Peace on a war footing

HAMMERS AND DICKIES: Susana Mahatara (left) and Namita Thapa’s husbands were murdered by opposing forces during the Nepali conflict. Twelve years later, both are now fighting for the same cause: truth and justice.

By M.M. Rai

Susana Mahatara was just 22 and pregnant with her second child when her husband, a policeman, was executed by the Maoists after being captured during a raid in Pyuthan in 1999.

After that, police began hunting down Maoists in reprisal attacks among Pyuthan’s mountains. Namita Thapa’s husband was a Maoist, and was dragged out of his house and later shot in 2002. Like Mahatara, Thapa was also pregnant with her second child when her husband was killed.

The two war widows, both from Bharhauti village of Pyuthan, struggled to raise their children. They met after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in November 2006, and were united for a cause: truth and justice. They say their husbands were both summarily killed in detention, and not during battles.

Mahatara and Thapa were among 200 conflict victims who came to Kathmandu this week on the 12th anniversary of the peace accord seeking truth, justice, reparations, and a guarantee of non-recurrence. They have issued a charter, pressuring the government to reboot the lingering transitional justice process.

Bhakti Ram Chaudhary of Conflict Victims’ Common Platform says: “We want the government to give the process a fresh start, involving us and respecting international norms.’

Transitional justice has been the most neglected component of the peace process. After the peace accord of 2006, political leaders were preoccupied with demobilising and disarmament the guerrillas, reintegrating them into the Nepali Army, and writing the new Constitution. They delayed investigating war crimes, waiting for victims to live out and give up.

It took the government a decade to even form the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission on Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons (CEEDP). Conflict victims questioned the legitimacy and intention of these bodies from the beginning, arguing that a mechanism led by political appointees would serve the perpetrators, and not victims.

Chaudhary told us: “As we predicted, the TRC and the CEEDP have failed. We now need to dismantle them, and form a new mechanism that involves conflict victims and civil society.”

He added: “So far, we have looked at transitional justice just as a technical issue. It should be dealt with as a political problem. We need to forge a political consensus to resolve it.”

Civil society leaders, human rights activists and conflict victims began to speak about the need for a new mechanism, also owned by political leaders allegedly involved in war-time atrocities, after the controversial draft of the new TRC law was out.

The draft bill, if passed, will allow perpetrators to wash their hands of blood by doing time in open jails or community service.

Conflict victims say it is not just the content of the TRC bill that is problematic but also the process of drafting it. But won’t the new mechanism settle conflict-era cases by just delivering compensation to victims and granting amnesty to perpetrators?

Chaudhary answers: “We will not allow amnesty for those involved in gross human rights violations.”

Om Astha Rai

Kathmandu hosts the 12th world Congress of Mountain Medicine.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
Turkish Airlines marked five years of connection with a full-filled afternoon of entertainment at Gandhara Forest Resort last Friday. *Nepali Times* spoke to Turkish Airlines Vice President for Nepal, Abdullah Tuncer, at the event. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: How do you assess the past five years of your airline connecting Nepal to the world? Abdullah Tuncer: Considering the launch of our flight to Nepal in 2013, Turkish Airlines has been expanding its unique hospitality and quality service to the market, and promoting Nepal as a tourism destination. In the past few years, our expanding fleet and by flying to 122 countries, the worldwide network has worked as an advantage for Nepal. In 2018, we increased our capacity by 12% compared to the previous year. We have resumed daily flights this year, and we plan to make it daily all year round by next year. Since 2013, the trade volume between Turkey and Nepal has increased five-fold. In addition, we are focusing on the 2 million tourist target of Visit Nepal 2020 and we are working to be the major contributor to achieving this goal.

What would you say are your unique selling points in the Nepal aviation sector? Turkish Airlines has been investing heavily on customer satisfaction within the past years and is trying to bring out new products to passengers. Within this scope, Turkish Airlines strives to be one of the top major global airlines. Through its strong network and state of the art services, we hope to offer our guests a seamless travel experience.

And where does Istanbul’s new airport fit into all this? Istanbul has been one of the most important cities in the world, and it has a unique geographic advantage for global aviation. Our new hub at Istanbul Airport will service 90 million passengers per year, and after the completion of all phases, its service capacity will reach to 200 million passengers a year. The first terminal in the biggest terminal building under one roof in the world with an area of 3.3 million sq. m. It will also have world’s largest airport duty free, and the airport will be revolutionary in terms of the use of new technology and service implementation, and our passengers can take advantage of it services and comfort.

What are your future plans for Turkish Airlines in Kathmandu? It may be worth remembering that we are not just an airline. We are the leading center of the Turkish Republic, and representative of Turkish hospitality. So along with bridging Nepal with rest of the world, we also continue to bridge our cultures. By ever expanding fleet and flight network, we will continue to be the main supporter for Nepal’s tourism and trade. Parallel to the tourism targets of the country, we will be increasing our frequency. Since we came here as the best airline of Europe, we will continuously work together with all stake holders of aviation industry.

Happy Singh Da Dhaba

A ll the food at Happy Singh Da Dhaba tastes so different that one wonders if this is really Pondicherry food. The dishes here do not have a strong musala aroma or make you feel heavy and stuffed. It is so surprising that this rendition of Pondicherry highway food does not even leave a colour on your fingers.

That is exactly what Chef Rajinder Singh Paul from Pondicherry and Executive Chef of Sawtler Cranes Plaza Yuba Rai Paul, were aiming to bring in the blend of traditional preparation with the therapeutic properties of spices. The two chefs are collaborating to introduce ethnic cuisine of Pondicherry in Kathmandu through the Happy Singh Da Dhaba food festival.

“Traditionally, people in Pondicherry or any other place did not use too much fat or musala in their food. To give them strength to work harder in the fields, they served or whole foods like acai and amaranth, which were super healthy and tasty,” explains Singh.

But now, foods were commercialised. People built on the presentation and appearance rather than its nutritional values. “So now, we are bringing back the forgotten traditions of food presentation and serving,” adds Chef Paul.

Yuba Rai Paul (right) with Rajinder Singh Paul

Indeed, the items at Happy Singh Da Dhaba have their own distinct flavors and sauces, decipherable after the first bite. Every dish is made from fresh ingredients and freshly pounded spices. No use of refined oils, or fats, synthetic vinegar, says sauce, artificial flavors or colourings, nothing that is unhealthy. And everything is cooked in slow heat and charcoal, and served in earthen pots, giving all dish the authentic flavors of Pondicherry.

