















A politial pilgrim

Indian PM Narendra Modi will spend most of his Nepal visit this weekend in prayer and worship, but his two stopovers in Kathmandu for political meetings will have long-term consequences for the two countries.

On Friday, after flying directly into Janakpur from New Delhi and offering prayers at Janaki Temple with Prime Minister K P Oli, Modi will fly to Kathmandu. Here, Nepali and Indian officials will exchange agreements on railways, inland waterway navigation and agriculture in the presence of the two PMs.

How strongly Oli, one of the strongest Nepali PMs ever, can safeguard the country's national interest in those deals will determine not just his own legacy but also Nepal's fate.

Last month, when Oli visited New Delhi, he wanted Modi's support to launch Nepal's own merchant marine. But Modi outsmarted Oli by offering more: connecting *Sagar* (Mt Everest) to *Saagar* (the ocean) through

inland waterways.

With the blockade in 2015, Modi squandered the goodwill of most Nepalis that he had earned during his previous two visits to Kathmandu. He will be trying to rebuild that trust on this trip. But experts say the inland waterway proposal is just a code for pushing through controversial high-dam schemes on the Kosi and other Nepal rivers.

India is building national waterways that can take oceangoing barges to streamline transportation. Regulated water from Nepal's rivers is crucial for the 1,620km Haldiya-Allahabad stretch of the Ganges-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system. It can take barges only if the river's lean season flow is augmented, and for that large reservoirs have to be built on the tributaries of the Ganges, most of which flow down from Nepal.

The talk of inland water navigation is therefore a way to persuade Nepal to agree to dam its rivers. India has proposed a 300m high dam on the Kosi which would create a reservoir 100km long. It could serve tourism, transportation and fisheries, but there would be massive inundation of prime farmland, settlements and infrastructure. There is also the sedimentation and seismic risk.

Experts say Nepal need not reject outright India's proposal to build high dams, but Kathmandu must seek equitable benefit sharing and fair compensation.

Says water expert Dwarika Nath Dhungel: "If it is Modi's strategic move to connect Nepal with India's waterways, Oli should have his own strategy to ensure Nepal's share of benefits."

As a strong PM set to govern Nepal for the next five years, Oli is in a better position than most of his predecessors to drive a hard bargain on river sharing. If he cannot do it, no one else can.

Nonetheless, given how hard Oli appears to be trying to please Modi, analysts are not optimistic.

Analyst Shreekrishna Aniruddh Gautam says: "Oli was perceived to be a rare Nepali leader who could stand up to India. But he is also wilting."

Om Astha Rai



BANNER HEADLINE: One of many Posters in Hindi that have gone up in Janakpur welcoming Indian Prime

Minister Modi to Nepal.

Modification

Campaigning in Nepal EDITORIAL PAGE 2

Modi on Nepali twittersphere PAGE 13

Modi's Himalayan marathon
BY OM ASTHA RAI

PAGE 14-15

Curtainraisers in the Indian media

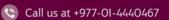


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11 - 17 MAY 2018 #909

CAMPAIGNING IN NEPAL

Tndian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has arrived on his third visit to Nepal Lin four years. The first time he came to Kathmandu in 2014 shortly after being elected, it had been nearly two decades since an Indian leader had visited Nepal.

Modi has not tried to hide his soft spot for Nepal. He began his speech to the Constituent Assembly Parliament in Kathmandu four years ago in near-fluent Nepali, and recalled that he had once made a pilgrimage to Nepal. Modi indeed spent 1968-70 touring Hindu holy places in north India, during which he is said to have visited Pashupati, Janakpur and meditated in Muktinath.

Modi had wanted to turn his second visit to Kathmandu during the SAARC Summit in 2015 into a pilgrimage. In Janakpur he had wanted to address a mass-meeting to be beamed live on Indian TV channels from the birthplace of Sita. He would have then flown to Muktinath for prayers. However, the pilgrimage was cancelled since Prime Minister Sushil Koirala was against a regional summit being turned into a bilateral visit.

Nepal was in the throes of Constitutionwriting at the time, and Koirala's real worry was that Modi's visit to Mithila would embolden Madhesi activists demanding greater autonomy for a plains-only province. Modi is said to have taken the rejection as a personal affront. Being a man who does not forget slights, this set the stage for things to get much worse, after his emissary Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar's wish that promulgation of the Constitution be delayed until Madhesi demands were met was rejected by Kathmandu.

India then enforced a five-month border Blockade on earthquake-ravaged Nepal from September 2015 to January 2016. The siege was much more earth-shaking than the quake – it sent Nepal's economy into negative growth and its political fallout is still much in evidence. Oli, who had portrayed himself as a David against the Indian Goliath during the Blockade, exploited that nationalist trump card during last year's elections to give himself and his Maoist partners a thumping majority in Parliament.

Modi's visit this weekend is an effort to turn the clock back to 2014, and restore Nepal-India friendship and trust to the level that followed his first visit. But don't expect Modi to make amends this time for the long years of hardships he unleashed on the Nepali people. There will be some token gifts, but not much more because the trip is driven by regional geopolitics and domestic electoral politics. In fact, going by social media reaction (see page 13) Modi's decision to go to Janakpur first has actually widened the cleavage between hills and plains. People in Province 2 overwhelmingly welcome the visit, while the rest of Nepal is distrustful.

In India itself, the prime minister has been under blistering attack in India for the failure of his 'neighbourhood first' policy allowing Chinese inroads into Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal. And even though news of the Blockade was successfully suppressed in the Indian and international media, Modi came across in 2015 as a regional bully -- creating some consternation in Western capitals which had bequeathed Nepal policy to New Delhi.

The pilgrimages to Janakpur and Muktinath are photo-ops for domestic consumtion to drive home the Hindu agenda in local assembly polls in Karnataka as well as national elections next year. The only problem is that Karnataka's Hindus are fiercely Shaivite, whereas Muktinath is a Vishnu shrine. Even so, it helps that Vishnu is revered in Modi's home state of Gujarat. The announcement of a Ramayana Circuit

to link Janakpur with Ayodhya will have resonance among voters in India's 'Cow Belt'.

India's bureaucracy and politicians often work themselves into a frenzy about China, believing the paranoia they themselves leak to the national media. They then export that insecurity to the neighbourhood. PM Oli understood this and played the 'China Card' to the hilt during the blockade, making a big deal out of the few token tankers of petroleum China donated, and signing a trade and transit deal amidst much fanfare. China's help was actually just symbolic, and Oli hasn't followed up on it in his current

India is China's number one import market. Beijing is using anti-Indian sentiments in Nepal to its advantage, but did nothing to jeopardise its close trade ties with India by substantially helping Nepal during the Blockade and after. The advice from Chinese leaders to Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali last month was consistent with what they have told everyone from King Gyanendra to Prachanda in the past: don't play us off against India, and sort out your relations with New Delhi. Despite the blockade, Chinese policy has not changed.

The Modi visit may be a time to remind ourselves of the economic ties between India and Nepal as well. Nepal's trade deficit with India was almost \$10 billion last year, making Nepal the tenth largest market for Indian goods. Our economic dependence on India has a direct impact on our political independence. However, Nepal is also the seventh largest source of foreign remittances into India because of the money Indian workers in Nepal send home. No one keeps count of how much money Nepali workers in India bring back.

Given this close economic relationship, why can't India Nepal relations ever be 'normal'? Nepal's leaders need to be mature enough not to bait India to fan popularity at home. Nepali nationalism should not be defined by anti-Indianism.

For its part, Indian leaders must be aware of Nepali sensitivities about sovereignty, and show genuine magnanimity where they can. The overbearing attitude of Indian officials, and the fickleness of their Nepali counterparts have been the main reason for past mistrust.



Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit

BHANU BHATTARAI

ONLINE PACKAGES



With worsening pollution and no separate cycling lanes, bicycle enthusiasts in Kathmandu do not have it easy. Still, there is a lot for cyclists to enjoy in the city of gently sloping, winding roads. Follow Kathmandu's cyclists as they navigate the dusty city and treacherous traffic, and find out why they continue to do so, risking their health. Story on page 8-9

TROLLEY BUSES

Electric vehicles certainly have a future and this trolley was a free gift from the Chinese that was never appreciated with maintenance and reinvestment. That is how it died during that awful, deliberate 'load shedding' era ('Kathmandu-Bhaktapur Trolley Bus', Peter Francon-Smith, #908).

Prakash Moktan

BEST WISHES FOR THE SAVIOUR

Wishing Dr Upendra Devkota all the best ('I want to live my last among friends', nepalitimes.com). You have my respect as both a surgeon and person. I will always value the time that I spent with you in Nepal teaching.

> lan Bone. Your former Glasgow Colleague

You reassured me at the time of a deeply stressful diagnosis and pointed me in the direction of effective treatment. I'm still here 25 years later. I do hope there is someone who can do the same for you. At least you have the satisfaction of knowing you have helped, treated and comforted many in their darkest hours. I wish you well and offer my thanks for all you have done.

> Andrew Hall, Former UK Ambassador to Nepal

- Deep gratitude for all that you have done for humanity. I salute your spirit. May god give the same kind of strength to all. Ritu S Vaidya
- It's sad to learn that you are struggling with terminal illness. But we pray for your healing and believe that the almighty will help you overcome it and you will go on to treat million more.

Bir Man Rai

Get well soon doctor. Thank you for your contribution and salute to your dedication. You are a fighter.

Jugnu Gurung

VAIL CHRISTINE

I met Christine and her dog in 2009 ('Goodbye Jan and Christine', #908). She was truly an inspiration. Vail Christine. Her legacy will endure through the many lives and programs that she gave so much to. Jack Williamson

I began my journey of professional learning by attending Christine Stone's training. I was amazed by her ideas on student-oriented pedagogy. Respect. Suman Laudari

THANK YOU AND SORRY

Thank you for all the help to Nepal and for coming back ('Back in Nepal after 14 years', Ingrid Ofstad, #908). Sorry for the local trails being turned into roads. The people, tourism board and committees involved don't have enough sense to save local trails.

Dawa Jangbu Lama

Times.com WHAT'S TRENDING

Goodbye Jan and Christine

Two exceptional British women who made Nepal their home, artist and animal rights crusader Jan Salter, and educator and children's book writer Christine Stone passed away last month. Many Nepali Times readers remembered their contribution to Nepal. To read the tributes and comments from readers go online to



Most reached and shared on Facebook



Kathmandu-Bhaktapur **Trolley Bus**

Tired, rusty, worn out machinery. Battered bodies and rusty chassis. This photo feature with nostalgic images of Kathmandu-Bhaktapur trolley buses at the Baneswor terminal was shared on social media with many lamenting the unfulfilled promise of electric public transport. The feature can be viewed online.



