To Davos with hammer and sickle

Prime Minister K P Oli is flying off to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum on 20 January with a 18-member delegation. This is the first time a Nepali leader has been invited, and it is interesting that a communist is going to a capitalist club of free marketeers.

Unlike some others party heads from China or Vietnam who have attended Davos, Nepal’s prime minister is the first democratically-elected Communist leader to do so. According to PM Oli’s foreign policy adviser Rajan Shrestha, the invitation to attend is a recognition of Nepal’s achievement in ending the conflict, holding elections under a new constitution, and its commitment to lifting living standards through stability.

The Prime Minister will be speaking at two panels, one on South Asian security and another titled ‘Beyond GDP’, where he is expected to promote Nepal in the global arena as a politically stable nation with a favourable environment for international investment. He will meet the Swiss and Vietnamese presidents, and attend a private dinner hosted by the World Economic Forum Executive Chair Klaus Schwab.

However, experts say Nepal’s leader will be judged more by what he does than what he says. Nearly a year after becoming prime minister, Oli gets generally failing grades on transparency, accountability and investment climate.

Former diplomat and UN official Gyansudra Atharaya says that networking with international businesses and leaders in Davos will in fact be more important than performances at panels.

As Nepal tries to take the great leap forward to middle-income status in the next decade, Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) will be necessary to create employment opportunities, develop infrastructure and to propel sustainable growth. But the inflow of FDI has been minimal in the past five years, and FDI makes up only 1% of the GDP.

Says Nepal’s former ambassador to the United States Shankar Sharma: “Even if the prime minister just succeeds in conveying the message that Nepal’s economic environment is optimum for foreign investments, that alone will be an accomplishment.”

Economist Jayshree Mahat adds that Oli being in Davos could be an important stepping stone to establish global political and economic partnerships, even if it may not have any immediate tangible impact.

The Davos conference used to be a platform to advocate for liberal policies and private sector development, but recently has also included issues of social justice, inclusion and sustainable development.

Nepal’s newfound stability, improvement in electricity supply, the availability of cheap labour, and location next to the world’s two largest markets could be plus points for investors looking for under-exploited markets.

Ramesh Kumar
CRONY COMMUNISM

There are a few remarks by K P Oli, prime minister and co-chair of the Communist Party of India, hinting of next week to the World Economic Forum in Davos. What is a communist leader doing in a capitalist winter wonderland?

But Chinese President XI Jinping who is also the Secretary of the Communist Party of China, has attended Davos as well. And just as China is Communist only in name, Nepal’s current state model is half-jokingly called ‘country communism’.

China will soon be the world’s largest economy, and is steadily gaining in global military, geopolitical and economic power left by American disengagement. Nepal, on the other hand, is struggling with poor governance and economic stagnation despite billions of investment from west powers. And while China is a one-party state, Nepal’s umbrella Communist were dually elected in a landslide in 2017.

Oli has said his main agenda in Davos is to send a signal that Nepal has put conflict and instability behind it, and is open for business. The Communist leader of one of Asia’s poorest countries is going to be speaking in panels on ‘South Asian Security’ and on ‘Beyond GDP’, and he is hobnobbing with the likes of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

While no two countries are the same, and what works in one does not always serve as a model for another. If Oli did only one thing in Davos, it is to take a few observers from Vietnam on how it achieved record growth in its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which hit $3 billion last year.

FDI needs to be a medium-income country in the next decade, and for that needs foreign capital. Even to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it is estimated that the country needs to spend Rs81 billion a year. But FDI in Nepal has dipped in the past three years to a record low of only Rs2.8 billion, and represents less than 1% of the GDP.

At the ICIM and CII Nepal joint investment seminar (free page 11) released this week, the government and leaders have been talking of transparency and getting foreign direct investment has got so far, even the FDI under FVIP receives is largely hampered ill-gotten wealth. The take-home message from the report is that it is not just the government that is drift, but also the private sector. In many cases they are in cahoots to rob the people.

There is nothing his Vietnamese and Chinese communist compatriot Prime Minister Oli in Davos about how to boost investment that he does not already know. It is the law of laws that foreign investors are skittish. Despite the field being wide open in Nepal for investors who want to leverage the country’s proximity to the world’s two largest markets in India and China, Nepal is better known as a kleptocracy than a democracy.

In an interview with this paper (page 4) the South Korean ambassador was diplomatic when he said Nepal needed a better business culture to attract investors.

The need to repatriate profits takes years, delayed by demands for kickbacks. Foreign contractors involved in large projects like Melamchi or Kathmandu ring road have been harassed by corrupt officials who brazenly ask for their cut. Iodine-balling startups like Fodder are targeted by transport cartels with political protection. Licences for hydropower projects are being sought behind sheer size. These are the realities of how a kleptocracy operates.

Despite the proximity to the world’s two largest markets in India and China, Nepal is better known among foreign investors as a kleptocracy than a democracy.

BETTER EDUCATION

Education Minister Girinath Pokharel is not really fighting for school children in government schools (Lowest common denominator, Editorial, #944). There are no more urgent needs in public schools such as hygiene, hand washing, water in toilets, computer education, to name a few. There are many ways to help school children in Nepal. What he should be doing is making the government schools better than private ones.

