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Times together

What do we want from India?

No CI in Nepal: Manohar

I have a 5-point checklist: Khatiwada, border delimitation, Shikharwa colleges, the 1950 treaty, and Lumbini's heritage.

Scandal at 100%

Bankrupt

Novel Kishore Rai

Times together

The Delhi run

Quality 72-hour endurance within 4000 for a leisurely four-day visit

Welcome Onboard...

Times

Heading south again

The most intriguing thing about King Gyamshu's visit to India is the timing and the itinerary

TAG Heuer

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Mr Dahal goes to Delhi

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Times

Delhi revisited

Editorial by Chakra Datta

Antiquity

Times SPRING LUXE

Let's talk

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Times

Deuba, Delhi and Doklam

The golden age of the great

QATAR

What is different this time?

Prime Minister K P Oli is in New Delhi this weekend, following a tradition laid down by predecessors to first visit India after assuming office. Oli himself had visited New Delhi in 2016, after India lifted the five-month Blockade.

So, what is new this time? Not much. Nepal has had 12 leaders, some of them serving more than once, since 2000. India has seen three Prime Ministers in this period, with each hosting multiple Nepali PMs and a king.

In every Nepali leader's India visit, the two countries have dwelt on the same issues: building trust, strengthening bilateral ties and agreeing on large projects that need to materialise.

Oli's visit will

not be any different even though he has emerged as the strongest PM in Nepal's recent history. And he is going to India after his strong nationalistic stance won his party a landslide victory in elections.

"Like any Nepali PM's visit to India in the past, it will be yet another courtesy visit," concludes political analyst Lok Raj Baral. "It will not change anything fundamentally."

Ahead of his three-day visit, Oli told Parliament on Tuesday that he will push to implement past agreements instead of signing new ones: Pancheshwar, Tarai roads, post-earthquake reconstruction loans.

Most of the other political and development issues that Oli may raise this time have been discussed over and

again in every Nepali PM's India visit in the past, as shown by the *Nepali Times* coverage (above).

The two MPs will remotely lay the foundation of the 900MW Arun III hydroelectricity project in Province 1, but that is not a new project either. In fact, Oli's own UML party had sabotaged the World Bank-funded Arun III in the early '90s. Pancheshwar has been in limbo for over 20 years, and it is slow going on the Tarai roads.

Oli is sure to broach his pet subject: inland water transport even though Foreign Affairs Minister Pradeep Gyawali has ruled out any MoU citing lack of preparation. Oli told Parliament that his visit will not bring shame to Nepalis, implying that he will not discuss the contents of the Constitution.

Even in 2016, Modi had met a resolute Oli who was unwilling to listen to New Delhi on amending

the state as demanded by the Madhesi parties. This time he will enjoy greater leverage when he sits down with Modi, who seems to have realised that his policy to isolate Oli has backfired.

In an interview with *Nepali Times* last week, Foreign Affairs Minister Gyawali said India might announce a special package of support to Nepal as a goodwill gesture. Even if Oli succeeds in rebuilding mutual trust and rebooting relations with India, that will be quite an achievement.

Om Astha Rai

Champagne

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NATIONAL INTEREST OR NATIONALISM?

Now that last month's needless confrontation between the Nepal Government and the European Union has subsided and passions have cooled somewhat, it may be time for us to learn some hard lessons from the whole sordid affair.

Even during the federal and provincial elections in November, the EU's Election Monitoring Mission was accused of exceeding its mandate by interrogating court officials in western Nepal. Its head Željana Zovko had been summoned by the Election Commission to clarify.

When Zovko issued the Mission's final report on 20 March and, among other things, recommended that electoral reservation for upper castes be scrapped, it triggered outrage – mainly from political leaders from that community.

We happen to broadly agree with the EU's suggestion: affirmative action is supposed to level the playing field, not uphold the status quo on skewed privileges. No one can question the dominance of men from the top caste groups and ethnicities in all three branches of the state. The letter of the constitution mentions proportional representation, but its spirit is about taking that extra step to expedite inclusion.

It could be argued that the EU overstepped its ToR, that it had no right to tell a sovereign nation with a democratically-crafted constitution what to do, or even that it is hypocritical for the EU whose member states are electing fascist leaders to lecture others on democracy.

The social media backlash prompted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue a firm but well-mannered statement. We should have left it at that. Nepal's narrow-minded and bigoted leaders had to grandstand in Parliament, and fan the flames by waving the flag. Even Prime Minister K P Oli could not resist the temptation to call the EU statement an "insult to Nepal's sovereignty".

Really? Is Nepal's sovereignty and independence so fickle that it can be undermined by a report made by an election monitoring team? Is our nationalism so fragile that we have to keep on working ourselves up into a frenzy about every perceived slight? It probably is.

Over and over and over again, we have seen that Nepal's nationalism only exposes our insecurity when expressed as xenophobia, exaggerated fears of outside interference, conversion, or foreigners coveting our natural resources. If we were true 'nationalists', we would be looking inwards to correct the ways we undermine our own national interest every day.

Nepal's political independence is undermined by our increasing economic dependence on the outside. The trade imbalance, falling exports, remittances from overseas workers, current account deficit, banking crisis, and the investment slump – these are all our own doing. We created and tolerated a rent-seeking state, we re-elected crooks, we have come to accept corruption and extortion as a given.

We need to cover up our shame by misguidedly trying to get into the Guinness Book of World Records and hold large rallies proclaiming that the Buddha was born in Nepal. That is not how we will be respected by the outside world. The ultra-nationalism of Nepalis is expressed by bashing India at every go. As Shekhar Kharel argues in his Guest Editorial (*below*) the New Delhi visit gives Prime Minister Oli a chance to rise above his own nationalistic rhetoric and use India's need for a course-correction on its Nepal policy to our economic advantage.



GUEST EDITORIAL

SHEKHAR KHAREL

Red carpet for a red leader

It has been an accepted practice that any Nepali leader makes a symbolic visit south to India after assuming office. But Prime Minister Oli's India visit this week is quite different although it looks like he is just following the tradition.

The reason has a lot more to do with New Delhi's past behaviour towards Nepal. It has now realised its policy was counter-productive and is laying down the red carpet for the leader of a Red coalition.

After its failure to get a constitution that suited its interest in 2015, New Delhi imposed a five-month Blockade on Nepal. Oli became prime minister just as the Blockade started to bite on a country still reeling from the aftermath of the April 2015 earthquake, and took a strong stand against India. Standing up to India became Oli's successful electoral platform, and it propelled him back to power in partnership with the Maoists two months ago. In fact, the more New Delhi tried to pressure Oli, the more he bounced back like a rubber ball.

In India itself there has been growing criticism from the opposition about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's failure

to stop Chinese inroads in the neighbourhood, including in Nepal. The Indian media analysts have been paranoid about Kathmandu tilting towards the Chinese axis.

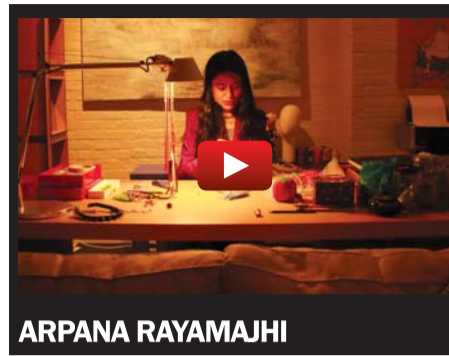
Prime Minister Modi has spoken to Oli several times after his election, and dispatched Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj to Kathmandu on a fence-mending mission. New Delhi knows that it will not gain anything by weakening a prime minister who is probably Nepal's most powerful elected leader in history.

But the Oli visit is also an opportunity for Nepal to set relations with India on a more even keel. It is time to reboot bilateral relations and put the past behind us. Prime Minister Oli need not sign any new agreements, he just has to make sure past agreements are implemented, and try to resolve the growing trade imbalance. That itself will be an important gauge of the success of this mission.



Shekhar Kharel is a freelance journalist.

ONLINE PACKAGES



ARPANA RAYAMAJHI

Four years since launching her jewellery line, Arpana Rayamajhi has been featured in Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, and her designs adorned by supermodels Adriana Lima and Gigi Hadid. Watch her talk on what got her started in jewellery designing, her love for *pottery* and her long term plans on encouraging Nepali artisanal talent.



TEA TIME

Nepali tea is finally creating its own identity and distinguishing itself in production methods and quality from British and Indian influences. Tea and Coffee Development Board has put out a licensed logo for Nepali tea with the tagline 'Nepal Tea, Quality from the Himalayas'. Come join us for a tea tasting event, filled with exotic aroma and unique flavours of high Himalayan teas and find out from a tea expert how they are evaluated.



HOME OF THE GODS

The 10th century stone sculpture of Standing Buddha of Yatka Tole and 12th century stele of Uma Maheswar of Tangal Hiti stolen in the 1980s was returned to Nepal by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York this week. Follow us as we go to Yatka Tole in Kathmandu to look for the exact location from where the idol of Standing Buddha was stolen. Story page 11.