Most popular on Twitter

"I want to live my last among friends"

From the Nepali Press

Neurosurgeon Upendra Devokota in this piece as told to Deshsanchar.com talks about battling a terminal illness and his choice to live out the rest of his life among friends back in Nepal. Readers were moved and sent in prayers that he recovers. Visit Nepali Times website, and Deshsanchar.com for new installments in Nepali. The tribute is also carried this week on page 13.



Most commented



Most visited online page

QUOTE >> TWEETS



EDITORIAL A rent-seeking state with its corrupt bureaucracy has actively promoted foreign employment so as to enrich itself by creating hurdles every step of the way for those desperate for work abroad. http://bit.ly/lottery-of-migration-Nepali-Times ..



Claire Cozens @clairecoz Powerful editorial blaming Nepal's elected politicians for a failure to create jobs that has forced millions to leave the country for work



Nepali Times @nepalitimes Photographs by @peterfrancon show all that remains of the iconic Kathmandu-Bhaktapur trolley buses. The images of the dilapidated Chinese buses hark back to a time when electric public transport had a future.



Sujeev Shakya @sujeevshakya Our research showed that the transport syndicates continuously worked with the government in killing the trolley bus company and also making electric vehicle companies die a natural death in #Nepal.



Nepali Times @nepalitimes Why are the people of Khokana up in arms? Read full story by @sahinashrestha to find out.

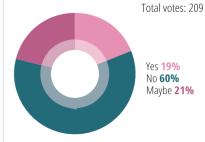


Prashanta Khanal @theprashanta First, who will hold those officers and Nepal Army accountable - for grabbing land from locals for certain purpose but later sold to private? @Hello_Sarkar @PM_Nepal



Weekly Internet Poll #909

Q. Are you hopeful that PM Modi's visit will reset



Weekly Internet Poll #910

Q. Do you still see PM KP Oli as a nationalist?

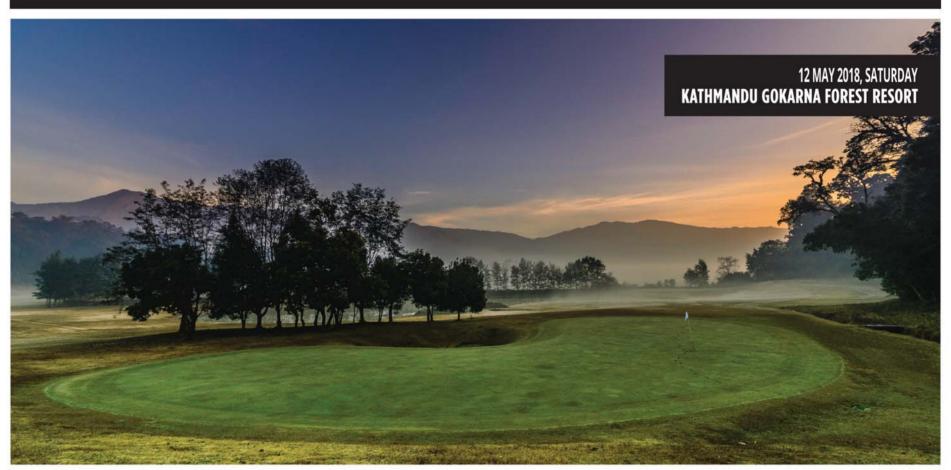


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Turkish Airlines are flying the world's best amateur golf series even further in 2018. Having launched the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup Amateur Series in 2013 with 12 qualifying events, the 2018 series will visit no fewer than 100 destinations in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

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For a few dollars more

You cannot sell Nepal if the first and last impression is so bad

n this column 'Outside In' I used to look at Nepal Lseen through outside eyes, commenting on things that you may not see because you are too close. I have been climbing in Nepal since 1983 and have a business here, so a vested interest in the shared success of Nepal.

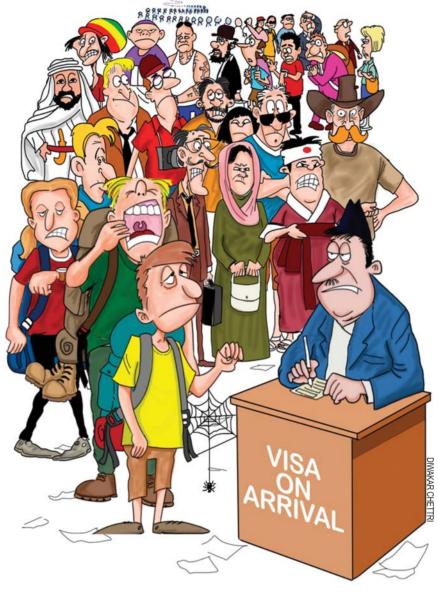


OUTSIDE IN Ted Atkins

I met vour editor, Kunda Dixit recently and he asked me to comment on the state of the Everest Industry, for that is what it is. May is the big month for Everest. Social media is full of Everest, keeping us abreast of progress. The climbers are all now acclimatised and waiting for their 'weather window' when the winds drop enough to go to the summit. Most of them will now be using oxygen made in Nepal, delivered by equipment made in Nepal by Nepali operators, and ably assisted by bold Nepali climbers.

Social media is also abuzz with Nepal Tourism Year 2020. The prevailing comment is in one word: strategy. You could call it vision. Let's face it, Nepal is a 'five dollars today economy'. Take five dollars Monday because you can, rather than wait until Friday and take 50.

Quick example: the hotel I used for many years overcharged



me one time. It was just \$10. They were insistent I pay. I said I would pay the extra \$10 but that I would never return, they accepted this. I paid, I never returned. I also never recommended them to my friends and clients, which would have been ten times my own business. And I never took another trekking group there.

That was an expensive \$10. It cost them thousands and continues to hurt them. My point is simple: move on Nepal. Think about the future. My first column in *Nepali Times* in 2014 (#731) was titled *The Gate*. It described how Kathmandu Airport was seen by an arriving visitor. It was not good. I am being kind, it was very bad, one of the worst in the world. This is Nepal's main gate, the first and last thing you see: it reeks of urine and has endless

I would have to say it has got better with the new visa machines, but Mr Airport, may I make a small point. I found the part of the machine that says scan passport' does not work. After trying to make it work several times, someone comes and says "It does not work, enter the information manually." Call me a rocket scientist, but if you put a sign on every machine that says ENTER INFORMATION MANUALLY then the queues would reduce by 50%.

At the beginning of my time here in Kathmandu, there were

two crashes at the airport within a week. Why risk flying here when you can go somewhere safer? Fix the airport first. You don't need a grand meeting, a big event for 2020 if no one wants to come.

Meanwhile, we in the mountaineering industry are training Nepali climbing guides, providing qualifications. Training high altitude workers in the use of oxygen equipment, promoting professionalism and confidence. We are working with the helicopter industry to make it safer. We are providing equipment that guests expect: western standards, compliance, accountability.

Say you are climbing Everest, you get to Camp 4, you are ready for your big day, but your oxygen cylinders are empty. You might die, or you might just get sick or lose some fingers or toes. But your dream is dead. Why did this happen, where did those cylinders come from? No one knows. There is a thriving black market in old cylinders as there is no traceability or certification, no test date, no safety standard. It is the same \$10 today mind set.

The industry is healthy today, but we must not be complacent. There is no point in me talking about all that is good. What is good today puts rice on the table today. Fixing the bad and making the average better ensures rice in the future. With chicken.

It is the responsibility of every Nepali and all of us 'working visitors' to do our best, to make sure that every visitor will want to come back. That is strategy. Every taxi driver or airport luggage tout who rips off tourists is damaging Nepal. 🔼

Ted Atkins is a former RAF Chief Engineering Officer and works on mountaineering oxygen systems.

Wild and dangerous



¬he Mardi trek in the Annapurna region is one of the most accessible scenic wilderness areas. However, it is also deceptively dangerous. The trek follows a narrow ridge that is the

southwestern spur of Machapuchre and its side peak, Mardi. People tend to get lost because of unmarked trails and the steep, slippery terrain.

At least three tourists have gone missing without a trace in the last two trekking seasons, and tourism entrepreneurs say many more have died and were injured since Mardi was opened up to tourists in 2011.

Corrie van Veggel, a 49-year-old Dutch woman, is the latest case on Mardi. After reaching the 4,500m Mardi Base Camp on 19 February, she took some selfies here and she descended to High Camp at 3,550m and

spent one night there. "It is a kind of lodge," she wrote in what turned out to be her last email — to her daughter Rein.

She emailed her daughters a few photos, including one in which she is seen at the base Camp (see pic), before heading further down to Pokhara. She had booked a place for a two-week course in April at Pokhara Vipassana Meditation Centre.

Corrie had told her family that she would be out of contact for two weeks once she started vipassana. Even so, she was expected to inform her daughter about her safe arrival in Pokhara. But there was no more word from her.

When Corrie's daughter was informed by Pokhara Vipassana Meditation Centre that she was yet to enroll for the April course, the search began

Last month, Corrie's mother, 76-year-old Jennie van Veggel spent three weeks on the Mardi trek, piecing together all information about her missing daughter. Police also accompanied her with sniffer dogs, but Corrie was nowhere to be found.

Before leaving Pokhara after a futile search for her missing daughter, Jennie told Nepali Times: "I don't know what to tell her daughter and husband when I get back.'

Jennie thinks her daughter chose the shorter but more dangerous route back to Pokhara via Sidhing. This route cuts through a dense forest and is so steep that even vaks have fallen off the trail.

Pokhara-based trekking guide Dilip Acharya says: "This route is so difficult that it would be almost impossible to rescue a person who falls off the cliff."

The other route back to Pokhara is longer and relatively safer. But even that one is not completely without danger.

In February, Bipana Upreti, a 21-year-old MBBS student at Manipal Teaching Hospital in Pokhara, lost her way around Pitam Deurali. She is still missing.

In October 2016, an Israeli tourist, 45-year-old Amit Reichman, went missing near the Mardi Base Camp and was never found.

