



QATAR
AIRWAYS القطرية

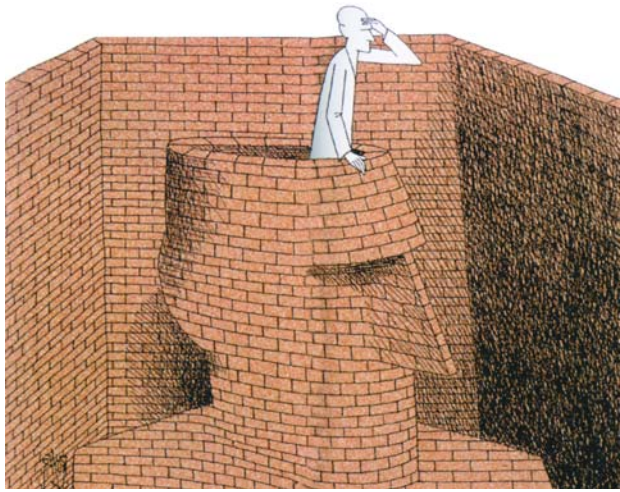
GOING PLACES TOGETHER

WHITE SWANS

The Black Swan Theory is used by business experts to classify events that disrupt a planned trajectory of a company, or a nation's economy. Nepal's recent history has been filled with flocks of black swans.

Despite the aftershocks of earthquakes and a Blockade, political uncertainty over the constitution and elections, a stagnant investment climate, the budget passed this week by a caretaker government finally offered a white swan. The glimmer of hope was that despite a 6.5% growth prediction for the last fiscal year, Nepal achieved 6.94% (*See report on page 6*).

Boosted by last year's healthy monsoon, an end to crippling power cuts, post-earthquake reconstruction, and pulled along by the Indian economic locomotive, this is the highest growth rate Nepal has seen in more than two decades. The question



GUEST EDITORIAL SWARNIM WAGLE

Nepal 2030

Nepalis and their economy are innately resilient. Even when the earthquakes of 2015 devastated parts of the country, our GDP growth rate did not nosedive. It took a bigger blow, the Blockade, to grind it to a halt in 2016. This year, we have rebounded to a healthy growth of 7%, thanks to a shrunk base, good monsoons, steady electricity supply, and normalisation of trade. Our focus now should be to remain on a high growth path of at least 7%, year after year. This will double the size of our economy in 10 years and make us a vibrant, enterprise-friendly, middle income nation by 2030.

The priority now should be on job-creating economic change, propelled by large investments in infrastructure. Energy and connectivity can unleash potentials in manufacturing, tourism and agriculture. There are about six major irrigation projects, like Sikta and Babai, which when completed will be like having a good monsoon every year. Sustained rise in agricultural productivity will form a durable basis of high and inclusive growth for decades to come.

After the first phase of the local elections, governments are being formed in the grassroots with great enthusiasm. The 2017 Budget has made a transformative departure by transferring hundreds of billions of rupees to local government coffers. Like an Englishman's home is his castle, parts of Singha Durbar will now be located in every Nepali village. This will redress our deficits in governance, public service provisioning and lacklustre rural growth. This is, however, conditional on local governments being functional. While the urban municipalities are better equipped, villages will need to be guided. Transitional handholding cannot be paternalistic because each local government is sovereign.

Implementation of federalism frees bodies like the National Planning Commission to take the long view, and focus on big ticket items of attracting large investment. This begins with Vision 2030 that articulates the sources of long-term prosperity. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), eased by new laws, simplified procedures and proactive outreach to global brands will loom large as a priority.

is whether it is sustainable given that the investment climate is still not favourable, the bureaucracy moves in slow motion, there is rampant corruption, extortion and lingering uncertainty about whether provincial and parliamentary elections can be held.

In its *Nepal Country Economic Memorandum* 2017 published last week, the World Bank warns that Nepal may fail to graduate from our Least Developed Country (LDC) status to lower middle income status (where the average annual per capita income crosses \$1,025) by 2030 if we continue to have a mismatch between poverty reduction and economic growth. How to translate Nepal's improvements in its Human Development Index into economic growth is a relevant question.

The World Bank's deliberate pessimism is puzzling, unless the idea is to shake up the government. It is true that to not make the report a self-fulfilling prophecy, Nepal needs to take some steps to sustain its 7% growth and double its GDP in the next decade, as economist Swarnim Wagle argues in his Guest Editorial (*below*).

We share his cautious confidence that with new investment laws in place and the politics stabilising, Nepal can sustain an infrastructure-led growth that will lead to job creation and an economic multiplier.

Going forward, we must nurture the following five **D's** to form our tailwind of progress:

Distance: Our proximity to two of the world's fastest-growing economies, and half the world living within five hours of flying distance, is a huge resource. With links forged with China's B&R Initiative and India's drive to connect its Gangetic hinterlands, we can negate our 20th century handicap posed by landlockedness. With lower costs of engagement, we can be part of international production networks, specialising in components where we have an edge.

Demography: Our greatest strength is our people, half of whom are aged below 22. After 2028 we will become an ageing society and after 2054, an aged one. We have a narrow window left to reap the demographic dividend, and to make up for two slow decades.

Democracy: There is no better way to govern a heterogeneous society like ours. But we need to revamp the way we celebrate and leverage democracy: it is not just about periodic elections, it has to evolve into a culture of rules-based governance that aggregates and responds to our diverse preferences. Without checks, federalism could go horribly wrong, shifting Kathmandu's problems to local units and amplifying them.

Digitisation: Our old model of trade and production is obsolete, and we need to catch up by leapfrogging into the digital age of fragmented production across integrated economies. There is an advantage inherent in backwardness: 25 years ago, there were 71,560 phones in the entire country, today Nepalis carry 28 million cell phones.

Diaspora: Our diaspora is coming of age. They need to be courted as the first investors. They must be our emissaries for greater trade, investment and tourism, stronger socio-cultural ties and firmer academic exchange and transfer of knowhow.



Swarnim Wagle is a member of the National Planning Commission.

Times.com

ONLINE VIDEOS



BOOK TALK

The century-long Rana regime is often associated with feudalism and despotism, few relate it with the arts, education and liberal values. This week on **Nepali Times Studio** Kunda Dixit speaks to Sagar Rana, the great grandson of Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher of the mark his family left on Nepal's history and politics, and about his new book *Singha Durbar: Rise and Fall of the Rana Regime of Nepal*.



TIC-TOP

A British Gurkha expedition to Mt Everest had to turn back after the 2015 earthquake. This year the team got to the top with two hand-made Loomes watches which will be auctioned to raise money to help earthquake survivors. Go online to watch unique drone footage of last month's climb.

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to all of the women who were elected, especially to Dalit women ('Including the excluded', Om Astha Rai, #860). You deserve to be there and to represent your people. Go well.

Cynthia McConville

THE WORST ADDICTION

Nicotine is the worst addiction ('Fired up over tobacco', Marty Logan, #860). In Nepal, smoking cigarettes is a fashion, it's even considered macho. If the Nepal government wants to seriously curb smoking, then there should a 300% tax on tobacco. But the tobacco farmers and lobbyist have leaders in their pockets. So, we will continue to die from smoking.

Kabita Hamal

WOMEN RULE

A female President, a female Speaker of the House and a female CJ, but the plight of women continues unabated ('Federal Feminine Republic of Nepal', Editorial, #860). We have taken great strides, but we still live in the dark ages. Women are mistreated, abused and treated as third class citizens. Look at the citizenship issues and how the children of a woman married to a foreigner are treated. Nepalis have come far, but they still have a very long way to go to create a just society where men and women are treated equally and with respect. But we have hope, and that keeps us going. The next generation of Nepali women will rule, and they will rule justly and wisely.

Sunita Tamang

BOUND TO FAIL

Like other experiments with a multi-party democratic systems the decentralisation model, however ideal, will also perform at its lowest level notwithstanding the goals that have been set ('Radically decentralised', Dinkar Nepal, #860). How would a democratic system function in a climate where parties with diverse political undertakings act in unison demanding a re-poll in Bharatpur? Save for a few, most local politicians will, in all probability, end up behaving in exactly the same way as before.

Anupam

CORRECTION

In the print version of 'The Royal Family Tree' chart of the family of King Birendra (page 4, #860) one of the captions should have read Princess Shruti Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah.

WHAT'S TRENDING



Jet set, go

by Kunda Dixit

Come September, Kathmandu will have its own aviation museum. Go online and have Captain Bed Upreti show you around the cabin of an Airbus 330 that he has restored and rebuilt into an aviation museum.

Most reached on Facebook
(12,175 people reached)

Including the excluded

by Om Astha Rai

The 2017 local elections have been a revolution. As the Election Commission prepares to wrap up vote counting from the first phase, women have emerged as the biggest winners, not political parties.

Most shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter
(84 retweets, 81 likes)

Federal Feminine Republic of Nepal

Editorial

New constitutionally-mandated quotas for women candidates in local elections has put them not just in policy-making positions, but also made them responsible for implementation. Nowhere else in Asia has the gender shift in governance been as dramatic.

Most commented

Climbing Mt Buggery

Backside

Ever wondered who reached the summit first, Hillary or Tenzing? The Ass reveals the lost transcript of a conversation between the two mountaineers during the first ascent of Mt Everest in 1953, which should finally put the debate to rest. We also find out how the Hillary Step was so named.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
This week we take a look at Nepal's #tobacco problem Read stories: <http://bit.ly/2r3rqd7> <http://bit.ly/2roSVzj> #WNTD2017 #NoTobacco

bharat b. subedi @art4heartssake
Smokers, plz make sincere effort & quit! I smoked for 9 long years before going cold turkey once & for all. Been a year. You can do it, too!

