The government has promoted the Investment Summit that begins on Friday in Kathmandu as an opportunity to show the world that Nepal is open for business. After two decades lost to war and an unstable political transition, Prime Minister Oli in Davos and Finance Minister Khatiwada in London recently harped on stability, reliable power and post-earthquake reconstruction as drivers of growth. Foreign businesses, especially from China and India, appear to agree that Nepal offers immense opportunities for early birds in energy, infrastructure and manufacturing. Although investment levels in 2017 hit rock bottom, the government has proposed projects worth $30 billion at this Summit. Foreign capital is needed because Nepal’s banks are not able to meet credit demand for large infrastructure projects, but also because foreign direct investment (FDI) will bring in much-needed knowhow, access to international markets and improve management. However, the international community, foreign and domestic investors, and even bilateral lenders appear to be skeptical. They say recent hurried passage of two Acts by Parliament (see inside) is too little too late.

Existing investors also point to ambiguous laws arbitrarily enforced, byzantine red tape, the need for multiple approvals from a slew of agencies for registration, renewals and repatriation of profits. There is no mechanism to address currency risk, and no sovereign rating. Primitive infrastructure and militancy unless plug catches. There is uncertainty about federalism. Instead of a one-size policy for investors, Nepal has a maze. In this literary of complaints, what is unspoken are kickbacks and extortion that have become facts of life for businesses. Recent horror stories of foreign contractors and investors being shaken down have received much international publicity, and will not help Nepal’s case.

While Oli, Khatiwada and Co have tried to sell Nepal to the world, telling potential investors to ignore that they are communists, a rent-seeking state back home erects obstacles to FDI at every operational level. Foreign investors are not impressed by the fact that even Nepalis are reluctant to invest. It is not just the bureaucracy and politicians who are to blame, domestic cartels are also lobbying against foreign investment and want protection, putting agricultural processing, dairy, poultry and other industries out of bounds for FDI.

What makes foreign investors skittish are not our laws, but absence of the rule of law, our corruption and red tape. This week’s Summit is a chance for Nepal to allay those concerns by cleaning up its house.
INVEST IN INVESTMENT

It is hard to entice foreign investors to the country when even Nepali businesses are so hesitant to spend money in Nepal.

FASCISM

The ideological foundation of every communist regime is exactly that — to muzzle the media in gradual steps (Cip jug up). Rasheshwar Bohara, #9522. Cracks of fascism are beginning to appear on the walls of democracy at a time when people have fought the oppression of Ranas and Bhadra for the last 250 years.

PROSPERITY

For 10 years ago this week

TOKYO GURUNG

This beautiful profile of Tokyo Gurung has been on my mind for the past couple of days. (Tokyo Gurung Nepal) @NepalLiterature is Thairub, Muna Gurung, #9522. It is truly special. I take inspiration from her daily life. As a poet, I stand chastened by her commitment to words. I am filled by her loneliness. While I measure solitude, I am reminded that it is a privilege that can soon turn into loneliness. I am inspired by her ability to own her work, her time, her land, and her lineage. Thank you, Toshiya. Bisha Girl

LUMBINI

It is one of my favourite places in Nepal and has so much to offer but no one can get to it due to lack of signage to tell you how to get there or where roads are broken (The Buddha was born in Lumbini), Prakash Kandel, #9522.

FEATHERY FRIENDS

It is very sad that not many of us know that these once common found birds are now endangered and unfortunately very few to no effort has been put to protect them (Khabahara’s silent spring, Soma Awale, #9522).

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Japan is holding a successful investment summit in its recent years after Laxad Pr上限 Minister Purita Kanai Dhal embargoed a trip to Nordic countries to retrieve investors earlier after the war.

Peter Minneci, Fujitsu Limited's chief analyst told the BBC that “The economic climate in Nepal is now conducive to foreign investment. However, the lack of rules and regulations is still lacking. The rules that are already in place need to be improved further to create a more investor-friendly environment. We will do our best to make sure that foreign investors feel comfortable and that the climate is conducive to foreign investment.”

Less than half of the Nordic countries have signed a free trade agreement with Nepal. The country is still a nascent market and many foreign companies are hesitant to invest in it. This is partly due to the unstable political situation and the lack of clear investment policies. The government is working to address these issues and create a more conducive environment for foreign investment. In the past few years, the government has taken steps to improve the business climate and attract foreign investors.
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Two experts on Nepal’s investment climate

Nepali investment professionals last month launched the Association of Investment Professionals Nepal (AIPN), a non-profit billed as a Chartered Financial Analysts network in formation. Ashutosh Tiwari caught up with Nick Pollard, the Managing Director for Asia Pacific of the CFA Institute, and Manoj Shahi, the first CFA from Nepal and founder of chairman of AIPN.

Ashutosh Tiwari: How does the Chartered Financial Analyst network in Nepal invest professionals?

