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

So, what is new this time? Not much.

Nepal has had 12 leaders, some of them serving more than once, since 2008. India has seen three Prime Ministers in this period, with each hosting multiple Nepali PMs and a king.

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

Oli’s visit will not be any different even though he has emerged as the strongest PM in Nepal’s recent history. And he is going to India after his strong nationalist stance won him a landslide victory in elections.

“Like any Nepali PM’s visit to India in the past, it will be yet another courtesy visit,” concludes political analyst Lek Raj Bhatta. “It will not change anything fundamentally.”

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

Most of the other political and development issues that Oli may raise this time have been discussed over and again in every Nepali PM’s India visit. In the past, as shown by the Nepali Times coverage (above).

The two PMs will remotely lay the foundation of the 560MW Arun III hydropower project in Province 3, but that is not a new project either. In fact, Oli’s own UML party had sabotaged the World Bank-funded Arun III in the early 90s. Pancheshwar has been in limbo for over 20 years, and it is still going on the Tarai roads.

Oli is sure to broach his pet subject: inland water transport even though Foreign Affairs Minister Pradeep Gyawali has ruled out any Moldovan lack of preparation.

Oli told Parliament that his visit will not bring shame to Nepal, implying that he will not discuss the contents of the Constitution. Even in 2016, Modi had not restate Oli who was unwilling to listen to New Delhi on amending the state as demanded by the Madhesi parties. This time he will enjoy greater leverage when he sits down with Modi, who seems to have realised that his policy to isolate Oli has backfired.

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

Gom Astha Rai
National Interests or Nationalism?

Now that last month’s needless confrontation between the Nepal Government and the European Union has subsided and passions have cooled somewhat, it may be time for us to learn some basic lessons from the whole awful affair. Even during the federal and provincial elections in November, the EU’s Election Monitoring Missions was accused of exceeding its mandate by interrogating court officials in western Nepal. Its leader, Zolana Zorzki, had been summoned by the Election Commission to clarify.

What Zorzki issued the Mission’s final report on 20 March and, among other things, recommended that electoral supervision for upper house be scrapped. It triggered outrage — mainly from political leaders from that community.

We happen to readily agree with the EU’s suggestions. Affirmative action is supposed to level the playing field, not uphold the status quo on skewed privileges. No one can question the dominance of these from the top caste groups and ethnics in all three branches of the state. The letter of the constitution mandates proportional representation, but its spirit is about taking that extra step to expedite inclusion.

It could be argued that the EU overstepped its TOE, that it had no right to tell a sovereign nation with a democratically elected government what to do, or that it is hypocritical for the EU whose member states are electing fascist leaders to lecturing others on democracy.

The social media backlash prompted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue a firm but well-meaned statement. We should have left it at that. Nepal’s narrow-minded and bigoted leaders had to grindstand in Parliament, and had the Times by waving the flag. Even Prime Minister KP Oli could not withstand the temptation to call the EU statement an “infringement on Nepal’s sovereignty”.

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

Over and over and over again, we have seen that Nepal’s nationalism only exposes our insecurity when expressed as xenophobia, exaggerated sense of difference, intolerance, conversion, or foreigners covering up our economic woes. If we were true nationalists, we would be looking towards to correct the ways we undermine our own national interest every day.

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

We need to cover up our shame by misguidedly trying to get into the Guinness Book of World Records and hold large rallies proclaiming that the Buddha was born in Nepal. That is not how we will be respected by the outside world.

The ultra-nationalism of Nepal is expressed by beating India at every go. As Shashikant Koirala argued in his Guest Editorial (below) the New Delhi visit gives Prime Minister EU a chance to show above his usual nationalist rhetoric and use India’s need for a close-correlation with Nepal’s political policy to our economic advantage.

Online Packages

What’s Trending

Online Packages

The Insect that changed Nepal’s history

by Surendra Koirala

Success in the current season of fruit picking in Kavre district, which is the prominent contributor to the total fruit export from the 1960s, has stopped the fruit picking season for the past 4 years.

NEPAL TIMES

About the Author

GUEST EDITORIAL

Red carpet for a red leader

It has been an accepted practice that any Nepali leader who has a symbol gets invited to visit India as the guest of honor. This is particularly true of anyone who has been pronounced as the leader of the red coalition.