You call yourself a Communist Party. Act like one and work for the people.

Alan Roadight

THANKS NAPEL Times for this encouraging news (‘Good fellows’, Pratikel Kardel, #942). I hope there are more welfare initiatives for government teachers as well. Our students need passionate teachers. So the support from the government is also important. It’s a shame that many students choosing boarding schools, the quality of education shouldn’t be different in public and private schools.

Vicky Cheung

The reason for conveting private schools into state schools is most likely to create a tax loophole (Class struggle, Pratikel Kardel, #942). Maybe it is just another moneymaking scheme under the guise of better education. Always follow the money if you want to get to the truth— investigative journalism 101.

Alex Ferguson

The Kamali by Anmol Shah

A Hatchet of pistols and a scientit trace the journey of one Kamali from a slum to a University. The film is a docudrama that delves into an old mystery. It’s a true crime story that will be of interest to fans of the Kamali. Nepal’s crime investigation

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter

Most visited online page

Lowest common denominator

A high level commissioner made this month a coroner’s report recommending to close out Nepal’s private schools and them turn into state schools. The government should be looking at the quality of school infrastructure, not state schools and they are trying to fill the gap in quality at the fine school system. Most riders agreed with the sentiment, Get rid of the bad schools and just go on discussing.

The Making of Chaku

Chaku, (protection money) is a secret business hidden during the Maoist regime in the Magh of Savaraj, Damauli and Parbat and gives livelihood to thousands of people for the red water. (Thanks to the nepali news paper in your country) I hope we can identify the business in future where traditional tribal cultures are still rigid.

Better Education

The government plans to upgrade the education system in Nepal. This includes improving teacher training, increasing the availability of educational materials, and introducing new subjects to the curriculum. The focus is on ensuring that students have access to quality education, especially in rural areas.

The Nepali Times #942

Weekly #943

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Nepal Times (Lalitpur edition) from my paper on 9 January 2004 talking about Prime Minister K.P. Oli who got to Florida and talked about the need for aid and investment in Nepal. Despite the debate, Prime Minister Oli is going to the US next week to talk about aid and investment and to try to get the message that Nepal needs a boost. It looks like the fight that he has written we edit in our 9th edition.

Prime Minister K.P. Oli is going to the US next week to talk about aid and investment and to try to get the message that Nepal needs a boost. It looks like the fight that he has written we edit in our 9th edition.

The Nepali Times #942

Weekly #943
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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
As Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli prepares to attend the World Economic Forum in Davos next week, how can Nepal forge economic ties with the donor community and create investment-friendly environment? Hear the ambassador's view.

The Nepali Times Ambassador to Nepal, Park Young-sik, spoke to Nepali Times about people-to-people exchanges, development assistance, and economic cooperation.

“The Nepali government can create a business-friendly environment”

Turkish Airlines recently announced its Lauf 2018 in December 2018 which reached 82% with a total of 1.5 million passengers. In the same month, 20% passengers of the airline went up by 5% approximately, while the number of international passengers, excluding transit passengers, went up by 8%.

Nepal has great potential toward the Korean Buddhists are required.

Korean pop culture is quite popular in Nepal. Do you have plans to build on this cultural diplomacy?

The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Kathmandu has been organizing various cultural events every year such as Korean Film Festival, Korean Pop Music Festival, K-pop song, and dance performance and Korean cooking classes. We also find that about 100,000 Nepali are currently enjoying the game of the Korean Pop Music Festival. The Embassy will organize “Korean Ambassador Cup” tennis and then Champion. Leader this year. Ambassador's Cup is held every two years. Nepal has a huge potential to attract Korean tourists to Nepal. This year's match will be held in February. Nepal has a huge potential to attract tourists from the world.

Online food fest

Nepali Times organizes its 3rd Online Food Festival from 7th November to 7th October, with a huge range of dishes. Each dish, Only Best in offers, online gamers, how to make it better, and 30 exhibiting restaurants with unique and regular recipes at a discounted price and free delivery in all the orders from the October's festival.

Nepal Times Ambassador to Nepal, Park Young-sik, spoke to Nepali Times about people-to-people exchanges, development assistance, and economic cooperation.

BIZ BRIEFS

The Nepali government can create a business-friendly environment

The Nepali government can create a business-friendly environment

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Caring for Nepal’s women

New study shows that Nepali women migrant workers face severe health challenges abroad

A recent Bournemouth University study exploring health care problems of 1,000 female migrant returnees revealed that Nepali women workers face severe health challenges abroad.

Over the past decade, almost 200,000 women have been documented by the Department of Foreign Employment to have travelled to nations across West Asia — mostly to the UAE, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus and Jordan, where they have worked primarily as caregivers and domestic help. However, 90% of Nepalese female migrants are estimated to be undocumented.

In 2018, the government outlawed labour permits for domestic workers in the Gulf following widespread reports of abuse. But women have continued travelling through illegal means via India, which further increases their vulnerability to traffickers and risks of being abused and exploited.

