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NO SHAME

Just when we thought everything necessary had been said about Nepal’s corrosive corruption, it seems to be even worse.

The idea that ‘corruption’ is a Rs100 note slipped under a table is now just a quaint notion. Today, a network of politicians, bureaucrats, the legislature, judiciary and private sector cartels plunder and loot from the people, dividing the spoils. The beauty of it: no one is caught.

‘Corruption in Nepal is not a series of disjointed, individual acts. Instead, a range of stakeholders spanning public, private and criminal spheres operate as one to steal from the people and ensure impunity thrives,’ says a new report by the Niti Foundation, *Nepal’s Kleptocratic Network: Mapping Corruption and Impunity*.

The network is one of shifting alliances spanning multiple agencies, with powerful businesses acting as brokers.

A KLEPTO
REPUBLIC
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

‘Money flows upwards through the hierarchy while impunity and benefits flow downward,’ adds the report. It uses flowcharts to show and shame politicians, political parties, public institutions and the private businesses.

‘The private sector has gained primacy as the driver of corruption and impunity in Nepal ... its main roles are to distort the functions and policies of government regulatory agencies and to hijack key revenue streams to facilitate money laundering and rentier practices,’ the report concludes.

In cahoots are political ‘patrons’ of the network and parties creating a ‘culture of collusion’, and public institutions, which also ‘collude with private interests and politicians to steal directly from the state’.

State institutions have been ‘weaponised’ and ‘hollowed out’.

So, who remains to protect the interests of the Nepali people? If you were thinking ‘the judiciary’, think again.

The report states starkly: ‘Through pressure and threats, including sackings, impeachments, and forced retirements, political parties control and extract loyalty from justices.’

MAKING NEPAL ACCESSIBLE

Special coverage inside of efforts to make mobility inclusive

3 toots for Tootle
PAGE 11

Jeeza Williams’ journeys
1st accessible trek trail
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PAGE 14-15

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India's new social media politics

There was no effort to curb 'fake news' during India's election campaign because the ruling BJP was responsible for disseminating much of it

Shashi Tharoor

NEW DELHI – What role has social media played in India's election?

Conventional wisdom had it that, in the Indian context, one should always be sceptical about the reach and political impact of social media. But with some 625 million Internet users in India, and upwards of 80% of Internet use on mobile phones, there could have been 625 million pairs of eyes looking at social media during the 2019 election, nearly eight times more than in 2014.

Though I was a Twitter pioneer among Indian politicians, my own



PROJECT SYNDICATE AFP

view is that no Indian election can be won or lost on social media alone. While perhaps above 40% of voters use social media, there are no reliable studies of how frequently they use it for political news and views. They could be in WhatsApp group chats or sharing Facebook snaps of their beach weekend,

rather than debating the merits of the political parties. There's still no substitute for mass rallies, street-corner addresses, door-to-door canvassing, handshakes at marketplaces and busy junctions, and Jeep-top tours.

Twitter, the most 'political' of social media, has only 30 million

active users in India. It is dwarfed by Facebook and WhatsApp, with over 240 million active users each. And, given parliamentary constituencies of some two million people, Twitter is of little help in political mobilisation. Twitter would be useless for organising a mass rally, it cannot be a substitute for conventional campaigning.

Nonetheless, political parties turned to social media during this election. Aside from its usefulness for issuing messages through memes, digital posters and WhatsApp forwards, social media's indirect impact (as a source for 'mainstream' media stories) makes it an indispensable communications tool for politicians. And that's where the trouble starts.

WhatsApp is the favoured medium because 82% of India's mobile phone users have downloaded the app, and because it is targeted to specific people. A political party can create groups defined by their interests, caste or religious identity, or by a specific issue or cause, and bombard them with messages to reinforce their biases and convince them the party is with them. The ruling BJP is the master of this technique, running an estimated half-million WhatsApp groups across the country. Its IT cell head, Amit Malviya, declared in March: "The upcoming elections will be fought on the mobile phone... In a way, you could say they would be a WhatsApp election."

The use of social media is not always benign. Disinformation is rife on the BJP groups, including concocted accounts of what leading Congress politicians (including me) have said and photoshopped images

portraying traitorous behavior by opposition leaders. 'Fake news' exists because it has been manufactured to serve the political interests of its disseminators. The BJP's attitude is that all is fair in love, war, and politics, but Indian democracy has become collateral damage.

WhatsApp took steps to limit the damage, restricting forwards, for example, to just five recipients in order to impede lies from going viral. It blocked numbers identified by the Election Commission as spreaders of 'fake news'. Guilty parties quickly find alternative numbers and create more groups, however. The BJP benefits from vast armies of people, paid and volunteers, whose job is to feed the WhatsApp groups.

The fears of democrats are not unfounded: people have been killed on the basis of fake WhatsApp rumours. Social media offers a marvelously useful set of communication tools that democratises public opinion. But in the hands of unscrupulous politicians who see it as a means of manipulation, social media can undermine democracy itself. Once you have voted for the wrong people on the basis of false information, there is nothing you can do about it until the next election. In that fact lies the danger posed by social media to Indian – and not only Indian – democracy. 🇮🇳

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Shashi Tharoor, a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister for External Affairs, is currently an Indian National Congress MP.

He is the author of Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century.

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prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Qatar Unveils FIFA TVC

Qatar Airways has unveiled a new FIFA tv commercial in celebration of its sponsorship of the upcoming FIFA Women's World Cup, taking place 7 June to 7 July in cities throughout France. The new film features a mother telling her daughter a bedtime story about a new land where women's football reigns, where players rule and fans from many nations gather to cheer. Brazilian football superstar Neymar is featured.

MetLife Asia visits Nepal

MetLife's Executive Vice President and Head of Strategic Growth Markets, Asia,



Rebecca Tadikonda, is visiting Nepal for three days. During her visit, she will inaugurate MetLife Nepal's new, dedicated customer service area called 'One Customer Place' in the company's corporate office in Pulchok. Ms Tadikonda will visit various MetLife offices across Nepal until 23 May.

Nissan offer

Pioneer Moto Corp, the authorised distributor of Nissan in Nepal, has

announced a 'Pre-Budget Offer' of cash benefits with the purchase of Nissan four wheelers. Customers who buy a Newmicra

Active will receive a benefit of Rs301,000. Similar benefits are available with the purchase of Sunny, Nissan Kicks, Navara and X-trail.

Bira 91 cracks a deal

Bira 91, one of the fastest growing craft beer brands, has signed a major five-year deal with the International Cricket Council (ICC). The partnership confirms Bira 91 as the official sponsor of ICC global tournaments including the ICC Cricket World Cup, ICC T20 World Cup, ICC World Test Championship, ICC U19 Cricket World Cup and the ICC Women's World Cup. This month, Bira 91 is running the 'Fly to World Cup' promotion, where consumers can win all-expense-paid trips to England to see a World Cup match firsthand. It will also launch the 'Assured Gift' promotion featuring free Bira 91 merchandise and screenings of ICC World Cup matches at selected locations.

prabhu BANK

Devolving the judiciary

New and old structural challenges remain in federalism and access to justice

Iain Payne
and George Varughese

The organisational infrastructure of the court system is of critical importance for the success of Nepal's new constitutional order. It is in the lower courts that people come face to face with the judicial branch of government, and where the ordinary and routine forms of justice most directly affecting daily life are in practice. Subnational courts therefore should not be forgotten in considering the judiciary's irreplaceable role in instilling a commitment to the rule of law and encouraging a new way of doing politics.

