

QATAR
AIRWAYS القطرية

GOING PLACES TOGETHER

CRONY COMMUNISM

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

But Chinese President Xi Jiping who is also General 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 'crony Communism'.

China will soon be the world's largest economy, and is stepping in globally to fill the military, geopolitical and economic gap left by American disengagement. Nepal, on the other hand, is struggling with poor governance and economic stagnation despite having a government with vast powers. And while China is a one-party state, Nepal's united Communists were duly 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 hobnobbing with the likes of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuân Phúc.

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 should be to take a few pointers from Vietnam on how it achieved record growth in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which hit \$30 billion last year.

Nepal wants to be a medium-income country in the next decade, and for that it needs foreign capital. Even to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it is estimated that the country needs to spend Rs18 billion a year. But FDI in Nepal has dipped in the past three years to a record low of only Rs35 billion, and represents less than 1% of the GDP.

As the ICIJ and CIJ Nepal joint investigation (see page 11) released this week proves: the impunity and lack of transparency have got so bad that even the FDI Nepal receives is largely laundered ill-gotten wealth. The take-home message from the report is that it is not just the government that is dirty, so is the private sector. In many cases they

are in cahoots to rob the people.

There is nothing his Vietnamese and Chinese comrades can teach Prime Minister Oli in Davos about how to boost investment that he does not already know. It is not for the lack 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 climate to attract investors.

The red tape in repatriating profits takes years, delayed by demands for kickbacks. Foreign contractors involved in large projects like Melamchi or Kathmandu Airport have been harassed by corrupt officials who brazenly ask for their cut. Ride-hailing

startups like Tootle are targetted by transport cartels with political protection. Licenses for hydropower projects are hoarded by companies in which bureaucrats are shadow partners. Rules are made and changed overnight just so that foreign companies can be shaken down. In this setting, only investors who are unscrupulous themselves, or contractors whose intent is to never complete a project, will venture into Nepal.

Prime Minister Oli has said he will be show-casing Nepal's impressive achievements of the past decades in improving its human development status, in resolving conflict, promulgating a federal constitution and holding elections to three levels of government. He will be underlining that from the strategic, trade and investment point of view Nepal is ideally located for investors.

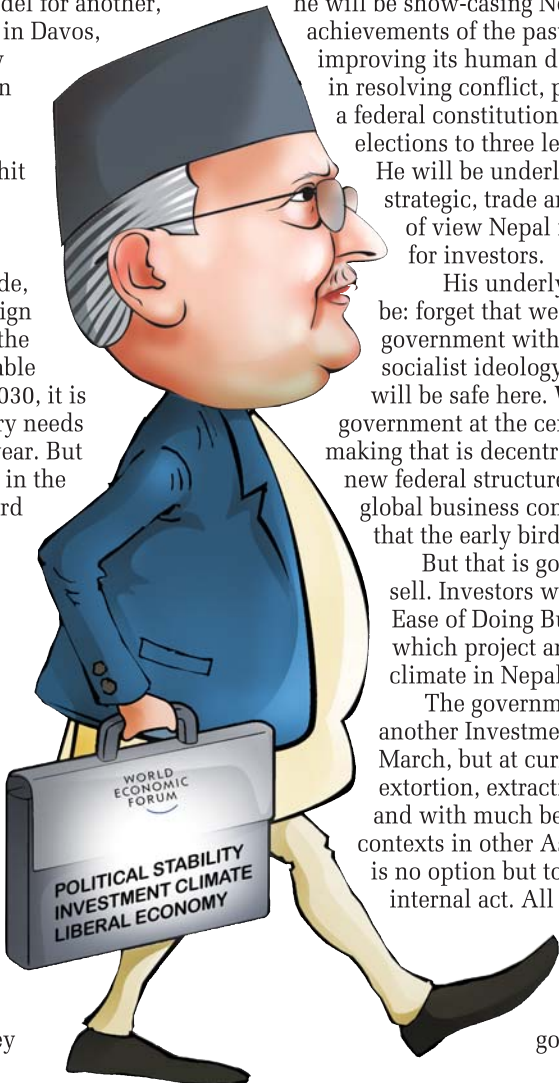
His underlying message will be: forget that we are a Communist government with a supposedly socialist ideology, your investment will be safe here. With a strong government at the centre, and decision-making that is decentralising under the new federal structure, Oli's pitch to the global business community will be that the early bird will get the worm.

But that is going to be a hard-sell. Investors will have seen the Ease of Doing Business rankings which project an iffy investment climate in Nepal.

The government is holding another Investment Summit end-March, but at current levels of extortion, extraction and corruption, and with much better investment contexts in other Asian countries, there is no option but to clean up our own internal act. All the schmoozing

in Davos or speechifying at investment summits are not going to help.

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.



BHANU BHATTARAI

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The *Nepali Times* #434 edition from ten years ago on 16 January 2008 talked about Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal jetting off to Finland and Norway to talk about Nordic aid and investment in Nepal. Exactly a decade later, Prime Minister Oli is going to Davos next week to talk about aid and investment and to spread the message that Nepal is open for business. It looks like nothing has changed since we wrote this editorial in 2008:

'Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is jetting off again, this time to Norway and Finland. We can't see the purpose of this visit at this time, unless with all the crises at home he wants a break. Whoever has been advising the prime minister of late has given him another bad piece of advice: you don't leave your country when there is an energy emergency, when the peace process is stuck, there is a breakdown in law and order and a mutiny is brewing within your own party.'

The ostensible reason for the visit: to inspect hydropower plants just doesn't hold water.'

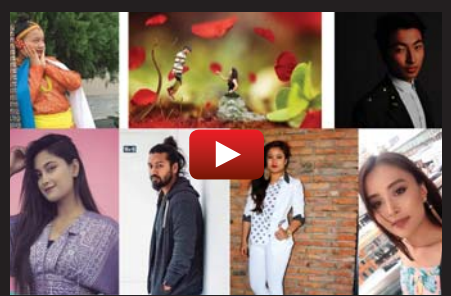


ONLINE PACKAGES



NEPAL-KOREA RELATIONS

South Korean Ambassador to Nepal Park Young-sik spoke with *Nepali Times* this week about mutual relations, tourism, Nepali migrant workers. As Prime Minister K P 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 out in video. Interview: *page 4*.



VIRTUAL STARS

Facebook and Instagram are no more just social networking sites, but avenues for success and revenue generation. Check out our special coverage of Nepalis who have risen to prominence with unique multimedia and video content on Internet platforms. Go online to watch content that helped them amass fame and fortune. *Story: page 8-9*.



THE MAKING OF CHAKU

Chaku (processed molasses) is a special delicacy relished during traditional Newari festivals like Maghe Sankranti and Yomari Punhi, and gives Kathmandu inhabitants a sugar fix for the cold winter. But most do not know how it is prepared. We take you to a factory in Tokha where traditional chaku makers still make it by hand.

BETTER EDUCATION

Education Minister Girirajmani Pokhrel is not really fighting for school children in government schools ('Lowest common denominator', Editorial, #942). There are 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 make the government schools better than private ones. You call yourself a Communist Party. Act like one and work for the people.

Alan Roadnight

■ Thanks *Nepali Times* for this encouraging news ('Good fellows', Prakriti Kandel, #942). I hope there are better welfare schemes 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 choose boarding schools, the quality of education shouldn't be different in public and private schools.