What makes the Mardi Trek such a draw is the wilderness, but trekking guides say it needs more signage, direction signs and warning signs for trekkers about the dangerous parts. Yuvaraj Shrestha in Mardi

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Love-hate relations

During his visit to Nepal this weekend, Indian PM Narendra Modi inaugurates a Janakpur-Ayodhya bus service as part of the Ramayana Circuit, remotely lays the foundation stone of the 900MW Arun III project, and signs agreements on agriculture, railway and inland waterway connectivity with PM KP Oli. However, 11 trucks of Nepal's tea exports have been blocked by Indian customs office at Panitanki.

New lead

Faris Hadad-Zervos is the new World Bank Country Manager for Nepal. An American,



he was with the Bank in Malaysia and also served in West Asia and North Africa.

Otter of 10

KFC has launched a special Wednesday Offer with 10 pieces of 'Hot and Crispy' Chicken' for only Rs990. The chain has six outlets in Nepal and recently renovated its Darbar Marg restaurant.

Qatar in India

Qatar Airways is planning to start a full service carrier in India under its ownership with an Indian management team. Qatar



will not have an Indian partner and is currently waiting for the government to give the operating license.

Turkish tee off

Turkish Airlines is set to host the qualifiers for the sixth edition of Amateur Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup at Gokarna



Golf Club on 12 May, with 100 players from Gokarna, Royal Nepal Golf Club, Dharan and Pokhara. The winner will get a ticket to the grand finals in Antalya in

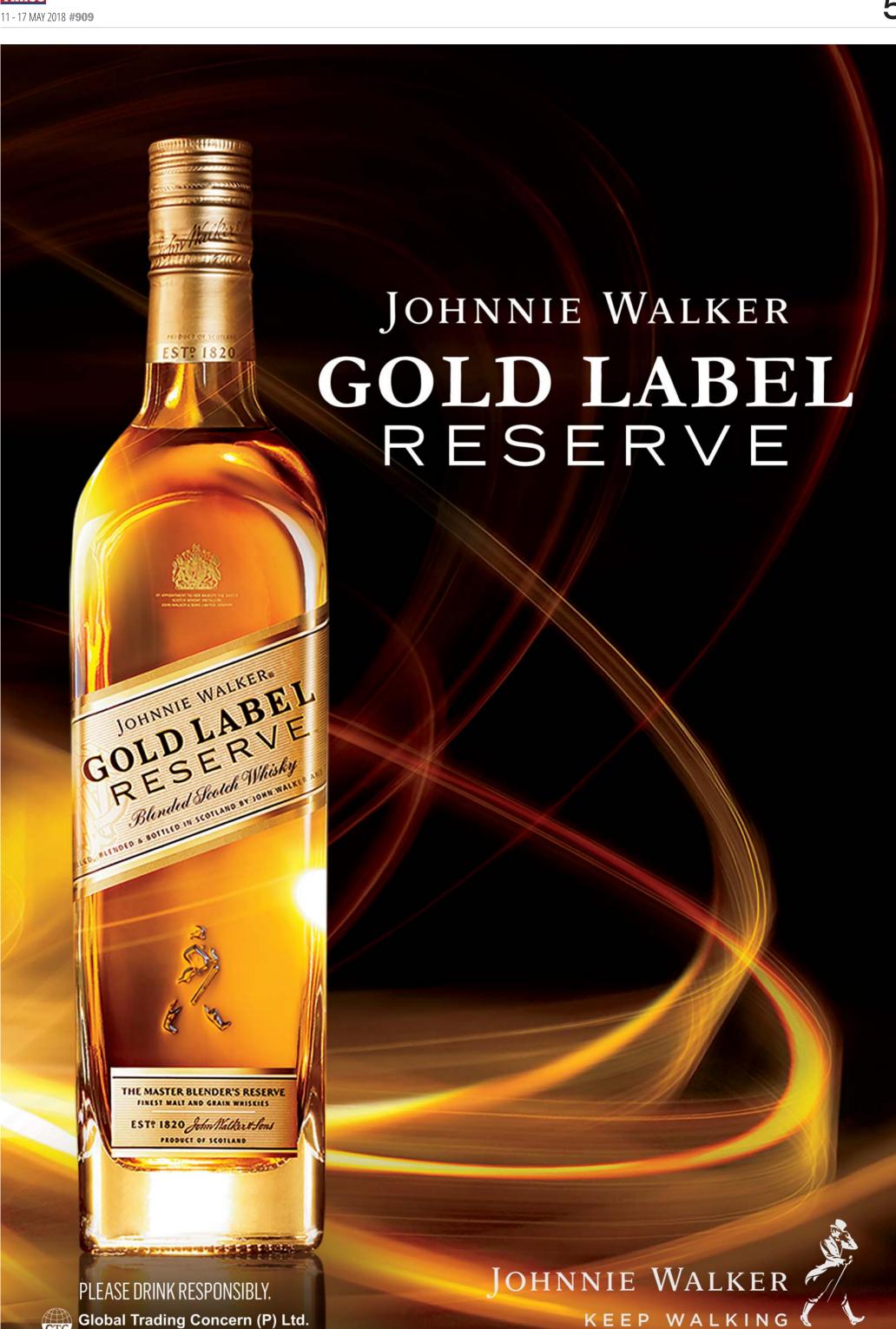
Swanky studio Hotel de l'Annapurna has launched a new

'Fitness Studio'. It opens 6am-9pm, 365 days a year, and members can also use the sauna and swimming pool.

Alibaba in Nepal

The Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group is acquiring the entire share capital of Daraz, a Pakistan-based e-commerce company operating in South Asian countries including Nepal.





The Kathmandu crowd

The Valley in the 1970s was a haven for biologists, ethnologists and anthropologists

't still stands, a rather plain large brick house whose oncespacious garden has since sprouted several new residences, cheek by jowl. Located on the corner of Sanepa and Kiran Bhawan, the so-called 'staff house' was where I lived after moving from Chitwan to work in the Durbarmarg office.



I would hesitate to call it 'home' due to the relentless intrusion of Tiger Tops company guests who came and went — friends of friends, itinerant staff and assorted hangerson. There was always someone passing through who needed a bed or a place to leave their bags. With the constant comings and goings, I was never sure whom I would meet at breakfast.

My favourite spot was the small square sitting room on the third floor with screened windows and floor-level seats, opening onto a big roof terrace from where the white peaks hovered across the rice terraces, mustard fields and tiered ridges beyond (pictured, right). Seemingly close enough to touch in the pristine mountain air, the crystal clarity that characterised those Himalayan hills has gone forever. In the limpid light, the white stupa of Swayambhunath floated on its sacred wood. But the Valley's encircling hills were denuded and patchy, less forested and densely verdant than today.

Jim's big brown horse lived in the garage, rescued from the Tollygunge racecourse in Calcutta, looked after by bandy-legged Ram Kaji whose other jobs were to tend the marigolds, grow vegetables and open the big clanging metal gates on demand. I used to ride sedately



through the paddies and mud roads amidst the peace of Patan in the late 1970s — saluting careful cyclists and avoiding the few cars, mostly painted in donor colours.

Sheila Laing was one who came visiting her stepson Nick and decided not to leave -- an older lady in search of sanctuary from a troubled marriage. I loved having her around. Short wired hair and sassy tinged with sadness, Sheila relished my eclectic collection of somewhat dubious Kathmandu friends, though they were a far cry from her colonial Caribbean home.

After work we could be found lolling on the cushions in my rooftop eyrie. Sheila and I smoked and swapped art stories with antique collectors Mervyn, Andy and Dutch Bob, or long-haired Addison regaled us with Humpa-Yeti trekking tales to forbidden regions. Former army officer D-Boy traded duty-free whisky and entertained us with tales of illicit border escapades by elephant. His departure from the regiment had been hastened by his forgetting the General's uniform on one crucial occasion.

Next door, the UN pilot Hardy Fuerer stayed on the top floor of an austere concrete house reached through a tangled path past his parked powder-blue Mercedes, opera music blaring from his open evening windows. At the top of the lane, the genial General Kiran personified Rana splendour with his extended family in a crumbling white palace, the extensive garden resonating with lost elegance overgrown walkways, box hedges and fountains that did not work.

Just down the hill, father and son doctors and ornithologists Bob Fleming Senior and Junior lived in missionary simplicity, always welcoming with a cup of sweet milky tea in chunky china. Having founded Nepal's first modern hospital in Shanta Bhawan, they were assembling watercolours to illustrate the first Birds of Nepal

Nepal in the 1970s was a haven for biologists, ethnologists and anthropologists, and many found their way to the Kathmandu staff house. American Jeff McNeely stored tin trunks of specimens from his Arun expedition in the bulging cupboard under the stairs, including one he showed me containing white plaster casts of alleged yeti footprints which have since been lost to

science. Perching uncomfortably on the low seats of our top room, Austrian Professor von Furer-Haimendorf was a frequent visitor in tweed suit and endless acolytes, and Corneille Jest from Paris charmed us with his ethnic pilgrimages in deepest Dolpo. Around our hearth Tibetologists David Snellgrove and Thadeus Skorupski debated Buddhist and Jesuit philosophy, whilst Pasang shared his fiery amber brew, the first samples of Marpha apple brandy.

The husband's dalliance turned out to be temporary, so to my chagrin but her relief, Sheila bid farewell to the Kathmandu crowd after a few months and headed home to married life. But she stayed in touch and our embryonic London marketing office later camped in her Fulham pied-a-terre with creaking wood floors, so cramped that meetings had to be held standing in the broom cupboard for privacy.

One day an intense young researcher dropped by the Sanepa staff house bearing a small puppy he had rescued from a Lalitpur gutter and named Hodgson after the second British Resident. Tristram Riley-Smith was returning to Cambridge, his anthropological thesis on Nepal history and Newari family structures complete.

Hodgson grew into an unruly and disobedient liver-coloured street dog with a chronic skin condition that seldom healed. My companion for the next decade, together we weathered some major milestones. But Hodgson never lived up to his grand name – he took my marriage in his stride but disdained baby Sanjay as unwanted competition, and distinguished himself by sleeping undisturbed on his cane chair throughout the 1988 earthquake that rocked the Valley.

DELIGHT

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Santa Gaha Magar

Despite government

Nepal's cricketers are going places

interference and neglect,



Finally, real summer is setting in after that long spring and unusually cool early May. The wind is shifting to more usual patterns for this time of year, and although the jet stream is still holding strong over the high peaks, it is preparing for its annual migration northwards. This is good news for the 650 climbers waiting for the 'weather window' to climb Mt Everest. Expect clear, bright and windy days with afternoon buildup in the Valley on Sunday.











and momentous achievements in the past few years, Nepali cricketers expected more encouragement and support from the government.

fter a string of nail-biting performances

But they were in for a rude shock: heavy government interference in the cricket governing body prompted International Cricket Council (ICC) to suspend Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) in 2016.