Happy Singh Da Dhaba is the perfect event with ISGAD and National Business Initiative for tasting ethnic and recruitment practices in the upcoming employment process for Nepal. Key representatives of government sector as civil service development organisations attended.

World Bank visit

World Bank Vice President for South Asia, Hartwig Schaider, conducted a five-day visit to Nepal during which he met PM KP Oli, Finance Minister Yuba Rij Oliwakas, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Shankar Mahat and private sector representatives. Meanwhile, the World Bank and IFC issued a new report Creating Markets in Nepal on how, agriculture, education, health, and I to accelerate productivity.

Brazilian Smiles

Turkish Airlines signed a frequent flyer program agreement with Tajikistans, with a Turkish-branded tail, allowing its members reciprocal mileage accrual and redemption opportunities from 1 January.

4 routes to Europe

Görsel Airways announced the launch of its recently-launched seasonal routes to Aliku, Indramayu and Melaka, with new flights and upgraded aircraft on two routes from May 2019.

Newer iPhones

Generation Next Communications, the authorized distributor for Apple products, launched iPhone 11, iPhone 11 Pro, and iPhone 11 Pro Max, in Nepal at its stores Evo Store, Future World, Siz Store and Quality Computer Bramadea.

Triple camera phone

The Chinese smartphone brand Nokhy (HUA) officially launched its flag-ship model Max 20 Pro, which has the triple camera setup with ultra-wide-angle lens. In Nepal. The phone, priced at Rs 59,390, has features such as performance with 6GB RAM, 128GB battery and advanced security.
Nepal’s banks have once more entered the dark tunnel of scarcity of loanable funds. Commercial banks have maintained the monetary conditions, along with a fourfold increase in deposits, paid-up capital in the two years to mid-2015 required by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), but have fueled a strong credit expansion. Private sector credit growth has averaged 22% (y/y) in the past two years, even as the NRB maintains ceilings on banks’ gross-to-deposit ratios and the loan-to-value ratio on real estate.

Nepal’s financial landscape is heavily skewed towards banking. According to a recent World Bank report, banks account for 87% of financial sector assets in Nepal. Private equity and venture capital space is still in nascent stages. The private sector thus largely depends on bank debt, and in their absence, businesses have had to borrow from informal or slow down operations. This has resulted in increased cost or lost opportunities.

Recurring credit crunches, which last several months every year, have impacted the economy adversely. Key responsible parties need to:

- Government of Nepal for its inability to spend on capital expenditures
- NRB for instigating the crisis and then offering regulatory forbearance that encourages banks to push prudential boundaries
- Banks which appear to be driven with the sole objective of servicing increased capital

Nepal’s economic growth over past two decades has been largely led by the private sector, in spite of ineffective governments and inefficient bureaucracy. Banks should refrain from pointing fingers at NRB or the government. The NRB has not always been proactive, its regulatory approach has often been ‘one step forward two steps back’. The government’s norm has always been to bulk up capital expenditure toward the end of the year. We want NRB and the government to be more responsive, but it will be a gradual process at best. And frankly, the banking business has thrived even in this environment, so let’s be reasonable.

As the most transparent sector of the economy, the onus is on the banks collectively to manage public perception and repair the community’s battered image. Here is a list of items they need to consider:

1. Anticipate better, and get your basics right. Will the market offer sufficient new deposits to fund growth in loan books? Nepal may be more stable politically, but with compromise from bureaucrats and politicians, it will be while before their Key Performance Indicators align with Nepal’s aspirations for rapid economic growth. It is unrealistic, this early, to expect government spending to move from tradition to follow a desired timeline that matches banks’ need for new deposits.

2. Who is winning that debate in the boardroom? Most banks appear to have adopted a strategy to grow lending books aggressively to meet shareholder expectations of return on equity. The impact of this on their lending behavior is worrisome. What is the quality of loan assets banks are booking when they are expanding at 22% while the economy grows at 3.4% annually over last few years? Also the continued contribution of banks to real estate bubbleary may someday come back to haunt them. Excessive reliance on real estate collateral has affected a lender’s approach to lending. Under the current loan loss provisioning norms and multiple banking context, it is possible to keep making bad loans, which raises doubts about quality of profits. The IMF has singled out that challenges and suggests ‘rapid credit growth underlines the need to accelerate banking sector reforms. Build on the recent amendments to the regulatory framework, loan classification, provisioning, and banks’ risk management practices should be upgraded.’

3. Is it possible that many banks have bitten off more than they can chew by expanding their operations and branch network rapidly? Frequency of operational risk events suggests that quality of human resource and internal control mechanisms need significant improvement. Banks have finally acknowledged the need to adopt digital channels of delivery. Better late than never. Even so, there is little chance of sufficient investment happening here. It is not enough to link bank systems to a digital payment platform. A key driver for consumer uptake is a cultural shift within individual banks to champion digital banking services. Clearly, Nepal is an under-banked economy with smaller banks struggling to stay relevant. Industry experts agree that there is a case for reduction in number of banks. Market prices are currently at interesting levels for more capable banks to consider acquiring other institutions. It may be easier said than done, but if there is an industry-wideresize, the docks will line up.

Suman Joshi is a former banker and founder and Chairman of True North Associates, a private equity firm.
A house in Budanikantha

Building a house from scratch in Kathmandu Valley is not as easy as it sounds

With the privilege of building a house from scratch in Kathmandu Valley comes a surprising appreciation that in reality it is more akin to an enormous puzzle. The only land we could afford was way out on the far rim of the Valley, roads were rough, building supplies unreliable, and contractors even more so.

So far so good

Lisa Choegyal

By 1990 Tenzin and I were weary of Kathmandu landlords—something about renting their houses turned the most civilized owners into unreasonable landlords. Snap! we were six and Richo at four years old had already lived in four different homes—not that he seemed to mind the endless upheavals.

A systematic scan of outlying areas took us on weekend excursions down the rural roads that stretch outside the Ring Road. Having secured the possibilities of Goddess (too small), Bhaisepati (too far south), Thahako (too many trucks) and Sankhu (too tenuous), we eventually settled on the north, beyond Basantapur.

We struck lucky one kilometre past the huge Vishwa who reclines on his grey stones, sculpted in mysterious black stone protecting the Valley from his Budanikantha eire. High above what used to be the sacred lake before being drained by Lord Macaulay’s sword.

