



Two to tangle

Why is it that every time Nepal's prime minister goes to India, all hell breaks loose back home? In 2016, when Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was being feted in a high-profile visit to New Delhi, the anti-corruption Czar Lokman Singh Karki held a hurriedly summoned press conference to say that he was investigating Dahal's alleged misappropriation of billions of rupees meant for ex-Maoist guerrillas in UN supervised camps. As soon

as he returned, Dahal got other political leaders to start impeachment proceedings against Karki.


Prime Minister Oli was in New Delhi for Narendra Modi's inauguration last week, and it was Dahal's turn to leak an agreement on the UML-Maoist unification that included a clause that said Oli and Dahal would 'take turns as necessary and on the basis of equality' to be prime minister. Many analysts say Dahal had initially shown

flexibility on the timing because he thought Oli was in failing health and would have to step down sooner or later.

However, with Oli showing signs of being in the pink of health, Dahal is getting impatient. Siding with him are his own colleagues, as well as disgruntled ex-UML stalwarts like Bam Dev Gautam and Madhav Kumar Nepal, who have not been given plum cabinet posts. On Oli's side are powerful Defence Minister Ishwar Pokhrel, trusted aide Bishnu Paudel, as well as Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, who has distanced himself from his former Maoist bosses.

Gautam has been harping on about the need to have 'one post, one responsibility' and

wants Oli to at least relinquish his party co-chairmanship. That is not going to happen, Pokhrel has publicly declared. Both Pokhrel and Paudel dismiss the leadership debate as an "artificial diversion", and privately blame it on Dahal's eagerness to be prime minister for the third time.

Dahal and Oli have met to try to iron out the issue, but both seem to be getting their trusted aides to rattle sabres while denying that there is a behind-the-scenes power struggle going on. The dispute is casting doubts about whether the Maoists and the UML are really united after all, and delaying the formation of a politburo and a joint political structure. 

Kunda Dixit

PRABHAKAR RANA, 84
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2



KAKREBIHAR
revealing the secrets
of an ancient empire
in western nepal

PAGE 8-9

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

Prabhakar Rana, 84

The passing of Prabhakar Rana on 31 May in New York after a year-long, post-operative convalescence marks the end of an era in Nepal’s political, business and social service spheres.

At a time when corruption was standard operating procedure among politicians, bureaucrats and private businesses, Rana stood out as a beacon of diligence, decency and dignity in public life.

Figures from all sections of the political spectrum, members of the international community and his colleagues in the business world, all had confidence in him. His demeanour and manners made even antagonists trust him, giving him a unique mediating role. He used his vast network of contacts in Nepal, India and overseas in the national interest. And for Rana, the national interest meant first and foremost ensuring stability in Nepal so that investors would come, business would flourish, jobs would be created and all boats would rise together with the tide.

Rana was the son of Nepal’s first Inspector General of Police, Nara Sumshere Rana, and was born inside Singha Darbar in 1934, when it still served as the palace of Rana prime ministers. His two sisters married two of King Mahendra’s brothers. Besides being an A-Class Rana, therefore, Prabhakar had proximity to the Shahs through the marriage of his siblings. This stood him in good stead after the rise of the Shahs, and especially after King Mahendra’s coup d’état of December 1960, right through the absolute monarchy years and the reign of King Birendra.

The launch pad for Prabhakar Rana’s vision for tourism-led growth in Nepal was the establishment of the Soaltee Hotel in 1966, which he pushed through despite nay-sayers predicting that it would flop. Fifty years before the current government started boasting about Nepal’s own merchant marine, Rana chaired the Nepal Shipping Company, which flew the double triangle on leased ocean-going vessels.

Prabhakar Rana went on to head the Nepal chapter of the Pacific Area Travel Association, the Hotel Association of Nepal, the American Himalayan Foundation and the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry. After 1990, Rana’s companies were involved in the first foreign investment in a hydropower project in Nepal, and he was on the advisory boards of many social service organisations.

As a descendant of the Ranas and born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Prabhakar, did not really have to work for a living. Yet, not only did he put his formidable capital

base to productive use, but he did it with honesty, transparency and for the larger cause of laying a strong foundation for the Nepali economy. Polite and tolerant to a fault, he treated everyone, no matter class, caste or creed, with equal respect. Not obsequious to the mighty, and never scornful of the down and trodden, Prabhakar Rana led a life of example.

After the promise of the 1990 People’s Movement went sour and the conflict began,

Rana became the main channel through which various domestic and international interlocutors tried to find a solution. He shied away from media interviews, and did just one with this newspaper, in 2000, when he said: “In the last 10 years we’ve had an open press... it has often been negative, (but) the charges about too much freedom are hollow. Maybe we just don’t know how to use our freedom.” His work then was discrete, behind-the-scenes and always focused on getting Nepal out of the quagmire of violence.

When King Birendra was being coaxed by his hardline relatives in the palace in the 1990s to scrap the Constitution and take over the reins of power, it was Rana who was sent as an emissary to sound out New Delhi, London and Washington,

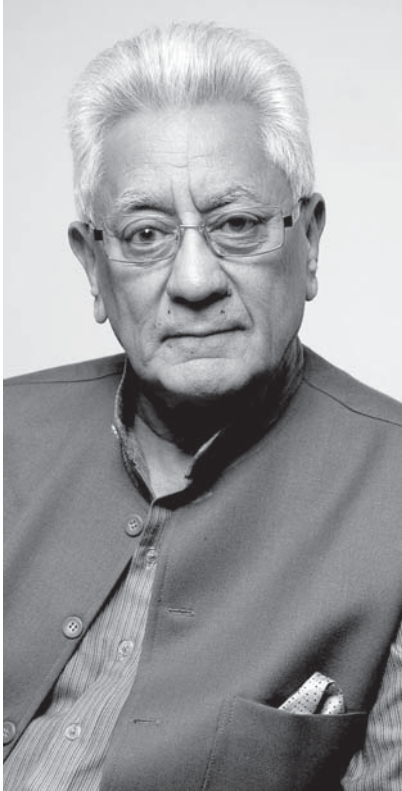
DC. He got a conditional amber light for a time-bound suspension of the Constitution on condition that negotiations would be held with the Maoists.

Some of these tensions and intrigue probably contributed to the royal massacre of 1 June 2001. When Gyanendra was enthroned, Prabhakar found an even closer role in statecraft because the king was now not just his business partner, but a close childhood friend as well.

Gyanendra called Prabhakar by his nickname, “Pro”, and used him as a sounding board in setting up his royal cabinet. However, while Prabhakar believed in democracy, Gyanendra had nothing but disdain for political parties and their leaders. “Eh, Pro, even after this you want to hand power to the parties?” he asked Prabhakar just before 1 February 2005, when Gyanendra re-enacted his father’s coup d’état, against all advice.

After the ceasefire, Nepal plunged into more instability, and there was plenty to be cynical about. But Prabhakar never lost hope that the country’s destiny was to be a stable and prosperous nation. When talking about the disarray in government, the most he would allow himself was one of his characteristic smirks.

Nepal will miss Prabhakar Rana when it needs him the most. He set the bar high for us to follow.



Rana stood out as a beacon of diligence, decency, and dignity in public life.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Ten years ago, in the #454 edition of 5-11 June 2009 of *Nepali Times*, CK Lal had this cynical take on the Constituent Assembly and the sheningans post-resignation of the Maoist government:

‘The problem with Nepal’s ‘moderate’ Marxist-Leninist apparatchiks is that they don’t know whether they want to be a revolutionary or parliamentary force. Worse, they don’t know that they don’t know. Hence, the constant flip-flopping and political promiscuity.

The Maoists are wasting their time and energy in boycotting the constituent assembly meetings — it’s useless, if not counter-productive. The UML couldn’t care less if it sits or not. If anyone were looking for excuses to suspend the interim Constitution, the Maoist lawmakers appear to be giving them a very powerful reason to discard it in the dustbin of history.’



ONLINE PACKAGES



TEST FLIGHTS

Join us on a trip to Piuthan to observe how drones are being used for the first time to collect sputum samples and deliver medicine to TB patients in the remote mountains of central Nepal. With drone footage. Story: [page 11](#).



LOST PARADISE

Deep in the Hindu and Janjati heartland of western Nepal, the ruins of a Buddhist structure were discovered 50 years ago. Follow our reporter to Surkhet, where the government is reconstructing Kakrebihar. Story: [page 8-9](#)



SWISS TALK

Swiss Ambassador Elisabeth von Capeller Oswald is in conversation with *Nepali Times*, where she speaks about Nepal’s transitional justice, labour migration, inclusion and Switzerland’s decades-long involvement in the country’s development sector, particularly bridges. Story: [page 4-5](#).



SYNTHESIS OF CULTURES

The hills of central Nepal come alive this season with the Ghatu dance, where Gurung and Magar communities sing songs in Tharu/Bhojpuri languages. Follow our reporter to Lamjung, and watch her vlog. Story: [page 12](#)

BAD AIR

This is such a bad phase — no one is realising it and taking it seriously. (‘Air pollution is more dangerous than smoking’, Sonia Awale, #962). My uncle has just been diagnosed with cancer... so much damage this pollution is doing and we keep quiet.