The ICC ban meant that CAN did not have the legitimacy and financial resources to organise domestic leagues and tournaments, which are vital for scouting new talent for the national team. The ban also delayed several sports infrastructure projects.

CAN's General Secretary Ashok Nath Pyakurel says: "The ban pushed Nepal's cricket back by at least five years.

Despite that and a difficult two years in which skipper Paras Khadka and his team pulled off even more thrilling victories, ICC has finally hinted at lifting the suspension.

After CAN agreed to endorse a statute approved by the ICC advisory board, the world cricket body has promised to revoke its decision under one condition: that CAN hold fresh elections under its new statute,

effectively ensuring that the government will have no say in its functioning anymore.

If the ICC recognises CAN again, Nepali cricket could enter what could be its golden age free from political interference. CAN's former CEO Bhawana Ghimire says: "The time is ripe for Nepali cricket to strike it big, and it is up to us to remake its future.

Despite all odds, Nepali cricketers have in the last two years earned One Day International (ODI) status with stellar performances, like in Namibia in February, which made headlines not just in Nepal but around the world.

To help promote Nepal in the ICC Division 1 status, all-rounder Karan KC played an inning no cricketer had ever played before: as the last batsman standing, KC smashed 42 runs unbeaten off 36 deliveries, securing a one-wicket victory against Canada. ESPN described it as 'one of the most miraculous endings to an ICC tournament at

The Cardiac Kids from Nepal, as Nepali cricketers were referred to by ESPN after the Namibia tour, travelled to Zimbabwe in March, hoping to qualify for the ICC World Cup. They failed after narrowly falling behind Afghanistan in the run-rate. But they did achieve ODI status till 2022.

This international success and support seems to have put moral pressure on CAN's political appointees to rethink and back off, paving the way for free and fair elections -- a prerequisite for lifting the

The success of Nepali cricketers has in fact spotlighted just how little the government had done to develop the sport. This bolstered the position of those in favour of amending the CAN statute and loosening the government's grip.

CAN General Secretary Pyakurel says: "Even those sabotaging CAN have now understood how important it is to have a strong governing body.

With CAN out of the picture, the private sector had come forward to organise successful domestic tournaments like Dhangadi Premier League (DPL) and Everest Premier League (EPL). Tv channels now pay more than Rs10 million for broadcast rights for each tournament.

And for the first time, Indian Premier League (IPL) has bought a Nepali spinner Sandeep Lamichhane. He is still struggling to make it to the playing set of the Delhi Daredevils, but he could open the door for other Nepali players in the

world's biggest cricket league. National cricket team coach Jagat Tamata, however, warns that Nepal could easily lose it all again: "We have a tendency to

be overconfident and complacent after every major success. We have many more challenges to overcome. Tamata thinks

Nepali cricketers are still not experienced enough for international cricket due to the lack of strong opponents in domestic games. He adds: "If we want good

results, there must be more tournaments so there is more choice. I am now mostly selecting the best from among the worst."





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TOI CONTISTS

Sewa Bhattarai

ith its gentle inclines, convenient distances and scenery, Kathmandu had always been an ideal cycling city. Tourists to Nepal in the 1970s wrote ecstatically about pedalling past emerald green terraces to hilltop towns with ancient monuments.

But that was before cars drove bicycles off the roads. Bicycles made a comeback during the fuel crisis during the 2015 Blockade, but soon things went back to roads choked with cars and exhaust fumes.

There has been new interest in trail biking around the Valley rim and in the high mountains as an adventure sport, but commuting by bicycles is in steep decline because of pollution and the unkept promise of bicycle lanes.

Abhishek Shrestha, who runs Cycle Chain, a bicycle shop in Jhamsikhel was selling up to four bicycles every week till two years ago. Now, he hardly sells one a month.

"Without separate bicycle lanes, motor vehicles pose a great hazard for cyclists," says Shrestha. Ironically, however, the sale of face masks have shot up, indicating that pollution is a factor putting off cyclists.

The death of conservationist Dr. Pralad Yonzon is still fresh in the minds of people, through it happened in 2011. An avid environmentalist, Dr. Yonzon practised what he preached and commuted on a bicycle. A truck rammed into his bicycle at Balkhu, leading to his death, and the roads continue to be as dangerous for cyclists.

True cycle enthusiasts like Girish Giri (below) however, have a reverse logic about bicycling around town: "I am glad I am not contributing to the air pollution," grins Girish, a journalist who cycles to work every day, and last month bicycled 120km to Birganj from Kathmandu.

The tax on bicycles (25%) is far less than on motor vehicles, so the price is about the same as in the country of manufacture. However, since bicycles are still associated with the lower middle class, it hasn't gained popularity among middle class commuters in Kathmandu.

Bicycle seller Keshav Bahadur Mahat in Patan agrees, saying affordable scooters have





Make sure bicycling is not injurious to health

Amir Neupane

ately, many patients have been coming to my physiotherapy clinic complaining of pain in the elbow joint, ■neck, knee, back, tendinitis and nerve impinchment. Most are bicycle enthusiasts who took up the sport to improve their health.

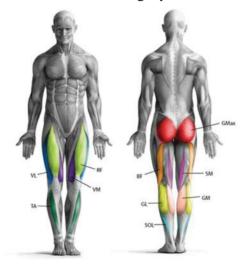
Indeed, bicycling can have many health benefits: increasing cardiovascular fitness, improving muscle strength and flexibility, greater joint mobility, reducing stress, better posture and coordination, and decreased body

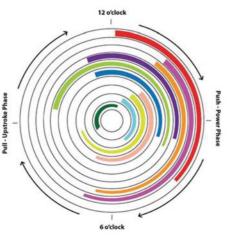
We need to understand the interface between the human musculoskeletal system and the mechanical laws of the bicycle to use it properly. The idea is to prevent common injuries while using bicycles for commuting, mountain biking, or in triathalons and extreme racing.

Healthy Exercise

- **Monitor air pollution.** Consult *Nepali Times* on mobile for live air pollution levels in Kathmandu to check if it is safe.
- **Timing workouts.** Avoid outdoor physical activity and reduce exercising when pollution levels are highest in mornings and evenings, or rush hours.
- **Avoid high-pollution areas.** Pollution levels are highest within 400m of busy roads. Take bike up to ridge (see accompanying article)
- **Exercise indoors.** Exercise indoors when air quality is bad. Check out a local gym or run laps on an indoor track.

Muscles used during a pedal stroke





Gluteus maximus - GMax

Vastus lateralis - VL Soleus - SOL

the long-term benefits of regular exercise outweigh the risks associated with exposure to air pollution.

Cycling incorporates all main leg muscle

physiotherapist can pinpoint the problem and

While physical activity is one of the

keys to a healthy lifestyle, air pollution and

This is especially true if you have asthma,

diabetes, and heart or lung conditions. Young

and toxic emissions in Kathmandu are several

times higher than the WHO's safe threshold. Health problems increase while exercising

in polluted areas. During increased physical

breathe it more deeply into your lungs. The

pollution and exercise is which types of air

prudent to avoid cycling along Kathmandu's

main roads, especially in the mornings and

However, research has shown that

pollution are most harmful over time. It is

air also passes through the mouth, bypassing the nasal passages which normally filter airborne particles. What is not clear with air

activity you usually inhale more air and

work or exercise outdoors can be especially

exercise can be a harmful combination.

children, older people, and people who

susceptible to the effects of outdoor air pollution. Street level suspended particulates

groups during various phases of pedaling. This movement is ideal for strengthening muscles, but overuse may cause repetitive

stress injury and pain (see box, right) A

locate any strength deficits.

Amir Neupane is an evidence based physio-practioner, and manages Aashas Health Care in Jawalakhel. http://aashas.com.np/

Posture

Your bike must be adjusted to suit your body size and shape so you are more relaxed and can ride longer distances with less effort. However much you enjoy bicycling, don't overdo it. If you get pains, visit a physiotherapist with a special interest in bike setup or a cycling store professional

Pick your bike: Do you want a bicycle to commute or for trail biking? Pick the right type and size.





Posture: Avoid excessive movement of the upper body. Maintain neutral spine by bending forward at the hips. Do not hunch, do not sway.

Reach: Have a comfortable reach with the handlebar, not too far away and not too near. Your arms should be 90 degrees to your torso.



Pedal: The ball of your foot should be centred over the pedal axle.

Saddle: Saddle should not be tilted and its height should be adjusted so that when the pedals are horizontal your knee is directly over the





cut into his market: "Only children's bicycles are still selling well."

With events like Mountain Bike Championships and Kora Cycling, the awareness about the recreational benefits of bicycling has grown. But sports cycling still has a long way to go.

"There is no velodrome in Nepal for indoor track cycling, and cross-country cycling, para-cycling, BMX, haven't really taken off and although Nepal's terrain is suitable for mountain biking, even that discipline has not grown to its full potential," explains Gopal Sundar Lal Kakshapati of the Nepal Cycling Association.

Activists lobbied for years to make Kathmandu more cycle-friendly, and Kathmandu Mayor Bidya Sundar Shakya had a plan for a 'Cycle City' with bicycle lanes and parking areas in his famous list of 100 Things To Do Within the First 100 Days in office.

"The 100 days have long passed, and we are disappointed the new Ring Road also does not have bicycle lanes," says Shailendra Dangol of Cycle City Network Nepal advocacy group.

Nepal's terrain is ideal for all kinds of cycling, but policies and plans actively discourage bicycles at a time when cities around the world are returning to this mode of transport.



Follow Kathmandu's bicycle commuters as they risk their health negotiating treacherous traffic on dusty streets. Listen to why they do it

nepalitimes.com

Riding above the haze

Mountain biking with a mask is better than no exercise at all

Tyler Mcmahon

It was only after getting above
Budhanilkantha that I took my mask off,
as I gasped up the trail on Shivapuri.
This is my morning routine: ride outside
of the Ring Road until I reach an area with
better air. Two hours later, I return down to
the Valley floor, where I put the mask back
on and ride the last 7 km into the city centre.
With Kathmandu's air quality constantly at
'Extremely Unhealthy' levels there isn't really
another option.

Riding with a mask until reaching safer air and getting exercise is better than not exercising because of pollution. Some studies even show cyclists are potentially exposed to less pollution than people in vehicles, so wearing a mask that reduces pollution by 90% or more is worth the risk (see health tips, below).