Nepal's network of 77 district courts is the gateway for virtually all of the country's litigation (85,000 cases in 2017-18, over which district courts oversaw final resolution to 60%). Yet both in resource allocation and in public imagination, these courts are the most neglected. It is remarkable that a mere 241 judges discharge the enormous workload.

While the 2015 Constitution has changed the executive and legislative, the court structure has not undergone significant revision, except to add two district courts — for a total of 77 — and to refashion 16 appellate courts as seven high courts with their 11 benches extended across respective provinces.

The subordinate courts now have slightly enlarged purview. For the first time, provincial high courts



will be able to hear public interest litigation, hopefully lessening some of the Supreme Court's caseload burden. District courts now supervise all justice institutions, formal and informal, below the district level.

District courts also have increased authority to oversee criminal offences punishable by more than one year imprisonment, many of which were previously adjudicated by quasi-judicial bodies like the district administration office. They have new jurisdiction over some civil matters previously supervised by the district executive.

Critical access-to-justice issues have been inherited from the previous governance setup. For example, the geographical inaccessibility of the district courts, which remain the lowest court in judicial hierarchy and sit at the now obsolete district headquarters, are one of the key reasons why only a fraction of disputes tends to be registered with the proper court and

judicial authority. The judiciary's absence in municipal government is glaring and hardly addressed by the presence of so-called judicial committees, which fall under the municipal executive.

Moreover, wholesale state restructuring must take into account roles and responsibilities of different justice sector institutions at the local level, and the judicial branch's reflections on these would be timely in guiding other branches of government. This is especially the case with regard to judicial committees in 753 locations, about which inconsistent visions are projected in the Constitution and the Local Government Operations Act of 2017— the federal framework legislation that presently guides local government operations. This is also the case with the option provided for in the Constitution allowing the creation of local courts if required. The judicial branch's reluctance to provide guidance

on constitutional provisions for accessing justice beyond district courts could result in costly adjustments.

These issues need to be addressed to guide the creation of a coherent and coordinated system for accessing justice locally, one that builds community and citizen trust in the entire justice sector and positions the judiciary in its rightful place in government. The lowest rungs of the judicial branch carry the greatest burden in making justice more accessible to more people. Much work, therefore, remains to be done to ensure that the promise of bringing all three branches of government closer to the people is fulfilled.

Renewed commitments to judicial independence headlined the recently concluded National Conference of Judges. However, aside from the hot-button topic of judicial appointments that dominated discussion, only a few creative ideas emerged. Perhaps

the most federally relevant of those related to empowering provincial courts to settle disputes between provinces and municipalities. Ideas such as this, while nascent, indicate that the judiciary may be willing to look for ways to be more responsive to the needs of the changed governance context.

With a recently appointed Chief Justice and remaining vacancies filled, Nepal's Supreme Court is drafting its fourth strategic plan with more stable leadership and better prepared justices than ever before. This will drive the judiciary's institutional vision, direction and contribution to democratic government in Nepal over the next five years.

Previous strategic plans have focused on court administration, caseload management, infrastructural and modernisation needs, and training programs. These remain necessary but will be insufficient to fulfil the difficult role of rethinking and reworking access to justice in a federal context. Oversight of the judicial functions of the state — wherever those may be located — is a key strategic metric of performance of the judicial branch.

More difficult will be the deep institutional introspection and principled actions required to assert independence while exercising guardianship of the rule of law. It is vital that the judicial branch of the government sees itself as a trusted partner of both state and society, with its functionaries embracing their role as 'justices of the people' and not just of the court.

Only then will a constitutional culture shaped by the rule of law translate into access to justice in federal Nepal. 🇳🇵

This concludes a three-part series by Iain Payne and George Varughese who are associated with Niti Foundation.



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A man and a woman are sitting back-to-back on a white rug, smiling. The man is on the left, wearing a grey cardigan and light blue trousers, using a silver laptop. The woman is on the right, wearing a blue t-shirt and black leggings, holding a black remote control. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall scene is bright and clean.

In 1952, when a Swiss expedition camped out at Namche Bazar on its way to climb the world's highest mountain, Kancha Sherpa was impressed with the climbers' gear. They looked glamorous, and their Sherpa guides had swagger. It made a deep impression on the 19-year-old, who ran away from home to Darjeeling to join Tenzing Norgay, who was preparing for the 1953 John Hunt expedition.

As a teenager, Kancha Sherpa worked as a porter, crossing Nangpa La to Tibet with loads of paper and bringing back up to 40kg of salt to barter for maize or rice. When he was offered Rs8 per day to join the Everest expedition, with a bonus for going above Camp 7, it felt like a windfall.

Despite having no previous climbing experience, Kancha was trained to use ropes and crampons and set out for the icefall with heavy loads of oxygen cylinders for the higher camps. Being better acclimatised than western climbers and used to carrying heavy loads, Kancha made a good impression on the 'sahibs'.

Kancha made it to the South Col at 8,100m with his load, and remembers Tenzing Norgay trying to lift the spirits of young Sherpas like him who were not used to the dangerous mountaineering on the steep ice of the Lhotse Face. Kancha portered for other expeditions in the Himalaya, but after his brother Jangbu died on the slopes and following a 1973 tragedy in which 11 Sherpas were killed in an avalanche, he was convinced by his wife to give up climbing.



This is now the pre-monsoon season, with the heat building up in the north Indian plains hitting 45C every day. This creates low pressure and the annual retreat northward of the jet stream that sucks in the monsoon from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The searing heat of the plains also causes updrafts along the Himalaya, forming the thunderstorms that we will be seeing later in the afternoons into Friday and on the weekend. The persistent haze is caused by raging forest fires across the Chure and western mid-mountains.