Vicki Cheung

■ The reason for converting private schools into trusts is most likely to create a tax loophole ('Class struggle', Prakriti Kandel, #942). Maybe it is just another moneymaking scheme under the guise of better education system. Always follow the money if you want to get to the truth – investigative journalism 101.

Alex Ferguson

WHAT'S TRENDING



The Karnali

by Ramesh Bhushal
A team of journalists and scientists trace the journey of river Karnali from its source in Tibet to its confluence with Ganga in India. On the way, they document the changing ecology of Nepal's longest river. This crossborder multi-media story was widely shared on social media and read by thousands. Visit nepalitimes.com to join the journey.

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Most popular on Twitter

Most visited online page

Lowest common denominator

Editorial
A high level commission earlier this month made a controversial recommendation to phase out Nepal's private schools and turn them into trusts. The government's job should be to improve the quality of the schools it runs, not close down schools that are trying to fill the gap in quality left by the state school system. Most readers agreed with the sentiment. Go online to read feedback and join the on-going discussion.

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Should private schools be converted into community schools ?

Dipak Gyawali @dipak_gyawali
Community schools should be improved. Period. And they won't be if well-running private schools are shut down and forcibly converted away from their basic "religion". That will be the equivalent of making everybody poor in the name of equality, not increasing wealth/quality.

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Muna Gurung starts her new monthly column Lightroom Conversations with a profile of the maverick poet Sarita Tiwari. Find out about Tiwari's extraordinary literary life, unique stories and local inspirations.

a. @aphapa
What a gratifying read. Loved this candid, enlightening convo. Look forward to your monthly lightroom, Muna. Thank you!!

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
A complete multimedia experience of the 1,100km journey down the mighty & remote Karnali River from Tibet, through Nepal to India. The water of the river holds hope for this impoverished region, but the people see it as a curse.

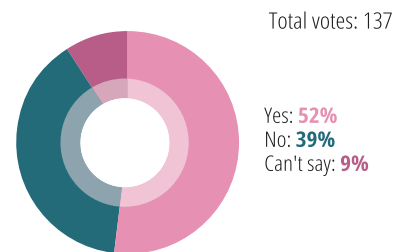
Renaud Meyer @renaudmeyer
Great report on the #Karnali river in @nepalitimes focused on its potential for energy, agriculture, tourism & how improved regional cooperation can deliver improved lives 4 the people along the River

Max Merch @max_morch
The perfect weekend read by @nepalitimes, an in-depth look at the Karnali and well worth an exploration



Weekly Internet Poll #943

Q. Should private schools be converted into community schools?



Weekly Internet Poll #944
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who is the most responsible for road accidents?



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Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Design: Kiran Maharjan
Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma rachanas@himalmedia.com | Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal santosh@himalmedia.com
Printed at Jagadamba Press | 01-5250017-19 | www.jagadambapr.com





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

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

Nepali Times: Thank you for agreeing to speak to *Nepali Times*. I want to hear from you about the Moon Jae-In government's perspective on Nepal.

Park Young-sik: Korea's president Moon visited Nepal twice on a personal trekking trip. During his last trekking to Langtang in 2016, he volunteered in the rehabilitation efforts of a school damaged by the earthquake in Nuwakot district. Against this backdrop, many Koreans feel the need for taking the current partnership up to a new level. I hope to try to make this happen by exchanging mutual visits of high-level leaders. I believe that this is the right time since the Korean government is trying to strengthen relations with South Asian and ASEAN countries in the name of New Southern Policy of Korea.

How closely were you involved in the search and rescue of the Korean expedition on Mt. Gurja last October?

Just before the Dasain Festival, the Korean embassy was informed about the tragic incident. Since then, we were heavily engaged in the search and rescue of the Korean expedition over three days and finally were able to dispatch bodies of five Korean mountaineers to Korea. Korean government highly appreciates the effort of Nepal police, Bir hospital, Helicopter rescue companies and mountain tour agents for their active participation. Our Embassy and the Korea Tours and Trekking Operators Association of Nepal (KTTOTAN) signed MOU on cooperation. This MOU is useful, especially for providing security for Korean mountaineers and trekkers.

After the 2015 earthquake, some countries have extended a helping hand to Nepali, which exists until today. How about the support from Korea?

Before taking my official duties as Ambassador, I met many Korean people, and they discussed a lot about the 2015 earthquake. I have felt the need to focus on the rehabilitation work. The Korean government is building a hospital and ten health posts in Nuwakot district through the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). The hospital is going to be completed in the middle of this year, while health posts have almost been built. There are many rehabilitation works being done by the private sector of Korea. Among them, building classrooms and health posts are the best examples.

KOICA supports to build the technology innovation center in Nepal and educate Nepali. What is the purpose of it and is there other plans to build a technical infrastructure in Nepal?

The Korean government has assisted in building two vocational training centers in Nepal: Korea-Nepal Institute of Technology (KNIT) in Butwal and Kathmandu University Technical Training Center (KUTTC). Nepal cannot rely only on remittances by sending workers abroad. Nepali workers should remain in Nepal to rehabilitate the domestic economy, while technology and experience of returnee workers should be fully utilized. In this respect, we welcome two policy



SANGMIN KIM

initiatives introduced by the Nepali government: establishing technical schools in all seven provinces and 753 local units and establishing start-up business ventures by returnee workers by providing a maximum of 10 thousand dollars loan at less than 6% interest rate. Korea University of Technology and Education is conducting a project called “enhancing the quality of CTEVT (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training) through capacity building of CTEVT instructors” which will make a great contribution to the development of Nepal's technical schools under the guidance of CTEVT.

Through the Employment Permit System, many Nepalis have come to Korea to work since 2007. What do you see as the main constraints and challenges of operating the EPS?

I had opportunities to meet members of ANKUR, an organization of Nepali workers who have returned from Korea after having spent about five years. They wish to make use of the skills and technology which they learned in Korea for the development of Nepal. The Korean government will endeavor to find suitable ways to implement industrial technology transfer. EPS has been running successfully, but we still need to see how we can improve this system. For example, some Nepali migrants were not able to adjust to their life in Korea, and some of them committed suicide. Both governments are making efforts to prevent suicides by providing psychological and mental care at worker's orientation before leaving for Korea and after arriving in Korea. Another constraint for operating EPS in Nepal comes from the problem of finding air tickets for Nepali workers. Some Nepali workers fail to reach their destination in Korea in time due to this problem. Korean government wants Nepali workers to reach their work destination according

to the schedule of employers to ensure that there would be no inconveniences for the Korean companies.

Nepal government is putting much effort to promote its tourist business. What can be done to increase the volume of Korean tourists to Nepal?

More than 34,000 Koreans are visiting Nepal annually in order to go trekking or to visit Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha. There is great potential for attracting Korean tourists to Nepal. If Korean travel agents are allowed to provide tailor-made tour programs for Korean tourists, even more Korean tourists will visit Nepal. If the Nepali government wants to promote Buddhism tour in Korea, more publicity activities toward the Korean Buddhism believers 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 traditional food exhibition, Korean Speech Contest, K-pop song, and dance performances and Korean cooking classes. We also find that about 100,000 Nepalese are currently enjoying the game of taekwondo. The Embassy will organize 'Korean Ambassador Cup' taekwondo Champion later this year. Ambassador's Cup is held every two years. Nepal has a huge potential to obtain medals in taekwondo in Olympics, South Asian Games, and SAARC games.

