Janakpur to Janakpur

When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Nepal next week for the third time since becoming PM, he will not only aim to reset bilateral ties but also send signals to the Madhes, his own electorate back home, and to China.

Modi will fly to Janakpur from Patna probably in an Indian Air Force helicopter on 11 May. He had wanted to enter Nepal overland, but security agencies in both countries are still assessing whether that would be a safe option.

Modi will perform a puja at Janaki Temple before receiving a civic reception at Rani Bhumi ground. Prime Minister KP Oli will also fly down to Janakpur to welcome Modi.

In Janakpur, there is a sense of déjà vu as preparations get underway for the visit. During the November 2014 SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, Modi wanted to visit Janakpur and Mukteshwar. The city had been spared with welcome gates along the main road (see photo, inset) when the Janakpur part of the trip was cancelled.

The Sushil Koirala government did not allow Modi to cross into Nepal overland and address a mass rally in Janakpur. When Nepal insisted that Modi just worship at Janaki Temple, and not address a mass meeting, he cancelled his trip.

Many believe that Nepal-India relations began to sour after that because Modi took the cancellation as a personal affront. Janakpur-based analyst Bhogendra Rana says, “If Modi was allowed to visit Janakpur in 2014, Nepal-India ties would not have sunk so low.”

Between that aborted trip and the one next week, Nepal-India ties have gone through a roller-coaster. Modi tried to arm-twist Nepal leaders into devaluing the Constitution, and when that failed he imposed a Blockade on Nepal. Anti-India sentiments ran high in Nepal, undoing gains of Modi’s successful first trip to Nepal in 2014.

KP Oli, in turn, used anti-India nationalism to prop up himself to power in last year’s elections.

It all began from Janakpur, but it could also end in Janakpur.” Jha adds. “Modi’s connection to Janakpur marks the end of an unwarranted chapter in Nepal-India relations.”

However, many Nepalis on social media are still calling for Modi to apologise for the Blockade on an earthquake-devastated country in 2015. “They also oppose the idea of a civic reception for a leader responsible for wrecking Nepal’s economy,” Jha says.

But there is a different tone in Janakpur. Many there say the Blockade is a thing of the past and it is time to forget, forgive and move on. Janakpur’s mayor Lalkrishna Shakh says, “If you keep taking up the past, you can never prepare for the future.”

But many say Modi is not the kind who forgets and forgive. The importance that he has attached to Janakpur during his two-day visit shows that he wants to show Nepal’s Madhesi people he has not abandoned them. He may announce aid for a Ramayana Circuit that will also help him with Hindu voters in Indian elections next year.

NLC leader Abhishek Pratap Shah says: “From Janakpur Modi wants to give a message to the Madhesi people that he could not fully champion their cause in the past but will do so in the future.”

Modi is also trying to use his Nepal visit as an opportunity to send a strong message to Beijing by trying to worship at Mukteshwar close to the Chinese border.

“India thinks the Chinese government is still pro-Chinese and believes Beijing has increased its influence in Nepal,” Shah adds. “From Mukteshwar, Modi will be signalling China that India is still a dominant player in Nepal.”

Om Astha Rai

DRESS REHEARSAL: Indian Ambassador Marjina Singh Puré is briefed on Wednesday by the pilot of an Indian Air Force helicopter that transported a team to Janakpur where Indian PM Narendra Modi will be welcomed on 11 May at the start of his visit to Nepal.

A full size of the welcome gate built for Modi’s visit to Janakpur in November 2016, which was cancelled.

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

2018

75th Anniversary
THE LOTTERY OF MIGRATION

All but forgotten in this week’s celebration of International Workers’ Day on 1 May was a unique migration of 4.5 million Nepalis working outside Nepal at any given time. Also largely ignored was the unheralded daily drudgery of domestic work, mainly by women, the labour of subsistence farmers, and those in the informal sector. Labour Day was formulated primarily to protect factory workers, and was inspired by early-20th-century socialism in the West. We need to redefine May First to be more relevant to our times and classes.

The chief villains in this year’s May Day rallies (probably because it coincided with the 200th birthday of Karl Marx) were exploitative capitalists profiting from the sweat and tears of underpaid and overworked proletariat. To be sure, Marx’s Labour Theory of Value has inspired activism that has improved conditions for workers worldwide. In Nepal itself, forms of bonded slavery were legally abolished 23 years ago. Even so, a lot more needs to be done.

In our part of the world to guarantee not just the right to gainful employment within one’s country, but also the right to at least a minimum wage, basic conditions, and protection for those in the formal sector. What if, however, the chief villains are not capitalist monopolists over the means of production who exploit Man’s ‘surplus value’ from workers, but the state itself? That is the case in Nepal where successive deserters since 1999 have masked their failure to create jobs by making the easy way out to export labour.

That much would still have been all right if Nepal’s neighbours – especially China and India – and other West Asia countries as well, where they went before the ban on female workers, and cannot visits family back in Nepal because of the fear that they cannot travel back to their well-paying jobs. However, some workers who are willing and have the connections to pay for ‘getting’ at Kathmandu Airport have been able to visit their children and return to Lebanon.

Nepal’s overstate contract workers go to great lengths to make a down payment to find work abroad, even though they know the inherent risks of being cheated, prolonged visas, or facing the very real possibility of not being able to earn what was promised. The first step is to make migration safer, the second step is to ensure fair earnings, the third, long-term goal should be to create jobs at home.

Writhe Khadka: ‘Current migration policies help make foreign employment more like a lottery than a pathway out of poverty.’

BAN THAT BACKFIRE
Kudos to the writers for raising serious concerns for Nepali migrant workers abroad (‘Homes away from home’, Upasana Khadka, 957). The consequences of the ban on female workers should be addressed immediately.

Devendra Rana

CONCRETE CHAOS
One thing that you must read on this week’s Nepal Times (Past disasters foretell, Om Nath Rai, 956). We should really think about the government’s unscientific plan to further concretize the Valley. Respective provinces partners too have a lot to say about the concrete chaos that Kathmandu Valley is.