Despite the pollution, the Valley rim is still a great place to stay in shape. The ridges surrounding the Valley offer trails ideal for running and cycling, extending from forested hills through the paddy terraces far above the pollution. One can easily ride 2 hours in the morning and get above the dirty air, and still make it back for work. Or there are 4-6-hour cycling trips on weekends. The rides with Himalayan views, clean air, good singletrack and tasty lunch at village tea shops make for an excellent Saturday out on a bike.

Tyler McMahon has lived in Nepal for 10 years, and has completed the world's highest mountain bike race, The Yak Attack, five times. He is co-founder and adviser for SmartPaani.



Shivapuri Scar Route

Easily accessed by riding or driving to Kakani, enter the Shivapuri National Park (Rs1,565 for foreigners, Rs100 for Nepalis). Continue on trail until a fork taking right and left contours around the park. Left is more travelled by, with a technical singletrack and beautiful views for 10 km until Gurje Bhanjyang. Drop back to Kathmandu via Tokha and Grande Hospital or continue on. The loop can have as much as 30km off-road singletrack. Multiday adventures include Chisapani and/or Nagarkot (single 12-hour+ day for extreme riders).

Up to Jamacho is also a very good ride inside the National Park. Around the perimeter of Nagarjun used to be good, but is now a dusty, muddy loop due to construction and traffic.

Best time to ride is October to May.



Despite the high mountain bike fees charged by the park, minimal maintenance is done and leeches and stinging nettle are in abundance, along with landslide damage.

Shivapuri Helipad Route This is a shorter morning ride, easily

This is a shorter morning ride, easily accessible from Budanilkantha. Take a right before the gate, take a right and head east. This road meanders, but follow the track up the ridge. This is a steep 2.3km climb which tops out onto an old helipad and continues up into the park. This downhill (not for beginners) is famous among Kathmandu mountain bikers and is one of the best. Continue to Kopan Monastery or take different trails back to Kathmandu.

Best time to ride is October to June, with some exceptions in April/May after heavy storms, but it remains ridable all year (no



Mudkhu to Tokha Trail

Good ride for beginners and fun the whole year. Construction and bulldozers make conditions unpredictable, so be prepared for muddy conditions, even in winter.

Year Round Ride.

Lakhuri-Lele-Bungamati Ride

These are all scenic rides on the Valley's southern rim. Some require fitness for climbing (Lakuri: 550m, Phulchowki >1400m in 14 km) but all have easy access, are forested and away from the Kathmandu chaos. The loop times range from 2-7 hours depending on entry and exit points. The brick factories below Khokana emit a growing amount of pollution.

Mostly year-round rides. Some of the forest singletracks are slippery in the monsoon.

EVENTS



Moods and Moments

Award winning photographer with 27 years experience, Min Ratna Bajracharya, exhibits his photographs in a collection - Moods and Moments. Also on display is Toni Hagen's camera which took pictures of Nepal since the 1950s, a gift to Bajracharya from Hagen. 11 May-20 June, The Britt, Taukhel, Godavari, 9841242307

Sacred Survival

An exhibition of seven contemporary Thanka and Paubha painters: Lok Chitrkar, Muna Moktan, Tenzin Norbu, Bhim Thapa, Sonam Dolma Tamang, Tularam Lama and Karma Rinchhen Gurung. 11-21 May, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4018048

Portraits & landscapes

Best portraits and landscapes of Nepal shot by participants of Eric Huynh's photography workshop in April. 11 May-29 June, Auditorium, Alliance Francaise Kathmandu, Pulchowk, (01) 5009221



Food tasting

Taste American, Japanese, British, Spanish and Sri Lankan cuisine prepared by culinary students at the International Food Tasting Event 2018.

12 May, 11am-5pm, Academy of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, Rs350, 9801104804

Celebration of womanhood

Visual artist Erina Tamrakar's collection of art celebrating womanhood on display at the restaurant.

11-31 May, 11am-10pm, GG Machaan, Pulchowk, (01) 5554291

Drishyansha closing

A nationwide cell phone Nepali short film competition comes to an end with a screening of 10 short films shot using mobile phones.

11 May, 4pm onwards, Sarwanam Theatre, Kalikasthan, (01) 4011027

Town hall meeting

A discussion on solutions to reduce air pollution, hosted by the Mayor of Lalitpur Chiribabu Maharjan.

11 May, 2pm onwards, Lalitpur Metropolitan City Office, Pulchowk, (01) 5522563



The Storytellers

The Storytellers' photographers' series brings Raj Bhai Suwal, Kishor Kayastha and Chandra Shekhar Karki to tell stories behind the frames.

16 May, 5:15pm onwards, Russian Cultural Center, Kamalpokhari, Rs300 (presale)/ Rs350(door sale), 9851242128

Unlimited weekend fun

Enjoy Saturday with friends or family at the hotel's swimming pool with servings of unlimited food and drinks.

12 May, 11:30am-3pm, Pool Side, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Lazimpat, Rs1,800 (adult), Rs1,000 (child below 10 years), (01) 427399

Comedy circle

A dose of fresh stand-up comedy by Kshitiz, Sajan, Ayush and Rajina for the

12 May, 6:30-9pm, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel, 9841915887

Byoga

An hour long session to experience beer with yoga. Breathe, sip and stretch. 19 May, 4-5pm/6-7pm, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, Rs2,500, 9813365426, 9841269962

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MUSIC



The Gentlemen

The Gentlemen is back to bring the roof down. Inject musical notes into your system and let the good times roll this Friday.

11 May, 6:30-9:30pm, Wicked Spoon Fork and Rock, Jhamsikhel, 9843471625

The Kathmandu Killers

The Kathmandu Killers playing a mixture of punk, ska, hardcore and electro music, together with Dissonance. The band has recently released their first ever EP 'Stories of Krantipur' with songs like Dubai Gorkhali, Goldstar Jutta and Falamko

11 May, 7:30pm onwards, House of Music, Amrit Marg, Thamel, Rs200, 9849377915

Jackowacko

Special summer jazz night with Jacko Wacko and great food and exotic drinks. 11 May, 7-10pm, Places Restaurant and Bar, Saat Ghumti Marg, (01) 4700413



Kutumba

The popular Nepali folk instrumental ensemble performing live at the restaurant. Join in to celebrate Nepali indigenous music.

12 May, 7-11pm, Friends Restaurant, Mandala Street, Thamel, (01) 4700063

The Kathmandu Chorale

Lift up your spirit at The Kathmandu Chorale's new spring concert 'Draw the Circle Wide' with children from the Baluwatar School, directed by Iris Kolodji. 12 May, 2-6pm, The British School, Ihamsikhel,

thekathmanduchorale@gmail.com

OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu on 11 May

Raazi is a Bollywood period-thriller film directed by Meghna Gulzar, with Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal in lead roles. An adaptation of Harinder Sikka's novel Calling Sehmat, the film revolves around a Kashmiri woman named Sehmat (Bhatt) who sacrifices herself in the service of her nation. To assist Indian intelligence during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, Sehmat is married to a Pakistani Army Officer Iqbal Sayed (Kaushal) without letting him know her identity. The movie, said to be more than a story of patriotism, is an exciting portrayal of a female lead as a daughter, wife and spy.

DINING



Arniko Room

Enjoy a 3-course set 'Executive Lunch'

Kailash Restaurant

Enjoy fine dining at the restaurant of the 50 year-old hotel. Serving continental, Chinese and Indian cuisine. Hotel Shanker, Lazimpat, (01) 4410151

Muse Restobar

A multi cuisine restaurant and bar with sophisticated wooden interior, providing a complete family environment. Uttardhoka, Lazimpat, (01) 4445533



The Diplomat

Experience luxurious culinary delights at the hotel's Indian and Continental restaurant, without compromising on comfort.

Hotel Ambassador, Lazimpat, (01) 4410432

Bayleaf

Drop by the garden restaurant for Burmese dishes such as Burmese Tofu Thoke, Khao Swe Thoke (Noodle Salad), Mohinga (fish noodle soup) and other signature pork dishes.

Tangal, opposite to Attic Bar, (01) 4437490



Hotel Kaze Darbar

Enjoy Japanese delicacies and more at the boutique hotel. Not to miss is their grilled pork in Miso paste. Kamalpokhari, (01) 4439303

Lake View Resort

The resort's private huts, featuring hand crafted wooden furniture, local stone exterior and a private veranda, offer a great weekend escape. Lake Side, Pokhara (061) 461477/463854

Balthali Village Resort

A small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses.

Panauti, Kavre, 9851087772



Dahlia Boutique Hotel

A luxury hotel at the bank of Phewa Lake with 180 degree mountain and city view: a good end to a memorable trek. Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 466505

Club Himalaya

Amazing mountain views through gaps in monsoon clouds for refreshing weekend escapades.

Nagarkot, (01) 6680080



Shangri-La Village Resort

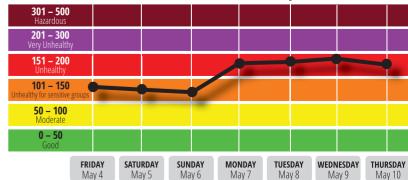
2 nights and 3 days special package at the village resort. Let the monsoon bring out the madness in you.

11May-30 September, Gharipatan, Pokhara, Rs7,499 (single, get coupons worth Rs3,000 back), (061) 462222

Chhaimale Village Resort

Adorned with pear trees, the Resort is an ideal destination for anyone seeking to escape the madness of Kathmandu city. Chhaimale, (01) 4268121

AIR QUALITY INDEX KATHMANDU, 4-10 May



Despite brief periods when air pollution levels in Kathmandu's city centre dropped to moderate levels after showers this week, it was soon back to the more 'normal' Unhealthy band. The average daily measurements at the monitoring station in Phora Darbar showed unacceptably high concentrations of dangerous particles below 2.5 microns contained in vehicle emissions and surface ozone. Moral of the story: the rains clean Kathmandu's air but only temporarily.