On the hill to the gate of the Shivapuri National Park, accessible only by a dirt lane with no telephones links and minimal electricity, we settled on a series of rice terraces bordered on one side by the headwaters of the Vihar-Mati River and on the other by a sylvan stream that has long slumbered and now we were told the foresight to buy up large plots along the river, and offered us first choice of whichever plot we preferred.

We chose the topmost section with the best aspect and shaded by Nepali poppies lining the river bank, but what clinched it for us was the scattering of huge granite boulders, vestiges of a massive avalanche rockfall many centuries ago. We oriented the house around those ancient stones, creating a series of small pools with the sound of running water and a rock garden by the veranda through which generations of children have scrambled and explored. A surprising number of guests remark: “it must have been a job moving those rocks!”

Sheltered by the Shivapuri forest lying behind us, we had no glimpse of white peaks but were compensated by the benefits of all day sun, plentiful water and extensive views south across the entire Valley. Being a thousand feet above the Valley floor, the microclimate kept us cool in summer and warm in winter, rid of safely above the chill morning mists that cloaked the view beneath us like the legendary laka, with Swayambunath perched above the fog, the mythical floating lotus island with its balled blue flame. It was two years before the first sod was turned, if that is the right expression, and two more years to build—no wonder the process is considered a cure.

Inspired by the work of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust and Goett Hagemuller’s restorations of Bhaktapur, Patan Durbar and Kathe Mahal, we were fortunate to have Eric Theophile design the house, but it was the brilliant Rohit Ranjitkar who had the hard prind of supervising the construction and managing all the component parts: bricklayers, plasterers, engineers, plumbers, electricians. Once the building stage had reached, Muni Rana helped with the planting.

We were very particular to use vernacular architecture and traditional design themes with thick mud mortar and brick walls, local materials and chiselled tiled roof. Strongly bonded to withstand earthquakes, which it did in 2015. We used a minimum of concrete but lots of wood imported from Malaysia. Not everything worked and there have been compromises along the way—too flushing and water heating is less than perfect, the chimney still smokes, central heating never works and dump patches persist on some walls.

Jooli complained that one third of the cost of the house went into timber floors and ceilings, but despite all the frustrations we were delighted with the result—a peculiar blend of neo-missionals Rana meets Patan Museum Malla Newar, with Tibetan chents and carpets.

The newly created spaces and empty rooms soon filled with scents of family life, perfumed with memories of friends and visitors.

This month is the 24th anniversary of the auspicious day that we first moved in on 12 November 1994. Since then, the boys have grown up and left, the garden and birds have flourished, and willow and bamboo cut back to protect the foundations. Generations of family dogs have raced around the lawns, disturbed the flowerbeds and, amidst much grief, been buried in the grove at the bottom of the garden.

Other than that, very little has changed. When the earthquakes dislodged a few tiles, caused some superficial cracks in the plaster and separated the veranda roof from the main house, we chose to re-erect exactly as before even the colours we painted the walls did not change.

Vishnumati House below Swayambhu after completion, and Eric Theophile’s design (below)

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The craft of art

A family of painters explores the universe beyond thanka

Sewa Bhattarai

There used to be a time when Tibetan spiritual art meant murals and tangkas. Not anymore. An internationally-renowned Sherpa family has given modern meaning to the historic art form.

Tulku Jamyang, 41, and his brother Ang Tshering, 50, learnt thanka painting from their famous father, Urgen Dorje Sherpa. He did not just teach his sons the craft of the art, but also the spiritualism behind it.

However, as they grew up, the brothers found the format too rigid and formulaic, and with little room for personal exploration. Even as they turned to more personal expressions, however, their creations today display clear influences from the early roots.

“My works are not tangkas, they portray my personal take on today’s society and politics, the feeling of being out of place anywhere, whether as an ethnic minority in Nepal, or an oriental man in the West,” explains Ang Tshering, whose art often depicts alienation and displacement. Buddhist deities wear socks and underclothes in unconventional postures.

Tulku Jamyang lives a hermit-like existence in his studio in Kathmandu, but is a keen observer of the changes he sees around him. A young woman wears a gown of brocaded cloth clashing on a Starbucks mug, and in another context on the slow pace of development in Nepal, seven deer bears represent the seven provinces of Nepal.

These and other paintings by Tulku Jamyang are on display and sold at the Changing Lanes exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery. The artist’s technique is to burn tiny holes with incense paper that give the works a meticulous dot matrix texture.

He combines this technique with western motifs like Leonardo Da Vinci’s Last Supper, Van Gogh’s Starry Night, and Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain. “I include these western motifs because this is how Nepali society is changing,” explains Jamyang, who portrays migration and alienation through a painting of Nepalis in different ethnic costumes sitting at a table like in ‘The Last Supper’.

Jamyang spent 15 years as a monk in a monastery, which gave his art a dense and spiritually layered appearance. Not only do they contain his own interpretations of the Buddha, but the act of burning holes with incense sticks to create his images is itself a spiritual performance. The process has to be so precise that a single mistake can ruin the entire painting, so for Jamyang the total concentration it requires is like meditation.

“I use all the porchah towns or the five elements that together represent truth — earth, sky, air, fire, and water — in my paintings. My canvas is the earth and incense sticks are fire. When I blow on them, I use the air, and the liquid colours represent water. When they are displayed in space, that is the sky element,”

Ang Tshering, for his part, is self-taught. His abstract style evolved from his own exploration into modern art and interactions with fellow artists of many nationalities. Though his work may look contemporary, he admits the technique is derived from thanga art that he learnt from his father as a child.

Though both brothers turned away from thankas, today they find appreciation and concern for the Tibetan and Nepali devotional art form. “As a child, I used to be schooled that I was learning this art,” recalls Tsering. “At that time it was seen as something uneducated people did for a living, and was not respected. It was cooler to be doctors and engineers.”

It was in the United States in 1998 that Tshering saw the traditional paintings of his community through Western eyes, began to appreciate its richness and grew concerned about its degeneration – with commercialization and the loss of the philosophical underpinning of the art.

Tshering relocated back to Nepal last year after 20 years in the US. He adds, “I only realized the value of my heritage after I saw it respected abroad. I now want to pass on that appreciation to the next generation of Nepali artists. If the artworks of living masters like my father can be treasured by museums, then it will also inspire a new generation. That will be a step towards conserving it.”