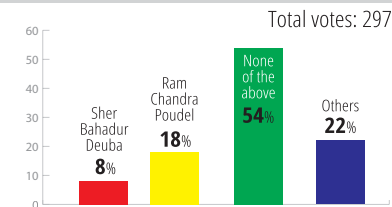
Nepali Times @nepalitimes
After winning the election some supporters refused to touch Parbati Bisunke because she is a Dalit. #FeminineRepublic <http://bit.ly/2r3Feol>

Rani@ Rani090545281
Disgusting behaviour. Big hugs to Parbatjee on her fabulous achievements. May you succeed in all you do. You go girl!!!!

Times

Weekly Internet Poll #861

Q. Who do you want to see as the next Prime Minister of Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll #862
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Can Nepal maintain its 7% economic growth in coming years?

Times

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Who will lead the charge?

The man who was to have led the campaign for the restitution of Nepal's looted statuary is no more

Sukra Sagar Shrestha was a wise man who spoke little but carried a large heart, and the archaeologist's zeal. He was a cultural activist who prized rigour. His ancestral home was Kirtipur, but he would be found in far corners of the Valley's cultural sites, photographing temple eaves, discussing inscriptions and providing sage



ON THE WAY UP
Kanak Mani Dixit

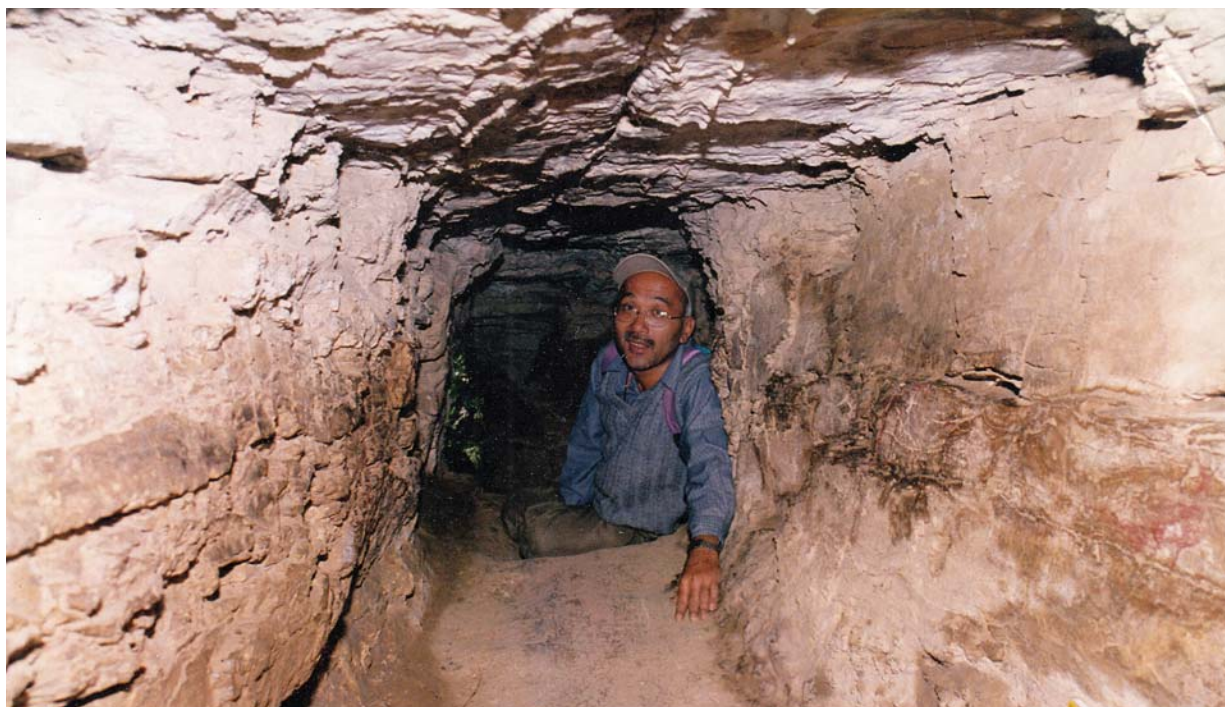
advice on restoration, particularly after the 2015 earthquake.

Sukra Sagar was the key person to consult in the as-yet-unresolved debate over whether the Department of Archaeology should allow modern methods and material in the reconstruction of earthquake-devastated temples and other structures. He is gone before the DOA has come up with the required courage to take a position.

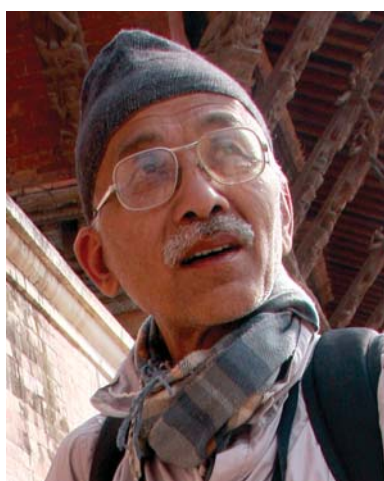
We have lost a critically important person in the effort to revive and energise the cultural life-force of 'Nepal Valley', which has been impacted by modernisation, urbanisation and the earthquake.

On a rainy August morning two years ago, we were all gathered for the *chhyama puja* (forgiveness ritual) at the Bhaidegah Temple, at the point where Patan Darbar Square meets Mangal Bazar. The three-tiered temple was built by the Patan 'prime minister' Bhagirath Bhaiyan to provide an alternative *lingam* after Kashi Vishwanath was sacked by Aurangzaeb in 1669.

The temple was destroyed in the 1934 earthquake and while all the other structures of the Darbar Square were rebuilt, Bhaidegah was left with a single-story stucco sanctum in 'Mughal style'. The ritual was meant to seek forgiveness of the deity while we started the job of giving the temple its pre-1934 original size



PRABEEN SHRESTHA



BASANTA MAHARJAN

LEAVING A VOID: Archaeologist Sukra Sagar Shrestha inside a cave at Chobhar during his research 15 years ago (above) and towards the end of his life (left) in Patan Durbar Square.

bahas and bahis, plinths and pedestals.

When Kathmandu Valley was 'discovered' in the 1950s by the West, the art connoisseurs were enthralled by the architecture of this medieval urbanscape that seemed frozen in time over centuries – and enraptured by the statuary that openly adorned public places. The idols, in stone, bronze and terracota, were loosely attached to the base, for who would steal a god?

But they would, because the 'international art market' was on the lookout for new pastures. The theft began right away, involving a network that included the overseas museums and international collectors to middlemen in Delhi, Bangkok and Hongkong – to international art scholars, diplomats, Valley elites and down to the local thug who did the actual lifting. Before long, free-standing statues were mostly gone, and those that survived

the loot were locked away behind welded cages.

The theft peaked in the 1980s and early 1990s, and waned mainly because what could be easily stolen had already been lifted. A living culture had been robbed, somewhat different from the theft of mummies or the transport of the Parthenon friezes.

It was natural that a need would be felt for a campaign for the return of stolen statuary, because the rationale was so clear – the deities were receiving *puja* and offerings till the moment they were stolen. When the collectors and curators realised that these were not 'artefacts' but representations of a living culture, many were mortified. Some willingly returned the gods without anyone even asking.

A campaign was important, so that the return of the stolen objects could be conducted in an organised manner on a worldwide scale, with documentation, forensic investigation, public information and communication.

It was important to make the point that any person or entity that held a statue of Nepal provenance should know that she/he/it was holding stolen property – unless

proven otherwise. These gods and goddesses were inhabiting public places, and their transfer would not have been authorised by anyone.

The ideal would be to place the gods and goddesses in their original pedestals or cubicles, back once again to receiving offerings of *abir*, flowers and water.

The logic of the statue return campaign is clear and humanistic: give back the gods to the communities for worship. For this, we have to be able to provide security when the objects are brought back.

Therefore, it is perhaps not necessary to immediately demand return of every statue that is out there, because Nepal has to be capable of handling the returning objects – they should not be subject to further threat of theft, nor should they necessarily be locked up in the storage space of the National Museum at Chhauni.

Hence, the proposal that the initial task be to identify the pieces in the collections around the globe and to inform the current 'owners' that they hold the objects as a *naso* on behalf of Nepal's people, in trust until such time that it is possible for them to return home in full security.

Sukra Sagar Shrestha was the perfect person to lead the campaign for return, with his mild personality backed by tenacious spirit. He never flaunted his knowledge, but knew the underlying culture and archaeology of Nepal, from the Brahmi script on the Ashok Pillar to the prehistoric caves of Mustang, and the history of his beloved Kirtipur.

There was no one better to recognise statuary, plead for their return, keep a smile while remaining unrelenting on the principle of restitution. He had agreed to lead the campaign. The only thing we can do now is to continue the effort, with his memory and wisdom to guide us as we seek to bring the deities back to the communities. 🇳🇵

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Hard to forget

11 years after the conflict ended, victims and their families need the truth

More than 10 years after the end of the Maoist war, the absence of truth has left many Nepalis unable to get on with their lives. A new report titled *We Cannot Forget: Truth and Memory in Post-Conflict Nepal* tries to illuminate other aspects of the transitional justice process besides the prosecutions – and lack of prosecutions – that sporadically makes news in Kathmandu.

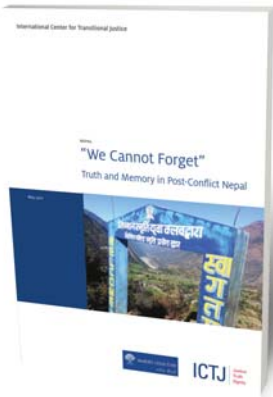
Referring to the dysfunctional truth and disappearance commissions the report says: ‘So far only a relatively narrow constituency of two broadly opposing sides has been involved in debates. Among national and international NGOs, human rights lawyers, and victims’ groups, the dominant discourse has focused on the demand for individual criminal accountability, while government leaders and representatives of the major political parties and security forces have worked to ensure that criminal prosecution and trials are completely off the table.’