HOW TO NOT RUN A CITY

Most cities that run well have very strict pollution and emission standards. In Nepal it means slipping a 500 Rs note along with the application, even for non-polluting vehicles ('How to get things done in Nepal', Anil Chitrakar, #903). Kathmandu is a case study on how not to run a city. I do enjoy Chitrakar's columns, but I think it is time to hold a mirror to the denizens of this city.

Abs Pan

A GOOD EXAMPLE

Thank you for also focusing on positive and uplifting stories ('State of the art rural hospital', Marty Logan, #903)

Himali Upadhy

THE WRONG CHOICE

I empathise with the protesters, although Kathmandu's streets do need improvement ('Crackdown on anti-road expansion protesters', Bikram Rai, nepalitimes.com). Our traffic problem cannot be solved simply by widening roads which should be for both the rich and poor. Much can be achieved through traffic management: improving road junctions, introducing regulations for roadside parking, encouraging private sector to build parking garage for profit, improving public transport and making sure that development displacement is kept to minimum. It is unfair to displace families for the better off to have a smooth ride.

Madhab Mathema

WHAT'S TRENDING

How to get things done in Nepal

by Anil Chitrakar

'Replacing polluting three-wheelers in Kathmandu with electric vehicles was a lesson in why money can't buy you everything,' wrote Anil Chitrakar in his column last week. Many readers seemed to agree, and shared his write-up widely on social media. Join the online discussion on public transportation and electric vehicles by visiting www.nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most commented



The insect that changed Nepal's history

by Tom Robertson

Nepal's history was not shaped so much by leaders like Chandra Shumshere or King Mahendra, but by the eradication of a mosquito that preyed on human blood from the Inner Terai in the 1960s. The insect has shaped Nepal's demography, environment and politics to this day. This piece was the most visited by our readers in the past week.

Most visited online page

Most popular on Twitter

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatriwada declared Friday in a speech to the Federal Parliament that privatisation has failed in Nepal, signaling a major shift in the country's economic policy under a new united Communist government.

Rai Biren Bangdel @bbangdel
Fully agree! It was a blunder. Seemed that whoever was the finance minister in the then congress government had decided to privatise the public enterprises on external pressure. Hope Khatriwada will help economically hit Nepal to take the right course in the days ahead.

Airline Guy @GuyAirline
22 governments in the last 26 years. 9 governments in the last 10 years. And oh, it's privatisation that's failed #Nepal's economy? Very logical when your logic is so twisted. #CronyCapitalism

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Replacing polluting three-wheelers in Kathmandu with electric vehicles was a lesson in why money can't buy you everything, writes Anil Chitrakar in his column 1/2 FULL.

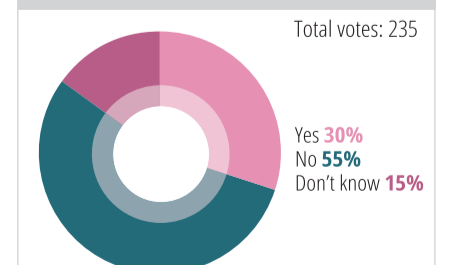
Ghana S. Gurung @ghanagr
We don't seem to learn obvious lessons proactively to benefit more, we rather learn by banging the head against a wall. Campaign for Electric vehicle started a decade ago #learningsmartly.

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Since 1900, who has most significantly changed the flow of events? Chandra Shumshere? King Mahendra? Prachanda? "The Anopheles minimus mosquito," says Tom Robertson. #Nepal #History

Lena Tara Michaels @lenatar
How malaria eradication efforts determined Nepal's history #Nepal #history #malaria #Terai.

Weekly Internet Poll #904

Q. Is Prime Minister K P Oli's planned visit to India necessary at this point?



Weekly Internet Poll #905
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should Chief Ministers be allowed to meet foreign ambassadors without informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?



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Asking the difficult questions

Prime Minister Oli's fence-mending trip to India is not getting into the touchy subject of Gorkha recruitment

Five years ago, a young man showed his identity card and was allowed to enter the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. In the office of the Defence Attache, he put a neat envelope on the table. The contents made the officer nearly jump off his chair.



CONNECTING DOTS
Dinkar Nepal

I was that nervous young man, and I had done what seemed to be the most normal thing a citizen of Nepal could do. I was serving as a Major in the Indian Army, and had decided to resign my commission because I felt it was principally wrong to serve in a foreign military. In a letter to the President of India, I wrote: 'My conscience does not allow me to serve in the Indian Army anymore. Hence, I would request you to release me from the service.'

The Defence Attache was furious: "I don't know what you are up to, but let me tell you: if you do not take this back, the moment you are out of my office the system will get after you. There will be severe consequences. It's not a threat. It is a concern and a personal advice."

Eight months of legal limbo, two years of isolation within the military, months of illegal military custody, and a Court Martial led to my conviction on the charge



BHANU BHATTARAI

of 'desertion' and dismissal from service. I returned to Nepal in 2016.

A week before the deadline for the promulgation of the Constitution in September 2015, Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar flew to Kathmandu as a special messenger of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India wanted to delay the promulgation of the constitution to accommodate Madhesi demands.

Sushil Koirala of the Nepali Congress, Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maoists and K P Oli of the UML, used each other as scapegoats. When he got a sense that Nepal was

not listening, Jaishankar warned: "Modiji is not Manmohan Singh. Strict measures will be taken. There will be consequences."

The rest is now history, and a black page in the relationship between the two countries. The Blockade that immediately followed the 2015 earthquake was a foreign policy blunder at par with, if not worse than, the LTTE war in Sri Lanka in 1988-89.

From the time when the Ranas leaned on British India with a clear 'strategy for survival', right to the present day, Nepal's relations with the south has seen

many transformations. Nepal's dependence on India has helped preserve a colonial strategic and security mindset in the Indian establishment long after the British left.

This security framework in New Delhi treats Nepal as a country that has to be saved from Chinese influence. Therefore the concept of equidistant foreign policy, which has been the elusive goal of many Nepali strategists, is not taken very seriously in New Delhi. Every time Nepal wants to move towards equidistance, India has warned of the consequences.

When Prime Minister K P Oli lands in New Delhi on Friday, he will be received as one of the most powerful leaders in Nepal's history. Oli has support of nearly three-fourths of parliament, a majority rarely enjoyed by any other leader in recent times.

Despite this, it will be virtually impossible for Oli to ask the difficult questions. The visit will be limited to tokenism, where the Modi government's focus will be on reducing the political damage of the Blockade and the consequences to his party in next year's elections. And Oli too, will be happy to play along.

One of the main agendas of the Maoists, laid out in their 40-point demand to the royal government in 1996 before launching the armed struggle, was scrapping the 1950 treaty and the issue of Gorkha recruitment. Now, the Maoists are in power with the UML, but none of the comrades wants to be reminded of those demands anymore.

The reason why I took that step five years ago, and why I felt so strongly that it was time to stop Gorkha recruitment was that it is a scar on our national self-esteem. At the core of it, Gorkha recruitment into the Indian and British armies sends out the message to the world: 'If you pay us enough, we are even ready to die for you.'

But however powerful K P Oli may be, and despite his nationalism narrative, even he will not dare raise this issue in New Delhi. ❑



Istanbul emerging as global aviation pivot

As Istanbul leverages its location to inaugurate the world's biggest and busiest airport later this year, it is posing strong competition to airport hubs in the Gulf like Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha.

Data for the first quarter of 2018 compiled by the group ForwardKeys shows a 21% increase in the volume of transit passengers through the current Istanbul airport. Passengers changing planes in Dubai and Doha remained the same as last year, and Abu Dhabi fell behind by 14%.

At present, Dubai, which is the home base for Emirates Airline, commands 40% of the transit market share among the four hubs. Doha comes second with 25%, with Istanbul at 20% and Abu Dhabi at 15%. However, Istanbul shows

the most robust growth which experts say is largely due to the expansion of Turkish Airlines, which now has 328 aircraft and carried 60 million passengers last year.

Turkish is exploiting Istanbul's strategic location between Africa, Europe and Asia to connect non-stop flights to anywhere in the world. There are 60 capital cities within a 3.5 hour flying distance of Istanbul which are among the airlines' 301 worldwide destinations. The airline has placed orders for 30 Boeing 787-9 and 30 Airbus 350-900s to meet future growth from the new airport.

"Istanbul is located at the intersection of three historic civilisations, and is an air transport crossroad. We want to take full

advantage of this with longer-range planes coming into the market, connecting passengers to nearby airports in Europe, Central Asia, Africa and Asia," Mustafa Doğan, Vice-President Sales for Americas and UK told *Nepali Times*.

He admitted that congestion at the current airport was a bottleneck, but it would not be an issue after the first phase

of the new Istanbul airport on the Black Sea coast, 37km north of the city, comes into operation on 29 October, serving 90 million passengers a year (pictured below). The \$35billion airport will have six runways and a capacity to serve 200 million passengers a year when it is fully completed by 2023.

A breakdown of transit passengers changing flights in Istanbul shows that the sharpest increase was for passengers connecting to and from airports in the US, UK and Russia, with smaller increases for Germany and the Subcontinent.

Despite the drop in transit traffic through Abu Dhabi, the airport hopes to regain growth with its mega airport that can serve 85 million passengers a year scheduled to be completed in late 2019.