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The last of the first

Kancha Sherpa is the final living climber of the 1953 British expedition that first summited Mt Everest



THOSE WERE THE DAYS: Kancha Sherpa (circled, above) in a group photo taken after the first successful ascent of Mt Everest in May 1953. Standing (5th, 6th, 7th from left) are Edmund Hillary, John Hunt and Tenzing Norgay. Kancha Sherpa at 87, in his home in Namche Bazar this week. (left, right).

based stories from the Khumbu. As the last living Sherpa of the first expedition to climb Mt Everest 66 years ago, Kancha Sherpa says he has no regrets, adding that the 1953 climb and changes to his homeland since then seem like a dream. He recalls: "It used to take two weeks to walk from Namche to Darjeeling; today I can take a helicopter to Kathmandu from a nearby helipad." Kancha Sherpa retains his respect and reverence for the mountains, and believes their sanctity should not be defiled. "They are gods, it is not good for anyone if they get angry. We should keep the mountains clean, and prevent the snows from melting." 🇳🇵

She was right: one-third of deaths on Mt Everest alone have been among Sherpa guides, who are much more exposed to avalanches on the Khumbu Icefall because they go back and forth many more times than their employers. Kancha Sherpa openly admits he worked as a high altitude porter, and later as a trekking guide, for the money — he had no real desire to reach the top. Kancha Sherpa set up the Nirvana Lodge in Namche and did well thanks to the trekking boom that started in the

SHARAD OJHA

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STARTING NEPAL'S GREEN SCHOOL MOVEMENT

Surkhet has a new, community focused eco-friendly school that could be a model for others

Sheilin Teo
in Surkhet

With its new highway to the north, Surkhet has become the gateway to the Karnali and is morphing into a boomtown. But 10 minutes out of the dusty, bustling city nestled amidst a terraced landscape, the Kopila Valley School (KVS) is a functioning model for the rest of Nepal on how schools should be built and administered.

At a time when progress is marked by the rise of glass and concrete structures, the school employs rammed-earth technology with an ecofriendly philosophy that uses local materials for construction, harnesses the sun and sewage for energy, harvests rainwater and minimises waste.

But even founder Maggie Doyne at first needed convincing by architect Prabal Thapa to accept a mud design for the buildings. Her vision of an environment-friendly school was

one made of bamboo, like the Green School she had seen in Bali.

“Look, we’re not in Bali,” Thapa told her. “We are in Nepal, and Nepal is known for mountains. With rammed earth, you’re making mountains.”

Rammed earth provides excellent thermal mass to keep temperature stable indoors, it uses local material and labour, the structure is durable and easy to maintain. The walls are nearly 0.5m thick, and reinforced with steel and concrete banding for seismic resistance.

“We wanted the school to feel Nepali through and through, to stay true to local architecture that is so stunningly beautiful,” explains Doyne, showing us around the campus.

The two-storey school blocks are simple and rectangular, with gabled roofs, breezy stairwells, and are connected by corridors on one side, much like traditional farmhouses in Nepal. The buildings are designed as modular blocks that can be arranged in various ways to suit the landscape and functions required by the school. The simplicity and repeatability of the modules were important considerations to allow ease of building by unskilled local labourers, many of them women trained on the job.

Standing within the grounds, it becomes clear why buildings were sited as they were: they form a protective coterie around a central sports court and create ancillary terraces where children play. The topography creates opportunities for passive surveillance from the administrative block that sits towards the top of the sloping site, and plenty of gathering and resting places along stone-lined steps that double as bleachers overlooking play areas and gardens. When children pour out of their classrooms, they tumble across the sports court and down the stairs, bobbing along ramps that slice across the school’s terrace walls brightly coloured in house colours of reds, blues, yellows and greens.

“Construction was so difficult, and the only thing that got us through the really hard moments was knowing that one day there would be kids in these classrooms,” Doyne says, explaining that complications in scheduling, budgets and differences of

Maggie’s mission

In 2005 when she was 19, Maggie Doyne was trekking in Nepal when she met Hima, a child worker. That started Doyne's Nepal journey, and her efforts to help children go to school eventually expanded to setting up Kopila Valley School and its sister initiatives in Surkhet.

Doyne was named the 2014 Unsung Hero of Compassion, awarded by the Dalai Lama, and won the 2015 CNN Hero of the Year Award. Kopila is funded by The BlinkNow Foundation, a non-profit Doyne founded in 2007 as part of a network of initiatives comprising a children's home, housing for at-risk girls, a training centre for women and a health clinic. KVS admits primarily children from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing for their education and welfare needs. It also runs a Futures Program to teach life skills, and provides vocational and academic support for senior students.



opinion about expectations and work values of intercultural and international teams proved to be challenges.

The project is not just a simple school. Strengthened with steel, stabilised with cement and concrete, fitted with high performance, durable windows, the school buildings called for experience and skills beyond those required by a traditional project. More advanced, outside-the-box technology gives the campus an edge of self-sufficiency, ease of maintenance and durability.

Green technology comes at a cost, with lengthy payback periods that are possibly out of reach of most other schools in Nepal, but are easily adaptable to the local context: filtration systems, biogas, rainwater harvesting by Smart Paani, and solar systems by Sun Farmer. At Kopila, all these design elements are integrated in the school’s new buildings, their functions and terrain, giving the school its green edge.

“I feel that this campus has so much integrity. Every step of the way, we made decisions that were sometimes hard, or





Sun roof

Concentrated solar panels on the roof of the canteen, by Sunworks Nepal, power cookers in the kitchen and replace Rs60,000 worth of LPG per year. Gas is still used as backup, but it is methane from a digester hidden under the artificial turf of a sports court, fed by effluent from the toilets. Irrigation for the school's vegetable garden and landscaping comes from black and grey-water filtration beds. Rainwater from the roofs is harvested into a 300,000l water storage tank under the school canteen, designed to fill all water needs for a year. Arrays of solar photovoltaics power the school, backed up by a diesel generator. Compost from black-water waste is used to grow the KVS's organic produce.

that had cost implications, or we had to forgo certain things in order to have others, but there's nothing I would change," says Doyne.

This approach is not limited to the physical design of the school; its curriculum is also grounded in place-based learning that adapts Nepal's national curriculum to the school's philosophy. Principal Naim Chaudhari explains: "It is about trying to integrate what we find in the community, what we can learn from and what we can give back to it. After all, when the children graduate they go into the community and they will live there. That is where they will grow further."

The school has a farm and a vocational focus, and the students learn at least one skill each year from among cooking, washing, cleaning, driving, farming, agro-forestry, animal husbandry, horticulture, welding, woodwork, machine work and electrical skills.

"When our children graduate from here, they should either go for further studies or be

able to find a job," says Chaudhari.

The school includes Grades 1-10 and an Early Childhood Village that focuses on self-learning through play and exploration. The older 'plus-two' students are still in an old bamboo school by the highway, but there are plans to bring them into the new buildings.

The school's design allows the new classrooms to blend into the greenery, preserving the productive fruiting trees on site. Just as village life still clings to the fringes of Surkhet, the school's program extends to the students' families, farms and the community.