Prepared by the International Commission for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and Martin Chautari, the report notes that victims desire truth for various reasons. It says many victims needed closure and an end to the ambiguous loss, others simply wanted acknowledgement of the suffering. Many others seek the truth as a

first step towards reparations or criminal prosecutions.

‘Our people will come home today or tomorrow. We watch the roads,’ a woman in Bardiya told interviewers preparing the report.

The wife of a man forcibly disappeared in Jhapa says making his name public would be insufficient: ‘For us this is not enough. It must be proved that someone killed them . . . the killer must also tell where he



buried them. For sure the army keeps some kind of recognizable personal things. They must keep their clothes or photo. I will not accept being simply told, ‘Your husband was killed’.

While victims’ seek the truth about individual cases, the report notes that truth is important for various cultural reasons. For example: ‘Families of the missing

and forcibly disappeared in particular emphasised the need to see the body of their missing relative or have the body signifies the cultural importance of proof of body, which is necessary for holding appropriate death rituals across the varied cultures in Nepal.’

Some people are looking for public recognition of their loved ones’ roles in the conflict – often by being declared martyrs – or the fact that they were innocent victims of a war that left 17,000 Nepalis dead.

Still others continue to suffer silently: ‘For some, especially victims of sexual violence, truth is more complicated, and effort will be needed to help victims to overcome societal stigma and use existing opportunities to break down harmful misconceptions about their experiences.’

Among the report’s recommendations: policy makers should issue ‘an official apology to victims for human rights violations experienced at the hands of state actors as well as for the state’s failure to protect victims of violations committed by non-state armed groups’.

Marty Logan

Go online for full report:
<https://www.ictj.org/publication/nepal-truth>

prabhu Bank BIZ BRIEFS

Economy perks up

After doom and gloom after the earthquake and Blockade that brought down growth rate in 2015-16 to nearly 0%, Nepal is set to rebound. In his budget, Finance Minister Mahara announced that despite a 6.5% growth prediction Nepal achieved 6.94% last year because of a healthy monsoon, end to power cuts and reconstruction. This is the highest annual growth in more than two decades. Planners say with policy reforms, this growth is sustainable (see *Guest Editorial, page 2*).

Turkish smart security

Turkish Airlines’ passengers to the US can save time at security without having to remove many of their personal belongings. Laptops and 3-1-1 compliant liquids can remain in carryon bags in its TSA Pre✓® lanes. Light jackets, shoes, and belts can also remain on.

Iftar on Qatar

Passengers flying during Ramadan won’t have to worry about breaking their fast on board anymore. Qatar Airways offers Iftar meal boxes on selected flights which will be served at an appropriate time.



Marriott in Nepal

Marriott International which has 850 properties around the world is making its debut in Nepal with Fairfield by Marriott in Kathmandu. The hotel in Thamel has 115 rooms and suites with separate living, working and sleeping areas, an all-day dining, bar and lobby lounge.



Etihad's new Airbus

Etihad Airways has added its 10th Airbus A380 to fly from its Abu Dhabi base to and from London, Sydney, New York, and from 1 July, Paris. The



double-decker plane has features such as The Residence, a three-room living space with private shower and bedroom.

Hisense hits goal

Hisense is now the official sponsor of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, becoming the first-ever Chinese electronics brand to support one of the biggest sporting events in the world.



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Taking politics out of the economy

Nepal can attain lower middle income status by 2030, but conditions apply

OM ASTHA RAI

Caretaker Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal laid the foundation stone for the Kathmandu-Tarai fast-track highway this week. What he conveniently forgot was that Deputy Prime Minister Bijaya Gachhadar had already laid the foundation stone for the same 76 km expressway when he was a minister back in 2009.

It is emblematic of the seemingly insurmountable barriers Nepal faces in improving infrastructure that the project was stuck for a whole decade because politicians competed for credit and kickbacks for a project that was never built. Nepal has had six prime ministers since the first foundation stone was laid for the highway, and in all that time millions of buses and cargo trucks between Kathmandu and Birganj have made 200km detours via Mugling.

Excessive politics and slow motion bureaucracy have led to chronic delays in all big-ticket infrastructure projects, and many have been abandoned midway. Every government says it will prioritise 'Projects of National Pride' but even that doesn't seem to speed up projects, some of which were launched 30 years ago.

The World Bank is worried enough to say in a new report that delay in infrastructure projects is one of the factors slowing down Nepal's economic growth, jeopardising its goal of graduating to middle income nation status before 2030.

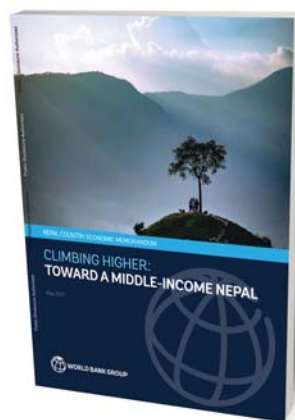
The report comes as Nepal achieved a 21-year high economic growth rate of 6.94% in the last fiscal year – mainly because of the

near zero growth last year due to the double whammy of the earthquake and Indian Blockade. This prompted outgoing Finance Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara in his budget speech this week to project an ambitious near 7% growth next year. Good performance this year was mainly due to the end of power cuts, a good monsoon and reconstruction.

The World Bank's Nepal Country Economic Memorandum 2017, however, is not so optimistic. It warns that Nepal cannot become a lower middle income economy by 2030 unless it boosts investment and productivity. The report argues that Nepal will probably not graduate to that level of annual per capita income in 13 years without comprehensive reforms.

Economists at the National Planning Commission (NPC) say the World Bank report is needlessly pessimistic and point to several factors why the current growth rate can be sustained, and that the 2030 target is realistic.

"The World Bank report is

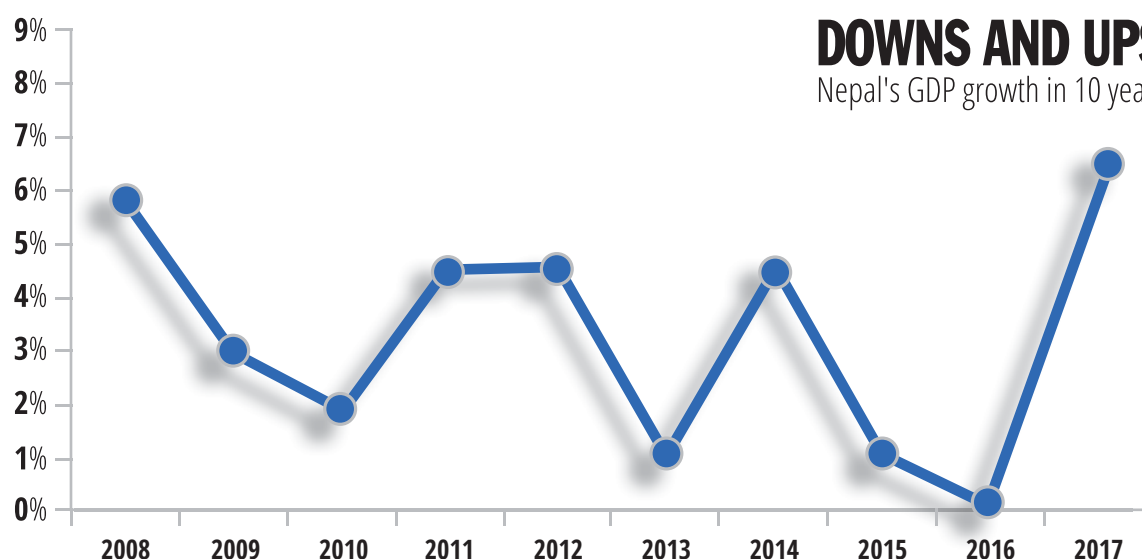


tone-deaf because it fails to take into account factors like how new budget has radically decentralised the economy which will boost infrastructure and increase capital expenditure," says NPC economist Swarnim Waglé, who thinks Nepal can sustain the 7% annual growth rate to double its GDP in a decade.

Another NPC member Chandra Kanta Poudel agrees, and points to a slew of hydropower projects coming online in two years including the 456MW Upper Tamakosi which will end power cuts, and there are large

DOWNNS AND UPS

Nepal's GDP growth in 10 years



hurdles that deter foreign investors persist," admits CEO Maha Prasad Adhikari of the Board.

At an investment summit in March, top political leaders vowed to make Nepal investment-friendly, but most potential investors had heard it all before and said they needed to see concrete steps on the ground.

Ram Prasad Gyanwali, Head of the Central Department of Economics at the Tribhuvan University, says sustaining a 7% annual growth rate is possible but only if Nepal also reduces its dependency. "What if another trade blockade brings our growth rate down to zero again again?" he asks.