Multiple horror stories have emerged over the years about the abuse of migrant women. With high demand for Nepali households in the Gulf, and migration agents having reported to sell women off to employers, women have to work long hours, do not receive pay on time, and have no one to lean on for support due to isolated nature of domestic work.

“At the agent’s office in Kuwait, we were treated like goats. Employers walked in and checked us out, bargained and handed cash to the agent on the spot. We were sold like livestock,” said Reeta, who had returned from Kuwait, to Nepal.

Professor Edwin van Teijlingen of Bournemouth University says that publishing quality research reflecting conditions of workers is crucial to providing accurate information for policy makers and the labour export industry to learn from. The study was conducted in collaboration with John Moores University and two Nepal organisations, Tara Nepal and POURAKHI Nepal, which work to ensure safe migration for women.

Professor Padam Simkhada of John Moores University explains that the study combines two crucial issues of migration: health and human rights. “This is one of several projects we are working on in the field of health and migration, and with proper working conditions, female migrant workers can learn and bring back valuable skills,” says Simkhada.

The study concluded that raising women’s awareness about their work environment and training them with preventive measures to combat exploitation from recruiting agencies and employers can play a positive role in empowering them.

In a discussion session following the report, concerns were also raised about the importance of government interventions in conducting awareness campaigns about health risks, rights and suitable health services in foreign nations.

For further information, contact:
John Moores University, Bournemouth University, Tara Nepal and POURAKHI Nepal.

BACK HOME: Female migrant returnees at Poushahi, one of the organisations involved in the study.

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SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

New Year in a New Zealand summer
Taking a break from tigers and rhinos, Lisa Choegyal is fascinated by the freedom of dolphins and whales

“Keep your eyes down and remember the dolphins are in the water not in the air. We nod slowly through our masks. “And keep singing in order to attract them – dolphins are playful and inquisitive, but no touching.” I am ensnared in a clinging black wetsuit from head to toe including a dark hood that makes it hard to hear, as close as I’m likely to come to the shore.

looking like one of them. The boat is expertly positioned beside a pod of dusky dolphins and at the given signal we take a deep breath and clamber off the stern into the South Pacific ocean.

The sun has crept up over the hazy horizon and the clouds over the distant mountain shorelines are threatening a summer shower. The shock of the cold is eclipsed by the surprise of finding myself amidst hundreds of sleek dolphins keen to frolic. These wondrous creatures circle and speed beneath me in little groups of two and three, streamlined black and white, passing close, and darting in their wild curiosity.

They leap, they spiral, they somersault, and if I lift my masked face I can see the dorsal fin above the translucent water but also the elegant piked curve normally hidden beneath the waves. Singing tunefully into my snorkel as instructed, my voice falters and my stomach heaves with emotion. Profound immersion in a primal universe, eye contact with a wild dusky dolphin in the open ocean.

New Zealand’s Kaikoura Peninsula suffered a massive tectonic upheaval during the 3.8 earthquake in 2016 that reshaped the landscape. In 2016, changing the coastal contours and up-turning the seabed by as much as 20 meters, harbours, jetties, hotels, houses, roads and railways were disrupted and the coastline reconstructed.

The deep ocean trenches and submarine canyons lying off Kaikoura create uniquely sheltered and plankton-rich conditions that attract a wealth of resident and migratory sea life, notably congregations of southern hemisphere dolphins and several species of whales. Colonies of seals hunk on the kelp-covered rocks, and a variety of seabirds, those haunting seabirds with the world’s widest wingspan, skim and wheel close to shore.

After a leisurely showing tourists the mega-fauna of the New Zealand’s wildlife, and with the sea’s currents, I was interested to see the whale watching business that had transformed the sleepy village of Kaikoura, and enriched its Maori owners. With almost guaranteed sightings throughout the year, marine mammal viewing concessions at Kaikoura had long been cited by my Kiwi colleagues as one of the best examples of tourism and conservation – a serious local business but strictly controlled to protect the marine environment.

The Kaikoura experience is so well established as a cornerstone of New Zealand tourism that after the earthquake, rather than miss the dolphins, whale, and seabird encounters on offer, visitors took long detours inland through rural farmland and across mountain passes until the coastal roads reopened.

“Taking a break from tigers and rhinos, Lisa Choegyal is fascinated by the freedom of dolphins and whales

BLOOD BOND: Subway diving with my son Benita and looking at the whale in the Maddox (broad and surrounded by young humpbacks in Vaiva, Tonga)

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A dog’s best friend

Kathmandu’s hero canines save the lives of fellow dogs with emergency blood transfusions

Sneha Shrestha and four rescued dogs at her Sneha CAREs shelter are saving abandoned canines – one blood transfusion at a time.

For four years dogs at the shelter have been providing blood for dog surgeries and transfusions, and have saved many lives while helpingولة across Kathmandu when they are in need of blood donation.

“Before I had the shelter I found a dog on the street who was very sick and didn’t have a lot of blood.” Shrestha recalls. “I took the dog to the clinic, and it needed surgery but there was no blood available. The doctor asked if I had a healthy and disease-free dog at home who could donate.”

Sneha brought her Jenny who donated the first pint of blood to the needy dog at the surgery’s table, and that made her realise that her dogs could help save other dogs.