Nick Pollard: The CFA Institute is the professional association of investment professionals that sets the standard for excellence and credentials. Our mission is to promote the highest standards of ethical behavior in investment management and to enhance the integrity and reputation of the financial services industry worldwide. The CFA charter is a globally recognized standard for investment professionals who want to demonstrate their superior knowledge and ethical standards.

What makes you hopeful about the growth of the investment industry in Nepal?

While Nepal may not be the largest market for the CFA Institute, we believe that the country has the potential to attract more investment professionals. We have identified 100 candidates studying for the CFA program, and we are confident that the industry will continue to grow in the future. We also see opportunities for collaboration with other professional organizations in Nepal.

SOME CONCLUSION 

We have set a high bar for ourselves and we aim to do this by focusing on three drivers: development of a national capital market, training of new managers, and the promotion of ethical standards. We believe that by working together, we can achieve our goals and make a meaningful contribution to the development of the investment industry in Nepal.

There are also other finance and investment professionals in Nepal. How is AIPN different?

Our members will be required to sign a code of ethics they agree to adhere to during their membership. In addition, we will have greater affiliation with the accreditation programs of the CFA Institute. We will also provide continuing education and networking opportunities for our members, as well as professional development opportunities for those interested in the field of investment management.
Early investors didn’t sell Nepal short

That lesson is still valid as the country seeks investments to accommodate 2 million tourists by 2020

The early foreign investors in Nepal may have been an eccentric and colourful bunch, but they did understand global attention to Chitwan’s wildlife with the creation of Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge.

Conveniently coinciding with their personal business interests, these resourceful pioneers knew a thing or two about what was needed to attract high paying visitors to adventure amidst Nepal’s natural and cultural wonders.

In those days it was not so easy, but with imagination and resolve, the rich and famous were lured to the remote and mysterious Hindu kingdom, and tourist dollars started seeping into the economy. Bouts’ eclectic guests included Queen Sophia of Spain, Agatha Christie, Jagger Bergman, and ordinary tourists followed. Air travel was primitive, roads were scarce and communications were basic — we relied on letters, telegrams and an unreliable crackly telephone line for reservations which were fast arrived in 1374.

Despite all that, Nepal became a fashionable, sought after spot for American and European vacationers. Often staying for weeks and returning annually, most of our Mountain Travel trekkers headed to the hills for seldom less than 14 days and often for a month at a time. Tiger Tops did not accept guests for less than three nights, and the price of $200 per person (yes, US$400 per room) included all meals and jungle activities, but not drinks from the bar. It must have been one of the higher rooms rates in 1970s Asia, especially as we lay deep in the forest and accommodation was constructed of local wood, bamboo and thatch.

Solar electricity came later, but the naturalist-guided Chitwan excursions with elephants, rhinos and tigers was considered a “must do” component of South Asian tourism.

Our mainstream business at the lodge in Chitwan was around-the-world US groups, mostly blue-nose rulings having their husband’s inheritance accompanied by competent, world-wise tour guides. In my guest relations role, I grew used to answering the same questions nightly but, if I was lucky, all the tables were filled and I got to eat on the bench by the elephant task bar with Chuck and the Nepali naturalists. Celebrity and superstars were regular visitors, enjoying their privacy in the undisturbed mountains and jungles of Nepal, and enthusiastic media coverage further stabilised Nepal as the adventure of choice. Actors, writers, mountaineers, politicians and royalty flocked to sample Nepal’s unique diversity and sublime scenery.

At the other end of the spectrum, the era’s flower-power hippies gravitated to Freak Street and Phewa Tal seeking spiritual enlightenment in clouds of legally available ganja whilst basting over the price of amphetamines and apple pies. For runners of today’s budget backpackers, hippies played a significant role in publicising Nepal’s tourism image, until their visas expired prior to King Birendra’s coronation in 1975. A healthy holiday destination delivers to a variety of different types of tourists, from the cheap world-travellers willing to rough it, to high paying clients cossetted in luxury, with domestic visitors who are an important part of the mix. Since the insurgency knocked international tourism down to half its normal volume, Nepal has struggled to regain its reputation as a quality destination, or to develop new “authentic” experiences! Hip trips to appeal to high spenders and trendy millennials.

Tourism recovery since the 2015 earthquakes has been impressive in terms of numbers, but our 1.2 million arrivals last year are mainly from cost-conscious neighbours and regional visitors who prefer the same parts of the country as were popular when I first arrived: Kathmandu, Pokhara, Chitwan, Lumbini, Annapurna and Sagarshetha.

The innate hospitality of the Himalayan people of Nepal is well suited to hosting guests, but uncontrolled tourism will become resented by locals who already complain that borders of budget travellers and pilgrims leave little but trash.

Visit Nepal Year 2020 is looming and the emphasis is on the number of arrivals rather than their ability to contribute cash. We have more and more tourists coming every year, but spending less and less during their stay. To redress this balance, we need to lure back the high value markets by improving the array and quality of services, and developing some persuasive experiences branching out beyond the same old circuits.