Nepal is trying to attract foreign investment through Investment Summit. What can Nepal do to make it happen?

Nepal has great potential in tourism, agribusiness, education, health, and information technology. However, Nepal's domestic economy does not have enough

resources for large infrastructure projects. To attain middle-income country status by 2030, Nepal would have to attract Foreign Direct Investment. Investment summit will be successful only if the Nepali government can create a business-friendly environment. One of the areas that need to be addressed by the Nepali Government is hedge fund. Many people are talking of great potential of Nepali hydro-power sectors. But foreign capital is not coming yet. The Pakistan government is taking 100% of currency risk, while the Nepali government is demanding excessive burden on foreign developers. I hope that the hedge fund issue will be soon settled in a mutually beneficial way.

NEPAL - KOREA RELATIONS



As Prime Minister K P 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 out in video.

nepalitimes.com

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Turkish growth

Turkish Airlines recently announced its Load Factor in December 2018 which reached 80.2% with a total of 5.5 million



passengers. In the same month, transit passengers of the airline went up by 3% approximately, while the number of international passengers, excluding transit passengers, went up by 8%.

Mastering debit cards

Himalayan Bank Limited in partnership with Mastercard, has launched a chip and pin based Mastercard Debit Card for its customers, with offers like discounts of up



to 20% on purchases at select merchants, issuing the cards without any charges to new account holding customers and attractive cash backs on Point of Sale transactions within Nepal.

Worthy TV

Skyworth has been awarded in the Top 50 Global CE brand, Top 10 CE, and Top 10 Global TV brand categories in household appliances at the Consumer Electronic Show 2019. It also received a product award, the AI Smart Dual Ecosystem TV Experience Gold Award for 65S9A/XA9000.

Bayern in Doha

Qatar Airways, the Official Airline Partner of FC Bayern München AG, announced the wrap-up of the football giant's 9th winter camp in Aspire Zone Doha, held from 4–10



January. During their stay, children from the Qatar Cancer Society met and interacted with their football idols, and received a jersey exclusively signed by the players.

Online food fest

Foodmandu organises its 2nd Online Food Festival from 15 January for 10 days, with a huge range of offers and deals. Flash Deals, Only Rs1 offer, online games, treasure box, mystery bags and 30 exhibiting restaurants with unique and regular recipes at a discounted price and free delivery in all the orders from the festival's stalls.

prabhu BANK

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 2016, the government outlawed labour permits for domestic workers in the Gulf following widespread reports of abuse. But women have continued traveling though 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. There is high demand of Nepali housemaids in the Gulf, and migration agents have been 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



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

of domestic work.

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

Times earlier this year.

The most recent survey has shown that difficult working conditions abroad translate to severe health consequences, with the most common maladies being fever, accidents, and other serious illnesses. Women suffering abuse

in the workplace, who have family problems back home, and who are illiterate had health problems in greater proportions than others, the survey revealed. After falling sick, only 12.9% of respondents reported that they received health care services.

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 Nepali 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 dissemination 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. 🇳🇵

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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 once you are in the sea, remember the dolphins are in the water not in the air.” We nod mutely through our masks. “And keep singing in order to attract them – dolphins are playful and inquisitive, but no touching.”

I am encased 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 come to



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

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 shoreline 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 lithe groups of two and three, streamlined black and white, passing close, and dazzling 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 pied curve normally hidden beneath the waves. Singing tunelessly into my snorkel as instructed, my voice falters and my stomach heaves with emotion, profound immersion in a primeval universe, eye contact with a wild dusky dolphin in the open ocean.

New Zealand’s Kaikoura Peninsula suffered a massive tectonic upheaval during the 7.8 earthquake in 2016 that ricocheted up the fractures of the South Island’s northeast, changing the coastal contours and up-thrusting the seabed by as much as two meters. Harbours, jetties, hotels, homes, roads and railways were displaced and damaged, and the reconstruction continues.

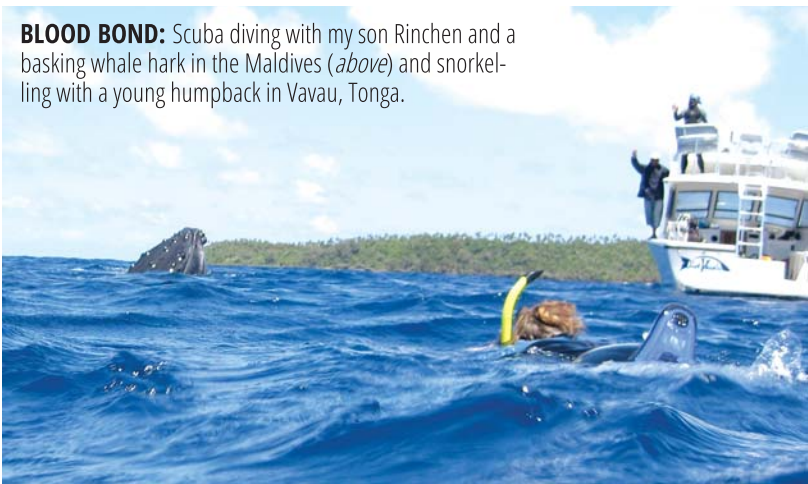
The deep ocean trenches and submarine canyons lying off Kaikoura create uniquely



sheltered and plankton-rich conditions that attract a wealth of resident and migrant sea life, notably congregations of southern hemisphere dolphins and several species of whales. Colonies of seals honk on the kelp-encrusted rocks, and a variety of albatross, those haunting seabirds with the world’s widest wingspan, skim and wheel close to shore.

After a career showing tourists the mega-fauna of the Nepal Himalaya and grappling with wildlife conservation concerns, 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



BLOOD BOND: Scuba diving with my son Rinchen and a basking whale hark in the Maldives (*above*) and snorkelling with a young humpback in Vavau, Tonga.

earthquake, rather than miss the whales, dolphin, seal and albatross 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, I’ve always been fascinated by the freedom of marine mammals and the privilege of glimpsing them in their boundless natural

habitat. Researching the Philippines ecotourism strategy, villagers showed us five different species of small whales and dolphin in one afternoon.

I have had semi-habituated dolphins darting between my legs whilst paddling in a remote Western Australian resort, and swum with sharks and stingrays in a Tahitian lagoon. The opportunities of whale shark tourism, those gentle filter-

feeding leviathans and the planet’s largest fish, has turned fishing folk into conservationists throughout their range.

I have spotted the huge bulk of a blue whale with a baby, the largest animal in existence, cruising just beneath the waves on her annual journey south to Antarctica. My most memorable moment was snorkelling with a young humpback in Tonga, in a deep bay off Vava’u where whales rest briefly during their annual migration - I was working on a South Pacific marketing plan. But that was all before the rapture of my hour with the Kaikoura dolphins.

It is Christmas, the height of summer in New Zealand, but I feel miles away from holly, tinsel, decorated trees and the other trappings of our traditional celebrations. Christmas and summer are a strange coagulation for those of us used to the winter solstice and pagan traditions adapted to relieve the long, dark, cold months of the north.