Four years later, Sneha is proud of her dogs whose loyalty goes beyond being man’s best friend to also serving as dogs’ best friend.

“I take the dogs to a private clinic every three months for the donations because I don’t have the correct equipment at my shelter, it is expensive but the dogs are worth it, one day I aim to have all of the equipment,” Sneha told Nepal Times.

Veterinarian Sushil Kumar Paudel at the Animal Medical Centre says he is very grateful for Sneha Shrestha’s dogs and their blood because it can be hard to find appropriate canine donors.

“There is a criteria that a dog must meet in order to donate blood,” Paudel explains, “they should be between 1-7 years of age, in healthy condition, disease free and preferably weigh more than 20kg. This last requirement can sometimes be overlooked if the transfusion required is small: only a 300ml bag instead of 400ml.

“It’s also difficult sometimes to convince dog owners to do the donation procedure, it’s completely safe but some owners still worry,” he adds.

Just as with human donors, after the dogs donate blood the clinic provides them with iron supplements and vitamins to ensure a speedy recovery of blood cells. There are no sedatives used during the donation procedure unless the dogs are particularly aggressive.

Most of the time the dogs cooperate and are happy to be held in place, and sedatives are discouraged because they affect the quality of the blood.

Blood transfusions are a novelty among dogs and are not used very frequently due to time and money limitations, as most owners prefer to treat their dogs with medicine rather than an expensive blood transfusion.

“These are incidents when a blood transfusion is unavoidable; with internal bleeding or long surgeries where the blood loss is high. But if the procedure is minor we often find alternatives to blood transfusion,” Paudel adds.

On average the Animal Medical Centre performs approximately two or three blood transfusions per month. One of the dog blood donors, a handsome German Shepherd named Jenny, has been adopted and flew off to Canada this week.

Cats may also be able to donate blood in the future, but currently their population in Kathmandu is small and their general health would need to improve before they can be donors, like their canine colleagues.
The new reality of Nepali celebs

Anyone with some talent can now amass an instant following on TikTok

Sewa Bhattarai

Four years ago, Lemi Tamang was just another fine arts student in Kathmandu when she started posting her makeup photos and videos on Instagram, just for fun.

Her fresh, dewy looks got more attention than she had ever expected. Before she knew it, she had become a professional makeup artist with studios in Kathmandu and Mumbai.

“I decided to change my passion into my career,” says Tamang who now has 277,000 followers on Instagram.

Tamang has worked with her dream brand Ficee, teaches makeup in Nepal, and travels all over the globe on work assignments, and credits her success to social media.

“No question about it, my work got noticed and I got assignments because of social media and it is my work portfolio,” she says.

A new brand of celebrities called ‘influencers’ now propel themselves to fame through social media, and the phenomenon is also turning the traditional advertising industry on its head. And the trend has arrived in Nepal.

Consumers no longer need television or newspapers to listen to songs, watch videos, laugh at comedy, learn fashion, makeup, or cooking tips, or even get the news. They are fed what they like online through algorithms or friends, and have no need to go beyond this circle of acquaintances or interests.

All this has created a new brand of celebrities whom people trust and follow. These influencers typically get people to click on their content because of their talent, and they no longer need to be profiled in mainstream TV and the press to become famous.

Social media musical sensations like Rijal Ghimire, Rojita Rui, Ram Raja Khalsa, Brajan Raj Vaidya, Neeshu Jung Khatiwada, Swoopon Sunam have all burst in Nepal’s cyberspace like supernovas.

Comedians like Rupali Banerjee and Hitayuk Kachhak, and dancers like Cartoonz Crew have gone on to great fame. Nepal has several world-famous makeup artists like Premise Tamang, also known as the ‘human chameleon’.

Reshma Ghimire, who goes by the moniker tigerah on social media, used to enjoy the app TikTok, where you can act and lip-sync to all kinds of background music, from songs to Bollywood dialogues. Her antics got her 98,000 followers, and offers for music videos (she accepted 2).

“I love appearing on screen, and am considering movies as well. But I hope I can still continue my nursing profession,” she says.

Khusbu Gauchan started a fashion blog eight years ago as a hobby, but then was flooded with offers of collaboration from international brands. She started

Ancel Neupane

ancel.neupane 18k on Facebook
Claim to fame: Quirky photo manipulations showing miniature people in dream locations
Team: Started alone, now has team
Fame led to: Career in audiovisual production
Other careers: CA diploma

Lex Limbu

lelimbu.com 11k on Facebook
Claim to fame: Most reliable and fast source for news about Nepali celebrities
Team: One man army
Fame led to: credibility as a news source, collaboration offers
Other careers: working for Red Cross

“Sometimes I worry when I see people whose only goals are to be well known, who do everything just to amass attention.”

“You cannot always be creative, so all your posts are not the same quality. But if you lose quality, people lost interest.”

“There used to be a time when I used to reply to every negative comment trying to make people understand, but now I don’t care.”

“Your social media is like your shop, have to present work, well polished and equal.”

