he was researching this global phenomenon.

"It was what hooked me into rap but oddly, later I figured that it wasn't even real rap," says Sacar.

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

NEWS DIGEST

Indian held with 64kg marijuana
HETAUDA: Makwanpur police arrested Samir Ahamad, 28, an Indian national from Motihari, India, in possession of 64kg marijuana on Wednesday. Superintendent of Police Mukesh Kumar Singh said Ahamad was caught with several packets of marijuana hidden in the roof liner of a car. Ahamad was travelling towards Palthaiya from Hetauda. **(PR)**

Doctor shortage in Achham
ACHHAM: Health services have been affected due to a shortage of medical specialists and medical superintendent in Achham District Hospital. The hospital with 22 beds has nine posts of medical specialists, all of them vacant. Only two doctors are currently available at the hospital. Patients have been denied health services. **(PR)**

Cameras in Dhangadhi not in working order
DHANGADHI: None of the surveillance cameras installed in Dhangadhi are in working order. As a security measure, police had installed 14 cameras in core areas of Dhangadhi three years ago. Not a single one of them are functioning these days. Pushpa Raj Kunwar, chairman of the Dhangadhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the cameras stopped working due to lack of regular maintenance. **(PR)**

Province 4 donates Rs10m to storm victims
POKHARA: The government of Gandaki Province has decided to donate Rs 10 million to the victims of rainstorms in Bara and Parsa districts. A Cabinet meeting on Thursday decided to deposit the money to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, said Ram Sharan Basnet, Minister for Physical Infrastructures Development. **(PR)**



A boy skateboards at Patan Durbar Square in Lalitpur on Friday.

Government plans to set up annual regional dialogue

Through 'Sagarmatha Dialogue', the government wants to raise issues of climate change, and promote Nepal's peace process and social inclusion

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

The government is planning to set up a flagship international forum in Kathmandu to host dialogues with the rest of the globe on Nepal's concerns and expertise, according to officials at the Foreign Ministry.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has long expressed an interest in hosting an annual forum akin to those Singapore and India host every year. Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are putting together a concept to present to the prime minister.

"As a mountain country, Nepal can take a lead on issue like climate change. As our first and foremost priority, the forum will focus largely on climate change," said Foreign Secretary Shankar Das Bairagi.

Other issues that the forum will discuss are Nepal's success in building an inclusive society, the country's political and governance systems, and the peace process.

"The forum is to share Nepal's experience with the rest of the world. As the country of Mount Everest (Sagarmatha), we are facing adverse effects of climate change and global warming. We thought we can lead the world in this topic," Bairagi added.

In order to shine a spotlight on

the adverse effects of climate change, the Madhav Nepal government held a Cabinet meeting at Everest Base Camp in 2009.

When launched, the forum, which officials told the Post would be called Sagarmatha Dialogue, will be the third state-owned initiative for promoting and pushing foreign policy ideas. However, the first two think tanks—Institute of Foreign Affairs and Niti Addhyan Pratishthan—have failed to expedite their work due to administrative and political reasons.

Sagarmatha Dialogue is believed to be framed after two similar forums in the region: Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, which was launched in 2002 and has since become a track one inter-governmental security forum and an independent think tank. Singapore hosts the dialogue every year.

The second one is right in Nepal's backyard: the Raisina Dialogue, initiated by India's Ministry of External Affairs. It is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving a variety of global policymakers, including heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials. In recent years, both forums have seen the presence of major private sector executives, as well as members of the media and academia.

Sunil KC, executive director at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, observed that apart from foreign policy issues and issues that Nepal can share with the rest of the world, the dialogue should focus on multilateral issues and Nepal's reach beyond India and China.

"It should be based on an arrangement where government officials and experts can come together. Second, it should focus on trade, investment, and emerging economies. Most importantly, it should not be seen as a purely government-driven initiative. Several think tanks operating here should be made a part of it," said KC, who organises cross-country dialogue and seminars in Kathmandu on a regular basis.

Officials are not sure exactly which modality will be followed while setting up the conference but they hope the forum will bring together international experts, academics, businessmen, media persons, government officials, and military officials to participate in Kathmandu.

Rajan Bhattarai, foreign relations adviser to the prime minister, told the Post that the concept was discussed recently and it is still in a "very preliminary stage" to share details about because a

lot more needs to be discussed and agreed upon. He, however, said the forum would be similar to the ones in Singapore and India.

The ministry has instructed the regional organisation division headed by Joint-secretary Yagya Bahadur Hamal to come up with a concept and modality after studying other international forums.

Though a formal decision to initiate the dialogue is yet to be made, sources at the Foreign Ministry familiar with the developments said that a formal announcement would be made after the administration receives a report from Hamal.

Initial thoughts are to initiate dialogue on agendas pertaining to regional and global issues ranging from geopolitics to climate change to security to defence cooperation.

Officials are devising a work plan to constitute and operate the forum but are not sure if it will have an institutional set-up.

A work plan and a charter will be prepared before the design and funds get approval from the government, said officials.

The plan will also spell out the timeframe for holding the conference, and areas for collaboration with other think tanks and academic institutions, among others.

Chinese nationals caught with 3.5kg gold

NAYAK PAUDEL
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Authorities arrested three Chinese nationals with 3,500 grams of gold hidden in their rectums at the Tribhuvan International Airport on Thursday.

The trio—Ma Fuming, 24, Mao Yinghua, 23, and Zhang Zhiyang, 27—had landed in Kathmandu on a China Eastern Airlines flight.

"The airport security stopped the trio when the walk-through metal detector beeped while they were making their way towards the exit. We frisked them but found nothing on them," Gajendra Kumar Thakur, chief of the airport customs, told the Post.

"They were then scanned with a hand-held metal detector which beeped once again. The three men tried to convince us that the buttons on their clothes were causing the beeps, but the security personnel did not buy their explanation."

When the trio started getting agitated, the security personnel became more suspicious and put them through a body scanner, which showed a blurred image of some object inside

their abdomens, said Thakur.

"They were taken to the Kathmandu Medical College at Sinamangal for x-ray," Superintendent of Police Krishna Koirala told the Post. "The results showed metal in their rectums, after which the doctors gave them medicines to make them excrete."

Authorities found 1,300 grams of gold in one of the individuals' rectal cavity while the other two had hidden 1,000 grams each. The gold pieces were wrapped in condoms and placed inside their rectums.

The customs officials said the trio was used as carriers to smuggle the gold and they did not know anything about the receiver.

"During the

investigation, we found that the men were supposed to be picked at the airport by someone whom they did not know," said Thakur.

The mobile phones of the individuals have been seized and the customs officials, with the help of Chinese language experts, are working on decoding the messages written in Chinese.

The trio could get a one year jail-term and around Rs20 million fine for their involvement in the smuggling. If they are unable to pay the fine, they can face jail sentence up to 10 years, according to the customs officials.



WEEKLY LUCKY DRAW
OF RS. 1 LAKH

LIVE

Should the state tell kids what to play online?

Nepal doesn't have laws to ban games like PUBG, and legal experts say the move banning the massively popular game is a slippery slope

ARPAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

In a 2010 interview with New York Times, the late Steve Jobs responding to Nick Bilton's question if his kids loved the iPad said, "They haven't used it. We limit how much technology our kids use at home."

Coming from the Apple co-founder who gave the world some of the most innovative and iconic tech products, his response sent out shockwaves.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, too, in an interview last year with The Mirror talked about how there is a limited screen time for his children, which helps them get to sleep at a reasonable hour. "We didn't give our kids cellphones until they were 14 and they complained other kids got them earlier," the billionaire bookworm said.

In an open letter, Facebook cofounder Mark Zuckerberg wrote after the birth of his second daughter in August 2017, he emphasised the importance to make time to go outside and play. He also hoped that his daughter will read Dr Seuss.

All three tech billionaires who have had so much impact in the way we use technology in our lives have but one single parenting advice on children's use of

right ban. The ban, according to Singh makes the game illegal and anyone found playing the game will be arrested including internet and mobile service providers if they failed to comply with the directive, but he is unaware of how the young already know how to figure out a way to bypass the ban or other similar games that is available to download.

"We investigated for a month. Once the ban is implemented, they can't play the game," he said.

"If there are other similar games, we will deal with it."

But no sooner had the ban been announced, critics were quick to point out that the gaming issue had more to do with teaching children how to have a healthy relationship with technology and that the regulation is pointless as there is a whole range of battle royal genre games to choose from beside PUBG.

"This [the ban] is unnecessary. I have been playing PUBG for some eight months now and do one or two rounds after work," said software engineer Manas Shrestha. "Perhaps the government could introduce the six-hour per day limit that PUBG is testing in India if addiction is really a problem."



technology—limit children's exposure to technology.

The case for limiting children's exposure to technology is not new. From the dawn of radio, telephone, cassette player and walkman to cable television, PCs, gaming consoles and the internet, parenting has never been easy.