Manisha Koirala

EVEREST TRAFFIC JAM

Interesting article about the reality of Mt Everest. When international media like #NYT #BBC and #CNN don’t understand the reality, try to get cheap viewership and bash a small country like Nepal.

Sanjay Golchha

NEPALI WOMEN

Read this, and then you won’t need to ask me that question that I am often asked — ‘why do you support Nepali women?’ (‘Bina Theeng Tamang: More than a maichyang’, Muna Gurung, 962).

Steve L Roberts

Feedback continued in [page 13](#)

WHAT'S TRENDING



11 tons of Mt Everest trash

by [Bharat Bandhu Thapa](#)
The crowd on Mt Everest grabbed headlines around the world, but a cleanup campaign on the world’s highest mountain did not get as much publicity. Find out more in this photo feature from Khumbu, which trended this week on the *Nepali Times* Facebook page.

[f](#) Most reached and shared on Facebook

#BeatAirPollution

Editorial
The toxic miasma that used to blanket the Kathmandu Valley on winter mornings is now a year-round, 24-hour phenomenon. But our approach to the solutions has often been piecemeal, when structural changes are required. This editorial generated much outrage on Twitter. Read it on [nepalitimes.com](#)

[t](#) Most popular on Twitter

Most days, it’s not so crowded on Mt Everest

by *Nepali Times*
Even as the photograph of the Mt Everest ‘traffic jam’ went viral, other Nepali climbers contested what they called ‘misrepresentation’, and called out inexperienced climbers for aggravating the bottleneck. The article generated vigorous debate online, along with solutions. Go online to join the discussion.

[v](#) Most visited online page

[“”](#) Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
In Nepal, four-wheelers have to pass a yearly emissions test to ensure they emit only up to 3-4.5% carbon monoxide. But many take a shortcut to the Green Sticker. Visit the Department of Transportation Management with @ChoeKySonam to see how it’s done

Narendra Khadka @NKhadka
Why only four wheels? It should be made mandatory to all vehicles

Tseten Norkyel @norkyel
What is the use of Green Stickers when the quality of fuel does not meet minimum standard! Every petrol pump must be monitored weekly by honest inspectors and OK stickers for petrol pumps too.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#Editorial Research has shown that air pollution is so bad in parts of northern India, eastern China and the Kathmandu Valley that it reduces the lifespan of people by an average of four years. What can Nepal do to tackle it? #BeatAirPollution

Sushma Joshi @joshi_sushma
I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe. You don’t need the state pressing down your neck with brutish fingers to experience asphyxiation.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
At a time when traffic jam on Mt #Everest is grabbing headlines around the world, a clean-up campaign on the world’s highest #mountain is not getting as much publicity. Find out more in this photo feature by @bharatbandhut from Khumbu. #Everest2019 #Nepal

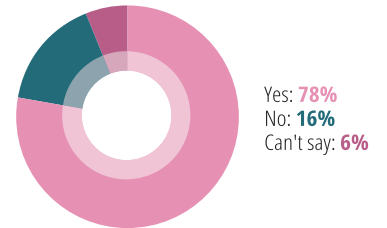
Bibek Poudel @nepali_is
Yeah, we people are more focused on making negative comments rather than growing positive attitude towards any situations. Thus, such things happen.



Weekly Internet Poll #963

Q. Do you think the government issues too many climbing permits for Everest?

Total votes: 225



Weekly Internet Poll #964
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](#)


Q. Will there be a smooth transition of leadership in the NCP?



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PHOTOS: MONIKA DEUPALA

“It is now or never to devolve power to local governments”

Swiss Ambassador Elisabeth von Capeller Oswald is on her second diplomatic stint in Nepal after also serving as assistant director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Bern. She spoke to *Nepali Times* last week about Switzerland’s changing focus in Nepal’s development over the decades. Excerpt:

Nepali Times: This is your second tenure in Nepal. How has Nepal changed?

Ambassador von Capeller Oswald: I am very happy to come back here, and I have seen many positive changes. Nepal was a rural society but now through mobility, it is more of a rural-urban society. The places that you had to walk for days to reach are now reachable in a few hours. In the past, the young wanted to be government officers, now they want to have their own enterprises. It’s much more diversified, self exploratory and self determined. That is a huge change.

Then, of course, the political system has changed a lot. Not everybody agrees with it but that is a part of federalism. People are closer to service delivery and elected representatives are closer to the people. The politics is more dynamic and engaging.

What is still there is discrimination. Probably it’s not as strong in some regions as it was, but maybe it’s more subtle and not so visible.

You mention how mobility has changed Nepal. Your government has worked a lot on building trail bridges. Has that priority changed?

I think Switzerland was among the first countries to understand that roads are needed for economic and social development. The Jiri road benefited the people

there. The Swiss Embassy has provided technical expertise in this area, later collaborating with the government for knowledge transfer. We want to stop building roads now because the competence lies with local governments.

Nepal’s migration economy has had a huge impact. What has been your embassy’s involvement?

I remember 10 years ago the government refused to accept migration as a fact. Now it is fully understood that it is a reality and it needs to be addressed. A lot depends on migrants who contribute to the development of this country. Our aim is to support positive migration but also to help the government mitigate the negative aspects.

The Migration Information Centres we have set up are the best initiative in our 30 years of development cooperation. They have helped people learn of the risks of migration, and their rights, and helped them to contact the right people in case of emergencies. We also give skills training to help them earn better, and to inform them about the cultural context of where they are going. We also have financial-literacy trainings. And what I appreciate is psycho-social counselling for victims and family members. Some of the women migrants really suffer because their family think they are not ‘honourable’ any more.

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Rum in the sun

Khukri XXX Rum has introduced awesome summer cocktails that are simple and easy. Now you don't have to wait for winter to enjoy rum. Try these 3 recipes: *Khukri Lemon Fizz*: Add a slight squeeze of lemon, some Sprite/7Up and ice to the rum. *Khukri Cola*: Cola, lemon juice, ice and rum will make a delicious Khukri Cola. *Khukri Ale*: Pour rum over ice and top with ginger ale.

Qatar CSR event

Qatar Airways, in partnership with Qatar Charity, hosted a CSR event at Hotel Annapurna for 100 children from four orphanages in Kathmandu on the occasion of Eid and to mark the Holy month of

Ramadan. Activities included a magic show, face-painting, bouncy castles and games with prizes for all the children. Tham Maya Thapa, Minister of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, attended the event and distributed gifts, along with Qatar Airways Country Head Nepal, Mr. Mohamed El Emam.

Job fair at British College

The British College held its first Job Fair on Friday 31 May 2019 at the college. Students were given training on resume and cover-letter writing, personality and communication and even etiquette and manners in the online world. Human resource professionals from 15 participating companies interviewed students to fill vacancies for many positions.

The pangolin reports

The Pangolin Reports is a project by the Global Environmental Reporting Collective focusing on the poaching, smuggling and illicit trade of pangolins, the world's most heavily trafficked mammal. One kilogram of Pangolin scales can fetch \$760 in China for likely use in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Journalists from Asia, Africa and Europe are collaborating on the project to mobilise global resources to empower local journalism and solve the cross-national issue together.





The Swiss embassy has been working a lot on gender and social inclusion. What can Nepal do to achieve better inclusivity?

Let me start by telling you that I am the first woman to head this office in 60 years. Even in Switzerland we are not where we want to be. It is a long process, it entails powerful people letting go, and for others to take over. Swiss laws are not as complex as Nepal's, but we do have different languages, cultures and religions. It is about diversity.

I would say this country has very progressive election laws: the President and Vice President need to be of different genders, and so do the mayors and deputy mayors. I think that is fantastic, exceptional and will have an impact on gender and inclusion. Compulsory Dalit representation at the local level will have a powerful effect too.

We have always said the root causes of the conflict were exclusion and poverty. It is important that those excluded due to gender or caste gain from development, including in the workforce. It is now our duty to support elected women and representatives of marginalised groups.

Nepal has recently become a federation while Switzerland has been one for a long time. What would you say are the ingredients that make devolution work?

We have different contexts and histories, but the

principle is the same: services are delivered where the people are, by elected persons. Last week I was in Karnali and I met many committed mayors, deputy mayors and also ward level members. They really want to understand the people and deliver the services. For me, this is what makes federalism work; that is its secret.

It is now or never. All citizens, and we as development partners, have to contribute if this is going to be a success story. Development partners will be decisive in power sharing at the local level. Do we still implement through the central agency with provincial representatives, or do we now implement and collaborate at the local level? I do not yet see a full change in approach by the donors. We have clearly adapted all our programs to the local level.

The Swiss embassy is also very involved in transitional justice. How do you gauge progress in that arena?

