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PRADEEP RAI, ONTA

Dying for others

After the fall of Makwanpur Fort in May 1816, Gorkhali defenders agreed to ratify the Sugauli Treaty with the British East India Company under which Nepal surrendered nearly half of its territory, and allowed recruitment of its fighters into the British military in return for retaining its independence.

Two centuries later, the practice of allowing our young men to fight and die for other countries continues. Over 52,000 Gurkhas were killed in the two World Wars alone, and they continue to die -- 11 Nepalis in the British Army have been killed in action in Afghanistan in the past decade.

Britain's Prince Harry is currently spending two weeks in the motherland of the Gurkhas with whom he served in Helmand. He is meeting families of those killed in Afghanistan, helping post-earthquake reconstruction, and urging the world to visit Nepal.

The royal tour has revived a debate in Nepal to redefine Nepal-UK relations that allows Gurkha recruitment on the 200th anniversary of the Treaty of Sugauli. A day before Prince Harry landed in Kathmandu on 19 March, an association of ex-Gurkha soldiers sent a letter to British Prime Minister David Cameron with some uncomfortable questions: why are Gurkhas who fought for the British Empire subjected to discrimination? Why are families of those killed or disappeared in the World Wars still not formally informed?

Gurkha veterans are also not satisfied with pensions and other facilities despite winning a major legal battle in 2004 that allowed them to settle in the UK. But their children above 18 still cannot apply for

UK residency, and say they are separated from their children in their old age.

Among the 40 demands the Maoists issued before launching their armed struggle in 1996 was one to stop the recruitment of Nepali nationals into the British and Indian armies. They still see it an affront to Nepal's sovereignty, although they are not pushing for a ban on recruitment anymore.

Lokendra Bista Magar of the UCPN (M) told *Nepali Times*: "Our youth must be ready to kill and die for our motherland, not for an empire that uses us as mercenaries to kill poor people like us in other countries."

But retired British Army Captain Yam Bahadur Pun, President of the Gurkha Ex-Servicemen Welfare Association, says: "Instead of ending Gurkha recruitment,

IN MEMORIAM: Britain's Prince Harry with Pramila Rai, mother of Remand Kulung killed in Afghanistan in 2010 on Tuesday at a ceremony in Pokhara commemorating the Nepali nationals who have died fighting for Great Britain.

young Nepali men should be given alternatives. If they get better job opportunities here, they would not migrate to the Gulf or fight for a foreign country."

The British Army is scaling back its uptake of Nepali nationals, recruiting only 128 last year, and this number is expected to decrease in the coming years. However, the British have separate agreements (to which Nepal is not party) to recruit Gurkhas on behalf of the security forces of Brunei, Singapore and Oman. Now, India also wants to supply Gurkhas to Brunei, sparking media criticism in Nepal. **Om Astha Rai**

UNINTENDED TRANS-HIMALAYAN CONSEQUENCES

Did New Delhi ever imagine its coercive strategy would backfire this badly?
 BY **KANAK MANI DIXIT**

LOOKING BACK TO THE FUTURE
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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

LOOKING BACK TO THE FUTURE

Nepalis have waited 200 years for a nation that they can once more be proud of.

Two hundred years ago this week, troops of the East India Company were advancing on Makwanpur Gadi, the hilltop fort guarding the southern approaches to Kathmandu Valley. The British wanted to teach the Gorkhali Kingdom a final lesson, and force its rulers to ratify the Sugauli Treaty that had been signed four months previously. As Jyoti Thapa Mani recounts in her recently-published book, *The Khukri Braves* (reviewed on page 9) the heroic but demoralised Gorkhali defenders did not stand a chance when the Company brought up heavy artillery.

1815 marked the peak of the Gorkha expansion, with Makwanpur being the last surrender. It was all downhill after that. The Sugauli Treaty allowed Nepal to remain independent and isolated, but it sanctioned the appropriation of nearly half its territory, and started the practice of the recruitment of Nepalis into the foreign military which continues 200 years later.

Nepal was economically ruined by the war, and the loss of so much territory also meant an acute loss of tax revenue. The fighters were abruptly jobless, and the first seeds of what is now Nepal's inescapable migrant economy were planted then: we started exporting young men to fight for a foreign army. Soon, there was a massive exodus of civilians, too, from Nepal's mid-hills to India's northeast and Burma.

The British didn't just conscript soldiers, they also recruited indentured labourers for the sugarcane fields of the West Indies and Fiji. Many Nepalis were among those who sailed off from Calcutta, including the ancestors of Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, the Trinidadian Nobel Prize-winning author.

The first Gorkhali fighters joined the Company even before the war formally ended. For two centuries since then, the British Gurkhas (called 'Gorkhas' in the Indian Army) have fought for the Empire. A total of 52,000 young Nepali men died during the two World Wars, emptying Gurung, Rai, Limbu and Magar villages of young men.

Nepalis are rightfully proud of the fact that our country has never known a colonial master. However, that was not



GURKHA MUSEUM

because British India or China-Tibet could not overrun Nepal, but because they chose not to. It was strategically much more advantageous, and cheaper, to keep Nepal as a buffer. Both the British and the Chinese had sent their armies into Nepal, and what they saw of its topography convinced them that the unforgiving terrain made it virtually ungovernable.

Jang Bahadur, the ambitious general and progenitor of the Rana dynasty, initially aspired to restore Nepal to its former glory. To gauge whether it was worth going to war to regain territory lost in 1815, he became the first subcontinental royal to cross the Black Waters to pay state visits to Britain and France in 1850. He was suitably impressed with British military prowess, and his descendants became devoted to the English, offering troops to quell the Mutiny in 1857, the Afghan Wars and other campaigns.

In 1923, after much lobbying in London and Delhi, Chandra Shumsher upgraded bilateral relations to formally recognise Nepal as a sovereign country. In 1937, Nepal became one of only four Asian countries with an embassy in London. But the sun was setting on the Empire, and when the British finally quit India in 1947, Nepal's Rana rulers

found themselves on the wrong side of history and were soon deposed with Delhi's help.

We fast forward to the present: Nepal still permits recruitment of its young men into foreign armies and even allows the British Army to recruit extra people on behalf of the security forces of Singapore, Brunei and Oman. Now, the Indian Army wants a piece of that pie, too. We have grown so accustomed to Gurkha recruitment we don't see the incongruity of a sovereign nation offering its men to fight other people's wars. It is the disgraceful governance failure of a succession of rulers in Kathmandu, their neglect and apathy, that force us to accept a migrant economy as a given.

Prince Harry looked cute playing Holi, but in Pokhara this week he donned a British military uniform to greet Nepali veterans from Helmand. Yes, 180 years later the Gurkhas were back in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, New Delhi is still looking at Nepal through vice-regal prisms of the 19th century. And Prime Minister Oli is in Beijing, continuing where his forebears left off in 1815 to persuade the sceptical Chinese to be more closely engaged.

Our rulers also have a proven track record of incompetence in handling the geopolitical balancing act necessary to keep Nepal politically stable and economically viable. As the Indian Blockade demonstrated, we have not yet learnt to be smart enough to outsmart our larger, clumsier neighbour. We either play the victim and grovel, or we recklessly let disputes escalate.

Nepalis have waited 200 years for a nation that they can once more be proud of. We now need leaders who do not need to resort to hollow nationalism, pure populism and empty promises to get to power. We need statespersons who can start building a self-reliant economy and a just society. We have a location between two of the world's largest economies, and they are not fighting over us.

Things are finally moving in the right direction for Nepal to break free of its past and forge its own future. The new constitution finally gives us a chance to get it right.

Times

THIS WEEK

YUVARAJ SHRESTHA

Most reached on Facebook

#HARRYINNEPAL

Britain's Prince Harry celebrates Holi with students of Gaunda Secondary School at Lamjung district on Tuesday. (13,387 people reached)

Most shared on Facebook

Nepal gains access to China ports by Om Astha Rai (21 shares)

Most visited online page

How to braid two cultures together by Seulki Lee (1,048 views)

Most popular on Twitter

How to braid two cultures together by Seulki Lee (45 retweets, 81 favourites)

Most commented

Welcome to the Time Warp by Foreign Hand

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

THE CHINA SYNDROME

Restoring Nepal's own trust in itself is the more ideal thing to do ('The China Syndrome', Editorial, #800). I am very suspicious of Chinese apparent influence such as a communication satellite in Bolivia. What's the point and why don't they just cooperate in rebuilding? If China has ideas to kill corruption, then welcome.

Ravi Raj Lama

■ If he only just figured out that poverty is one of Nepal's big problems, I don't hold out much hope.

Susan Welch

NO OIL FOR OLI

It seems quite obvious by now that Oli is an attention seeker ('No oil for Oli', Om Astha Rai, #800). And it is also clear that internal Indian political dynamics played a role in extending the crisis. Nepal's Prime Ministers have always had to go through a chain of people at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to reach out to Indian PMs. Oli felt this made Nepal to be a second class nation. None of this desire for state equality is bad per se in itself given

Anjanai Pajiyar

■ All these bravados by Oli during blockade to make himself appear as true Nepali to resist Indian hegemony and now it looks like he has gone the same way like others in the past and business will continue as usual. But I guess business with Madhesi, Tharu and other ethnic group will not continue as usual.

Namah

■ Could any of the many foreign agencies provide support for a national scheme to help here?

David Seddon

NOBLE MEANS

It's not just 'madhesi' grievances ('Noble ends through noble means', Rubeena Mahato, #800). Rather, we need to address governance and citizen services delivery.

Nam

■ Let us start by incarcerating those who call Madhesi an Indian.