In the age of super-fast smartphones, social networks, online gaming and constant connectivity, parenting now comes with an added challenge—digital parenting. On Thursday, Nepal Telecommunication Authority directed all internet and mobile service providers to ban the massively popular PUBG, an online game which has a 16+ rating for strong violence.

The directive came following a public interest litigation hearing at the Kathmandu District Court on Wednesday when the Metropolitan Crime Division of Nepal Police seeking a ban on PUBG said that the game has a negative effect on the behaviour of children and youth and their studies. The permission to ban the game came the same day.

According to the division chief SSP Dhiraj Pratap Singh, the litigation was a result of complaints from parents, schools and school associations regarding the effect of the game on children. "We also held discussions with psychiatrists before filing a litigation and seeking permission to ban the game," Singh had earlier told the Post.

But advocate Babu Ram Aryal who specialises in cyber law says the ban is reflective of a hazardous and potentially slippery slope for democratic values and that the country actually lacks laws on banning content such as PUBG.

"This is an issue about good digital parenting and introducing policies on technology usage in schools. The ban is completely irrational and illogical and paves way for political control," Aryal, who is closely studying the PUBG ruckus, said.

"The litigation which claims consultations with psychiatrists is also abstract and offers no details."

On Thursday afternoon when PUBG, the award winning player versus player shooter game broke the Nepali internet sphere, it inspired a range of memes and exchange of opinions on social media as concerns over the game that it is addictive, and has negative effects on behaviour of children and youth and their studies were dealt with a stern government intervention in the form of an out-

The ban on PUBG too could easily be bypassed by using a virtual private network, which would instead raise online security issues according to marketing technologist Anil Ghimire.

"Nothing on the internet can be stopped. The understanding of the authorities on these issues is low. VPN would consume more bandwidth and we would be spending more money and time," Ghimire, one of the widely followed tech blogger said.

"There are other socio-economic factors that is largely ignored. If the game was really dangerous, it wouldn't have achieved its cult status across the world, would it? Young people smoking in cafes is more dangerous than that."

On Friday, as this went to press, PUBG is still openly accessible and it is not clear how the ISPs will implement the ban but according to technology experts, PUBG will remain accessible unless the PUBG servers impose a restriction on virtual private network.

There is also bound to be an increase in traffic as young fans and adults, figure out a way to engage in PUBG or other online multiplayer battle royal games at the comfort of their bedrooms and in complete privacy.

But concerns that games such as PUBG is addictive and has negative effects on behaviour of children cannot be ruled out completely, according to child psychiatrist Dr Gunjan Dhwonju, who occasionally plays PUBG in his spare time.

"Children should not be exposed to violence in any form be it in television, movies or games," said Dhwonju, who added that gaming for some children could actually be a way to cope with their anxious feelings.

"All this boils down to good parenting. Parents cannot shy away from their responsibilities to monitor their children's activities. PUBG is a rated game. They should allocate screen time for their health and safety."

Technology usage is bound to increase as technology takes big leaps. The gaming industry today is an internationally recognised sport and continues to evolve as tech companies offer cutting-edge digital experience and attract young fans.

"There was Farmville, Candy Crush, Angry Birds, Pokemon Go and so on. Banning something randomly is a knee-jerk reaction and does little to actually solve the problem," Dhwonju said.

TOMORROW AT 5 PM



JANAK RAJ SAPKOTA
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

The Central Investigation Bureau's records show that 10 foreign paedophiles were arrested from different parts of the country in the last fiscal year.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, APRIL 11

However, neither the Truth and Reconciliation Commission nor the Commission of the Investigation on

“The selection process will be fully transparent as per the aspiration of the stakeholders,” Sharmila Karki, a member of the committee told the Post.

SHANKAR ACHARYA
SUKHACHAINA (PARSA), APRIL 12

Manoj, who worked as a migrant worker in Calcutta, India, is now performing the death rituals of the deceased. "I had returned home to celebrate Holi," said Manoj.

Sanoj's family members and relatives have been left grief stricken after his untimely death. The victim's family say they have not received relief from the federal and provincial government or the metropolitan office.

"Not having citizenship has not only barred us from receiving the aid but the ward secretary has also expressed unwill-

Raj Kumar bemoaned having to spend his entire life as a stateless person. "I hope my sons and grandsons don't have to suffer this pain," said Raj Kumar. Many Indian nationals received Nepali citizenship certificates in Birgunj one-and-a-half decades ago, he added. "However, all those who received the citizenship certificate were well connected Indians."

New Year Eve Celebration

WISH YOU
HAPPY
NEW YEAR
2076

HOTEL
MANAND
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Live Cultural Show,
Live BBQ with
Buffet Dinner &
Carlsberg Beer
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Room also available

Probably the best beer in the world.

Arundhati Roy speaks at an event in Kathmandu on Friday. She is best known for her novel 'The God of little things,' and is also a social activist.

BHRIKUTI RAI
KATHMANDU, NEPAL

The first time was in 1997, after her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, was released. Back then, she had to answer charges of obscenity. In the years since, her political

The audience broke into applause, and watched Arundhati Roy take a bow and leave the stage with her unforgettable smile.

SHADING: The residents of Khahare and Aarughat, who will be affected by the construction of the mega Budhigandaki Hydropower Project, on Friday staged demonstrations in Dhadingbesi, the district headquarters of Dhading, demanding compensation for their land and properties. They have demanded that the authorities fix the compensation for the Aarughat, Arkhet, Bishalnagar and Khahare bazaar areas. The 1,200MW national pride project is expected to affect more than 8,000 households in Dhading and Gorkha. (PR)










New Year Eve Celebration

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Live Cultural Show,
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Buffet Dinner &
Carlsberg Beer
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For Reservation:
Tel: 6700389 / 9851052685
Time: 6:00 pm onwards
Date: 13th April 2018
(30th Chaitra 2074 BS)
Hotel Manang Pvt. Ltd.
Thamel, Kathmandu



**HOTEL
MANANG**
THAMEL KATHMANDU NEPAL



Probably the best beer in the world.

The return of Lil Buddha



PHOTO: ABANI MALLA

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Hip-hop in Nepal can arguably be dated back to 1993, when Girish Khatriwada and Pranil Timalisina formed GP, and a year later, released the first Nepali rap album *Meaningless Rap*. The 10-track album was greatly influenced by the stylistic trappings of East Coast hip-hop—primarily from New York in the United States, the birthplace of the movement. The album was full of rap clichés—drugs, love and braggadocio, as on the track ‘Ma yesto chu’. But they were also singing about politics and social issues. The album went on to sell more than 18,000 copies. “Their song, ‘Malai vote deu’, was the first song about activism that I had heard,” says Sacar. The song was a satire about politicians and how they make false promises before elections. “I remember those songs as my earliest inspiration to rap music.”

Following GP’s unprecedented commercial success as a rap duo, other artists started to emerge in the Nepali rap community. By the early 2000s, there was a fully-fledged hip-hop community in Kathmandu, and they called their brand of music ‘NepHop’. Artists like Nirnaya Da’ NSK, Nepsydaz, Sammy Samrat, Madzone, DA 96, 9double7, Jehovah, and The Unity were getting regular play on the radio and on television, and they were selling out concerts.

But in the years that followed, and despite the long list of Nepali rappers, the movement failed to break through. It was almost as if rap was a blip on Kathmandu’s musical radar—there and gone. Most rappers either stayed underground or stopped rapping. Others left the country for college or to work. The few that continued were playing to a handful of loyal fans.

It was only in 2011 that Nepali rap saw a resurgence. With one music video, Yama Buddha brought rap back into the mainstream and this time, it exploded. Yama Buddha’s video for his song Saathi, off of his mixtape, gained thousands of views and elevated him to overnight rap star.

In 2012, Sacar had just graduated from high school and rap was fast becoming his obsession. He was recording himself delivering free verses over Dr Dre beats, and even filmed his first single, with the help of his sister and uploaded it to YouTube. That video got a measly 2,000 views.

“It was laughable compared to the views I get today,” says Sacar. “But it was that little success that told me to start rapping

professionally.”

He had moved on from the staple hard and classic rock repertoire of the young Kathmandu man and was now listening religiously to rap. His biggest influencers were Nas, Tupac, Big L, Cassidy and KRS-One—all from the ‘old school’ of the rap game—while Kendrick Lamar, Dizzy Wright, Wax and Herbal T are among the contemporary and underground rappers he admires.

Later that year, while at a cafe for a smoke, Sacar ran into Yama Buddha. They were introduced by a common friend. Sacar knew Yama Buddha and although he acted calm when they first met, he said he was ‘impressed and had a good feeling.’