Annapurna

NUANCED ANALYSIS
Great to see such nuanced analysis and reporting on the earthquake relief and reconstruction process. ‘My ‘41/3 empty or 23 feet?, Nepal’ (Pintu, 956). First, a piece on the folly of ‘nothing is happening’ and how no country – developed or otherwise – fully rebuilds three years after a major disaster.

Leela Mukulata

A WASTE LAND
Field and empty villages are all over the mid-hills of Nepal and increasing by the year.

Devendra Bhanet

FOND MEMORIES
Thank you for the write up (Survival survivors), Lila Chaukya, 957). Sharing it on my Tiger Haven Society page dedicated to the memory of Billy Aryan Singh, who also knew Deiter Plane

Brinda Dobay

RECIPE FOR DEVELOPMENT
True (‘Under Kathmandu’s spell’), Dukshang Sherpa, 957). Nepal and Nepal need a stable government and a progressive economy based on Nepal’s potential resources.

Ramesh Shrestha

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHATS TRENDING

The waste land
by Malin Patel

Birthday party
by Hemal Patel

US terminates TPS for Nepal

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times (tweet)

Nepali Times (tweet)

Nepali Times (tweet)

Nepali Times (tweet)

Nepali Times (tweet)

Nepali Times (tweet)

Times Weekly

Weekly reader poll Free

Weekly reader poll Free

Weekly reader poll Free

Weekly reader poll Free
Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup: The biggest, the best.

Turkish Airlines are flying the world’s best amateur golf series even further in 2018. Having launched the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup Amateur Series in 2013 with 12 qualifying events, the 2018 series will visit no fewer than 100 destinations in 63 countries, reflecting the truly global nature of Turkish Airlines’ ever-expanding network.

Recognized as one of the leading corporate golf tournaments, the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup travels to more destinations than any other series of its kind. It provides an ideal networking platform for companies to host senior business executives and industry experts while enjoying Turkish Airlines’ award-winning hospitality.

Qualifying events are hosted at premium venues around the globe with the winner from each qualifying event progressing to play in the Grand Finals. The final stage of the tournament sees lucky winners playing alongside some of the world’s best players in the Turkish Airlines Open Pro-Am, with past winners partnering Tiger Woods, Sergio Garcia, Henrik Stenson and Martin Kaymer.

For more information: turkishairlines.com/golf  twitter.com/T_A_GOLF  facebook.com/TurkishAirlinesGolf
Khukri Rum sharpens its act
Breathing new life into Nepal’s famous rum

Sikuma Rai

It isn’t auto’s doesn’t fix it, the saying goes. Khukri Rum is one of Nepal’s most recognised brands, the quality has been, consistently superior, it has history and culture. So why fix it?

After nearly six decades of production, the maker of this world class rum from Nepal, The Nepal Distillery, felt the product was not living up to its full potential. Which is why the company has been taking Khukri on a road show to acquire Nepali consumers with the versatility of the iconic drink.

The idea came from two experienced bartenders to tailor-make designer cocktails using Khukri Rum that would be appealing to Nepali consumers. One of them, Sik Hazam, Master Mixologist and Head Barman at the award winning OLAY’S Restaurant and Sky bar at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore went bar-hopping with Khukri 24-27 April in five venues across Kathmandu; Tantris, Trisna, Optum, Boore Sely and Mezze.

Sik Hazam: “We figured that the Nepali people palate is still young. Many prefer sweet cocktails over bitter or sour ones, indicating that a lot needs to be done to develop a taste for the drinks we have on offer. So we started from the basics, training the bartenders themselves.” Despite all that, the drinks were well received at the Mezze by Roadhouse event on 27 April with invited guests quaffing away.

Amit Shroff, another award winning flair bartender and head mixologist at London Text in Mumbai (see box, below) was also there to lend a hand, bringing

The woman who plays with fire

When Amit Shroff entered the lounge of Mezze in Durbar Marg at a cocktail event organised by Khukri Rum on 27 April, heads turned as she slipped behind the bar and started mixing drinks. The real show began, however, when she picked up two bottles of rum, set them on fire and juggled them to music. The audience were transfixed.

“A real mix of innovation in India as well,” says Shroff, sipping water after the performance, “I have been flipping bottles since 1999 and there are still very few women flair bartenders around.”

Shroff, who has won a couple of awards for her flair bartending, works as head mixologist at The London Text in Mumbai, and is one of the first two female flair bartenders in India. A friend in Goa taught her the basics of juggling bottles just for fun, but it ended up launching a new career. Well known in India and countries in the region for her flair moves, Khukri Rum invited her to Nepal where she trained a group of bartenders for three days along with Din Hasan from Singapore.

“I received a lot of appreciation in Kathmandu,” she says, “It is still a male-dominated profession so we need to be even more assertive, confident, in control of our own space. Sometimes, we also have to know when to quit the foot down.”

Culinary collaboration

Chef Kasahara of All Nepal and Turkish Caterers, Tourism Association signed an MoU to further culinary exchanges between the two countries. The collaboration is partnered with Turkish Airlines, both parties will contribute in their future business plans to increase recognition of their kitchen heritage and food tourism.

Hyundai Golf Trophy

Rahat Ali Khan won the Hupshys Open Golf Tournament 2018, defeating 157 golfers by 41 points at Gokarna Golf Club on 28 April. Tawar who played with six handicap, scored birdies on 5 and 16 holes and dropped down on 1, 16 and 17 holes.

Fresh makeover

Coca-Cola has unveiled a vibrant new logo for Fanta orange and lemon, which features from its new branding team. The company will engage the youth and other events as its marketing strategy, (Country Director Ambuj Singh said).

Biz Briefs

One To Watch
The new investment company One To Watch has partnered with the private equity firm True North Associates to support a new $25 million SME fund in Nepal, according to Falsehoods. With the partnership, One To Watch will work with True North Associates to foster innovation in the country.