"We are a full service community school," Doyne explains. "It is not just for the kids who study here — we want to bring the community in. This buildings belong to them, and I hope it makes them think about what they ultimately build someday. Just like Bali inspired Kopila, I hope that there will be other schools like this in Nepal, because this one existed." 🇳🇵



Kopila Valley School just shifted to its new eco-friendly premises. Follow our reporters to Kopila Valley School in Surkhet for a tour of its buildings made of rammed earth, rainwater harvesting system and solar cookers that make gas unnecessary.

nepalitimes.com



EVENTS



Top of the Mountain
Celebrate 100 years of the birth of Sir Edmund Hillary with a lecture on View from the Top of the Mountain by mountaineer Billi Bierling. She will illustrate her tales about dangers and thrills on the peaks with beautiful slides of mountains.
31 May, 10:30am onwards, Rs500, Hotel Shanker, Lazimpat (01) 4410151

Cycle Rally
Get on your bicycle and ride to celebrate International Menstruation day. Break the silence about menstruation.
25 May, 7-9am, Kathmandou Durbar Square (start), Patan Durbar Square (finish) 9841804407

Open House
Got questions about SWO-YATRA 2019 (Solo Woman Travel Challenge)? Visit the open house to chat with the team and clear up your queries, discuss your travel plans and get help with your applications.
24 May-7 June (every Friday), 5-7pm, Outdoor Adventure Centre, Thamel, 9801002975

Traces
This printmaking exhibition displays 28 different works by the Batch of 2017, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Kathmandu University School of Arts, Department of Art and Design.
24-29 May, 11-6pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok (01) 5522307



Flea Market
The weekly market offers sections focused on babies and children, outdoors and biking, general items and local crafts. Visit for the local products on your shopping list.
25 May, 12-6pm, Genesis Café, Panipokhari 9869066010



Sound Healing
Sound healing is an ancient practice to heal through the sound of the singing bowl. In this advanced training, you will learn the theory behind the practice and receive practical direction.
24-30 May, 11am onwards, \$350 (basic) \$800 (advanced), Mandala Street, Thamel (01) 4701322

Dolpa Diary
Dolpa Diary, a film by traveler and filmmaker Prasuna Dangol, will be shown along with a discussion organised by Karnali Bahas with Martin Chautari.
30 May, 3-5pm, Martin Chautari, Thapathali (01) 4238050



Girl-a-thon
Run for a cause. Take part in this mass run to spread the message that women should have equal representation in decision-making positions. Register online.
25 May, 7-10am, Rs200, Jawalakhel (01) 4467876

Gender and Family Violence
Lorenn Walker is facilitating a three-day training on "Addressing Gender and Family Violence through Restorative Justice". It will help you to gain a deeper understanding of this violence and equip yourself with the necessary insights and skills. Call for details.
29-31 May, 10-5pm, Rs2,500, SAP Falcha, Baber Mahal (01) 5172052

MUSIC

Kutumba
Drop in to listen to Kutumba, an instrumental Nepali folk band playing at the closing of the photography exhibition Here and There. Enjoy the music and the final day of the show.
24 May, 6-9pm, Alliance Française Kathmandu, Pulchok, (01) 5009221



Rock N' Roll
Rock N' Roll this weekend with talented singer Rajesh Nepali.
24 May, 7-11pm, Rockin'Jokers, Jhamsikhel 9813967542

Asthir
PahenloBatti Muni is celebrating the release of their first studio album — Asthir. The band will be accompanied by talented artists Baaja and Ishan R. Onta (Elements). Call to book your seats.
24 May, 5:30-9:30pm, Rs500 (includes album) Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 9808771281, 9861609634 or 9841027200

Abhaya & The Steam Injuns
Celebrate the music of rock band Abhaya & The Steam Injuns in Thamel to mark the end of the week.
24 May, 7pm onwards, Club Fahrenheit, Thamel 9801233355



Ganatantra Ko Sawari
This Republic Day enjoy a fuelled up performance by Albatross LIVE for 'Ganatantra Ko Sawari' featuring Space and PahenloBatti Muni as supporting acts.
29 May, 6pm onwards, Rs1,000, Lord of the Drinks, Thamel, 9843948991

OUR PICK



Opened in Kathmandu on 24 May

After a long run as an animated series, Disney is presenting *Aladdin* as a live action movie. The story, set somewhere in the Middle East, features street rake Aladdin. The boy (Mena Massoud) vies with the country's most powerful man for a magic lamp and the princess Jasmine (Naomi Scott). After much criticism, Disney has made more efforts to incorporate local context and sentiments into this film, so this effort starring Will Smith as the charismatic genie seems worth a watch.

DINING



Fire and Ice
One of the first pizzerias in Kathmandu, Fire and Ice offers genuine Napolitana pizza and dozens of variants to choose from. But we recommend the paesane, a combination of mozzarella, spinach, courgette and bacon.
Thamel, (01) 4250210

Biryani and Beer
Have a taste of aromatic and flavorful Biryanis, in Hyderabad, Malabari, Lucknowi and Kolkata styles. With an extravagant cyclic buffet and bottles of beer, enjoy rooftop dining on a summer evening.
24-31 May, 6:30-10:30pm, Rs1,799 (plus 24.3% taxes), Terrace Garden Restaurant, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat (01) 4411818



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

BBQ and music
Relax and enjoy your Friday evenings with BBQ and live music performance by Tattwo band.
Every Friday 7pm onwards, Rs2,500 per person, Hotel Shangril-La, Lazimpat (01) 4412999

Kebab and Biryani Festival
Dining Park Restaurant and Lounge Bar brings the Kebab & Biryani Festival to all lovers of Mughal Indian cuisine, with a wide range of choices.
29 May- 13 June, Dining Park Restaurant and Lounge Bar, Old Baneshor (01) 4486002/ (01) 4486003

GETAWAY



Hotel Moonlight
The hotel is a tranquil oasis in bustling Thamel. The gardens are beautiful and the rooftop terrace offers amazing views of Kathmandu. Their boutique rooms are unique and a refreshing change from the typical offerings.
Thamel, (01) 4383566/ 4380636/ 4383528

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



HeranyaYala
Immerse yourself in the rich cultural heritage of Patan by staying in the midst of MahaBoudha and the Hiranya monastery. The hotel provides a complete tour package to get a genuine feel of authentic Newari heritage.
Gujibahal, Patan, (01) 5523168, 9851067168

Grand Norling Hotel
Enjoy a calm and relaxing stay at the hotel featuring spacious bedrooms and adjoining bathrooms and a large balcony overlooking the golf course, monkeys and deer herds — not to forget the garden.
Gokarna, (01) 4910193



The Last Resort
Take an exciting trip to the Bhote Koshi River for adventures like bungee jump, tandem swing, or whitewater rafting.
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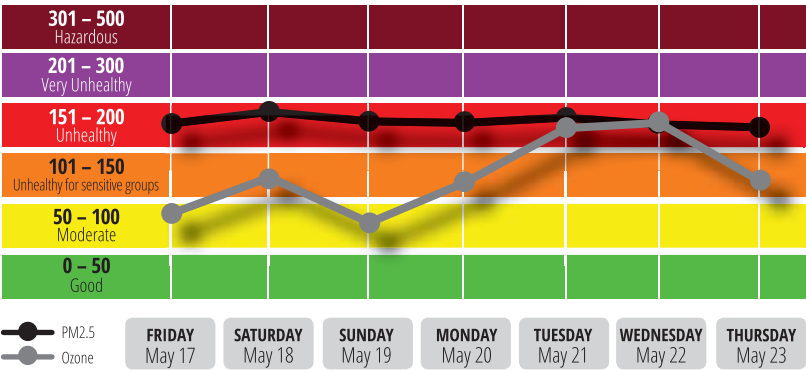
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AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 17 - 23 May