I am still in a dolphin daze as we drive back past sunny roadside stands selling fresh crayfish. In the Marlborough valley delicate green tendrils of new vines brush our faces as we stroll the regimental lines of a vineyard, our bare feet enjoying the dawn dew of the mowed grass. Birdcalls fill the morning air, fantails fuss amongst the green borders, tuis streak through the flowering flax, and the promise of impervious sun drenches the coming day. Flying across Cook Strait, a shaft of light catches the white car ferry ploughing through the choppy furrows of the indigo sea, blotched navy by cloud reflections.

“They really don’t know how to do Christmas properly here at all.” My originally Irish cousin Sal and I stand thigh deep in the turquoise shades of the South Pacific, the sky an aching blue, our skin zinging with salt. It is early in the New Year and New Zealand summer is in full swing.

A neighbour entertains himself by painting a red sign for a makeshift driftwood bar on the empty beach, someone brings a tray of cool sparkling Kiwi wine to christen it, and our feet burn on the hot sand. Sal smiles: “But you get used to it.” 🇳🇿



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BLOOD BOND: Jenny, a street dog injured after being hit by a car, received a blood transfusion from a fellow canine that helped save its life. Dogs at Sneha Care animal shelter regularly donate blood, which is used to help other dogs in need.

best friend to also serving as dog’s 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,” Shrestha told *Nepali 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 350ml bag instead of 450ml.

“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.

“There 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 Jack 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. 🇳🇵



PHOTOS: SNEHA SHELTER

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

Taylor Mason

Sneha Shrestha and four rescued dogs at her Sneha Care 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 helping vets 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.” Shrestha brought her Jenny who donated the first pint of blood to the needy dog at the surgeon’s table, and that made her realise that her dogs could help save other dogs. Four years later, Shrestha is proud of her dogs whose loyalty goes beyond being man’s

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TIGOR

The new reality of Ne

Anyone with some talent can now amass an instant following o

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 *Faces*, 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 Bipul Chhetri, Bartika Eam Rai, Sushant KC, Sajjan Raj Vaidya, Neetesh Jung Kunwar, Swoopna Suman have all burst in Nepal’s cyberspace like supernovae. Comedians like Rupshi Basnet and Binayak Kuinkel, and dancers like Cartoonz Crew have gone on to great fame. Nepal has several

world-famous makeup artists like Promise Tamang, also known as the ‘human chameleon’.


Reshma Ghimire, who goes by the moniker tigerreshma 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



Facebook
10,000,000



Instagram
1,200,000

THESOCIALMEDIATODAY.COM

Soc
Use
201



Twitter
2,300,0

“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.”



Khusbu Gauchan

stylescrap-khusbu.blogspot.com 20k views per month

Claim to fame: Modeling clothes on blog

Team: Makeup artist and Photographer

Fame led to: A new package of clothes waiting at home almost every day

Other careers: Restaurant, airbnb, hospitality

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



Aneel Neupane
aneel.neupane 10k 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 dropout

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



Lex Limbu

lexlimbu.com 113k on Facebook

Claim to fame: most reliable and fast source for news about Nepali celebrities

Team: One man army

Fame led to: credibility as news source, collaboration offers

Other careers: working for Red Cross



“Your social m
is like your sho
have to present
work, well ph
and ec

Lemi Tamang

__lemii__ 277k on Instagram

Claim to fame: Fresh, dewy skin

Team: One woman army, photographer

Fame led to: Makeup for the entire country

Other careers: For

Nepal's virtual celebrities

on the Net, but while starting out is easy, standing out is harder

Social Media
ers in Nepal
18



YouTube
3,800,000

000



Pinterest
500,000



LinkedIn
540,000

receiving packages of clothes and was asked to model them in her blog. “And I got to keep the clothes, I didn’t have to shop after that,” Gauchan says, laughing.

If you admire Sisan Baniya’s leather jacket or want to grab a bottle of Pepsi like Reshma Ghimire, it may not be pure accident. Companies approach influencers who have 30,000+ followers with placement offers. Elena Don, known for her funny vines, recently endorsed Somersby, Livon and Tuborg in her social media feed.

“It is good pocket money, and I might turn audio-visual production into a profession,” says the liberal arts and science student.

But influencers agree that success is not easy, and it is hard to convince

parents that there is a future in it. Aneel Neupane decided to plunge full time into photography after he dropped out of accounting school. “My parents were aghast that I was leaving a dependable career and putting all my eggs in an unreliable basket,” recalls Neupane, who now has a film production company.

One of the earliest Nepali social media celebrities was Lex Limbu, who attained fame through his news blog site. He says there are pros and cons: “Ten years ago, there were fewer Nepalis who made vlogs or YouTube skits and when they did, people would often wonder why. Today, a majority feel that their stories, voice and

views deserve a space online and everyone has the ability to generate an instant mass following. It has really helped some but also shown how difficult it can be to stand out among many.”

Influencers agree that while starting out is easy, standing out is the difficult part, and consistency is key. “There may be so many others out there who are better than me, but they are not as famous,” admits Sisan Baniya, one of the most popular Nepali vloggers. “The key is to work hard and keep producing quality content.”

All over the world the relationship between traditional and social media is being remolded every day, and Nepal is

no different. But the death of the mainstream media may be greatly exaggerated.

“At some point, social and mainstream media complement each other,” says Information Technology expert Aakar Anil. “For many virtual celebrities, social media is a stepping stone into mainstream media. And mainstream media increasingly uses social media for everything from scouting for talent to promoting products. In future the two will likely go hand in hand.” 🇳🇵

 nepalitimes.com

Go online to watch videos that made these celebrities famous.



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



Sisan Baniya

Paradygm TV 175k on YouTube

Claim to Fame: funny videos on paradygm tv, and personal vines and travel vlogs

Team: up to half a dozen editors

Fame led to: more fame and promotion of audio-visual production house

Other careers: Restaurant, garments, production house

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



Reshma Ghimire

TigerReshma 98k on Instagram

Claim to fame: Dramatic expressions and on-point lip sync to Tiktok

Team: Selfie phone

Fame led to: Two music videos, film offers, model coordination stints

Other careers: Currently studying for nursing degree

media portfolio
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photographed
dited.”

amang

k on Instagram

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ans to hire video professionals

e website of Faces, and work with GQ

mer fine arts student



“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.”