When the armistice between the new India was to be signed, New Delhi realized that it was a major project and spent a lot of time preparing for the occasion. The government of India was also in the process of a major breakthrough in the peace talks with the Maoists.

What this means is that Nepal will be in a position to negotiate with India on some major issues, including the status of the Tibetan people in the region. The two countries have held several rounds of talks in the past and are likely to hold another round soon.

Nepal Times

About the Author

Himal Upadhya

The wrong choice

I empathise with the protesters, although Kathmandu’s streets need improvement ("Crimewave on internet expansion", Bikram Rai, nepaltimes.com). Our traffic problems cannot be solved by simply removing the roadblocks. We need to address the root causes of the problem, and work towards creating a sustainable system.

Nepal Times

About the Author

Nishad Mathema

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About the Author

Nishad Mathema
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Asking the difficult questions
Prime Minister Oli’s fence-mending trip to India is not getting into the tough subject of Gorkha recruitment

Five years ago, a young man came to my office with his identity card and was allowed to enter the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. In the office of the Defence Attaché, he put a seat envelope on the table. The colonel made the officer nearly jump off his chair.

I was that nervous young man, and I had decided that being the most normal thing in the world could possibly be an act of an agent. I had been assigned to the Indian Army because I felt that I was principiarily wrong to serve in a foreign military. In a letter to the President of India, I wrote: “My conscience does not allow me to serve in the Indian Army anymore. Hence, I would request you to release me from the service.”

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

The last eight months of legal battle, two years of isolation within the military, months of illegal military custody, and a Court Martial led to my conviction on the charge of ‘desertion’ and dismissal from service. I returned to Nepal in 2016. A week before the deadline for the promulgation of the Constitution in September 2015, Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar flew to Kathmandu as a special messenger of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India wanted to delay the promulgation of the Constitution to accommodate Madhesi demands.

Sukh Koirala of the Nepali Congress, Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maiti and K P Oli of the UML, used each other as scapegoats. When he got a sense that Nepal was not getting the message across, Jaishankar warned: “Moody’s is not Mathurin Singh. Strict measures will have to be taken if there will be consequences.”

The rest is now history, and a black page in the relationship between the two countries.

The blockade that immediately followed the 2015 earthquake was a foreign policy blunder at par with, if not worse than, the LTTE war in Sri Lanka in 1988-90.

From the time when the Rana ruled on British India with a clear ‘strategy for survival’, right to the present day, Nepal’s relations with the south have seen many transformations. Nepal’s dependence on India has helped preserve a colonial strategic and security mindset in the Indian establishment long after the British left.

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

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

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

One of the main agenda of the March 4 signatures, laid out in Khantibhoj 60-point demand to the royal government in 1996 before launching the armed struggle, was scrapping the 1950 treaty and the issue of Gorkha recruitment. Now, the Newars are in power with the UML, but none of the comrades wants to be reminded of those demands anymore.

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

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

Istanbul emerging as global aviation pivot

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

Data for the first quarter of 2018 compiled by the group ForwardKeys shows a 21% increase in the number of travel transgressors through the current (Istanbul) airport. Passengers changing planes in Dubai and Doha remained the same as last year, and Abu Dhabi fell behind by 49%.

At present, Dubai, which is the home base for Emirates Airlines, commands 46% of the transit market share among the four hubs, with Istanbul at 20% and Abu Dhabi is at 15%. However, Istanbul shows the most robust growth which experts say is largely due to the expansion of Turkish Airlines, which now has 328 aircraft and carried 60 million passengers last year.

Turkey is exploiting Istanbul’s strategic location between Africa, Europe and Asia to connect non-stop flights to anywhere in the world. There are 45 capital cities within a 3.5 hour flying distance of Istanbul which are among the airlines’ 301 worldwide destinations.

The airlines has placed orders for 30 Boeing 787-9 and 30 Airbus 350-900s to meet future growth from the new airport.

Istanbul is located at the intersection of three historic civilizations, and is an air transport crossroad. We want to take full advantage of this with longer-range planes coming into the market, connecting passengers to busy airports in Europe, Central Asia, Africa and Asia,” Mustapha Bogos, Vice-President Sales for Americas and UK told Turkish Times.