The air quality in Kathmandu this week, especially for harmful particles below 2.5 microns in diameter, has been consistently in the 'Unhealthy' zone. Despite a fresh breeze and passing showers, it looks like the air cannot be cleaned fast enough because of the buildup of fumes from vehicles. Added to this is the smoke from the wildfires that have been burning out of control in the western Tarai for 3 weeks. Satellite images clearly show the soot covering most of Nepal up to an altitude of 3,500m. The ozone concentration is also bad, due to increased daylight hours and two-wheeler emissions. For an hourly live update on AQI go to [www.nepalitimes.com](https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/)
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>



ALL PHOTOS: MONIKA DEUPALA

Three toots for Tootle

The motorcycle ride-share serves as a reliable option for people with disabilities unable to use public transport

Sonia Awale

Kathmandu's overcrowded public buses are a daily challenge for commuters, but they are virtually impossible for the visually impaired and people with disabilities. Fortunately there is now Tootle, the motorcycle ride-sharing app, for people like massage therapist Junu Shrestha, 31, who likes the door-to-door service.

"I am a female and a blind one at that. Micros are unsafe, taxis are expensive, but Tootle is affordable and convenient," says Shrestha (pictured above) who commutes every day to work at a Boudha branch of Seeing Hands, the blind massage therapy centres in Kathmandu.

Chiran Paudel, 35, is fed up with

extortion from taxi drivers taking advantage of his inability to see. Paudel tells his female colleagues to avoid micros and taxis, and call Tootle or the other ride-sharing app, Pathao, instead.

"I can't count the number of times I've been cheated by taxi drivers," says Paudel, who also works for Seeing Hands.

Kushal Pandey, 26, is partially blind, and says it is nearly impossible to get on crowded buses. "As soon as conductors see our walking stick or someone on a wheelchair they speed off, and if the driver does stop it is impossible to get the seat for the disabled."

It is no coincidence that Tootle, which has been facing hurdles over taxation, has taken off among female commuters and people living with disabilities, who find public transport difficult and

dangerous. Women make up half of Tootle's users — and roughly 10% of the service's drivers — and there are more than 150 visually impaired riders a day.

"The Tootle app was developed to give everyone the freedom of movement, especially those living with disabilities, women who face harassment in crowded public transport and those without personal vehicles," says CEO Sixit Bhatta, who adds that the firm's software engineers have worked with the visually impaired and those with disabilities to make the app more user friendly.

Roma Neupane lost her left leg in an accident when she was eight. She is now a famous one-legged dancer and actress in Nepali movies. But despite her popularity, she hasn't been able to travel easily to shoots around Kathmandu.

"I have to perform all over the city and often times the shoot goes late into night; I now manage it all with Tootle," says Neupane, who calls for rides up to four times a day and to get home at night. "The drivers now know me and treat me like their sister."

In the two years since its launch, the ride-sharing startup has also amassed support among the general public, created 10,000 jobs, and now serves thousands of passengers a day. Much more challenging has been navigating Nepal's byzantine tax laws and the lack of electronic micropayments.

Bhimmaya Sunuwar (pictured driving the motorcycle above) a mother of two from Dharan, works as a Tootle driver from 9AM-3PM, when she is free from her duties as a mother and homemaker. She makes Rs30,000 a month, and

Tootle does not take any fee from women drivers like her.

Says the 37-year-old: "The best thing is that the working hours are flexible and I can choose to ride when I want to. And the money is handy." 🇳🇵



UPWARD MOBILITY




Follow us on Tootle to see how the visually impaired and those with disabilities now have greater mobility and independence because of the service offered by the Nepali motorcycle ride-share startup.

nepalitimes.com


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Turkish Airlines Art Competition

Flying with Turkish Airlines : Dream Destination



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Guidelines

- The art work should have the title : Flying with Turkish Airlines – Your Dream Destination (Country Name).
- The artwork should strive to portray the theme along with Turkish Airlines Aircraft.
- The artwork should be drawing or painting only.
- The artwork should be submitted electronically in good quality format (JPEG or PNG) to turkish@glocalteenhero.com

Organized by: **TURKISH AIRLINES** A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

In Collaboration with: **GLOCAL**



Turkish Airlines school art competition

School students in Nepal, would you like to win a trip to your dream destination anywhere in the world by entering an art competition?

If you are a Nepali school student aged 13-19, enter the themed art competition, ‘Flying with Turkish Airlines: Dream Destination’. The winner will receive a return economy class ticket of Turkish Airlines to his or her dream destination, along with a ticket for one adult.

‘The objective is to highlight the students’ artistic talents through fine art, to promote reflective and critical thinking regarding the visual arts and at the same time support students in building their dreams,’ the airline said in a statement.

The contest runs from 27 May - 31 July 2019 and will be managed by Glocal Pvt Ltd in collaboration with Turkish Airlines. It will be featured on Glocal Teen Hero 2019, an online platform to recognise teenagers’ initiation, creativity and enthusiasm, and to empower young people.

Students’ entries for the competition can be drawings or paintings. Only one entry per person is permitted, and it must be submitted electronically in a good quality format (JPEG, PNG or PDF) to the school principal, who will then select the best five to send via email to flywithturkish@glocalteenhero.com with full name, address and contact number.

The art work should include the title: Flying with Turkish Airlines – Your Dream Destination (Country Name). All works submitted must be original, no plagiarised art will be accepted, and the airline suggests that the artist should try to portray the theme along with a Turkish Airlines aircraft.

The selection of the winner will be done by a panel of the Turkish Airlines team based in Kathmandu, using criteria like relevance to the theme, visual effectiveness and aesthetics, originality and the message.

Established in 1933 with a fleet of five aircraft, Star Alliance member Turkish Airlines today has a fleet of 335 (passenger and cargo) aircraft flying to 307 worldwide destinations (258 international and 49 domestic), in 124 countries. Glocal works in education, entrepreneurship and skilling through Glocal After School, and runs an online media named GlocalKhabar. It contributes to the growth and development of entrepreneurship and youth through various projects, like Glocal Teen Hero and Glocal International Teen Conference. 🇹🇵



DIGITAL FIRST: Prime Minister KP Oli lays the foundation stone for the Mid Hill Information Highway in Dhading on Monday. The Rs3 billion project will see optical fiber expanded to 35 districts in Provinces 1, 2 and 3 in two years.



LABOUR TALKS: ILO Regional Director Tomoko Nishimoto, ILO Nepal Director Richard Howard, Labour Minister Gorkarna Bista and Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Mahesh Prasad Dahal, meeting in Kathmandu on Monday.