Karna

Q. How do you rate the importance of Prime Minister KP Oli's visit to china?

Total votes: 134

Crucial: 37.86%

Pointless: 35.39%

Whatever: 26.76%

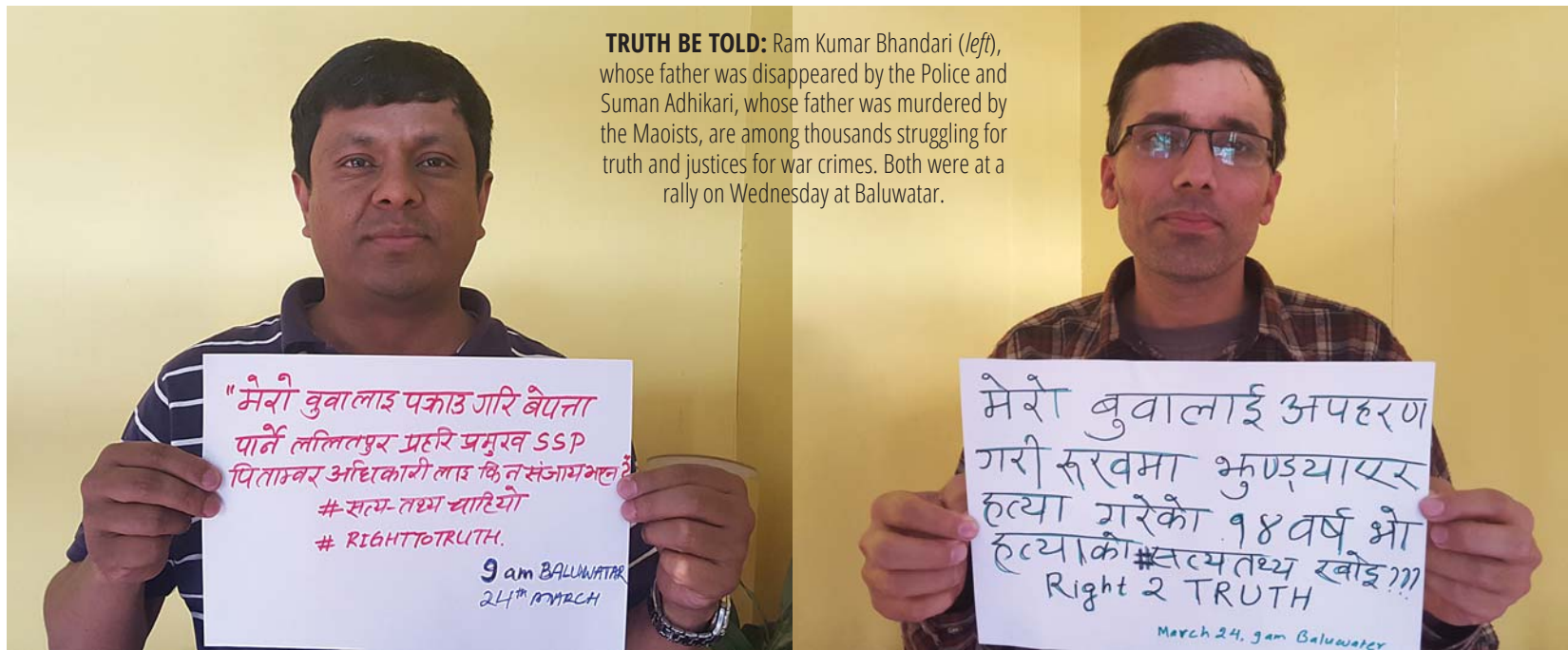
Weekly Internet Poll #802

To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should Nepal discontinue the recruitment of its men in foreign armies?

Forcing us to forget

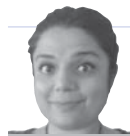
As a society we have failed the victims of conflict in more ways than one



TRUTH BE TOLD: Ram Kumar Bhandari (left), whose father was disappeared by the Police and Suman Adhikari, whose father was murdered by the Maoists, are among thousands struggling for truth and justices for war crimes. Both were at a rally on Wednesday at Baluwatar.

BIDUSHI DHUNGEL

In the 365 days of the calendar year, the UN has thought up a way to have basically every day represented by one issue or the other. Usually, this has meant



ONE TO MANY
Bidushi Dhungel

that people working in each sector have a day or two in the year to mobilise around a certain subject. Whether it's World Water Day or World Happiness Day or day to end all forms of discrimination,

however, these days hold little more than symbolic meaning in the days of ordinary people.

In Nepal, these days are often just an opportunity for NGOs and INGOS to organise poorly attended rallies and discussion programs and perhaps even use up the budgets they often struggle to spend.

But 24 March was the International Day of Truth. And while it was just another day and yes another protest, Nepalis seem to have long forgotten the value of truth. The International Day of Truth is actually associated

with truth-seeking for victims of conflict.

And while us Nepalis often like to conveniently forget that there was an armed struggle in this country that left at least 15,000 people dead, that truth must not be forgotten. The struggle of those affected by that conflict will not be over until they are given some semblance of justice, whether it is through legal justice or simply by giving them access to the truth about what happened to their near and dear ones and why.

What is most upsetting is the way in which ordinary people

see the inconvenience in acknowledging the truth and thus choose to ignore it. But, while each Nepali individual may not have been directly impacted by the conflict and the bloodshed it caused, the reality of the state's protection of criminals and rampant impunity is an issue that affects us all. For example, those that feel pain and injustice regarding the recent murders in the Tarai must know that justice cannot be fought for alone and only for selective injustices.

Civil society, and NGOs in particular, have hijacked the

conflict victims' agenda into cases represented by one civil society leader or another. For years, the victims were pitted against one another by parties and the civil society which profited from the division. Victims of state atrocities and victims of the Maoist atrocities were socialised to be suspicious and angry with each other. Now, they have finally come together and it's high time that the rest of Nepali society gave these brave and persistent citizens the support and encouragement they deserve.

As a society, in many ways we have already failed the victims of conflict. People, not just politicians, stood idly by as an illegal bill was passed and two sham commissions were formed. It is common knowledge that the agendas of the TRC and the Disappearance Commissions are not victim-centric, but rather focused on tiring out any opposing voices before pushing through what is effectively going to be blanket amnesty. Their tenures have passed a year already and they have only just drafted their working regulation.

With all parties focusing on forcing people to forget – much less investigate, expose and take cases to court – it is an uphill battle for the victims of conflict.

Even their allies – civil society and NGOs – have moved on as funding patterns have shifted. But until the grievances of the conflict victims are publicly addressed and the impacted individuals are ready to move on with their lives, the fundamental and democratic principles of justice and accountability cannot be truly established in Nepal. 🇳🇵



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LIGHTNING STRIKES
The number of deaths by districts from April 2013 - April 2015

Total fatalities	239
Men	142
Women	97
Livestock killed	639
Total loss Rs	12.6 million

SOURCE: NEOC

Forecast: more thunderstorms

Climate change and lack of awareness is increasing the number of deaths from lightning strikes in the world’s most densely populated mountain nation

OM ASTHA RAI

When it started raining on a stormy afternoon last week, workers at a brick kiln in Chitwan district ran under a tree for shelter. Lightning struck the tree, killing two and injuring nine of them.

Nepal’s storm season got to a deadly start, and Dinesh Majhi, 13, and Rita Rai, 24, became the first fatalities from lightning this year. They are unlikely to be the last.

More than 100 people are

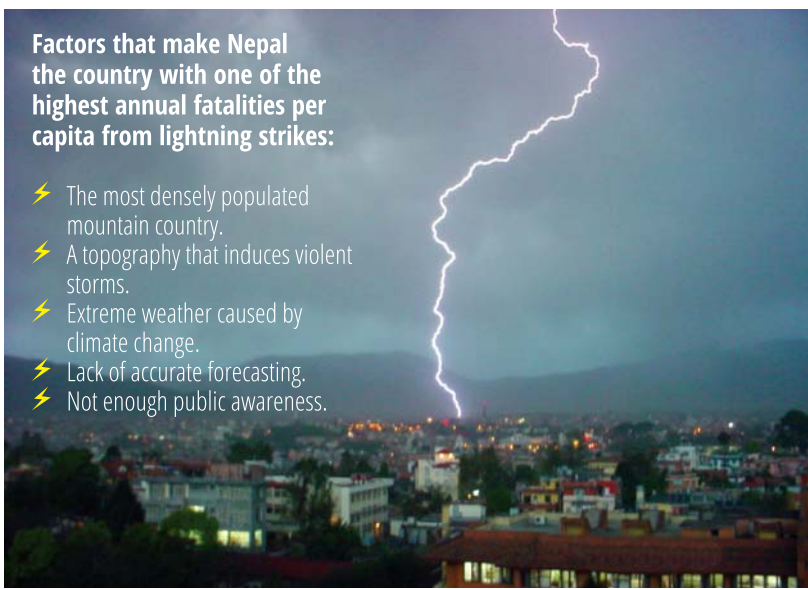
killed by lightning in Nepal every year, with most of the fatalities in the pre-monsoon season. Thunderbolts have killed 547 people in the last five years, higher than any other natural calamity barring last April’s earthquake. Not even floods or landslides kill as many people, and government figures show the numbers are rising every year.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has been recording deaths caused by lightning since 2000. From 2010, the number of lightning fatalities has started exceeding 100 every year. One reason for the increase could be more

accurate reporting of deaths due to lightning after the setting up of the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) six years ago.

However, there also appears to be a correlation between the frequency and intensity of storms and global warming. Says climate scientist Ngamindra Dahal: “It is not just that we have been recording lightning fatalities more actively now, they are indeed increasing and getting more deadly because of the increasing intensity of storms.”

A 2014 report in the journal *Science* states that lightning



Factors that make Nepal the country with one of the highest annual fatalities per capita from lightning strikes:

- ⚡ The most densely populated mountain country.
- ⚡ A topography that induces violent storms.
- ⚡ Extreme weather caused by climate change.
- ⚡ Lack of accurate forecasting.
- ⚡ Not enough public awareness.

strikes are likely to rise by 50 per cent in the US within this century if global warming continues at the current rate. Nepal’s location on the southern slopes of the world’s highest mountains means it could get worse here.

“Nepal is not just mountainous, but it is also a region over where cold air from the northwest collides with rising hot air from the southwest during the pre-monsoon generating more lightning than elsewhere,” Dahal explains.

The other factor is the lack of accurate weather forecasting, as well as insufficient public awareness about what to do when an electrical storm hits.

Government data shows that lightning strikes are more common in central and eastern Nepal than in the west (*see map*) with most fatalities in Makawanpur district southwest of Kathmandu. As many as 23 people have been killed by lightning in this district

in the last two years alone. Interestingly, Kathmandu Valley has had no reported deaths due to lightning in the past two years.

Suresh Dhungel of National Academy of Science and Technology explains: “The fact that lightning kills so many people in Makwanpur but none in nearby Kathmandu is proof that awareness is key to saving lives during storms.”