Despite the blockade of Qatar by its neighbours, Doha did not register a drop in transit traffic, while Dubai showed a slight increase mainly due to the expansion of Emirates Airline. ❑

PRABHU BANK BIZ BRIEFS

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Qatar Airways has introduced its luxurious Business Class seat, Qsuite, on flights from Chicago from 1 April. The comfortable Qsuite fitted in Qatar Airways Boeing 777-



300 ER aircraft features double bed and customisable private cabins for up to four people, adjustable panels and movable TV monitors, providing personalised travel experience for passengers.

One way to Europe

Turkish Airlines has introduced a special one way fare to selected destinations in Europe: Lisbon, Prague, Helsinki, Malta,



and Warsaw, starting from 15 April. The fare price starts from Rs36,700. Call: (01) 4438363/4438436

Mustang in Nepal

G.O Automobiles' new Ford Mustang has entered the Nepali market with its sleek style, enhanced engines and sharp driving dynamics. The new Mustang also features Ford's SYNC 3 communications and entertainment system allowing



drivers to control their smartphones, audio, navigation, and climate functions with conversational voice commands.

Sunrise Insurance

Under the bank's health insurance facility, Sunrise Bank has been providing savings account with a guarantee to compensate for the expenses, facilitating up to 25% of weighted average deposit of the last 365 days or the bill amount—whichever is lower—with a maximum limitation of Rs100,000.



Project One tour

Bandwagon by Positive Vibes is bringing the 4th edition of ARNA Pheri Uthney Chha Nepal, an event that will take Project



One, a new band on tour across Nepal spreading the message of togetherness. The band's line-up includes Mukti Shakya, Robin Tamang, Swapnil Sharma, Niran Shahi, Hari Maharjan, Sarad Shrestha, Roshan Kansakar and Nikhil Tuladhar.

PRABHU BANK

Deepak Gyawali
in Bhairawa

Prime Minister KP Oli, during his first tenure, had refused to visit New Delhi as long as the Indian Blockade of Nepal continued. In fact, Oli went to India only in February 2016 after New Delhi stopped backing Madhesi parties who were obstructing the border checkpoints.

Two years later, Oli is Prime Minister again, and is off to India this weekend. But he seems to be oblivious of another blockade that has brought cross-border trade through Bhairawa to a standstill for months.

About three kilometers down the Sunauli (India)-Belahiya border (Nepal), there is an Indian check post that has made it difficult for Nepal-bound cargo to pass through despite attempts by the envoys of the two countries to solve the problem.

Nepali trucks and containers carrying raw materials have found it increasingly difficult to pass



Virtually a Blockade

PM Oli opposed the Indian Blockade in 2015, but as he prepares to visit Delhi he seems unaware of the stoppage at the Bhairawa border

DEEPAK GYAWALI

through the check-point, and there is a long queue of trucks, sometimes as long as 20km, waiting for clearance to cross over.

Some drivers spend up to 7 days in the queue, paying a daily detention charge of Rs 2,500. Truckers often get abused, harassed or even beaten up by Indian police for complaining.

“Some truckers easily cross the border by bribing Indian police, but most get stuck for about a week,” says Kul Prasad Neupane, President of Siddharthnagar Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

On a normal day, more than 550 containers can easily pass through the Sunauli-Belahiya check point, and this is the lifeline for Bhairawa,

Butwal and other towns in western Tarai. These days, not more than 300 trucks are allowed to cross into Nepal.

The Sunauli-Belahiya border was not completely blocked even during the Indian blockade. When the Birganj-Raxaul border was blocked from September 2015 to February 2016, most trucks were

rerouted and brought into Nepal through this check-post. Even then, truckers bribed Indian police and customs officials to let them cross the border.

The Blockade ended, but Indian police and customs officials in Sunauli seem to have got used to the easy extra money. They began delaying clearances, forcing truckers to give *baksheesh* to cross into Nepal.

The border jam here is reminiscent of the Indian Blockade that destroyed Nepal's economy in 2015. The fall in revenue from the checkpoint also comes as Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatriwada said last week the state is bankrupt. Only Rs33 billion revenue has been collected from this trade point in the first half of the current fiscal year, which is Rs 4billion lower than target.

In July last year, Indian ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri and then Nepali ambassador Deep Kumar Upadhyay undertook a joint effort to settle the issue. Police on both sides agreed to do what they could. The problem eased for a few weeks, but now everything is stuck again.

Bidur Dhungana of the Nepal Cement Manufacturers Association says the Sunauli-Belahiya border problem is too complex that it cannot be solved locally. He says: “Only the prime ministers of the two countries can solve it.”

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The struggle for Transitional Justice

Nepal is engaged in the search for post-conflict reconciliation even while ensuring accountability for serious crimes

Hari Phuyal

Nepal's peace process cannot be considered successful without completing the final step of dealing with conflict era human rights violations through the process known as transitional justice.

Over the past decade, the defining mood among the victims of conflict has been that of disappointment and frustration, while among the other stakeholders there has been distrust, doubt and insecurity.

Amidst the extended disquiet, however, one now discerns a consensus emerging on the way forward, dictated by practical considerations even as society achieves some political stability through elections.

This emerging consensus is a result of the long struggle of the victims, several court decisions, and watchdogging by the international community. There has also been realisation among political parties, including the Maoists, as well as the security forces that the future is not secure without transitional justice that respects human rights and the decisions of the Supreme Court.



KANAK MANI DIXIT

Key issues needing a sorting out at this stage refer to amnesty vis-à-vis prosecution of cases of extreme human rights abuse, 'truth telling', reparation and the matter of running court cases. A legislative framework is fundamental to address these issues, which will require the amendment on the relevant law.

There is now general willingness to follow the principle laid out in the Supreme Court's landmark decision in the case brought by Suman Adhikari in 2015, stating that amnesty cannot be allowed in four categories of crimes – extra judicial killing, enforced disappearance, torture, as well as

rape and other sexual offences.

The newly adopted Criminal Code of Nepal criminalises torture and enforced disappearance, but there is need to lift the statute of limitations on cases filed.

There is emerging consensus on not to change the office-holders in the Disappearance Commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. On the other hand, the new arrangement being considered is for the commissions to recommend cases to the Attorney General, who will prosecute at a special court to be established under existing law.

Despite the fervent desire of the victims, it may be ambitious to prosecute too many cases, given the lapse of time and paucity of legally admissible evidence. However, there is no denying that emblematic cases reflecting conflict-era excess with adequate evidence for prosecution have to be taken up.

Such prosecutions are vital for the sake of deterrence in the event of future conflicts. At the same time, based on successful transitional justice efforts elsewhere and particularly in Latin America, a liberal attitude may be explored by truncating the incarceration period during sentencing. Under the international human rights law, every country has the obligation to investigate and prosecute conflict era excesses, but sentencing is a sovereign subject.

While prosecutions must be a requirement, political pragmatism and the need for society to 'move on' would also have to be considered.

There is a need to adjust the mandate of the Disappearance Commission and the T&R Commission in order to expand truth-seeking procedures. Perpetrators of serious offences who come forward to reveal the truth would get some leniency in sentencing. However, we must be careful not to delink sentencing completely from the 'satisfaction' of victims.

The existing law does not consider reparation as a right of victims, and this lacuna should be

EXHUMING ACCOUNTABILITY:

Baburam Tamang, Maoist activist, one of the 21 killed execution-style by the army in Doramba in August, 2003.

removed. The two commissions should also be given the mandate to provide interim relief and an adequate budget to complete the reconciliation agenda.


To move Nepal's transitional justice process towards conclusion, it is recommended that the two commissions be buttressed with financial and human resources from the Government and the international community. The National Human Rights Commission, as the leading constitutional body in the field, must provide technical assistance to the commissions and coordinate the international support they may need.

As far as the running court cases of the conflict era are concerned, there is need for creative thinking. There are two categories of such cases: a) the few which have been filed by the victims themselves and, b) those filed by the police against Maoist cadres and leaders.

The Attorney General must be given the power to choose the cases to be transferred to the special court based on the interest of the victims and attached gravity. The remaining running cases may be transferred to the two commissions for further investigation, to be recommended for prosecution if serious violations are identified.

There have been efforts to link Nepal's transitional justice process to crimes against humanity, war crimes and even genocide. While there is no doubt that Nepal has seen serious violation of human rights during the conflict, it is not clear if the listed abuse fall under such categories. Given that these crimes are not criminalised in the Criminal Code, ambitious efforts to achieve a higher threshold of justice may impede addressing serious human rights violations.

Overall, there is need for a realistic approach in taking up prosecutions, as the parties to the conflict have embraced peace and constitutionalism, and also reiterated their commitment to human rights. On the other hand, we cannot ignore international standards, including on the use of child soldiers in conflict, which the Security Council itself is engaged with.

The normative framework for transitional justice is crystallising simultaneously in different parts of the world in post-conflict contexts. From within South Asia one can hope that Nepal, with all the delays and disappointments thus far, will show the way and contribute to the global development of the principles of transitional justice. 