In early 2013, a few months after they met, Yama Buddha, in collaboration with three friends, started Raw Barz, a freestyle battle league where rappers would go head-to-head against each other in insults. Raw Barz soon turned into a platform for young Nepali rap artists to show up, perform and test their mettle.

A few months after their first meeting, Sacar received a message from Yama Buddha, inviting him to take part in the first season of Raw Barz.

The scene is set: Sacar on one side and Uniq Poet on the other. They’re surrounded by a hooting, booing audience. Yama Buddha motions for quiet. They toss a coin and Uniq goes first.

This was the first time Sacar met Utsaha ‘Uniq Poet’ Joshi, who he’d go on to collaborate with later. Although they went to the same school, they had never known each other.

“I had battled before, but it was Sacar’s first time,” says Joshi. “Then, it was easy for me to tackle him, but now he’s gotten quite good at it.”

The first few days, Sacar sneaked out of the house to attend the event. Later, as his videos went viral, his mother learned of his activities.

“I was fine with the rap, but I asked him to stop using such language,” says Radha. “But he told me this is how it is.” Since it was a rap battle, insults and coarse language were common at Raw Barz.

Sacar’s father, Keshab Adhikari, was also supportive.

By the end of the first season of Raw Barz, Sacar had won a small but growing fan following and had built connections with the Nepali rap community, especially Yama Buddha, or ‘Yama dai’ as he calls him. Yama Buddha was a mentor to many newcomers in the rap game and Sacar, too, placed him on a pedestal once

he got to know him well.

In February 2015, Sacar left for Australia to continue his studies. He enrolled at the University of Technology Sydney for Information Technology, but a year later, he dropped out and started working full-time delivering mail. He liked his job, as he owned a bike and could listen to music all day. He also had occasional gigs at bars and restaurants. Sacar was busy.

At the end of 2016, things went sour between Sacar and his then girlfriend, which he said began affecting his emotional health. The Post reached out to the former girlfriend but she refused to comment or be identified.

On January 14, 2017, Sacar returned to his apartment from work, only to hear the news of Yama Buddha’s suicide at his home in London. The entire NepHop community was shaken. And Sacar lost his mind.

Sacar was suffering the emotional hurt of his failed relationship, and the mental pressure of living and working in Australia. Yama Buddha’s death was the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back.

“I stopped caring about anything, nothing mattered anymore,” says Sacar.

He started doing psychedelics and hard drugs. And within a few weeks, he started going online on Facebook, streaming videos of him spouting conspiracy theories and asking for hits on other rappers. He was angry, harsh and not in the right state of mind. He blamed other rappers for Yama Buddha’s suicide and even abused his own sister. His mother, back in Nepal, started receiving phone calls and visits from friends and relatives. Sacar had lost control.

“I remember doing those things,” says Sacar. “But I can’t figure out how I was doing it. I just know that I wasn’t sane.”

■ ■ ■

Sacar admits he is stubborn. Once he plans to do something, he says he doesn’t listen to anyone, especially when he’s intoxicated and out of his mind. In the midst of his breakdown, Sacar somehow managed the time to record a new album. He felt the need to complete his dream of ‘paving the roads of NepHop’, abandoned halfway due to the death of Yama Buddha.

In 2017, he acquired a new stage name, Lil Buddha as a tribute to Yama Buddha.

“In hip-hop, the day you name yourself, you become a man,” he says. “It’s not about the gender; it’s about an attitude.”

In August of that year, he dropped his first

mixtape, *Tathastu*, with the track ‘Sapana’, a remake of Yama Buddha’s original.

“To me, Sacar is a rebel. His cover of Yama Buddha’s ‘Sapana’ was what caught my ear,” says 20-year-old Gaurav Phuyal, a frequent commenter on Sacar’s Instagram who’s already pre-ordered his new album. “I love the reggae vibes in songs like ‘Ganja nation’.”

Although Sacar’s album was out, he was still on drugs. His parents, desperate back home, requested his friends to take him to a hospital. Radha even acquired a visa in two days and flew to Sydney to take care of her son. Sacar was medicated but even the doctors weren’t sure what, if anything, was wrong with him.

“They said he might have bipolar disorder,” says Radha. “But they couldn’t confirm it.”

Sacar was prescribed medication for depression and eventually discharged. He returned to Nepal with his mother later that year. But back home, another crisis awaited him.

His livestreamed rants had reached a wider audience than he’d imagined. He’d railed against the prime minister and other politicians, leading the police to file a cybercrime case against him. If convicted, he could have received five years jail time and a fine of Rs 100,000, says Radha.

Sacar’s parents argued that their son wasn’t mentally stable but this meant that he’d have to undergo a medical evaluation. Sacar was hospitalised at the mental hospital in Patan for a week. But it wasn’t doctors who gathered outside his room every morning—it was the group of female interns who apparently knew of Sacar and were fans of his music. They mobbed him during his stay in Patan, asking him for autographs and selfies. Radha captured her son’s newfound fame on video.

Sacar was eventually found not guilty since he’d been under the influence and had not been mentally stable. But the whole process had taken a toll on him. For most of 2018, Sacar stayed home, waking up late, taking a shower, and then sleeping all day. Healing took time, and Sacar invested almost a year in getting better. But when 2019 dawned, he knew he had to get back into the game.

Sacar registered a new record label, YB (Yama Buddha) Records, and has geared up to release a new album under it.

“I wasn’t silent, I was working in silence,” he says. “I had it all planned out because Lil Buddha had to build his empire.”

He came up with the King of NepHop

brand, managed by YB Records, which primarily does “rap stuff”—releasing songs, organising rap battles, freestyle sessions and hosting interviews. Sacar wants to “take over” the kingdom that is hip-hop in Nepal.

His process is regimental and old-fashioned. Sacar has his own flag, literally, and an album that he says will be circulated (sold) like currency.

This new album, *Shree Panch*, was announced in December 2018 on Sacar’s Instagram. He has a unique concept for the new album—he’s printed a one-rupee note with King Birendra on the left and himself on the right, and a QR-code on the back, encouraging buyers to directly download the album.

“I love how Sacar is focused on his dream. He messed up a little when he was in Sydney but I think the pressure that international students, particularly one with a background like his, might’ve taken a toll on him,” says Prisma Aryal, a music student and a long-time fan. “The way he can smoothly transition from pop and jazz influenced songs to rap shows that he’s tremendously multi-talented.”

But not everyone likes Sacar’s new direction. His critics, and even fans, feel “less connected to the song as the lyrics were wack and had no substance,” says Phuyal. Sacar’s constant cry to “save NepHop” had fans expecting that he’d be more “like Yama.”

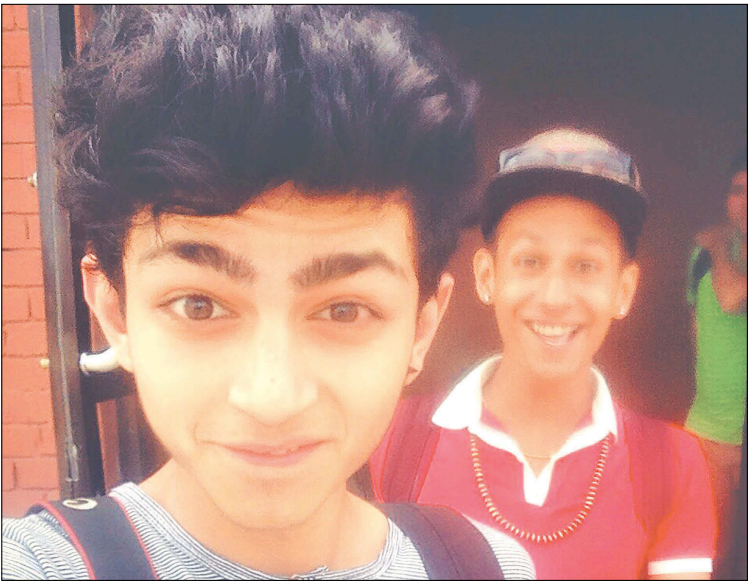
NepHop isn’t as popular as hip-hop is in the west, but the community is growing, especially since the Raw Barz series. For rap aficionados, Sacar lies somewhere in the middle—there are artists better than him and artists worse than him. He’s back, he’s better, but some listeners say he’s not the best yet.

“He’s better than he was before, but like in King of NepHop, he gets outshone by others,” says Dirghayu Shah, a rap fan. “But if you’re into the genre then he’s like another brick in the wall, nothing special.”

Sacar has plans to make the industry bigger and better but most importantly, he aims to ‘pave roads’ for emerging rappers, just like Yama Buddha wanted to. His time in Australia helped him acquire a new perspective.

From the rooftop lounge in Dillibazar, Sacar looks out at a panorama of his city while the wind blows out his cigarette. He says he looks forward to many of his plans, especially his Nepal tour, which he hopes will promote NepHop in every corner of the country.