Dhungel has been analysing the pattern and intensity of lightning strikes to forecast violent and potentially deadly electrical storms. He adds: “We have myths about lightning, but not much scientific knowledge about it.” Besides public awareness, Dhungel says a stricter building code is needed with lightning detection and protection system, especially in rural areas.

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Interactive map



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Triangular relationship

Madhesi leaders believe PM Oli has no intention of following through on his commitments

When Prime Minister K P Oli told a gathering in Beijing this week that he was on a “special mission” during his visit to China, I was reminded of remarks made by senior Indian figures during a visit to Kathmandu last year.

The blockade was just getting underway, and the



former general of the Indian Army, Ashok Mehta huffed and puffed and said it was time for Nepal to choose between India and China. He almost sounded like a jilted lover in a triangular relationship.

As if the point wasn't already clear, he went on to warn that China's activities in Nepal were a serious threat to India. This reflected the Indian military establishment's deep distrust of China, which despite cordial diplomatic relations between Beijing and New Delhi and burgeoning bilateral trade, hasn't recovered from the humiliation of 1962.

At the same press conference, former Indian ambassador to Nepal K V Rajan made a strong case for federalism, coming strongly on the side of disputed Tarai districts being amalgamated into future Madhes provinces. The gist of his argument, and indeed of the Indian foreign policy establishment, is that if the provincial boundaries were not settled as he suggested, it would create domestic instability in Nepal and that would affect India's strategic interests. Which is why India couldn't remain a

mute spectator.

The NC-UML coalition in Kathmandu then flip-flopped between a six-province model that it rectified to seven provinces after strikes in western Nepal for a united far-west. Indeed, it turned out as Rajan had predicted, boundaries became the focus of a violent protest movement that engulfed the Tarai and triggered a border blockade in which India got deeply involved.

The point of all this is that the blockade has actually ended up diluting Indian influence in Nepal on the Madhes issue. Oli has bagged quite a few important trade, transit and investment deals with China during his visit, and the prospect of importing petroleum from China in future is still alive.

Even the Madhesi parties seemed to have taken the cue and went over to meet the Chinese ambassador and warned him not to engage the Oli government in any substantial deal because it would bypass the Madhes. And without a settlement of the Madhes issue Nepal could never hope to attain stability, which in turn would affect China's strategic interest.

Interesting that Mehta and the Madhesi leaders both harked upon stability in Nepal as being in the national security interests of both India and China respectively.

Privately, Madhesi party leaders believe PM Oli is taking them for a ride and they don't trust him to implement any of his promises to them. They think he is using the China Card to frighten India and defuse the Madhes movement. They find it suspicious that Oli did not sign

LET'S LISTEN: Chinese Ambassador Yu Chuntao (centre) at a meeting last week with Madhesi leaders who told him their demands would ensure stability in Nepal.

a joint communiqué in New Delhi last month, as the Indian side wanted, which would have put down in writing his commitment towards the Madhes.

In that sense, the issues that were precursors to the violence in the Madhes and the border blockade have still not been addressed, and Oli (emboldened domestically by his visits North and South) is unlikely to honour his commitments.

Many analysts believe that Nepal should first resolve its internal problem and then reset relations with India and China. Oli has got it backwards, he is playing geopolitical games to dilute the genuine demands of the plains people for true autonomy. 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS



Huawei nabs Messi

Chinese telecommunications company Huawei announced the appointment of Lionel Messi as its global brand ambassador recently. The partnership, according to the company, is to showcase the brand's alignment with the idea of striving towards excellence like Messi, who is an inspiration to many around the world.

Retail therapy

Nepali business conglomerate R P Group Nepal has attained an authorised dealership for India's CTNS clothing company brands W,



Aurelia and Wishful. The company has already started retailing ladies kurta, tops, leggings and party wear for the brands in Nepal.

Gionee's new gadget

Chinese mobile manufacturer Gionee recently launched the Gionee Elife S6 in Nepal. Powered by a 3150 mAh battery, the phone comes with a 3GB RAM, 32GB internal storage, a 13MP rear and a 5MP front camera. It is available in black, silver and gold variants and is available for Rs 29,999.



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Unintended Trans-Himalayan Consequences

Did New Delhi ever imagine that its coercive strategy would backfire this badly?

KANAK MANI DIXIT

It was the five-month blockade by India that provided Nepal's political class with the daring to sign the deal in Beijing on Monday. Without the public opinion created as a result of that thoughtless adventurism, no leader, including KP Oli, would have gone the distance in inking the 10 agreements on transit, transmission lines, highways, railways, banking, etc.

The enthusiastic language of Wednesday's 15-point joint communiqué, replete with unusual terms like 'remarkable', 'synergy' and 'momentum', and China's support for the new Constitution, were in sharp contrast to the studied expressions of the Indian authorities during Prime Minister Oli's visit to India last month.

It has suddenly become possible to talk to China as Nepal does with India after decades of running scared. The very term 'connectivity', used with such earnestness by Indian diplomats such as former Foreign Secretary (and Nepal ambassador) Shyam Saran is now being applied on the trans-Himalayan sector.

Ironically, India itself stands to benefit for having pushed Nepal into China's embrace, because the development of trans-Himalayan linkages opens up possibilities not just for Nepal but both the giant neighbours. The consternation evident in New Delhi over the Nepal-China bhai-bhai atmospherics is a holdover from the past that does not do justice either to Nepal's sovereign agency, nor India's own rapidly evolving economic relationship with China.

Much of Delhi's disquiet actually emanates from outdated strategic paranoia about the Himalaya that harks back to the defeat in the 1962 war. This mindset continues to regard the Himalayan ridgeline as a security barrier, using unconscionable pressure over the decades to block infrastructure development in Nepal.

If the panicked commentators in New Delhi would read a bit of history, the new opening to the north is actually a continuation of trans-Himalayan commerce that was pioneered by Kathmandu traders



MOFA NEPAL

in Lhasa, at times even with powers of extra-territoriality.

The ten agreements now have to be converted into reality through protocols and diligent follow-up. Beijing itself is said to have been exasperated over the decades by the diffidence of a Kathmandu's ruling class fearful of Indian reaction.

It would be important for New Delhi to hold off this time and allow Nepal to proceed with the agreed-upon projects and programs. Indeed, both New Delhi and Beijing should trust Kathmandu to not allow activities inimical to their interests out of Nepali soil, while for their part they should desist from making demands that would make Nepal a closed society.

The agreement on transit rights is the most significant, and will help transform modern Nepal from being 'India-locked' to truly 'landlocked', with now the possibility of reaching third countries through the north. Certainly, the nearest port city of China is three times the distance from Calcutta, and the northern route may not see much use, but at the very least it will dissuade those who would want to use blockades as instruments of geopolitical

coercion in the future.

No country can be expected to be excessively altruistic, and Nepal need not be too beholden to Beijing because China, including the Tibetan Autonomous Region, is sure to benefit in full measure from the agreements signed. If Nepal needs connectivity to the north, China too would benefit from crossborder transmission lines and the Kimathanka Highway (once built) for quick access to the sea as alternative to the Nathu La and Jelep La in Darjeeling/Sikkim.

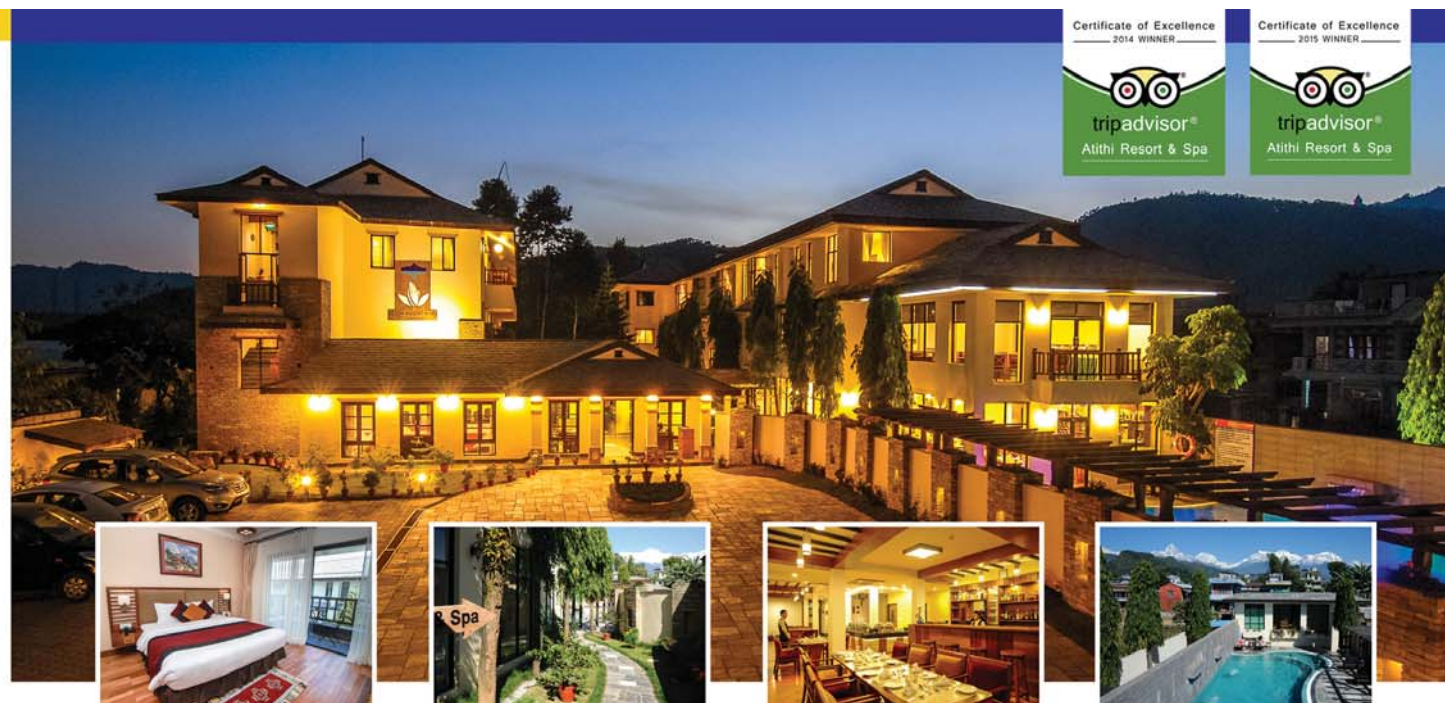
Much of the possibilities to the north depend on the viability of transport of goods by rail. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway from Beijing via Golmud has already arrived in Xigatse and is ploughing westward across the Changtang plateau along Nepal's northern frontier. President Xi Jinping's 'One Belt One Road' initiative relies on trans-continental transport of goods by rail being competitive with maritime shipping. If railway carriage turns out to be affordable, then Nepal stands to benefit immensely – through bilateral trade, third-country transit through China, as well as entrepot trade

between India and China.