PEACEKEEPING: Nepal's envoy to the United Nations, Amrit Rai, speaks with his Libyan counterpart, Ghassan Salame, on Wednesday about the safety of Nepali peacekeepers posted in Libya.



VISIT NEPAL: Nepal Tourism Board CEO Deepak Raj Joshi and newly appointed UNDP Resident Representative Ayshanie Medagangoda-Labe sign an agreement on Monday to promote sustainable tourism in Nepal.



NURTURING NATURE: US Ambassador Randy Berry and WWF Country Representative Ghana Gurung present the Conservation Award to Nima Lama for his conservation work in the Manaslu region, on the 26th anniversary of WWF Nepal in Kathmandu on Sunday.

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कानून बमोजिम लिनुपर्ने इजाजत नलिई वा इजाजत पत्र नवीकरण नगराई वा इजाजत प्राप्त व्यक्तिको मृत्यु पश्चात हकवालाको नाममा नामसारी नगराई वा अन्य जुनसुकै तरिकाले नेपाल राज्यभित्र कोही कसैले अवैध हतियार र खरखजाना राखेको भए यो सूचना प्रकाशित भएको मितिले ३५ (पैंतीस) दिनभित्र नजिकको प्रहरी चौकी, जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालय वा नेपाली सेनाको ब्यारेकमा अनिवार्य रूपमा बुझाउनु हुन नेपाल सरकार (मन्त्रिपरिषद्) को मिति २०७५/११/१८ को निर्णय अनुसार यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ ।

यसरी हातहतियार र खरखजाना बुझाउन ल्याएमा यसअघि ती अवैध हातहतियार र खरखजाना राखेको कारणले मात्र त्यस्ता व्यक्तिलाई कुनै कानूनी कारवाही नचलाइने हुँदा तोकिएको समयभित्र अवैध हातहतियार तथा खरखजाना अनिवार्य रूपमा बुझाउनुहुन सम्बन्धित सबैमा जानकारी गराइन्छ। यदि इजाजत प्राप्त नगरी आफूसँग रहेका हातहतियार तथा खरखजाना तोकिएको अवधिभित्र स्वेच्छाले नबुझाएमा त्यस्ता व्यक्ति उपर प्रचलित कानून बमोजिम कारवाही हुने व्यहोरा समेत सूचित गरिन्छ ।



नेपाल सरकार
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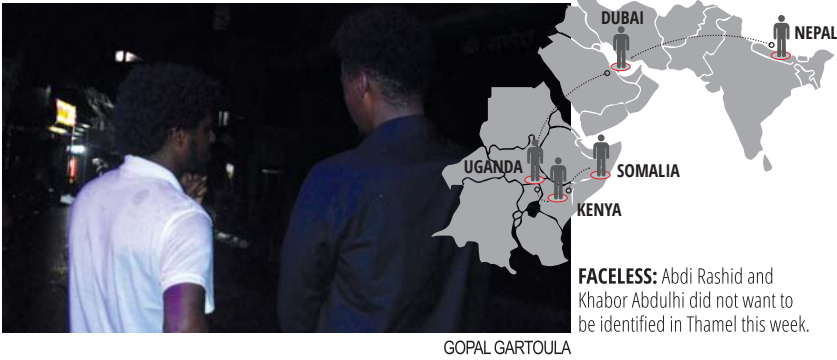
Naples-bound Somalis find themselves in Nepal

Gopal Gartoula

After working in a garage for two years in Uganda, Abdi Khabor had saved only \$7,000, not enough to take him to Europe.

He was looking for a way to earn more money when a Ugandan man offered to smuggle him to Naples via Libya and the Mediterranean for \$10,000. Khabor did a Google image search of Naples, saw a prosperous city by the sea and was excited. He paid \$7,000, and his kind employer lent him the rest, saying as he was seeing him off at Kampala airport: “I know how difficult your life is. Pay me if you can. If not, consider it a help.”

This was the first time Khabor had been on a plane, and he was excited when he got to Dubai. After a short transit he boarded the next flight, not bothering to check his boarding pass. Five hours later, on 17 April 2014, the plane landed at a small airport surrounded by mountains. There was no sea nearby. He asked the person who came to pick him up where he was. “Kathmandu,” came the reply.



Four years later, Khabor is still in Nepal, not Naples. After arriving, he was taken to a hotel, where he fell asleep. When he woke up the next day, the hotel receptionist told him to pay up or leave.

Nowhere to go, he broke down and wept on the sidewalk in Thamel. The human trafficker’s agent who had picked him up at the airport had abandoned him, taking his passport and ticket.

After spending 24 hours hungry in Thamel, he told an African person he met his story. The man gave him Rs200 and the address of the United Nations High Commission for

Refugees (UNHCR) in Kathmandu. Two months later, he received a refugee ID. Then began his long struggle working at construction sites or as a dishwasher to pay for food, clothes and rent.

Khabor lived with 12 siblings in Somalia’s Suddur village near the border with Ethiopia, farming potatoes and barley and raising livestock. Since his father was paralysed, his mother Anav Haasan took care of the fieldwork as well as the family. But life was not easy, there was never enough food and the land owners treated them badly.

One day, a gang of men with guns arrived at his home and stole all the grain. His uncle was

shot. Khabor’s sister tried to run away, but was raped. Khabor went to the capital Mogadishu with his 17-year-old brother and 15-year-old sister. He started washing dishes at a hotel, leaving early in the morning and returning late at night. He found out too late that his sister was pregnant with the child of a man who had promised to marry her, but instead threatened to kill him if he spoke about it.

Fighting erupted in Mogadishu, and Khabor could not get away from his workplace. When he finally got to his room, his brother and sister were missing. He left, travelling through Kenya to Uganda. “I don’t think any of my 13 family members are alive now,” said Khabor one recent evening in Kathmandu. “When I see Nepalis happy with their families, I remember my childhood, the barley bread and soup that my mother used to make. I remember the yard where I used to play. I cry a lot.”

In Kathmandu, Khabor met a few other Somalis like him. Among them was Marian Abdulhi, who had seen her husband and father murdered in front of her, and also fled to Uganda. She also paid \$10,000 to traffickers to get to Naples. Khabor and Abdulhi are married, and now have a 4-year-old daughter.

“Even mourning and grieving needs time, which we do not have,” says Khabor. “So we cry in the night after the city goes to sleep.”

Abdi Rasid, 27, and his two siblings used to live in Mogadishu. When the fighting started, three armed men entered their home, killed their father inside his shop, and then shot his mother, brother and sister in the yard. Abdi, a witness to this terror, managed to hide and was helped by his father’s friend. He met a trafficker who promised to take him to Australia, but landed up in Kathmandu as well earlier this month. A man who came to get me at the airport said this was Australia,” Abdi recalls. “He told me I would be working in a hotel, and took me to one.” The hotel turned him out the next day, and he spent the night in an alley. He also received an UNHCR ID, and eventually married Sudi Abdi Ameena, a fellow Somali who entered Nepal last year.