Khusbu Gauchan

stylist-chhusbu.blogspot.com 28k view per month
Claim to fame: Modeling careers on Instagram
Team: One man and photographer
Fame led to: A new package of clothes waiting at home almost every day
Other careers: Restaurant, airline, hospitality

Lemi Tamang

lemi.. 777
Claim to fame: Fresh, dewy
Team: One woman army
Fame led to: Make-up for the stars
Other careers: Food
Special Media Influencers in Nepal

Go online to watch videos that made these celebrities famous.

Sisan Baniya
Fame to fame: funny videos on parodies and personal vlogs and travel videos
Teams: Up to half a dozen creators
Other careers: Restaurant, garments, production house

Reshma Ghimire
Fame to fame: Dramatic expressions and on-point lip sync to TikTok
Teams: Self phone
Other careers: Currently studying for nursing degree

Elena
Fame to fame: Fatty and relatable vlogs
Teams: One woman army
Other careers: Hone your writing and move to YouTube

“Sometimes you just want to have a normal day, you don’t want to do anything. But you feel like you owe it to your supporters, so you make content anyway.”

“So many of our youth abroad are frustrated. They talk to me and tell me it’s possible to make it in Nepal.”

“It’s a very strange world because no one tells you what to do if you become famous. You just have to figure it out by yourself.”

“From what I’ve seen, many of the popular social media influencers in Nepal are making waves with their relatable content and unique personalities. However, the road to success is not easy. It requires hard work, determination, and persistence.”

“Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, and it has changed the way we interact with each other. It has also opened up new opportunities for people to showcase their talents and reach a wider audience.”

“Many of the influencers we spoke to emphasized the importance of being true to oneself and not compromising on values. They also stressed the importance of engaging with their audiences and being transparent about their lives.”

“With the rise of social media, we have seen a shift in the way we consume content. People are not just passive consumers, but active participants who engage with the content they consume.”

“Social media has also had a significant impact on the Nepali entertainment industry. Many actors and actresses have turned to social media to showcase their talents and connect with their fans.”

“However, it is important to note that social media is not a substitute for traditional forms of media. It is important to have a balance between the two and not rely solely on one platform.”

“Overall, social media has had a significant impact on the Nepali entertainment industry, and it is important to keep up with the changing trends and adapt to them.”

“Despite the challenges, the Nepali social media influencers are continuing to push boundaries and create content that resonates with their audiences.”
Swing social

Swim into the late-summer vibe of Swing, Sip and Swing hop-straight from the 30s and 40s. All yummy people come along and make new friends. Before you know it, you’re tapping along the beats. 22 January. 8pm onwards, Diffhaithadpavion Hall, Kathmandu, (01) 5189402

Coffee brewing course

The most affordable coffee brewing foundation and intermediate barista course by one of the highly skilled and reputed Specialty Coffee Association Certified Instructor, Miss nar; 13-14 February, 9:30am-5pm, NIC Coffee Lab and Training School, (081) 3323082

Mithila Cosmos

Mithila Cosmos, Songs of Innocence & Experience is an exhibition of paintings by S. C. Samrat. 23-30 January, 10.30am-6.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Shahi Mor, Restored

Jewels of Newar Art

The second edition of the art exhibition displays some of the best traditional Newar arts along with works from other diverse fields. It is also the inauguration of the gallery. 20 January – 2 February, 11am-5pm, Bodhikuti Gallery, Inar, Patan, 88162

Himalayan Hydro Expo

Attracting 5,000 visitors in hydropower, irrigation and drinking in South Asian Region, the expo focuses on investment, research, production, engineering, entrepreneurship and expertise in water resources. 19-20 January, 12am onwards, Bhrikutimandap Exhibition Hall, Kathmandu, (01) 5189402

In pursuit of Dragons

A fascinating talk about the discovery, history and science of dragons with photos by renowned entomologist Karen Correll. 19 January, 6pm onwards, Diffhaithadpavion Hall, Kathmandu, (01) 5042344

Raagmari

Chai, beer and ambience with Raagmari performing live on Friday night. 19 January, 5pm onwards, 5 degrees Bar, (01) 5042344

Crescendo Music Festival

Kuma Sripal is doing a special show featuring Golab from Karnie. Katham will be opening with their usual set. 22 January, 8pm, Kastor Club, Outdoor Lounge, Jorpati, (081) 3662207

Full moon concert

Oriental songs and classical music performances with the full moon. 27 January, 4pm, Kastor Club, Inari, Jorpati, (081) 3662207

Bloom fest

Experience day with exotic music from talents like Santi Malaya, Banke, D.J. Knuck leading the festival and various other great talents. 23 January, Open onwards, Tango Club, Ward, (01) 4060855

Cooking with nettle

Learn the culinary secrets of the herbal nettle, nettle (urna in Nepal) with Natural Roots Nepal, and create a nettle-themed platter (soup, dips, fritters, bread, fruit, and yak cheese), treated with minted wine. 19 January, 3pm, Koh Mandala, Kaveshi Road, Patan, (081) 3901930

Raagmari

Chai, beer and ambience with Raagmari performing live on Friday night. 19 January, 5pm onwards, 5 degrees Bar, (01) 5042344