For now, the advantage of the transit agreement is strategic, with its guarantee of an alternative route to the world economy. It also carries the possibility of loosening Indian attitudes towards transit through Indian ports, as well as access to Mongla and Chittagong ports in Bangladesh.

If economic and infrastructural connectivity is truly the agenda of New Delhi as well as Beijing rather than a camouflage for strategic penetration, then both should look at the great opportunities that Nepal holds for market synergies. If what New Delhi analyst Suhasini Hyder writes is borne out, that "connectivity is the coinage for power in the future", then Nepal as the country connecting the Middle Kingdom with the Ganga plains stands to gain.

Without exaggerating what has been achieved, a trigger was required for Kathmandu to dare to reach out for deals with Beijing. India activated that trigger with its blockade, and one may thank New Delhi strategists for what is clearly a result of unintended consequences. ■



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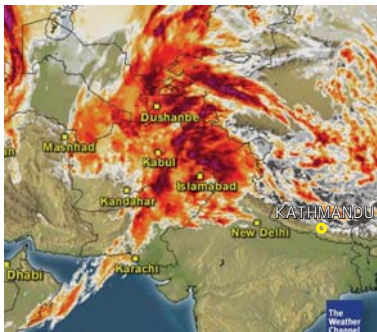


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We are now going into the season of thunderstorms and lightning (see page 4) and there is evidence that the frequency and intensity of storms are getting greater. This means being aware of changing weather especially towards late afternoon, and keeping abreast of forecasts. A westerly front is dragging moisture into the Himalayan midhills and this will create updrafts and thunderstorms starting Sunday and into Monday. Till then, though, haze will filter sunlight, keeping maximum temperature lower than usual.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
25° 10°	25° 10°	23° 14°

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SMRITI BASNET

Amidst the whine of chainsaws and carvers tapping chisels at the Nepal Academy this week was the internationally-acclaimed American sculptor David Best. Renowned for dramatically setting fire to the wood art he creates, including one commemorating the Irish conflict in Londonderry.

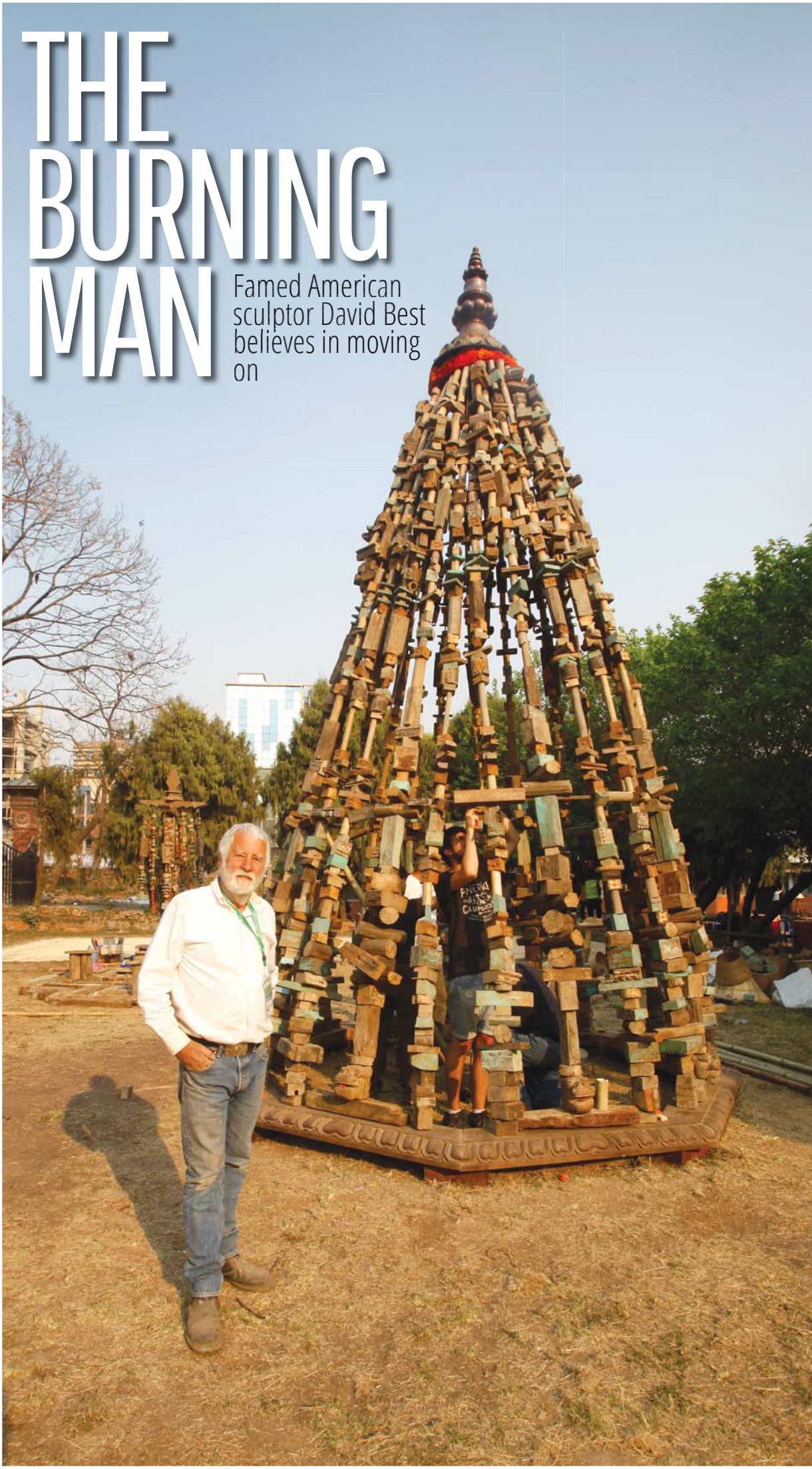
We caught up with the casually dressed septuagenarian (*pic*) clad in a white shirt and jeans as he coordinated a team putting up a wooden pyramid-like structure made from the ruins of earthquake-damaged structures in Bungamati.

"I would not have come here as a tourist, but I was invited to come and it became more meaningful to work in a community that has faced challenges," said Best. He is among artists taking part in the World Wood Day event organised by the International Wood Culture Society, IUCN and the government. The exhibits will be on display till 25 March at the Nepal Academy lawn, when Best will set fire to one of his structures.

Born in California, Best knew he wanted to be an artist since the age of six. "I just started making things; that was my protection," he says. A graduate of San Francisco Art Institute, his works include cars made from recycled material, collages, ceramic sculptures and wooden structures.

The practice of setting fire to the wooden artworks he creates started with his exhibit at the annual Burning Man Festival in Nevada in 2000 which was a tribute to his friend who died in a motorcycle accident.

What started out as the burning of wooden memorials became an annual tradition. The festival asked him to build



BIKRAM RAI

another wooden memorial the following year and Best dedicated it to people who have committed suicide.

"I am not a Jew, a Hindu or a Catholic so I thought about what I would dedicate the temple to if I were making a temple," said Best.

For Best, the idea was for his commemorative wooden structures to reflect a place of loss and for the burning to signify closure, and moving forward.

Best did not explain that the suicide memorial at the Burning Man Festival was a tribute to those who committed suicides, but 15,000 people spontaneously wrote their names on pieces of paper and put it inside the structure.

One of Best's last projects was his Temple in Londonderry in Northern Ireland, commemorating those who died during the sectarian strife. "This was a collective temple, where everybody recognises and embraces a person," he explained, "it is about forgiveness and moving on with life."

The structure he built in Kathmandu is not as large as his previous ones. It is made up of pieces of wood salvaged from the ruins of homes in Bungamati, and he will also not be burning the structure. The artwork will go back to Bungamati for the residents to do what they want with it.

"What I was hoping I would do is inspire the village to smile," says Best. "What we brought to the village is that excitement about creating out of ruins. The village lost its homes, we got the wood from those homes and made something from scratch."

However, Best feels discouraged by the current condition of the country. "One thing I will take back is the anger about bad water, fuel, the government, and the struggles between China and India," he says. "It just makes me angry that there is such a thing in our world as a third world country. How can so few people have so much wealth and control so many?"

If Nepal is to rise out of the devastation it needs to be rebuilt to suit the youth of today, who should take charge and lead the way for the country.

He adds: "Go completely new because it belongs to the new people. To hell with history and nostalgia, forget the postcards."



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20७२
चैत्र १५ देखि
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Goût de France

When I think of France, two things come to mind: food and love. And luckily for the rest of us, the French love sharing their adulation of food.

Goût de France, meaning 'Good France', returned for a second run in an evening of fine dining at The Chimney Restaurant, serving up a five-course menu celebrating classic French cuisine.

We were first served a baked cheese soufflé with Armagnac cheese fondue. Soufflé is derived from the French word souffler, which means "to breathe", but the soufflé I was served was sunken and looked like someone had let the air out of it. Still had a lovely, light texture and what it lacked in appearance it made up for in taste. The accompanying fondue served up another hit of cheesy goodness, infused with a generous dose of French brandy.

Next, we had the duck leg confit with white bean sauce on a bed of mashed potatoes and steamed vegetables. To my surprise when I cut into the duck, the skin was soft. My understanding of duck confit is a dish that is browned in the oven until the skin is crisp. Still, the meat was fall-off-the-fork tender and deliciously flavourful. The mashed potatoes and bean sauce nicely balanced out the saltiness of the duck, making for a decadent meal.

We were then served a second main of prime tenderloin with béarnaise sauce and roasted vegetables. I found the doneness of the steak a little uneven, as the innermost portion was rarer than the rest. Nevertheless, the quality of the cut was excellent and the



ALL PICS: LIEW YU WEI

meat well-seasoned. The herb-infused béarnaise sauce lent a fragrant touch to the steak.