Elena

elenadon_ 52k on Instagram

Claim to fame: Funny and relatable vines

Team: One woman army

Fame led to: Endorsement and music video offers

Other careers: Hoping to learn script writing and move to YouTube

PICTURES FROM SOCIAL MEDIA OF RESPECTIVE PERSONS

EVENTS



Swing social
Bounce around the floor to the off-beats of Swing, Jazz and Lindy Hop straight from the 30's and 40's. All shy people come along and make new friends. Before you know it, you are tapping along the beats.
22 January, 6pm onwards, Bikalpa Art Café and Bar, Pulchok, 9851147776

Coffee brewing course
The most affordable coffee brewing foundation and intermediate combo course by one of the highly talented and reputed Specialty Coffee Association Certified Instructors. Miss not!
12-14 February, 9:30am-5pm, NCA Coffee Lab and Training School, 9802023082

Mithila Cosmos
Mithila Cosmos, Songs of Innocence & Experience is an exhibition of paintings by S. C. Suman.
23 January- 20 February, 10-5:30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited

Jewels of Newar Art
The second edition of the art exhibition displaying some of the best traditional Newar arts along with works from other diverse fields. It is also the inaugural of the gallery.
20 January – 2 February, 11am-7pm, Bodhisattva Gallery, Inar, Pulchok, 9851091255



Paanch
A play that uses body as a medium to tell a story, or many stories. Directed by Sudam CK
18-20 January, 5pm onwards (1:30pm also on Saturday), Kausi Theatre, Teku, 9861315317

Himalayan Hydro Expo
Attracting shareholders in hydroelectricity, irrigation and drinking in South Asian Region, the expo focuses on investment, research, production, engineering, entrepreneurship and expertise in water resource.
18-20 January, 12am onwards, Bhrikutimandap Exhibition Hall, Kathmandu, (01) 5180402

In pursuit of Dragons
A fascinating talk about the discovery, history and science of dragonflies with photos by renowned entomologist Karen Conniff.
18 January, 10:30am, Hotel Shanker, Lazimpat, Rs500, csgninkathmandu@gmail.com



Cooking with nettle
Learn the culinary secrets of the medicinal herb, nettle (sisnu in Nepali) with Natural Roots Nepal, and create a nettle-themed platter (soup, dips, fritters, bread, fruits, and yak cheese), served with mulled wine.
19 January, 3-7pm, Yala Mandala, Kwalkhu Road, Patan, Rs2,000, 9849101693

Bath tub
A surreal play written by Kumar Nagarkoti, directed by Ghimire Yubaraj and starring Nir Shah. Actors will not be seen, but only heard by their voice.
24 January- 11 February, 4:30pm (except Tuesdays, 1pm also on Saturdays), Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, (01) 4469621

Hip Hop Coppelia
Directed by Alizé Biannic, the play tells the story of Paul, a city youth who becomes infatuated with a life-size doll, and Sophie, who dresses up as the doll, through steps of Hip Hop.
18-20 January, 1:30pm and 5:30pm, Russian Center for Science and Culture, Kamalpokhari, Rs500-1,500, 9861053015

MUSIC



Raagmani
Chill vibe and ambience with Raagmani performing live on Friday night.
18 January, 6pm onwards, 8 Degrees, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5543740

Crescendo Music Festival
Kanta dAb dAb is doing a special show featuring Solene from France. Kathan will be opening with their acoustic set.
19 January, 6-9pm, Base Camp: Outdoor Lifestyle, Jhamsikhel, Rs400, 9841226397

Full moon concert
Devotional songs and classical music performances with the full moon.
21 January, 4-8pm, Kirateshwar Sangeetashram, Pashupati Area

Bloom fest
Experience a day with electronic music from talents like Smokey , Ranzen, DJ Knack headlining the festival and various other great talents.
19 January, 12pm onwards, Tangelwood, Naxal, (01) 4428655

OUR PICK

Opens in Kathmandu on 18 January

The desire for spots in colleges with lucrative courses makes for fierce competition in India, and the commercialization of education is rampant. Why Cheat India digs deep into the world of academic fraud, where brilliant students and con men make money by giving examinations in proxy for rich students. The film promises to show us the shady underworld where such rackets happen, which may sound familiar to some in Nepal. Directed by Soumik Sen, the movie stars the dependable Emraan Hashmi with a few newcomers.

DINING



Magnificent Momo
Relish a plate full of hot steaming home-made momos on a cold winter day, served fresh from the steamer. Chicken, pork or vegetarian. Steamed, fried, souped or kothey-ed.
10 January - 10 February, 3-7pm, The Lounge, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, (01) 5171234

La Dolce Vita
Probably the best ristorante Italiano in Thamel, it comprises three floors with a restaurant, an espresso bar and a terrace. Pizza, pasta, steak, ily coffee and more. Try their Torta Di Cioccolato, a soft creamy dark chocolate cake.
Thamel, (01) 4700612

Monthly fam-brunch
A true Western style brunch for the whole family: Appetizers buffet, hot main courses, desserts spread, unlimited coffees, soft drinks, mimosas, and a separate kids' buffet with supervised play area in the backyard. Reserve faster for seats.
20 January, 11am-1pm or 1-3pm, Le Sherpa, Maharajgunj, Rs2,999 (adult), Rs1,000 (child), (01) 4428604

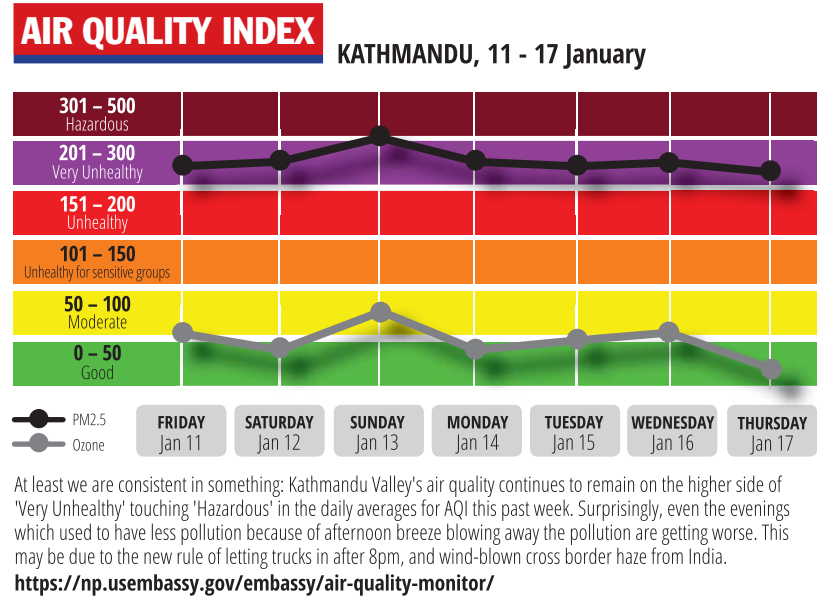
GETAWAY

Grand Norling Hotel
Enjoy a calm and relaxing stay at the hotel which provides a spacious bedroom with adjoining bathroom, a large balcony with sights of the golf course, monkeys and deer herds, and not to forget, the garden.
Gokarna, (01) 4910193



Jamacho hiking
Put on your hiking boots, pack a lunch, carry a stick, camera and binoculars if needed and meet the other groups at Macchapokhari, near Buddha Mall for a satisfying hike of 4-5 hours. The price includes entrance fee, breakfast, water bottle and fee of a nature guide.
19 January, 8am, Nagarjun Hill, Rs650, 9815446293, 9867474716

Rupakot Resort
Spectacularly located on a high ridge and approximately an hour drive from Lakeside Pokhara or the airport, with breath-taking panoramic views of the Annapurna range, Rupa and Begnas lakes far below, Rupakot Resort offers the ultimate luxury getaway with a taste of traditional Nepali rural life.
Maidan-6, Rupakot, Kaski, (61) 622660 / (01) 4004687



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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 Nepalis held Rs5 billion in secret Swiss bank accounts. Most people thought the money must have been parked there by Nepal's corrupt politicians.

But after the Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal (CIJ Nepal) went through 3,000 pages of documents from Swiss Leaks, Offshore Leaks, the Panama and Paradise Papers, the names were of Nepal's top business people. Even foreigners had deposited money in the banks using Nepali addresses and documents.