“I don’t really see a future for Sacar in rap,” Radha, his mother, says. “But then again, I don’t see my headstrong son doing anything else.” ♦



Sacar with Yama Buddha, the rapper who was a mentor to many newcomers.

“In hip-hop, the day you name yourself, you become a man,” says Sacar. “It’s not about the gender, it’s about an attitude.”



Sacar with Girish Khatriwada of GP, Nepal’s pioneering rap duo.

PHOTOS COURTESY: SACAR ADHIKARI

The artist who uses Mithila painting to challenge social norms

Ranju Yadav's paintings mock and satire what are considered society's norms: gender inequality and the caste system

TSERING NGODUP LAMA

When Ranju Yadav was a ninth grade student in Rajbiraj, an incident from a nearby village made a lasting impression on her. A woman was murdered by her in-laws because her parents had not paid enough of a dowry.

"I cried when I heard that news. It disturbed me so much," says Yadav. "I remember wondering what could be done to stop such murders."

In 2013, 27-year-old Yadav completed her first-ever professional Mithila painting. In the middle of the painting is a man on a scale being weighed against several boxes, a car, a motorcycle, and jewellery—things that are normally given as part of a dowry. In the four corners of the painting are four more illustrations—a woman getting ready for marriage; her marriage ceremony; her in-laws demanding more dowry; then torturing her and then setting her on fire. Yadav named the painting 'Dowry Killing', and put it up as part of her first exhibition, in 2017. The painting, Yadav says, depicts a reality that's prevalent in many parts of the country.

Born in Thalha village in Saptari district, Yadav spent her childhood watching her grandmother, mother and aunt do Mithila painting. "They would paint on the walls and floors of our house," she says. "When I was old enough, I started painting with them."

When Yadav was 12, she moved to Rajbiraj to live with her uncle and aunt—their house was made of concrete.

"I was used to painting on mud walls and floors, and my uncle's city house had no mud walls," she says. "Luckily, the house's front area had a small mud-plastered section, and that was where I would paint. I would make colours from tree leaves, cow and buffalo dung, and coal. I would also decorate my school copies with elaborate Mithila drawings."

Every time she started painting, Yadav says, she would lose track of time.

But despite her interest in painting, she had never imagined that she'd become a painter later in life. "I wanted to become a singer/dancer. I loved watching dancing and singing reality shows, and I wanted the life of the participants I saw on TV," she says.

As Yadav grew older, she outgrew her fascination with reality shows. She studied to become a teacher and got a bachelor's degree in education in 2012, and in 2016, she completed her Master's in Arts, specialising in Maithili.

"What I wanted out of my life kept changing, but one thing that remained constant through all these years was my love for painting," says Yadav.

In 2010, Yadav got married and moved to



Ranju Yadav's paintings being exhibited during her first solo exhibition 'The colours of change' held at Nepal Art Council from March 30 to April 5.

Kathmandu. "I had started making Mithila paintings on cloth, and when I moved to Kathmandu, I brought them with me," she says. She placed one of her paintings on the TV table in her new home in Kathmandu.

"Even in Kathmandu, I continued painting, but even then I never really thought about pursuing painting as a career. It was something I loved doing during my leisure hours," she says.

But things changed when she met Ajit Sah, a senior Mithila artist, in 2013. "Ajit Sah visited my family, and when he saw the tablecloth on the TV table, he was very impressed. He encouraged me to pursue art seriously and even agreed to guide me," she says. That year, she finally started painting on paper.

Under Sah's mentorship, Yadav started to improve. "When Ajit moved to the US, he would teach and train me via Skype. I would show him my work and he would suggest where I needed to make improvements. I owe a lot to him," says Yadav.

When Yadav had her first group exhibition in 2017, where she exhibited her 'Dowry Killing', Mithila painting had already become hugely popular. But according to her, she was the first Mithila painter to use the artform to comment on a prevalent social reality.

"As a 16-year-old girl in Rajbiraj, I cried feeling helpless when I heard about a dowry killing. Almost 16 years after that incident, I was using an artform that I loved to spread awareness about an issue that I feel strongly about," says Yadav.

In 2018, she was part of a group of Nepali artists who travelled to Dhaka, Bangladesh to

take part in a Nepal Art Fair. That year, she became the first person from her village to travel abroad.

"Many in the village asked me how I had travelled so far without my husband," says Yadav. "Even in 2018, for many in my village, it was unthinkable for a woman to go abroad without being accompanied by a male member of the family."

In many of her paintings, Yadav mocks and satires what are considered society's norms: gender inequality and the caste system.

"Having grown up in Rajbiraj, I have heard deeply upsetting stories of girls' parents being forced to spend huge amounts of money on dowries, dowry killings and sex-selective abortion," says Yadav. "Through my paintings, I raise awareness against these practices."

One of the paintings in her first solo exhibition, which was recently held from March 30 to April 5, was titled 'Confronting Challenge'. In the painting, a woman wearing a bright red sari is stopping a bull by grabbing its horns. The painting, Yadav says, shows a woman's strength—physical and psychological.

In another painting titled 'Education is Power', there are four illustrations of a woman working in an office, using a telescope, piloting an airplane, and giving a speech. The centre of the painting is a woman reading a book.

"If you provide girls with an education, they, too, can become officers, scientists, pilots, and politicians," says Yadav.

Another painting titled 'Disaster Tourism' mocks the government's indifference towards those whose daily lives are upended by natural disasters. In the painting, several helicop-



ters hover above a flooded village where people are shown sitting on the roofs of houses inundated with water; livestock and people are wading in the depths. The people in the helicopters, says Yadav, represent politicians who visit disaster sites but don't actually do enough to help the victims.

The paintings that Yadav exhibited in her

solo exhibition were all made in the last three years. "I have spent 12 to 15 hours a day just painting, and one painting takes me anywhere between two weeks to a month to finish," says Yadav. "To be able to raise awareness against issues that you strongly believe in and also have an audience is empowering. More women should have such platforms." ♦

Five damaging myths about video games—let's shoot 'em up

PETE ETCELLS

Video games are one of the most misunderstood forms of entertainment. In one sense, it's easy to see why: if you haven't had much interaction with them, watching someone play one can be a pretty unsettling experience. Gamers can often give the impression that they're glued to the screen, absorbed in what feels like the digital equivalent of junk food. At best, it seems like a pointless thing to do; at worst, we worry that games are socially isolating, or actively harmful. If we take a little time to uncover the true nature of video games, though, we find a very different story playing out...

- 1. 'Video games cause us to become more violent'**
One of the longest-standing tropes about video games is that violent ones—like Call of Duty or Fortnite—can cause players to become more aggressive in the real world. It's a worry that becomes acutely salient in the context of mass shootings. Video games often take centre stage in the ensuing media analysis of such atrocities, with insinuations that not only do the perpetrators play violent games, but that they were driven to the act because they play games.
Such accusations often fall flat in the face of subsequent forensic analysis. Indeed current scientific evidence suggests that the link between games and aggression is actually weak. In a recent study published in Molecular Psychiatry participants were asked to play a violent game (Grand Theft Auto V), a non-violent game (The Sims 3) or no game at all, every day for a period of two months. Using an array of questionnaires and behavioural measures to test aggression, sexist attitudes and mental health issues, the study's authors found that playing the violent video game had no significant negative effects on any of these measures.
In a similar vein, research published this year in Royal Society Open Science showed that in a survey of more than 2,000 teenagers and carers in the UK, there was no evidence that playing violent games caused the teens to either become more aggressive or less social.
Two studies aren't going to give us the whole story, of course, but the emerging picture from the research literature is that video games don't appear to have a meaningful impact on aggressive behaviour, and certainly aren't the root cause of mass acts of societal violence.
- 2. 'Video games are addictive'**
In the summer of 2018, the World Health Organization formally included "gaming disorder" in its diagnostic manual, the International Classification of Diseases, for the first time. It was a decision that ignited a furious debate in the academic community. One group of scholars argued that such a diagnostic label will provide greater access to treatment and financial help for those experiencing genuine harm from playing video games. Others (myself included) argued that the decision was premature; that the scientific evidence for gaming addiction simply wasn't accurate or meaningful enough (yet).
Part of the problem lies in the checklists used to determine whether a disorder exists. Historically, the criteria



for gaming addiction were derived from those used for other sorts of addiction. While that might be a reasonable place to start, it might not tell us the whole story about what the unique aspects of gaming addiction look like. For example, one of the standard criteria is that people become preoccupied with games, or start playing them exclusively, instead of engaging in other hobbies. However, these don't sit very well as a benchmark for what you might consider to be "harmful" engagement, because games themselves (unlike abused drugs, say) are not inherently harmful.
Also, using this as a criterion has the potential to inflate the prevalence of addiction. While there will be people out there for whom gaming can become problematic, the chances are that this is a small group.
Moreover, some research suggests that gaming addiction is fairly short-lived. Data looking at players over a six-month period has shown that of those who initially exhibited the diagnostic criteria for addiction, none met the threshold at the end of the study.
This is not to say there isn't anything about games to be worried about. Increasingly, and particularly in the case of mobile games, gambling-like mechanisms in the form of in-app purchases and loot boxes are being used as sources of income. Here, some emerging research suggests a correlation between people who spend money purchasing loot boxes to acquire new in-game items and scores on measures of problematic gambling. This work is preliminary, and we don't yet know the causal direction