Hyundai Golf Trophy

Rahat Ali Khan won the Hupshys Open Golf Tournament 2018, defeating 157 golfers by 41 points at Gokarna Golf Club on 28 April. Tawar who played with six handicap, scored birdies on 5 and 16 holes and dropped down on 1, 16 and 17 holes.

KAGS aircraft. The feature makes new technology and can be accessed by passengers for a longer time with the flight purchase.

Cool and compact
E:O Automobies launched its latest global product Ford EcoSport, a compact SUV. Vehicle for Nepal at Lion Mall on 2 May. Priced with a powerful engine delivering 125hp power, the all-new EcoSport comes with 360 degree design and innovative new technology.

Old art meets new
Kathmandu’s bartenders up speed on the vast range of concoctions that are possible with Khukri. She mixed the rum with fresh fruit juices and spices, presenting excited feedback as customers came back for thirds.

That eager reception has convinced the distillery that there is potential for further growth of the Khukri brand. So far, the rum has had a marked seasonal consumption pattern in Nepal with 85% of sales in the winter months. That needed to change.

Explain Shuvash Lamichhane of The Nepal Distilleries: “Elsewhere, rum-based drinks are popular all times of the year. But in Nepal we label it a ‘winter drink’ because it is supposed to warm up the body, even though it is a good drink for the summer too. We are trying to change that with refreshing rum cocktails especially for summertime bringing in master bartenders.”

As soon as it was launched in the early-1960s, Khukri caught on fast among Nepali tippers and quickly became a household word. But what really launched the brand was during the coronation of King Birendra in 1975, when the distillery brought out the rum in a khukri-shaped bottle.

Nearly a century later, the dagger and the premium Coronation Rum it contains is still a favourite souvenir item for Nepalis going abroad. It is also exported to 11 countries including Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Italy, the US.

Novel marketing, therefore, is not new to The Nepal Distillery. Hence the rum tour last month to inject new zing to the product. Khukri XXX Aces of Rum Masterclass ended up training more than 30 bartenders to experiment with summer ingredients like fruits and spices, and to perform flair moves to entertain the audience.

Khukri Rum plans to hire 18-15 of the bartenders to be its in-house bartenders as ‘Aces of Rum’. They will interact with fellow bartenders across the country, experimenting with new cocktail ingredients and making fancy moves behind the bar.

Adda Lamichhane: “At the country’s first rum brand, it is our responsibility to develop the profession of serving these drinks. This course is costly for us, but free of cost for those receiving it. In the end, it is a win-win for all.”

Kathmandu’s many bars are already offering new summer rum cocktails in their menus. The cocktails range from easy to hard depending on ingredients, and will be served at various high-end hotels and bars. The company is expecting a big boost to its summer sales this year – but that will depend on whether Nepal Life catches on in the Valley’s watering holes.
Jan Salter, the face of Nepal

The artist and animal welfare activist Jan Salter is famous for her book of portraits, *Faces of Nepal*, and who had made Kathmandu her home, passed away on Sunday at her home in Lyme Regis in UK at age 82.

She settled in Nepal in the mid-1970s where she walked the length and breadth of the country, drawing pencil sketches of the faces of the extraordinary people she met along the way. Jan’s art is a time capsule of the age-old traditional costumes and jewellery of a Nepal that is quickly disappearing.

Salter used to say: “The people I have captured... have much to offer in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the natural world and in the uniqueness and richness of their own cultures.”

Ismetto (Ian) Sonia Salter was born in 1936 in Southampton and as a young woman she travelled to Africa, Australia, and East Asia, but none fascinated her as much as the people of Nepal.

Among the many interesting and significant experiences she had in her travels was a chance encounter with the renowned Intendant Jan. Salter made with whom she painted in Nepal.

Later, she began to experiment with oil paintings, which allowed her to “explore and express a versatility of style”. Salter’s life work consists of over 300 pencil drawings and oil paintings, the greater part of which record the varied ethnic groups of Nepal. Many of these were collected in the book *Faces of Nepal* that she co-authored with her long-time friend, the demographer Harka Gurung.

Salter has always had a great kindness and compassion for the people around her, and exercised her greatest care and empathy to capture another facet of life in Nepal: the soulful depiction of more than 50 trafficked girls who were rescued by Marin Nepal and form the collection of paintings called ‘All Our Daughters’.

In more recent years, Jan’s work turned to her other passion, the humane treatment of street dogs. In 2004, she founded the Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) Centre which stabilised the street dog population, eliminated canine pestering by the city, and greatly reduced noise in dogs and humans in Kathmandu. All this helped transform the population’s fearful attitude towards and cruel treatment of street dogs.

Jan Salter was decorated in 1997 for ‘Faces of Nepal’ with the Gorkha Dakshin Bahu medal by King Birendra. In 2010 she received the prestigious Extraordinary Commitment and Achievement Award from Humane Society International for her groundbreaking work in animal welfare. She was cited on the New Year’s Honours List 2013, and received an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II for animal welfare in Nepal.

Jan’s own reflections best summarise her art: “I would be proud if my work contributed in any way to a greater recognition and respect for the rich and varied cultures my ‘faces’ represent. It is a small and humble offering in comparison to what I have received from Nepal and its peoples.”

Christine Stone, 77

Christine Stone, an educator who celebrated her life to uplift the quality of schools in Nepal, died last month in a care home in Scotland. She was 77.

Stone first came to Nepal in 1982 to join United Missions Nepal’s schools in Makapaning and Namzung of Gorkha district. She then moved to Pokhara where she made Gandaki Boarding School well known for its best-performing students. Realising that raising the quality of education in Nepal needed teachers to be better trained and motivated, she worked with the government on curriculum development and wrote many text books that Nepali children study today.