Next came a platter of French and Nepali cheese, served with fig compote and assorted nuts. The sweetness of the compote balanced out the sharpness of the cheeses, and the nuts provided a good crunch. With French cheeses like Camembert and Tomme de Savoie served alongside local cheeses like Belkot, Kanchan, goat, and yak cheese, it was a celebration of the love of cheese shared by the two cultures.

Then it was time for the highlight of the night. By this time, we were quite full but as the old adage goes, there is always room for dessert. Besides



savory dishes, the French are known for their sweet treats like macarons and meringues, so we knew we were in good hands.

Given a choice between two desserts, I went for the dark

chocolate, coconut and white chocolate truffle with strawberry coulis while my dining companion had the trio-colour cold soufflé. Mine was a towering array of chocolate sculpted into intricate



decorative pieces sprinkled with desiccated coconut. With so many sweet elements in the dish, the tartness of the strawberry coulis was the perfect accompaniment to balance out the flavours.

The trio-colour cold soufflé with mini opera cake, like the previous dessert, also came with an impressive chocolate sculpture. Although the dish was elegantly plated, it was a letdown in terms of flavour. The soufflé was much too heavy, with a texture more befitting of mousse instead.

Although the dinner had been a lavish treat, there were flaws in the execution of some dishes that detracted from the authenticity of the French fare. Still, it was a commendable effort, and with plans to introduce the five-course menu (Rs 5,000 plus taxes) as a mainstay at The Chimney Restaurant, perhaps they will undergo further refinement to attain the high standards of authentic French cuisine. 🇫🇷

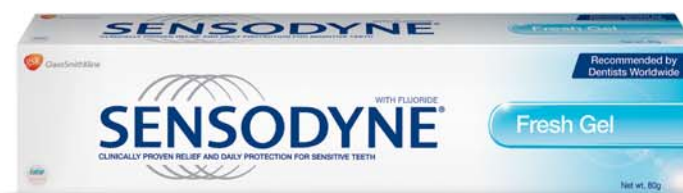
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How to get there: The Chimney Restaurant is located inside Hotel Yak & Yeti at Darbarmarg.

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The sharp edge of history

A new book looks back at 200 years of Gurkha history

KUNDA DIXIT

Exactly 200 years ago this week, Nepali defenders were waiting at Makwanpur Fort for the East India Company to attack. This was going to be a make-or-break battle to protect Kathmandu, and Nepal's sovereignty. The Gorkhalis ambushed the British, and a shell from a cannon exploded near the British commanding officer, Major General David Ochterlony, nearly killing him.

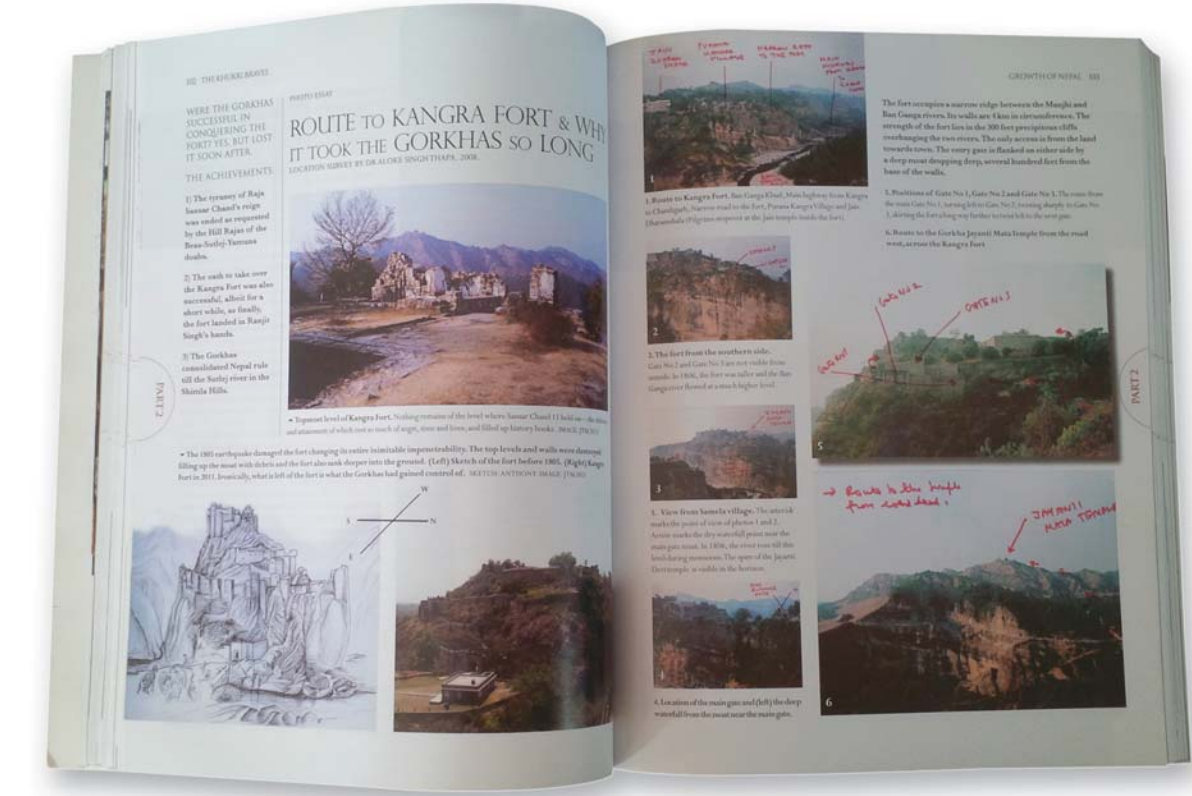
In her new book, *The Khukri Braves*, Jyoti Thapa Mani concludes: 'If Ochterlony had been hit, the complexion of the Second Anglo-Gorkha War would have changed completely.' Indeed, the Gorkha kingdom, having lost Garhwal and Kumaon, was balking at ratifying the Sugauli Treaty. Learning from past experience, the British brought in two 18-pounder cannons and aimed them at the fortifications. The Nepalis knew then that the game was up, and dispatched Chandrashekhra Upadhyaya at 2AM to Ochterlony with the Sugauli Treaty duly signed and stamped.

Ochterlony wrote a receipt: *'Received this treaty from Chunder Seekur Opedtheea, agent on the part of the Rajah of Nepal in the valley of Mukwanpoor, at half past two o'clock on the 4th of May 1816, and delivered to him the Counterpart Treaty on behalf of the British Government. (signed) D Ochterlony, Agent, Governor-General.'*

It is details like these that make Mani's book riveting. Far from being a history text book with dry annotated text, it is an illustrated encyclopedia of the wars that shaped this country, a saga of how Nepali soldiers ended up two centuries later fighting for other nations. We learn, for instance, that Nepali soldiers had defected to the British side in 1815, even before the Anglo-Nepal War formally ended.

That first unit was called the Malaun Regiment after the last big battle in Garhwal, which went on to become the 66th Ghoorkha Rifles and then the 1st Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army after the British left. We learn that Mani's own ancestors were part of the Gorkhali Army in 1790 as it marched west, later they served in the Malaun Regiment and her great-great-grandfather was in the 66th Ghoorkhas and her great-grandfather Kaluram Thapa fought in the 1st Gurkha Rifles. Mani's military genes and her job as a newspaper designer make her the ideal person to package this history of Nepal's famous fighting men.

The East India Company in Calcutta was a multinational trading house that represented the British state in the subcontinent, and had an army made up of Irish and Scottish mercenaries and Indian recruits. The expansionist Gorkha empire at its height in 1815 stretched along the Himalayan foothills for 2,000km from the River Sutlej to the Tista



in the east. The Company was interested to find routes across the Himalaya, primarily to monopolise the lucrative trade in shatoosh, a fine wool made from the chest hair of baby antelopes found on the Tibetan plateau. But the Gorkhalis controlled the Himalayan passes.

The Shah kings after Prithvi Narayan Shah had brilliant generals like Amar Singh Thapa and Balbhadra Kunwar who waged a westward blitzkrieg conquering territory at astounding speed. But the supply lines had become too long, the Thapas and Pandes in Kathmandu were feuding, and principalities they had conquered started rebelling behind them.

Mani carefully retraces the steps of her ancestors, and visits the blood-soaked forts at



Nalapani, Khalanga, and Jythuck. She becomes an archaeologist herself to pinpoint the location of Kangra Fort. These are names of battles etched in Nepal's national memory, and *The Khukri Braves* makes them all come alive. The book is superbly researched, illustrated with maps, as well as with then-and-now photographs of the famous forts that forged the histories of Nepal, India and Britain. We can follow the

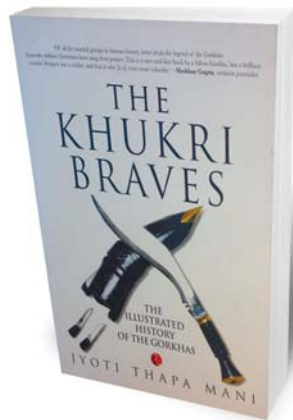
legendary battles, the bravery of the Nepali defenders who fought to the last. There is a gripping account of how Gen Bhakti Thapa charged British cannons at Malaun, was hit, tied his disemboweled stomach with his turban and proceeded to behead a whole lot of enemy soldiers before falling.

Mani follows the exploits of the Gurkhas in later campaigns under the British. More than 100,000 young Nepali men served in the Western Front and in Gallipoli during World War I, and 22,000 were killed. In World War II, 250,000 British Gurkhas and Royal Nepal Army soldiers fought and died in Europe, in Burma and Malaya, 32,000 were killed. We find out that Nepali soldiers were on opposite sides in the Burma front, British Gurkhas

fought fellow Nepalis from Subhas Chandra Bose's INA who were allied with the Japanese.

Mani makes the distinction between Indian 'Gorkha' and British 'Gurkha' soldiers, and explains why it is a generic term and not an ethnicity. She includes a Hall of Fame of 13 Gurkhas awarded the Victoria Cross and Indian Army gallantry medals for action in wars against Pakistan and China. The book argues that Nepali soldiers can't be called 'mercenaries', but even so it is a historical aberration that allows the nationals of one country to fight and die for another. Also, research into censored letters written by Nepalis in the trenches of Ypres show a less stereotypical, more human, Gurkha suffering from homesickness, fear and gloom.