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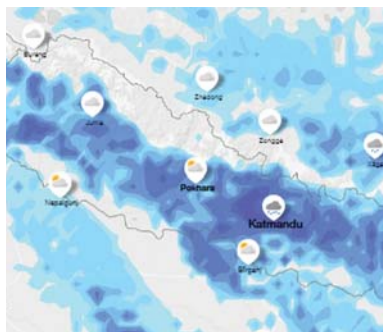


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Email: info@tranquilityspa.com.np, Website: www.tranquilityspa.com.np

Hari Phuyal is a lawyer and former Attorney General.
hariphuyal@yahoo.com





After that long dry spell, it looks like we are headed for quite a wet weekend and week ahead. There is a mild westerly system pumping in water vapour from the west and the remnants of a low pressure area over the Bay. These have energized updrafts from the Indian plains where the temperature had climbed to the 40s even as early as end-March – up to 5 degrees above normal for this time of year. The convection systems are unleashing storms right across the Himalaya from east to west. Central Nepal will be under its spell into midweek next week at least.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
24° 13°	23° 13°	24° 13°

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AYESHA SHAKYA

Arpana's world of quirky jewellery

“I don’t know if I picked jewellery, but jewelry might have picked me.”

Ayesha Shakya
in New York

‘Jill of all trades, master of some’ is how Arpana Rayamajhi might describe herself -- there seems to be nothing the jewellery designer, model and self-made entrepreneur cannot do. The Nepali in New York has been seamlessly juggling hats, while making a name for herself and her jewellery on the world stage.

Barely four years since she launched her jewellery line, Rayamajhi has been featured in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, included in *The New York Times* 30-under-30 list and her jewellery adorned by the likes of supermodel Adriana Lima and Gigi Hadid on the runways of the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show.

“I don’t know if I picked jewellery, but jewellery might have picked me,” Rayamajhi tell us in a recent interview. Always creative,

Rayamajhi took up painting and sculpting at The Cooper Union School of Art, and the passion to create her own jewellery grew out of necessity after graduation.

She explains: “I started working with beads because I was broke and I couldn’t afford anything else. I was waiting tables and babysitting to earn money, but I realised if I didn’t do jewellery now, I would never do it.”

Rayamajhi started off selling her designs to friends and their friends, but it wasn’t until she began modelling her jewellery herself and posting photos on Instagram that things really took off. Soon, she scored a feature on *Vogue* and began amassing tens of thousands of loyal followers on Instagram.

“If you don’t believe in your work, no one will. Sincerity and producing my own work was important to me,” says Rayamajhi. Indeed, it is her identity as an artist that makes her jewellery so unique and transcendent.



“I am really invested in making work that shows the artists' persona and how their mind works,” explains Rayamajhi. Colourful, playful, eclectic, and incorporating quirky elements like synthetic hair, tassels and miniature idols, Rayamajhi’s jewellery defines her. It also defines how she has

grown as an artist. Starting with beads, Rayamajhi made a big jump into diamond jewellery for the ‘Diamonds with a Story’ series by Australian Diamonds in January.

This was the first time Rayamajhi became an art director herself, and only designed the jewellery, instead of making them herself. Always socially and environmentally conscious, she only took up the offer because the diamonds were conflict free.

Rayamajhi also chooses to remain close to her Nepali roots, but incorporates elements that make her jewellery truly global. Her popularity has not gone unnoticed in Nepal, and that does come to her as a pleasant surprise.

“The kind of reaction I got from the Nepali audience on the Victoria’s Secret Fashion show was amazing. *Craze dekhera danga thiyeyi*,” says Rayamajhi, breaking into Nepali to explain how she was encouraged by the reaction.

Rayamajhi went back to Nepal twice last year after a gap

of five years, and remembers re-seeing Kathmandu in all its beauty and chaos. She wants to have a flagship store in Nepal to encourage more artisanal talent and support a comeback for Nepali handicraft.

She adds: “I will consider myself really successful if I am able to move a generation. In the end, I want people to see me and see themselves in me. I want them to feel that if she can do it, so can I.”



Watch a video profile of Arpana Rayamajhi, and learn what drives her passion for jewellery, and her plans to extend her work to boost Nepal’s artisanal talent and handicraft.

nepalimes.com



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Chiampagne

The delicate and refreshing flavour of high mountain tea from Nepal gets a cult following abroad

Sikuma Rai

The subtle aroma and lingering taste of Himalayan tea has created a new international market with big potential for exporting high value leaves from Nepal. Several Nepali growers are exporting this sophisticated product range that needs much greater quality control and care than normal teas.

More than 80% of the tea Nepal exports is still the traditional CTC variety with brands like Tokla and Muna, or mediocre teas sold in India to be re-exported as Darjeeling. However, a growing segment of the market is now dominated by specialty or orthodox teas.

This coincides with the lengthy effort to brand Nepali tea, and put it on the map of the tea world like Sri Lanka did with Ceylon and India with Darjeeling. Nepal's Rakura is trying to establish the Nepal brand with sustainability, longterm strategic planning and a mission to make tea from Nepal famous worldwide.

"Through Rakura, we are pushing the market with a similar approach to international tea brands," says Neeraj Rathi, one of two brothers who own and run Rakura.

Nepal was not making use of its potential and capacity to produce a lot of high quality tea, and even within Nepal, very few consumers knew about the origin of the quality tea being produced.

Nepal Tea and Coffee Development Board (NTCDB) has finally put out a licensed logo (*below*) for Nepali tea with the tagline 'Nepal Tea. Quality from the Himalayas' which can be used by Nepali companies exporting quality tea to the international market.

"The logo marks a symbol of standard for our tea", explains NTCDB Executive Director, Sheshkanta Gautam. "It means that the product with the logo on the pack has undergone thorough inspection, is certified organic and the quality is supreme."

Internationally, however, customers are getting more familiar with High Mountain teas from Nepal with brands like Jun Chiyabari which produce up to 20 types of tea with unique flavours found nowhere else. Nepali tea is finally carving out its own identity and distinguishing itself in production methods and quality from British and Indian influences.

"General consumers worldwide do not know much about Nepal, unless we use the term Himalaya, and besides our teas get mixed up with Darjeeling because of similar taste," explains Lochan Gyawali of Jun Chiyabari. "That is why we have created a distinct and exclusive taste, so that our tea stands out among the other better known ones."

Jun Chiyabari tea plantation is situated in the mountain slopes near Hile of Dhankuta. Their tea varieties are now exported to Japan, USA, Canada and Europe, where it has been very favourably reviewed. As a pioneer in exclusive Nepali teas, Jun Chiyabari is popularising teas like Himalayan Pine,

Himalayan Evergreen, Himalayan Shiiba and Himalayan Spring. Drinking its brews is different from traditional tea, there is an elaborate process of growing, picking, making, sorting and drinking it chilled like champagne in tea ceremonies (*right*).

Gyawali says his tea garden tries to get away from being a poor copy of Darjeeling varieties to be sold by the case-loads and blended with other teas. For this, Jun Chiyabari uses new Nepali cultivars, Taiwanese machines, specially trained pickers and has found a new cult following among the health-conscious in Europe and East Asia who are disillusioned with coffee.

With the success of these specialty Nepali teas in the international market, branding standard Nepali tea may have come too late.

"Despite it being a good branding exercise, very little of the tea produced in Nepal is of high enough quality and there is a danger that the new brand will be eroded if we do not implement proper food safety measures and quality control," says Uday Chapagain of Gorkha Tea Estate and Nature Himalayan Tea.

With so much happening in Nepal's tea industry, championing the international market will no longer become an unachievable mission. 🇳🇵



TEA TIME



Come join us for a tea tasting event, filled with exotic aroma and unique flavours of high Himalayan teas and find out from Lochan Gyawali how they are brewed and evaluated.

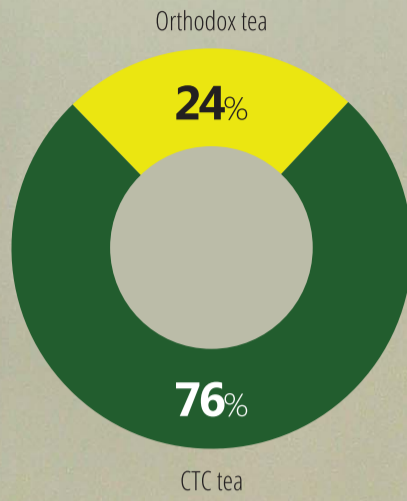
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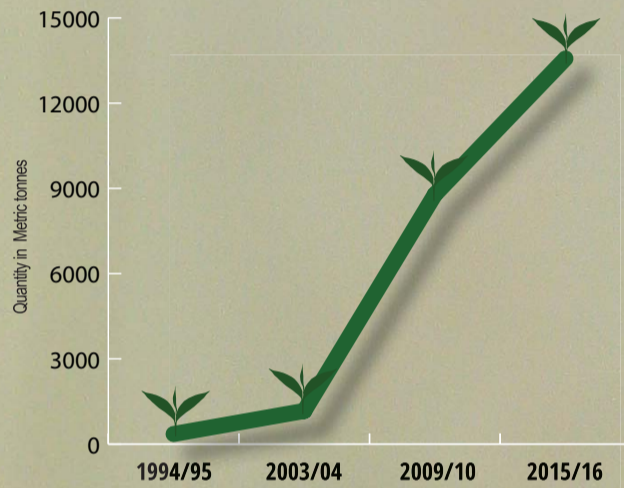


NEPAL TEA

production in 2016/17:
25,000 tons.