of the relationship, but it points to the fact that there are some aspects of games marketing and monetisation that we need to be wary of.
3. 'Gaming leads to social isolation'
The stereotypical view of a gamer is a pasty white teenager playing alone in his or her bedroom. It's understandable that something about that situation seems unhealthy or unnatural. But this view usually comes from a misunderstanding of what video games really are. Games, since their inception, have been designed as social experiences. Whereas in the first 30 or so years of their existence this was restricted to people playing multiplayer games with each other in person, the advent of high-speed, ubiquitous internet access means increasingly that those interactions are moving online. Rather than isolating people, online gaming has the potential to bring us together in myriad new ways, to form close-knit communities based around common interests and hobbies.
Take Mats Steen, for example. Mats was born with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a devastating disease that causes progressive muscle deterioration. As he grew up, to the outside world—to his family, even—he appeared to become isolated and withdrawn. After he died in 2014 at the age of 25, a different picture emerged—one in which Mats lived a full and happy life in the online world of Azeroth, the setting for Blizzard's long-running game World of Warcraft. Far from being alone, Mats was surrounded by friends in this world, and they clubbed togeth-

er to travel to Norway for his funeral.
For Mats, like so many other people around the world, the value in playing video games was not just in their ability to help him escape, but in their ability to help us connect with each other.
4. 'It's a meaningless waste of time'
I often get this criticism as a games researcher—couldn't I be doing something better with my time? There's a certain dissonance to the notion, in a way: somehow, we are able simultaneously to worry that games are the root cause of many of society's problems, yet also consider them to be a pointless or vacuous thing to do. Why play them when you could go outside, or engage in more culturally enriching forms of art? But this comes from a misunderstanding about the creative power that games possess. They provide us with an opportunity to experience our world and other fantastical places in a way no other form of media comes close to.
As novelist and games designer Naomi Alderman outlined in a 2013 radio essay: "While all art forms can elicit powerful emotions, only games can make their audience feel the emotion of agency. A novel can make you feel sad, but only a game can make you feel guilty for your actions."
Video games place you at the centre of the story—you are an active participant, instead of a passive observer. They offer us a safe place to interrogate and test the emotional consequences of our actions. Far from being a meaningless waste of time, then, games help us explore what it means to be human, to explore notions of love and loss, and to allow us to travel to far-off incredible places, to become incredible people—all from the comfort of our own home.
5. 'It's purely entertainment'
Video games, obviously, were a product of scientific development. Increasingly, that relationship is becoming symbiotic—in part because of their power to draw us in, video games are being leveraged in the course of scientific study. The best examples of this achieve two things: they act as fertile ground for collecting scientific data, while at the same time being an entertaining game experience.
An example of this is the recent mobile game Sea Hero Quest. Developed in 2016, Sea Hero Quest is a living, breathing virtual laboratory where the game acts as an experiment. Players are tasked with memorising a map, and then navigating a cartoonish fishing boat around a series of waterways, visiting a set of buoys in a specific order. That data is being used by scientists at University College London and the University of East Anglia to understand how spatial navigation abilities vary across the globe, and across the lifespan.
This sort of knowledge is crucial in developing a deeper understanding of how such abilities start to decline and go wrong in the case of neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's disease. Within six months of launch, the game had been downloaded by nearly 4 million people from every country in the world, and the hope is that in the future, data from the game will help inform new approaches towards diagnosing and treating dementia. ♦



Vitality of Varanasi

PHOTOS & TEXT: ROBIC UPADHYAY

The streets of India never cease to amaze me—their sights and smells, their sounds and silences. In the city of Varanasi, there is spirituality, timelessness, culture, honesty and absurdity. From the holy banks of the Ganges to its uptown malls, the city brims with chaos and contradiction. On one hand, Varanasi is an assault to the senses; on the other, it is food for thought.

Each evening, as the sun's dying rays reflect off the expansive waters of the Ganges, hundreds of devotees and tourists gather on the *ghats* of the old Banaras for the evening *aarti*. This everyday ceremony reverberates with hymns, prayers, rituals and a palpable sense of spirituality. The *aarti*—an ornate oil lamp, lined with dozens of flames burning—is offered to the mother of all rivers, in an orchestra-like synchrony.

The mornings are punctuated by a cacophony of Siberian migratory birds that spread their wings to begin a journey spanning thousands of kilometres with the onset of winter every year.

Looking at the river Ganges, one laments that it has been contaminated with toxic, human waste. Yet, people take a dip in it and even drink its waters. May be, if you have enough faith and conviction, you can actually transcend the filth. The most frustrating part about the *ghats* are the innumerable stalls making a profit out of the faiths of thousands of pilgrims. Devotees looking around for a spiritual experience or just for a quiet time along the banks of this calm river are constantly being pestered by annoying salesmen who want to sell you everything—from *poofa* paraphernalia to *ganja*.

Caught between chaos and solace, tradition and modernity, motion and stagnation, spontaneity and eternity, life and death, Varanasi is a city that make you wonder, if not wiser.



Talking into the night

Sometimes, conversations touch on more than words. They become fingers, hands held carelessly and the smell of bodies that seek familiarity.

PRATEEBHA TULADHAR

It has started to spray. We're about to step out for lunch. We're both starving. Let's borrow this huge umbrella, I say, I pick an abandoned umbrella from the reception, the largest one available. It's enormous, the size of a restaurant shade, black with an orange lining. We step under the umbrella and it's like stepping inside a room. We start walking together. Slowly. This is nice, you say. Yes, I say. But I can't tell if you mean the size of the umbrella or the rain. I also want to ask if you mean it's nice that we're walking under the same umbrella in the rain. But I don't ask. How do you ask a stranger such questions?

There's a brief awkward silence. I'm perturbed by your presence. I can't tell if we're strangers, because there was something in the moment I plopped myself across the table from you in our very first meeting that dissipated all strangeness. I had walked into a crowded restaurant and found you sitting alone at a small table, waiting. You apologised on behalf of the table. I apologised for my lateness and we laughed and continued talking.

We spent the evening eating, talking, walking, then drinking on a deserted terrace. The bile from my past that usually spills out in contrived laughter had caught an honest flow that evening. I was telling you of my fears, the sufferings and trage-

dies of those I love, and the abject lack of want. You listened. We caught on a tone. We both spilled on the terrace of that abandoned restaurant in Durbar Marg. And as we spilled, our silences punctuated the rivulets of our minds like little barrages, holding together a sea that cannot be contained.

Later, walking down the deserted stairway, I felt like you'd almost stopped for a moment to say you wanted to pause. But you hadn't. I think I had imagined it.

As we walked into the night, at one point, you stopped by the pavement and pushed scattered pebbles back into the flowerbed from the slabs of stones, arranging them neatly. Your toenails, painted cream, shone in the semi-darkness from under the strap of your sandals. And then I asked, OCD? You looked up at me, smiled and told me to shut up, and we both laughed again.

You took sips from the green beer bottle as we walked. I didn't know if it was okay for us to do that, but I liked it that you appeared so liberated, putting the bottle to your mouth and looking up at the sky. Then, two policemen caught up and warned us about the bottle. I apologised quickly, more in an attempt to protect you than to voice regret. And my thoughts brimmed on fear: Were they going to touch us? After announcing a list of prescribed behaviour for good girls, they left us to our beer bottle and the endless pavements. In a small way, we



PIXABAY

now shared a crime. And maybe it made us partners in our feeble act of defiance.

You continued to drink from your bottle and I continued to walk alongside you. The streets were quiet and

we permeated them, even with the smallness of our existence. Specs in a universe.

The evening was strangely familiar and surreal. I had never before

fallen headlong like a shooting star into an abyss, one where I could finally bury all my demons and ghosts, and still have them accepted as a part of me. It felt like the monster in me had risen that day in greed, a greed for the quietness of a conversation.

The evening was strangely familiar and surreal. I felt like I had never before fallen headlong like a shooting star into an abyss, one where I could finally bury all my demons and ghosts

The tone we conversed in was not jarring to my ears, like my own words often are to me.

For a moment, I wondered if I had mistaken myself for someone else. I was walking beside you, such a tender young person, offering to you only my endless years of meaninglessness. What I saw in you that evening was a reflection of my own brimming need for conversation. Sometimes, conversations touch on more than words. They become fingers, hands held carelessly and the smell of bodies that seek familiarity. But that evening, I was too much in my element to challenge my own apprehensions. I look back and think there was something un-nameably pleasant to that night.