He admitted that congestion at the current airport is a bottleneck, but it would add to an issue after the first phase of the new Istanbul airport, 37km north of the city, comes into operation on 29 October, serving 60 million passengers a year when it is completed by 2023:

A breakdown of transit passengers changing flights in Istanbul shows that the shortest increase was for passengers connecting to and from airports in the US, UK and Russia, with smaller increases for Germany and the Subcontinent. Despite the drop in transit traffic through Abu Dhabi, the airport hopes to regain growth with its newest terminal after it can serve 85 million passengers a year scheduled to be completed in late 2019.

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

Luxurious flight
Qatar Airways has introduced a luxurious business class route, Quatra, on flights from Chicago from April 6, portable lounge and Quatra first in Qatar Airways image 777.

336 FR aircraft features double bed and corresponds plane car to up to four people, adjustable, panels and saleable for monitors, providing personal and travel experience for passengers.

One way to Europe
Turkish Airlines has introduced a special one way fare to selected destinations in Europe, Turkey, Prague, Helsinki, Milan, Brussels using Turkish Airlines image.

Sunrise Insurance
When the bank is happening, there is no choice, the Sunrise Bank has been providing savings accounts with a guarantee to compensate for the expenses, balancing 27% of weighted average deposits of the last 365 days or the bill amount, with a maximum limit of 10,000,000.

Project One tour
Unveiled by President Xi is bringing the 6th edition of AMAN Pearl (Uyghur) or the People’s Art and Culture, a new band on tour among nations, involving the message of cooperation.

The China Articulate speaking of Xi Jinping, Xi Jinping, and others were involved in an artistic cooperation event in Kearsarge, the China Articulate, and others.
Prime Minister KP Oli, during his first tenure, had refused to visit New Delhi as long as the Indian Blockade of Nepal continued. In fact, Oli went to India only in February 2016 after New Delhi stopped backing Madhesi parties who were obstructing the border checkpoints.

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

About three kilometers down the Sunauli (India) Belahaiya border (Nepal), there are no Indian check posts that has made it difficult for Nepali-bound cargo to pass through despite attempts by the authorities of the two countries to solve the problem.

Nepali trucks and containers carrying raw materials have found it increasingly difficult to pass through the check-point, and there is a long queue of trucks, sometimes as long as 26km, waiting for clearance to cross over.

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

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

On a normal day, more than 500 containers can easily pass through the Sunauli-Belahaiya check point, and this is the lifeline for Bhairawa, Butwal and other towns in western Nepal. These days, not more than 300 trucks are allowed to cross into Nepal.

The Sunauli-Belahaiya border was not completely blocked even during the Indian blockade. When the Birgunj-Belahaiya border was blocked from September 2015 to February 2016, most trucks were rerouted and brought into Nepal through this check-post. Even then, truckers bribed Indian police and customs officials to let them cross the border.

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

The border jam here is reminiscent of the Indian Blockade that destroyed Nepal’s economy in 2015. The fall in revenue from the checkpoint also comes as Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada said last week the state has no revenue. Only Rs63 billion revenue has been collected from this trade point in the first half of the current fiscal year, which is Rs4 billion lower than target.

In July last year, Indian ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri and then Nepal ambassador Deep Kumar Upadhyay undertook a joint effort to settle the issue. Police on both sides agreed to do what they could. The problem eased for a few weeks, but now everything is stuck again. Hitesh Bhunega, of the Nepal General Manufacturers’ Association, says the Sunauli-Belahaiya border problem is too complex that it cannot be solved locally. He says: “Only the prime ministers of the two countries can solve it.”
The struggle for Transitional Justice

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

Hari Phuyal

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

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

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

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

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

There is now general willingness to follow the principle laid out in the Supreme Court’s landmark decision in the case brought by Ruth Adhikari in 2016, stating that amnesty cannot be allowed in four categories of crimes—extra judicial killing, enforced disappearance, torture, as well as rape and other sexual offences.

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

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

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

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

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

There is need to adjust the mandate of the Disappearance Commission and the TRC Commission in order to expand truth-telling and redress. Perpetrations of serious offences who come forward to reveal the truth would get some leniency in sentencing. However, we must be careful not to delink sentencing from the ‘satisfaction’ of victims.

The existing law does not consider ex-parte as a right of victims, and this lacuna should be removed. The two commissions should also be given the mandate to provide interim relief and an adequate budget to complete the reconciliation agenda.