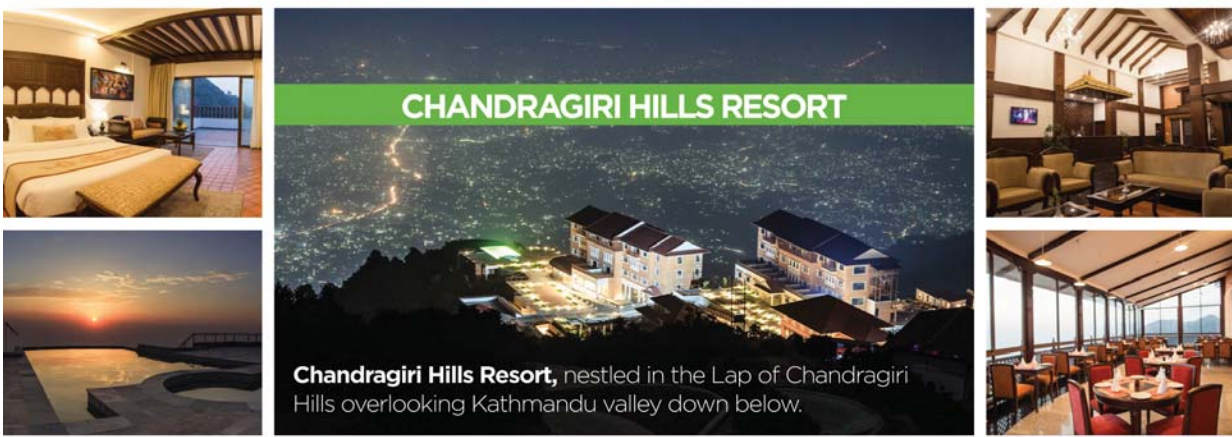
I was first here in 2006, and a lot has happened since then: the peace accord, the Maoist integration, an earthquake, the Constitution and the election at three levels. It's a lot for a country to go through in a short time, and shows the country is able to deal with difficult situations.

Having said that, we also believe it's the right time to finalise the peace process. We support a Nepali-led process which is victim-centric. It is not just about justice but also about people who have the right to know what happened to their loved ones, about compensation and memorials. It is also about rule of law, because if impunity prevails it will have an impact on the economic environment. The economy can only be strong in an environment with a strong rule of law.



Go online to watch our video interview with Swiss Ambassador Elisabeth von Capeller Oswald.

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Times.com

Piecing together Afghanistan’s Bamyan Buddhas

The baked biscuit cliffs of Bamyan shimmered in the dawn glow, the massive blank Buddha niches gaping like painfully missing molars (*right*). We had arrived by road late the night before and, stumbling out of the guesthouse with dew dampening my bare feet, I was not



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

prepared for the vista across the valley. Tidy green fields studded with fortified farms, mud houses huddled under the pockmarked precipice, and nude bare hills rising behind, faintly dusted with snow and dark shadows. Generations of Silk Road travellers and pilgrims must have gazed with equal wonder as they plied the trade routes through this northern valley of Afghanistan, a prosperous enclave strategically positioned between several great empires, and with Buddhist links to Ladakh and Mustang. The two gigantic 6th century Buddhas, standing solid a quarter of a mile apart and towering 55m and 38m tall, would have appeared very differently to those early visitors, their plaster veneer resonating with red, blue and gold decorations haloed in yellow and white. The main bodies had been hewn from rock, but the details and dress were enhanced with a mixture of mud, plaster, straw and horsehair coated with stucco. ‘Neither has any artistic value,’ sniffed travel writer Robert Byron 100 years ago, but their gaudy monumental mass, placid gaze and Gandhara-style draped robes could not have failed to impress. Thousands of monks inhabited temple caves that surrounded the two huge figures, their alcoves now eerily empty, hollowed out of the soft stone over the whole height of the rock face and decorated with frescoes in bright hues. One story tells of a mother who took 12 years to recover her lost son, so extensive was the labyrinth of grotto dwellings carved into the

Waiting for the end of war to restore giant figure of the Prince of Peace



compressed clay and gravel cliffs. Only a few fragments of colour remained when I first visited Bamyan on an ADB tourism mission in 2005, and again in 2006, but we could still make out the paths used to piously circumambulate the Buddhas. Ruined trails and crumbled stairways precariously connected the intricate network of chambers, but I was not brave enough to climb with the others to dizzying head level. At their feet, heaps of rubble, rock and plaster were laboriously sorted and conserved by teams from UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites. In their scorching tin-roofed shack store, dust motes circled in sunlit rays. We were shown metal shards embedded in some of the pieces,

remains of the dynamite, bullets and bombs used in their brutal destruction. The colossal Buddhas were blown to bits by the Taliban in March 2001, declared as ‘false idols’ and cheered by hundreds, including Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, who flew in to witness the spectacle. Several weeks and many attempts were needed to demolish them, anti-aircraft fire and rockets had little effect, and eventually timed explosives were placed within the dove nests and bored into the statues, planted under duress at rifle point by unwilling prisoners dangled on ropes from above. Ancient texts tell of a third giant Nirvana Buddha reclining in the vicinity but he is yet to be located by archaeologists, perhaps kept secret for safekeeping. The crumbling ochre citadel of Shahr-e-Gholghola, meaning city of screams, sighs or lamentations, was destroyed by Genghis Khan in a 1221 massacre. Departing with my colleagues for the astounding turquoise lakes of Band-e-Amir, where we had been asked to reorganise tourism and build a visitor centre, we avoided forgotten mines by carefully keeping to the dusty tyre tracks. West of Bamyan we walked the spine of a dragon supposedly slain by Hazrat Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet, a haunting volcanic barrage of rock in the shape of a petrified dragon from which emanates mineral tears and mournful, unearthly sounds caused by underground springs, said to be moans of frustration at his mountain imprisonment. I returned to Bamyan in 2008 to work on the Aga Khan Foundation’s ecotourism project, trying to boost livelihoods for the locals. New Zealand forces were still peacekeeping behind a high-wire fence, but security had deteriorated and it was no longer safe to drive the highway from Kabul. My UN aircraft was filled with shadowy characters in checked headgear and bulging armpits, who vanished in haste once we landed amidst the golden fields. Arriving on my flight out of Bamyan was a rare group of intrepid Brits, one of the very last to visit, and led by a veteran journalist. Looking back it seems naïve, even distasteful, to have been working on tourism in Afghanistan, preparing a national ecotourism strategy, designing national park activities for the lakes of Band-e-Amir (*left*), planning fortified farmhouse stays in Bamyan, and recceing trek routes amongst the burned-out tank and artillery skeletons of the Panjshir Valley. In 2009 and 2011 we brought two ecotourism study tours to learn from Nepal and interact with our industry, including the heroic lady governor of Bamyan, Habiba Sarabi. But in 2005 suicide bombers had murdered more people in London than Afghanistan, and there was still hope that tourism could bring some relief and alternatives for the beleaguered local people. We were unaware of how much worse it would get. Debate has raged about what is best for the Bamyan Buddhas, how to safeguard, rebuild, repair, restore or revive with 3D laser light projections into the recesses. In Kabul Museum a multinational team is painstakingly piecing back together 7,000 shattered fragments of Buddhas, smashed with sledgehammers as pagan effigies. “These artefacts don’t just belong to us, they belong to the entire world,” said a stressed-looking conservator in the television interview. Healing the wounds of the Afghans, putting together the pieces, reassembling the past, is happening just as peace with the Taliban is making some tentative progress. 🇦🇫

Cold Stone

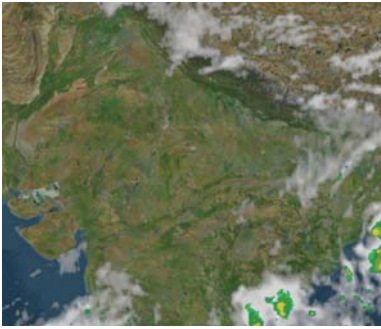
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The countdown to the start of the monsoon has begun. There is a buildup off the Kerala coast, which is on schedule. International meteorologists meeting in Kathmandu last month used computer simulation data to predict a near-normal monsoon in western Nepal and below-average rainfall in the east. We will have to see about that. But the clouds are building up, and the sign of the monsoon's arrival will be the wind changing direction to easterly after blowing from the west since last September.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
24° 17°	25° 17°	26° 17°

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Hrijata Dahal

Grow vegetables faster, cleaner and with less water than conventional farming — it all sounds very fishy. And it is. Aquaponics combines rearing fish in tanks with hydroponics, which grows plants in water only.

Aquaponics works like this: fish poop and leftover bits of food in a fish tank are pumped into the plant-growing area, where bacteria convert them into nitrites, then into nitrates. The nitrates are absorbed by the plants as food and the water is recycled to the fish tank.

“Aquaponics is the best way to save water and the environment because the same water is continuously circulated throughout the system,” says Bill Ashwell, CEO of Hope Nepal Bioponic Food and Aquaponic System. “Open farming consumes 10 more times water, yet aquaponics is more productive.”