Export growth of Nepali Tea



SOURCE: NEPAL TEA AND COFFEE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Mountain to cup

How Nepal's sophisticated new teas are grown and produced for export.



1. Life of tea starts with two leaves and a bud.



2. Pluckers are trained to carefully harvest young leaves.



3. Plucked leaves are left to wilt and wither in open.



4. Leaves are rolled by hand or machines.



5. Clumped leaves are broken up and set to oxidise.



6. Leaves are roasted or 'fixed' depending on the type of tea.



7. Water content in leaves are reduced for longer shelf life.



8. Dried leaves are sorted for the final check.



9. Tea-tasters test finished tea to ensure quality.

EVENTS



KJC spring camp

Spring camp for kids aged 5-12 to learn about musical instruments and the basic concept of music and movement. Other activities include Zumba, self defense, acting and drama class, personality development, wall climbing, field trip, art and craft.
9-13 April, 10am-4pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5543554, 9813556945

Pop up market

Prazada is hosting its first ever Saturday market. Visit to find out what is in store.
7 April, 1-5pm, Prazada, Baluwater, (01) 4410473

1905 Garage sale

Buy and sell anything from art to kitchenware.
7 April, 9am-12pm, 1905 Suites & Restaurant, (01) 4411348, 9849647339

18th StoryYellers

Get your tickets for the 18th session of StoryYellers.
11 April, 5:30-7pm, 25 hours, Tangal Rs200/250, 9851242128



Bird watching

Meet at Suryabinayak Temple to join the bird watching team. The program is organised by Bird Conservation Nepal.
7 April, 7:30am-12:30pm, Suryabinayak, Bhaktapur, 9846076194

First Friday talk

Nepal Communitere's session will have entrepreneur Nikita Acharya, co-founder of Urban Girl & UG Cakes speaking about her journey as an entrepreneur at the young age of 19, followed by the regular happy hour at the Cargo Bar
6 April, 4pm onwards, Nepal Communitere, (01) 5530229



Paint and play

Introduce your children to the world of art through an interactive painting class.
7 April, 1-5pm, Royal Empire Boutique Hotel, Subarna Shumsher Marg, 5+ years, Rs1,500, For Reservation: 9813910611

Kids Springfest

Visit the museum for a day filled with fun spring activities, games and more.
7 April, 12-4pm, Children's Art Museum of Nepal, Hattisar, 9801087072



Cycle rally

Grab a bike and join in for a rally around the city. At the finish point in Tangalwood, there will be a fun fair and concert by Adrian Pradhan.
7 April, 6:30am onwards, Jawalakhel Central Zoo premises, Rs1,500/2,000(if cycle needed)

Yellow House market

Start your Sunday morning with a scrumptious breakfast at the Yellow House and take a stroll around the stalls for interesting art and local food, accompanied by music.
8 April, 9am-12pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01) 5553869

ABOUT TOWN

MUSIC



Mahogany Jones & band

A sensational performer and lyrical powerhouse, Mahogany Jones from the US will be performing alongside Nepali artists Laure, Swopna Suman, Sandhya Joshi, Cartoonz Crew and Nepal Hip-hop Foundation, using hip hop as a means for social and political expression and change.
7 April, 3pm onwards, Jawalakhel Football Ground, (01) 4234000

90's grunge

Tribute to the biggest bands of the generation X: Nirvana and Alice in Chains, by Kaagaz and Meso.
7 April, 8pm onwards, Purple Haze, Thamel, Rs300 (pre-sale), Rs400 (door), 9841288210



Farhan Akhtar

The versatile Bollywood artist Farhan Akhtar, who made his singing debut in the movie Rock On, will be playing hit songs for the Kathmandu crowd.
7 April, 3-9pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, Rs2,000 (gold), Rs4,000 (platinum), For Tickets: 9851104277

Jindabaad

Jindabaad returns to Moksh after 8 years with a complete original lineup since their EP Plastic Heart release. The band will be playing their songs from the EP, followed by some new songs.
7 April, 7-9pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, Rs300/500, (01) 5528362

OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu on 6 April

Blackmail is an Indian black comedy drama film depicting the mundane life of a middle-aged married man named Dev, played by Irrfan Khan, who is stuck in a 9-5 job. One day he returns early from work to surprise his wife with flowers, but ends up being surprised as he finds that his wife is having an extramarital affair. The plot unfolds with many characters as Dev chooses to confront the situation by blackmailing his wife (Kirti Kulhari) and her lover (Arunoday Singh). The film is co-produced and directed by Abhinay Deo.

DINING



Achaar Ghar

Satisfy your cravings for home-cooked meals along with the various choices of pickles prepared using recipes passed down from generations.
Jhamsikhel, Pulchok, (01) 5541952

The BLVD

Celebrate the New Year at a newly renovated modern restaurant, The BLVD at Royal Singi Hotel. On the same occasion the restaurant is featuring a Nepali Food Festival.
9-14 April, Lal Durbar, Kamaladi, (01) 4424190/ 4424191

Sapporo Japanese

Experience typical Japanese food and drinks at the restaurant known for homemade fresh noodles, ramen, udon, soba and more. It is the restaurant's first anniversary, so visit for a grand celebration.
7 April, 12-6pm, Anamika Marg, Baluwater, 9803445405



Kakori

Discover amazing flavours and the most celebrated recipes from Punjab and North India at Soaltee's North West Indian specialty restaurant. Choose from varieties of kebabs, biryanis and a variety of Indian breads and mouthwatering desserts from their revamped menu.
7-10:45pm for dinner, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, for reservation: (01) 4273999

Baan Thai

Baan Thai serves generous portions of perfected and healthy Thai dishes.
Durbar Marg, (01) 4231931

Bajeko Sekuwa

Excelling in barbecue items and typical Nepali cuisines, and known for its sekuwa dishes, Bajeko Sekuwa has its outlets across the main cities.
Battispatali, 9801188465

GETAWAY



Rupakot Resort

Get pampered in the lap of luxury amid stunning views of the Annapurnas.
Maidan-6, Rupakot, Kaski, (61) 622660 / (01) 4004687

Hyatt Regency

On Mother's Day, gift your dear mother a relaxing spa treatment at Club Oasis that includes manicure, aroma therapy massage and facial.
6-30 April, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, Rs7,500, (01) 5171234



The Last Resort

Enjoy the resort's 'ride and dive' package for 1 night and 2 days where bike or travel enthusiasts drive to The Last Resort and celebrate New Year's Eve with a unique experience of night bungee.
13 April, The Last Resort Nepal, Bhotekoshi, Rs8,500 (for Nepalis), (01) 4700525/4701247

Tiger Mountain Lodge

Situated 1000 ft above Pokhara valley, this resort offers spectacular views of Machhapuchchre, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu.
Kandani Dada, Pokhara, (01) 4720580

Pataleban Vineyard Resort

Japanese-influenced eco-resort with great views, jungle walks, and picnics.
Chisapani, Kathmandu, (01) 4316337

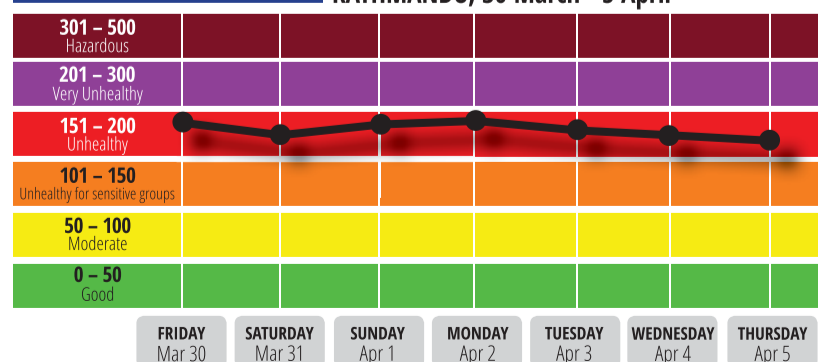


Meghauli Serai

Relax with fine dining and wildlife safaris in Chitwan at Taj Safari's luxurious lodge.
Chitwan National Park, 9851218500

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 30 March - 5 April



Thank heavens for the copious rain this week in Kathmandu Valley, but despite the air being washed the average daily Air Quality Index still remains evenly in the Unhealthy Red band. Good news is that AQI remained below 200 all week, and evenings after the rains, it actually dropped to the Green 'Moderate' level. Bad news is that as soon as street vehicular traffic picked up, so did the pollution levels.

<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

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Bringing our Gods home

Two 1,000-year-old stone deities return to Nepal, but hundreds of other stolen objects are still out there

Sahina Shrestha

In Yatkha Tole, Krishna Bahadur Tuladhar, 62 shows *Nepali Times* a brass crown belonging to the Standing Buddha that was stolen from a shrine in his neighbourhood in 1986. His family has worshipped the crown every day ever since the Buddha went missing.