Savings of Nepalis in the banks

from dictators, corrupt politicians, business persons who evade taxes and organisations 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 not China, India or the United States as one may presume, but the tax haven state of the British Virgin Islands. Of the total Rs137.67 billion received as FDI in the last two decades, the share of the British Virgin Islands (BVI) accounts for 45%. They obtained approval from the Nepal government to invest in and establish industries worth Rs8 billion.

In 2017, the Panama Papers revealed that seven Nepalis including Upendra Mahato, the founder of Non-resident Nepalis

future.

"While Nepal avoided the scrutiny and monitoring criteria 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 Khatriwada's white paper on the economy last March.

Nepali companies have also dealt with Mossack Fonseca, the intermediary 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 in 2008 Nepal's Milap Group approached Mossack Fonseca to bid

The ICIJ and CIJ-Nepal investigations have also shown how money is laundered from tax havens into Nepal as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Records show that the Saurabh Group chaired by Bishnu Prasad Neupane, brought foreign investment from the BVI to build a hotel in Bhaktapur, but construction was stopped after Madhyapur Thimi Municipality found the 17-storey building only had permission for a five-floor structure.

Saurabh Group brought the investment for the hotel from the BVI-based Global Technology and Trademark Company, and the Rs1.94 billion proposal was approved by the Department of Industry in 2013.

Sulav Agrawal is the director of four companies under the

Group's Jagadamba Synthetic and Quality Roto Packaging is also in the printing and lamination business.

Four companies in which Saurabh Group's Neupane has invested, have benefitted from Nepal's controversial tax settlement policy which allowed them to get away with paying just 3.45% of the total taxes due to the state after a Commission formed by Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat in 2015 waived payments.

The CIJ Nepal investigation based on the Paradise Papers leaks obtained by the German paper Süddeutsche Zeitung in 2017 also unearthed links between Nepal's Laxmi Cement and tax havens in the BVI, the Isle of Man, Seychelles as well as two Indian investors. Shareholders of Laxmi



have now crossed Rs50 billion, email correspondence between CIJ Nepal and Swiss banks show.

The records also reveal that Nepalis started to deposit money in Swiss banks the year after the Maoist insurgency began in Nepal in 1996.

Nepalis had Rs1.25 billion in the Swiss National Bank in 1996, but that figure doubled to Rs4.1 billion by 2006, when the war ended. Nepali deposits in the two years after the conflict declined to Rs3.9 billion. Records show that Nepali have withdrawn Rs 15.6 billion from Swiss banks so far.

The biggest Nepali depositors in a Swiss bank are Minu Shah Chhibber, and her two sons who live in the UK. They had Rs2.6 billion in Swiss banks in 2006-7. Even some foreigners are found to have used Nepali documents to deposit their money in Swiss banks, including an Israeli national using a Nepali passport to open an account with 'Kathmandu' as his address. Other account holders who have Nepal connections are Indians.

Despite its banking secrecy laws, an agreement between the Swiss government and the European Union in 2015 after the Swiss Leaks ends the exclusive confidentiality, and the Swiss agree to provide account details if demanded. The ICIJ says Swiss banks have profited

Association, had invested in tax haven states. The ICIJ and CIJ Nepal collaborated in digging more into these investments, and found that Nepali businesses have used tax havens to evade taxes in Nepal or to transfer the illegally earned money 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 party, his elder brother Upendra Mahato, Niraj Govinda Shrestha, a non-resident Nepali and Ajeya Raj Sumargi, 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 organisation 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 2012 and passed the Money Laundering-related Act. However, given these revelations, there is still a possibility that Nepal could be blacklisted in

for a tender from the Nepal Supreme Court calling for an international consultant for Judicial Mapping and Judicial Assessment for a project on legal and judicial reforms. Milap Group emailed to Mossack Fonseca proposing to jointly apply for the tender, which a Mossack Fonseca official declined, saying the two could collaborate in future. Milap Group has been involved with foreign companies printing 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 Dhanusha lawmaker Juli Kumari Mahato as main investor. The company has 20 percent share capital investment in United Telecom Limited. Mahato is the wife of Raghubir Mahaseth, Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport and sister of Upendra Mahato and Birendra Mahato. When asked, Juli Kumari Mahato denied having investments abroad, and said "it is a mere coincidence" that a company with similar name existed in the British Virgin Islands.

Saurabh Group and brought Rs300 million in FDI from a UAE-based company to manufacture soap and betel nuts in Birganj. Agrawal is also vice-chairman of Shankar Group, but the UAE company has the same name as the one based in the BVI: Global Technology and Trademark which was also found to be evading taxes in its ventures in Parsa district.

Krishna Holdings Ltd of Hong Kong has a 45% stake in Sarbottam Cement Pvt Ltd of Nawalparasi, also run by the Saurabh Group. The remaining 55% shares are owned by Neupane and his relatives. Just like how Global Technology and Trademark is operating out of not just the UAE but also the BVI, the Hong Kong-based Krishna Holdings is related to the UAE-based Krishna International.

Krishna International Ltd has mentioned on its website that it has invested in as many as 22 countries including Nepal, Mauritius and Cyprus. Ramesh Kumar Sawartha has brought Rs29.5 million from Hong Kong to build a commercial complex in Gyaneswor, Kathmandu in 2005.

The British Virgin Islands-based Global Technology and Trademark has also invested Rs 240 million in the printing and lamination sector. This company has no Nepali partner, but Saurabh

Cement are also involved in KEPY Cement Udyog of Dhading and Ghorahi Cement of Dang.

The Act Restricting Investment Abroad, 1964 bars Nepalis from investing in a foreign country, but the ICIJ and CIJ-Nepal investigation found that 55 Nepalis have invested in foreign countries which includes well-known captains of industry in Nepal and non-resident Nepalis. Although the law does not bar NRNs from investing abroad, but there are questions about their offshore companies.

Former lawmaker Birendra Mahato, who is currently a central member of the Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum-Nepal, has invested in the 'OJSC Amkodor Holding Limited Company' in Belarus with his brother Upendra and another overseas Nepali Niraj Govinda Shrestha, and a foreign partner Romeo Abdo, who also happens to be linked to the Ncell tax-evasion case. Abdo, who is of Lebanese origin has been doing business in Belarus, represented the TeliaSonera in Ncell in whose ownership transfer of nearly Rs61 billion (the amount has reached Rs 72 billion now) was implicated in evading Nepal's capital gains tax. Birendra Mahato admitted having the investment seven years ago, but not anymore, and denied knowing Abdo. 🇳🇵

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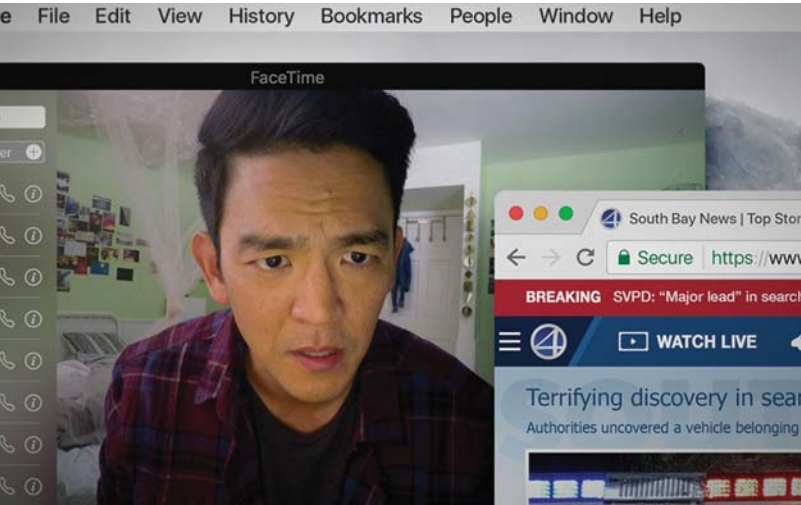
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Searching