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

As far as the running court cases of the conflict era are concerned, there is need for creative thinking. There are two categories of cases—those few which have been filed by the victims themselves and, of those filed by the authorities against Maratled cadres and leaders.

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

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

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

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

Hari Phuyal is a lawyer and former Human Rights Commissioner.
"I don’t know if I picked jewellery, but jewellery might have picked me."

Ayesha Shakya in New York

"All of us, made of stone" is how Arpana Rayamajhi might describe herself — there seems to be nothing but the jewellery designer, model and self-made entrepreneur cannot do. The Nepali in New York has been seamlessly juggling hats, while making a name for herself and her jewellery on the world stage. Rarely four years since she launched her jewellery line, Rayamajhi has been featured in Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, included in The New York Times 30-under-30 list and her jewellery adorned by the likes of supermodels Adriana Lima and Gigi Hadid on the runways of the Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show.

"I don’t know if I picked jewellery, but jewellery might have picked me.,” says Rayamajhi, known for her creativity and vision in the fashion world. "Creating something new is inherently a process of self-discovery, a journey of exploring one’s own identity. It is a way of understanding who I am and where I come from." The journey has been both fulfilling and challenging. "The beauty of modern-day digital art is the ability to instantly connect with people across the globe. It is a powerful tool for self-expression and for sharing my vision with the world,” says Rayamajhi.

"I am really invested in making work that shows the artist’s persona and how their mind works," explains Rayamajhi. "Colourful, playful, eclectic, and incorporating quirky elements (like synthetic hair, fossils and miniature idols), Rayamajhi's jewellery defines her. It also defines how she has grown as an artist. Starting with beads, Rayamajhi made a big leap into diamond jewellery for the "Diamonds with a Story" series by Australian Diamonds in January. This was the first time Rayamajhi became an art director herself, and only designed the jewellery. Instead of making them herself, Rayamajhi chose to remain close to her Nepali roots, but incorporate elements that make her jewellery truly global. Her popularity has only gone unassisted in Nepal, and that does come to her as a pleasant surprise. "The kind of reaction I get from the Nepali audience on the Victoria's Secret Fashion show was amazing. Cross-dressers love it," says Rayamajhi, breaking into Nepal to explain how she was encouraged by the reaction. Rayamajhi wants to bring back to Nepal twice last year after a gap of five years, and remembers seeing Kathmandu in all its beauty and chaos. She wants to have a flagship store in Nepal to encourage more artisanal talent and support a comeback for Nepali handicraft. She adds: "I will consider myself really successful if I am able to move a generation. In the end, I want people to see me and see themselves in me. I want them to feel that if I can do it, so can they."

JEWEL OF NEPAL

nepalitimes.com

Ayesha Shakya in New York

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JEWEL OF NEPAL

nepalitimes.com
Come join us for a tea tasting event, filled with exotic aroma and unique flavours of high Himalayan teas and find out from Lochan Gyawali how they are brewed and evaluated.
NEPAL TEA production in 2016/17: 25,000 tons.

Orthodox tea 24%

CTC tea 76%

Export growth of Nepali Tea

1. Life of tea starts with two leaves and a bud.
2. Pickers are trained to carefully harvest young leaves.
3. Picked leaves are left to wilt and wither in open.
4. Leaves are rolled by hand or machines.
5. Chopped leaves are broken up and set to oxidise.
6. Leaves are roasted or “fired” depending on the type of tea.
7. Water content in leaves are reduced for longer shelf life.
8. Dried leaves are sorted for the final check.
9. Tea-tasters test finished tea to ensure quality.

Mountain to cup

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

SOURCE: NEPAL TEA AND COFFEE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
First Friday talk
Nepal Community’s sessions will have entrepreneur Niba Acharya, co-founder of Urban Girl & ‘I do’ Gales speaking about her journey as an entrepreneur at the young age of 19, followed by the regular happy hour at the Cargo Bar
6 April, 4pm onwards, Nepal Community, (01) 5350239

Pop up market
Prabada is hosting its first ever ‘Saturday market’. Visit to bid out what is in store.
7 April, 1-5pm, Prabada, Baluwatar, (01) A104701

1905 Garage sale
Buy and sell anything from art to kitchenware.
7 April, 9am-1pm, 1905 Sales & Restaurant, (01) 4411348, 1849647339