The Nepal Investment Summit is an opportunity to inspire courageous and innovative investors from both home and abroad, reassuring potential promoters that Nepal’s rich resources are tips for responsible tourism development and that the country’s investment climate is conducive.

Perhaps we should allow the original investors to have the last word. “After a few hours I fell madly in love with this country.” Bouts declared in a 1963 interview. “I’d rather handle half as many tourists with each spending twice as much as is in my debt’s mantra. And Jimmy Roberts used to run. ‘Why are we selling our beautiful mountains so cheap?”

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Napoli Nepali

Ever since her father emigrated from Italy to Venezuela, and later living in London, Annamaria Forgione had always yearned to belong to some place she could really call home. Now, at 68, the founder of Fire and Ice Pizzeria in Thamel has decided that she belongs more to Nepal than Naples.

This week, as the Nepal Investment Summit gets underway, it may be a good time to remember one of the first investors in Nepal’s hospitality sector after the Foreign Investment Act was passed in 1992. Fire and Ice will soon mark 35 years in Kathmandu, and is a model business that has stuck with Nepal through thick and thin.

“As an immigrant child, I missed the sense of home, but it gives me great happiness to know that I belong to Nepal,” says Forgione, raising her voice to be heard above the background noise of her busy Kathmandu pizzeria one recent evening. Forgione was working at the Italian Embassy in London when she fell ill and became wheelchair-bound for more than a year. Her British husband, a teacher, started looking for a job so she could have a change of scenery to recover, and fortuitously landed a job at Lincoln School in Kathmandu.

One regular was Crown Prince Dipendra, who came for his favourite salami pizza with his friend Deyvan! Rana a fortnight before the massacre at the nearby royal palace in June 2001. There have been many celebrity visitors since, including Sting, Richard Gere and Bollywood stars.

Nepal has now moved on from monarchy to republic, from war to peace, and survived many political upheavals, but Fire and Ice is exactly where it was on Tridevi Marg next to the three temples dedicated to the goddesses, Dakhshinkali, Manakamana and Jwalajini. Kathmandu-based expats return to Fire and Ice when they visit Nepal just to relive the time they were here.

“Some young men come and bug me and say, ‘Annamaria, remember me?’ They were children when they used to come here 20 years ago, and now they are all bearded and grown-up,” Forgione remembers. “They feel the restaurant is a link to their childhood, it is a constant. We need these anchors to give our lives continuity.”

Forgione’s main challenge in the past 25 years has been to ensure quality, so she personally supervises the kitchen, training and sourcing ingredients. The other challenges over the years have been dealing with shutdowns and extortions.

Despite conflicts, earthquakes and the blockade, Annamaria Forgione says she has never been fed up with Nepal, and will never leave. She helps lay Nepal Action Volunteers work with earthquake survivors, and is full of admiration of the inner strength of Nepalis.

“Nepal gives me such happiness, it has been my life,” she adds, “when I go to the Big Pizzeria in the sky, I want to look down and see that this place is still going strong.”

Grazie: Annamaria Forgione (left), above with her staff, when they and pus first opened in 1985 in Thamel, and this week (centre) serving the popular Pita Marghenta at her restaurant that will soon mark its 75th anniversary.

“"It was an act of god that I came to Kathmandu," says Forgione, smiling. "Otherwise, who knows, Fire and Ice may have opened up in Olam Brut.""

It was her obsession with cleanliness that made Forgione plan “a clean, simple place with no pretensions”, where people in Kathmandu could eat without falling sick. She even put a microscope in the kitchen to show waiters the germs lurking about if they did not wash their hands.

The timing was perfect. The new business-friendly Foreign Investment Act made it easy to register Fire and Ice, and with the boom in trekking tourism, and growth in Kathmandu’s expat community in the mid-80s, the restaurant immediately took off as a place not just to eat, but to meet and greet.

Grazie: Annamaria Forgione (far left) above with her staff...
Their Songs from the Forest

Photographer Uma Bista’s exhibition, Our Songs from the Forest, is a gentle invitation into the remote mountains of Achham where we meet young women coming of age in a fast-changing society.

The women are learning to navigate superstition and ingrained patriarchy in their community while balancing it alongside new aspirations of equality. They are asking questions, and pushing boundaries.

Women are considered impure during menstruation, and even though the practice of being harassed by the cowled during their periods is now outlawed and is gradually fading away, it is still happens. These brave women are challenging societal norms, and trying to speak against the superstition that perpetuates the practice.

Many women still believe that the gods are angered if they do not isolate themselves in the women’s home every month. They are held responsible for ills that might befall the family, especially the menfolk, if they break the rules. Despite new laws that criminalise this practice, the fear runs deep. Fear of angering the gods, fear of being labeled immoral, fear of being ostracised by the community, fear of change. Can such fears be replaced by the fear of legal consequences? Destroying the sheds must also free us of the tradition associated with them.

Uma Bista takes us into the forests around Oligani, where young women seek freedom from the inequality they face daily, and the shame they are forced to endure every month. In the forest, the skies are open, the air is free and they feel no fear. They can sing and laugh as loud as they wish.