She also wrote children’s books for Room To Read, among them the now famous characters Tommy Tempo, Rishi Rickshaw and Bir Bahag. She was awarded an OBE from the British government in recognition of her work with education in Nepal.

Ink & Water

Reflect the colours of nature more accurately with high quality precision printing in state-of-the-art Jagadamba Press.
There was always a danger that phrases like "Corporate Social Responsibility" and "Social Entrepreneurship" would be hijacked by the corporate world, and become meaningless clichés. That is exactly what happened. CSR has become PR. Token donations under large banners in the media spotlight to entice the vast generosity of CEOs. However, in the last decade businesses have found that they can do better by doing good. Social entrepreneurship has been shown to be an end in itself. There is now a critical mass of companies around the world that go beyond token gestures to frame the whole purpose of their businesses in a new value system. The public good (fair trade, environmental protection or social justice) precedes turning a profit as the main corporate goal.

John Wood is the founder of the library and literacy advocacy group, Room To Read. He worked for Microsoft and was in charge of its operations in China when in 1998 he came to Nepal on a task. On the first day of the Annapurnas Circuit he saw at a school in Bahundanda of Lamjung district how deprived Nepali children were of reading material. He vowed to return, and did come back a year later – with 3,000 books for Bahundanda and surrounding schools. 

Wood soon quit Microsoft at age 31 to devote his life to literacy and reading, and colleagues thought he had lost it. But such was the power of his conviction that today, nearly 20 years later he has set up Room To Read in Nepal, the group reaches 12.5 million children in 15 countries. Most of that transition from corporate to corporate to cooperate is chronicled in his 2007 book, Learning Microsoft to Change the World, translated into Nepali as Microsoft Deki Bahundanda Samma by Pradip.)

His latest book, Purpose, Incorporated, goes deeper into how small and large companies across the world are shedding free market capitalism to literally incorporate new values. Wood co-authored the book with Amalia McGibbon who works at Facebook, and that may carry some symbolism at a time when the social networking giant has been accused of commodifying private data.

There is a danger, of course, that the word "Purpose" will also become threadbare with misuse. But Wood and McGibbon argue that companies are changing their mission and values to accommodate something larger than themselves. This new corporate idealism comes out of a sense of urgency because the world faces crises on a global scale: accelerated climate change, intolerance and xenophobia, new fears of nuclear conflict, deepening inequality and poverty.

The book tells us that for a long time there were only two types of companies: for-profit and non-profit. Wood argues that the time has come to have companies that are driven by the goal of doing well by doing good.

He calls Purpose the fifth "P" in the 4Ps taught to MBA students: Product, Price, Promotion and Placement. He says the 4Ps no longer define what sets a company apart. "Purpose can show a company is unique by helping attract more motivated talent, and by actually boosting business by bonding with customers," Wood says.

The idea for Purpose, Incorporated came to Wood while fundraising for Room To Read. Business leaders who had donated to the program wanted him to speak to staff to motivate them about doing greater good to the world. He told them that purpose should no longer be an afterthought, but be "embedded in the DNA" of a company. Soon, many companies around the world started to expand their small Corporate Social Responsibility departments to create that good work went hand-in-hand with profits by building bonds with customers, hiring motivated employees and creating a sense of purpose to their jobs.

Wood and McGibbon banned to add that they are not trying to be only goody-goody. They interviewed hundreds of CEOs who have discovered that the higher calling of saving the planet, being less wasteful, treating workers fairly can give them a competitive advantage. Wood says he learned all this himself while trying to run Room To Read like a business with strategic plans, KPIs, dashboards, hiring committed individuals and firing underperformers. "The change I am most happy about is how what started out as one little library in Bahundanda in 1999 has become such a key part of the education system in Nepal," Wood told us in an interview. "When children learn to read bright colourful books to engage, it changes their mindset and allows them to get lost in a world that is different from theirs."
Kathmandu-Bhaktapur Trolley Bus
(Born: 1975, Allowed to die: 2009)

The passenger cabins were warm but despite being repaired with metal sheets, shaving the trolley journey with 15 scheduled stops untamable.

Peter Francon-Smith

Fifteen years ago, while operating motorcycle tours across India, Bhutan and Tibet, I lived with my family in Kathmandu. Weekends were for exploring, by bicycle or when there was petrol by Bullet motorcycle.

One Saturday we found the gates of the trolley bus terminus at Basantapur open, and cycled in. Grey acres of decay and neglect. Tired, rusty, worn out machinery. A vintage forklift truck sat where it was parked for the last time. Overhead line repair vehicles, cannibalized for crucial parts, lay wearily on wooden blocks. Rustied bodies clung to rusty chassis. A bus parked over an inspection pit, waiting for a mechanic.

Recently demobilized Marxist guerrillas had settled in the administrative block. Some had made homes in the old trolley buses. Red hammer and sickle banners hung across broken windows, next to laundry on lines. A young man played tunes on an old wooden accordion, a sad tribute to Kathmandu’s pioneering mass transit project.

Opened in 1979, the inter-urban transport line covering 33Km had operated for three decades. Suffering persistent theft, theft of overhead wires and lack of investment, the service finally came to an end in 2009.

The trolley bus system was opened in 1975 with a rupees 40 million grant from China for 22 standard trolley buses adapted to left-handed operation. Ten newer model buses were donated in 1997. The line was operated by the Nepal Trolley Bus Service, a branch of the Nepal Transportation Corporation (NTC). In 2001, the NTC was dissolved and the trolley bus operation was suspended, as it did not turn any profit since 1990.

The reasons for NTC’s failure were stringent government bureaucracy and overstaffing, coupled with cronyism in management that resulted in poor technical expertise and inept operational policy.

After 18 months, Kathmandu, Madhyapur Thimi and Bhaktapur municipalities agreed to restart the service and the trolley buses rolled again. Less than a year later, the Madhyapur Thimi and Bhaktapur municipalities opted out of the scheme as the service failed to attract riders and continued to lose up to Rupees 2m a month. Consequently, the line was reduced to only between Tripureswar and Tinkune, and most routes beyond city limits was removed.