Bath tub

A surya kalyan written by Kumar Naggadhi, directed by Charitra Baral and starring Nir Shrestha. Actors will not be seen, but only heard by their voice. 24 January – 11 February, 4.30pm (except Tuesdays), 8pm onwards on Saturdays, Shiffre Theatre, Bhaktapur, (01) 4466211

Hip Hop Coppelia

Directed by Raj Bhargav, the play tells the story of Fruit, a city youth who becomes radicalized with a hill-side doll, and Sophie, who dresses up as the doll, through steps of Hip Hop. 19 January, 11am and 5:30pm, Russian Center for Science and Culture, Kinnarpanch, 89114-5300, 8811308105

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Jamao hiking

Put on your hiking boots, pack a lunch, carry a stick, camera and banana liar if needed and meet the other groups at Moustapha Khaili, near Buddha Mall for a satisfying hike of 4.5 hours. The price includes entrance fee, breakfast, water bottle and free guide. 19 January, Ram, Astagey, Balsampu, (081) 3946721

La Dolce Vita

Your perfect romantic salad in Thamel, it comprises three floors with a restaurant, an espresso bar and a terrace, Ross, gus, steak, by coffee and more. Try their Tartu di Ciccioli, a soft creamy dark chocolate cake. Thbil, (01) 4701038

Monthly fan-brunch

A true Western style brunch for the whole family. Appetizers buffet, main courses, desserts, grilled, umbrella coffee, soft drinks, mimosas, and a separate kids’ buffet with supervised play area in the backyard. Reserved seating for family. 20 January, 11am to 1pm, Le Shephas, Mangalbazaar, 89239 (adult), 87239 (child), (01) 409669

OUR PICK

Opens in Kathmandu on 18 January

The dream for spa fans in colleges, with exclusive courses makes for finest competition in India, and the commercialization of marijuana is rampant. Why not indulge deep into the world of flowers, fruit, where its full students and can mean money by giving examinations in favor of kids students. The firm promises to showcase all the study, knowledge which students have in store. Some students have carefully preserved and developed, which may be the foundation for some Nepali and tribal students. The move stems the dependable ultimate stethoscope with a few newsmakers.

Rupakot Resort

Spectacularly located on a high ridge and approximately an hour drive from Lakeside Fakahara or the airport, with breathtaking panoramic views of the Annapurna range, Rupa and Langeskila far below, Rupakot Resort offers the ultimate luxury getaway with a taste of traditional Nepali rural life. Mardinia, Kopardi, (081) 632 660 / (01) 4084097

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 11 - 17 January

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>AQI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 January</td>
<td>81 – 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 January</td>
<td>91 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 January</td>
<td>101 – 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 January</td>
<td>111 – 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 January</td>
<td>121 – 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 January</td>
<td>131 – 140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Air quality is monitored by Samriddhi Air Quality Monitoring Station, which is located on the higher site of Samriddhi and reporting daily air quality assessment of the entire city. The daily reports are available online at the concerned websites of the concerned organizations. The AQI is divided into five categories: Good, Moderate, Poor, Unhealthy, and Hazardous. Categories are determined based on health effects of the pollutants.*
Nepalis in tax havens, Swiss banks, money laundering

These are excerpts from an investigation carried out by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal.

CIJ Nepal

In February 2015, The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) revealed that Nepal held Rs 67 billion in secret Swiss bank accounts. People thought the money must have beenparked there by Nepal’s corrupt politicians. But after the Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal (CIJ-Nepal) went through 3,000 pages of documents from the leak of Magnitsky Offshore Leaks, the Panama Papers, and other sources, the names were of Nepal’s top business people. Even foreigners had deposited money in the banks using Nepal’s names as documents.

Savings of Nepalis in the banks from dictators, corrupt politicians, business persons who evade taxes and organizations that make money through the illegal transaction of weapons and drugs by allowing them to deposit their earnings.

The country with the biggest Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nepal is China. India or the United States as one may presume, but the tax haven state of the British Virgin Islands. Of the total Rs 17.87 billion received as FDI in the last two years, the share of the British Virgin Islands (BVI) accounts for 45%. They obtained approval from the Nepal government to start investment and establish industries worth Rs 8 billion.

In 2017, the Panama Papers revealed that seven Nepalis including Devi Prasad Shrestha, a former employee of Udayan, were part of the owner of Non-Resident Nepalis Association, which had invested in a tax haven state. The ICIJ and CIJ Nepal collaborated in digging more into the information and found that several Nepal businesses have used tax havens to evade taxes in Nepal or to use the funds thus generated to launder it. The money was then repatriated to Nepal under foreign direct investment (FDI).

Investigations show that Birendra Mahato, a former lawmaker and central committee member of Federal Socialist Forum, his elder brother Upendra Mahato, Naini Govinda Shrestha, a non-resident Nepali and Anjali Raj Samangi, a businessman, are involved in this elaborate money laundering scheme. They used the sale of the telecom company Ncell to avoid paying capital gains tax in Nepal.