Tulku Jamyang agrees. “The artist must survive for the art to survive, so we must take care of the artists. Economic survival is important, and in the case of tangkas, so is respect.”

At 73, their father Urgen Dorje, continues to be active and is currently restoring a monastery in Tsetang.

Pressures: Siddhartha Art Gallery (05) 29 November

BROTHERS IN ARTS: Tulku Jamyang and his brother Ang Tshering learnt traditional thanka painting from their famous father Urgen Dorje Sherpa, but have struck off into more creative styles.

PHOTOS SIVARAJ BHATTARAI

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Monika Deupala

Over the Tihar festival this month, while most people were busy worshiping cows, dogs and cows, an unusual group of people had gathered in a temple in Patan. They were not carrying marigold garlands and vermillion powder, but bamboo pens and bottles of ink.

The week of the Nepal Samiti 1319 new year was an appropriate time for another Calligraphy workshop in which participants are tutored in writing the ancient Nepali script, which originated in the Kathmandu Valley civilization and is derived from early Lichhavi alphabets. Ananda Kumar Maharan, was demonstrating Ranjana calligraphy and teaching a class of young students how to write "shudeš bhutinsa (happy new year)" in the ornate script of the Newar people.

Maharjan, 35, has been working as a font and graphic designer, and the idea for the calligraphy classes evolved from a Facebook group he set up three years ago. He says, "The response was so encouraging, with enthusiasts sharing their writings with the hashtag calligraph, that we decided to expand the exercise."

Sunita Dangol was a student who is now a tutor herself, and she encouraged the classes to gain popularity. At the recent Kumbhak Cultural Festival, Maharjan and Dangol set up a stall to show people how to write their names in the script.

The calligraphy workshop was unplanned, but the response was overwhelming," says Dangol, who went on to conduct 12 other workshops with the Nepali Lipi Gufi.

The decorative alphabet designed by Maharan Valley artisans was used in early sculptures, and manuscripts, and was transported north in Tibet, China, Korea and Japan in the 14th century with Amiko.

Ranjana letters can be seen at the Great Wall of China, artefacts belonging to Kublai Khan, as well as in temples in Korea and Kyoto. (See story, below.

Maharjan says that the script spread with Mahayana Buddhism as it travelled from Nepal to Tibet and China. "The Newar were traders who crossed the Himalayas as far back as the 15th century, and the spread of Ranjana was later assisted by Bhaktapur and Amiko taking Kathmandu Valley religion, architecture and culture to China," Maharjan explains.

Lately, young students in Kathmandu Valley have developed an interest in learning about their rich culture and heritage and Ranjana is enjoying a renaissance.

Dangol explains that Ranjana uses the Kubaksher method of vertical writing and used it as a code, "Ranjana was not just a decorative script but the foundations served as a secret message system that was hard to understand, and even more so, was hard to write," she added.

Maharjan is now trying to design different versions of Ranjana script in a digital format. Meanwhile the Calligraphy team is working on learning materials including animated videos, interactive dotted books for learning to write Ranjana for children. The team is also practicing beautifying the font and producing tutorial videos for YouTube.

Sewa Bhattarai
in Beijing

The Great Wall of China is one of the world’s most famous landmarks, but what is less known is the historical link between this World Heritage Site to another one 6,000km to the south in Kathmandu Valley.

Here on the white marble Cloud Platform of the Layingtsaran Section of the Great Wall 60km from Beijing, visitors come across ancient Buddhist inscriptions that tell the story of the influence of Nepal on the Yuan dynasty in the 13th century.

At the base of the Great Wall is an arch built in 1345 and inscribed with Buddhist sutras in six languages: Mandarin, Tibetan, Uighur, Mongolian, Tangut and Sanskrit. Kublai Khan and his descendants had to pass under the script of the Buddhist scriptures when they visited nearby temples.

What is surprising is that the Sanskrit lines inscribed on the arch are not in the usual Devanagari letters, but in the Ranjana script that originated in Kathmandu Valley.

Ranjana is called ‘Landcha’ in Mandarin, and can be found in religious monuments across Tibet and China, having travelled with the spread of Mahayana Buddhism, whose main texts including the Praya Pramata are written in Ranjana.

Many sects of Buddhism had already spread to China through Central and South Asia more than 2,000 years ago, but they were overlaid by Mahayana Buddhism after Pratice (Buddhist) took the sect to Tibet in the 7th century from Kathmandu Valley. The practice of inscribing Buddhist scriptures in a distinctive Nepali style have been documented from this time.
At the Great Wall and other monuments, an enduring testimony that Nepal's Ranjana alphabet spread to China with Buddhism.

Cultural historian Satya Mohan Joshi believes that traditions began as early as the 7th century in China after the arrival in Beijing of Priyaji, the ambassador of King Nandula Dev. In his book on Amiko, Joshi cites a 1,400-year-old stela inscribed with the Unice Shukla Dharani Sutra in the Xian Museum. However, Ranjana was not in the picture yet, and these scripts may have been the precursors of Ranjana. Ranjana started appearing in Buddhist monuments after the 12th century.

Ranjana alphabet was derived from the Braci script and originally developed in Nepal in the 11th century, which is why some say it should be called the 'Nepali script'.

"Ranjana had been in China since the 7th century. It was used in the Great Wall and other monuments, and it spread to China with Buddhism. The Alphabet was used to write the script of Ranjana, which was unique to Nepal and had a very distinctive way of writing the vowel 'a' which was carried over to China."

However, other scholars say that the script originated in Bengal and transferred to Nepal along with other cultural heritage after Buddhism was introduced in northern India. Buddhist scholar Basanta Maharjan says that the Ranjana letters were beautified and preserved by the Newars of Kathmandu Valley, from where it travelled to Tibet, China and on to Korea and Japan.

"The script was influenced not just in China but in Mongolia in the north and Kashmir in the west. The version of Ranjana found in these places is distinctly Nepali, and that is something that we can be proud of," says Maharjan.

Nepal's art and philosophy got another boost in China from Amiko, the Kathmandu architect who travelled to Beijing in the 13th century to help Kublai Khan build temples and monuments with Buddhist symbolism, and leave a Nepali imprint in the ancient architecture of China, Korea and Japan.