Nayan Tara Gurung Kakshapati

Our Songs from the Forest
10-10 April
12AM-PM
Chayo Centre, Thamel, 344/175695
(01) 5348271 (Photo Note)

Oligani is an hour by feet from the district capital at Mangade of Achham. It is made up of mixed families of Ugra upper to lower. It is common for girls to marry by 16 even though the legal age of marriage for girls is 18 with prior
Gita Miller, 16, (left) is in Grade 9. Before and after school, she gathers fodder for the family livestock, works in the fields and in between does other household work. Living menstruation, Gita usually goes to the cattle shed. She wakes up early at 5 am. Both girls gather fodder and firewood before going to school.

She had heard the old women say that a person touched by a menstruating woman would go insane. Once, when she got her period, Gita decided not to tell anyone. She feared she would be thrown out. The girl’s father is a labourer, the mother is a housewife. The girls have been told by their parents to be careful about menstruation.

She and her 16-year-old sister, Manisha, take turns to look after the livestock. They have been told that women should not be seen during menstruation. The girls go to bed early and get up early. They are afraid to talk about menstruation.

Tejana Khamai, 16, (above, left) from Murgaram is waiting for her Grade 10 result. Her brother is a student, so out of the four sisters, she is the only one who has to work. She said she was not told about menstruation at home. The family has no access to any modern facilities.

Sometimes, they have to go through the fields to get to the village. The girls are not allowed to go to the market. They have to work in the fields and cannot go out. They have to work hard to support their family.

Marisha Nath, 16, (above, right) has finished Grade 10 and wants to study further. She said she is not allowed to go out during menstruation. But she is not afraid. She said she will do what she has to do.

Many girls and women in rural areas face similar challenges. They are not aware of their rights and the government’s efforts to provide them with education and opportunities. The situation needs to change, and more should be done to improve the situation.
Earth Hour
Getaway

On this Earth Hour, engage with social enterprises working first-hand to practice sustainable lifestyle choices such as Doka Reyertas, Harmi Bahin, Khadiasi and many more. This Earth Social Jam will also have fun music and some Undaarar food options for a day that is engaging and informative about environmental sustainability. 30 March, 7.30-9.30, Bhilwara Pron (Green Park Area). 9

Little Picasso Vol 13
A ten-day long art camp for children by Artista to explore their creativity and enjoy learning and making art. Children will be able to learn from and collaborate with contemporary artists and designers from Nepal. Register online. All materials are included. 30 March 9-16, 8:30 am (for ages 5-7) and 1-3 pm (for ages 8-16), Rs 850. Artista, Swayambhunath, 9881069790. 9

Chocolate workshop
Learn how to make chocolate muffins, cookies, drinks, and a secret chocolate cake. No prior culinary experience required and all materials will be provided. Interested participants must register online and submit payment via MANDA. 30 March, 3-3.30, Rs 300, Yako Midhars, Kadukha Road, Patan, 9881834942, mandy.yak@gmail.com 9

Music Camp
Kaj: brings a music camp for children between 6-12 years where they can learn about music, plans, percussion and eat experience recording in a professional studio as well as enjoy other activities like arts and craft, film, and wall climbing. 1-2 April, 5-7 pm, Kathmandu. For more information, (01) 4754343, 9811719846, info@kajуча.com.np 9

Events

The Art Market
The market is a platform for artists to exhibit their creativity in a range of art forms. This edition is specially dedicated to women and celebrate womenhood. 30 March, 7-9.30, The Hollow House, Swayambhunath. (9811759069) 9

EIMUN 2019
The sixth edition of EIMUN International Model United Nations (EIMUN) will once again create an engaging platform for young students to discuss global issues, develop leadership skills and formulate resolutions. The event is led by the organizing body, the Youth Thinker’s Society and the US Embassy in Nepal. All interested participants should send in their applications by 15th April through the EIMUN website. Applications are due by 15 April. Conference on 19-20 April. (9811795726), appliEIMUN@gmail.com 9

Women Trade Expo
The fourth edition of this international expo will bring together world-renowned products such as clothing, handicrafts and agricultural produce. Explore the variety and enjoy this day with your friends and family. There will also be handicraft workshops by local women who are experts in their craft. 29 March - 1 April, Heritage Garden, Swayambhunath. 11

The Caste System
Mukti Lama, anthropology professor at Tribhuvan University, will talk about the caste system and its implications in Nepalese society. The talk is organized by Cultural Studies Group of Nepal (CSGN) on 29 March, 10 am, Kastha (a CSCG member), #256 (students and senior citizens), hotel Shrene, csgkathmandu@gmail.com 9

BMF Finale
After a month-long entertainment with shows at various locations, the Base Camp Music Festival’s Finale is here with a line-up of diverse genres to guarantee an afternoon of musical fun. 30 March, Madhy, Jhumka, (01) 35525852. Line-up: The Jain Family International (Reggae Groove) 2:45 pm at Stage one. D-P3 (Electro Dance) 4:30-5:30 pm at Stage one. Kathmandu Killers (Ska Punk) 5:30-7 pm at Stage two. What the Funk (UNO) 8-10 pm. D-Sickey (Old School Hip-Hop) 10-11 pm at Stage two. 9