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

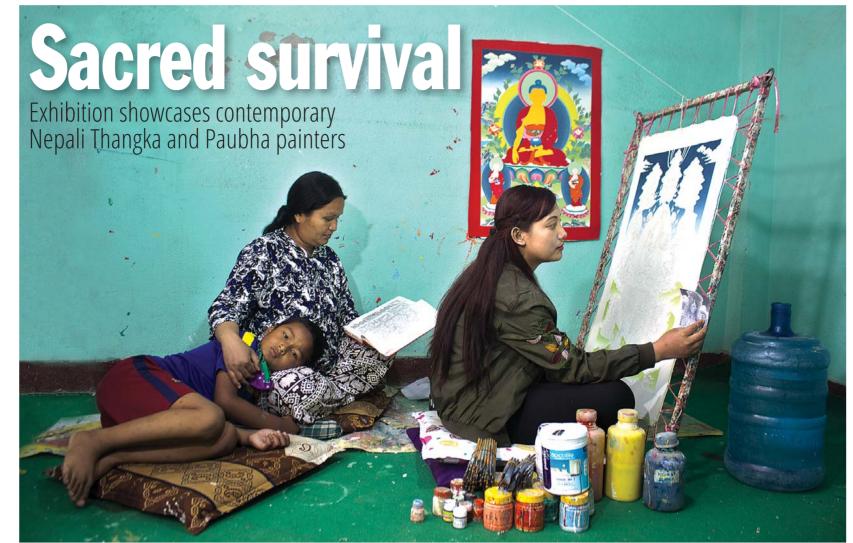


PHOTO: MICHAEL GORDON

Michael Gordon

alk into most Paubha or Thangka shops in Thamel or Durbar Marg, and you will probably hear a story about Tibetan monks grinding stone pigments high in the Himalaya. 'Exotic' spirituality has become as much of a brand as Iphones used to Instagram it, but in reality most of these paintings are produced by Tamangs, Gurungs, and Newars using inexpensive poster colors in warehouses around Boudha and Bhaktapur.

The painting factories may not seem 'authentic', but for the artist it puts food on the table. The demands of economic survival and the need for cultural preservation create new terms of authenticity for paubha and thangka.

Thangka and paubha were originally ritual objects for Vajrayana Buddhists. Many would like to separate what is sacred and what is sold, but this is a false distinction. The paintings always involved financial transactions. However, as secular art collectors and tourists buy more of them, profit drives commodification.

Tularam Lama has been painting for over 25 years, yet he is still at the mercy of gallery dealers who do not share their profits with

"We are compelled to sell cheap," says Lama, who founded the Nepal Association of Thangka Artists. He still strives to maintain artistic integrity, teaching Tamang students to paint with inexpensive pigments as well as to understand the tradition's cultural heritage.

Some painters use the market to build connections. Bhim Thapa, manager of Tara Thangka Center in Thamel, donates 25% of his sales to his community in Sindhupalchok. Prior to the earthquake, Thapa's sales supported orphan children and women's education. Today he focuses on basic necessities like blankets and food. "Thangka is not about perfect iconography, says Thapa, "to help is my dharma."

At the other end of the spectrum, internationally renowned Lok Chitrakar paints with traditional mineral colors and works with scholastic rigour. He will be the first to gently remind you that paubha and thangka are not the same thing.

Paubha was developed by the Newars of Kathmandu Valley in the 7th century. Nepali Princess Bhrikuti is said to have taken some of the images with her when she introduced Buddhism to Tibet 1,300 years ago. Over centuries, Tibetans developed their own stylistic code known as thangka. After the exile of the Dalai Lama in 1959, Tibet and its people gained increasing global popularity. Today, many tourists flock to Nepal as a surrogate for Tibet, hoping to find the monasteries (and thangkas) they saw in TinTin in Tibet and National Geographic documentaries. But what they find may defy expectations: Lok Chitrakar's use of Hindu gods like Ganesh as icons of Newari Buddhism is not just an artistic choice, but a testimony to Nepal's unique religious coexistence.

For many, however, maintaining these traditions is oppressive. Historically, thangka and paubha were made by men, but today the field is changing thanks to women artists like Muna Moktan. For her thangka means not just employment but also empowerment. She supports her family and a school of aspiring Tamang artists (mostly girls) with her paintings.

"Women need to find a way to live on their own means, and I found it through thangka," says Moktan

Sonam Dolma guides (rather than 'teaches') students in ritual pursuit of perfection. Many painting production centers now use transparent plastic overlays to rapidly reproduce outlines. Sonam's students at the Tsering Art school use black wooden boards thinly coated with ghee and dusted with white chalk- to repeatedly draw until outlies are memorised, "by hand, mind, and heart." The painters begin and end each day with prayer, to remember the true



purpose of their craft.

One of Sonam's top students, Karma Rinchhen Gurung, paints to strengthen his practice as a Buddhist monk. At 15, he entered Samten Ling Monastery, and like his monastic vows, his painting brings him freedom through discipline. He considers his practice meditation, focusing his mind and brush on a single point. People often ask if he paints to make money. He himself wonders: "Am I doing this for dharma or for economic reasons?" Many students at Tsering Art School, including monks, paint for private dealers to afford living in Kathmandu.

The foreign interest in thangka and paubha has also encouraged artistic individuality. Tenzin Norbu comes from a 400 year old lineage of thangka painters. Each new generation broke away from the stylistic trends of their predecessors. Norbu now illustrates modern Dolpo life and has shown around the world from the Rubin Museum in New York to Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. His ancestors never signed their paintings, believing in the collective accumulation of merit. Norbu now champions his distinct style as an emblem of personal entrepreneurship.

For some, the craft is a way of maintaining cultural and spiritual lineage. For others, redefining not only what is painted, but who gets to paint affirms the rapid democratisation of the art from. To all artists, the paintings are a means of sacred survival, providing both sanctuary and subsistence.

Sacred Survival, an exhibition of seven contemporary thangka and paubha artists 11 to 21 May, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Curated by Michael Gordon.











For Reservation:
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very reviewer who is not located at a city which is cinema will tell you that sometimes they struggle to bring attention to the best, and most relevant, cinema to their readers and viewers - on a weekly basis.



At a time when Avengers: Infinity War has been in the theaters for several weekends and the remaining titles are *Damaru* ko Dandibiyo, Kohalpur Express, Shatru Gate, and Rampage - I prefer, rightly or wrongly, depending on how much you might gain from such decisions, to bring attention to films that are not immediately available at their time of release but find their way into our markets in various ways for intrepid cinephiles who are on the lookout.

M-Series Printers

Recommended to me by a movie-loving friend who saw it when it came out in cinemas in France last year, right after it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival (outside of competition but winning an accolade nevertheless). Faces Places is a film worth chasing down. A documentary made by the legendary Agnès Varda – now in her late 80s, in collaboration with her friend, the 35-year-old French artist known only as JR, Faces Places or Visages Villages as it is titled in French, is the story of two artists, undaunted by their age differences, who decide to travel across France, meeting their fellow countrywomen and men, and creating art out of the faces and occupations of these quotidian but quietly extraordinary

JR prints the photos of the people they meet, and with his skilled team, watched over by Varda's unerring cinematographer's eye, these images are pasted onto the edifices of people's towns, homes, monuments, and sometimes the abandoned ruins that used to

house entire communities.

The project sounds simple, maybe even facile, but in the hands of more ambitious, less artistic people (documentary makers are often ruthless in the manipulation of their subjects: but not these two young at heart, old souls) it could have gone wrong. Instead, the film meanders along at its own pace, the two friends converse over where to go, unafraid of boring the viewer, tease each other mercilessly, and together bring out the most tender and human aspect of themselves, and their subjects, resulting in breath-taking portraits of the people and the places they live in.

Faces Places was rightly nominated in the Best Documentary category this year, but this piece of information is only included in my review to convince the sceptics who might be holding out till now. While it did not win, the film is such a piece of beauty in an ugly world that it is worth finding, and viewing. It is also a chance to see one of Agnès Varda's films – her other films are not as accessible, even while Cleo from 5 to 7 (1961) is one of the great masterpieces of cinema, a dream of a film that follows the life of a woman, moment by moment, through her day: the kind of daring, insouciant, perfectly crafted film that every arthouse filmmaker dreams of making.

Readers interested in Nepal and its issues, in print or online, perhaps may wonder at the point of watching a film about French bluecollar workers. I guess, I would say, the wider your viewing, the more you can open your heart. So go out and seek.



Watch trailer online

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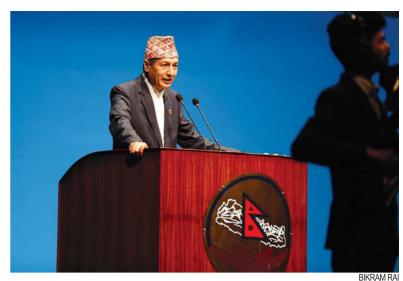
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UPTO 1 YEAR

OR 50,000

HIGH

SPEED



MONEY MATTERS: Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada, addressing Parliament on Wednesday, says the new budget would give top priority to infrastructure and connectivity.



EUROZONE: German Ambassador Roland Schaefer, Finnish Ambassador Jorma Suvanto, EU Ambassador Veronica Cody and British Ambassador Richard Morris (from left to right) at the Europe Day celebration at Hotel Annapurna on Wednesday.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS: The UK Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, calls on Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali at Singha Darbar on Sunday.



BEJEWELED: Indian actress Karishma Kapoor during an inauguration of Marigold Jewelers' showroom in Darbar Marg on Monday. The company aims to promote traditional Nepali jewelry in India.



BIRD CONSERVATION NEPAL

BIG DAY: Birders pose for a group picture after Bird Conservation Nepal's Global Big Day 2018 at Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park on Saturday.



"I want to live my last among friends"

First part of Upendra Devkota's own story in deshsanchar.com, 4 May

(Noted Nepali neurosurgeon Upendra Devkota is now in the Neuro Hospital in Maharajganj that he himself founded. He is battling terminal cancer, and returned after five months of treatment in London to 'live the rest of my life in the lap of my motherland'. Even though he is a surgeon, Devkota's disease has not affected his concern about Nepal's political and constitutional changes, social tolerance, widespread corruption and Nepal's independence.

We are grateful to Devkota for allowing us to present his views, and hope that this will not be his final testimonial.)

My British neurosurgeon colleague Henry Marsh, who wrote the bestselling book Admissions, and I drove off to Gorkha and reached the village about noon. We started climbing from Liglig up to Drabya Shah's historic palace with our packed lunch and some beer. Henry is about four years older, but the climb was harder on me. I was becoming a city slicker, I thought to myself. I pointed out landmarks in the 360 degree view from the top the Marsyangdi Valley, Lamjung, Chepe and Gorkha Darbar.

 \overline{I} sipped the beer, but did not like it at all, and we headed back down. Henry told me to get an endoscopy once we got back. I went to Patan Hospital and got a strange report: it was positive for gastritis and helicobacter. I got back to work, but kept taking the medications.