Satya Mohan Joshi researched Amiko in China, and it is confirmed that Amiko's influence was significant. The White Pagoda built by Amiko in Beijing in 1279 still stands today, and contains many distinct Ranjana inscriptions. The Cloud Platform at the Great Wall was built almost a century after Amiko reached China, and shows his influence because on top of the arch are Garuda, crocodiles, and other curved elements which look like they have been transplanted from Kathmandu.

The Ranjana script was used in a new golden stupa built in Beijing's Potala as recently as 1986 to house the Buddha's tooth relic. "The prevalence of this script is an example of the enduring influence of Amiko, and the cultural links between Nepal and China," says Joshi.

Amiko created the White Pagoda on Kublai Khan's command and it was a symbol of the unification of China under Yuan dynasty. "Today the Maozu Temple museum in Beijing acknowledges his work as a great symbol of cultural exchange between Nepal and China. That Nepali art and architecture and the Ranjana script were so widespread in China are proof of this historical trans-Himalayan connection." says Das Das Manandhar, a noted proponent of the preservation of Ranjana script.
Sonia Awale

Polio eradication is one of the most ambitious public health initiatives undertaken in human history. Launched in 1988 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the campaign aimed to rid the world of the virus by 2000. But 30 years on, and after $13 billion later, even though polio cases worldwide have been reduced by 99%, there are still isolated pockets of the disease. And unless every last case is removed, there will always be a chance that the infection will come back.

Encouraged by the eradication of smallpox, WHO launched the campaign in 1988. The organization debated the wisdom of spending so much time and money to exterminate a disease when there were many other more pressing health concerns like malaria, TB, or diarrhoea that kill many more people.

Thomas Abraham, a journalist who taught health reporting at the University of Hong Kong, has tried to answer this and other questions in his new book, Polio: The Odyssey of Eradication. He says polio was held hostage by geopolitics, and traces the reason why countries opted for a weak vaccine against a strong virus.

The author concludes that future global campaigns that zero in on just one disease must be weighed against the necessity of upgrading public health, especially in poorer countries.

In Nepal, indigenous polio was eliminated in 2000 after the country responded to WHO’s eradication goal by adding polio to its successful campaign of vaccination against other diseases. However, there were still polio cases in Nepal brought over the border from India. The last case of polio was detected in Bajhang district in 2010, and Nepal was finally declared polio-free four years later.

In response to a query from Nepal Times this week, however, Abraham said Nepal is not ‘out of the woods yet’. “If polio re-emerges in India, particularly UP and Bihar, this would be a major challenge to Nepal,” he said. “Also, if levels of routine childhood immunisation fall in Nepal there is a danger of outbreaks of vaccine-derived polio,” he warned.

Even though polio has been largely removed, there are still cases in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria where vaccination campaigns have been thwarted by religious extremists. Ironically, immunity between India and Pakistan and the heavily guarded border between the two countries has minimised the risk of polio spreading via India to Nepal.

Polio derived from oral vaccines has emerged as a new threat to the eradication campaign. By 2019, WHO deployed a combination of inactivated Polio Vaccine (Salk vaccine) and inactivated oral vaccine to prevent further outbreaks.

“Routine immunisation levels need to remain high in order to maintain Nepal’s polio-free status. Luckily, we have a strong disease surveillance system to detect any new polio cases,” said Jitku Shakya, Acting Director of the Department of Health Services.

Nepal is one of the oldest diseases to afflict humans, but it wasn’t until the beginning of 20th century that there were outbreaks in Europe, North America and Australia. US President Franklin D Roosevelt was paralysed by polio, and because of this the US saw considerable political influence and funds to back polio vaccine research.

The first was the Salk vaccine that used inactivated poliovirus, and protected individuals injected with right dose, but it did not stop the transfer of the disease. The Sabin vaccine in 1961 employed a weakened poliovirus to be administered orally. It was cheaper and easier to use and protected individuals from paralysis as well as stopped polio transmission, which eventually led to it being chosen as a tool of eradication.

Despite its success, the Global Polio Eradication campaign has been criticised for its huge cost and for widening the gap between local health needs and global health programs. In his book, Abraham puts his experience as a foreign correspondent to good use by visiting the frontlines of the battle against polio in Pakistan, India and Nigeria. He writes about the sensations of polio vaccinators in Pakistan and Afghanistan by the Taliban.

A considerable portion of the book deals with a long-standing debate about whether targeting a single disease for eradication should take precedence over strengthening national health systems. This resonates with WHO’s own reluctance to endorse polio eradication for a long time in favour of a strong primary health care system.

This book is a recommended read for public health professionals, but it has lessons for anyone who wants to better understand the inner workings of health systems, donor agency priorities, and what goes on behind the scenes in Nepal.

Abraham is neither an epidemiologist nor a medical practitioner, he is a journalist with over 25 years of experience covering conflict, politics and health. Maybe that is why the book reads more like a thriller with an engaging real-life account of what goes right and what can go wrong in the fight against a disease-causing pathogen.
Delhi’s deadly air

Shashi Tharoor

NEW DELHI - A diplomat friend returning home after less than three years’ service in India, was asked at his exit medical examination how many packs a day he smoked. When he protested that he was a staunch non-smoker, the doctor commented that x-rays of his lungs showed otherwise. All he had done was breathe Delhi’s air, three smokey winters in a row.

It really is that bad. When November comes, New Delhi begins to choke on a thick blanket of smog that chokes lungs, corrodes throats, and impairs visibility. It’s not just Delhi’s notorious diesel fumes from cars and truck exhausts. There are also factories spewing smoke, charcoal burners on the sidewalks, coal stoves used by roadside vendors, and agricultural stubble burned by farmers in Punjab and Haryana. Delhi had just three ‘clean air days’ in the whole of 2017. The worst air quality is in winter, when polluted air meets winter fog and is trapped.

Poor air quality is now costing India at least 1% of GDP every year in respiratory diseases, reduced productivity, and increased hospitalization, and may be reducing India’s lifespan by three years. According to the State of Global Air report published by the Health Effects Institute, the absolute number of unsafe-related deaths in India rose by a staggering 356% from 1990 to 2013. The economic implications of deteriorating air quality are equally ominous. Welfare costs and lost labor income due to air pollution amounts to nearly 8% of India’s GDP.