The book has a useful guide to the Gorkha forts of northern India, and as citizens of this country we are left to ponder how we ourselves have honoured our brave forebears who died to leave us a nation called Nepal. 🇳🇵



The Khukri Braves

The Illustrated History of the Gorkhas
by Jyoti Thapa Mani
Rupa India, 2015
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EVENTS



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4 to 15 April, 10am to 4pm, Mondays to Fridays, Extended week: 28 March to 1 April, 10am to 2pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554

Historical exhibition,
A display of 40 paintings by celebrated mid 19th century Nepali landscape artist Rajman Singh Chitrakar.
10 to 24 April, Taragon Museum, Baudha, 9843722329

BAC Mela,
Local products, foodstuffs and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family at BAC'S monthly mela.
26 March, 2pm onwards, BAC Art Café, Pulchok, www.bikaplaartcenter.org



Ride along,
The eighth Enfield rendezvous and poker run starting from Kathmandu and ending at Pokhara.
12 to 14 April, Rs 10,400. For more information: 9559112666/9793185744

Art exhibition,
Appreciate the artwork of five Nepali artists made during their residency period at Bindu.
13 to 29 March, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal, 9818996169

#MyGHT,
Capture, caption and share a picture from your experience on the Great Himalaya Trail with the hashtag #MyGHT and stand a chance to get published.
Deadline: 25 March, greathimalayatrails.com

Master class,
Learn all you need to know about music with composer, pianist and music educator James Miley and his faculty from Willamette University.
22 to 28 March, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554

Friendship fair,
Enjoy live performances by UK's Dallahan band and DJ Goldierocks along with Nepal's Kutumba band in a fair celebrating 200 years of bilateral relations between Britain and Nepal. Plus Circus Kathmandu in action.
26 March, 12 to 9pm, Yak and Yeti Hotel, Darbar Marg, (01) 4410798, www.britishcouncil.org.np

Truly Bangladesh,
Explore the land of rivers in a photography and painting exhibition by Mirzapur Ex-Cadet Association of Bangladesh.
26 to 28 March, 11am to 5pm, Patan Museum, Lalitpur, (01) 4390130/ 4390131

Himalayan Rush,
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26 March, Begnas, Pokhara, (01)5550758/ (01)5550759

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KRIPA JOSHI




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Jazz it up,

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Tickets: Rs. 500 without invitation, Rs 300 with invitation, 26 March, 7.30 pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikel, (01) 5013554

Music mania,

Be part of the rock and roll mania with the 12th edition of the KCM Inter College Music Competition. Preliminary rounds on 15 and 16 April.
Registration fee: Rs 5000, 10am onwards, 23 April, Jawalakhel Football Ground, 9849149154, 9849465316, 9813505758

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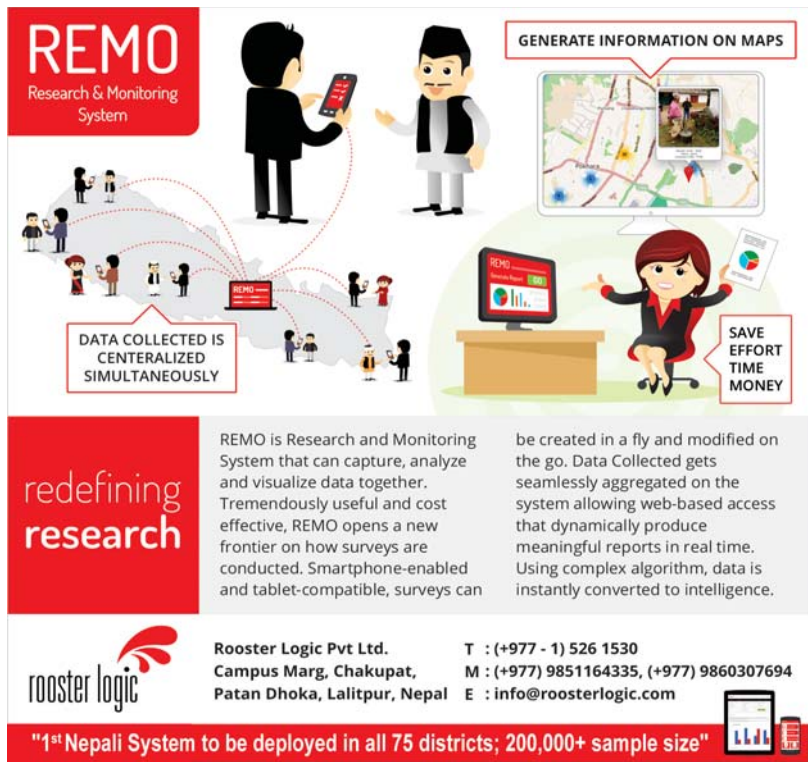
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Remembering the war



janapati.com, 22 March

Sabina Adhikary (*pic*) joined the Maoist militia when she was just in Grade 8. For the next ten years of the People’s War, she fought on the frontlines of more than three dozen major battles, sustaining bullet wounds in both her legs. Since the end of the conflict, Adhikary struggles to make ends meet, living in a small hut in Tarakhet of Rolpa.

The commander who trained her during the war, Nanda Kishor Pun ‘Comrade Pasang’, is now the Vice President of Nepal but former combatants like Adhikary struggle both economically and socially. Former Maoist combatants say that they feel let down by the party, which failed on its promises.

Adhikary said that even though their commander during

the Battle of Beni on 20 March, 2004 is now the VP, most living guerrillas are no longer politically active. “As the anniversary of the battle nears, the wounds open up again,” she told *benionline.com*.

Instead, most injured combatants who fought at Beni, including Adhikary’s husband Tenzing Garbuja, have left for work in the Gulf. Former fighters say it is difficult to find a job and assimilate back into society since the ‘class enemies’ they beat up and abducted during the war are still around.

“We have to struggle for our livelihoods in the same places we waged our class struggle,” said another former combatant. He added that instead of caring for the families of the injured and deceased combatants, the leaders were too busy accumulating wealth for themselves. They say the wounds and injuries they sustained during the war are constant reminders of all that they lost.

Still, many injured guerrillas from a decade ago have yet to receive compensation from the government, having to take out loans for their treatment. The District Administration Office cites 26 cases of unattended injured former combatants. “The state still thinks of us as the enemy. False victims have collected cheques while real victims like us have not received any relief,” said Adhikary.

First female CJ

Onlinekhabar.com, 16 March



Months after Nepal welcomed its first female President and Speaker of the House, the country is set to swear in its first female Chief Justice. The Judiciary Council on Sunday recommended the senior-most Justice Sushila Karki as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Karki will take office in April after the current Chief Justice, Kalyan Shrestha, retires.

Born on 7 June, 1952 in Biratnagar, Karki completed her undergraduate studies at Mahendra Morang College, Biratnagar in 1972. Three years later, she earned a



postgraduate degree in political science from Banaras Hindu University in India. Then at the age of 26, Karki completed her Bachelors in Law in 1978 from

Tribhuvan University.

Karki began her law career as an advocate in 1979 and was appointed as a Justice (ad hoc) in the Supreme Court thirty years later. She has been serving as a permanent Justice at the Supreme Court since 2010.

Karki is known for her zero tolerance approach against corruption. She was one of the two judges on the bench that convicted the sitting Minister for Information and Communication, Jaya Prakash Gupta, of corruption in 2012. And this January, a bench including Karki had ruled against granting amnesty to former UCPN (Maoist) lawmaker Bal Krishna Dhungel.



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Deemed as a top health food across the globe, honey is a wonderful creation. The health properties of this thick golden liquid have been valued since ages. For anyone who wishes to lead a healthy lifestyle, honey must become an important component of their diet. The most convenient way to do that is starting your day with a warm glass of water and mixing Dabur Honey in it. As per Ayurveda, honey is known to increase metabolism and if consumed with lemon in the morning before breakfast it helps to manage weight. Honey is also known to be a natural healer, as it fights infection and aids tissue healing. It is also known to reduce inflammation and scarring. If you're feeling sleeplessness, then mix honey with warm milk and have it before sleeping. It is known to make you feel relaxed and rested, and get you a good night's sleep. It's not just the adults who benefit from these golden drops. If your kids seem to feel lethargic throughout the day, or lack energy, then give them toasts with honey



for their day breaks. It will enable them to stay energetic and active throughout the day.

So, honey has all the goodness in the world: from being a healthy addition to your diet, to providing energy to the body, to increasing your metabolic system, and even working as an antioxidant. Love honey in all its glory and imbibe it as a part of your daily lifestyle for a healthy life. If old is gold, then honey is the treasure we've been handed over for generations. For anyone who wishes to lead a healthy lifestyle, honey must become an important component of their diet. There's really more to it than just a diet-friendly ingredient.

What people are not aware of is that it is an important ingredient for preventing illnesses and remedial for other health/medical conditions. Honey is a natural ingredient that possesses anti-bodies properties unlike sugar. While it has been recommended to stay away from sugar for patients, one must not stay sugar free. Hence, a honey diet is recommended. There are studies that suggest regarding the treatment of various organs honey is a good agent that aids patient's recovery. It appears that honey is an intelligent food item that is selectively toxic to weak or harmful cells and

non-cytotoxic to normal cells. Honey aids in combatting common ailments like headaches, cuts and bruises, burns, acne and pimples, dry skin, nausea, dizziness and more. For instance, one must chew honeycomb to calm down a severe hay fever. The Chinese believe that consuming honey drink helps reduce

the heat in the body. Honey and lemon juice is considered beneficial to battle obesity. It is so, because honey mobilises extra deposited fat, and the body utilizes it as energy. Honey is your best friend, especially if you are a foodie! A spoonful of this tasty golden liquid after a heavy and oily meal will do wonders for your digestive system. It also works as a great detox tonic. Honey does not go bad. Yes, it's true! Honey is probably the only food that does not get spoilt over time. The unique chemical composition of low water content and relatively high acid level in honey creates an unfavourable environment for



bacteria or other micro-organisms to grow. Elixir of life Honey is the only food that includes all the substances necessary to sustain life. These includes enzymes, vitamins, minerals and even water. No wonder, it's called a superfood. Honey is also the only food eaten by humans that is produced by insects. Natural food supplement: Honey contains vitamins and antioxidants which are vital for a healthy body.