Ashwell came to Nepal for the first time in 1993 to trek, and fell in love with the mountains and people. Since then he has returned many times to help with water projects. He sold his business in South Africa in 2005 and moved to Nepal with his wife Janet in 2005 to pursue his interest in Aquaponics.

“I felt that setting up a business would be the most sustainable way to stay long-term and help Nepalis by demonstrating new technologies and creating employment.” HOPE Nepal Bioponic Food also serves as a training centre and demonstration farm showcasing the technology as it grows tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, strawberries and more.

“In open farming you would probably need about six weeks for a lettuce plant to mature but with aquaponics it’s half of that. It grows faster because it is raised in a protected environment in a greenhouse, where you can control climate conditions, and also because the plant gets all its nutrition requirements from the fish,” says Ashwell.

Adopting aquaponics would help Nepal to improve agricultural productivity and reverse its growing reliance on food



HRIJATA DAHAL



Something fishy in new Nepal farm

Aquaponics is organic, requires no land and is powered by fish poop

imports, and it could provide food security during natural disasters like floods. But the system has particular challenges: the farmer has to know something about fish farming, plumbing and chemistry, as well as agriculture. Also, the start-up phase is challenging.

“People do have a strong desire to do this but they don’t know how to start and from where to start, and they don’t have time to learn all these skills,” says Ashwell, who believes nevertheless that the potential gains outweigh the losses. Because fish would suffer if pesticides or other chemicals were used in growing, aquaponics uses neither, making it one of the healthiest ways to produce food.

A system can be built in a heated greenhouse, at home on a rooftop, in a backyard or even indoors if proper lighting is available. “Nepal has a lot of opportunities and in order to embrace those one needs to have vision, good management and good practices,” says Ashwell.

Karma Gurung apprenticed at Hope Nepal for three years. His vision is to install an aquaponic system on every rooftop of every house in the capital. “Kathmandu needs this system — there is a lack of water and people are compelled to eat vegetables grown with pesticides and chemicals,” he says. “Aquaponics would also be ideal in more remote parts of Nepal where water is even scarcer.”

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Buddhist relics in western Nepal

The secrets of a flourishing 1,000-year-old empire are just being revealed in Surkhet Valley

Sewa Bhattarai
in Surkhet

Just a 10-minute auto ride from the bustling city of Birendranagar in Surkhet, via a road that meanders through a lush green forest, a hillock marks a mystery — a medieval looking, six-metre tall, shikhar style temple surrounded by ruins.

Since its discovery about 50 years ago, the site Kakrebihar has piqued the interest of archaeologists and Buddhism scholars. They agree it dates from the 13th-14th centuries, but question if it is really a Buddhist site or a Hindu temple that adopted Buddhist features.

Is it one of many places along a route that passed through the Surkhet-Dang area in prehistoric times, bypassing the inhospitable Gangetic plains to the south? Who built it — followers of the Vajrayana Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley or of the Tibetan Buddhism of the mountains? And was it even constructed as a temple, or could it have been a palace, monastery or something else?

The discovery half a century ago of what seemed a lost Buddhist paradise in western Nepal, populated by Janjatis and Hindus, was intriguing. Buddhism had been virtually unknown outside of the Kathmandu Valley and

Nepal's mountains, and had even disappeared in Buddha's birthplace Lumbini, which is today surrounded by Muslim settlements.

The Department of Archaeology (DoA) excavated the site in 2000, and has been working at it slowly over the past three years. Stone craftsmen work hard all day chiselling exact copies of broken pieces. The task is expected to be done this year, but the DoA's decision to use concrete to join the stone pieces is controversial.

"The stone pieces were hard to put together, and concrete was the only viable option. We consulted with experts before we arrived at this decision, which is the best way to preserve the site," says DoA Spokesperson Ram Prasad Kunwar.

Because the structure was made of stone, much of it has survived, though in fragments. Scattered at the site are stone walls, facades, statues, spires, wells and more, but there are few clues as to what these pieces originally looked like as a whole. However, they suggest an architecture similar to that of temples in Kumaon, which was once part of the Khas kingdom.

After excavation and a detailed study of the structure's foundation, the DoA decided to piece the ruins together to make a shikhar style temple, which was also the dominant Kumauni style of that era.

The 12th to the 15th centuries marked the reign of Khas kings, rulers of a powerful kingdom that stretched from Trisuli in the east to Kumaon in the west, Tibet in the north and Bodhgaya to the south. Using the last names Challa and Malla, they ruled from their capital in Sinja, Jumla.

Evidence points to the Buddhist nature of this state: the fact that Sinja was a confluence of Buddhists from Tibet, Kashmir and Kathmandu, and that Buddhist kings of the Pal dynasty from Bengal had settled in Jumla. Buddhist scriptures gifted by Khas kings to shrines in Kathmandu still exist, and King Ripu Malla's signature on the Ashok pillar in Lumbini can still be seen.

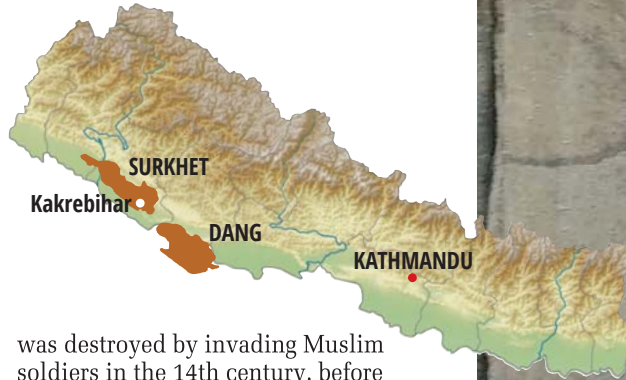
After this though, all at Kakrebihar is guesswork. There are no records to indicate who created the site. According to a signboard it was done by Ashok Challa around 1268 AD, but experts say it could have been built earlier by another king, Kraa Challa.

Statues of Buddha found at the site indicate that it was a Buddhist site, but the presence of Hindu deities like Ganesh, Saraswati

and Shiva throws that thesis into question. Some see it as a Hindu-Buddhist shrine.

The signboard at Kakrebihar proclaims that its builders followed Mahayana Buddhism, but the statues, as well as the Khas kingdom's interactions with Vajrayanis from Kathmandu, Bengal and Tibet, indicate Vajrayana.

Conflicting theories also exist about the building's destruction. Some suggest it was levelled by an earthquake in 1833, but Buddhism scholar Basanta Maharjan thinks it



was destroyed by invading Muslim soldiers in the 14th century, before they were eventually defeated in Dailekh. At most, the ruins of Kakrebihar offer tantalising clues to a mysterious past, which is being pieced together by craftsmen from Bhaktapur, who are tooling missing pieces for the temple.

The Karnali province chief minister Mahendra Bahadur Shahi recently announce plans to turn the area into an open zoo, while experts think it should be conserved and investigatged. Many say the DoA should be actively searching for other structures that surely exist at the site. "The site is randomly called Kakrebihar, but no *bihar* (monastery) has been found there yet. More excavation of this area is needed, which will lead to better understanding of Buddhism in western Nepal," says Maharjan. 🇳🇵

A LOST PARADISE



Follow our reporter to Surkhet where, deep in the Hindu and Janjati heartland of western Nepal, the government is reconstructing a Buddhist temple from ruins. Though much of it is still unknown, intricate artistic motifs provide tantalising clues to a lost paradise in Kakrebihar.

nepalitimes.com



Why is the site in ruins?

The debris of Kakrebihar has inspired many stories. While these tales are at odds with historical facts, they show how the enchanting ruins have captured local imagination.

According to local Tharu folklore, the temple was a palace built for the Pandava princes, characters of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. They were supposed to be burnt alive in the palace of lac, but discovered the plans and fled, destroying the palace.

Another local folktale says that two sets of partners competed to build temples overnight. While the duo called Lati Koili managed to build a Shiva temple at the adjacent Lati Koili hill, the *sali-bhena* duo (brother-in-law and sister-in-law) found their temple still unfinished when the day broke. Ashamed, they destroyed whatever they had made and fled.