A crude marginal and unreliable service was maintained during the last few years of operation, with sporadic interruptions due to losses and debt. The trolley bus service was finally laid to rest in November 2008. A year later the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) permanently shut the operation and dissolved the undertaking. All assets were sold to private entities.

The project to widen the Arniko Highway threatened the removal of trolley support poles, and the closure of the service. Although there were calls for trolley buses to be revived along the Ring Road, the plans never materialized and the buses became extinct.

EXTINCT BUSES

Go after to work a little on this with more photographs by Peter Francon Smith at the now defunct Trolley Bus Service depot in Kathmandu. The images of the dismantled Chinese buses have been passed on to a firm where recycled metal is in demand.
Service

As of 1990 the trolleybuses operated between 7:40–21:00 and ran on an irregular headway. The officially stated headway was 6 minutes during rush hours, 12 minutes at other times. About 15 trolleybuses were operated in peak periods, carrying up to 10,000 passengers daily. By 2007, the service was irregular and sporadic. The headway had increased to up to 25 minutes. Total running time along the remaining 5 km long route was up to 35 minutes, depending on traffic conditions. Only three services were operating, and average passenger loads were just above seated load.

Rolling stock

As of March 2007, a total of 32 trolleybuses had been deployed. They included models Shanghai SK611 (1974) and Shentong SR-B60C (1997). But by 2008 only five buses were operable, all of them were 32-year-old Shanghai SK611 vehicles, which despite their age were simpler to maintain and operate. All newer Shentong SR-B60C remained out of use due to complex maintenance requirements. Shentong SR-B60C15 vehicles required frequent maintenance and could only be delivered from China in 2006, but this deal never materialized. Curiously, even though adapted for 11-km hundred operation, older Shanghai SK611 vehicles retained the driver’s seat on the left side, while newer Shentong SR-B60C vehicles (right) have the driver’s seat on the right.

Routes

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Food tasting
Taste American, Japanese, British, Spanish and Sri Lankan cuisine at the international Food Tasting event 2018 prepared by culinary students.
5 May, 11am-8pm, Academy of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, 8th Floor, 907/01, Old Kirtipur on display at an exhibition.

Herbs expo
Nepal Herbs Ayurveda Expo 2018 exhibits a wide range of herbs and agro products available in Nepal.
4-6 May, 10am-6pm, Dadarmarg Exhibition Hall, (01) 4105027, 9887509861

Moods and Moments
Imagination of film Shama Bajarcharya’s photo exhibition, Moods and Moments. 5 May, 2pm onwards, The Birt, Thamel. (01) 4973307

European folk music
First of its kind in Nepal, the concert brings together three amazing Nepali musicians who will play Norwegian, Irish, German and French folk songs. Enjoy the concert with some Danish melmacs, picked cucumbers and a glass of wine at Citéer.
4 May, 8pm-10pm,rics Coffee, youngster, 9806179222

The Kathmandhu Chorale
Uplift your spirit at The Kathmandhu Chorale’s new spring concert. ‘Draw the Circle Wider’ with children from the Rainbow School, directed by Ms. Kanjri. 72 May, 2pm, Mahab, thamshikel. thekathmandhuchorale@gmail.com

Shivapuri Heights Cottage
Treat yourself to a 90-minute ayurvedic massage at Nerran’s Spa, followed by a healthy lunch at the Cottage. Shivapuri Road, Dukhkharka, 98417/29279

Dhokaiama
Tender chicken breast marinated with herbs and grilled, served with spinach sauce, coque and sauce on the side, otherwise known as Chicken Marination, for dinner at the café. Patan Dhoka, (01) 5527113

Ventures Café
Soap by the both fusion menu and local favourites, and enjoy the breezy outdoor seating. A great venue for beer connoisseurs. Bawalara, 9841238014

The Thrud
The newly renovated restaurant at Hotel Royal Singh serves healthy and flavorful gluten-free menu. Don’t believe? Try Quinoa Babulchen served with grilled skewers of pepper, mushroom, tomato, pepper and onion. Lumbini, Kathmandu, (01) 4841519/ 4841991

Empire Restaurant & Bar
Enjoy stuffed Italian Contractor, a classic French dish, for lunch or dinner at the restaurant serving vegan as well as meat food items. Kupandole Heights, Bhaktapur, 9841112117

Old Kirtipur in photos
Historical images of old Kirtipur on display at an exhibition.
5 May, 7pm-6am, Kirtipur

The Urban Night
Spend Friday night with friends, family and dear ones at the event featuring servai, LED synchromatica, hoop and City Wheel dances, followed by an after-party and live musical performance by fantastic band.
4 May, 7pm onwards, Club Deel Vi, Dadarmarg, Thamel. (91) 011/357/2019, Table Dance: 91 757/350/9644, (01) 9802611119, 9840 880 483

Jazz Jam
A jam party with Bluebell Sallies and Kathmandha Jazz Conservatory musicians. 70 May, 7-10pm, Mohit, Thamel. (01) 5525402

Meze by Roadhouse
Smart orientation and a sit-down terrace with a view of the palace give a great atmosphere to enjoy dinner with friends. Recommend the chef’s special – smoked mackerel and grilled chicken with truffle oil, wasabi. Menchikdress, Hotel Roadhouse, (01) 4202567

Synthesis art exhibition
An exhibition of painting, sculpture and photography, redefining Nepali Art featuring Lak Chitrakar, Pradhma Rajbhandary, Rishita Rajbhandary. Aakash Pradhan, Saptak Raj Bajracharya and many others.
4-5 May, 2pm onwards, Dhi Hati, Bhaktapur, (01) 4298606, 4105027

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Note:
Despite being the first time and an experience for the first time, the average daily Air Quality index (AQI) in Kathmandu in the month of March was measured in the following way: 10 PM of the day of the week measured at the AQI of a city as "Good" and the lowest AQI of the week measured. This text was written on a Wednesday at 9:30 AM. The next AQI was measured at 9:30 AM on the following day.

https://nepalairquality.gov.np/aqi/

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The Kathmandu Post
Kirtipur, Nepal

The Kathmandu Post
Kirtipur, Nepal
Back in Nepal after 14 years
Former Norwegian ambassador to Nepal returns to see a country transformed

Even when there was a conflict going on, I always found people friendly and open to dialogue. I was in Nepal from 1999 to 2004. Despite the warmth and hospitality, there was a lot of tension at the time. Most of the tension came from the Maoist rebels. Norway was supporting the education sector but visits to rural schools became difficult as teachers and students were threatened by both the Maoists and the security forces.