The Nepal government has decided to waive the delayed visa fees of Somali refugees, and deport them. But they do not want to go back to Somalia where a civil war is still raging. “I saw my parents and siblings murdered before my eyes, how can I take my child there?” asks Abdi, whose one-year-old son needs a kidney transplant.

There are 27 Somali refugees in Nepal, and they do not know where to go next. Says Abdi: “the world has abandoned us.”



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Making Nepal accessible

The country is making a start in inclusive adventure tourism with disabled-friendly trekking and other facilities

Monika Deupala

As Nepal rebuilds many heritage sites and trekking trails that were damaged in the 2015 earthquake, activists say this is an opportunity to make them barrier free. Such improvements would render the facilities accessible not just for different kinds of tourists, but also for local people with disabilities, along with the elderly.

Accessible tourism simply means adapting facilities so they are easier to travel in, whether the visitors are people with disabilities or not. This gives tourists opportunities to visit areas they have been dreaming to see, but could not visit because of access difficulties. Inclusive tourism accepts everyone, no matter their physical state.

“There is still a lot of work to be done to make Nepal an accessible destination, and we need a partnership between the state, tourism service providers and advocacy groups,” says Pankaj Pradhananga of Four Seasons Travel (4ST), a key player in creating accessible tourism experiences in Nepal.

A milestone in promoting accessible tourism in this country was the visit five years ago by the late American inclusive tourism advocate, Scott Rains, who worked with Nepali tourism entrepreneurs to develop an accessible tourism strategy.



Then, two months after the 2015 earthquake, 4ST organised a day trip to Godavari Botanical Garden for 50 people in wheelchairs who were living in a temporary shelter in Jawalakhel. Since then, the visually impaired and double amputees have climbed Mt Everest, completed difficult treks, and have been participating in relatively easier experiences, like taking mountain sightseeing flights out of

Kathmandu.

In 2016, 4ST helped organise the ‘Wounded Heroes Trek to Nepal’, in which a group of amputee veterans trekked with prosthetics in the Annapurna Region (above). Last year, the organisation worked with Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the National Federation of Disabled Nepal to host the inaugural International Conference on

Accessible Adventure (ICAA 2018) in Pokhara, during which Nepal’s first ever accessible trail, near Sarangkot, was inaugurated by late Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari. (See box, below)

Freedom of movement and the right to mobility and travel are considered basic

Pokhara’s first accessible trek trail



Yuvaraj Shrestha in Pokhara

Nepal’s tourism city may not have wheelchair-friendly streets or sidewalk guiding blocks for the visually impaired, but it now has an accessible trail nearby designed for hikers with disabilities.

A 3km stretch of the trekking trail between Kaskikot and

Naudanda has been made wheelchair friendly for day hikers. There are no steps and guardrails have been built along cliff sections as the trail winds its way through thick forests and ridge meadows with full frontal views of the Annapurnas. There are wheelchair-friendly toilets along the way, and

parts of the trail are also stone-paved.

Tourists in wheelchairs can now ride in a vehicle from Pokhara to Sarangkot for the sunrise view, drive on to Kaskikot, and then hit the trail in wheelchairs up to Naudanda, a distance that can be covered by lunchtime. Lodges and eateries along the way have built ramps and disabled-friendly bathrooms.

“We built this trail as a model, so more and more trekking paths in Nepal should be made like this,” says Bishnu Hari Sharma, who heads a local committee that built the trail. “After all, those with disabilities also want to be in the outdoors to admire the scenery. Please spread the word.”

Heman Gurung of the advocacy group Swabhalamban in Pokhara says: “It is short, but exciting. It is a great experience for those who are wheelchair bound, not only for us in Nepal, but for those like us from all over the world.”

The trail offers a stunning panorama of the Annapurna Range, Dhaulagiri and Machhapuchhre to the north, and Phewa Lake and Pokhara city to the south and east. Most hikers can return to Pokhara from Naudanda along the Baglung Highway. The easy gradient means that the trail can also be used by the elderly and those who have problems with steep climbs.

The trail was built as a model with a Rs1.9 million grant from the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), which is adding more guardrails and pavement. It was inaugurated by the late Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari in 2018 as a pilot project.

“This trail is also designed to spread awareness among the general public about the special needs of people with disabilities, and also to show the world that Nepal is accessible to all,” says NTB CEO Deepak Raj Joshi.



4ST

to all

human rights in an international covenant signed by most of the world’s countries. However, accessible tourism is still not a reality in many places, including in developed destinations. In Nepal, the concept is new and since most travel products involve adventure, inclusive tourism is still a long way off.

However, a start has been made with recent initiatives that use tourism to raise awareness among local people about the need to offer wheelchair access and make infrastructure safe and easy to navigate for people with disabilities.

More than 4,000 Nepalis were left with physical disabilities as a result of the 2015 earthquake. They join an estimated 600,000 people in this country with physical handicaps.

“It is actually more important to build accessible infrastructure for the benefit of the locals than for foreign tourists,” says Pradhananga.

Suman Timsina of the Washington-based International Development Institute, which organised the Annapurna trek for veterans on prosthetics adds: “There are many advantages to promoting accessible tourism: it will open up Nepal as a new destination for people with disabilities, and senior citizens, and it will spread awareness among locals to care for people with special needs. Accessible tourism is not an easy thing to do but the right thing to do.”



Watch video of tetraplegic Jeeza Williams, who does not let his paralysis deter him from engaging in adventure sports, and is spreading awareness globally about making tourism destinations more inclusive for people like him.

nepalitimes.com

JEEZA’S JOURNEYS

In 2010, international river and mountain guide Jeeza Williams (*right*) fell off a waterfall while canyoning in Switzerland, his spinal injuries paralysing him chest down and confining him to a wheelchair for life. But the 43-year-old New Zealander was always into sports and the tetraplegic has not let his injury stop him from seeking adventures around the world, while helping to adapt travel for those with disabilities.

Williams has been in Nepal for the past two weeks, having a whooping good time paragliding in Pokhara, rafting down the Trisuli River and going on a safari in Chitwan. “Waiting for a glimpse of Annapurna at sunrise from Sarangkot was heavenly,” Williams told *Nepali Times*. “I am grateful to people who have been helping me from day one. This has been the most exciting and most adventurous trip so far.”

Williams is a licensed paragliding pilot, and flies in his special three-wheel, self-designed buggy harnessed below the wing. It was while recovering from his injury in a Swiss rehab centre that he made up his mind to continue his adventure tourism career, but Williams was soon shocked at how little infrastructure exists to make tourism friendly to people with disabilities.

So he set up the non-profit Makingtrax to promote inclusive tourism, so that all kinds of people could enjoy adventure sports. Williams started attending talk programs and visited travel companies and adventure planners to spread his message.

Last year in Brussels, he met Pankaj Pradhananga from Nepal’s Four Seasons Travels (*see main story, left*) at the Inclusive Tourism Summit and the two found they had lots in common.