I was supporting the Left Coalition and went back to Gorkha ten days later. Election campaigning was in full swing. I gave speeches with Prachanda and K P Oli and exhorted everyone to vote for them. But I was not feeling well, and rested at home. I had to operate on a 12-year-old girl from Gorkha the next day. I was not satisfied with a fellow surgeon's work, and was unusually irritated. Something must be wrong with me, I thought. I looked at my face in the mirror and saw my eyes were yellow and thought I had jaundice as a side-effect of the clarithromycin that I was taking. I got an MRI and ultrasound in my own hospital. When I saw the scans, I was shocked.

It wasn't the cholestatic jaundice

as I had suspected, but obstructive jaundice. I consulted with some friends who are experts: the bile duct was blocked because of a growth in the liver. This could be life-threatening, and I called Henry in the UK. He got me an appointment for Tuesday at King's College Hospital with Prof Nigel Heaton. We flew out immediately to London because treatment was not possible in Nepal.

Nigel immediately called over some specialists. They tried to insert a stent in the bile duct with enormous difficulty, after a biopsy the diagnosis was cancer of the bile duct. It was a very serious prognosis and the only treatment was chemotherapy to reduce the size of the tumour, which oncologist Paul Ross supervised. Even though I had reached London on 21 November, the chemotherapy started only on 25 January. I had three treatment sessions, but the tumour size actually increased. Ross was disheartened with the lack of response. The CT scan showed that the cancer was spreading. It was probable that second line chemo would not work, radiotherapy would have side effects and surgery was not possible. I was in a

My options were running out, and I decided it would be better to return to Nepal and live out the rest of my life among you than continue with experimental treatment. I am a doctor myself, and my personal response to an incurable disease is to use what energy is left in the body to keep working. I decided to spend my last days in my own country, among my family and friends. I don't know if my experience will help anyone, but I love my motherland and my fellow Nepalis, and I will try to lay out my feelings in installments.

It is written in the Gita: 'It is certain that after life there is death'. Henry Longfellow wrote that life is a journey from the mother's womb to the tomb. The Nepali poet Kshetra Pratap Adhikari wrote: 'There is a lot left to do in life, the greatest of which is to die'.

Death is not so important. What is important is what the dead person leaves behind.



For full Nepali version of this piece, go to deshsanchar.com

Modi visit on Twittersphere

Selection of recent Tweets on the Nepali cybersphere about the Narendra Modi visit.



Madhu Raman Acharya @MadhuRamanACH

16h16 hours ago

No welcome of the Constitution. No acknowledgement that the blockade was a mistake. Just jumping from one felicitation to another. Isn't there something called self-esteem of a country and its people? Or will you just revel in kowtowing?



Jhalak subedi @makaikhole 1

5m15 minutes ago

The Modi visit is going to polarize Nepali politics. On one side there is rejoicing among some Madhesi people, on the other outrage among some mountain people. Reminiscent of the time the Constitution was promulgated. It is Nepal's loss. India has not changed its course.



Subhash Adhikary @subry2000

12h12 hours ago

The country is ours, but the guest chooses his destination. The sky is ours, but the plane is the guest's own. Our guest, but its his security. We are victims, but it is the perpetrator who is felicitated. There is a big difference between patriotism and nationalism.



Bishal Silwal @silwanen

12h12 hours ago

1. We needed airways, they agreed to waterways. 2. Easier to import more from there on a train. 3. They will help us with agriculture, but they move border pillars. You can only farm if there is land.



Deepak Adhikari Verified account @DeepakAdk

14h14 hours ago

A so-called nationalist government turned out to be cowards. This government is arranging trips to Janakpur and Muktinath for Modi, which even the Congress didn't agree to.

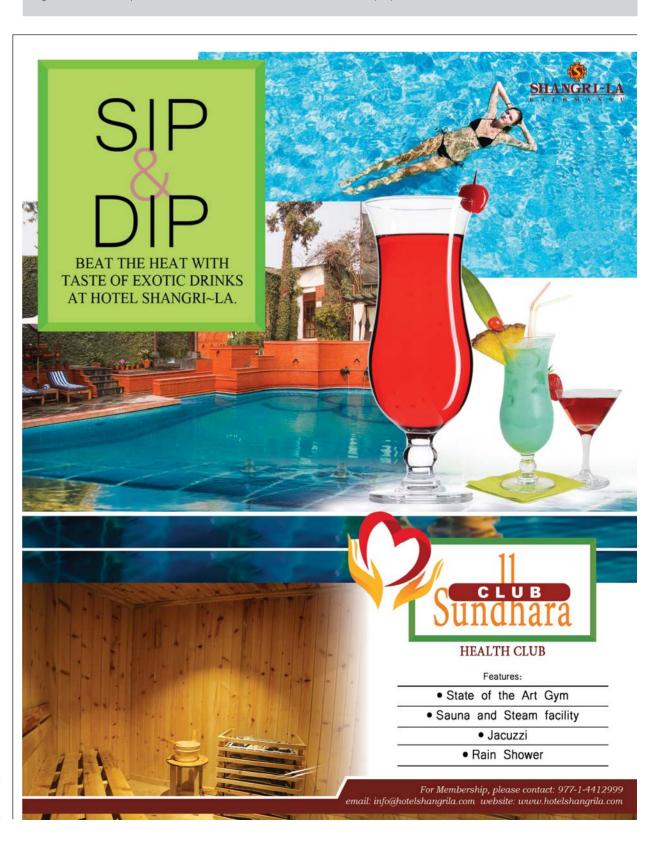


Chandrakishore @Kishore chandra 17h17 hours ago Indian PM Modi's visit to lanak is attracting a lot of attention for political reasons, but for Nepal's tourism industry the visit to Muktinath is even more important than Janakpur because of its religious and scenic significance.

पेशल पोखरेल @Peshalbroo

FollowFollow @Peshalbroo

A majority of people are calling for Modi to apologise for the blockade, but we are going to honour him in Kathmandu. No greater example of kowtowing. The leaders may forget the blockade, but the people haven't.











Modi's Himalayan marathon

The Indian prime minister's visit to Nepal sparks hope, dismay and speculation

Om Astha Rai

A s Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi transits Kathmandu between two political pilgrimages to Janakpur and Muktinath this weekend, there is hope, dismay and even confusion in Nepal.

In Janakpur, where Modi will worship at Sita's birthplace and be felicitated, there is unprecedented excitement. Not since Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the Kosi Barrage in 1961 has an Indian leader visited Nepal's Tarai. The citizens of Province 2 hope that Modi's decision to take a direct flight from New Delhi to Janakpur on Friday will be a big boost to the Madhesi demand for amendments to the Constitution.

In Kathmandu, where Modi will spend two nights and meet political figures, many are dismayed that their mayor is felicitating an Indian leader who blockaded Nepal for five months in 2015. Angry posts on Nepali social networks (*see page 13*) have demanded that Modi apologise for what they call a 'crime against humanity'.

People are widely circulating an appeal on Twitter and Facebook to observe a 10-minute blackout in Kathmandu on Friday evening, as a symbolic protest to remind citizens of the dark days of the Blockade two years ago.

And, there is confusion about whether the Modi visit reflects a course correction in India's policy towards Nepal. Some think New Delhi realised it went too far, pushed Nepal closer to China, and it is now trying to reset bilateral ties.

But others argue that Modi either doesn't know about the level of anger in Nepal, or doesn't care. He is more interested in using his pilgrimage to Hindu shrines in Nepal just ahead of Karnataka elections as a photo opportunity during the silent period before voting on Sunday in the staunchly-Hindu south Indian state.

MP Radheshyam Adhikari believes Modi's visit indicates New Delhi's realisation that the Blockade was a blunder. But analyst Shreekrishna Aniruddh Gautam thinks otherwise, and that a Modi apology is highly unlikely.

a Modi apology is highly unlikely.
Gautam says: "Modi's visit is
less about resetting diplomatic ties
with Nepal and more about his
own domestic electorate politics,
and geopolitics."

MP Anil Jha of the Madhesbased RJP-N asks sardonically: "There was no course in Indian policy towards Nepal, so how can there be a correction? Still, the visit has symbolic significance."

Whether offering prayers at Janaki Temple in Janakpur, worshipping at Muktinath shrine near the China border or visiting Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, whatever Modi does here is aimed directly at the home audience.

Modi will also be trying to allay criticism at home that his policy has pushed Nepal into China's embrace. Last year, Modi was able to resolve the Doklam standoff diplomatically, but China is said to be still camped in what India claims to be Bhutanese territory.

Rahul Gandhi of the opposition Congress in India is using Doklam as an example of Modi's diplomatic failures. Some say Modi's recent visit to China was mainly to ensure that there is no new border flare-up in the Himalaya before Indian general elections next year.

Bhaskar Koʻrala of the Nepal Institute of International and Strategic Studies thinks that Nepal is no longer an effective buffer between India and China because of better connectivity and trade.

"India would naturally be concerned about the extent to which Nepal begins to tilt towards China," Koirala says.

In Kathmandu, Modi will likely try to make a repeat performance of 2014 when he turned around Nepal's public opinion with a rousing speech in Nepali to Parliament. He will try to turn on

the charm offensive once again.

Modi will flag off the JanakpurAyodhya bus service, unveil a plan to connect the birthplace of Sita with the Ramayana Circuit. He is also likely to announce a special package for Janakpur's development.

In Kathmandu, Modi and PM KP Oli will remotely lay the foundation stone of Arun III (see box). The two leaders are also expected to sign agreements on railway, agriculture and inland waterway projects.

But these will not be enough to heal the bitter memoriers of the Indian Blockade on the Nepali psyche. Nepal's former ambassador to India Bhekh Bahadur Thapa who is a member of the India-Nepal Eminent Persons Group says: "The only way Modi can begin to win back the confidence of Nepalis is to deliver on his past promises."

Dam it, it's all about water

As the Kathmandu intelligentsia debates whether New Delhi has realised its mistake of blockading Nepal or not, there is a growing call for Nepal to correct its own past mistakes on hydropower projects.

While in Kathmandu, Indian PM
Narendra Modi will remotely lay the
foundation stone of Arun III, a 900MW
project being built by the Indian public
sector firm Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam in
eastern Nepal. But experts say Nepal's first
export-oriented electricity scheme could
be a losing proposition for Nepal.