The aptly titled movie *Searching* is a film for our times. In an era where youngsters haven't touched a physical newspaper for the past five years, when they spend more time on the mobile monitor than looking at the real world. *Searching* plays out almost entirely on-screen with 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 Facebook 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 all these factors, it 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, postpones, and finally deletes the entry 'Mom comes home',

we realise the tragedy, but without an accompanying melodrama. If this sounds a little impersonal, that is what the world has become as the lines between online and offline get blurred. David does not recognise the daughter he knows in her online persona with her intimacies and random people she chats 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 '21 reasons why David could have killed his daughter', and an unflattering photo of David soon makes the rounds, labeled 'Father of the Year' – indicating the trolling phenomenon. Teens who were never particularly close to Margot post teary videos claiming to be her best friend, to thunderous (virtual) applause. Directed by one-time Google filmmaker Aneesh Chaganty, the movie gets all its technology tones right, from the ubiquitous sounds of computers opening and ring tones of various communication apps, to David not knowing the new age social media like tumblr (he googles 'tumblr'). Technology-based movies are not new in Hollywood, nor is the sci-fi genre. But *Searching* is part of a new generation of movies where the technology showcased is real, but its content is virtual. Sci-fi is not about aliens or futuristic worlds any more. In 2013, *Her* featured Scarlett Johansson's voice as an alluring artificial intelligence assistant that the protagonist falls in love with. In 2016, we saw *Unfriended*, where a ghost haunts online chats. Since 2011, *Black Mirror* has been projecting how the technologies we know could grow to control our lives, in an eerily familiar manner. *Searching* is part of this genre, where sci-fi is not about unrealistic fantasies but about how the technology we live with is changing the way we live and process information. And it is all the more scary because it is true. *Searching* is not just for youngsters and techno buffs. And if it does not make it to Nepali screens, readers of this review can always search and find it online! **Sewa Bhattarai**



HERITAGE TOUR: Prime Minister K P Oli with Patan Mayor Chiri Babu Maharjan and CEO of the Nepal Reconstruction Authority Sushil Gyawali at Patan Durbar Square on Wednesday to inspect rehabilitation work on monuments on National Earthquake Safety Day.



NEIGHBOURLY TIES: Nepal Army Chief Purna Chandra Thapa is conferred the Honorary Rank of General of the Indian Army by the President of India Ram Nath Kovind in New Delhi last week.



FLY HIGH: Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Rabindra Adhikari speaks at the Global Aviation Summit in Mumbai on Tuesday. Aviation experts from around the world had gathered for a two-day event.



BIRD'S EYE: Construction of Pokhara's much-awaited new international airport has gathered pace, and is expected to be completed in early 2020. An aerial view taken on Sunday morning.



HARD AT WORK: Traditional chaku makers prepare the special delicacy at a factory in Tokha on Tuesday. Chaku or molasses is eaten in Kathmandu Valley during Maghe Sankranti and Yomari Punhi celebrations to keep warm.

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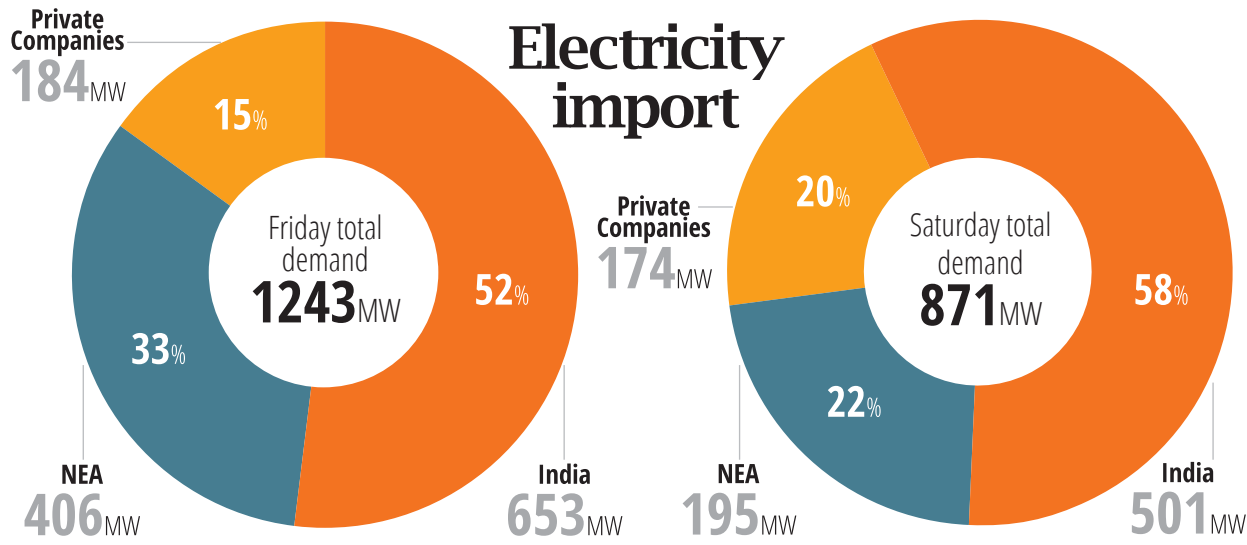
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New Road : 4227854, New Road : 4260173
New Road : 4222384, Patan : 5538849
Putalisadak : 4266820, Putalisadak : 4415786
Putalisadak : 4227474, Putalisadak : 4436307
Putalisadak : 4417050

Outside Valley Dealers:

Baranaga : 011-660888, Biratnagar : 021-536729, Biratnagar : 021-532000
Birtamode : 023-540150, Butwal : 071-545399, Chitwan : 056-571764
Dang : 082-561022, Dhangadhi : 091-523601, Dhangadhi : 091-521392
Jorakpur : 041-525565, Lahan : 033-561205, Mahendranagar : 099-523872
Nepalgunj : 081-527092, Pokhara : 061-525300, Surkhet : 083-522488,
Tulsipur : 082-562575



More than half of Nepal's electricity imported from India

Naya Patrika, 14 January

गयाँ पत्रिका

Nepal imported 653MW electricity from India on Friday, the biggest amount so far since the country ended powercuts 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 Kulman Ghising had informed that Nepal would be importing up to 500MW electricity this winter, but the actual import exceeded his estimate by 153MW. Last year Nepal spent Rs20 billion importing electricity from India, on top of the Rs90 billion in petroleum imports.

According to NEA, the import is necessary to fulfill 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 province Chief Minister Sherdhan Rai.



Quick, put on your helmet. The minister is here!

अन्नपूर्ण

Basu Kshitiz in
Annapurna Post,
14 January



Unity Day and the Bibeksheel Sajha Party.