“We had a synergy as we started talking about superb destinations in New Zealand and Nepal and how Nepalis and Kiwis have adventure in our blood,” says Williams, who adds it is difficult to make a historic city like Kathmandu completely accessible, but it can be made inclusive.

“We can make it friendly for all disabled people. Start with little things like widening doors to hotels or washrooms and provide trained adventure guides who can help with equipment that those with disabilities need,” he told a gathering on Wednesday at Hotel Manaslu.

Monika Deupala



MONIKA DEUPALA

Nepal opens doors to a different world

If people with disabilities are seen as potential customers, all hotels would be wheelchair-friendly

Prabhas Pokharel

Yami Jhakri Magar (*behind desk, right*) rides fearlessly and comfortably in her wheelchair inside Hardik Hotel, where she has worked for nearly four years. Most infrastructure in Kathmandu is inaccessible for wheelchair users like Magar, but in her workplace she feels completely independent as she requires no help from peers to use the bathroom or move about the workplace.

Hardik Hotel is one of those rare establishments in Kathmandu that have tried to address the mobility of people with disabilities, many of whom cannot find work because workplaces are not wheelchair friendly. And even if employers want to hire people with disabilities, most cannot provide the needed environment.

“If more hotels, even five-star hotels, start building such infrastructure their hiring policy could be very inclusive for persons with disabilities like me,” says Magar.

Opened seven years ago, Hardik Hotel in Bagbazar is still one of few, non-5-star hotels in Kathmandu with accessible rooms, bathrooms, hallways and wheelchair ramps. For manager Ramesh Pandey it was not an easy journey. At first the incline on the



PRABHAS POKHAREL

ramps was too steep and wheelchair users had to be pushed up. (*Video online.*)

“When people hear accessibility they think it is costly, but if you include those elements during the initial design and not as

an afterthought, the cost of ramps is the same as for stairwells. It does not cost a fortune.”

Pandey was inspired to make a disabled-friendly hotel after watching a wheelchair user having to skip lunch because the

only way to the food was via stairs. “It affected me deeply at a personal level, and I decided that my hotel had to have accessible infrastructure,” he recalls.

The move has been a plus for business. Many conferences and programs, not just ones for the differently-abled, now use Hardik as a venue. Ramps link the parking area to meeting halls and guest rooms with accessible bathrooms.

Says Sagar Prasai of the advocacy group Diverse Patterns: “As a person using a wheelchair, my major concern whenever I am invited to events is whether the bathroom is accessible to us.”

Pandey says it is a mindset problem: most hotel owners do not regard people with disabilities as potential customers or employees. “Making a facility wheelchair friendly is only the first step,” he explains. “What is the point in just making a hotel wheelchair friendly? Look at the state of our roads and sidewalks — how will people get to the hotel in the first place?” he asks.

Also, while wheelchair ramps are the most visible symbols of accessibility, they are of no help to other differently-abled persons, such as those having visual or hearing impairments. Pandey now plans to create a mobile app so the visually impaired can navigate the premises.

ELEVATE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

FIRST BARREL
WHISKY OAK

Maturation of the IMPORTED SCOTCH MALT constituent for eight years in traditional AMERICAN OAK BARRELS in SCOTLAND mellows the maturing spirit and imparts warming layers of vanilla spiciness and ripe berry overtone with a sweet taste, rich in barley malt.

SECOND BARREL
SHERRY OAK

The IMPORTED 8 YEARS SCOTCH MALT is blended with ENGLISH GRAIN SPIRIT and SPRING WATER from THE HIMALAYAS and matured for few months in EUROPEAN OAK OROSO SHERRY BARRELS, which imparts fruity and honeyed depths to this exceptional whisky.

Game of Clones

Many of you have taken me aside at diplomatic receptions this week to ask deeply personal questions about what I think of the final episode of *Game of Thrones*®, to which my diplomatic answer to all of you has been: “None of your business.” It is strictly a matter between me and David Benioff alone, no one else. But for those of you who got older as *GoT* actors aged or were killed off, here is an abridged recap. Please do not hesitate to raise your hands and interrupt me during this presentation if anything is unclear:

The Wall keeps off illegal migrants called White Walkers from Westeros. Robert Baratheon (Cersei Lannister’s husband) meets the Warden of the North, Ned Stark, and recruits him as his new Chief of Staff to replace someone whose name I forget. King’s Landing is so corrupt it is ripe for rebellion by the Bigplop Faction when Ned Stark travels down with his daughters Sansa and Arya Starks. Bran is defenestrated by Jaime and his sister (I know, this part was censored by HBO for faint-hearted South Asians) and is wheelchair-bound for the next 8 years. Catelyn Stark suspects Tyrion Lannister of chucking Bran (even though that is impossible because he is a dwarf) and is challenged to a duel, which he fights through his proxy, Bronn. Cersei Lannister’s son Joffrey has Lord Petyr Littlefinger Baelish decapitate Ned because he wants Stannis Baratheon and not him (Joffrey) as Protector of the Realm. Arya escapes and Sansa is arrested, King Robb of Winterfell goes to battle against Lannisters. Meanwhile Khal ‘Dothraki’ Drogo marries Daenerys Targaryen, who wants to capture Westeros and sit on the Iron Throne. Drogo dies, leaving Daenerys to give birth to three baby dragons capable of exhaling napalm.

[You following me up to here? So far the story is pretty straightforward, but the plot thickens after this.]

Jaime Lannister is a POW as Robb proposes joining forces with Balon Greyjoy in the Indo-Pacific Alliance, is double-crossed and Winterfell falls. Catelyn and Brienne of Tarth are suspected to be perpetrators of Renly’s murder. Meanwhile, Jon Snow is freezing his semi-royal Ass off at The Wall, gets bored with Night’s Watch and defects to Wildlings. Daenerys gathers her dragons and takes off for Qarth seeking an alliance against Westeros, and escapes to form a eunuch army, Joffrey is poisoned, Jaime’s hand is chopped off, and Bran Stark becomes a wolf. Cersei is forced to walk naked through the streets of King’s Landing (also censored), Daenerys firebombs Aleppo and Sanaa just before the Dothraki forces, now allied with ISIS, close in.

Meanwhile, not all is quiet on the Northern Front as Jon Snow is resurrected for a second coming to wage the Battle of the Bastards. Jon and Daenerys go to King’s Landing to convince Cersei to fight the Johnny Walkers together. Two dragons are subsequently shot down by Scorpion heat-seeking missiles, as the living and the dead fight unto death with smart bombs.

[Still with me?]

Cheetah is on the branch of a baobab scouring the Serengeti for meat and mate. Carnal carnivore that she is, she finds a large hunk with nice fat assets after a brief chase. That was the mate. Good thing she didn’t mistake him for prey and eat a future husband. Wearing spotted House Targaryen inspired leggings, Cheetah chases a particularly yummy gnu named Jenna and slits her throat.

[Who’s fiddling with the remote? Why didn’t you tell me we had switched to Discovery Channel?]



LOCKER

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