18th Storytellers
Get your tickets for the 18th session of Storytellers.
17 April, 2.30-7pm, 25 hours, Target
A2B2W00, 380/09972013

Bird watching
Meet at Sundarijal chowk temple to join the bird watching team. The program is organized by Bird Conservation Nepal.
7 April, 7.30am-12.30pm, Sundarijal, (800/061/94)

KJC spring camp
Spring camp for kids aged 5-12 to learn about natural music and the basic concept of music and movement. Other activities include jungle, self-defense, acting and drama classes, personality development, wall climbing, field trip and art and craft. 9-15 April, 9am-4pm, Kathmandu Jn. Conservation, (01) 5534545, 9875314545

Paint and play
Introduce your children to the world of art through an interactive painting class.
7-15 April, 7.30pm, Royal Empire Boutique Hotel, Sabarmati Swasthit Marga, 5 years onwards, Rs.500.
For Reservation: 9875314545

KFC Kids Springfest
Visit the museum for a day filled with fun spring activities, games and more.
7 April, 12-4pm, Children’s Art Museum of Nepal, Bhartipal, 9861880727

Cycling Rally
Gadcr a bike and join in for a rally around the city. At the finish point in Tanglewood, there will be a fun fair and concert by Adrian Pradhan.
7 April, 6-8pm onwards, Jwala Pushkarini Central Park, 1,000/0/1500 (cycle needed)

Yellow House market
Start your Sunday morning with a scrumptious breakfast at the Yellow House and take a stroll around the stalls for interesting art and food. Sponsored by Must.
8 April, 9am-1pm, The Yellow House, Santeja, (01) 5553887

Mahogany Jones & band
A sensational percussion and lyrics powerhouse, Mahogany Jones from the UK will be performing alongside Nepali artists Laune, Swoopa Sunam, Sandhya Joshi, Cartouche Crew and Nepali Hip Hop Foundation, using hip hop as a means to spread social and political engagement and change.
7 April, 5pm onwards, Jwala Pushkarini Football Ground, (01) 4509900

90’s grunge
Tribute to the biggest bands of the generation Kurt Cobain and Alice in Chains.
7 April, 5pm onwards, Purple Haze, Thamel. Rs.150 (per show), Rs.450 (asis), 9861880727

Farhan Akhtar
The versatile Bollywood artist Farhan Akhtar, who made his singing debut in the movie Bhaiaji Unlimited, will be playing his songs for the Kathmandu crowd.
7 April, 7.30pm, Skyberg Restaurant, Boudha, Rs.1500 (w/m), Rs.800 (without food), for Tickets: 9875314027

Jindabad
Jindabad returns to Nepal after 8 years with a complete original lineup since their EP ‘Plastic Heart release. The band will be playing their songs from their EP, followed by some new songs.
7 April, 7pm, Motel, Khanepani, Rs.1500-5000, (01) 5529502

Bayn Thai
Bayn Thai serves generous portions of perfectly healthy Thai dishes. Durbar Marg, (01) 4239313

Bajeko Sekuwa
Tasting in barbeque items and typical Nepali cuisines, and known for its sekudo dishes, Bajeko Sekuwa has its outlets across the main cities. Boudhanath, 9875188485

The BLVD
Celebrating the New Year as a newly renovated modern restaurant on the 1st Floor at Royal Singh Hotel. On the same occasion the restaurant is featuring a Nepali Food Festival.
9-14 April, Lal Durbar, Basantapur, (01) 4237350/4237351

Sapporo Japanese
Experience typical Japanese food and drinks at the restaurant known for homemade fresh noodles, ramen, udon, soba and more. It is the restaurant’s first anniversary, so visit for a grand celebration.
7-14 April, 12-3pm, Jwala Pushkarini Marg, Baluwatar, 9883454545

Kokori
Discover amazing flavours and the most celebrated recipes from Turkish and North India at Sraisok’s North West Indian specialty restaurant. Choose from varieties of kebabs, biryanis and a variety of Indian breads and marinade with some fasting from their revamped menu.
7-16pm, for dinner, Gooler Crowne Place, Toshahau, for reservations: (01) 4273999

Moghalui Serai
Relax with fine dining and wildlife safaris at Moghalui Serai, on the outskirts of Chitwan National Park, and experience the beauty of the jungle, wildlife, and scenery.
(01) 4278337