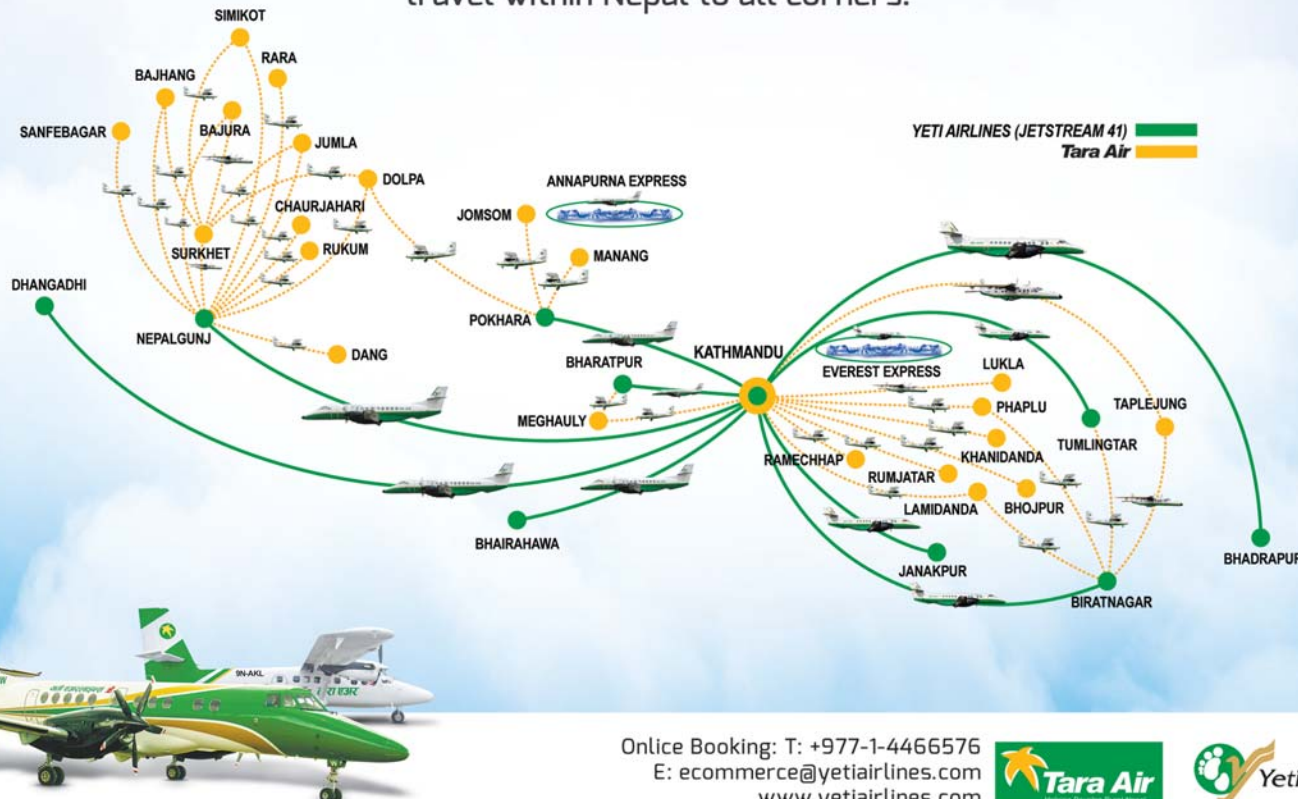
There are still too many ifs and buts in Nepal's road to graduating from its Least Developed Country (LDC) status by 2030. The biggest 'if' is political instability, but economist Swarnim Waglé says Nepal does not have the luxury to first sort out political crisis, and then focus on fixing the economy. (see Guest Editorial, page 2).

Large-scale migration is not a sign of strength but a symptom of structural problems in the economy. Planners have alerted successive governments to channel \$7 billion Nepal officially earns from remittances annually into productive sectors, and boost investment so that jobs are created to in turn reduce outmigration. Newly-elected local governments can help the process by encouraging investment in local development.

"Remittance looks a huge amount, but it is in fact small streams of money going into individual households," Waglé says, "but we can still use that to boost the economy." 🇳🇵

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Cyclone Mora's periphery grazed central and eastern Nepal, bringing us the monsoon-type weather this week. There will still be some residual precipitation from that system into Friday. But the weekend is looking like it will be drier than it has been, with daytime cloud buildup but just 30% chance of showers. Which is good news, considering that this has been the wettest May we've had in a while. However, because of the humidity, Saturday-Sunday is going to be hot and sticky in Kathmandu.

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Going places together - qatarairways.com

French architect Marina Shrestha first came to Nepal in 1981 and was immediately drawn by the exquisite designs of Nepal's art and handicraft. She never left.

After working on a few buildings as a consultant, it was by chance that Marina, now 60, got into designing paper products. She made a few lokta items, and just kept getting more and more orders. She also designed jewelry, but it was paper that fascinated her more. She opened her store at Baber Mahal Revisited in 1998, and started selling to local hotels, got some export orders, and has never looked back.

Recently, she decided to go upscale and established the Marina Vaptzarova brand after her maiden name that has now become synonymous with her uniquely designed notebooks made of hemp, nettles, allo and lokta, all sourced from the mountains of Nepal.

Her latest material is 'vegetal leather' which looks and feels like soft wrinkled leather but is made from lokta, a bark of the Himalayan daphne bush that grows wild

Putting it down on paper

Designer shows where art and craft can converge to make high-quality Nepali products

and can be harvested sustainably without killing the plant. Marina moulds the material into journal covers, cushions and window blinds. Other items include artist journals, travel diaries, lampshades, photo frames, guest books and wishing cards.

Even after working with handmade paper designs for more than two decades and establishing a sought-after international brand, Marina says she still likes to challenge herself with every new piece. "I don't see competition in what I do, but I compete with myself," she says, showing

value," says Marina. Her studio and workshop employ 15 people and she ensures that all her raw materials are produced in an ecologically sustainable way.

Marketing Nepali handicraft products abroad is challenging because of the notion that items produced in South Asia are cheap, says Marina, who is trying to make Marina Vaptzarova a luxury brand available in fine stores in USA, Australia, France and other European countries. The products come with two trademarks: Himalaya for middle range products, and Marina Vaptzarova for the high-end items.

Marina's dream project is to set up a 'concept museum' in one of Patan's historic bahals where she will team up with other designers to showcase and sell high quality handicraft products – and one of the star attractions no doubt will be Marina Vaptzarova.

Shreejana Shrestha

us around her store which is teeming with elegant, delicate paper products. In a paperless digital age, Marina Vaptzarova deliberately makes us slow down as we run our fingers through the textured pages and covers, we are forced back to a time when there was paper and one wrote on them with fountain pens at the speed of our thought process.

"Writing on paper is linked with the emotional development of a person, we get more insight when we write, it is tangible and it solidifies messages. Paper journals will never lose their

nepalitimes.com

Visit online gallery of Marina Vaptzarova designs

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THE RANA REIGN

Sagar Rana's detailed historical recap of his clan's 100-year rule over Nepal

KUNDA DIXIT



Singha Durbar was built by Chandra Shumsher Rana in 1924 and was once the largest palace in Asia. After the fall of the Ranas, it became the seat of government, the fr

No one is better placed to pen the history of the rise and fall of the Ranas than Sagar S.J.B. Rana. He is a family insider and political outsider, an Oxford-educated

great grandson of Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher, grandson of hardliner Gen Baber Shumsher, son of educationist Mrigendra Shumsher.

Sagar Rana comes from a liberal intellectual branch of the dynasty known for a century of iron-fisted rule. His brother Bharat has been a lifelong

democrat who set up the Gorkha Parisad that eventually merged with the Nepali Congress, another brother Jagdish is a man of letters. Sagar himself joined the Nepali Congress heading its International Department. His son, Udaya, is the Nepali Congress MP from Lalitpur.

This inter-generational involvement of a Rana

in Nepal's democratic politics makes *Singha Durbar: Rise and Fall of the Rana Regime* of Nepal a compelling and unprejudiced history of Nepal's other royal family from 1847-1951. Sourced from archival material, historical memoirs in Nepali, interviews with members of the Rana clan, and an unpublished diary of

his father, Sagar Rana's book is meticulously researched and in places moves like a thriller.

He starts with the gory events at the Kot in 1847 that led to the rise of his ancestor, Jung Bahadur Kunwar, to be pre-eminent while the Shahs bickered, and the Pandes, Thapas and Basnyats carried on their feuds. The Kot, the book



Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah 1816-1847



Surendra Bir Bikram Shah 1847-1881



Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah 1881-1911

1847

Jung Bahadur Kunwar (1846-1857) rises to power after the Kot Massacre



1850

Jung Bahadur visits Britain and France



1857

Indian Mutiny, Jung sends troops to rescue British

1877

Dhir Shumsher took charge on behalf of Ranodip Singh (1857-1885). Time of coups, counter-coups and bloody purges, decline of the Jungs and rise of the Shumshers.

1885

Bir Shumsher (1885-1901) Built Bir Hospital, Ghanta Ghar, etc.

1901

Dev Shumsher (1901) Short-lived reign, removed in coup within nine months by Chandra



CORONATION OF DEV SHUMSHER

1903

Chandra Shumsher (1901-1929) visits Delhi



CHANDRA SHUMSHER AT WORK

1908

Chandra visits UK

1914-1918

Nepal sends 200,000 troops to help Britain, 22,000 are killed in Gallipoli and Belgium



CHANDRA SHUMSHER WITH KING GEORGE VI IN CHITWAN IN 1911.

1923

Chandra lobbies successfully to sign Anglo-Nepal Friendship Treaty



JUDDHA SHUMSHER HOLDING COURT

1929

Bhim Shumsher (1929-1932) Purged Chandra loyalists in court, first hints of anti-Rana resistance

THE PALACE JUNG BAHADUR BUILT ON THAPATHALI HILL IN 1854 AFTER THIS TRIP TO LONDON IN A PHOTO TAKEN IN 1930 FROM ACROSS THE BAGMATI.

Reading about the past to

Sagar Rana's *Singha Durbar* is replete with references that show us how little things have changed in the way the British and independent India deal with Nepal, how Lainchour always looms large in Nepal's domestic politics, and how we seem to have always underestimated the role played by the the 200-year-old tradition of Gurkha recruitment in Nepal's relations, first with the British and then with India. It can be said that Nepal's independence came not just at the cost of Nepali blood spilt from Kangra to Makwanpur in 1814-16, but also in the trenches of Flanders Fields in 1917 and the jungles of Burma in 1944. *Singha Durbar* has echoes from Nepal's history:

- Indian politician Karan Singh writes in the Foreword how his ancestors' Dogra kingdom and the Rana regime were both established in 1847, his father Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir

and Mohan Shumsher both stepped down around 1950, how he married Yasho Rajya Laksmi, the granddaughter of Mohan Shumsher, and was sent by Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh in 2006 to convince King Gyanendra to restore parliament. If Gyanendra had listened earlier, perhaps Nepal would still be a monarchy.