Moreover, a recent study revealed that India’s toxic air is also dissuading executives from accepting assignments in Delhi: people are turning down lucrative jobs in order to save their lungs. In 2015, the New York Times’ former South Asia correspondent, Geraldine Harris, explained that he was leaving his post prematurely because merely living in Delhi was damaging his children’s health. Harris wrote that Delhi is suffering from a dire pediatric respiratory crisis in which nearly half of the city’s 4.4 million schoolchildren have irreversible lung damage from the poisonous air. So he picked up his kids and left India.

Most Indians don’t have that choice. They must live with respirable suspended particulate matter that becomes lodged in the lungs and impairs breathing.

A study of Delhi schoolchildren between four and 17 years of age found that key indicators of respiratory health and lung function were 3-4 times worse than in schoolchildren elsewhere. And the damage was irreversible. India needs to make improving air quality a national priority. It needs to create state and national action plans for clean air; set tough new targets for thermal power plant emissions, factory chimneys, and automobile exhausts; and establish a proper air pollution monitoring system. And it needs to act fast. Already, 15 of the world’s 20 most polluted cities and towns are in India. More than a million Indians are dying every year because of bad air.

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Shashi Tharoor, a former UN under-secretary-general and former India ambassador to the United Nations, is credited for proposing India to the world of the 21st century.

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Happenings

23-29 November 2018

Shashi Tharoor

ON A HIGH: The inaugural session of the 12th Mountain Medicine World Congress in Kathmandu on Wednesday. More than 200 delegates from 30 countries are taking part.

WOMEN POWER: An all-female flight crew of Yeti Airlines flew an all-female UN team led by acting Deputy Secretary General of United Nations Amina J. Mohammed and UN Resident Coordinator Valerie Jallade on a flight last Friday.

HOLY WALK: Hundreds of Muslims gathered to mark the birth of the prophet Nabi Muhammad in Kabul on Wednesday.

BRIGHT AND COLOURFUL: Thai Airways presents blankets to monks at Royal Thai Monastery in Lumbini on Sunday to mark the 50th anniversary of the Airlines’ flights on the Singapore-Kathmandu route.
Ex-guerrillas regret the war

Yogendra KC of Ramechhap was recruited into the ‘people’s war’ launched by the Maoists to overthrow feudalism and install a people’s government in Nepal. Twelve years after the war ended, he runs a footpath shop. In spite of all the political ups and downs of the past decade, it has made little difference to this former guerrilla, and he has no desire to remember the painful days of war.
“I joined because I dreamt about changing the face of the country, but the war destroyed me. Now, I just want to get on with my life from this shop,” he says. KC joined the Maoist militia in 2001, and went on to be a platoon commander. A year previously, he was working in a garment factory in Kathmandu where the security forces arrested him on charges of being a Maoist. “I knew nothing about the Maoists, but they joined me for six months,” he recalls. After his release, he went to Sikkim and worked as a waiter, but he had an altercation with some soldiers posted there and he became their target. “The army kept harassing me, and accusing me of being a Maoist even though I wasn’t. So, fearing for my own safety, I joined the Maoists,” says KC who then received military training, and actually led his unit in numerous battles. KC says his dreams to change the nation were dashed after the peace process. He was compelled to opt for self-retirement. “The party had agreed to integrate us into the Nepal Army based on educational qualifications,” he says, “but ironically it was the same bourgeois education which we fought against that was the requirement.”

After the peace process, KC received Rs.900,000 compensation and went to Daang to start a business. But after the ice-cream factory he started went bankrupt, he now sells seasonal items in his footpath shop — the main source of income for his family of four. KC now feels that joining the Maoists was a waste of time, and there are many like him who are feeling pang of regret. Khema Prasad Budha Magar from Rolpa is another ex-guerrilla. “I took up arms to build a new nation, but an struggle now to sustain myself.” After witnessing his father’s murder by the Royal Nepal Army, Magar joined the Maoists at age 12 to seek revenge. The child soldiers grew up in the Maoist militia. After the peace agreement, he could not be rehabilitated into the army because he was only 17 and the minimum age requirement was 18. “I was eligible to fight in war but the Maoists declared that I was ineligible to receive rehabilitation,” says Magar, who doesn’t want to get involved in politics, preferring to work in a construction company. Also working in construction is Chitla Magar, who was an assistant commander in the Maoist militia ever since the beginning of the conflict. “I joined because I suffered many injustices and discrimination,” recalls Magar, who could not join the Army because of lack of schooling. “There was no way I could receive education that I was fighting against,” he says. Magar regrets joining the Maoists and says that he and his comrades were tricked by their leaders. He says, “We were just stepping stones for the big shots to climb over.”

Foreigners in Nepal’s prisons

Himal Khakapatrika, 11-18 November

As many as 98 foreigners are currently serving time in Nepal’s prisons, according to the latest data released by the Department of Prisons Management. Not surprisingly, an overwhelming majority of foreign prisoners are Indians. Nepal shares a long and porous border with two of India’s poorest states with high crime rates. So it comes as no surprise when one finds out that there are 41 foreign prisoners doing time in Nepal are from India. Of the 682 Indian prisoners languishing in jails in Nepal, 41 are women. Foreigners are serving jail terms in Nepal mainly for drug peddling, kidnapping, rape, human trafficking, murder, cheating, wildlife poaching and TF fraud. Indians outnumber other foreigners in almost every crime except visa overstay, bank fraud, counterfeit currency and child abuse.

What is interesting is that the second highest number of foreigners in detention are from Bhutan, a tiny Himalayan kingdom, with which Nepal has restrained people-to-people ties. But what could explain this is a large number of Bhutanese refugees languishing in eastern Nepal for the last three decades. Although over 100,000 refugees from Bhutan have been taken to the US, Australia, Canada and other countries, some 6,000 refugees are still in Nepal.

After nationals from Bhutan (59), Bangladesh (49) and Pakistan (21) are number three and four on the list of foreign prisoners in Nepal. Only 79 foreign prisoners are from outside these four South Asian countries. Foreign prisoners from outside the region are in single digits, except China (10), but this figure also includes Tibetans.

As many as 19 foreign prisoners are from Africa, and 15 are from马克西姆蒙古, including the notorious French ‘Bikini Killer’ Charles Sobhraj. There is only 1 American. The higher number of foreign prisoners is lodged in Butwal Jail in Kathmandu (108). Most of them have been slapped with jail terms of more than five years.
HIGH ALERT

This week, Kathmandu hosts an international conference on mountain medicine

The 13th Mountain Medicine World Congress is being held in Kathmandu 21-24 November, with more than 400 delegates from over 30 countries taking part.