After a G-7 Summit established the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, the Paris-based organization has been blacklisting countries. The FATF blacklists countries not cooperating in anti-money laundering financing. Nepal committed to abide by the criteria drawn up by the FATF and its Asia-Pacific Group in 2013 and passed the Money Laundering-related Act. However, given these revelations, there is still a possibility that Nepal could be blacklisted in the future. “While Nepal avoided the scrutiny and monitoring of the global community in 2014 due to legislation and institutional reforms, there has not been effective implementation of the laws,” states Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatriwala’s white paper on the economy last March.

Nepali companies have also dealt with Mossack Fonseca, the international law firm in BVI that helps businesses who want to launder their money by finding them legal loopholes in tax haven countries. In 2015, the ICIJ published details of the firm in the Panama Papers, after which it closed down.

Panama Papers emails show that it had been using its failed grant approached Mossack Fonseca to bid for a tender from the Nepal Supreme Court calling for an international consultant for Judicial Mapping and Judicial data in Jhargram, Jhapa. AsianAid is also vice-chairman of Shankar, which bid for the tender, which a Mossack Fonseca official declined, saying the two could collaborate in future. Mossack Group has been involved with several Indian companies paying excise stickers for Inland Revenue Department, bank notes for Nepal Rastra Bank and passport printing and supply of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Another company linked to Mossack Fonseca is Nepal Ventures registered in BVI. It is not clear from the Panama Papers who was listed as the owner, but a company with a similar name is registered at the Office of Company Registrar in Nepal with Bhawana Mahato Juti Kumari Mahato as the main investor. The company has 20 percent share capital investment in United Telecom Limited. Mahato is the wife of Rahul Mahato, Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport and sister of Upendra Mahato and Birendra Mahato. When asked, Juti Kumari Mahato denied having investments abroad, and said “it is a more coincidence” that a company with similar name existed in the British Virgin Islands.

Swabha Group and brought Rs 3.99 million in FDI from a UAE-based company to manufacture soap and liquid detergents in Jhapa. AsianAid is also vice-chairman of Shankar, which bid for the tender, but the UAI company has the same director. The company was also found to be evading taxes in its ventures in Parsa district.

Kathmandu Agro Ltd of Hong Kong has a 45% stake in Sebottam Cement Pvt Ltd of Nepal, which also runs the Sankhu Group. The remaining 55% shares are owned by Neupane and his relatives, just like how Global Technology and Trademark, which was also found to be evading taxes in its ventures in Parsa district.

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Searching

The aptly titled movie Searching is a film for our times. In an era where young people haven’t touched a physical newspaper for the past five years, when they spend more time on the mobile internet than looking at the real world, Searching plays out almost entirely on-screen—a nearly all-Asian cast, and most of the script is not voiced dialogue, but through apps like Facetime and Skype, Google searches, Instagram and outlook posts.

When David Kim (John Cho) realises his quiet, studious teenage daughter Margot (Michelle La) is missing, he starts a search for her. He files a police report, but starts a search of his own, going through her contact records and chats on their shared computer. Telling you whether or not David finds the culprit and saves his daughter would be a spoiler, but suffice to say that the ending is unexpected and dramatic, as every good mystery should be.

The movie has also received praise for its Asian-American cast, the first time they have headlined a Hollywood thriller. But much more than these factors, is the contemporary storytelling style that makes Searching stand out.

The movie goes virtual right from the start. The opening scene is of a computer logging in. Calendar entries and reminders tell us how Margot is doing at school, and also how her mother’s health is progressing. When Margot creates passwords, and finally deletes the entry ‘Mom comes home’, appear on gossip websites, including ‘I’m reason why David could have killed his daughter’, and an unfavourable photo of David soon makes the rounds. Stoked.

Feder of the Year – 1 indicating the thrilling, prerequisite. Teens who were never particularly close to Margot post many videos claiming to be her best friend, to hundreds (virtual) applause.

Directed by one-time Google filmmaker Aneesh Chaganty, the movie goes all in on technology, with all the familiar sounds of computers opening and rings on various communication apps. It dares not knowing the new age social media like Tumblr (the Googles’ Tumblr). Technology-based movies are not new in Hollywood, nor is the sci-fi genre.

Searching is part of a new generation of movies where the technology showcased is real, but its content is virtual.

So it’s not about alien or futuristic worlds any more. In 2015, Her featured Scarlett Johansson’s voice as an alluring, artificial intelligence assistant that caused the protagonist’s downfall. In 2016, we saw Jennifer Lawrence and the robotcautious sci-fi film Ex Machina.

David does not recognise the daughter he knew in her online persona with her intimate and random people she chatters with. This and other paradoxes ring true to our experiences of how social media exaggerates and distorts our perceptions. As the search progresses, sensational lists appear on gossip websites, including ‘I’m reason why David could have killed his daughter’, and an unfavourable photo of David soon makes the rounds. Stoked.

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Naya Patrika, 14 January

Nepal imported 883MW electricity from India on Friday, the biggest amount so far since the country ended power cuts three years ago. The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) had to import because the total demand for electricity reached 1,243MW last week because of winter peak load and falling production from run-of-river schemes due to low water volume in rivers.

"The amount we import depends on the total demand, so it keeps going up or down," explained Suresh Bhattarai of NEA. But on Saturday a full 58% of the total electricity demand in Nepal was met from Indian imports, and this was unprecedented and unexpected. NEA’s Managing Director Kalman Ghising had informed that Nepal would be importing up to 500MW electricity this winter, but the actual import exceeded his estimate by 333MW. Last year Nepal spent $2.5 billion importing electricity from India, on top of the $3.9 billion in petroleum imports.