- After Jung's death in 1877, despite a clear succession roll, the brothers bickered so much that the British resident Col Wylie wrote to Calcutta about the ascendance of Bir Shumsher: 'It doesn't matter which side of cut-throats has the upper hand ... as long as they render services to us.' Which immediately brings to mind words later ascribed to various U.S. presidents: 'He may be a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch.'
- As Chandra Shumsher conspires to unseat Dev Shumsher in 1901, he uses a hunting trip in Chitwan by Governor General Lord Curzon to get a tacit nod from the British for his planned family coup, much in the same way Nepali politicians today jet to Delhi before toppling governments to seek blessings.
- Chandra Shumsher tried to ban animal sacrifices, but was over-ruled by his priests. So, he brought a



ONE OF MANY RANA HUNTING TRIPS IN THE TARAI. JUDDHA SHUMSHER IN THE 1930S WITH TROPHIES.

revered Indian swami to a public debate in Kathmandu which the pro-sacrifice clergy won. The debate goes on today with the mass slaughter at Gadimai.

- Chandra built Singha Durbar, the palace from which the book gets its title. It had 1,400 rooms, but no toilets. When asked why, the host is said to have replied: "We don't go to the toilet, here the toilet comes to us."
- As Britain prepared to go to war against Germany in 1939 the Ranas debated whether to offer troops. Padma Shumsher argued that 'the Nazis were better prepared to emerge victorious and Nepal should back the winning

horse, or remain neutral'. Nepal sent 200,000 troops to Europe, Malaya and Burma anyway.

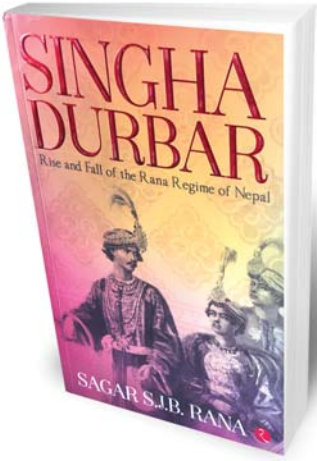
- Mahavir and Subarna Shumsher, despite being Ranas, favoured a militant approach to overthrowing the oligarchy, even setting up the Jana Mukti Sena — the exact same name given by the Maoists 40 years later to their People's Liberation Army.
- B. P. Koirala was inspired by Gandhi and initially opposed the use of violence. Koirala even met Gandhi to ask him to talk some sense into the Rana rulers in Kathmandu so he would not have to take up arms against them. Gandhi's sad reply: 'I cannot help you. When my own people do not heed me, why will the Ranas listen to me?'
- J.P. helped B.P. get arms from his social democrat friend U Nu in Burma, and Mahavir Shumsher sent two of his Himalayan Airways DC-3s to Rangoon to fly the weapons to a disused WWII airfield near Patna. On board was journalist Bhola Chatterjee, and Thir Bam Malla.
- A pall of gloom descended in Singha Durbar and the palaces of the Ranas in Kathmandu on the day the British decided to leave India. What happens in India,



Front façade that survived a devastating fire in 1972 was badly damaged in the 2015 earthquake.

reminds us, was not as bloody as Bhimsen Thapa’s culling of nearly 100 members of the nobility three decades previously. Despite his ruthlessness, Jung comes across as a strategic thinker who has the national interest foremost in mind as he embarks on a trip to England in 1850. It is a spy mission: Jung wants to gauge Britain’s military prowess

and to see if it is worthwhile risking war to regain territory lost in 1816. Suitably impressed with the ordnance factories and the naval yards, Jung and his dynasty remain staunch Anglophiles for the next 100 years. The British found the arrangement mutually beneficial. When they were being butchered



Singha Durbar
Rise and Fall of the
Rana Regime of Nepal
Sagar S.J.B. Rana
Rupa, New Delhi 2017
426 pages INR 495

in the 1857 mutiny, Jung led troops under his own command to rescue them, but not before pre-negotiating payment from the Raj for revenue lost between 1816-1857 from territory Nepal ceded to British India after the Sugauli Treaty, and the return of the western Tarai.

An important reason for Britain to want stable relations with the Ranas was Gurkha recruitment, and Chandra served the British well, sending Nepali troops to Waziristan, and to Gallipoli and Belgium in WWI. Twenty years later, Nepalis were again fighting and dying in Burma and Europe in WWII. Some 50,000 Nepalis were killed in the two wars at a time when Nepal’s population was barely 2 million, emptying the countryside of two generations of young men.

Like his forebear Jung Bahadur, Chandra knew how to cash in

on goodwill. He hosted Lord Kitchener, invited King George VI and Prince Edward for tiger hunts, softening the British establishment to sign the Anglo-Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1923 that firmly established Nepal as a sovereign nation apart from semi-independent princely states in India.

Sagar Rana implies that we should not judge Chandra and Jung with retroactive correctness. They may have been ruthless, but they were always keenly aware that their personal and family fortunes were tied with a strong and independent nation state. Unlike other members of his family, Chandra was not as openly promiscuous as some of his relatives and much more of a workaholic, cunning at statecraft and astute in geopolitics.

Singha Durbar contains fascinating details of how the Ranas tried to salvage their power as the democracy movement gathered pace. The threat came not just from Nepali students educated in India who were influenced by the anti-British movement, but also from within the Rana clan from the likes of Mahavir Shumsher, flamboyant businessman and once one of Calcutta’s richest men, and Subarna Shumsher whose liberal education made him fight feudalism. The dynasty was also imploding because of the brewing rebellion among B and C Class Ranas, classified according to the caste and ethnic hierarchy of the wives and concubines who begat them.

The second half of the book is a blow-by-blow account of how the anti-Rana resistance took shape, the rise and fall of the Koiralas, the story of Biratnagar, the freedom movement in exile in Calcutta and Bananas and how

it brought together a disparate group of Nepalis caught up in the Quit India Movement with Rana dissidents. Ultimately it was the home-grown revolt led by martyrs like Shukra Raj, Dashrath Chand, Ganga Lal and Dharma Bhakta that fired the resistance. Other activists, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ganesh Man Singh, Ramhari Sharma waged an underground movement at considerable personal risk.

As the pressure from within Nepal and outside grew, half-hearted reforms by Bhim, Juddha, Padma and finally Mohan were too little too late to quell the revolt. The Ranas had hoped that Gurkha recruitment would work again to cushion them against Indian pressure, but times had changed. India’s independence had already put the dynasty on the wrong side of history.

Sagar Rana has finished writing a sequel, tracing the trajectories of some of the cast of characters from *Singha Durbar* in the period between 1951 to the present. It should be just as fascinating a read about historical lessons not learnt, and of freedoms fought for and squandered over and over again. 🇳🇵



Sagar Rana speaks to Kunda Dixit on Nepali Times Studio about his book, *Singha Durbar*, and the mark his family has left in Nepal’s history and politics.

nepalitimes.com

Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah 1911-1955

1932

Juddha Shumsher

(1932-1945)

Acted swiftly to rebuild after the 1934 earthquake



1945

Padma Shumsher

(1945-1948)

Tried to introduce reforms as anti-Rana protests spread.



JUDDHA (RIGHT) CROWNS PADMA

1939
1945

World War II in which another 25,000 Nepali soldiers are killed in Europe, Burma and Malaya

1947

Mohan Shumsher

(1948-1951) signs Friendship Treaty with India in 1950 to replace British support after 1947. Forced to hand power to King Tribhuvan, and retires to Bangalore in 1951.

1947

Nepal National Congress set up in Banaras by **K.P. Bhattarai** and **B.P. Koirala**



B.P. KOIRALA AND GANESH MAN SINGH

1946

Nepal Democratic Congress set up in Calcutta by **Mahavir Shumsher** etc

1949

Nepal Communist Party formed by **Pushpa Lal Shrestha** in Calcutta



PUSHPA LAL SHRESTHA, FOUNDER OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF NEPAL

1950

NNC and NDC merge in Calcutta. King Tribhuvan flees to Delhi. Nepali Congress launches military offensive captures major towns.

1951

King Tribhuvan

returns to Kathmandu



o understand the present



RARE PHOTO OF THE TRIUMVERATE OF THE INTERIM ARRANGEMENT AFTER 1951: LAST RANA PRIME MINISTER MOHAN SHUMSHER, KING TRIBHUVAN AND HOME MINISTER B. P. KOIRALA.

then and since, has always had a direct impact on Nepal.

- To evade Mohan Shumsher’s spies, the role of intermediary between King Tribhuvan and the Indians

was played by German physiotherapist Erika Leuchtag. The two had a code word for Mohan: ‘Goebbels’.

- Indian Ambassador C.P.N. Singh had an even better channel of communication with Tribhuvan: confectioner

B.L. Sharma, who used to carry messages back-and-forth slipped inside boxes of *laddoos*. Singh once took Tribhuvan for a sightseeing flight over Kathmandu so he could have a face-to-face conversation away from Rana surveillance.