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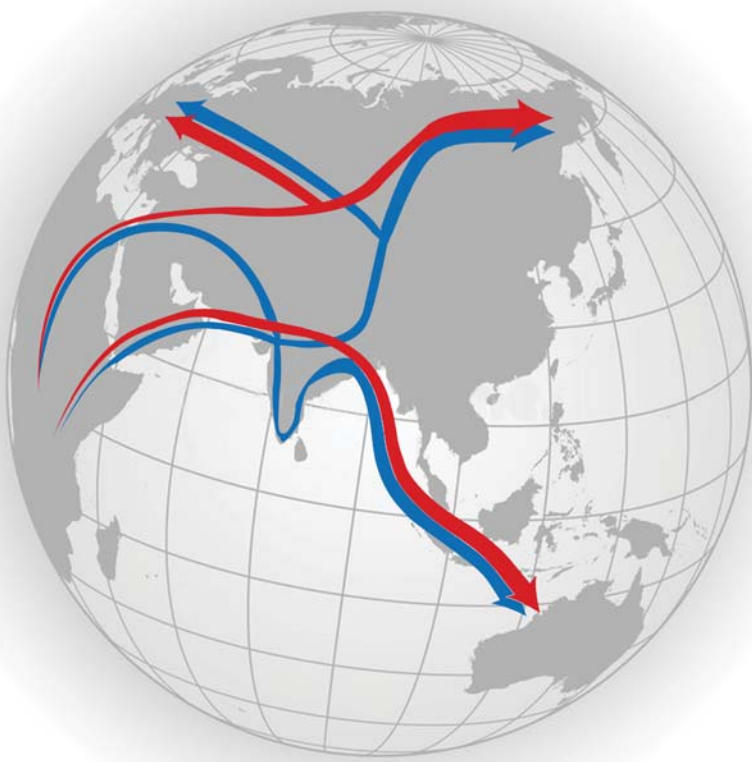
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कानून बमोजिम लिनुपर्ने इजाजत नलिई वा इजाजत पत्र नवीकरण नगराई वा इजाजत प्राप्त व्यक्तिको मृत्यु पश्चात हकवालाको नाममा नामसारी नगराई वा अन्य जुनसुकै तरिकाले नेपाल राज्यभित्र कोही कसैले अवैध हतियार र खरखजाना राखेको भए यो सूचना प्रकाशित भएको मितिले ३५ (पैतीस) 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 तथा 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
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग



- Multiple wave dispersal model
- Single wave dispersal model

SOURCE: HUMAN DISPERSAL OUT OF AFRICA: A LASTING DEBATE BY SAIOA LÓPEZ, LUCY VAN DORP, GARRETT HELLENTHAL. PUBLISHED IN JOURNALS.SAGEPUB.COM

Out of Africa and through Nepal

Paleontologists agree that humans moved out of Africa about 70,000 years ago, and spread out across the world. Several theories exist about their migration routes, and recent geentic studies of the Y-chromosome with samples taken from all over the world have helped figure out their historical movements. A popular theory suggests they first crossed over to Central Asia and eastwards to India, then Southeast Asia, with one branch walking on to Australia and another through the frozen Bering Strait to the Americas.

A study by German palaeontologist Gudrun Corvinus in 1984 published definitive evidence of prehistoric settlements in Nepal's mid-mountain region. 'The research has yielded an unexpected number of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic sites and filled the lacuna of knowledge about prehistoric settlements in Nepal,' wrote Corvinus in a paper published in the journal *Ancient Nepal* in July 1985, which mentioned sites in Dang and Deukhuri with remains of hand-axe flakes, blades,

adzes, core-scrappers and points.

For the first time, this proved that the entire belt of valleys at the foothills of the Chure, perhaps including Surkhet, was inhabited by prehistoric peoples. 'There is no question now that during the prehistoric times Nepal, too, was occupied by people who fashioned stone age tools and were able to penetrate through the thick forests of Terai,' writes Corvinus, adding that prehistoric people may have stopped by in western Nepal on their way to Europe via the Caucasus and eastwards. The relics in many parts of Nepal are similar to ones in Vietnam and Thailand, indicating that the Nepal Chure route was used by humans to travel to Southeast Asia, bypassing what at that time must have been dangerous jungles of the Gangetic plains.

Corvinus concludes that prehistoric people settled along the hospitable foothills of the Chure hills 12,000-30,000 years ago. But today, with soil erosion and changes in geography, it is increasingly difficult to find evidence as the prehistoric objects are first exposed and then washed away.

ALL PHOTOS: SEWA BHATTARAI

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EVENTS



Drawing workshop

Join this three-day art workshop if you want to learn sketching or improve your knowledge about drawing. The workshop is for all ages and starts with the basics.

7-9 June, 11-2pm, Rs1,200, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel (01) 5521812

Rendezvous with Yaks

The semi-annual event by Snow Yak presents speakers including Bhumika Shrestha, Juju Kaji, Amir Maharjan and KP Khanal, who work to make the world a better place and have made an impact on society.

7 June, 5pm onwards, Rs300, Nepal Children's organisation (Bal Mandir), Naxal, 9841527462

Functional but Disconnected

Listen to Mireille Widmer, doctoral researcher from the University of Sussex, and independent researcher Bibha Karna talking on the topic, "Functional but Disconnected: Can Janakpur's Security System Cope with Urban Growth?" in the research seminar series at Martin Chautari.

9 June, 3-5pm, Martin Chautari Seminar Hall, Thapathali (01) 4238050/4102027/4102243



Forest Therapy

Relieve your stress by practising forest therapy. The therapy has roots in the Japanese practice of *Shinrin-yoku*, also called 'forest bathing,' and refers to immersing yourself in the atmosphere of the forest. Call to register.

8 June, 10am, Sundarjal, Rs1,000-2,500, Bouddhanath Stupa gate (meet-up), 9861584054, 9841746242

Live Art Competition

As one of the pre-events of the 13th National ASA Architectural Exhibition, participate in a live art competition where you can paint/draw/sketch on the themes "Wake up for mother nature" and "Abandoned heritage". The winner will get Rs5,000 (advance level) and Rs3,000 (basic level).

8 June, 11-3pm, Rs250 (advance), Rs150 (basic), Pulchok Campus, Pulchok 9840056406



Open Air Cinema

Watch the 2006 movie *Prestige*, as part of the open air cinema at Lavee Garden restaurant cafe & bar.

8 June, 6:30pm onwards, Lavee Garden 9808996175

Reminiscences

Siddhartha Art Gallery presents an exhibition of paintings & drawings entitled "Reminiscences," by Ishan Pariyar. UNESCO Representative Christian Manhart will inaugurate the exhibition.

12 June- 9 July, 11-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited (01) 4218048



Swing Socials

Experience a great evening of dancing, fun and socialising with friends while enjoying the best swing music. Open to everyone, so don't be shy if you don't know how to dance.

11 June, 6:30-8:30pm, Bikalpa Art Cafe & Bar, Pulchok, 9851147776

#Trashtag Challenge

Join the challenge to clean up Bhaktapur. The trashtag challenge is a good way to show how fabulous nature can look when it's free of trash.

7 June, 10am (meet-up), VHS Bhaktapur (01) 6611283

ABOUT TOWN

MUSIC



The Mongolian Heart

The popular folk-pop Band The Mongolian Hearts celebrates its silver jubilee on the Nepalese music scene. The event will also feature Jyovan Bhujju.

8 June, 6-11:45pm, Trisara, Lazimpat (01) 4410200

Sabin Rai & The Pharaoh

Groove to the music of Sabin Rai & The Pharaoh this Wednesday while celebrating Ladies night at Aila Lounge. Call for tickets and other details.

12 June, 8-10pm, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati (01) 5008681



Neha Kakkar

A treat for Bollywood fanatics this weekend, talented singer Neha Kakkar is in town and will be performing live. Call to book your tickets.

8 June, 7pm onwards, Lord of the Drinks (LOD), Thamel (01) 4444428, 9803050576

Dusha Connection

Indulge in the spell-binding performance of this band's three instrumentalists. Open-minded, they inimitably combine the most diverse musical topics whilst drawing from the broad stock of jazz history.

14 June, 8-11pm, Rs500, House of Music, Thamel 9849377915

DINING



A One Cafe

A multi-cuisine restaurant with 30 years of experience where you can explore a variety of flavours; 16 outlets to choose from.

Dhumbarahi (01) 4417921

Ageno

This restaurant's menu is filled with local Nepali cuisine as well as terrific Italian, Chinese and Indian dishes. Enjoy the bursting flavours.

8am-10pm, Dhobighat (01) 5538106



Alice Restaurant

Alice offers multinational cuisine, including Japanese, Chinese, Italian and Continental, as well as a Thakali set, for lunch and dinner. Green Mo:Mo and Phapar Mo:Mo, as fast food, and Samma Siyo Yaki are specialties.

11-9:30pm, Gairidhara (01) 4429207

Cafe Cheeno

With a beautiful outdoor garden and inner dining area featuring a couch, a mini-library and a wine rack, this is a place to sit back and relax while enjoying great food.

7am-9pm, Krishna Galli, 9808735679



Anatolia (Halal)

If you are looking for quality halal food, this is the place for you. The restaurant has been serving quality vegetarian and halal non-vegetarian Turkish, Indian, Nepalese and Chinese cuisines since 2004.

10am-10pm, J P Marg, (01) 4258757

GETAWAY

Meghauri Serai, A Taj Safari

This hotel in the core of Chitwan National Park stands on the banks of the river Rapti, overlooking a vast expanse of rippling waters. As a summer special, the hotel is offering a one-night deal for couples including dinner, breakfast plan and an elephant or boat safari, starting at Rs19,800 plus taxes.

Chitwan, 1 800-111 1825



Hotel Nag Pukhu

Experience authentic Newari culture at Hotel Nag Pukhu in the ancient city of Bhaktapur, walking distance from the darbar square. Its interior and exterior decorations reflect rich Newari culture.