Tiger Mountain Lodge
Situated 1000 above Pokhara village, this resort offers spectacular views of the Himalayas, Phewa Lake, and Manaslu. Kandama Zoos, Pokhara, (01) 4260900

Patalpani Vineyard Resort
Japanese-influenced rest-resort with great views, jungle walk, and picnic.
Dhulikhel, Kavrepalanchour, (01) 4276237

Rupakot Resort
Get pampered in the lap of luxury amid stunning views of the Annapurnas, Maitland, Rupakot, Rupakot, (01) 4225967 / (01) 4200647

Hyatt Regency
On Mother’s Day, gifts your dear mother a relaxing spa treatment at Club Oasis that includes manicure, aroma therapy massage and facial.
3-5 April, Hyatt Regency, Basantapur, Rs.7,500, (01) 5171314

The Last Resort
Enjoy the resort’s ‘ride and dive’ package for 2-4 nights and 2 days where bike or hotel minibuses drive to The Last Resort and explore the remote jungle with a unique experience of night camping.
13 April, The Last Resort Nepal, Bhairahawa, Rs.5,500 (for Nepalis), (01) 4203504/4203415

Kathmandu
Kathmandu is a 90-minute drive from Kathmandu. The city is a great place to explore the rich culture, history, and natural beauty of Nepal. It offers a wide range of activities, including sightseeing, shopping, and outdoor adventures.

Kathmandu, 30 March - 5 April

Getaway

About Town

Events

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Dining

Getaway

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14-17 April 2018, 9:00AM

30 March - 5 April

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14-17 April 2018, 9:00AM

30 March - 5 April

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14-17 April 2018, 9:00AM

30 March - 5 April

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14-17 April 2018, 9:00AM

30 March - 5 April

10
Bringing our Gods home

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

Sahina Shrestha

In Yatkha Tole, Kiskhas Babander Tuladhar, 62, shows Nepal Times a brass crown belonging to the Standing Buddha that was stolen from a shrine in his neighbourhood in 1986. He family has worshipped the crown every day ever since the Buddha went missing. On Wednesday, the 10th century Standing Buddha of Yatkha Tole was one of two holy stone sculptures returned to Nepal by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The other was a 12th century stele of Uma Maheshwar stolen from Tungah Hiti in Patan in 1993.

“This looks like the same statue missing from our temple,” says Tuladhar looking at the photograph of the Standing Buddha being returned. “If it is the same, the crown should fit,” he adds. Since the sculpture went missing 30 years ago, the community has installed another statue in its place. But the open space the Idols once occupied has shrunk because of the private houses that tower all around.

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

It is likely that the Idols were stolen soon after the end of the Rana era in the 1920s, as Nepal opened up to the world. Over the next few decades, thousands of Idols worshipped in temples and monasteries in Kathmandu Valley were stolen to be sold to collectors in museums in the West. The process accelerated during the 1990s.

When Tej Rana Tamang heard about the stolen Buddha being returned to Nepal, he had bought it. It was another statue from his clan’s Ayra Naam (Singh) genealogy that was stolen from a private house in Yatkha Tole. Tuladhar said that the Idols were returned to the Agan Cahan (sometimes called) and Yatkha Tole museums in the West.

Heritage
daily and it should be returned to us.”

The Department of Archaeology is positive. “As per the Archaeological Protection Act 1956, the community can send an application through the district administration and if we are convinced about the community’s safety, it will be returned,” Dahal said.

As for Tej Rana Tamang, he still hopes that his God will also be returned one day. “He says: “I am hopeful but we too confident it will happen in my lifetime.”

Fortunately, the works of Late Singh Bangdel, Jirun Schick and late Renesh Bangdel have sought to fill the gap. Bangdel and Schick accurately photographed and documented hundreds of statues in their original place and published Stolen Images of Nepal and The Gods are Leaving the World. Their work, however, has not been completed.

After Bangdel studied the stolen 30 Idols, he wrote a book. However, his book was never published.

The Standing Buddha was stolen from the Agan Cahan (sometimes called) and Yatkha Tole museums in the West.

HOME OF THE GOD

The Standing Buddha and Uma Maheshwar have also been handed over to the National Museum of Nepal at Chabahil.