Fourteen years later, Nepal has moved from war to peace. People can move freely, and children go to school without fear. On a recent visit, I saw branded vehicles on the streets of Kathmandu and no APF checkpoints caring for any need. Today, the checkpoints are now looking for drunk drivers.

A palace massacre, a violent insurgency, the royal takeover, new constitution, the earthquake and blockade, all in a timeline of less than 15 years—this is really too much for any nation to cope with. Still, this is just what the people of Nepal have done, and they have come out more united and confident. My friends told me that many wounds are not healed, but the victims feel forgotten, and that there is still a big wedge between the class of rulers and those being ruled. This may be slowly closing the commitment of many Nepalis encouraged me.

I visited Okhaldhunga and saw that the earthquake took the schools hard. But there was a priority for the rehabilitation of schools, many children now have safer classrooms. The people were busy building new, stronger brick houses, as the government support had finally reached them.

My Norwegian friends have worked at Okhaldhunga Community Hospital 14 years.

Taking this, the hospital and its outreach services have grown to take particular care of mothers and children. They even offer expecting young mothers to stay with relatives at the Maternal Waiting Home, ensuring that they reach the hospital in time. The relatives these days are often the husband, and many of them want to be present during delivery.

The reason is that there are now roads everywhere. You can now drive from Kathmandu to Okhaldhunga and even to Sulu Khumado and a lot of areas in Kathmandu, of course, the increases in traffic has brought heavy air pollution.

Still, the rest of the country is so magnificent as ever. My visit to Nepal was timed to enable me to experience the spectacular sun rise view of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna from Poon Hill with the red rhododendron forests in full bloom. It was not a dream, it was the real thing. It is one of the most stunning views I have ever seen. Nonetheless, this was that the new road to Ulleri and Chandrakot have partly destroyed the old walking trails. Local people want road access, but it makes sense to protect the trekking routes.

One of the greatest charms of trekking in Nepal is walking on paths used by local people, passing villages where farms and livestock are still the main activity. Nepal still has a living cultural landscape, which is the main draw for foreigners besides the mountain views. This may be difficult to preserve, but finding better ways to accommodate both tourism and farming needs to be explored.

Nepal has changed, but it is still many ways the same. People are struggling to keep traditions alive, to preserve national identity. I was lucky to witness the Rato Machindranath Jatra from 2000 to 2004, and later in the north-east in 2011.

Why Bangladesh is booming
Progressive social policies and a bit of historical luck

NEW YORK—Bangladesh has become one of Asia’s most remarkable and unexpected success stories in recent years. Once one of the poorest regions in the world, Bangladesh has recently surpassed Pakistan in terms of freedom. Bangladesh’s economic growth has surpassed Pakistan’s by roughly 2.5% per year. This year, its growth rate is expected to reach 6%. (though this primarily reflects Bangladesh’s easy access to global markets, which should be reversed barring gross policy mismanagement).

Moreover, Bangladesh’s population growth is growing faster than Pakistan’s by roughly 1.8% per year. By extrapolation, Bangladesh will overtake Pakistan in terms of per capita income in 20 years.

In fact, by 2050, Bangladesh’s population growth is growing faster than Pakistan’s by roughly 1.8% per year. By extrapolation, Bangladesh will overtake Pakistan in terms of per capita income in 20 years. In a country already struggling with rising temperatures, the failure to address this issue is a concern.

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Avengers: Infinity War

The only really annoying thing about this new Avengers film is that it has a problematic structural device, which, if you didn’t know about it (like we didn’t), could have a major impact on your enjoyment.

MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

reviewer) will leave you extremely disappointed. Instead of that, the film is very enjoyable indeed, though more for the super fans who can remember all the in and outs of the previous eighteen Marvel films that essentially build up to this one.

Astonishingly, for a film that is 3 hours long, time flies by – indicating how entertaining this film is – even while there are few really memorable moments. For those who are wondering who is in this film, the answer is: everyone. All of our favourite and not-so-favourite characters from previous films come together in Avengers: Infinity War. Including the team from the Guardians of the Galaxy (2014, 2017) who are my personal favourites, along with the (Chris Hemsworth), Loki (Tom Hiddleston), The Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), Captain America (Chris Evans), The Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), Robert Downey Jr., Idris Elba, and Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) to name a few of this mind-boggling cast.

Over the last couple of Marvel films, the plot has always been followed by a claw revealing the whereabouts of some of the six Infinity stones that are placed around the universe. In this film, we find out what they are and how they came to be, finally, in a satisfying explanation about why they yield such awesome power. Unfortunately, the brutal war criminal and genocide proponent Thanos (played by Josh Brolin), who is also, alas, the adoptive father of Gamora (Zoe Saldana), one of the Guardians of the Galaxy, and beloved of Peter Quill aka Starlord (Chris Pratt), has discovered where most of the stones lay hidden and comes into possession of them one by one.

Many sub-stories and emotional arcs are woven into this complex narrative, an achievement that should not be taken lightly by critics who may not appreciate the kind of care and skill that must go into such a daunting undertaking.