Bhaktapur, (01) 6613736

The Old Inn

This B&B consists of two beautiful, timber and brick Newa townhouses in traditional design, overlooking a serene, traffic-free bazaar. The view of the Central Himalaya from Annapurna in the west to Langtang and beyond in the east is magnificent.

Bandipur, (065) 520110



Grand Norling Hotel

Enjoy a calm and relaxing stay at this hotel surrounded by world heritage sites. The spacious bedrooms include an adjoining bathroom, a large balcony with sights of the golf course, monkeys and herds of deer — and not to forget, — the garden.

Gokarna (01) 4910193

Borderlands Eco Resort

Enveloped in the natural Himalayan splendour, this resort is located a mere three hours north of Kathmandu. A quick getaway to wild nature and weekend eco-adventures. Borderlands Eco Adventure Resort, Sindhupalchok, (01) 4381425, 9801025111





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OUR PICK

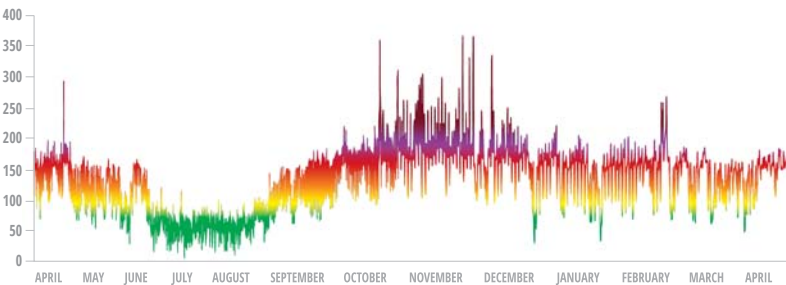


Opened in Kathmandu on 7 June

Part of the *X-Men* superhero franchise, this movie depicts the evolution of one of X-Men's popular characters, Jean Grey, into the iconic Dark Phoenix. Fresh from her popular stint as Sansa Stark in *Game of Thrones*, Sophie Turner shines as a woman intoxicated by heady new powers. The movie directed by Simon Kinberg also stars Jennifer Lawrence, Nicholas Hoult and James McAvoy.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

Daily Air Quality Index average from 1 April 2018 - 1 May 2019 showing less pollution during the monsoon and dirtier air in winter.



This week we are not presenting daily averages but the annual graph of daily data from the US Embassy air quality monitoring station at Phora Darbar in Kathmandu. The graph shows us the seasonal variation in the Air Quality Index, with the monsoon being the least polluted period and winter months having unacceptably high daily averages. *Nepal Times* brings you AQI in daily averages every week as well as live hourly pollution data on [www.nepalitimes.com](https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/).
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>



RAMU SAPKOTA

Nepal tests and treats TB with a flying pharmacy

A pilot project in Piuthan is using drones to collect sputum samples and deliver antibiotics to patients

Ramu Sapkota
in **Piuthan**

Problem: Some 70% of Nepalis are carriers of the tuberculosis bacillus and many of them have full-blown versions of the disease. Although diagnosis and treatment is available, the sick cannot travel to hospitals. How to test the sputum of patients, and deliver antibiotics in remote and road-less parts of Nepal?

Solution: By drones.

Nepal has been acclaimed for its directly observed treatment short course (DOTS) for treating tuberculosis, which demands a combination of antibiotics that are administered under supervision. However, TB is difficult to diagnose and treat in remote parts of this country.

That is why the Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT) is taking a big leap in treating TB with a pilot project in a remote part of Piuthan district in the mountains of central Nepal.

The Trust has cleverly recycled the DOTS acronym to DrOTS, this time to mean Drone Optimised Therapy System, and is running test flights in the district to collect sputum samples and deliver both diagnoses and treatment to patients living in up-country villages.

The drone flies to health posts in the mountains, and returns sputum samples to the district hospital in Swargadwari Municipality and the public health centre (PHC) in Piuthan Municipality. The samples are tested using a GenExpert kit. If they are positive, patients are given DOTS treatment using smart pill boxes, which keep electronic records of whether or not patients have taken the antibiotics.

“We are using the drones experimentally to ensure that

we can reach the hidden cases of tuberculosis, since every untreated patient is a potential carrier of the disease and can spread it,” explains Sradha Acharya, BNMT coordinator in Piuthan.

During the pilot phase, drones will be used only to collect sputum samples from remote settlements. If the tests are successful, the Trust hopes to use the unmanned craft to also deliver medicine.

Thanks to the initiative, health personnel will no longer need to walk for days to deliver sputum samples from health centres in the villages to the district hospital and PHC for testing, and then return with medicines for those who test positive. The current system results in delays in getting medicines to patients, and also lack of supervision administering the antibiotics.

Community Health Worker Sita GC (*pictured above*) says the drones are god-sent because they can deliver samples in 25 minutes, where earlier it took 2-3 days. “Logistics was a huge problem because of unreliable transport; now it is easy to diagnose and treat quickly,” she adds.

Maxine Caws of BNMT, an epidemiologist with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, says the drones are being tested in Piuthan because it is the mountain district in Nepal with the highest TB prevalence. Last year, the district treated 379 patients for tuberculosis, but 335 new cases were detected in the same period.

The remote-controlled craft are handled by drone specialist Nepal Flying Lab. “We found this to be an exciting project because the drones are ideal for bridging distances to remote areas and the sputum samples and medicines are not too heavy,” says the lab’s Uttam Pudasaini, who adds this is the first time such deliveries are being tested in Asia.

The drones weigh 9kg when empty and can carry another 7kg in a cargo hold designed to protect

against biohazards; they can be airborne for 30 minutes. The craft flies at speeds of up to 1km per minute, and is controlled by a pilot at the takeoff point who coordinates with a health worker at the destination. In future, the project plans to train health workers to fly the drones themselves.

The technology has been used for TB control in Zimbabwe and Papua New Guinea. In Nepal, the pilot project is funded by the Nick Simons Institute till December. “Further extension will be determined by whether it is successful and cost-effective,” says Caws.

Sita GC says so far up to 35 positive cases of TB have been detected from sputum samples in Piuthan this month. However, many people refuse to give samples, and others do not follow instructions on taking antibiotics.

The ministry of health is also involved in the drone trials. Spokesperson Mahendra Shrestha says that if the tests are successful the government will take over the program and try to replicate it for TB control in other remote areas.

“If this project is successful, Piuthan and Nepal will be famous worldwide. But the biggest challenge is to first make the tests work,” says Shrestha. 🇳🇵

TEST FLIGHTS



Join us on a trip to Piuthan to observe how drones are being used for the first time to collect sputum samples and deliver medicines to TB patients in the remote mountains of central Nepal.

[nepalitimes.com](#)

TB or not TB

There are 10 million new cases of tuberculosis every year, and the medieval disease still takes the lives of 1.5 million people annually worldwide.

South Asia accounts for 40% of the global TB burden, with over 4 million cases as well as 40% of total fatalities, a third of them patients who succumbed after they failed to respond to treatment. But worsening air pollution, smoking and alcoholism are big risk factors for TB infection in the region.

Some 11 Nepalis die every day from the highly contagious infection.

There are 40,000 new cases of TB here every year, and Nepal also has a very high rate of latent TB infection. Despite antibiotics, it is often difficult to reach patients in underserved parts of the country and Nepal’s harsh terrain makes it hard to access diagnosis and treatment on time. Experts say there is huge under-reporting of cases.

Nepal is a role model in the community-based DOTS (directly observed treatment short course), with its supervised administration of antibiotics to patients. Yet, experts say much more aggressive case detection and an early treatment system should be in place if the country is to meet the UN target of reducing TB mortality by 95% and cutting new cases by 90%, by 2035.

This means developing techniques to reach the poorest in the remotest parts of the country, and also requires increases in Nepal’s TB control budget and prioritising the infection otherwise known as the ‘poor man’s disease’.



KUNDA DIXIT

MDR (multi-drug resistant) TB is also spreading, as patients develop resistance to commonly used drugs for treatment. The last survey in Nepal showed that among previously treated cases, anti-microbial resistance was found in 15.8% of cases, against the world average of 18%.

Nepal also has the added challenge of an open border with India and migrant workers continue to bring infections home, while many patients from India come to this country for treatment.

The UN General Assembly held its first-ever, high-level meeting on tuberculosis last year to draw attention and generate investment for TB research, treatment and diagnosis. The SAARC TB Centre located in Kathmandu focuses on prevention and control of tuberculosis and TB/HIV co-infection. Research is also needed for non-resistant drugs with shorter regimen.

Sonia Awale

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JHUMA LIMBU

Swaying to Ghatu dance in Lamjung

Devotees lined up inside the Tashi Chhyoling Gumba of Nalma village, Lamjung, recently on Buddha Jayanti to prepare the Ghatu. Interestingly, although the day began with offerings for the Buddha, the dance starts by invoking Hindu gods.