According to NEA, the import is necessary to fulfil immediate needs and to prevent the economic cost of resuming power cuts. "If we compare the cost of importing 500MW electricity to the loss that Nepal’s industries would incur without that electricity, then the loss is much higher," said Ghising. "It will take many years for us to construct 500MW hydropower plants. But the power is immediately available for import, which is economically more beneficial for us."

NEA has not declared resumption of load-shedding, but many areas have been facing electricity cuts since mid-December. "The distribution systems and transmission lines are overloaded, and that has led to transformers exploding and feeders catching fire. These incidents have led to electricity service being interrupted, it cannot be called load-shedding," says Bhattarai.

A working committee has been formed to address the problems in Kosi Corridor Transmission line. The Committee has been tasked with identifying the problem and recommending solution, and presenting the report to present Chief Minister Sher Bahadur Rai.
Nepal’s deadly roads

Gopal Gartaula

In the past five months alone, 1,176 people have been killed across Nepal in what police call ‘road traffic accidents’ (RTA). This is an increase from last year, and with more vehicles driven by negligent drivers on poorly-built roads, fatalities have gone up sharply in the past decade.

The district-wise data of total fatalities from 16 July 2017 were collected by a Nepali Times team over two days this week, and shows that the majority of road traffic mishaps have occurred in crowded urban areas in the Terai and Kathmandu Valley. But even Dolpo has had three serious accidents, killing 20 since the first roads were built four years ago.

In the last 10 years, 22,461 lost their lives in RTA, according to Nepal Police. While most were men, women made up 3,577 of the fatalities, and of the total, 2,440 were men and women below 18 years of age.

Police records blame 95% of accidents in Nepal on negligence of drivers. Mechanical failure, poor road condition, careless pedestrians and bad weather accounted for the rest. However, even though over-speeding, over-loading are major causes, the number of accidents caused by poor road maintenance, and the presence of animals and pedestrians on highways are probably under-reported.

This means the blame ultimately goes to lax Police monitoring, and government apathy in completing road construction and maintaining minimum safety standards.

The Department of Transport Management, the governing body responsible for safe and reliable transportation, does not even seem to acknowledge that road safety is its responsibility, taking an ‘accidents happen’ attitude.

There is no effort to enforcing and implementing existing laws to ensure safety, and some of the officials interviewed for this article appeared to recognize that the rising number of road traffic accidents was a national emergency that needed a strategy for mitigation.

Article 257 of the Vehicle and Transport Management Act 2093 authorized the Department of Transport Management to appoint transport supervisors to fine or seize driving license of individuals violating traffic rules.

But 28 years on, not a single transport supervisor has been appointed. Article 67 of the Act also clearly states that the co-drivers also need to obtain licenses from the Department, but none has been issued so far, admits Tirtha Khanal, head of the Vehicle Monitoring and Provincial Coordination Division.

“We see a small five-person office. It is impossible for us to monitor such a huge number of vehicles in Nepal,” said Khanal.
take their toll

It is no longer correct to call them accidents, this is slaughter

There are more than 3.2 million motorcycles, cars and trucks registered across Nepal and the figure is growing exponentially.

The Act further states that all vehicles must have passed pollution tests and passes a vehicle inspection report, and drivers are required to take a half-hour break after four hours on the road. Passenger vehicles are also restricted from carrying more people than the total number of seats, and long-distance vehicles should have two drivers with change in shift after 6 hours.

In March 2018, the government amended the Vehicle and Transport Management Rules and banned buses older than 20 years. But eight months later, these polluting old vehicles are still on the roads.

The Department of Transport Management spent Rs. 60 million to build the Vehicle Fitness Test Centre in Tokha in April 2017. Built to originally conduct a complete health check-up of vehicles including emissions, and condition of brakes, chassis, headlights, spring balance and wheel load, most of the testing equipment do not work and the tests cannot be carried out.

“At the moment we are only able to do emission tests, and faster loose bolts, most of the equipment do not work and we don’t have place to repair it anytime soon,” says Chief Engineer Ramchandra Pandey bluntly, as if it is no one’s responsibility. There are no vehicle test stations outside Kathmandu Valley.

The only good news is that the number of drunk driving cases and fatalities caused by them have gone down significantly in Kathmandu Valley. Called ‘Ma‘dle’ by its Nepal acronym, the Police’s campaign against driving under the influence of alcohol has saved thousands of lives since 2012. Between July 2017- June 2018 there were 32,234 men and 58 women drivers who failed breath analyser tests.

On a daily basis, 1,500 traffic police officers work to manage the traffic in Kathmandu Valley and in the last five months they penalised 185,436 individuals for violating traffic rules – 1.238 per day. Similarly, 477,409 vehicle drivers and owners were fined in the last fiscal year.

A whopping 3 million people have been penalised for violating various traffic rules in the last 5 years and this has resulted in the government earning more than Rs. 238 billion.

nepalitimes.com

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