- Boris Lissanevitch of the 300 Club in Calcutta (and later Royal Hotel in Kathmandu) facilitated Tribhuvan evading his Rana guards during a visit to Calcutta to deliver a letter to Nehru agreeing to overthrow the Ranas.
- In Patna, B.P.’s group was preparing for a military campaign when he eavesdropped on an Indian Embassy radio transmission from Kathmandu that said King Tribhuvan had sought refuge in the mission. Sagar Rana quotes B.P.’s memoir: ‘The matter has now gone out of our hands ... the King is under Indian Embassy control.’
- Mohan Shumsher made a last-ditch attempt to garner Indian support by signing the 1950 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation that addressed India’s security concerns vis-a-vis China. The treaty is seen to have been forced on Nepal and remains controversial to this day.
- Mohan sent SOSs to Washington and London to

recognise Gyanendra as the new king after Mohan Shumsher left for Delhi, but Nehru ‘persuaded the Anglo-American lobby to refrain from any hasty step’. In 2006, the Anglo-Americans abandoned Gyanendra again.

- When the British dispatched a delegation to Kathmandu to assess the situation, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu got B.L. Sharma and others to organise a protest at Gaucher airport that turned into a full-scale riot.
- Anti-Rana forces found out that Tribhuvan was under ‘guest house arrest’ at Hyderabad House in Delhi, and they launched armed attacks in Nepal capturing Birganj. Nehru was furious, and again pressured the British and Americans to follow ‘the middle path’, much in the same way India got them to back its ‘twin pillar’ doctrine in 2005.
- The 5-point Delhi Compromise of 1950 itself seems to have been a harbinger of the 12-point agreement between the seven political parties and the Maoists in Delhi in November 2006, establishing a tradition whereby every big crisis in Nepal is resolved with Indian mediation.

EVENTS



Ride for refugees,

Mark this year's World Refugee Day by participating in a cycle rally from Patan Durbar Square to Khokana to show solidarity for refugees.
17 June, 7:30 to 11 am, Patan Durbar Square, 9841729965
www.cyclecity.org.np/ride4refugees2

Secret bazaar,
Enjoy eco cocktails, healthy food, a live jam session and watch various local and international artists present their creative handmade items.
2 June, 4-10 pm, the Secret Garden Guesthouse, Kaldhara, 9808123799

Health for education,
Stay fit and healthy by opting for a 12-km walk, run or jog and raise funds for the upcoming Book and Talk Show to be organised by Bookmandu.
3 June, Tickets: Rs 500, 9849763436, bookmandu@gmail.com



Mud fest,
Celebrate this rice-planting festival by getting soaked in the rain, playing in mud and mingling with locals. Includes a sumptuous Newari fest at the end of the day.
24 June, 7 am to 3 pm, Khokana, Rs 1950 for adults, Rs 999 for children, free for children below 4, Information: <http://www.socialtours.com>

Bloggers networking,
Sign up for a free networking event for Rising Junkiri. Aspiring bloggers and writers can participate too.
10 June, 2-8 pm, Octave Kathmandu, Woodland Complex, Darbarmarg, Admission: Free for members, For more details: risingjunkiri@gmail.com



Open-air cinema,
Watch B  b   Tigre, a French drama with English subtitles, about a young Indian boy in France trying to work to send money to his parents back home.
8 June, 6:30-9:30 pm, Alliance Francaise de Kathmandu

The art market,
Take an afternoon out to watch the latest works of local artists in town.
3 June, 12-4 pm, the Yellow House, Sanepa www.image-ark.com

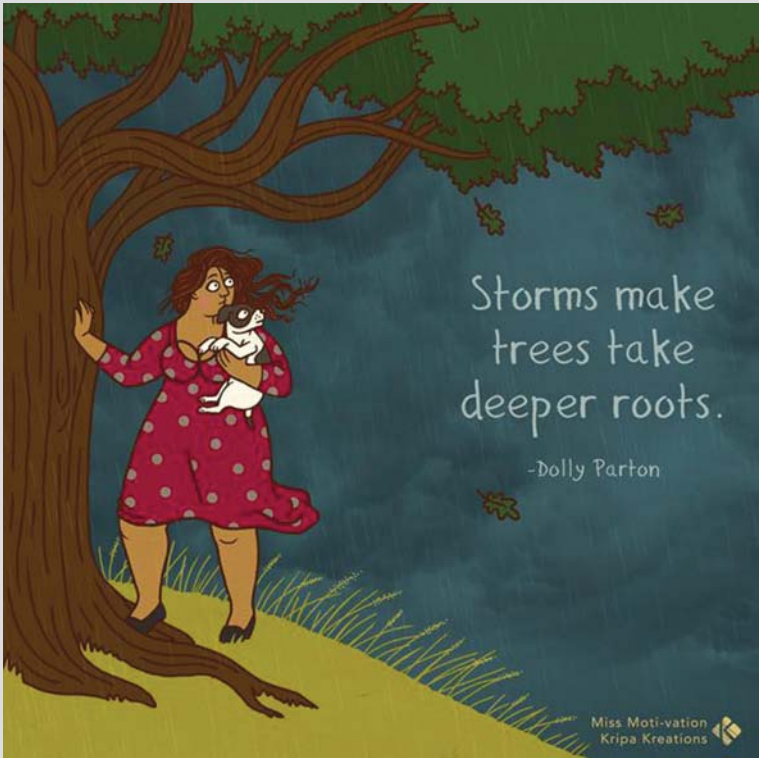


Karmic yoga,
Join a two-day class to motivate yourself to do yoga and help raise funds for Hakuna Matata, a summer camp for children living with or affected by HIV & AIDS.
3 June, 7:30-8:30 am, Attic Bar, Tangelwood, Kathmandu, Rs 1500, (01)6200083



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



MUSIC



Jay Sean Live,
Book your tickets now to listen to British singer and songwriter Jay Sean perform live in Kathmandu.
28 June, 7 am onwards, Black Religion, Kathmandu

Acoustic Friday,
Enjoy a night of live indie music by Binam Karmacharya and a great evening with friends and family with food and drinks.
2 June, 7-10 pm, Empire Restaurant & Bar, Kupondole Heights Road, 9813967032



Friday Live,
Spend this Friday evening listening to Deepak Bajracharya and the Rhythm Band belt out some of their hits live.
2 June, 7 pm onwards, Wicked Spoon Fork & Rock, Jhamsikhel, Patan



Saturday Night Live,
Sway to the rhythms of alternative rock band Innov8 and spend your weekend with friends and family.
30 June 6:30-9:30 pm, Ai-La Lounge. Restaurant, Kumaripati, 9801018683

Into the night,
Join artists Nasty, Paramita RL Rana, VZN, Symfamous, Tyrant Music and Grizzle for preview of original music.
3 June, 6 pm onwards, Karma Bar & Lounge, Tripureswor, Kathmandu



Musical tribute,
Exhibit 69' will be playing heavy metal songs as a tribute to Iron Maiden.
3 June, 2-5 pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, Tickets: Rs 500, 9841539392

DINING



Dunga,
Head down for some delicious continental food and don't forget their signature cocktails, all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space.
Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 463321

Hotel Shangri-La
Let the subtleties of Arabian cuisine tease your palate or opt for pasta if you're not too adventurous with food.
Every Saturday, 11 am-3 pm, Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, Rs 1500 nett per person, (01)4412999 (Ext. 7520/7508)



Bodhi books & bakes,
A quiet, snug place offering a rich collection of cakes and pastries.
Maharajgunj, 9851193262

Dan Ran,
The best authentic Japanese food in this part of town.
Jhamsikhel, (01) 5521027

Taza,
An excellent new Middle-Eastern restaurant with a Syrian chef. Offers free deliveries within Patan. Try the shawarmas.
Pulchok, (01)5541592, 9860960177

Wunjala Moskva,
Treat your palette to Newari and Russian dishes in the lush garden with ancient trees and trickling streams.
Naxal, (01)4415236



Dechenling,
The place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings.
Thamel, (01)4412158

Tasneem's Kings Kitchen,
A charming restaurant proposing the unique flavours of Bohra Muslim Food.
Jhamsikhel, 9801282727, (01)2239532

Fresh Cup,
This coffee-culture caf   is the place to go for excellent americanos and mochas. Try their grilled chicken sandwich, among other selections.
Kamaladi, Kathmandu, (01)4428040

GETAWAY



Atithi Resort & Spa,
A quiet sanctuary that fuses Nepali tradition with modern amenities, complete with a fancy pool and a cosy restaurant.
Lakeside, Pokhara, (06)1466760, info@atithiresort.com

Shivapuri Cottage,
Escape the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and enjoy peace, tranquility, good food, and fresh air.
Budhanilkantha, 9841371927

Solid Rock,
Enjoy a relaxing stay in this traditional Nepali farmhouse away from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu city.
Solid Rock Lodge & Restaurant, Dollu, near Pharping, 9823233093

Famous Farm,
Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the aankhijhyal.
Nuwakot, (01)4700426, info@rural-heritage.com



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

Tiger Mountain Lodge,
Situated 1,000 ft above Pokhara Valley, this resort offers spectacular views of Machhapuchhre, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu.
www.tigermountainpokhara.com, (01)4426427, 9849194874

Park Village Resort,
Yoga, detox and ayurveda treatment in a quiet corner of Kathmandu. Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, (01)4370286, peace@wellness.com.np



Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,
Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at probably the best hotel in the area.
Lumbini, (071) 580220, 9801033109, info@ktmgh.com

Sixty four years after Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Sherpa took a Smiths watch to the summit of the world’s highest peak, a British Gurkha expedition to Mt Everest has taken two hand-made watches to the top so they can be auctioned to raise money for earthquake relief in Nepal.

The exclusive Loomes watches will be auctioned in London in the next few months and the money handed over to Mountain Trust, a charity based in England and working in Nepal, and Gorkha Welfare Trust, a charity working for families of Gurkha soldiers in the British Army. Mountain Trust will use funds collected from the auctions to help earthquake victims in Gorkha by rebuilding their houses and supporting a radio educational project called Radio Guru. The Gurkha Welfare Trust, meanwhile, plans to use the money for the welfare pension of Gurkha retirees.