Fusion Jatra
Fusion Jatra is an instrument-based band of sarang, flute, and svara who play folkal and classical tunes as well as create original sounds. Enjoy their music this Saturday along with dishes BHAJ in the relaxed ambiance of Pauline’s Garden on 31 March, First Avenue, Pauline’s Garden, Aamchi Mag, (01) 457105, 9815297075 9

Bawarchi
Lauded inside a historical palace in the heart of Kathmandu, Bawarchi provides the ultimate pan-Asian dining experience. Bawarchi serves delicious, innovative Indian dishes and one of its specialities includes flavoured rice from the city of Tanga, Kathmandu which has a unique fusion of Asian Chinese cuisine. 11

The Ranger
A rememberable night in Nepal that performs Nepal, Hindi, English, fusion and instrumental music with guest artist, Hari. 8 March, 6.30, Shangri-la. New Year, 9819278902 9

Craft Draft
Shiksha now serving Sherpa on tap. Enjoy a tall chilled glass with bestoken every season meeting in the biergarten. Shiksha café, 9815272713 9

Hotel Country Villa
From the top of the Nagarkot hill, the hotel provides spectacular views of greenery, sunshine and sunset, and recommending the mountain range on clear days. a natural and relaxing venue for those wishing to escape the pandemonium of the city. (977) 4000035, 9815711026 9

Sapporo Japanese
Experience typical Japanese food and drinks at the restaurant known for handmade ramen noodles, sashimi, uramaki, soba and more. Anrokaji Mag, Budhanilkantha, 9814344045. 9

Taste of Bangladesh
Hotel Yak and Yet presents a unique Bangladesh food festival in collaboration with the Embassy of Bangladesh. Four chefs will be flying in from Bangladesh to give you authentic Bangladeshi dishes and flavours. The event also includes cultural performances by the Bangla musical rock band, Soal. 29-31 March, 6-9 pm, dinner only, Rs 250 per table, performance, Hotel Yak and Yet, Durbur Mag, (01) 4583099 9

Milla Guesthouse
If you prefer the quiet and enjoy a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place for you. Not far from the city, yet worlds apart. (01) 4558017. 9

Atitli Resort & Spa
Centrally located in the hub of hotels in Nepal by the Himalaya, the resort is a quiet sanctuary that eases Nepali tradition with modern amenities. Spend a night or two here to make it memorable. Lakeside, Halswala, (01) 4067670. 9

Retreat at Damaara
A serene sanctuary for everyone looking to enrich their minds, passions and inner self. As part of their retreat, you will also be supporting the local tourism and culture. Besisahar, Koshi, 9815214062. 9

Air Quality Index
KATHMANDU, 22 - 28 March

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This week we saw just how much vehicles polluted the air of Kathmandu in the past. (BMJ)
Nepal’s Prime Minister takes charge

Oli’s recent moves may be authoritarian, but they reinforce the need to adhere to the rule of law

In the last few weeks, Prime Minister K.P. Oli has made some decisive and significant political moves. He signed an agreement with C.K. Raut, leader of the All�iance for an Independent Madhes to bring this popular leader back into mainstream politics by securing his agreement to drop his call for an independent Madhes, thereby avoiding a long jail term.

Daniel Lak
in New York

A keen advocate for justice for the world’s poorest women, who has worked with the Human Rights Watch and a deeply empathetic heart, this is how friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances remember Tejshree Thapa, who passed away this week in New York City at the age of 52 after succumbing to a sudden illness. The news brought great pain to the prime minister of Nepal, surrounded by love.

Tejshree Thapa, 52

Tejshree was known to her family and friends as an attorney who attended the National Law School of India in New Delhi and graduated from the University of California before obtaining a law degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1993.

She led the Human Rights Watch with unwavering passion and dedication, earning respect across the globe for her advocacy of human rights. In her career, she was instrumental in establishing the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal.

An expert on violence against women in the context of conflict, Tejshree was a tireless advocate for the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and girls. She was a strong voice for justice and equality, fighting for the rights of those who were often invisible in society.

In Nepal, on her return from the United States, she continued to work on human rights issues, focusing on the protection of women and children in conflict situations. Her dedication and tireless efforts in the advocacy for human rights had a profound impact on the lives of many.

Tejshree was a beacon of hope for those who had lost their way, providing guidance and support to those in need. Her legacy will be remembered with gratitude and respect.

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NATION

11

GIARDA

David Seddon

He also branded the ‘Big P’ organization a criminal outfit and has initiated action against this self-styled Marxist faction. His initiatives have angered some in the GSPN, both its own ex-TMC comrades and the former Marxist faction of Pahada Kuma Ardal. who accuse him of not having sufficiently consulted with them before taking action.