HOMELAND SEASON 5

When *Homeland's* first season premiered in October 2011, it made tidal waves in the television industry with its extreme, hawkish politics in regard to dealing with terrorists and protecting the United States (note the name of the series), the unexpected investment in a brilliant, abrasive, female main



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

character, the mentally unstable CIA agent Carrie Mathieson (Claire Danes), and the dramatic story arches that in today's times are probably pretty close to reality – at least in terms of portraying the extremism that has manifested in multiple terrorist attacks across the globe.

Over multiple seasons the plotlines of *Homeland* became increasingly hysterical, an ill-


thought out development that was embodied by the histrionics of Carrie Mathieson herself, a troubling, complex character who portrays her struggle with bipolar disorder (also a rare thing in mainstream television) with great sensitivity, but suffers from repeating plots and triggers that make her travails ever so slightly exasperating; Carrie's mental illness elicits empathy with her character but her manifest personality even while she is taking her medication, is written, purposefully, to be harsh.

This combination of violence, imminent gunfire and explosions, difficult characters, and Machiavellian CIA tradecraft made it difficult to continue watching subsequent seasons of *Homeland* without having nightmares. Curiosity at the resilience of a show that was founded on an initially facile premise, but is now in its fifth season, compelled me to pick up watching the show again to see

if anything had changed.

Thankfully, and wisely, both *Homeland* and Carrie Mathieson have evolved for the better. Set now in a contemporary Berlin, Carrie has left the CIA, to the great disappointment of her mentor Saul Berenson (Mandy Patinkin) and is consulting as a security expert for the enigmatic Otto Düring (Sebastian Koch), an extremely wealthy German philanthropist who runs his own foundation. Carrie has a child, a little girl, she is in a stable relationship with Jonas Hollander (Alexander Fehling), a human rights lawyer for the Düring Foundation, and her world appears, finally, to be giving her the positive reinforcement and stability that she has lacked her entire life.

Unfortunately, a chillingly prescient terrorism plot (in light of recent events in Europe) draws Carrie into a convoluted world of former CIA colleagues with opaque intentions. Peter Quinn (Rupert Friend), another agent from her past, re-enters her life, and the nightmare begins again, but with higher stakes.

Full of surprises, good and bad, with two additional strong female characters in lead roles, several twisty plotlines that are, even with minimal hyperbole, hair-raising, and no less than four unconventional love stories that are absolutely captivating, *Homeland* succeeds in its fifth season because for the first time, the human relationships portrayed in it are grown up and believable, like Carrie Mathieson herself. 

 nepalitimes.com

■ Trailer 

HAPPENINGS



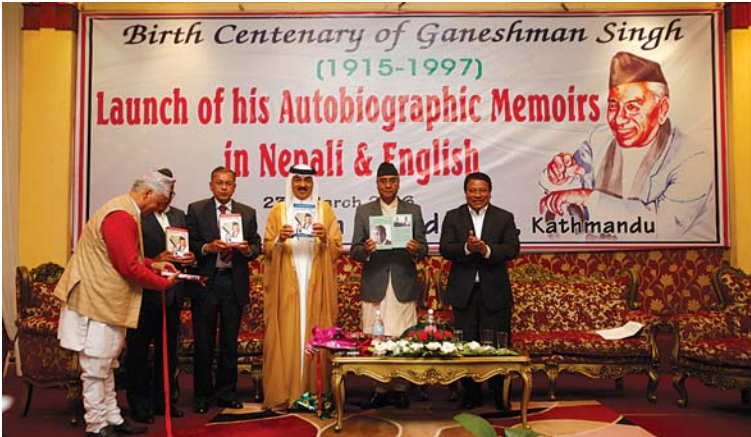
MOFA

SOUTH-NORTH: Prime Minister KP Oli called on Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Monday during his first official trip to China.



PRAKASH MATHEMA

PRINCE AND PRESIDENT: Britain's Prince Harry shakes hands with President Bidya Bhandari at the inaugural session of the Nepal Girl Summit hosted by Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

HIS STORY: (left to right) Indian ambassador Ranjit Rae, Qatari ambassador Ahmad Jasim Mohammed Ali Al Hamar, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba and leader Prakash Man Singh at the launch of Ganesh Man Singh's autobiography in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

CARVING OUT A NICHE: A Chinese artist works on a piece at the World Wood Day at the Nepal Academy on Sunday.



GOPEN RAI

COLOUR PLAY: Young people celebrate Holi at a party in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



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So you want to be a voluntourist?

Well-meaning foreigners are being duped by fake orphanages unknowingly contributing to a vicious cycle of abuse

MICHAEL NISHIMURA

In February 2014 the founder of Happy Home Orphanage in Dhapakhel, Bishwa Pratap Acharya, was arrested on charges of fraud, kidnapping and child trafficking after years of physically and psychologically abusing the children at the home, most of whom were not orphans.

But Acharya was released one year later after it was ruled that the case lacked sufficient evidence, largely due to alleged witness tampering by Acharya's wife, Pooja. Today, the couple continues to run Happy Home, business as usual, profiting from foreign volunteers and donors.

This is not an isolated story. For-profit and fake orphanages are rife in Nepal, evidenced by the fact that over 80 per cent of all the 600 registered orphanages in the country are concentrated within the five tourism-heavy regions of Kathmandu, Pokhara, Chitwan, Bhaktapur and Kaski.

During the conflict, child trafficking was a lucrative business as recruiters cajoled impoverished parents to give up their kids, promising an education and a better life. Instead they were marketed off as 'conflict

orphans' in the city and in India. Since the end of the war in 2006, donors and volunteers armed with good intentions but lacking useful skills have flooded in again, fuelling trafficking, sexual abuse and psychological harm.

"There is literally no role that tourists can play in volunteering in children's homes and orphanages – there are no skills required that cannot be found within the professional arena in Nepal," says Andrea Nave, director of Forget Me Not, a former children's home turned NGO that has worked to reconnect 58 'paper orphans' back with their families.

Though technically illegal on a tourist visa, around 30,000 well-meaning foreigners each year are duped into forking over hundreds of dollars per week each to volunteer at operations that masquerade as charities, unknowingly contributing to a vicious cycle of abuse.

Many of the 'orphans' they serve are not actually orphans – more than two-thirds of the 16,000 minors in children's homes around Nepal have at least one living parent.

"One young girl who lived at one of these so-called orphanages told me that the management use the orphans like crops, harvesting them for their own



SAM KANG LI

personal gain," says Barbara Weibel, owner of Hole in the Wall Cultural Travel, who spent two years researching orphanage voluntourism. "This practice is nothing less than human trafficking and should be stopped at all costs."

Though Nepal is a signatory to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and has recently updated its official Child Policy in 2012, direct action on sham orphanages is not of vital concern since they provide what the government is neglecting – a social safety net for thousands of underprivileged children. The Central Child Welfare Board has been receptive to a surfeit of complaints, but lack the resources

to maintain regulations.

Next Generation Nepal is another group working to return paper orphans to their families, with 167 successful cases thus far. It conducts rescue missions, takes children to a transit home for medical and psychological support, and then reconnects them with their families once they are identified.

Next Generation also works with various embassies and the government to discourage all volunteering associated with orphanages. Its 2014 report states that institutional care hinders the development of these children's necessary skills to survive in the external world.

"Even if you're sure the

orphanage is safe and the kids were not trafficked, it still causes attachment disorders for children that don't grow up with a stable loving family," says Country Director Martin Punaks. "What they learn is that people come into your life for two months, love you and then leave. Not knowing how to form long-term relationships leads to depression, aggression and anxiety in the future."

After last year's earthquake that saw an inundation of funding and do-gooders, NGOs are taxed to promote more ethical ways in which voluntourists can contribute, focusing on cultural dialogue rather than a donor-beneficiary relationship. One way tourists can help is to do their homework by properly vetting 'development' projects, talking to the community and making sure they have skills that actually match needs on the ground.

Says Punaks: "It's easy to tell people what not to do but hard to tell them what they can do. It's about not telling people they're bad people but telling them how to do volunteering in a more positive way." 🇳🇵

*Wisdom Wednesdays
Talks on ethical volunteering
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THE RUNAWAYS

Hundreds of young Nepali boys who ran away from home to Indian cities long to return



ALL PICS: TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

TSERING DOLKER GURUNG
IN NEW DELHI

After being locked up inside a madrasa for ten days in his hometown of Inaruwa in Nepal, Sajad Khan escaped and fled to Delhi. He had hoped for freedom, but just as he got off the train at the New Delhi Railway Station, the 12-year-old was caught by police and sent to live in a children's home.

Shortly after he got there, six other Nepali boys were also brought to the shelter run by the Salaam Baalak Trust in the teeming Tis Hazari area of the Indian capital. Like Khan, they had all run away from home, some came looking for work, others for adventure.

"On average we receive two to three Nepali boys each month," says Arpana Dwivedi of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) Mayur Vihar, one of several such committees in this city. Most Nepali boys are sent here because it is near the New

Delhi railway station. They are first interviewed here, and then sent to live in children's homes if immediate return to their families is not an option. Which is the case, almost always.

From 2010 to 2013, over 200 Nepali children lived in Central Delhi Homes, 84 per cent of them boys. Given that there are more than 500 children homes in the Indian capital and over 5,000 across India the total number of Nepali children here is estimated to be in the thousands.

The children mainly come from western Nepal and make their way through the open border, usually in groups of two to three. It is also easier for boys to cross borders without attracting attention, since police is mainly on the lookout for young women being trafficked.

Manoj Sunkhar, 17, from Bardiya has been coming to India for work since he was 13, and his last job was in a farm in Haryana where he earned INR 3,000 a month, but left because he was abused by the employer.

He was apprehended by the CWC on his third trip while enroute to Mathura for a new job.

"I don't like it here," Sunkhar said after spending a month at a children's home. "There are always fights, a lot of bullying going on. I just want to go back home." Most Nepali children felt the same way. Some like 11-year-old Bijay Bhatta tried to escape from the shelter but were caught and transferred to a government run shelter known to be a hotbed of physical and sexual abuse.

Many also accuse the staff of playing favouritism, and say they usually don't help Nepali boys when they get bullied or beaten by others. The children are also enrolled in the formal education system only after a year of their arrival, and once it is determined that their family cannot be contacted. Until then they are given vocational training.