The expedition was planned for 2015 to mark the 200th anniversary of the beginning of Gurkha recruitment into the British Army after the end of the Anglo-Nepal War in 1816. However, the team had just made it to Camp II when the earthquake struck, triggering an avalanche at Base Camp that killed 18 climbers. The expedition was stuck above the Ice Fall and members later helped in the rescue effort when they eventually got down to Base Camp.



Timely climb

Handmade watches taken to the top of Mt Everest will be auctioned to help earthquake survivors

The watch summiteers took with them in 2015 has already been auctioned for £7,400. After that the expedition spent two years training in Scotland and the Alps for this year’s climb.

On 16 May, the 13-member team that included nine Nepalis and four British soldiers became the first expedition to summit Mt Everest this season (*pictured, above*). This is the first time serving Gurkhas has made it to the top.

Milan Rai of British Gurkha Rifles reckons climb and the watch auctioning idea is an opportunity to use the

challenging of climbing the world’s highest mountains while at the same time helping Nepali people who are in need.

Lt Chris Boote of British Army, one of the summiteers, said: “As I am passionate about climbing, it was a happy moment. But what made me happier was that I could help earthquake survivors in Nepal while doing the climb.”

Loomes specialises in handsome hand-made timepieces and donated two watches costing £9,850 each, to be taken to the top of Mt Everest to be auctioned. Bentley believes that the watches which summited Everest, could

be sold for up to £20,000 each.

Asked about the reason behind idea of sending watches to the summit, Robert Bentley of Loomes said: “I always have a feeling of connection with Nepal, it is an honour that our watches reached the top of the world.”

Adds Charles Malcolm-Brown of Mountain Trust: “The British Gurkha team were not to be defeated by the two most devastating earthquakes in recent Nepali history. They worked intensively to raise the funds, to get the top military brass to support a second attempt.”

Shreejana Shrestha

TOP WATCH



Unique drone footage of the Mt Everest climb by the British Gurkha expedition last month and the plan to auction two watches that made it to the summit for the welfare of earthquake survivors in Nepal.
nepalitimes.com

Nepali street names in England



JOHNNY GURKHAS: Retired Major Lal Bahadur Gurung and Captain Raju Gurung at the statue of a Gurkha at Church Crookham where both lived for five years when based in this English town.

For 30 years between 1970-2000, more than 12,000 Nepali soldiers from the British Gurkha regiments and their families lived in this small parish town 65km southwest of London.

It was from here that they were deployed to Hong Kong, the first Gulf War, or the Falklands. But after the British Army scaled back and the Gurkha barracks were shifted to Kent, part of the former base was sold to a real-estate developer. The buildings have been redesigned in this now-upscale neighbourhood.

But Church Crookham hasn’t forgotten the Gurkhas. It has given many of its streets Nepali names: Nepal Gardens, Thapa Close, Gurkha Way, or Kukri Gardens. And in the centre of the township, next to the Sirmoor Orchard (named after the first

Gurkha regiment established in 1816) is an imposing bronze statue of a smiling Gurkha soldier standing at ease (*left*), which was inaugurated last year by retired captain Ram Bahadur Limbu who was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in Borneo in 1965.

“The time we lived here with our families were some of the best in our lives,” recalls retired Major Lal Bahadur Gurung.

Parish Councillor Pat Lowe said in her speech last year said that the Gurkhas will be missed in her town. “We remember the smart gentlemen in their green jackets, always polite and smiling as they walked around the village,” she said.

Sculptor Jemma Pearson said she tried to portray the Gurkha reputation for “cheerfulness and pride”.



Hacksaw Ridge

Mel Gibson's return to Hollywood, after a ten-year break brought on by several bouts of very bad behaviour, is, by most standards, a success. While the direction of *Hacksaw Ridge* never quite takes on the soaring highs of *Braveheart* (1995) and



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Apocalypto (2006), it succeeded remarkably well at the box office, and was nominated this year by the Academy for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor for Andrew Garfield who plays the role of Desmond Doss, the deeply religious combat medic who saves so many lives at the deadly Hacksaw Ridge during the Battle of Okinawa in World War II.

The story of Desmond Doss is the story of what religious fervour, coupled with natural human compassion, can

accomplish. Gibson himself as a devout Catholic has been guided by his faith, producing films that illuminate the bravery that can be bolstered by absolute conviction in a higher power.

Hacksaw Ridge starts off with the classic tropes of a biography, sketching out the key points in Desmond Doss's life that shaped his character. Reductive, amateur, and frankly, snooze-worthy, these opening scenes thankfully give way to some better story-telling where the characters are finally allowed to breathe, and do surprising things that help the otherwise predictable script along.

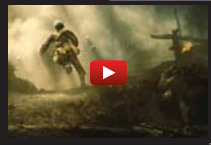
Doss's alcoholic veteran father (played by the ever great Hugo Weaving), and his lovely fiancée Dorothy Schutte (Teresa Palmer) evolve gratifyingly through the first half of the film from cardboard cutouts to three-dimensional human beings, as do Doss's rowdy counterparts in the 77th Infantry Division, with their characters, initially crudely sketched out in the tradition of Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), but later becoming memorable in their own rights; breaking hearts as they

die during the frightful first onslaught at Hacksaw Ridge.

Doss, who refuses to bear arms in faithfulness to the tradition of the 7th Day Adventist Christians, is initially ridiculed by all, taunted as perhaps even feeble minded in his insistence that he wants to serve as a medic, even while refusing to fire a rifle. His sheer conviction along with surprising support from his father and fiancée get him through to active duty where his heroism is awarded by the Medal of Honour, the highest recognition for bravery in the American Army.

The events at Hacksaw Ridge are the high point of Gibson's filmmaking, but they are also the stuff of nightmares. The taking of Hacksaw Ridge is to be watched through half-closed eyes, such is the carnage. The heroism of Doss is therefore particularly striking in the context of these events.

I will not elaborate on the actions that made Desmond Doss so famous, they are the denouement of the film, unspeakably moving, and quite frankly bewildering without an understanding of the man's immense faith in God. It begs the question of whether that kind of courage is possible without some belief in a higher power. I will leave it up to you all to decide.



Watch trailer online

[nepalitimes.com](#)

HAPPENINGS



NEPAL ARMY

FAST AND FURIOUS: Outgoing Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal lays the foundation stone of the 76 km-long Kathmandu-Tarai fast-track highway, being built at a cost of Rs 112 billion, in Nijgadh of Bara on Sunday.



RSS

COMING CLOSER: UML Chair KP Oli (*second from left*) and other leaders participate in an international conference on China's Belt and Road initiative in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

WE SOLEMNLY SWEAR: Newly elected local representatives of Kathmandu Metropolitan City during the swearing-in ceremony at City Hall, Kathmandu on Wednesday.



GOPEN RAI

TRAGIC LOSS: Family members of the pilot and co-pilot of Goma Airlines airplane which crashed near Tenzing Hillary airport in Lukla on Saturday, grieve as their bodies at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu on Sunday.



RSS

RIGHT TO WALK: Traffic police arresting a jaywalker on Durbar Marg on Wednesday. Metropolitan Traffic Police has cracked down on jaywalking in Kathmandu.

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Who will be the new Chief Sec?

Ram Bahadur Rawal in *Nepal* magazine, 28 May-3 June

नेपाल

As Chief Secretary Somlal Subedi prepares to move to the Philippines to join Asian Development Bank (ADB) as its Alternate Executive Director, there is considerable speculation about who will succeed him?

If Subedi resigns a week before joining the ADB on 16 July, Secretary Dhan Bahadur Tamang will be the senior-most bureaucrat to replace him. If not, Tamang's five-year tenure as Secretary will be over, and he will have to retire without the ultimate promotion of a bureaucrat. But even if gets promoted to Chief Secretary, he will have to retire due to the 58-year age limit in less than four months.

If Subedi delays his move to Manila by one week, Tamang will have retired by then, and



Shanta Bahadur Shrestha



Shanta Raj Subedi

Secretary Rajendra Kishor Chhetri will be senior-most. But he, too, will have to retire due to the age limit in less than six months.

Next in line are Narayan Malego, Shanta Bahadur Shrestha and Shanta Raj Subedi who were all promoted to secretaries the same day, so have equal rankings. But Malego is turning 58 in two months, and the government is unlikely to pick a new Chief Secretary for such a short period. Tamang and Chhetri may also have little chance for the same reason.

So the race to the highest post in the bureaucracy boils down to just two candidates: Shanta Raj Subedi and Shanta Bahadur

Shrestha. The two are not just namesakes, but are also backed by the same Maoist party but with the blessings from different leaders. While Subedi is closer to Maoist-Centre Vice President Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Shrestha is supported by party secretary Barshaman Pun.

But there is going to be a new

prime minister from another party just as their appointment date nears. They will have to win confidence of the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba who seems to have his own favourite: the much more junior Lok Darshan Regmi.

The current Home Secretary Regmi is known for being in the good books of all politicians, and sources say he has already begun lobbying. If Deuba wants to give him the job, he will have to delay the appointment of the new Chief Secretary until both Subedi and Shrestha retire due to their age limits.

Administration expert Bhim Dev Bhatta says: "The ability to please the Prime Minister should not be a qualification. We need a Chief Secretary who is active, has leadership skills, can coordinate with all ministries and is nationally and internationally influential."



Teaching Nepali in China

Himal Khabarpatrika, 28 May – 3 June

हिमाल

As China's influence and investment grow internationally, there is increasing interest in learning English among the Chinese. However, while the rest of the China is learning English, Sing Yung has found herself drawn to the Nepali language.

Sin arrived in Santong Province 15 years ago to start college at the Communication University of China (CUC) in Beijing and decided to take up an additional foreign language as well. Her parents had learnt about a small Himalayan country that bordered China and Nepali seemed like an exotic thing to do.