They say Nepal would benefit much more if it planned on meeting its own suppressed demand for electricity instead of exporting it. Studies have shown that the consumption of 1 kilowatt of electricity makes the GDP grow by Rs 91.

Water resource analyst Ratna Sansar Shrestha extrapolates that this could benefit Nepal by more than Rs 9,100 billion in 25 years from the multiplier effect of domestic consumption of Arun III electricity. But Nepal will be exporting 78% of Arun energy production to India, and will therefore be deprived of downstream benefits of the energy on the economy.

As Modi and Oli patch up after last year's elections in which Oli capitalised on the perception that he had stood up to India during the Blockade, there are also concerns about how Nepal will safeguard its national interest on water resources. Back in 1996, it was Oli himself who persuaded his UML

party to support the controversial Mahakali Treaty on the western border river which was said to have cheated Nepal of water rights.

Building high dams on the Kosi or Karnali can be a political hot potato in Nepal. Added to that, there is so much mistrust in Kathmandu that Modi and Oli are cleverly using the term 'waterway' as a code for 'dam'.

Reservoirs in Nepal would be useful for monsoon flood control and for augmenting flow of Indian rivers for irrigation and inland waterways in the lean season.

This could be why Oli is suddenly obsessed about making rivers navigable, and Modi talks about connecting *Sagar*



(Mt Everest) to *Saagar* (Ocean) through inland waterways.

"Nepal will not benefit from making Indian rivers navigable," Shrestha explains. "Modi is trying to persuade Nepal with the possibility of access to the sea, promising that it will no longer be landlocked. But he is doing it so that Nepal will not drive a hard bargain when it comes to compensation for possible inundation."



From the Indian media

Selection of curtainraiser opinion in the Indian media about the visit by Indian PM Narendra Modi to Nepal.

Indrani Bagchi in *The Times of India*, 10 May

Modi may find it a little more difficult to charm everyone as he had done in his previous visit. The ghost of the 2015 blockade hangs in the air, while Nepal's resurgent nationalism is more often than not aimed at India. Modi's first visit elicited an ecstatic reception in Kathmandu. Greater scepticism may greet him this time. Instead India will try to keep the discourse to development assistance — agriculture partnership where the first meetings have been held and pilot projects have been identified; inland waterways transport, where Kalughat in Bihar has been identified as the transhipment point.

The Wire, 8 May

According to sources, the quick reciprocal visit by the Indian PM is the result of PM Oli's insistence. "When PM Modi had spoken to Oli to congratulate him on becoming PM, the latter had urged him to make an early return visit. The prime minister's willingness to make this visit so soon shows a certain comfort level with the Nepali leadership and his keen interest to build trust," the source said.

The emphasis on "trust" is a result of Oli's antagonism towards India for allegedly being behind the 2015 'blockade' and keeping the Madhesi agitation simmering. India had also been suspicious of Oli leaning towards China, with talks of opening the border and transport links across the Tibetan plateau into Nepal.

Modi's trip to Nepal this week would be the first time that he has travelled thrice to a South Asian country. Sources say that the main purpose of the visit is to build on Oli's visit – "principally to carry forward the new initiatives and implement pending proposals".

With a stable government in Kathmandu, India is hoping that the implementation of many development projects which were stuck due to issues from the Nepali side like land acquisition and forest clearances will be accelerated.

Dinesh Bhattarai, former adviser to Prime Minister Sushil Koirala in *The Hindu*, 10 May

Immediately after the promulgation of Nepal's constitution, India enforced an undeclared economic blockade that caused unspeakable suffering to the people of Nepal who were also hit hard by the devastating earthquake of April 2015. This act eroded trust and confidence in the eloquent words of the previous year. Had the then Prime Minister Sushil Koirala not taken a firm position amid last-minute pressure from India, there would not have been the promulgation of the new constitution. Now three tiers of elections have been held, the democratic process institutionalised, and the present leadership installed this February. Koirala followed courageous pragmatism in the conduct of foreign policy, respected India's concerns and sensitivities when needed and asserted Nepal's sovereignty when circumstances demanded ... the Nepali people are not ready to barter their dignity and sovereignty for support and goodwill of any kind.

Suhasini Haider in *The Hindu,*

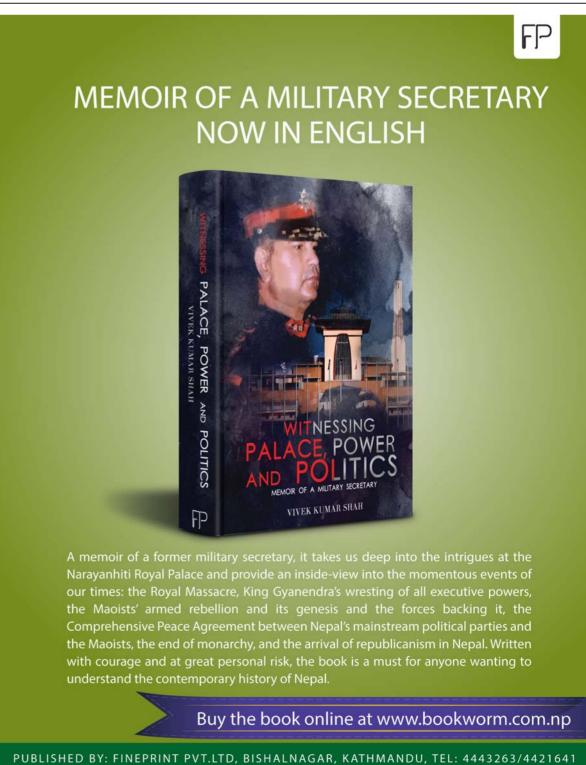
4 March

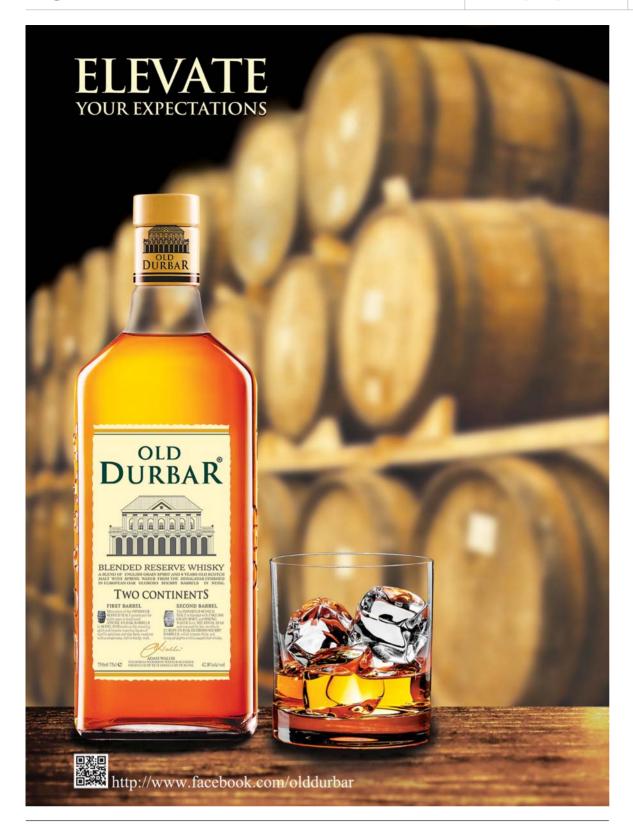
Many (in Kathmandu) accept that equidistance or foreign policy independence from India is easier said than done. A whopping 70 per cent of Nepal's imports come from India, which has allowed Nepali citizens an open border, and quasi-citizen rights for employment and property ownership on a reciprocal basis. India and Nepal give each other's army chiefs honorary ranks, and have close security ties mandated by the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

nepalitimes.com

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The Moody Visit

t is difficult to go anywhere these days without 👢 politicians, dips, fellowhacks, the family priest, and the friendly neighbourhood barber from Darbhanga asking me what I think about the visit to Nepal by @narendramodi. My answer has always been: #KarnatakaElection2018.

It is appropriate that they decided to call it a 'State Visit' because he is beginning his tour in our State #2. The symbolism is not lost on anyone when they are rubbing it in so vigorously. The Indian leader is journeying to Nepal in the first direct flight between the capital of India and the capital of Mithila since Ram made the journey in Pushpak Biman Airlines to ask for Sita's hand in marriage. He was also not taking no for an answer.

spend the night on the banks of the Modi River in Pokhara. However, the Grovelment of Nepal asstutely decided that he should at least make a transit stop in Kathmandu so that the Metropolitan City could fix what we euphemistically call 'roads' in these here parts.

Alert readers will not have to be reminded that Kathmandu has not been spruced up since the 2014 SAARC Summit, and it was beginning to look rather shabby. Since no street repair ever gets done in Nepal unless we have a powerful foreign leader visiting, it was vital that Narinder Uncle stop over in Kathmandu so the roads could be asphalted overnight.

The Chabahil Road which had more craters than the Jupiter moon, Ganymede, feels like an Expressway after its makeover on Tuesday night. Thank you Mr



However, after the original plan to drive overland across the border was shelved for security reasons, it would have been more appropriate for PM Moody to make the journey from Bihar Province to Province 2 by hovercraft so as to underscore the emphasis during this visit on promoting inland waterways. Given the condition of the East-West Highway and other Feeder Roads in the Tarai during the monsoon, methought we already had inland waterways in Nepal.

However, this is not the time split hairs. We should regard it as a positive development that Nepal will graduate from being land-locked to becoming fully India-locked by land, sea and air. BTW is it such a good idea to give Shree Modi the keys to Janakpur Town when we already have an open border? Anybody could just

Fearing black flags and protests in Kathmandu from people who want to remind us of the Great Blockage, Modi originally planned to fly straight from Province 2 to Province 4 and

Modi. However, GONE should have insisted that the Indian PM nightstop in Gokarna Resort so that the Sankhu Road, which the Ass commutes on for his weekend golf run, could also have been patched up. Better still, instead of Pokhara, we should have sent the Visiting Dignitary to Sauraha so the Mugling Highway would be miraculously mended once and for all.

And we hope you loval readers and royal leaders will take it as your personal sacrifice for the restoration of Nepal-India relations to a state of 'normalitude' that you will willingly and happily sacrific your Friday and Saturday being stuck in horrendous jams on the roadways and airways. If you are thinking of going anywhere, don't. If you are flying anywhere, drop it.

It is not enough to declare Friday a holiday, the gonerment should declare a 48-hour curfew before Comrade Bigplop decides to declare a Two-day Bund.



The Ass