"I will never come back here again," says Mahendra Sunar who along with brother Shishir and friend Karan came to Delhi from Banke. "All we wanted

was to stay away from home for a bit."

However, many children are stuck because there is no official agreement between India and Nepal on repatriation of runaway children. These children then end up moving from one shelter to another until they turn 18 when they are asked to leave the homes and live on their own.

"There is a mentality especially among government officials that as long as the children are being fed, it's okay no matter where they live," says Shailaja CM, co-director of Chora Chori Nepal which works to repatriate the children (*see overleaf*). "What many don't realise is that it is in the best interest of the child to live with their families rather than grow up in an institutional setting."


Pushesh Arya, a welfare officer at a shelter for boys in Alipur near Delhi says: "As soon as we receive a Nepali child, we contact the Nepal Embassy but they never give a positive response. We get 15-20 Nepali boys each year and it's trouble

for us to keep them here too."

We asked the Embassy about this allegation, and the reply was that it doesn't have the required funds to organise repatriation trips. Furthermore, follow-up on cases are also rare when concerned officials' tenure ends.

Diplomats are also concerned about sending children back before verifying that they are indeed from Nepal. Says Second Secretary Shreejana Adhikari: "It is hard to differentiate who is Nepali and who is Indian. Thus, we have to make sure that each and every child going to Nepal is a Nepali citizen."

Even though immediate repatriation seems like the most ideal option for the children, there's also the question of where these children will go once they are brought back. At present the government operates only four homes all across the country.

"We have to think about the long-term welfare of these children and act accordingly," explains Namuna Bhushal at the Central Child Welfare Board in Kathmandu. 



COMING HOME: Chora Chori Nepal co-director Abha Karki with the 17 children brought back this week from children's homes in Delhi. There are hundreds of Nepali children sheltered at both government and private run homes all across the Indian capital.

Bringing them back

Since it was set up in September 2014 Chora Chori Nepal has repatriated over 50 Nepali children from shelters in Delhi and Bengaluru. This week alone it brought back 17 boys from four children's homes based in Delhi to Kathmandu.

Like the other children it has brought home, the boys aged 10-17 were first taken to Chora Chori Nepal's temporary shelter in Kathmandu's Godavari area. Chora Chori Nepal has one other shelter in Hetauda. It first tries to trace the families of the children and help reunite them. In cases where the familial environment is deemed unsafe for the child, Chora Chori Nepal places the child in a longterm care home and provides for their education.

"The majority of these children are runaways who end up getting caught and

are sent to live in children's homes. Once inside very few are able to contact their families and return," says co-director Abha Karki who works with partner Shailaja CM to find the children and facilitate the repatriation process.

However, with the number of Nepali children living in government shelters in India now running into the thousands, one might question the impact of works done by organisations like Chora Chori which can only bring limited number of children home. "We know that the problem is huge. But if we just sit back and do nothing, more and more Nepali children will end up lost in Indian homes," says Shailaja.

Most of the 17 children (*pic, above*) who were brought back this week had run away on their own, few were trafficked.

Fourteen-year-old Shyam S (name changed) was taken to Punjab to work in a rice mill six years ago by an agent from his village in Ittatar of Siraha. He says there were 50 other Nepali children working at the factory. Shyam was never paid during his time there and when the mill closed down last month, he came to Delhi hoping to make his way home. He was caught at the Railway Station. Unlike the other boys who talked and joked throughout the 40-hour long bus ride from Delhi to Kathmandu, Sada was withdrawn and mostly kept to himself.

While it takes care of the children and brings as many home as it can, Chora Chori Nepal's ultimate goal is to find traffickers and bring them to justice. Says Shailaja: "Until they are stopped the problem will remain." www.chorachori.org.uk



ABHA KARKI

REUNITED

Mimsara Sunar (*pic, above*) wept as she hugged her sons Mahendra and Shishir, who had run away from home in Banke last January to travel to New Delhi.

"I thought I'd never find them," said Sunar, wiping her tears. The brothers were among the 17 children brought back from Delhi this week by an organisation working to repatriate Nepali children stuck in shelters in India.

Mahendra and Shishir were only looking for few days of adventure in a foreign land. With the money they made from selling the bicycle they stole from their grandfather, the two siblings accompanied by another boy from town reached Delhi but were caught on the day of arrival.

The three were then sent to a shelter for boys that housed over 100 other street children, seven of them were from Nepal. "We were often bullied and taunted. The other kids would steal our stuff and try to pick fights," recalled Mahendra, "I never want to go back there again."

Chora Chori Nepal is now trying to trace the families of the other 15 children. "In many cases families don't have the resource and knowledge to search for their lost children," says Shailaja CM, co-director at ChoraChori Nepal, which works on repatriation.

Mimsara says she filed a police report about her two missing children, but until she got a call from Chora Chori Nepal last week she had no clue where they were.



"Don't want to go home."

When questioned about his family and hometown, all Ravi Kumar (*right*) will say is "I don't remember" in Hindi. The 15-year-old is one of ten Nepali boys living at the DMRC Shelter for Boys in New Delhi. But unlike the others he doesn't speak Nepali and doesn't want to return to Nepal. He has been here for four years and is in Grade 7.

"I like it here. I have friends here. I am studying. Why would I return?" says Kumar.

Kalu (*left*) is from Rolpa, and doesn't want to go home either. Kalu suffers from Hypochondroplasia, a form of short-limbed dwarfism and says he came to Delhi six months ago to work as a street performer. He was caught two months ago and brought to the shelter.

Kalu wants to learn to use a computer, get trained as an electrician or plumber at the shelter and use that to make himself a living when he gets out.

Showing maturity beyond his years, Kalu tells us: "I have to take care of myself once I am on my own. So for now it's best for me to stay here, learn as many things and then use that to get a job."

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And the rest of the news that didn't fit

It has been our experience in the news business that important international happenings like Kim Kardashian's selfies, Holly Hagan's breast augmentation and Miss Selena Gomez taking out an insurance policy on her bellybutton often crowd out equally earth-shattering events here at home.

And even as Nepal's vibrant free press tries to accommodate all the gossip that is fit to print there is, understandably, a lack of space and many news items of vital national importance go into the rubbish bin. That is why it is incumbent upon us as media typhoons dedicated to the public's right to say "no", to bring our valued customers up to speed on goings-on in this great country of ours without fear or favouritism. This roundup of weekly news is brought to you by 5 Virgins Cement (motto: 'Because Six Would Be Overdoing It') and NASA Engineering College ('We Shoot the Stars').

Prince Hari To Stay in Nepal Forever

BY OUR EX-ROYAL CORRESPONDENT

Impressed by the great progress Nepal has made in preserving earthquake ruins in as-where-is condition and in conserving the country's medieval way of life,

Britain's Prince Hari has decided not to return to the UK.

The Prince (currently third in line to the British throne) announced this through his Twitter account and said it was a spur of the moment decision to renounce his British citizenship and become a naturalised Nepali even if it takes 15 years of residency.

"The #Nepalese miss the #monarchy, and I want to stay and do everything I can to help," His Royal Highness tweeted.

Nepal's constitution experts said that if the monarchy was reinstated in Nepal in future, there would be no legal problem to fast track the prince's candidacy to be King Hari III.

Nepal Celebrates Earth Hours

BY OUR ENERGETIC REPORTER

While cities around the world turned off their lights for 60 minutes during Earth Hour this week, Nepal put the rest of the world to shame by turning off its electricity supply for 14 hours.

"We wanted to show our commitment to reduce our carbon footprint and to spread awareness about global warming," said the Minister of Load Shedding and Hot Air, reading his communiqué

by candlelight.

He added that Nepal had reduced its diesel imports to almost zero in the second half of 2015, and credited the Indian Blockade for helping Nepal attain its goal of being a zero carbon economy.

Nepal Included In Two More Listicles

FROM OUR CYBERIA CORRESPONDENT

Nepal this week was included in two more internet listicles, showing that the efforts by the National Tourism Board to publicise Nepal is bearing fruit.

A hitherto unheard of portal in Serbia-Herzegovina has decided that Kathmandu has the third worst air quality among the world's cities. Alarmed by this, the government is taking stern action and the Nepal Embassy in Geneva has filed a strongly-worded note verbal asking the Serbs to clarify in writing how they came up with the list, and how come Kathmandu did not make it to the bottom of the heap as the city with the worst air quality.

The Government spokesman said: "We suspect foul play. The two cities on the list that beat Kathmandu, Tetovo in Macedonia and Cairo in Egypt,

must have done match-fixing."

Meanwhile Trip Advisor has ranked Nepal 23rd on a list of 25 top travel destinations in the world and used algorithms in a sentiment analysis of visitor comments. For example feedback like 'Kathmandu Airport, there is no other airport like it in the world' is counted as a positive comment. So is: 'Visit Nepal and go back to the dark ages' or 'Wait 3 Hours for Baggage at Kathmandu Airport, Get Free Haircut'.

FinMin To Tax Smuggling

BY OUR FINANCIALLY-STRAPPED ANAL-YEAST

In an effort to increase internal revenue that has fallen drastically after the Blockade, the Finance Ministry has announced it will start taxing smugglers and their illicit income. The measure is expected to add 3 Kharabs 45 Arabs and 77 Corrodes to the gubberment coffers every month.

The Ministry's new initiative that has the slogan 'No Representation Without Taxation' will start at the Brigand Dry Port and then to petrol stations and gas depots throughout the country.

However the Federation of Nepalese Blackmarketeers

in a statement denounced the move and threatened to bring all smuggling to a halt, thus crippling the national economy. Micro-bus syndicates expressed solidarity with the action, and said it would vandalise all buses that dared to ply on the Ring Road in defiance of its right to a monopoly on public transport.

Yeti Exists: Expedition

By an Abominable Reporter

NAMCHE - A group of Nepali primatologists said today they had found indisputable proof that the yeti indeed exists. After three years extensively scouring the worldwide web through several search engines, the scientists said they had found at least 315,000 intercepts of yetis on Google alone and at least 25 Facebook pages of Yetis. "When we did an image search, we found visual proof of 6,600 yetis," scientists said. "It is a myth that the yeti does not exist." Several yetis approached for comment via WhatsApp to confirm or deny their existence answered: "Maybe."



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