GIARDA

David Seddon

Oil himself must now pursue a strong and balanced policy of upholding law and order while at the same time recognising the political realities on the ground with respect to the Tikapur killings in August 2015. Armed supporters of the Tharath Struggle Committee had attacked security forces, leading to the deaths of seven police officers (one of whom was burnt alive). This had followed mass protests by Tharu opposing the claims of the Madhesi parties to represent their interests, and demanding a separate federal province.

This one move may be trickier to handle sensitively and effectively, given the complex political vested interests involved and the recent decision of the Kallali Court. Ever since the violence, there has been a constant debate about whether it was right or not to try the members of the Tharath Struggle Committee for the murders of the police officers. Strongly opposing views were expressed by representatives of different political parties, as well as by the National Human Rights Commission.

This month, more than three and a half years after the incident, the Kallali Court (Nepal (RJP-N) politician, Rohtag Chaudhary and 24 others charged with the crime, convicted the Tharath killings were sentenced by the Kallali Court.

Chaudhary had in the meanwhile been elected in 2017 to the Federal Parliament from Kailali-7 whilst on the run, and was sworn in on 3 January 2018. He was given a life sentence, along with the others, while 14 of the accused were given jail sentences of three years each.

Those were acquitted.

This outcome has already raised several questions about the extent to which those on trial were well served by the legal system, and whether a more effective inquiry into the wider context and circumstances of the killings would have resulted in a very different process. There are, arguably, grounds for appeal, and it seems probable that the matter will not rest with the District Court decision.

Prime Minister Oli must do some serious groundwork before intervening in this matter, especially given the need to keep the executive and the judiciary separate. But it seems clear that if simply left to the courts and the judicial process, there will be a significant political response, both from those who feel that the members of the Tharath Struggle Committee have been unfairly treated and have paid too high a price for their involvement in the deaths of the police officers, and also from those who feel that any appeal against the sentences would be an insult to those who died.

David Seddon is Director of Oxford faculty, author and co-author of many publications on Nepal, and currently writing a three-part book on ‘Nepal and the Great War’.
The pain of love and separation

Rajni Upadhyay calls her artworks an ‘artistic diary’, which reflects her life events and yearnings. Her current exhibition ‘Love Revisited at Le Sherpa’ is a visual documentation of her feelings. It showcases more than a dozen of Upadhyay’s prints, all centered around the theme of love, affection, separation, and the pain of love.

Many of the works have white backgrounds with human figures in blue and orange in various poses. The white background gives a clear, pristine look to the paintings, so the viewer can focus on the images in the foreground. Most of the figures are in pairs: two people leaning towards each other, in conversation, in proximity, two hearts bound by threads.

Upadhyay says the images reflect the centrality of love in life. “Love is all around us, love is everywhere. By showing two hearts bound by threads, I am showing how love keeps human beings connected,” she says.

Upadhyay uses many symbols to expand on this theme. There are houses, which symbolise speed. Hot air balloon is shown with wings, depicting modern relationship that take you to love in minutes through the cell signal. Like Upadhyay who married a Belgian national, these individuals connect through long distances, with Nepal’s temples and monasteries on one side and modern cityscapes on the other. Though Upadhyay calls her art her diary, she could just as well describe the inner turmoil of millions of Nepali couples separated by migration today.

Upadhyay’s underlying message is that love brings not just joy but pain. Most times her lovers are far apart, arms outstretched in aching separation, longing towards each other. She has used tautness as symbols of patience, the farthest needed to wait for love when it is far away. Even pairs of hearts are far apart, bound only by fragile red threads.

But even more than the pain of longing, Upadhyay depicts the pain of suffering that women go through. “Creativity is an act of love, but other that, women suffer alone to give birth and complete the act of creation,” she says. “Women are like the earth mother who withstands floods, earthquakes and all kinds of disasters and still endures. I have tried to show what women are and what women can do.”

Upadhyay’s art has always intersected with activism, gender issues mixed up with themes like goddess and mythology. This time, she portrays women as giving mothers as she herself still mourns her daughter’s death two years ago at age 20. Women’s faces and profiles look out from many prints, stark and bright against the white background. Some are adorned by thorns, some held by crosses, while others give birth. They are severe and mournful, but also strong and compassionate. Most of all, they deliver a strong emotional punch, leaving us with tender melancholy.

Through this exhibition, Upadhyay demonstrates not only how central love is to the human experience, but also how painful it can be, especially for women.

Sona Bhattacharjee
Kathmandu | Le Sherpa
May 11, 2009

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French Embassy

KNIGHTED: Pratima Porte was conferred the French Knight of National Order of Merit by the French Ambassador to Nepal François Xavier Legu in Kathmandu recently.

IN THE LINE OF FIRE: A Nepal Army fire fighting team from Tundal Battalion tried to extinguish a jungle fire that broke out in Parsa National Park on Monday.