Amongst some breath-taking action, and a few really good jokes, lives are lost, hearts are broken, real evil is conveyed to the viewers, and the afore-mentioned structural flaw is a shock ending that leaves us in mid-res – wondering what could possibly happen in the sequel due out on the 3rd of May next year that could resolve such a mess.

These Marvel films are meant as pure fun, not as works of art. Occasionally they lag, they are shamelessly exploitative in their constant presentation of sequels, but occasionally a classic comes along – justification all. It remains to be seen, till next year, if this instalment, itself a sequel generating film, will be regarded as one of them. I personally, however, can’t wait to see it again.

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MODIPUR: Prime Minister K.P. Oli and Awadhesh Tripathi, Vice Chair of Lumbini Development Council, arrived from India on Friday at the peace rally organised on the occasion of 2562st Mahabodhi Jayanti in Lumbini on Monday.

LABOUR LEADERS: Mehedi (Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and UML leader Bishnu Prasad Koirala during a joint event organised by communist trade unions to mark 129th International Labour Day in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

REST IN PLACE: Federation of Nepalese Journalists and Photography Club Nepal organised a candlelight vigil at Monjola on Wednesday in memory of journalist killed in a suicide bomb in Kabul this week.

ON THE TABLE: Shree Ram Adhikari of Nepal Chefs Association Foundation and Crimon Boumpa of Turkish Gastronomy Tourism Association sign an MoU in Kathmandu on Sunday to exchange food culture between Nepal and Turkey. Turkish Airlines is the official partner airlines for the collaboration.
Lonely survival

Deepa Dalal in
www.doubtshares.com, 2 May

She tries to smile, but is held back by the traumatic memory of a tragedy she survived, that a dozen of her classmates did not. Samira Byanjankar, 24, cannot move around without a walker. The medical student was one of the 29 survivors of the US-Bangla plane crash that killed 32 people at Kathmandu Airport on 13 March. She is being discharged from hospital in a few days, and needs another month of convalescence at home before she can finally stand on her own feet. Byanjankar showed remarkable determination to recover from multiple bone fractures in the hip, but she has found it more difficult to overcome the loss of her friends. Twelve of the 29 Nepalis killed in the crash were medical students with whom she had spent five years at a school in Bangladesh. They were returning home after final exams, while their parents were waiting for them at the airport. At Kurintar hospital bed in Kathmandu, Byanjankar heard that she had passed final MBBS exams, and the college in St Albans had invited her for an internship. But she does not want to go back to a place with so many memories of her lost friends, and the happy moments they shared, crying for each other. “I don’t want to stay in that empty room without my friends,” she says, her eyes brimming with tears. “I hope the government can help me do my internship in Nepal.” Byanjankar and her best friend Princy Dhami were admitted into the same ward of Kathmandu Medical College after the crash. Dhami came to only after four days, but was unable to move her body. She kept crying in the bed next to her. Dhami would shake her legs slightly whenever the nurse tried to give her an injection. Byanjankar would soothe her with her voice, and she would stop resisting. Dhami was later moved to India, but she did not make it. Her friend’s death further devastated Byanjankar. Even in the plane, the two had sat next to each other. As the plane approached Kathmandu, they were chatting about how excited they were to be back home. But the plane began to fly in a strange manner, nearly hitting the terminal building, and then a mountain. When the plane crashed, Byanjankar slammed and when she regained consciousness, she could not move her body below the waist. She tried to shake Dhami, but she was still unconscious. Soon, soldiers pulled her out and took her to hospital. Says Byanjankar: “I do not know whether I am lucky or unlucky. I survived, but my friend died not.”

More controls on foreigner

Nepal, 2 May

The government is preparing to bar foreign countries, their diplomatic missions and NGOs from spending money directly on projects in Nepal. The National Good Conduct Policy 2018 also aims to stop bureaucrats, elected leaders and political appointees from allowing foreigners to directly invest in Nepal’s public or private sector. But exceptions can be made if foreigners agree to the federal government’s approval, the policy states. The directive comes at a time when China and several western countries are vying permission to invest directly in Nepal, pointing out that the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has long enjoyed such privilege. The embassy was first allowed to directly distribute or spend small grants up to INR200 million when Surja Sahukar Thapa won Prime Minister in 2003. When Baburam Bhattarai became Prime Minister in 2011, the ceiling for India’s direct small grants was increased to INR500 million. But the Sher Bahadur Deuba government declined to renew the agreement under which the Indian Embassy had been directly building schools, libraries, rural roads and other infrastructure in Nepal. But the new cabinet government led by PM Oli overturned the previous government’s decision, once again allowing the Indian embassy to distribute direct small grants.

And now, China wants the same privilege. Sources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs say the Kathmandu based embassy of the People’s Republic of China has also expressed its interest in distributing direct grants. The policy also aims to deport foreigners found guilty of acompanying or even deceiving their persons not grants. It also proposes to set up a surveillance team under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which will closely monitor foreigners and NGOs operating in Nepal. Based on the reports submitted by the team, the government may snap any agreement signed with an NGO.
"Our land is us, we The people of Khokana have had enough of a state that doesn’t value their way of life

Sahina Shrestha

For a long time in Nepal’s history, all roads led to Kathmandu. Two democratic movements, a decade-long war, and many political upheavals later, all roads still lead to Kathmandu. But the locals of Khokana, a sleepy farming town 16km south of the Ring Road, are asking if it still has to be so. Do the new highways and transmission lines have to go through their sacred sites?

Khokana is famous for its mustard presses, and used to supply the oil to much of the Valley. The town used to be a living heritage museum until the 2015 earthquake destroyed many of its houses and temples. Now, the town faces a threat even bigger than earthquake builders.

Five future infrastructure projects will affect Khokana, which sits right on the planned alignments for the Kathmandu–Tansen Fast Track Highway, the Outer Ring Road, the Bagmati Corridor project, Patan’s satellite city and the Kulekhani 132kVA high tension line. Khokana stands to lose almost 60% of its fertile farms and much of its heritage (see map).