On Wednesday, the 10th century Standing Buddha of Yatkha Tole was one of two holy stone sculptures returned to Nepal by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The other was a 12th century stele of Uma Maheswar stolen from Tangal Hiti in Patan in 1980.

"This looks like the same statue missing from our temple," says Tuladhar looking at the photograph of the Standing Buddha being returned. "If it is the same, the crown should fit it," he adds.

Since the sculpture went missing 30 years ago, the community has installed another statue in its place. But the open space the *bahi* once occupied has shrunk because of the private houses that tower all around.

Shyam Dangol remembers playing in the *bahi* and praying to the deity when he was a child. "It is the same one that went missing from here," he says looking at the photograph. "When the idol was stolen, the authorities came with big dogs and even the locals were accused of assisting in the crime. We never found out who did it."

The epidemic of idol thefts started soon after the end of the Rana era in the 1950s, as Nepal opened up to the world. Over the next few decades, thousands of deities worshipped in temples and monasteries in Kathmandu Valley were stolen to be sold to collectors and museums in the West. The process accelerated during the 1980s.

When Tej Ratna Tamrakar heard about the stone Buddha being returned to Nepal, he had hoped it was another statue from his clan's *Arya Naam Sangiti Guthi* that was stolen 30 years ago. After the Buddha was stolen from the *Agan Chhen* (sacred house housing the clan's god) in Yatkha Bahal the *guthi* installed a much smaller stone Buddha.

"When I heard the news, I thought that our God was coming home," 70-year-old Tamrakar told us this week, "but this one is not ours. Our Buddha was sitting down in *bhusparsa* position, this is standing."

The Uma Maheswar was donated to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1983 by a collector, and the Standing Buddha was donated in 2015. During the acquisition process of the Standing Buddha, The Met found out from Lain Singh Bangdel's book *Stolen Images of Nepal*, published in 1989, that the two figures had been smuggled out of Nepal, and so the process for its return began.

In 2017, the Museum contacted the Nepal government and offered to return the sculptures, after which the Consulate of Nepal in New York contacted the Museum to coordinate and facilitate the process. The nose of the Standing Buddha currently looks different from the picture in *Stolen Images*



of Nepal, (where it looks slightly damaged). John Guy, curator of the Arts of South & South East Asia at The Met believes the nose was repaired when sold to the collector about 30 years ago.

"When the statues were carved and consecrated, no one would have thought that centuries later someone would try to steal them. That is why they were not anchored securely and were easy to lift off, and that is also why the government did not have an inventory," says heritage activist Kanak Mani Dixit.

Fortunately, the works of Lain Singh Bangdel, Jürgen Schick and later Ramesh Dhungel have sought to fill the gap. Bangdel and Schick separately photographed and documented hundreds of statues in their original place and published *Stolen Images of Nepal* and *The Gods are Leaving the Country* respectively. Dhungel studied the Nepali artefacts in The

Met and documented them in *The Lost Heritage*.

"Ramesh Dhungel studied Nepali art in the same museum from where the two idols have been returned, and his book along with the others' shows how many more Nepali idols are still out there," said Bhes Narayan Dahal, Director General of Department of Archaeology.

Since April 1996, when 19 stolen artefacts were returned from Britain, only a few out of the thousands have been returned to Nepal. And even from those few, many have ended up in museums, rather than the communities where they belong. The two images of the Standing Buddha and Uma Maheswar have also been handed over to the National Museum of Nepal at Chhauni.

"The idols have spiritual, psychological and emotional connotation for the people so they need to be returned to the community. The government should help safeguard it," says Ramesh Dhungel. "When they end up in museums they merely become items of art, which is unfair to the people who believe

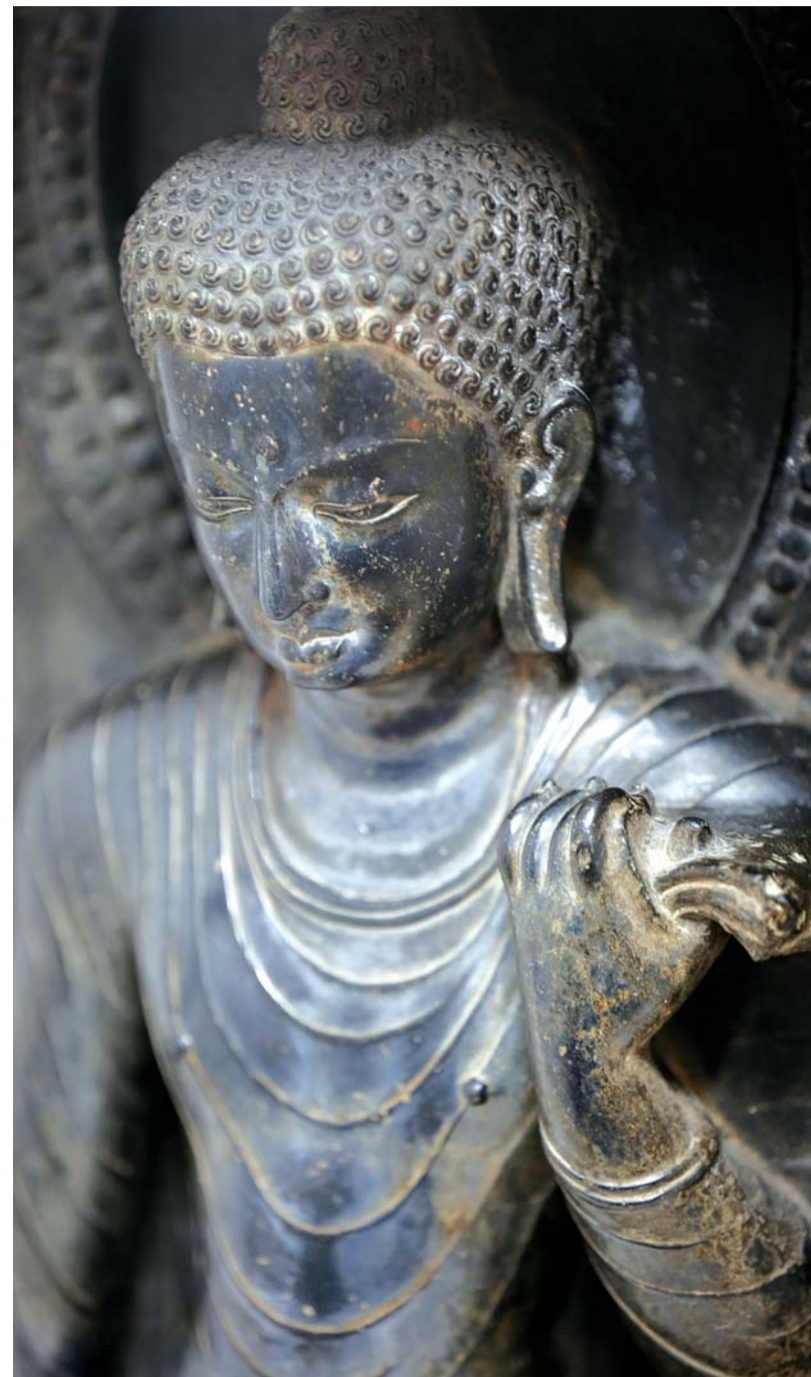
HOME COMING: The 12th century Uma Maheswar stele from Tangal Hiti, Patan, stolen in early 1980s (above) and the Standing Buddha sculpture dating back to 10th century that was stolen from Yatkha Tole, Kathmandu in early 1986 (right). Both the stone sculptures were returned to Nepal on Wednesday.

that the idols have life."

The communities also want the Gods to be returned to them and not housed in museums. Clutching an old photograph of an idol of *Balabhadra* stolen from their community 40 years ago, Tirtha Raj Bajracharya, Bishwa Bhakta Malla and Shree Ram Tamrakar of Tangal Hiti want their God back too.

"They stole it in the past but now we as a community will look after it now," says Bajracharya.

In Yatkha Tole, Tuladhar told *Nepali Times*, "It is our God. We should be able to pray to it



PHOTOS: GOPEN RAI

HOME OF THE GOD



Follow us to Yatkha Tole in Kathmandu in our search for the exact location from where the holy idol of the Standing Buddha was stolen 30 years ago. The Buddha has been finally returned to Nepal.

nepalitimes.com



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Phantom Thread

While I greatly admire Paul Thomas Anderson's films (the incredibly cheeky *Boogie Nights* from 1997 is my favourite), I began his latest film, 2017's *Phantom Thread* with a little bit of trepidation, imagining a film that yet again deals with the masculine ego, thriving on its complexities. While *Phantom Thread* is indeed about a very masculine ego, that of Reynolds Woodcock (Daniel Day-Lewis

the film and the complexity of the characters.

Nominated this year in the category for Best Picture at the 90th Academy Awards, *Phantom Thread* lost to Guillermo del Toro's fantastical, lovely *Shape of Water* in a year where the Best Picture nominees have been incredibly strong and represented a wide range of cinema at its best, though arguably, of course, it could have been more diverse.