“They have spiritual, psychological and emotional connotation for the people so they need to be returned to the community. The government should help safeguard it,” says Renesh Bangdel. “When they end up in museums they merely become items of art, which is unfair to the people who believe that the Idols have life.”

The community also want the Gods to be returned to them and not housed in museums. Clutching an old photograph of an idol of Balabhadra stolen from their community 40 years ago, Yuktai Raj Rajbhandary, Balbasi Bhakta Malla and Shraw Ram Tamang of Tungah Hiti want their God back too.

“They stole it in the past but now we as a community will look after it now,” says Rajbhandary. Their 30 Idols are also missing. They believe they should be able to pray to it regularly.

Sahina Shrestha
Phantom Thread

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

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

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

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

The relationships here, written by Anderson, who also shot this beautiful film, are woven with care and understanding of how contrary people can be. It is a pleasure to be baffled by every dramatic turn in a film that showcases the talents of three extraordinary actors: Day-Lewis, Krieps, and the great Leslie Mann as Cyril Woodcock, keeper of the gate of the House of Reynolds and Woodcock’s bosom confidante and sister. This is not a film for the impatient or for those who expect a conventional love story. It is indeed a work of art that yields surprises, probably with every viewing, with an extraordinary mixture of art. Fashion, clashing eggs, love, rivalry, and the unexpected role of wild, poisonous mushrooms. If you are in the mood for a lurid, extremely bizarre love story, this is going to be your film of the year.

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

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

FRONTIER LIFE: Minister for Commerce and Supplies Manan Karki today flew to Indirapuram in India to meet United Nations Special Envoy for Nepal, Monique Chapron, on Monday to monitor the construction of the integrated Check Post of Nepal-India border point.

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The gods are back: Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Mohan Kumar Marasini returns 10th and 11th century images of Sunita Buddha and Uma Manesar to Bishnu Narayan Nauti of the Department of Archaeology on Wednesday. Story on page 71.
How they kept Nepal in the dark ages

Ramesh Kumar in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-7 April

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

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

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

In the winter of 2016, Nepal's electricity output dropped to 50% of peak demand. In July 2017, it dropped to 25%. The NEA's chief executive, Ghising, admitted that the NEA was supplying less than 200,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity each day to industrialists.

The NEA's data shows that the NEA was supplying electricity to industrialists at a rate of 100% of their demand. But industrialists were using only 50% of their demand. The NEA was supplying 50% of the electricity to industrialists at a rate of 100% of their demand.

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Who got 24-hour electricity?

- Baba Jute Mill
- Swarup Jute Mill
- Nepal Jute Mill
- Gill textile
- New Narayan Kishor
- Sakina Pipe
- Nita Fabrics
- Satyavati Concrete
- Siddhartha Mineral Pvt Ltd
- Hetauda Cement
- Siru Hydra Corporation
- Multi-Purpose Plastic Industry
- Kamala Railing Mill
- Airan Titanium
- Mahavir Steel Industry
- Asha Powder
- Maruti Cement
- Dhamrai Synthesis
- Negi cement
- Jagadamba Steel
- Hula Wire
- Farangpuri Silver
- NHL
- Nepal Metro Bank
- Nepal Agriculture Development Bank
- Prithvi Pratishtha Raja Laxmi Shah
- Nirimia
- Nirman Hospital
- 24x7 Client Care Centre
- Lady Laxmi Hospital
- Manipal College
- Manipal College
- Medical Center
- Himawari Eye Hospital
- Nims Hospital
- BP Memorial Hospital
- Green City Hospital
- Asha Child Nursing Home
- Nirmal Hospital
- Narayani Nursing Home
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The conflict ended 12 years ago, but Anupa Rai is reminded of it every day because of the shrapnel lodged in her head.

Anupa Rai was in Grade 8 in Gkhalung when she was so stunned by the revolutionary zeal of the Maoists that she and her brother joined the militia. At age 16, she went through weapons training and was hopeful that the war would improve the lives of people like her who were neglected by the state. Fresh out of school, with the energy and drive of a newly converted rebel, Rai was fully focused on the movement.