FREE SPIRIT: A tourist enjoys skiing at a new adventure sport facility in Ghukhel this week.
Overseas Nepalis are not impressed

They say new Acts do not address their misgivings about investing in their homeland

Sewa Bhattarai

Learning from the success of overseas Chinese and Indians investing in their homeland, the Nepal government hurriedly passed two foreign investment related bills recently. But non-resident Nepalis are not impressed.

The Public Private Partnership and Investment (PPPIA) Bill was passed by Parliament on 18 March, and the Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer (FITTA) Bill on 22 March, but investors say it does not go far enough in aligning their concerns.

Not only do the bills have contradictory provisions with an extended negative list, a minimum limit for investments, and requirements of multiple approvals, experts say they do not address the central concern of transparency, policy continuity and rule of law.

FITTA has extended the negative list (sectors in which foreign investment is prohibited) to include agriculture, horticulture, and dairy, sectors which many overseas Nepalis are eager to modernize and create jobs back home.

"When you prohibit so many areas for foreign investment, you are giving the wrong message to investors, especially to non-resident Nepalis. Not only does it render some sectors completely off limits, it also scares investors that their current investments may become off limits in future," says Siddhant Pandey of Business Oxygen.

"Investment should be welcomed in all areas so as to help economic growth, technology transfer and to bring Nepal’s human resources up to speed."

The Non-resident Nepali (NRN) Association is concerned about shortcomings in the Acts, and has said so through a document published by its policy research wing Nepal Policy Institute (NPI) which rues the fact that the Acts treat overseas Nepalis, foreign citizens of Nepal origin, and other foreign investors alike.

Says Shugendra Dhakal of NPI: "The government says it needs the negative list to prevent small scale industries, but people of Nepali origin have special emotional ties to Nepal even if they may not have enough capital for large scale investments. NRNs and foreign citizens of Nepal origin should be given the same rights as Nepali citizens."

The NPI report recommends scrapping the negative list and lifting restrictions on foreigners from investing in businesses worth less than $150,000 for overseas investors.

"If a business worth $100,000 is employing at least 20 Nepalis and training them in new technology, it should be open to investment for NRNs and foreigners of Nepali origin too," says Dhakal.

However, FITTA authorizes the Industry and Investment Promotion Board to approve companies investing Rs.5-10 billion, while PPPIA directs companies above Rs.10 billion to the Investment Board Nepal (INB).

Amidst concern that PPPIA concentrates power in the INB, which does not have much to show for itself, the real question at the Summit this week is whether these hastily-passed bills will remove misgivings of foreigners and NRNs about investing in Nepal.

Economist and former Nepali ambassador to the United States, Shankar Sharma believes that the law itself is not the problem when it comes to attracting foreign investment, but its execution.

TK is an award winning thorough-bred chef having garnered accolades in kitchens under celebrated chefs such as Shihbayu at MGM Grand in Las Vegas and 4 Diamond rated Brown’s Beach House in Hawaii.

Pacific Rim Cuisine combines Asian flavors, California freshness and a myriad of inspirations from various cultures.
Nepal has to curb corruption before

The biggest obstacle to foreign investment is a rent-seeking state

Ramesh Kumar

A fter adopting a liberal free-
market policy, passing
the first Foreign Direct
Investment (FDI) Act in 1991,
there’s a clear trend that the
effectiveness of the FDI Act has
diminishing returns, despite the
current political and economic
context. Why is this so?

By 1994, several FDI
projects were registered and by
1999, the total amount of FDI
registered for the period 1992-1996 was
in excess of 500 million dollars. Today, less than 100
projects have been registered, and the total amount of FDI
registered for the period 2000-2004 was less than 100
million dollars. However, the FDI Act has been
effectively curbed due to political instability and the
political environment.

Today, the FDI Act is no longer
seen as a tool for attracting
foreign investment. Instead, it is
seen as a tool for transferring
capital and technology from
foreign investors. The FDI Act
has been ineffective in attracting
foreign investment due to political
instability and the absence of a
clear and stable legal framework.

One of the biggest obstacles to
foreign investment in Nepal is the
rent-seeking behavior of
officials. The FDI Act is no longer
seen as a tool for attracting
foreign investment, but rather a
tool for transferring capital and
technology from foreign investors.

The FDI Act has been
ineffective in attracting
foreign investment due to political
instability and the absence of a
clear and stable legal framework.

The government needs to take
action to address these issues in
order to attract foreign investment.

Showcase projects presented by Investment Board Nepal at this week’s Summit

Appendix C (in PDF)

Nepal, Inc.

We need foreign investors more than foreign investors need us

The centerpieces of the event were the keynote speeches by Finance
Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada. He used the occasion as a curtain raiser
for the Nepal Investment Summit in Kathmandu on 29-30 March, and
impressed the audience with his strong grasp of the economy and
foreign investment in Nepal. He presented Nepal as a worthy
destination for foreign investors, and that the country was ready for
business.