For the ever-critical who insist on not being able to relate to a film unless there is a person the same colour as themselves onscreen, *Phantom Thread* might dismay as it is a film about three very contrary and complex white people who indeed are dealing with the first world problems of love, identity, success, failure, and their place in the world. Luckily, Anderson, being the great director that he is, is able to make the story transcendent, creating a riveting psycho-drama

about what it is to love somebody but to also retain one's dignity and sense of self in the process—a difficult balance once you understand that even the best of love involves some kind of power dynamic.

When Reynolds falls in love with a young, seemingly ordinary waitress Alma, played by the wonderfully talented Austrian newcomer Vicky Krieps, we are tricked into thinking that she is just one of a long line of ingénues that he uses as a blank canvas for his haute couture dresses. Alma however, is made up of some unusual stuff and therefore we have a film which surprises at every turn, confounding us just when we think we know what is going to happen next.

The relationships here, written by Anderson, who also shot this beautiful film, are woven with care and understanding of how contrary people can be. It is a pleasure to be baffled by every dramatic turn in a film that showcases the talents of three extraordinary actors, Day-Lewis, Krieps, and the great Leslie Manville as Cyril Woodcock, keeper of the gate of the House of Reynolds and Woodcock's bosom confidante and sister.

This is not a film for the impatient or for those who expect a conventional love story. It is instead a work of art that yields surprises, probably with every viewing, with an extraordinary mixture of art, fashion, clashing egos, love, rivalry, and the unexpected role of wild, poisonous mushrooms. If you are in the mood for a luscious, extremely bizarre love story, this is going to be your film of the year.



Watch trailer online

nepaltimes.com



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

in what could be his last role), a designer of one of the great eponymous (and fictitious) British Fashion Houses of the 1950s, it is also much more than that, surprising me at every turn, even as I was enraptured by the beauty of



BIKRAM RAI

TICK TOCK: As the time for his state visit to India grew closer, Prime Minister KP Oli addressed the Federal Parliament on Thursday, saying Nepal-India relations were too strong to be jeopardised by anyone.



RSS

FRONTIER LIFE: Minister for Commerce and Supplies Matrika Prasad Yadav and Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri (right) arrive in Nepalganj on Monday to monitor the construction of the Integrated Check Post at Nepal-India border point.



GOPEN RAI

THE GODS ARE BACK: Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Finance Madhu Kumar Marasini returns 10th and 12th century images of Standing Buddha and Uma Maheswar to Bhesh Narayan Dahal of the Department of Archaeology on Wednesday. *Story on page 11.*



TWITTER OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

VISIONARY: Nepali ophthalmologist Dr Sanduk Ruit receives the Padma Shree award from Indian President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday. Ruit treats over 2,500 patients every week and provides free eye care to the poor in Nepal and around the world



RSS

HOWZAT?: Mayor of Bharatpur Metropolitan City Renu Dahal and Sitaram Kattel of Dhurmus-Suntali Foundation inspect land allocated for the construction of an international cricket stadium in Chitwan on Tuesday.

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How they kept Nepal in the dark ages

Ramesh Kumar in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-7 April

Nepalis endured a crippling power shortage for a decade from 2006-2016, and were told over and over again that it was because of the gap between demand and supply. The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) blamed the war for delayed projects, political instability -- everything but corruption.

However, in 2016 Nepalis got a pleasant surprise. As soon as the NEA had a new chief, Kul Man Ghising, they started getting 24 hours of power supply. It was a miracle. Or was it?

Ghising said modestly then that it was just a matter of "better management of demand and supply". But our investigation has revealed that Nepalis did not suffer from load-shedding just because of undersupply but because of structural corruption -- top NEA executives were selling electricity to industrialists, leaving household consumers in the darkness for 10

years.

In the winter of 2014, Nepalis were enduring 14 hours of power outage every day at a time when the NEA was supplying uninterrupted electricity to selected cement factories, cotton mills and steel manufacturers.

Hydro-electricity cost was Rs7 per unit that year -- four times cheaper than per unit cost of diesel-powered generators (Rs29). Industrialists wanted cheap uninterrupted power and were willing to pay the NEA brass under the table to give them a dedicated feed. Businessmen saved millions they would have otherwise spent on buying expensive diesel. NEA officials filled their pockets. And everyone got their share.

Documents which Himal Khabarpatrika has acquired show that NEA Managing Director at the time, Mukesh Raj Kafle, alone sold 50 MW of electricity to Reliance Spinning Mill, Triveni Spinning Mill, Hulas Steel, Shivam Cement, Sarbottam Cement and six jute mills in Biratnagar, leading to load-



shedding even during the monsoon.

The modus operandi was simple: industrialists requested dedicated feeders, the NEA's regional managers recommended uninterrupted power supply, and the MD ordered the dispatchers to ensure 24 hours electricity to selected customers.

Kafle learnt the trick from his predecessors when the nexus evolved in 2006 while Arjun Karki was NEA chief and Sher Singh Bhat headed the Load Dispatch Centre.

Karki and Singh forced Nepalis to bear up to 17 hours of power outage daily in winter, while supplying 24-hour power to influential business groups. In January 2013, the NEA Board of Directors ordered that dedicated feeders be disconnected. But that decision was reversed when Rameswor Yadav became the NEA's new MD. That year, a probe panel led by Shyam Sundar Shrestha, Deputy Director General of Electricity Development Department, concluded that the NEA was 'arbitrarily' supplying uninterrupted electricity to industrial plants operated by powerful businesses. The panel recommended further investigation and action against the guilty.

After Kafle became MD, he brushed that report under the carpet, blaming undersupply. Only

after Ghising replaced Kafle did the NEA cut the dedicated feeders to industrial plants, and made sure electricity was distributed evenly.

Ghising also imported more electricity from India to fill the gap caused by the increase in suppressed demand. But NEA spokesperson Prabal Adhikari says cutting off dedicated feeders to industries and importing more electricity from India were not the only factors leading to an end to power cuts.

"We have also cut leakage. People don't use inverters to store power in batteries, and this also reduced demand," he explains.

Apart from industrialists and NEA officials, the other sector that benefited from power cuts were solar and diesel generator traders. In 2015, Nepal imported diesel generators worth Rs3.26 billion and solar panels worth Rs2.1 billion. This fiscal year, the country imported only Rs 2.1 billion worth of diesel generator and Rs290 million in solar panels.

Who got 24-hour electricity?

FACTORIES

- Reliance Spinning Mill
- Shivam Cement
- Hulas Steel
- Sarbottam Cement
- Triveni Spinning Mill
- Arihant Multifibers
- Raghupati Jute Mill

- Baba Jute Mill
- Swastik Jute Mill
- Nepal Jute Mill
- GB Textile
- New Narayan Rubber
- Sakuara Pipe
- Sita Food Industry
- Satyawoti Concrete Industry
- Siddhartha Mineral Pvt Ltd
- Hetauda Cement
- Sino Hydro Corporation

- Multi-Purpose Plastic Industry
- Kamala Rolling Mill
- Asian Thai Foods
- Mainawati Steel Industry
- Arihanta Poly Pack
- Maruti Cement
- Dhanlaxmi Synthetic
- Negale cement
- Jagadamba Steel
- Hulas Wire
- Pashupati Sim Pack

SERVICES

- Ncell
- Nepal Telecom

GOVERNMENT

- Shital Niwas
- Nirmal Niwas
- Ex-princess Prekshya Rajiya Laxmi Shah

BANKS

- Rashtriya Banijya Bank
- Agriculture Development Bank

HOSPITALS

- Norvic Nursing College
- Devdahal Medical College
- Manipal College of

- medical sciences
- Himalayan eye hospital
- Neuro Hospital
- BP Memorial Hospital
- Green City Hospital
- Ishan Child Nursing Home
- Medicare Hospital
- Kantipur Dental College
- Sahara Hospital
- Annapurna Neuro Hospital

- Norvic Hospital
- Shanti Hospital
- Jaya Buddha Hospital
- Pushpanjali Hospital
- Om Hospital
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- Saptagandaki Medical College
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- Asha Hospital

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CHANDRA SHEKHAR KARKI / A PEOPLE WAR

This photograph by Chandra Shekhar Karki of Anupa Rai and her newly-born son in a hospital in Phidim in August 2006 was printed in *Kantipur*, and was symbolic of Nepal's journey from war to peace.



By 2009, Anupa Rai's son was three years old. She moved to her husband Man Kumar Rai's village two days walk from Phidim. Their sacrifice for the revolution was forgotten by the Maoists.

Forgotten people of

Bhim Kumar Banskota
in Panchthar

The conflict ended 12 years ago, but Anupa Rai is reminded of it every day because of the shrapnel lodged in her head

Anupa Rai was in Grade 8 in Okhaldhunga when she was so stirred by the revolutionary zeal of the Maoists that she and her brother joined the militia.

At age 16, she went through weapons training and was hopeful that the war would improve the lives of people like her who were neglected by the state. Fresh out of school, with the energy and drive of a newly converted rebel, Rai was fully focused on the movement.

The teenager was soon deployed at the frontlines of Maoist attacks on security bases in eastern Nepal. She fought in the battles of Salleri, Bhakundebesi, Chainpur, Sindhuli and Rumjatar.