That pleasant feel is borrowed over to this moment of us walking under the same umbrella.

Do you like rain, you ask me. How strange that you should ask, I think. Everyone knows I'm crazy about rain. Then it strikes me that you hardly know me. So, I answer: I love rain! After an almost pause, I add: I think everyone likes rain. Not everyone, you say. There are people who complain about it.

Maybe in countries where the rain is polite, I hear myself say. Polite? You ask and smile. Then I elaborate. I guess rain would have to be as mad, cruel and intense as it gets in South Asia, for one to love it. It's so unforgiving, yet beautiful in its brutality.

We're inside the restaurant now.

Is it going to rain in the mountains where I'm going, you ask me. Maybe, I say. Mountains are unpredictable. ✦

Cut them down

This is the story of a massacre—a mass slaughter that no one prevented and no one spoke of

UMESH BAJAGAIN

Their remnants were dragged on our streets, past our homes. I was surprised. I still am surprised—by the absence of blood on the path

To which bearing witness is not easy—I will.

There was a massacre in our neighbourhood. We witnessed a mass slaughter and kept silent. Most of us chose to live with it. We still don't talk about it—I have never heard anyone invoke this tragedy since then.

Back then, time was a matter of pride for everyone in our neighbourhood. As children, we witnessed our guardians confront 'them'. A day before the incident, everyone was discussing it. They were recruiting and planning meticulously. They were teaching who 'we' were and who 'they'

had been. We were to kill all those that had stood in our path to development. It was indeed a political battle.

They, our guardians, agreed to start with the elderly and then, ones with strong sturdy arms and health, vigour and stamina. No mercy was bestowed upon them. The weaker ones were taught not to get involved in the gallantry because it was not in their repertoire. Weapons were sharpened. They got together everything they had. We were told that anything that can inflict 'great pain' would do.

The day came. Everyone was united. They were motivated. They wore rage and anger; our guardians were unstoppable. No one on the battle-

ground was to be spared. "Start with the sturdier ones but leave no younger heads unchopped". Everyone was to be maimed. "Hit them hard, let them bleed; leave them mutilated and cut off their extremities. Be brutal"—everyone was told. I knew they were weaker and we were stronger. It was an easy win.

Early in the morning, the team set out to the battleground. We were organised. Children were to by stand and bear witness to the adults' performance. When we reached there, they were waiting for us. I still wonder how they could not defend themselves. I bet they sensed our strength. If I had been them, I'd surely protest, arm and defend myself to my last breath. But they surrendered.

We picked their leaders, kicked them and hit them hard, thrashing them to the floor one by one. We severed their veins, scarred their tissue, and chopped off their extremities, spilling their blood violently into the flowing canal. The canal refused to change its colour. Its unmitigated indifference bought us more courage and we went for more blood. The passers-by watched us in amazement. Some couldn't maintain their composure and walked off in disgust; some booed us while others counted our strikes and pushing us to go harder. Hundreds were martyred that day, none from our side.

Their remnants were dragged through our streets, past our homes. I was surprised. I still am surprised—by the absence of blood on the path. What happened to their blood? Did we collect every drop as we do with our goats, with clinical perfection, when we chop their heads off? Were they equivalent to goats in the pursuit of our happiness?

When our parents brought them home, it was a matter of pride for everyone. Happiness was all around, except for us, the children, who remained puzzled for they were our spiritual friends. We were told we had to be happy. But we weren't convinced. We thought maybe they were logical tropes that we children were not supposed to understand. Everyone was happy. We cooked food. We ate. In our front yard, we lay the mutilated remnants of those beings and slept inside our homes unharmed.

No one was mourning the next morning. We, the children, went to the crime scene to see what was left of them. There were no bodies, they were gone. The river was flowing, the colour unchanged. The wind was blowing, but we couldn't see it. We had to look into the fluttering in the distance to sense the wind blowing

against our proud chests and aside our brilliant brains.

That day, countless trees were martyred. Their death gives me peace. We do not talk about them anymore. I wonder why we shouldn't talk about such human bravery, as if we've committed a crime. We have broken no law. If there is no one to punish us, we have nothing to fear. And as far as the trees are concerned, humans are not to fear those non-humans, for they are lesser than us. What difference does it make if we use them to feed ourselves?

Some people say we're brutal. They say, "to murder something living, we call sustenance". These people are unaware of our silent sophisticated euphemistic language. For them to choose: chopping, utilisation, conservation, beautification, collateral damage, you choose. We fed on those trees, the same ones that fed us with cool air during the summer.

But, things are different. Now we have built them into our rooms. We can now change the speed of the wind inside our homes and not require them to be fed on. Trees have become useless now. Anything and everything that is useless has to face the same fate at our hands.

I often visit that battlefield and imagine how those trees attained salvation at our hands. A bridge sits over the canal on both sides of which those tall trees used to stand. When, at times, I stand on that bridge, I can see far off into the highway, where vehicles run leaving beautiful trails of smoke. I see the recently built processing plant far off in the distance. I cannot say for sure, what it does, for I do not know exactly what projects such mighty black smoke hundreds of metres into the sky.

Those trees were blocking the way to the beautiful highway and the silent industry far away in the horizon—both of which are striving for development in my world. Trees are awful—they block scenery, they impede human development, and they are a hindrance to the beauty of the journey of blackness from our chimneys to the relentless sky. They block our view and make us blind. Their absence enables us to enjoy the setting sun. I, by now, have realised that we gave redemption to those trees and helped humanity. We must. Our man behind the axe is unstoppable and no one has the right to strip off development from his backyard. We have every right to see things. We must cut anything that comes on our path. Then, we were ambushed; now is different. We must act. We have to see. Nothing can blind us, not even the trees. ✦



UNSPUSH

Books are pathways to understanding life

Bhupeen, the poet known primarily for his powerful performances, is a university lecturer by profession. But in the decades since he started writing poetry, he has published three collections—Kshatigrasta Prithvi ra Mool Sadak, Hajar Barshako Nidra, and Suplako Hawaijahaj. Having also dabbled in non-fiction in recent years, his first novel Maidaaro will soon hit the shelves. For his writing, Bhupeen has won the Uttam Shanti Puraskar and the International Nepali Literature Society Award among others. The Post’s **Asmita Manandhar** spoke to him about his favourite reads and the inspiration behind his writing. Excerpts:

How did you first come to love books?

I grew up in a *lahure* family. My father and brothers were in the military so there wasn’t much of a reading environment at home. When I was in the seventh or eighth grade, I found Bhupi Sherchan’s poetry collection *Ghumne Mech Maathi Andho Maanche* among my father’s belongings. After reading the collection, I realised that poetry can be powerful. It was then that I was drawn towards books.

I have a thirst to understand the juxtaposition of past and current social and philosophical ideas, which I can only acquire through reading

Then, I began sending poems to the children’s programme on Radio Nepal. When my poems were recited, my mother used to shed tears. This encouraged me to read and write more as I realised the power of the written word. The local library near my home was my second home. I read everything from Dinesh Adhikari and Shyamal to Russian writers. Later, when I met Sarubhakta, he encouraged me to read books on philosophy and sociology.

What was the last book you read?

The last book I read was a memoir, *Chhuteka Anuhar*, by Ramesh Saayan. He has beautifully detailed even the smallest events from his



RK ADIPTA GIRI

childhood to his youth. I really enjoyed the whole read, but I always believe that a book should also have philosophical reflections, in addition to its descriptions. This was missing in Sayaan’s book.

What is your current read?

I’m currently reading *Old Path, White Clouds* by Thich Nhat Hanh, which is a classic recounting of the life and teachings of Gautam Buddha. It is really feeding my desire to learn different philosophies, and it has been illuminating so far.

What books are currently on your wish list?

There are two books that I’ve never managed to complete, even after trying multiple times—*One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *War and Peace* by Leo

Tolstoy. I would really like to finish these books in the future.

What books would you recommend as must-reads?

There are many books that have been my favourites over the years and have

shaped my thought process as a reader and a writer. Among books from international writers, I’d like to pick *Mother* by Maxim Gorky, *The Song of Youth* by Yang Mo, *The Good Earth* by Pearl S Buck, *Sidhhartha* by Herman Hesse, *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, *1984* and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *Howl and other poems* by Allen Ginsberg, and the poetry collections of Pablo Neruda and Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena.

From Nepali writers, I would recommend *Pagal Basti* by Sarubhakta, *Ular* by Nayan Raj Pandey, *Pretkalpa* by Narayan Dhakal, *Dhobighat Express* by Roshan Sherchan and *Samjhanaka Kuinetaharu* and *Afnai Aakha ko Layama* by Khagendra Sangraula.

Why is it important to read and write?