“Our land is us and we are our land,” says Hem Reeta Shresta, a Khokana activist. “People here have a physical, spiritual, social, cultural and economic connection with the land. We have no identity without it.”

The four-lane 76km Kathmandu–Tansen Expressway project will follow the Bagmati River from the Valley to a proposed new international airport in Nepalgunj. Some 4km of the highway will slice through terrace farms and cultural heritage sites. The Fast Track will start at Sikali and go through Pingah, the funeral area, Kar Dhar, Jagatari, Machha Bagar, Chanku rivina – all important parts of Khokana’s cultural circuit on the route to the next town of Hurgamal.

In Sato Khokana where the expressway is supposed to start, Asha Maharjan will lose all her property. The fertile soil here is an important part of his family’s history and he remembers ploughing it with his parents when he was young. His eight-member family still relies on harvests for their food and income.

“Maybe they can re-route it through non-urban land,” Maharjan says hopefully. “It will save us from being homeless.”

Up the road from his house, the project will take up a portion of Sikali hamlet, where the annual Sikali Jatra is celebrated. In October, when the country celebrates Dasain, Javch in Khokana mark Sikali Jatra – a five-day festival with masked dances for Goddess Kali and other deities.

“The Jatra follows a prescribed circuit and there is a specific way to perform it. If the expressway cuts through it, the place of the masked dances will be lost,” says Astitra Maharjan, another local activist. “We value our heritage, and that is not just the physical structure but the festivals and rituals as well.”

Noted historian Satya Mohan Joshi agrees. “We cannot avoid development, but at the same time we cannot hurt the sentiments of the local people,” says Joshi. “Their grievances must be addressed and a middle path must be found before the development can commence.”

For generations, Gyan Bhagat Maharjan’s family has been a member of the Jatra Ta Gath, one of the three community groups responsible for organizing the Sikali festival, which makes the food for the gods and devotees. The gath is a plot of land where the annual feast takes place.

“Without the land we won’t be

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(and get a free ride on Chandragiri Cable Car)
The residents of Khokana speak out on camera in this video to passionately explain why they oppose infrastructure projects that threaten their land and way of life.

“Are we not against development, but they are forcing projects on us that threaten our way of life.”

not the first time

When no one listened to their grievances, and they were on the verge of losing their farms and most important heritage sites, the people of Khokana finally took to the streets.

Last month, they joined others protecting loss of property to road widening at a march from the Mandala to Parliament. The peaceful protest turned violent as police deployed the newly-acquired water cannon carrier and tear gas. Khokana finally hit the national headlines.

The people of Khokana had voiced concern about their land being taken away for decades. First, it was the Army that nationalised 70 hectares of their farmlands to conduct paradropping exercises. The Army still retains a small part of it, and the rest was sold off to private housing. Khokana farmers got nothing.

Then, the government nationalised another 100 hectares for a leprosy hospital, a training facility for the Armed Police Force and a prison. None of the land was used for the intended purpose and was sold off to private builders.

Nuti Kaji Maharjan, 75, had to give up his land for the prison that was never built. “Now, it will be the Tarai Expressway that will rob him of the remaining land. ‘We are farmers. We depend on the land, without how are we to eat?’ asks Maharjan. ‘How can they take our land and sell it to someone else?’

Following widespread protests, the government has said it may re-route the expressway, but having been developed so often, Khokana residents retain wary.

Asha activist Anjali Maharjan: “How much more land should we give to them before they are satisfied”
The Golden Age of Democracy

Don’t listen to the naysayers, the cynics who are always pining for Nepal’s march towards federalisation, secularisation and democratization. They’re just jealous.

Look at the progress the country has made in just two months of The Oligarchy: we have gone from leaps to bounds. From a few tons of gold (that used to be smuggled in false bottoms of passengers) we moved quickly up the ladder to 38kg of contraband biscuits, and by the time we had parliamentary elections we weren’t just satisfied with biscuits; we were hauling tons of gold ingots in containers through Tribhuvan International Airport.

This is the kind of growth and prosperity the Left Front government promised during its election campaign, and they have delivered it even before the honeymoon period is over. At the rate we are going, we are going to be the leading exporters. What is that? To be one of the six? I think so. We are entering Nepal’s Golden Age.

However, there is a fly in the ointment. There is a dark cloud behind this golden lining. The bottleneck for the smooth passage of even more contraband gold is Kathmandu Airport itself, which everyone knows is not the epitome of efficiency when it comes to moving large volumes of cargo and passengers. This is why the Marinet-Solitair-Mahtal Colloquium has announced it is going to allow the airport to operate 21 hours a day.

It is also extending the spron and runway so the airport will be able to double the volume of gold it handles at present. A new domestic airport is being built in Butepa to ease congestion and allow ever more gold carrying overseas flights to land in Kathmandu. Two new international airports are coming up in Bhairawa and Pokhara to handle the burgeoning trade in gold. Ex-Royal Nepal Airlines is going to bring in two Airbus 300s which can carry double the amount of gold bullions than its current single-aisle aircraft. Pretty soon all our narrow-bodies are going to be wide-bodies.

The airport takes freelance contractors from Raxaul to Kathmandu.

1. Railway from Raxaul to Kathmandu:
   To make the ride as lengthy as possible so passengers can enjoy the scenic scenery, the track will follow the same alignment as the Tribhuvan Rajadh.

2. Railway from Kurung to Lumbini via Kathmandu:
   Rolling stock will be placed with 24-carat gold so that entire wagons can be smuggled into India.

3. The Chinese and Indian railroads will connect in Kathmandu (see above) to facilitate trans-Himalayan trade in gold and wildlife.

4. Inland Waterway: The Kosi and Ganges will be made navigable by building the Kosi High Dam so that containerships ferrying the Nepali flag will be able to dock in Sunari. This will exponentially increase the volume of contraband trade.

5. A tunnel beneath the Chicken Neck will drive Nepal-Bangladesh trade underground.

The Ass