Ghatu seems to bring many cultures and languages together across central Nepal. In Nalma village, a two-hour ride from the district headquarters of Besishahar, four young girls are dressing up in traditional Gurung costumes. The rituals actually begin in January, on the festival of Shree Panchami, when the dancers are selected. They are then trained until the performance starts on Buddha Jayanti, and goes on for up to a week.

On full moon day the dancers line up in a community building at the centre of the village, and begin swaying slowly to the music as village elders sing to the beat of the *madal*. Ghatu tells the tragic story of King Pashramu and Queen Yambawati: Pashramu goes on a hunt, meets and marries Yambawati and they have a child. Pashramu is killed in action, Yambawati self-immolates on her husband's pyre.

The dance climaxes with Yambawati's grief as she gives up her kingdom, says goodbye to her little son and embraces death. The dancers go into a trembling trance.

Ghatu is performed all over central Nepal by Gurung, Magar, Dura, Balami and Kumal communities, but no one is sure how it originated. "Our ancestors did not tell us where they learnt it or how it began," says Jung Bahadur Gurung, a dance teacher in Nalma. "People believe it's based on a local story, and that Pashramu and Yambawati were a local Gurung king and queen."

Gurung does not know what language the songs are in, but it sounds like Tharu or Bhojpuri. Since Pashramu meets Yambawati when he is out hunting, some people speculate that Yambawati was a woman from the Tarai, who brought the songs with her.

The Gurungs also did not practise sati, which is depicted in the dance. Considering this and other factors, folk music expert Kishor Gurung concludes that Ghatu was actually brought to Nepal by Lahures who went to India. "Nepali soldiers who joined the British Indian armies must have brought it back with them 150-200 years ago."

There is agreement, however, on what makes participants go into a trance as they dance with their eyes closed. "The dancers sometimes don't even know the story, but go with the flow and where the music takes them," says folk music researcher

Jhuma Limbu, who is making a documentary about Ghatu. "It is a matter of great pride that music which explores the depths of human psychology is still alive in Nepal. We must do our best to preserve it."

Grown women who were former dancers sometimes fall into a trance when they hear the music. Hence villagers here forbid recording the music, and the performances only happen at designated times.

With the march of time, interest is waning in such lengthy dances when other means of entertainment are easily available, says musician Raju Gurung: "It is very sad that people are losing interest in the ritual part of the dance and it is becoming more and more commercialised. We love our dance very much and would like to preserve it, but it is a losing battle."

Sewa Bhattarai in Lamjung



The hills of central Nepal come alive this season with the Ghatu dance, where Gurung and Magar communities sing songs in Tharu/Bhojpuri languages. Follow our reporter to Lamjung, and watch her vlog.

nepalitimes.com



RSS

HE LIVES ON: Prime Minister KP Oli and other government ministers attend the inauguration of the Rabin德拉 Adhikari Memorial Foundation in Pokhara on Saturday, to honour the former minister killed in an air crash in February.



RSS

A NEW ACT: Actors present the musical drama *Nepal Gatha* (Tale of Nepal) written by Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, in Kathmandu on Monday.



QATAR AIRWAYS

EID MUBARAK: Minister Tham Maya Thapa and Nepal Country Head of Qatar Airways Mohamed El Emam cut a cake at an event to celebrate Eid in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



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Times Feedback

Below is a selection of the online discussion about last week's *Nepali Times* coverage of environmental problems like air pollution in Kathmandu, Mt Everest cleanup campaign and the traffic jam on the world's highest mountain. The Green Issue package was timed for World Environment Day on 5 June.

BAD AIR

Thank you *Nepali Times* for putting this important issue to the front.

Satyajit Pradhan

The government ought to bring in outside experts to not only advise but to follow through with the recommendations, no matter how unpopular it might be in certain quarters. The government carries a responsibility to provide the answer to the pollution problem that is shortening the lives, by years, of the people in Kathmandu.

Alan Roadnight

Instead of investing in roads, why not invest in a good public transport like a tram or a regular (big) bus service, or get rid of all micro-buses and use electric tuk tuks? Kathmandu is one of the few capitals without a proper public transportation system.

Rik Roels

Wow, such an amazing article. Wish this could be translated and sent to all the CA members so that they get enlightened and maybe they'll also bang the table in the House of Representatives ('How to clean up Kathmandu's air', Anil Chitrakar, #962). Not only that, but send it also to all the schools, colleges and universities so the people know what we want and how it can be done.

Mani Lama

This is so appalling ('#BeatAirPollution', Editorial, #962). Citizens of Nepal by far are the most cooperative lot when it comes to following the rules for the greater good.



It's not such a difficult issue that it can't be resolved. The sheer lack of political will is causing catastrophic health effects in the lives of everyone. Time to seriously wake up.

Wapnil Chaudhari

1. Easy, vote in politicians who care.
2. Sweep all roads of dirt.
3. Tarmac/cement all roads.
4. Emission tests, fines (police keep 50%) followed by 14 days to service vehicles.
5. Alternative plate number days (enforced) - upgrade public transport.
6. No special treatment for VIPs. Then we see some action.
7. Military action — thousands of soldiers could be cleaning streets.
8. Bring 10th-century waste disposal systems into 21st century.

Nothing will happen as long as politicians have no sense of civic duty, no personal pride, remain inept and corrupt. Billions are paid in car tax, billions in road tax.

David Durkan

Can we join forces to sue the government over poor air quality in the capital and for making us breathe toxic air and for their lack of interest to do anything about it?

Vairochana Sherpa

Visit Nepal 2020 to witness one of the most incompetent governments in the history of humanity.

Bhumi Ghimiré

EVEREST TRAFFIC JAM

I think climbers need to have ample experience of high risk mountaineering before trying to summit Mt Everest. People can make stupid decisions for which their loved ones bear the pain.

Prasanna Malla

Everest permit prices must be increased to decrease this traffic.

Anup Bajracharya

Karma Tenzing puts it into perspective ('Most days, it's not so crowded on Mt Everest', #962). He was actually there, unlike these news reporters.

Mark Parella

There were 381 permits sold though, which is a record and this number doesn't include guides. Also, apparently, relatively inexperienced climbers are up there. That's crazy (and dangerous for everyone) if true.

I read they are looking at extending the season and also looking at experience of climbers.

Karen Porter

I am not sure the Nepal government is the issue ('Crowd-funding from Mt Everest', Ivan G Somlai, #962). What we see on Everest are symptoms of mass tourism. The same is happening in the Alps. Some say Mont Blanc is actually the most dangerous mountain in the world: over 20,000 people try to summit each year with around 10 fatalities. Chamonix has been a rich village for 100 years — before it was as poor as most of Nepal is right now.

Jürgen Stäudtner

There is a fundamental lack of understanding about the complexity of handling safety issues, but adequate greed. It should not be about the numbers, but sustainability and quality.

Khem Lakai

I agree with much of what you say ('Because we are there', Damien Francois, #962). Mountaineering is a choice and with it comes responsibility for oneself and partners. However, when we use terms like Nepali or Sherpa 'guides' it implies leadership, responsibility and a duty of care on their part. The NMA and government share this responsibility — although not the income — with the Sherpa guides, leaders or mountain communities. Accepting clients with little mountaineering experience increases the risk to everyone but also increases

the duty of care burden on guides, leaders and government. It seems to me, after 39 climbing and trekking adventures in Nepal, poor management of mountain tourism is changing the game and degrading the experience, without improving the lot of mountain communities. On the other hand, a few egos having a crowded day on Everest palls in the face of Nepal's greater social and economic needs.

Bill O'Connor

EVEREST CLEANUP

So good to have this article to share with my American friends who love mountain climbing and have been horrified by recent articles even in our favourite news source, NYT, about the degradation of the Everest environment ('Expedition brings down 11 tons of Mt Everest trash', Bharat Bandhu Thapa, #962).

Wilda Campbell

Well done to all concerned. I think it is time for the Nepal government to get serious. Close the mountain for one or two seasons, clean up the trash and then re-open to climbers at increased fees with only a limited number of permits per season. Let the Sherpas themselves run the whole management of the mountain and empower them to enforce the law.

Andrew Duncan

Thank you for this much needed and labourious task. It is a shame that there are expeditions this year failing to abide by the rules to bring down their own trash. Perhaps the Nepal government should deny climbing permits for the next climbing season to any company that failed to provide for compliance of these regulations.

Kathryn Schwenger

I'm not a climber but if they can take it up why can't they bring it down?

Christine Henry

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Caliber
MADE IN NEPAL

Priyanka Budathoki
in Parsa

Nepal has made significant progress in raising primary school enrolment, with more than 95% of boys and girls now attending school from Grades 1 through 5. More than half of adolescent girls in rural areas are now in secondary schools; 15 years ago it was less than 30%.

Despite this achievement, poverty, family pressure and gender-unfriendly schools mean that the dropout rate for girl students is still high. As a result, adolescent girls from rural areas get caught in a trans-generational cycle of poverty inherited from their mothers, and are more likely to pass it on to their own children.

In response, VSO Nepal, in partnership with Aasaman Nepal, the British Council, Global Action and Mercy Corps, is helping girls in districts like Parsa — where female literacy is low — through a program called Sisters for Sisters' Education. Older girls are recruited to mentor younger ones, increase their enrolment and prevent dropouts.