The IMF’s recent Article IV Consultation Report supports the
minister’s point that Nepal’s economy is recovering solid
expansion and that the near-term outlook is favourable. Political
stability, more reliable electricity and re-construction activities are
drivers of the current growth. There is a consensus that
Nepal offers tremendous business opportunities in multiple sectors.
A senior IFC executive concluded her trip to Nepal recently with a
depth and profound sense of optimism about Nepal’s development
prospects and indicated IFC’s appetite to ‘radically scale up’ its
investment in Nepal from the current $75 million to even $1
billion by 2023.

Due to an inadequate domestic
capital formation, the local banking sector is not able to keep up with
robust demand for credit in recent years. The total need in channel
foreign capital is more pronounced now than ever. In addition to new
money, FDI enables businesses,

acquire technology, access
international markets and improve
quality of governance thus ensuring
durable long-term sustainability.

However, Nepal’s track record on FDI inflows has been dismal. By
contrast, Bangladesh, considered a basket case until the early 90s,
quad-quadrapled its economy in the last 15 years with the help of FDI
and exports.

Pundits have identified the
following as main bottlenecks to
securing foreign investment into
Nepal:

- Inadequate or ambiguous laws
and regulations
- Need for approvals from multiple
authorities causing delays
- Primitive foreign exchange
regulations
- Lack of currency hedging
mechanism
- Poor infrastructure and enabling
environment
- Absence of sovereign rating
- Poor governance standards,
corruption etc.

The negative list is still too long, and there’s no ‘automatic route’

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Nepal is also seeking to graduate from its Least Developed Country status by 2020, but that is unlikely, without achieving the United Nations’ Development Agenda goals. The UN estimates that in 2017, 114 million people in Nepal—25 percent of the population—live on less than $1.90 per day, which is below the poverty line. The government’s Next Five Year Plan, which aims to achieve middle-income status by 2025, has been criticized for its lack of concrete targets and measurable indicators.

The Nepali government has been negotiating with various partners, including China, India, and Japan, to secure funding for infrastructure projects. Despite these efforts, the country continues to struggle with high levels of poverty and inequality. The government has also been criticized for its slow progress in implementing structural reforms and its failure to address corruption and political instability.

A key challenge for Nepal is its reliance on foreign investment, particularly from China, which has been a significant donor in recent years. However, this has raised concerns about the country’s sovereign integrity and its ability to maintain its independence. Furthermore, the government’s efforts to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on foreign aid have been limited by the lack of domestic resources and the challenges of governance and corruption.

In the meantime, Nepal continues to work on developing its natural resources, particularly in the energy sector. The government has signed agreements with companies from China, India, and Japan to develop hydroelectric projects. These projects are expected to generate electricity for domestic consumption and for export to neighboring countries.

Despite these efforts, Nepal remains a country with limited resources and a challenging political landscape. The government will need to work closely with its partners to ensure that the investments made are in the country’s best interest and that they contribute to sustainable development and peace.
You have arrived

The Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation has hit upon a cunning plan for Visit Nepal year 2020: the strategy is to go for the quality of visitors rather than their quantity. By making it as difficult as we can for you to get into the country, and by ensuring that your stay is as gruelling as humanly possible, we can guarantee that we only get genuine holidaymakers looking for thrills and adventure, and not the riff-raff who want all creature comforts. By first class, and stay in 7-star accommodation paying $1,000 a night. So, it’s not just numbers, we are looking to welcome 2 million kilograms of tourists in 2020.

Which is why, from April 1st, getting to Nepal is being made even more challenging because the nation’s only runway is down for repairs 10 hours a day. (This is not April Fool’s jokes –Edited) Direct flights to Lhasa will henceforth be by hot air balloon taking off from Kathmandu. Most international flights, instead of waiting for hours to land during the peak tourist season, will open the hatch while circling over Kathmandu and parapod tourists directly into city hotels below. This way, you also beat the traffic jams.

To streamline disembarkation formalities, the Department of Immigration and the Department of Strang Customs have set up visa counters and x-ray machines at the airport itself for purchase tourists who are advised, to expedite the process, to fill out their arrival cards and visa forms while dropping.

Upon landing, and after nearly folding their chutes, all tourists will be treated like terrapins until proven otherwise. This is to make sure that only the stout-hearted will henceforth gain entry into Nepal. Terrors without visas have to wait in five lines lasting 5 hour each: one to change money, the next to apply for a visa, third to clear immigration, fourth to get a chest x-ray, and fifth to get their false bottoms examined.

At the x-ray for carry-ons, the Department of Traditions and Customs is doing its bit to make Nepal a safer place. Contraband items like your extra bottle of Molotov Cocktail and the second Perambulator you are trying to smuggle into the country will be treated as threats to Nepal’s national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will be confiscated on the spot without compensation. Walking through the Green Channel with more than one of each of these items will result in the immediate Impounding of the Plastic Tricycle in question, which will be destroyed later in a controlled and safe explosion.

The new Immigration forms also have deeply philosophical questions for arriving visitors to fill out:

Name:
Nationality:
the name of the father:
Center of origin:
Names of both:
Type of entry:
Purposes and Duration of stay at present Earth:

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GO BEYOND YOUR LIMITS