It is important to comprehend the current time and society that we live in. Books are pathways to understanding life. There are many who have lived their lives without really thinking about these things, but as a writer, I have a thirst to understand the juxtaposition of past and current social and philosophical ideas, which I can only acquire through reading and writing.

What book have influenced you the most and why?

Herman Hesse’s *Sidhhartha* and George Orwell’s *1984* and *Animal Farm* have shaken my thought process. I was forced to ponder long after reading these books due to their philosophical themes.

How do you draw inspiration for writing?

I mostly draw inspiration from my travels. When we are moving, our senses are experiencing constant changes in sights and sounds, and that is when I am able to develop my writing. ♦

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Sarraf, Paudel lead Nepal to emphatic win over Singapore



Pawan Sarraf with the man-of-the-match award after helping Nepal beat Singapore in the ICC U-19 World Cup Asia Qualifier match at the Selangor Turf Club in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Friday.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Allrounder Pawan Sarraf and skipper Rohit Kumar Paudel sealed an emphatic 217-run win over Singapore in the first match of the ICC U-19 World Cup Asia Qualifier at the Selangor Turf Club in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

Put into bat first, Nepal overcame a poor start to post a massive 282 runs in 46 overs. Singapore delayed the inevitable for 31 overs before finally being dismissed for a paltry 65 runs.

Nepal were reeling at 18-2 by the sixth over after losing opener Rit Gautam (1) and No 3 batsman Asif Sheikh (8) cheaply. But Gautam's opening partner Sarraf and skipper Paudel put on a 90-run third wicket stand to consolidate the Nepali innings. Sarraf fell three runs short of a half century after hitting four boundaries and two sixes. Sundeep Jora (0) walked in to join Paudel but lasted just two balls, falling prey to Pramesh Singhavi.

Paudel held his nerves at the other end and put on meaningful partnerships with Bhim Sharki, Kushal Malla and Rashid Khan to propel the team's total. The Nepal skipper added 36 runs for the fifth wicket with Sharki (26), 16 for the sixth wicket with Malla (10) and another 77 for the seventh wicket with Rashid Khan. Paudel was unlucky not to have completed his century, falling five runs short to Atharva Gune.

Paudel's composed 105-ball knock included seven boundaries and a six, while Khan too fell two runs shy of a half century after clobbering four boundaries and two sixes in his 47-ball knock. Kamal Singh Airee also helped swell the Nepali total playing a 31-run cameo. Airee struck three sixes and a four in his 18-ball innings. Gune was pick of the Singapore bowlers with figures of 4-37 from eight overs. Raoul Sharma and Vinit

Mehta also claimed two wickets each for Singapore.

Singapore were never in contention after losing half their team for 42-5. Malla triggered the Singapore collapse, first combining with Khan to run out Arnaav Chabria (2) before having skipper Aman Desai (1) stumped off wicketkeeper Sheikh. Malla also accounted for Sai Venugopal, who scored a painstaking 18 off 45 balls.

Man-of-the-match Sarraf polished off the Singapore tail with a burst of three wickets after Surya Tamang had Singapore's top scorer Ishaan Sawney caught by Sharki. Sawney scored 20 off 54 balls with four boundaries and a six. Apart from Sawney and Venugopal, none of the other Singapore batsmen scored runs in double figures.

After falling three runs short of a half century, Sarraf also shone with the ball with an exceptional figures of 3-5 from six overs, five of which were maidens. Malla took 2-17 and Tamang 2-15. In other matches, UAE beat Malaysia by five wickets and Kuwait defeated Oman by eight wickets. Nepal will take on the UAE in their next game on Saturday.

Apart from Nepal, Kuwait, hosts Malaysia, Oman, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates are fighting for a single berth available for the U-19 World Cup in South Africa next year. The winner of the Asia Qualifier will join Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the West Indies and Zimbabwe in the tournament next January and February.

Summary

Nepal 282 in 46 overs (RK Paudel 95, R Khan 48, P Sarraf 47, KS Airee 31; A Gune 4-37, R Sharma 2-36, V Mehta 2-30) **beat Singapore 65** in 31 overs (I Sawney 28; P Sarraf 3-5, K Malla 2-17, S Tamang 2-15) **by 217 runs**

Man-of-the-match: **P Sarraf**

Province 2 rule men's wrestling

SPORTS BUREAU
KAPILVASTU, APRIL 12

Province 2 wrapped up the men's wrestling events under the eighth National Games ending up with six out of 10 available gold medals in Banganga Municipality in Kapilvastu on Friday.

Province 2 claimed 57kg, 61kg, 65kg, 79kg, 92kg and 125kg gold medals to get the better of second-placed Province 5, who took three gold.

Naresh Yadav won the 57kg weight division gold defeating Tilak Deuja of Tribhuvan Army Club in the final. Jay Mangal Yadav took the 61kg gold beating Jadu Lal Yadav of Province 3.

Nepal Police Club (NPC) wrestler Ritesh Prasad Yadav lost to 12th South Asian Games bronze medallist Saroj Yadav in the 65kg gold medal fight. Punni Lal Raut won the 79kg gold over-coming Sunil Kumar Sah of Province 3. In the 92kg final, Sumir Sah defeated NPC wrestler Sagar Kumar Yadav and the sixth gold for Province 2 came for Raj Yadav who saw off Karan Bhatta of Province 7.

Province 5 won the 74kg final through Baijnath Yadav after he defeated Mukhtar Alam of Province 2. The other two gold for Province 5 came in the 86kg and 97kg with Bhuwaneshwor Yadav and Ramesh Gotame winning their respective final matches. Suresh Chunara won the only gold for TAC in men's wrestling defeating Manoj Prasad Yadav in the 70kg final.

Province 7 added three more gold in their kitty to finish with six gold in the women's wrestling. Neeraj Aauji won the 65kg gold beating Sumitra Magar of TAC in the final. Bimala Sunar won the fifth gold for Province 5 with victory over Nirmala Jagari of NPC in the 68kg final. The other gold came for Laxmi Khatri in the 72kg final easing past Rekha Rawal of NPC.

Sushila Chand of TAC won the 62kg gold defeating Sapana Chand of Province 7. Province 1 won the 76kg gold with Srijashu Giri overwhelming Laxmi DC of Province 5. On Thursday, Province 7 had claimed gold medals in the women's 50kg, 53kg and 55kg. Ramesh Gotame and Srejasu were adjudged the best players of the event.

Meanwhile, departmental teams dominated the table tennis on the third day of the Games at the Ghorahi covered ball on Friday. NPC clinched the mixed doubles and men's doubles gold medals while Nepal Armed Police Force (APF) Club won the men's team event title. Santu Shrestha and Nabita Shrestha combined to beat NPC teammates Binesh Khaniya and Alina Maharjan in the mixed doubles final while Santu and Binesh defeated Mani Kumar Lama and Bilash Shrestha of APF in the men's doubles final. APF, meanwhile, saw off Tribhuvan Army Club to clinch the men's team event gold.

(Manoj Paudel in Kapilvastu and Durgala KC in Ghorahi contributed to this report)



Marquee players, teams unveiled for Women's Champions League

ADARSHA DHAKAL
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Queen's Event Management Pvt Ltd on Friday unveiled the marquee players and team owners for the upcoming Women's Champions League scheduled for May 17-25 at the Tribhuvan University Stadium.

The Twenty20 event is announced as country's second franchise competition in which the women cricketers will be picked up through draft. The players will have a set price and the franchises will pick the players according to their turn. A total of five city-based franchises are competing in the WCL.

Three out of five franchises who competed in the Pokhara Premier League have also bought the teams in the WCL. PPL champions Pokhara Paltan, runners-up Chitwan Rhinos and Biratnagar

Titans are the three franchises also buying team in the women's event. PPL was also organised by Queen's. Other two teams include Lalitpur Falcons and Capital Royals Kathmandu—the franchises who play in the Everest Premier League Twenty20 in Kathmandu as Lalitpur Patriots and Pokhara Rhinos respectively.

Falcons have former national team skipper Nary Thapa as the marquee player and is owned by Srijana Joshi. Binayak Pokharel owns the Paltan which has national team vice-captain Sita Rana Magar as the marquee player. National team skipper Rubina Chhetri will take the reins of Royals owned by Deepa Agrawal.

Indu Berma is the marquee player for Rhinos owned by Mingma Dandu Sherpa, while Paras Luniya is the owner of Titans and will be led by Sarita Magar. The marquee players were

happy to be part of another professional Twenty20 league. NCL Sports Pvt Ltd had also held auction of the women cricketers for the upcoming Women's Cricket League.

"We are very thankful to the organisers of the tournament because they have revived the women's cricket which was already in a comma because of the unavailability of the tournaments. Its something which we had longed for a lot," said Paltan marquee Rana Magar. Paltan owner Pokharel said they were ready to have a go at a women's Twenty20 competition.