The older girls are volunteers from the community, who act like Big Sisters to get Little Sisters into school and guide them through adolescence. Big Sisters provide not only academic support but also encouragement and taboo-busting information on sexual and reproductive health to the younger ones.

More than one-third (36%) of Nepali women over 15 have had no education. This rate increases with age — more than 91% of women ages 60-64 cannot read or write.

Girls are at a much higher risk of dropping out due to cultural bias, lack of educational opportunities and resources, and

SISTERHOOD OF STUDENTS

A new approach allows older female students to support younger ones to complete schooling



Do not fail students in WASH

Nepal must ensure progress in water, sanitation and health continues, so children stay in school

 **SOMEWHERE ELSE**
Marty Logan

By the numbers, Nepal's progress in water, sanitation and health (WASH) is encouraging. More than 90% of people now have access to toilets and 74% enjoy safe drinking water, a recent survey found.

But as usual, facts and figures alone don't tell the full story. According to Unicef, just 25% of water supply systems in the country work properly, 36% require minor repairs and 39% need either major repairs, rehabilitation or reconstruction.

Schools are also reporting progress — 82% now have toilets and close to 80% can

boast an improved water source — but in only 47% of schools was water supply available during a recent survey.

Nationally, two-thirds of schools have separate toilets for girls. That is supported by research done in 12 schools in Achham, Bajura and Parsa in 2016. It found that all schools had toilets, with 10 having separate ones for girls. Yet only 3 toilets in all 12 schools had a water tap that children could reach and just 1 toilet in all the schools was disabled-friendly. Nineteen toilets had a door that locked while 33 lacked a door; no toilets had soap and water nearby for hand-washing.

Girl students especially are sensitive to the availability of toilets, and if they have to share facilities with boys, or if there are no locking doors or if no water is available, some girls will choose to stay home instead.

Given that enrolment of girls in schools is





“I am proud of my sisters”

Apsana Khatun, 19, from Province 2, is a Big Sister community volunteer who mentors four girls (Little Sisters) in a community school. When her relatives wanted her married, Apsana’s mother resisted. Apsana’s story:

“I am a Muslim. The girls in my community cannot go out on their own, and have to wear veils. My relatives wanted me married off, but my mother allowed me to go to school. Many other girls are not so lucky. After completing Grade 10, I became a Big Sister community volunteer in Sisters for Sisters’ Education in my village.

I am responsible for four Little Sisters, whom I mentor with academic guidance and emotional support. At first their parents were not happy with me. But I persisted, and got two of them who had dropped out back in school. Now, the parents treat me like family. I feel so proud when the girls in my school say they want to be teachers, doctors and nurses. My mother never went to school; I want every mother in Nepal to be educated.



“Never look back”

Sunti Devi is 34 and her daughter is 12, the age she was when she got married. At 16 with two babies in her arms and a small bag, Sunti was forced to leave her husband’s home. She does not want her daughter, or other daughters in Nepal, to go through what she did and now mentors female students in her community. Sunti’s story:

“I was in Grade 7 when my parents fixed my marriage with someone in a faraway village. I became a mother at 13, but my in-laws taunted me for giving birth to a daughter. A year later I gave birth to a baby boy and hoped to be accepted back to my husband’s house. I returned only to find that he had married someone else.

I completed Grade 10 and began teaching in a primary school, renting a room to raise my children as a single mother. I started working in Sisters for Sisters’ Education and have never looked back. I am living in the same community where my husband lives with his second wife, but that does not affect me anymore. I am determined not to let my students be forced into marriage at an early age. As an Auntie Champion I train the girls in life skills, mentor them and increase their confidence.”

pressure to marry. Roughly 40% of girls are married before they turn 18 – the third highest child marriage prevalence in South Asia. Enrolment rates for girls have risen in recent years, and great progress has been made towards gender equality in education, but girls are still much less likely to be educated than boys.

Sisters for Sisters not only gets Big Sisters to mentor Little Sisters through school and act as positive role models, it works with girls’ families and schools to ensure they remain within the formal education system.

Although child marriage is illegal, girls living in rural areas get pulled out of school to be married as early as 13. As girls enter adolescence, this and other pressures increase, resulting in a rising dropout rate: 6% drop out of primary school while 8% leave secondary school.

By dropping out, adolescent girls in rural areas fail to acquire a lifetime capacity for critical thinking and problem solving that can only be learned via secondary education, which goes beyond basic literacy and numeracy skills.

As Little Sisters age, VSO supports them to enrol in higher education, which enhances the girls’ confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to take control of their own sexual and reproductive health and rights, and develop life skills.

So far, peer learning support funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) has helped 8,115 girls in Nepal, in 50 schools in Dhading, Lamjung, Surkhet and Parsa. 🇳🇵

Priyanka Budathoki is with VSO Nepal.

ALL PHOTOS: PRIYANKA BUDATHOKI



No Privacy

Photo (left) taken by Sushma, 15, from Sindhuli, in a WaterAid UK participatory project She said: “This is the girls’ toilet at our school. It doesn’t lock properly. If someone is inside, someone else has to wait outside, pushing the door. This is why we need more girl-friendly toilets.”

Handwashing at a mother’s group meeting in Achham. (below)

already lower than boys because of traditional beliefs that educating females is simply not a smart investment, effort is needed to ensure they remain in class. When girls are menstruating equipped private toilets are even more important.

The number of examples is growing country-wide of schools where the administration and students are overcoming traditional barriers to together manage girl students’ menstruation so that they don’t miss classes. There was good news in the recent budget too, the government promising to

supply all community schools with sanitary pads and also allocating Rs43 billion for water supply and sanitation projects.

While implementation will be key, such initiatives should be praised. WASH is not a luxury or an add-on like a science lab or a football pitch; it is a necessity. Having working toilets does not equate to equipping schools with fancy facilities but of taking pains to create healthy environments, and habits, for Nepali children.

Advances in water supply will undoubtedly be challenged by growing shortages as the climate crisis deepens. Water quality also remains a priority concern in this country. Surveys have found that 71% of households in Nepal are at risk from E. coli contamination of source water, and 82% from E.coli at the household level. 700 children die from diarrhoea yearly.

If we want our girls to have the same opportunities as boys, and if we want all children to be healthy enough to attend school every day, it’s time that we took building — and maintaining — toilets as seriously as we do building roads. 🇳🇵



MARTY LOGAN



To mark World Environment Day (5 June) a WASH Mela is being held 8-9 June, 8AM-5PM, Basantapur, Kathmandu



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Nepal’s undecided decision-makers

Don't believe what the press is writing about ministers being incompetent. As usual, the media is exaggerating.

Actually, our ministers are hard at work behind the scenes trying not to take any major decisions. This is an ingenious strategic move by the government so that they do not make any mistakes.

If no decisions are taken, there is no chance of the decisions being wrong. For anything to go wrong, a decision has to be taken that is not right. It is audacious for the government to be so decisively indecisive, since decisions that are eventually taken may turn out to be the wrong decisions.

Policy-makers may think they are decision-makers. Out of sheer boredom they take impulsive decisions, and immediately get to regret their decisiveness. Since this is a two-thirds majority grumblement, the Cabinet has the mandate to not decide on anything of a substantive nature.

So, the matter of the members of the Cabinet (Motto: 'Who Told You the Buck Stops Here?') being incompetent doesn't arise. It's an idiot-proof system of governance because our movers and shakers don't move at all and very rarely shake. To make the system even more failsafe, ministers have collectively decided to henceforth scrap Cabinet meetings at Singha Darbar altogether since it has been decided that everything is not decided at Baluwatar anyway.

Even so, the grovelment spokespersona is required to hold a press conference every Thursday to brief the press about the decisions that were not taken by the Cabinet. In the pseudo-nationalist interest, we have decided to publish heretounder all pending indecisions:

1. The Cabinet has decided not to make any decision on reviving the Melamchi project, and instead allow the 26.7km tunnel to be used for a Bullet Train service to Langtang National Park. But no decision had been taken till press time.
2. The Ministry of Information Overload has firmly decided to put off any decision on the Media Council Bill because it would show that the government had foolishly decided to be decisive.
3. The God of Rain has not yet decided when the monsoon will begin, and farmers have therefore put off their decision to transplant paddy.
4. Patching potholes on the 500m section of road between Chabahil and Baudhha is half-complete because the Department of Roads and Kingdoms is half-decided about completing it before the rains.
5. The government hasn't decided what the decision should be on the Nijgad Airport clear-felling contract. "The decision hasn't been taken on who should decide which logging company should bag the deal," clarified the government spokespersonification with a hint of indecisiveness in his voice.
6. Heavenly sources have told The Ass on condition of anonymity that The Almighty hasn't made up his and/or her mind about what to do with Nepal next. "God is weighing the options since things are fluid. Just because he is omnipresent doesn't mean he's got Nepal all figured out," said a celestial spokespersonality.



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