During the fighting in Chainpur,

Rai was charging at the Nepal Army sentry point when she stepped on mines laid at the perimeter of the base. She was severely injured, became unconscious, and was left for dead.

When she came to, she was alone in the middle of a jungle. She dragged herself to a nearby village where friendly locals took care of her. She learnt later that her brother was also wounded and taken to India for treatment.

After three weeks, Rai was well enough to contact the Maoist base in Sankhuwasabha where her comrades had already declared her a martyr. It took her two more months to recover enough to rejoin her platoon.

Although she had received basic medical treatment, the shrapnel

from the explosion was still lodged on the left side of her head and chest, which kept her in much pain.

In 2002 Anupa married fellow-guerrilla Man Kumar Rai, and the couple went on to fight alongside each other in several battles. After the 2006 ceasefire, Man Kumar and Anupa took their newly-born son to live in their ancestral village two days walk northeast of Phidim.

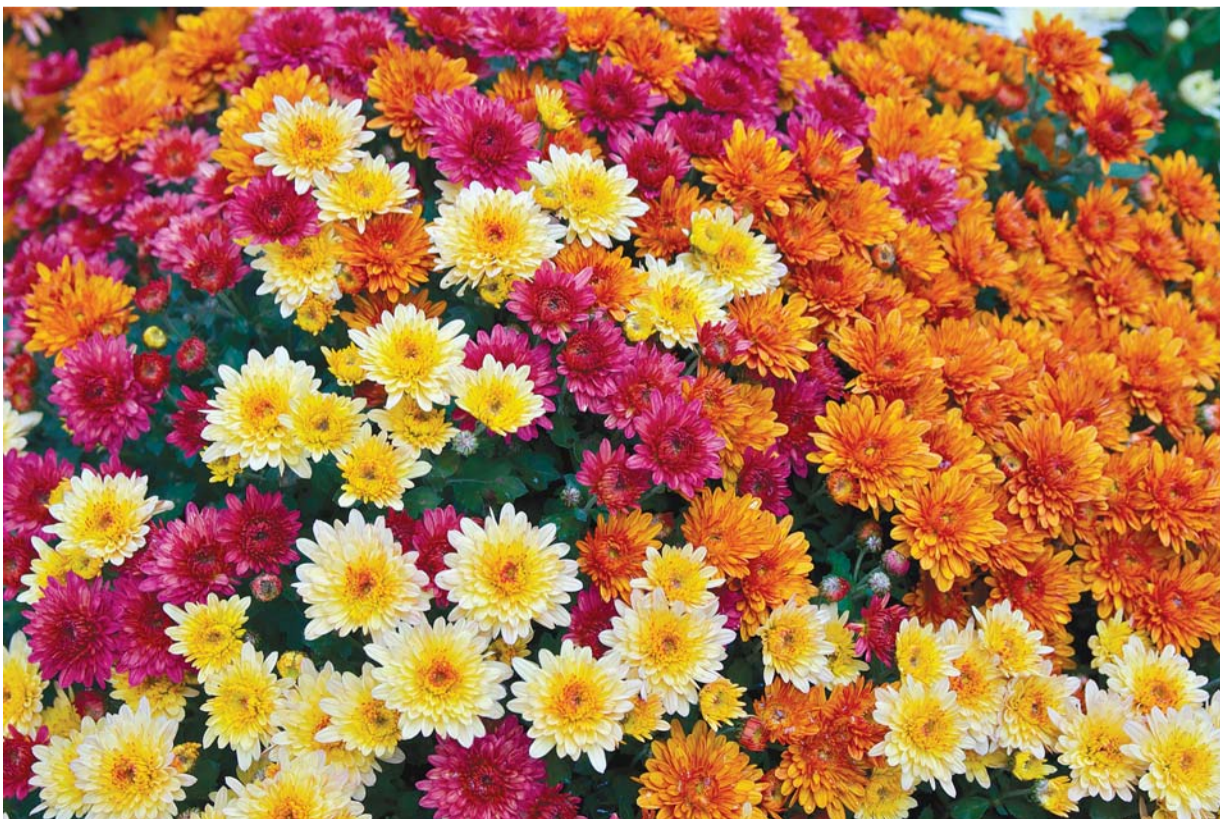
Anupa applied for integration into the Nepal Army, but was disqualified because of her injury. With no compensation and the meagre earnings from their farm not enough to raise a family, Man Kumar migrated to Malaysia to work.



In all these years, Anupa hasn't ever appeared in the official list of war wounded, which means she has not been entitled to compensation or free medical treatment.

Anupa and Man Kumar's Maoist commanders were Sanjiv Thapa and Santu Darai, who are now personal aides to Maoist Chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Kathmandu.

"We fought for change and progress, without thinking about ourselves. It is unfair that our former commanders who now enjoy senior positions have ignored us," says Anupa, who is now 31. "The



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LAVDEV DHUNGANA / PEOPLE AFTER WAR



BHIM KUMAR BANSKOTA

Anupa Rai posed last week in Phidim with her son Rabin (*above*) who is now in Grade 7. After the media wrote about her war wounds, a hospital in Birtamod (*box, below*) is finally preparing to extract a shrapnel that has been lodged in her head for the last 15 years.

the People's War

Party should take care of people like us and at least pay for our medical treatment.”

The war ended 12 years ago, but she is reminded of it every moment of every day by the severe pain in her head and chest, and the numbness that follows at times. She does household chores and works on the farm, but her movements are restricted by the pain – which gets worse with heat and cold.

Anupa has made the rounds of hospitals in Kathmandu, Dharan and Biratnagar to get the metal pieces extracted from her body, but she could not afford the treatment.

For the past five years, Anupa used money sent by her husband to pay for household expenses, school fees for her son Rabin, and

medicines for her mother-in-law, Budhha Maya, 72. There wasn't enough left over to pay for her operations. Rabin is now 12, and is as old as the peace process.

Anupa Rai's story appeared in the national media last week, and it caught the attention of doctors at the B&C Hospital in Birtamod which has offered her free treatment (*see box, right*).

Anupa feels she can finally lead a normal life again, but having been let down so often, she is not going to believe it until it happens.

In an interview eight years ago for the book *People After War*, Anupa Rai had said: “The war just made a lot of people miserable. Let's hope that we never have to fight again.”

Theatre of war to operation theatre



Durga Prasai of B&C Hospital in Birtamod was reading *Annapurna Post* one morning last week when he came across the moving story of ex-Maoist guerrilla Anupa Rai who had been injured during the conflict, and had been left to fend for herself while raising a family.

Without hesitation, Prasai got in touch with Rai in Phidim and asked her to take the 9 hour bus ride to his hospital, and offered her free treatment.

Anupa has pieces of metal lodged in her head and chest, and has been living with the pain, numbness and tingling feeling for 15 years.

On Tuesday, Rai was examined by B&C's neurosurgeon Pankaj Nepal who concluded that the operation would be complex, and could last up to 10 hours. He has decided to only extract the shrapnel from Rai's head, and leave the one in the chest. He is confident that her health will be fully restored after the procedure.

“After the peace process I approached my party which was in government many times, but they never listened to me,” Rai told Rabin Bhattarai of *Annapurna Post* in Birtamod on Tuesday, “I am glad I am finally in good hands.”

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Horny again in Kathmandu

I have just been reminded through Google Alert that it is time for our annual review of traffic rules in Kathmandu. These periodic updates are necessary so that vehicle drivers, pedestrians and street livestock are apprised of changes (if any) in the rules and procedures while trafficking in this city. Follow these rules, otherwise we will follow you:

1. The No Honking rule has been rescinded. Honking is an important part of road safety, and not honking repeatedly and loudly at fellow travellers will result in a 6 month jail term or a Rs 6,000 fine, whichever comes first. When God made cars and trucks, he in his infinite wisdom equipped them with horns. Let's use them, as instructed in the back of trucks.
2. Drivers are advised that they are no longer required to stop at zebra crossings to let pedestrians cross the road. This rule has been revoked retroactively, so you can even go back in time to last year and not stop at the zebras. Henceforth and heretofore, if there are street walkers trying to step into a zebra, the driver's responsibility is to accelerate and beat them to it.

3. Micro-buses are jam-packed for a reason – they allow close human contact between citizens and build a touchy-feely community spirit. Any new clean and reliable bus service that offers sterile and silent commuting and removes social interaction must be opposed tooth and nail by stoning new buses and declaring a bund east of Tinkune.

4. It is an indication of the reverence we accord to our National Animate that we give bulls the privilege of serving as bovine traffic islands at the Mandala, weekdays from 9-5. El Toro's TOR is to not budge, even if the Presidential Motorcade en route to Parliament whizzes by since he is there by divine instruction.

5. Now that the traffic lights at Baneswor have been fixed, let us remind ourselves what the coloured lights mean. GREEN: Go Fast. AMBER: Go Faster. RED: Bribe Cop.

6. The Police's zero-tolerance for driving while under the influence has been revoked with immediate effect. Since the treasury is empty, it is up to every citizen to imbibe and help generate revenue for the state.



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