"PPL was a successful tournament for us and that was where we signalled our arrival in domestic franchise cricket winning the title. It would be perfect for us if we can claim the title of the WCL and clean sweep the two events under the Queen's," Pokharel said.

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CROSS CURRENCY									
	USD	EUR	JPY	GBP	CHF	CAD	AUD	INR	NR
NR	110.9500	125.5700	9.9100	145.2300	110.9100	83.2500	79.5900	1.6015	
INR	69.1700	78.2730	6.1770	90.5370	69.2220	51.9577	49.6020		0.6244
GBP	0.7639	0.8644	0.0068		0.7635	0.5731	0.5478	0.0110	0.0069
JPY	111.9500	126.6800		147.0588	111.8900	83.9800	80.2800	0.1619	0.1009
EUR	0.8834		0.0079	1.1569	0.8830	0.6627	0.6335	0.0128	0.0080
USD		1.1320	0.0089	1.3091	0.9994	0.7502	0.7171	0.0145	0.0090
HOW TO READ THE TABLE									
The chart shows the rates of nine world currencies. Move across the table to find rates of exchange between any two currencies. One unit of the currency mentioned horizontally is worth that amount in the currency mentioned vertically.									

FOREX	
US Dollar	110.95
Euro	125.57
Pound Sterling	145.23
Japanese Yen	9.91
Chinese Yuan	16.54
Qatari Riyal	30.47
Australian Dollar	79.59
Malaysian Ringgit	26.97
Saudi Arab Riyal	29.58
Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank.	

IMF, World Bank urge caution with China loans | Page II Increased lending by China to developing nations is increasingly under the spotlight amid concerns that growing debt burdens and onerous conditions could sow the seeds of a crisis.

Government spent Rs 222.83b in last month of fiscal 2017-18

20.55 percent of the total budget of over Rs1 trillion was spent in mid June-mid July

RAJESH KHANAL
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

The government's habit of slow capital spending was painfully obvious during the last month of the fiscal year 2017-18, where government agencies spent Rs222.83 billion in one month.

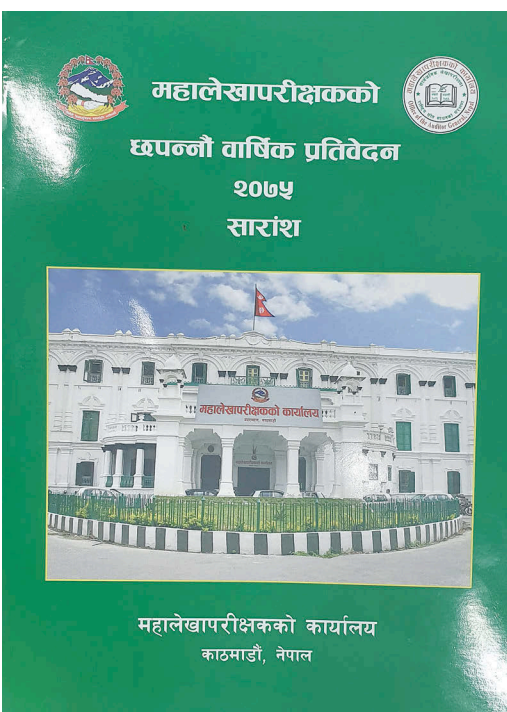
According to the report unveiled by the Office of the Auditor General on Friday, government agencies spent 20.55 percent of the total allocated budget of over Rs1 trillion for the fiscal year in mid June-mid July, the last month of the fiscal year.

It showed that government offices only sped up their expenditure in the last week of 2017-18, spending 10.87 percent of the allocated budget or Rs117.92 billion.

"It shows that a lack of effective implementation of the electronic procurement system, delays in awarding contracts and low capacity of the contractors are still in place," reads a report that was presented before the President on Friday.

Low utilisation of foreign assistance, lack of proper planning for construction of national pride projects and awarding contracts without conducting the necessary preparation were some of the underlying problems highlighted by the report.

Targeting to improve the quality of development work, the constitution has maintained the budget announcement in advance to allow the government more time to spend the allocated funds. In the past, the budget announcement was made in



A copy of the 56th Annual Report unveiled by the Office of the Auditor General.

the mid-June to mid-July period. Now, after the changes, the budget announcement is made on May-end.

To tackle the persisting problem of slow capital spending, the Finance Ministry last year even issued a time-bound action plan, giving line ministries deadlines to complete development works. The ministries and

year. But the ministry's plan has not shown any effective outcomes, shows the government audit report.

The tax dues of the government has reached Rs252 billion, with an additional Rs900 million due amount in the first nine months of the current fiscal year. As of 2017-18, the government was left to collect tax of

Per capita debt of Nepalis surges to Rs31,750

KATHMANDU: Per capita debt of Nepalis has increased by Rs7,043 in 2017-18. A report unveiled by the Office of Auditor General shows that the debt burden per Nepali has gone up to Rs31,750 from Rs24,707 in the last fiscal year.

The report stated that

the total debt of the government was Rs915.31 billion till 2017-18, an increase from Rs217.62 billion over the period.

Of the total debt, the internal debt and the external debt of the government is Rs391.16 billion and Rs 524.15 billion respectively. (PR)

implementing bodies were asked to prepare procurement plans, detailed designs of the projects and cost estimates and issue tender notices within the first month of the fiscal year. They were also instructed to award the tender within the first quarter of the fiscal

worth Rs161 billion. The Office of the Auditor General pointed out the inability of the government in monitoring the extended tax bases and tax collection mechanism.

The report shows that the amount of arrears has increased by 37 percent to Rs683.66 billion in the current fiscal year. It includes the unspent amount by all three tiers of government, district coordination committee, tax dues and reimbursement in the foreign aid.

Of the total amount, the arrears amount with the offices of federal government stands at Rs286 billion. The amount with the provincial governments and local governments are 195 million and Rs35.99 billion respectively. The figures show that the problem is severe when it comes to spending capacity of the offices at the local levels.

PRAHLAD RIJAL
KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Reconstruction work at the Tatopani transit point on the Nepal-China border is nearing completion. The border crossing has remained closed since 2015 after much of the infrastructure was destroyed by an earthquake.

Along with the restoration works, a new dry port has been built at Larcha near the border. The dry port project was initiated five years ago but it came to a standstill after the earthquake and subsequent Bhotekoshi River floods that caused extensive damage to the trade route.

The quake and floods damaged the Tatopani-Piplang road, Liping road, Friendship Bridge and other infrastructures along the highway, forcing authorities to close the Tatopani crossing and divert commercial traffic to the Rasuwagadhi-Kerung transit point further west on the Nepal-China border.

Last May, the Nepal Intermodal Transport Development Board and China's Commerce Ministry signed an agreement on China Aid Post-Disaster Recovery for the Tatopani Frontier Inspection Station Project, raising hopes for an early reopening of the Tatopani transit point.

Following the agreement, the Chinese government appointed Chinese Railway Construction Company to build the dry port at

Larcha which is spread over 27.5 million square feet and the Liping road that connects it with Tatopani. The dry port project was funded by the Chinese government and was built at an estimated cost of RMB147 million. Tianshun Road and Bridge Company which is rebuilding the Friendship Bridge has expedited work and expects to finish it by May 29.

DSP Krishna Gopal Gurung of the Armed Police Force said that the Chinese construction crew had raised the pillars of the bridge and were working to finish the cement filling works. Officials said vehicular movement would resume immediately after workers finish the cementing filling works on the bridge.

"A Chinese construction crew is currently blacktopping the 7-km road from Khasa to the Friendship Bridge, while the Roads Department is repairing road sections damaged by landslides at Jure," Gurung said. "We have been informed that the border point will officially reopen on May 29." Nepali customs officials said that more than 85 percent of the restoration works at the transit point had been completed while the dry port was ready to come into operation.

"The construction of infrastructure is in the final phases, and the ministry has deployed a working team to fulfil all other logistical requirements and pro-

vide the customs office with a high-speed internet connection within a month to ensure smooth flow of cargo on the route," Joint Secretary Navaraj Dhakal of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies said.

"The Roads Department has also speeded up the construction of retention walls and reconstruction of damaged portions of the Kodari Highway and small bridges. The trade route which is expected to reopen soon following a prolonged halt will now facilitate increasing trade between Nepal and China," he added.

The dry port has parking bays for 200 lorries, agricultural quarantine facilities, a border inspection building, cargo warehouse, litigation-warehouse, a parking lot with a capacity to accommodate at least 158 large containers and 33 cars. Construction crews have also repaired the main office, customs office and yard, storage, check pass yard, check post, bank and residential buildings damaged by the earthquake.

An official team including Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali and representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers and the Foreign and Physical Infrastructure ministries visited Tatopani on Tuesday and inspected the progress achieved in the reconstruction work.



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