The biennial conference is being organised by the International Society for Mountain Medicine (ISMM) together with the Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA) and the Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal. The Congress will continue to focus on science and research, and offer a comprehensive overview of ongoing topics of interest in mountain medicine, including emergency mountain medicine.

Located in the Central Himalaya with some of the highest terrain in the world, and a popular destination for mountaineers and trekkers from all over the world, Nepal is an ideal venue for the Congress.

Nepali climbers have accompanied expeditions for many decades to the world’s highest mountains, but not to Nepal, but all are well-versed.

In addition, an increasing number of young Nepalis are discovering their own country, and can be found in large numbers on trekking trails that used to be frequented by foreigners.

Nepal also has a long history of research in mountain medicine starting with the Silver Hut studies in the early 1960s, one of the first to look at the effect of high altitude on the human physiology. The Sherpa people are probably the most studied, breath-analysed and blood-taken community in the world, as scientists try to find out how their bodies have evolved to high altitude living. Even today, many Himalayan expeditions have medical research components.

Like the study of two mountaineers who were on Mt Everest this spring, while their twice-rescued their expedition left the world.

The goal was to research possible changes in their gene expression.

Local organisers of the Kathmandu conference this week are mostly young Nepali doctors of the Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal (MSSM), which is dedicated to keeping the Himalaya safe by researching and increasing awareness of mountain medicine.

They will be presenting findings on altitude illness, cold, avalanche hazards, search and rescue, exposure to ultraviolet radiation, etc. The conference has offered 80 scholarships for young Nepali doctors to attend the meeting with support from Mount Naupaka, an internal medicine intern in Kimhans.

The Himalayan Rescue Association has been a pioneer in mountain medicine in the Himalaya for almost 40 years, with its clinic in Phuket and other popular trekking and mountaineering excursions.

Among the speakers at the conference are Peter Hackett who has done pioneering research into mountain medicine as medical director at the HRA, and David Shim who has studied trekkers’ diarrhoea (see their contributions, alongside).

At altitude

When the Himalayas range, which includes 14 peaks above 8,000m, and begins where the European Alps reach their highest point. Mt Everest and other mountains nearly cut into the stratosphere. Hypoxia that climbers feel in the Himalayas is much greater and much more medically significant than in the Alps, or other mountain ranges in the world. In his inaugural keynote to the Congress in Kathmandu on Wednesday, Peter Hackett reminded the audience that the best antidote to altitude illness is still to take the patient down while administering bottled oxygen.

Going to great

How Pheriche was put on the world map for modern mountain medicine

Peter Hackett

Kathmandu is hosting the Xth World Congress on Mountain Medicine 21-24 November, and the location is indeed appropriate considering that it was in the Nepal Himalaya that modern mountain medicine made great advances in altitude illness.

Acute altitude illness requires two things in order to happen: 1) a person not adjusted to high altitude, and 2) going high quickly, faster than the body has time to adjust.

Before the advent of modern transportation, no one could travel high enough fast enough to get into much trouble. Altitude illness is therefore mainly a problem of modern times. It is likely that the best experience with altitude illness prior to the advent of trekking in Nepal was when the British Army, in the Sino-Indian war of 1962, was airlifted rapidly to over 5,000m.

Although foreigners started walking around Nepal in the early 1950s, larger scale trekking

Solving the problem of diarrhoea among Himalayan trekkers changed travel medicine around the world

David R Shim

When I first visited Nepal in 1978, the causes of diarrhea in trekkers were not known, and there was no effective treatment available. Trekkers were stranded in the mountains when they became too sick to walk and were often abandoned in huts by their guides. Some had to be rescued by helicopter. Long planned trips were ruined. Many died not to come to Nepal because of their fear of falling ill.

When I joined the CWEC Clinic in Kathmandu in 1983, we discovered that we were the first clinic in the world seeing trekkers at their destination. We struggled to solve the problem of trekkers’ diarrhoea among our patient population until we were able to join forces with a US Army research lab in Bangkok called AFRCMS, which was the best diarrhoea lab in the world at that time. They were able to check for a wide number of bacteria and viruses that could not be detected in our laboratory.

The research demonstrated that most diarrhoea in trekkers was due to bacteria and the susceptible to a short course of antibiotics and ended the illness within 12-24 hours. It turned out that the symptoms of bacteria caused diarrhoea were remarkably consistent: sudden onset. In contrast, the less common causes of infection, such as Giardia and amoebiasis, had a gradual onset of illness that was more tolerable, but slowly wore the trekkers down.

This insight into diarrhoea allowed us to arm trekkers with antibiotics and simple instructions on how and when to use them. The advent of what is called ‘empic self-treatment’ of diarrhoea completely changed trekking in Nepal. Diarrhoea was now an inconvenience rather than a trip-ending occurrence. Within a few years, empirical self-treatment became the standard for most trekkers headed anywhere in the developing world.

Our focus initially was on diagnosis and treatment, and subsequent attempts to find ways to help prevent diarrhoea were not very successful. The trekkers’ best efforts at choosing...
heights to prevent altitude illness

only began in the late 1960’s. Trekkers, unaware of the risks of ascending rapidly, began to die on their treks. The number of evacuations and deaths became alarming to the fledgling trekking industry and the few agencies in operation at that time banded together to start the Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA) in 1973, organised by a former Peace Corps Volunteer named John Snow.

John Dickinson, who began work at the old Shanta Bhawan Hospital in Butan in 1969, became the receiving physician for severe cases of altitude illness. He and Dr. Bond, the pathologist, published the first series of autopsy findings in trekkers dying from altitude illness. This work brought the world’s attention to the problem of altitude illness in Nepal, a rather mysterious condition that stuck down perfectly healthy young people venturing into thin air. Dickinson became the first medical advisor to the HRA.

Under the leadership of Teck Chantra Pokhrel, Mike Clough, Dave-John Shaya and Robert Reiffel in the early 1970’s, the HRA staffed an aid post in the village of Phuriche, at 4,300 m on the path to Everest Base Camp. When I first passed through Phuriche in 1974, the post was staffed by an American nurse and a famous climbing Sherpa, Tashi. Wanting to stay in Nepal, I volunteered for the next season, and many seasons after that. I became the medical director of the HRA until 1983 when David Shlim took my position. In 1986, he became the medical director of the only hospital in Nepal to drill the CMRC Clinic.