"I found Devnagari script quite different from English letters and Chinese characters that I was used to, and I was drawn to learn the language," says Sin, who is now a PhD student of Nepali language at Tribhuvan University under the supervision of Prof Madhav Pokhrel, who has given her the Nepali name 'Indira'.

Sin isn't only passionate about learning the Nepali language, but is equally interested to understand Nepali history, culture, society, journalism and religion. One of the papers for her Master in Journalism degree from CUC in 2012 was titled 'Analysis of Chinese News in the Nepali Media'. In 2013 she studied Nepali at the Campus of International Languages in Kathmandu under a Chinese government scholarship.

Sin has visited Nepal 16 times, and plays a role in the collaboration of CUC with Tribhuvan University and the Campus of International Languages. Seeing the rise in number of Chinese visiting Nepal for trade, tourism, volunteering and education, she is happy her efforts will help build understanding.

She then headed of the Nepali Language Department at CUC in Beijing from where 44 Chinese students have graduated under her tutelage. Her students are either working in Chinese Radio International or at the Chinese Embassy in


Kathmandu. The others have themselves gone on to teach Nepali at various Chinese universities.

Currently affiliated with Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), Sin recently had its Nepal Study Centre inaugurated by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal during his China visit. She now wants Tribhuvan University and BFSU to collaborate in educational exchange programs.

Yung is also actively involved in translating Nepali books, and is in the final stages of completing the Mandarin edition of Diamon Sumshere Rana's historical novel, Seto Bagh. Her teacher has also translated Muna Madan, the Nepali classic by Laxmi Prasad Devkota of a Nepali trader who dies in Tibet, leaving behind a young wife in Kathmandu.

Says Sin: "Muna Madan carries historic significance for Nepal-China relations, and we need more government support for the translation and research of such Nepali books into Mandarin."

Tufan Neupane in Beijing





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BURNING IN THE AFTERMATH

Earthquake survivors in temporary shelters, especially children, are at risk of burn injuries



PICS: GOPEN RAI

▲ Nine-year-old Akshya Kumar Balamis family lost their home in Okharpauwa of Nuwakot in the earthquake. The temporary shelter has no electricity. Early in the morning of 23 May, Balamis lit an oil lamp when his shirt caught fire. The only health post in the village wasn't open and the buses were not running. The family brought the boy to Kathmandu in a garbage truck.



On 3 May, Sita Tamang put her eight-month-old son Saroj to sleep and went to fetch water downhill from the family's temporary shelter in Bhote Namlang of Sindhupalchok. While she was away, Saroj had woken up and crawled headfirst into the fireplace.

The medical store in the village could not offer treatment, so the family paid Rs 12,000 to get the baby to the ICU at Kanti Children's Hospital. He had 35% burns on his head, back and face, but one month since his wounds are healing. Doctors say Saroj need an operation on his head and is still not out of danger.

SAHINA SHRESTHA

Since the earthquake, there has been a surge in burn cases from earthquake affected districts around Kathmandu.

This week, five patients in the 22-bed Burn Ward at Kanti Children's Hospital were injured in earthquake shelters.

"Most accidents happen when the parents are not paying attention, but living in temporary shelters has added risk factors as preventive measures are not in place," says Gauri Karki, nurse in-charge of the ward.

As earthquake reconstruction moves at a slow pace, more than 1 million people are still

living in crowded and cluttered shelters without electricity and where the kitchen is in the living room. This puts the family, especially the children, at greater risk.

"In the first two to three months after the earthquake, we had cases of people living in temporary shelters, lots of scald burn cases at that time," says Peeyush Dahal of the Burns and Surgery unit at Bir Hospital.

This adds to the economic burden of families already too poor to rebuild. Both the Tamangs and Balamis had to take loans to pay for the treatment of the boys. The cost can be long-term when operations and physiotherapy are needed.

"The bills have come to Rs 80,000 so far and the doctors

Low cost care

Bicky Alam, 19, worked in a garage in Baglung and last month had just emptied the petrol tank of a car when one of the drivers lit a cigarette. Alam was badly burnt and was rushed to Pokhara and after four days transferred to Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital (SKMH) in Kathmandu.

As a specialised centre for burn and reconstructive surgery, SKMH gets many referral cases like this from all over the country. The hospital is named after the wife of former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who along with her sister died when their kerosene stove caught fire in Biratnagar in 1967.

The hospital is supported by Interplast Germany Foundation and has performed over 23,000 surgeries since it opened in 1997 and runs surgical camps country-wide. "Our main aim is to provide holistic and

good quality service at low cost because most patients are poor," says Medical Director Jaswan Shakya.

A hospital committee assesses low-income cases and decides how much aid to provide each family, ranging from free surgery, medicines and hospital beds to a complete waiver. "Sometimes there are cases where we have had to provide return transport for the patients," says Shakya.

SKMH costs a fraction of private hospitals because of donor support from Germany: beds start at Rs 60 per day. Apart from specialised care in burns and reconstructive surgery, the hospital is trying to pay for its burns care by diversifying into gynaecology, dental, psychiatry and mental health. A two-bed ICU is also under construction so that patients with infected wounds can be treated.



FIRST AID

Burn injuries need special emergency treatment:

- + Stop, Drop, Roll and cover the face
- + Cool the burn area with cold water for 30 minutes or more
- + Do not use ice packs/ice on burn area, do not rub skin
- + Consult a doctor within three hours from injury

say we need to stay a few more months, and we still have to take care of the family back home,” says Jagbir Tamang, Saroj’s uncle.

Sanu Saila Balami, Akshya’s father, is a daily wage worker, and says: “I have taken loans but I have no idea how to pay them back, I just want my son to be better again and take him home.”

Both Balami and Tamang say the accidents could have been avoided if they were still living in their own houses. “Although our house was one storey, we had properly divided the rooms and the kitchen, if it were still standing, my nephew couldn’t have crawled that far to the kitchen without one of the family members seeing him,” says Tamang.

Nepalis were lucky the earthquake hit on a Saturday when schools were closed. Kathmandu was saved because when it struck at noon most families had already finished cooking, and the predicted devastating post-quake fire did not engulf the city.

“In the worst case scenario it was estimated that at least 10,000 people in Kathmandu would be affected by fire after

the earthquake, thankfully the numbers were much less,” says Dahal at Bir Hospital. “If there was a bigger earthquake with fire, none of the hospitals were equipped to treat burns victims.”

The house next to Astha Maya Prajapati’s tea shop in Bhaktapur, which was damaged during the 25 April earthquake, was being demolished two weeks ago. Hearing a crashing sound, she ran out for cover and got badly burnt when cooking oil spilled on her hand. She is recovering at the Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital in Sankhu, and her daughter Soni says: “My mother would have recovered sooner had the other hospital sent us here on time.”

The lack of a skin bank in Nepal also hinders burns care. People with burns covering more than 30% of their bodies need donor skin for grafts. Usually, patients don’t know where to go for specialised treatment.

“There is so little burn care in Nepal that by the time they get to the hospital, it may be several days late by which time the wound may be infected,” says Wendy Marston of the charity, Burns Violence Survivors.

Cost of treatment is unaffordable for most patients. For a victim with 10-15% burns, the hospital stay can last more than a month with costs up to Rs 200,000. Even if they survive, many need psycho-social counselling to deal with the trauma and physiotherapy.

Says Dahal: “Burns are serious but preventable, but people are not aware of this. We need education and awareness.”

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Seeking assylum in Nepal

Several valued customers have taken me aside during Happy Hour in the past week to ask if the second phase of election will take place as scheduled. To which my answer was (as it has always been when you pose the donkey a hypodermic question): “How should I know? I’m an Ass, not an Asstrologer.”

Be that as it may, notwithstanding the foregoing, and nonetheless in possession of the wherewithal to find my whereabouts because that is neither here nor there, congratulations are in order to Lion King for slyly becoming Primordial Minister for the fourth time, and counting.


In other countries, old prime ministers just die or fade away. Remember John Major? Where is he now? Don't remember reading his obit. Tony Blair hasn't been seen or heard from in ages. Where is Junichirō Koizumi these days?

Here in Nepal, because we believe in rebirth and the transmigration of the soul, prime ministers just keep getting reincarnated over and over. In his previous life, the Brave Loin was a royal lapdog, and before that he was a hyena with a toothache. Dubya has to be prime minister just one more time after this to be included in the Balu Water Hall of Fame. The last time he was PM, Nepal was still a monarchy and there was no Facebook.

But the problem for Comrade Brave Loin is that the Take-care Prime Minister doesn't seem to want to step down just yet even though it has been a week since he resigned. That is because the

Kangresis are taking forever to
cobble together a dumbo cabinet.

“No hurry, take your time,” Lotus Flower was overheard telling Brave Loin the other day. “I need a few more weeks to list all my considerable achievements of the past nine months in office.” Which are, to wit:

1. Making First Dotter Renu Bharatpur Mayor by hook or by crook. Mostly by crook.
 2. Banning horning.
 3. Erasing all zebra crossings and then fining gay walkers.
 4. Ensuring the South-west Monsoon arrived one month ahead of schedule this year. Who cares if the rain fails now, I won't be prime minister any longer.
 5. Inaugurating 2 art exhibitions, 1 album launch, and cut the ribbon in 3 handicraft fairs in 10 months -- more than any previous PM.
 6. Patching one irritating pothole at Bhatbhateni intersection.
 7. Ensuring 24-hour electricity so you people can henceforth install hooks to steal power at any time of day or night.
 8. Signing agreement with Jina.
 9. Making Injuns mad as hell.
 10. Respecting the gentleman's agreement to step down.
(Compared to Trump even I look good.)
 11. Allowing the Ass to write what he likes. Stopping Assange from seeking assylum in Nepal.
 12. Taking the trouble to count my achievements, and publishing this list.
- 



The Ass