नेपाल

Rabindra Manandhar in Nepal, 12 January

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Nepal's deadly roads



Gopal Gartaula

- At least seven people were killed when a bus heading to Narayangand from Beni lost control and fell 70m from the road down to the Kali Gandaki River in Kusma Municipality of Parbat district on Thursday.
- A bus plunge from a crumbling highway in Tulsipur last month killed 22 and maimed 15 -- most of them students and teachers from a technical school in Ghorahi on a field trip.
- A mini truck skidded off a dirt tract in Nuwakot and plunged several hundred meters in Dupcheshwar rural municipality on 14 December, killing 22 out of the 40 on board the lorry. The passengers were returning home to Sisipu after performing funeral rites for a fellow villager.
- In just one day that week, Devi Prasad Rai of Kerabari in Morang lost his life when a bus hit him near a fuel station. Dhan Prasad Giri, 63, and his 29-year-old son were killed by an Indian-registered truck. Nirmala Karki of Gauradaha of Jhapa was hit by a school bus and died.

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 Tarai 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.

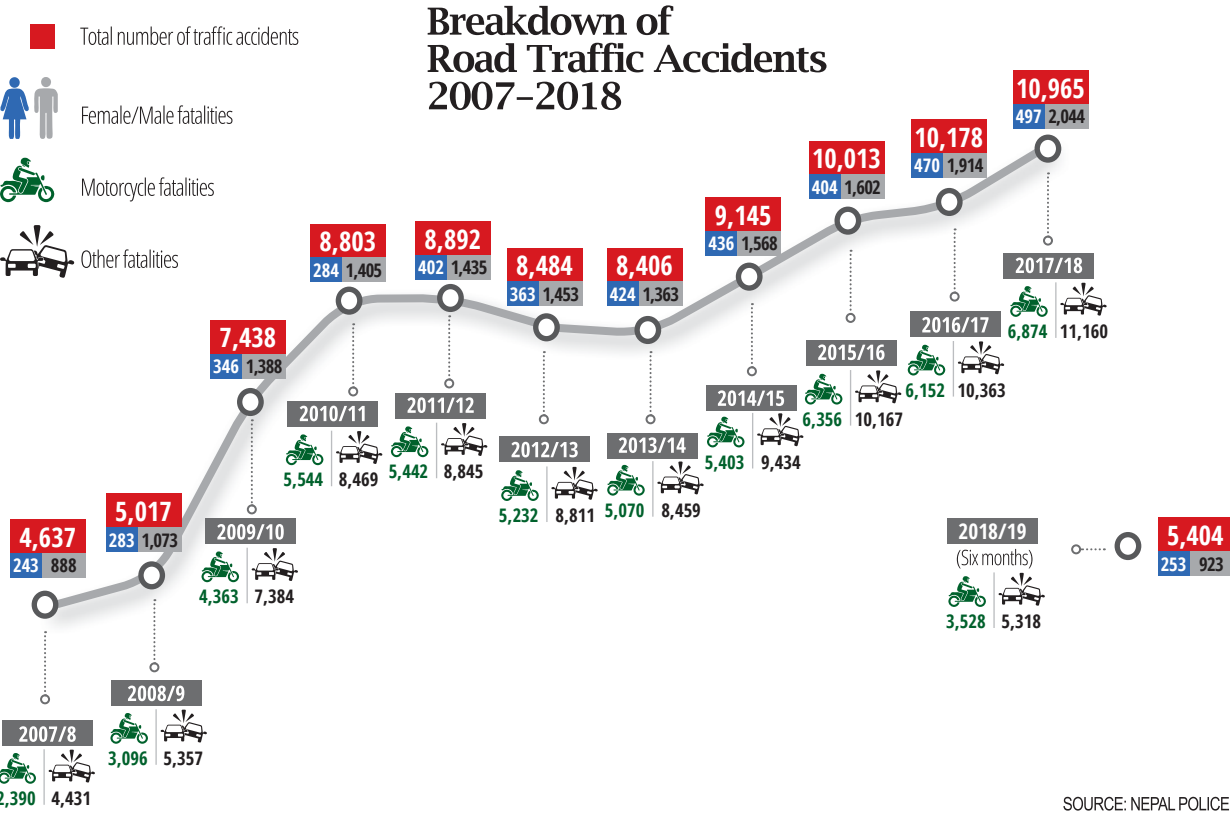
The Department of Transport Management, the governing body responsible for safe and reliable transportation does not even seem to acknowledge that road safety is its responsibility, taking an 'accidents happen' attitude.

There is no effort to enforcing and implementing existing laws to ensure safety, and none of the officials interviewed for this article appeared to recognise 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 1993 authorised the Department of Transport Management to appoint transport supervisors to fine or seize driving license of individuals violating traffic rules.

But 26 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 are a small five-person office. It is impossible for us to monitor such a huge number of vehicles in Nepal," said Khanal.



100%
WHEAT
VODKA

8848
IMPORTED

MADE IN THE HIMALAYAS

8848
VODKA

5
FIVE TIMES
DISTILLED

IMPORTED

WORLD'S PUREST VODKA

NO SUGAR SYRUP, GLYCERIN OR ADDITIVES ADDED

The country is a zoo

As a Wild Ass, I can vouch for the fact that Nepal is one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth. And the incredible thing is that this wealth of flora and fauna is now living cheek-to-jowl with the country's human population without eating each other up. Humans with herd mentality are leaving en masse along crossborder migration corridors, whereas wildlife species conduct themselves responsibly to defecate only in designated spots.

In fact, as Nepal rises in the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030, we can safely say that the country's rankings in the Animal Development Index (ADI) has risen even faster. This means members of our erstwhile animal kingdom who are now protected citizens of the Federal Democratic Republic enjoy living standards and social welfare safeguards that would be enviable in any other country.

Proof of this was the news last week that a female endangered One-horned Rhinoceros heeded the call of the Ministry of Wild Life and Animal Husbandry to further improve the rate of

institutional delivery in Nepal by giving birth to a healthy male calf in a maternity Ward in Bharatpur. This is a heart-warming example of how wildlife and humans have learnt to coexist in a country whose patron deity is the Lord of the Animals.

It will be harder to convince expecting Royal Bengal Tigresses to get themselves admitted into the hospital, but the Chief Warden of the Chitwan National Park is working on it.

On the other hand, villagers in the buffer zone are making frequent forays into the National Park to collect thatch and fodder, setting fire to the grasslands. The number of tourists on elephant back and jeeps entering the Park has shot up this winter.

As humans move into the Park and the wildlife moves out, we may as well declare Bharatpur a National Park and encourage tigers, rhinos and sloth bears to pay a fee to enter the city to watch humans in their natural habitat.

The country has also shown its commitment to nature conservation by allowing all kinds wild animules to enrich the biodiversity of the grasslands within the perimeter of Kathmandu Airport. Rhesus monkeys have a free run of the departure concourse, rodents find their way into planes, and the runway is regularly patrolled by leopards and wild boar. We are even allowing the smuggling mafia to induct trafficked chimps. This country is turning into a zoo in preparation for Visit Nepal Year 2020.



CHITWAN PARK VILLAGE



The Ass

God created WINTERS,
we created HOT RUM PUNCH

Khukri XXX Rum

Cinnamon Powder

Lemon Juice

Star Anise

Cardamom

Hot Water

Honey

Clove