In Phuriche, I conducted the first studies of altitude illness in trekkers. We ended up suggesting a schedule that included rest days on the ascent to Kalapattar. This new schedule cut the incidence of altitude illness in half but did not completely eliminate it.

We documented the value of Diamox (acetazolamide) in preventing altitude illness. A 1977 paper in the Lancet was the first large study of altitude illness in a civilian population, and put Phuriche on the world map as a center for altitude illness research.

The HRA now operates the clinic in Phuriche and a clinic in Munsang on the Annapurna trek. These clinics have been, and still remain, the best clinical experience a doctor can get in diagnosing and treating altitude illness. The HRA is currently operated by an all-Nepali board of directors with Radda Basnet, the former medical director of the HRA, as its medical director.

Nepal is not immune to the effects of altitude illness. Trekking guides, porters, and climbers have all suffered, and all too frequently, died of altitude illness in the course of their jobs. Basnet was the first to study the risk of altitude illness in Hindu pilgrims to high altitude sites in Nepal. Just because they are Nepali and have the Himalayas in their backyard does not offer immunity to the effects of low oxygen at high altitude.

Pilgrimage to events such as the Nepal Purnima Festival are generally low-altitude people who ascend for two days, such as from Dzongu at 1,960 m to Gesinkund Lake at 4,380 m, at only 48 hours inside altitude illness to a safe 4 days. The HRA provides a temporary health clinic at the base of the lake for pilgrims and treats many cases of severe altitude illness, preventing death from small altitude illnesses.

The most auspicious development in medicine in mountain medicine in Nepal is the large cadre of young Nepali physicians, who are now intensely interested in high-altitude medicine. Mentored by Basnet, these young doctors are carrying on the tradition of small teams of medical care of victims of altitude illness, researching on causes and treatments, and developing systems of early intervention to help reduce mortality.

The Nepal Himalaya and the HRA, are still a backbone of modern mountain medicine.

Peter Hackett is a world renowned high altitude expert and a leading authority on altitude illness, and the effects of altitude on people in the mountains.

with the trots

what foods to eat could not control the fact that most diarrhoea was transmitted by errors made in the kitchen of restaurants. Mistakes in the preparation, handling, and storage of food.

Diarrhoea also proved to be seasonal, with the pre-monsoon months having double the risk compared to the rest of the year. When we later matched this with local data, we also saw this was true for Nepali children. Although the exact reasons for this seasonal increase is not known, it does coincide with the mousey seasons in Nepal.

Fleas lay their eggs in human stool, are attracted to food in the kitchen, so fecal bacteria on their feces contaminate the food. One of the biggest breakthroughs in Nepal is the program to eliminate stool from the open environment where it can attract flies. Stuffed Open Defecation-Free Zone, the intervention of these programs in these areas has greatly reduced the risk of diarrhoea to both tourists and locals.

Foreign trekkers and expatriates are like Nepali children in one key aspect: they are both equally susceptible to bugs that cause diarrhea. We studied expatriates who moved to Kathmandu and found out that they each had an average of 3 episodes of diarrhea per person in the first year. This turned out to be the exact same number of episodes that an average Nepali child would have.

We were also able to show that long-term expatriates gradually developed immunity to the diarrhoea bugs, just as Nepali children do. Over a period of 2-3 years, the risk of getting diarrhoea, and the severity of the illness, went down. This is why diarrhoea is not a major problem among adult Nepalis.

Although antibiotics have greatly decreased the suffering of trekkers and have helped support the tourist industry by giving visitors more confidence in travelling to Nepal, the wider availability and use of antibiotics by the general public in Nepal has resulted in more resistant bacteria. The antibiotics that treat diarrhoea have changed several times in the last 35 years.

The long-term solution to travelers’ diarrhoea is to improve the hygiene in the host country, which is more effective than just being on both locals and foreigners. Restaurant hygiene has already improved a great deal, and there is far less stool in the open. Nepal pioneered the diagnosis and treatment of travelers’ diarrhoea in the world and has also demonstrated that decreasing the risk of diarrhoea among locals can also reduce the risk for foreigners.

We look forward to a time when the level of hygiene in Nepal is such that children can grow up without the constant risk of illness, and the concept of travelers’ diarrhoea no longer needs to be discussed with travelers.
The Ass

Make Nepal greater again

A time when politics abroad, national morale is sagging, and there are tumours of the Kailash can getting Together again, we need something to lift our patriotic hearts with a longing for the days of yore when Nepal was still great, paraded on Mount Kailash, from Tibet to Terai, and we were a self-sufficient nation of self-sowers.

We may just be too lazy to count our blessings. Take the garbage and plastics on the streets; they are blatant symbols of our hard-earned freedoms, and a sign that this country is steering ahead to a prosperous future. We are already rich enough to start a throwaway society and free to litter whenever we want. This means we are halfway to adopting an earlier regime’s status at all schedules.

Proof that we are not a feudal state anymore is how Nepal’s government is so independent and sovereign, it allows roads to be in a state of disrepair for decades, and have people freely to fund for themselves. Which other country has such aaison? Our system, allowing our liberty and self-determination?

We matter what anyone says, we love our country, trash and all. After all, this is the land of brave Bal Bhakta, and the first defined by Rajah Singh’s army. We are the nation of Sugarbush, even if two-thirds of the mountains in actually in China. This is the country of the Bhagwata which has been trusted nearly in extinction. We honour Asian Wild Elephants by deplotting them in 1,200 rogue bank notes to show how much we value them (the cash, I mean, not the elephants).

Buddha and Siva were banned even before Nepal became a life member state. The Chinese would be barbarians if Arko hadn’t taught them how to build dagobas. So, no nation should underestimate us. We are a dynamic field between two bundles. No superhero is too great for us to safeguard our freedom to dump trash wherever we want in Nepal’s sprawling territory.

The question now arises, how far does our territoriality? Times is right for the Federal Government to restore Nepal to its former glory and irreplaceable territory we lost to the British in 1816. Eight problems: we have to go to war to get it back we might be fighting for Nepal’s sake since they also saw in the Afghan Army.

A less costly military solution would be if retired Gurkha commanders captured Churchill’s Cuddhama and razed the enormous double triangle over the mighty Gurkha Bar and Grill. Nepal’s annexation of this oil of Britain would a right to historical wrong. And it would be easy, since the town has Nepal street names, and is really a modern Nepal.

Thank Carlsberg It’s Friday

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