The teenager was soon deployed at the frontlines of Maoist attacks on security bases in eastern Nepal. She fought in the battles of Salleri, Bhoandesh, Chitpur, Sinthali and Rukum. During the fighting in Chitpur, Rai was charging at the Nepal Army sentry point when she stepped on mines laid at the perimeter of the base. She was severely injured, became unconscious, and was left for dead.

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

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

Although she had received basic medical treatment, the shrapnel from the explosion was still lodged on the left side of her head and chest, which kept her in much pain.

In 2001, Anupa married fellow guerrilla Man Kumar Rai, and the couple went on to fight alongside each other in several battles. After the 2006 ceasefire, Man Kumar and Anupa took their newly born son to live in their ancestral village two days walk northeast of Phidim. Anupa applied for integration into the Nepal Army, but was disqualified because of her injury.

With no compensation and the meagre earnings from their farm not enough to raise a family, Man Kumar migrated to Malaysia to work.

In all these years, Anupa hasn't ever appeared in the official list of war wounded, which means her family has not been entitled to compensation or free medical treatment. Anupa and Man Kumar's Maoist commanders were Sanjiv Thapa and Sani Durai, who are now personal aides to Maoist Chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Kathmandu.

"We fought for change and progress, without thinking about ourselves. It is unfair that our former commanders who now enjoy senior positions have ignored us," says Anupa, who is now 31. "The
Anupa Rai posed last week in Phidim with her son Rabin (above) who is now in Grade 7. After the media wrote about her war wounds, a hospital in Biratnagar (box, below) is finally preparing to extract a shrapnel that has been lodged in her head for the last 15 years.

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

Anupa has made the rounds of hospitals in Kathmandu, Tibetan and Biratnagar to get the metal piece extracted from her body, but she could not afford the treatment. For the past five years, Anupa used money sent by her husband to pay for household expenses, school fees for her son Rabin, and medicines for her mother-in-law, Radhika Maya, 72. There wasn’t enough left over to pay for her operations. Rabin is now 13, and is so old as the peace process.

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

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

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

Theatre of war to operation theatre

Durga Pratist of B&C Hospital in Biratnagar was reading Annapurna Post’s front page last week when he came across the moving story of the Maid of Gupila Anupa Rai who had been injured during the conflict, and had been left to fend for herself while raising a family. Without hesitation, Pratist got in touch with Rai in Phidim and asked her to take the 9-hour bus ride to his hospital, and offered her free treatment.

Anupa has pieces of metal lodged in her head and chest, and has been living with the pain, numbness and ringing feeling for 15 years. On Tuesday, Rai was examined by B&C’s neurosurgeon Parkash Nepal who concluded that the operation would be simple, and could last up to 2 hours. He has decided to only extract the shrapnel from Rai’s head, and leave the one in the chest. He is confident that both her health will be fully restored after the procedure.

“When the peace process I approached my party which was in government many times, but they never listened to me,” Rai told Rabin Bhushal of Annapurna Post in Biratnagar on Tuesday, “I am glad I am finally at good hands.”
Horny again in Kathmandu

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

1. The No-Handing rule has been rescinded. Hanging is an important part of road safety, and not hanging repeatedly and loudly at every traffic light will result in a 6-month jail term or a Rs. 6,000 fine, whichever comes first. When God made cars and trucks, he in his infinite wisdom equipped them with horns, let’s use them, as instructed in the back of tricks.

2. Drivers are advised that they are no longer required to stop at zebra crossings to let pedestrians cross the road. This rule has been rescinded retroactively, so you can even go back in time to stick plaster and not stop at the zebra, pedestrian and pedestrian, if there are fewer walkers trying to stop into a hole, the driver’s responsibility is to accelerate and beat them to it.

3. Micro-buses are now packed for a reason: they allow more human contact between citizens and build a tough-flying community spirit. Any new clean and reliable bus service that offers inside and silent commuting and remains social interaction must be opposed tooth and nail by stopping new buses and decrying the bond east of Trishuli.

4. It is an indication of the reverence we accord to our National Animal that we give bulls the privilege of roaming as passive traffic islands at the Mandala, weekdays from 9. El Toro’s Tor is not buddy, even if the President or Minister on route to Parliament whizzes by since he is there by divine institution.

5. Now that the traffic lights at Sagarwori have been fixed, let us remind ourselves what the coloured lights mean: GREEN = Go, Fast, AMBER = Go Faster, RED = Brake Cap.

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

THE Blud

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