Hornets nest

The people must take leadership in a democracy... and elected leaders should listen to them,” Prime Minister Oli said in a speech at Oxford University last week. But back home, protests over the controversy, Guthi Bill had snowballed precisely because his government had ignored the will of the people in trying to ram that and other legislation through Parliament.

Combined with the Media Council Bill, which would have dampened freedom of expression, the National Human Rights Commission Bill, which could undermine the constitutional body’s independence, an attempt to interfere with academic appointments, and other decisions, Oli showed an inclination to centralise power and go it alone.

The charitable explanation for these missteps is that the Oli administration is receiving bad advice that is landing the Prime Minister in trouble. However, there is also the strong possibility that the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) is not really committed to upholding democratic values. Although he tried in Davos earlier this year, and during last week’s visit to the UK, France and Switzerland, to play down his government’s ‘communist’ image by speaking about his adherence to an open society, Oli’s actions at home speak louder than words.

While the Guthi Bill was supposedly intended to regulate the openness in the management of some trusts, there was a blatant attempt to grab valuable urban real estate.

That bill stirred a hornet’s nest, especially among the Valley’s News community. And despite the government shelving it, tens of thousands of people poured into Mandala Square on Wednesday in an unprecedented show of force. They wanted the Guthi Bill to be scrapped and ministers who have made disparaging remarks to be sacked.

Conspicuous by his silence in all this is NCP co-chair and impatient prime minister-o- waiting Pushpa Kamal Dahal. He seems to be letting Oli stew in his own juice. The government tried earlier to squeeze the press with the Media Council Bill, but that had backfired badly. Indeed, Oli has centralised so much power in himself that when things go wrong, like now, he has to take the flak.

It is not just the new laws that have badly exposed the government’s intransigence. Nearly two years into its tenure, the ruling party made up of former UML and Mādhyasthā has little to show for itself. Laws concerning local governments are in limbo, creating uncertainty over jurisdiction and decision-making.

OWN WORST ENEMY

EDITORIAL

Says advocate Radhishray Adhikari

“We see the government go from one blunder to the next, and it begs the question of whether the Prime Minister is in charge.”

It is hard to see what Oli can do now except take recourse in a cabinet reshuffle. A cabinet face change is a time-honoured, time-consuming tactic of Nepal’s rulers, and that could be his next move.

Kumla Bhattar

Uncover the cultural heritage of Lisbon

Situated on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean lies a vibrant, cosmopolitan city brimming with old world charm. You can explore by foot and discover the ancient dictatories and museums, or take the tram, funicular or Santa Justa lift and embrace the unparalleled views of the pastel colored terracotta rooftops from above. For even more beauty, you can head to the nearby town of Sintra and revel at the spectacular fairytale castles. The treaty of Lisbon is endless
OWN WORST ENEMY

The Nepal Communist Party does not need enemies. It is doing its best to undermine itself. It is squandering its two-thirds mandate with every act of omission, every atrocity by Prime Minister KP Oli, and every bill he tries to ram through Parliament.

The upheaval comes out of its mistaken belief that a majority government can get away with anything. Twice since it came to power 18 months ago, the Oli administration has centralised power not just in Singh Durbar, but at Balkot's Durbar. In a system of federalism in a small country, this has theoretically devolved power to local government, but we have evidence that this is nearly as centralised as the Rana oligarchy. It is playing up to autocratic tendencies.

From the very outset, Oli brought various agencies of the state under his own control. He then used a law to freeze various civil service jobs in academia, the education sector, citizenship and publishing under the Communist Party's criteria.

The bills were not supposed to streamline development, but to extend political control, restrict information or to usurp real state power. The measures were greeted with sporadic protests, but none has been as sustained and intense as the outrage over the Oli Bill. Besides being a travesty of democracy, the process brings the tax heaven of Kathmandu Valley's government community, already outraged by the erosion of its heritage and civilisation through rampant urbanisation, the Kathmandu Bill was the last straw.

Indeed, Oli does not need enemies. He has himself. By making statements like the recent one in which he said that local government should be under the purview of the federal state, he rubbed everyone the wrong way. Instead of trying to allay fears that he is centralising power, the Prime Minister himself seems to want to centralise power. Him, or I?

To be sure, Oli comes with a mandate, which itself was a reward for his handling of immediate post-earthquake response, promotion of the Constitution and the Indian blockade in 2015. If the election victory of the UML that combines and the ensuing unification of the party made the NCP a strong political force, why then is it behaving like it is weak and thin-skinned?

Governance failure, a corruption pandemic, internal strife within the NCP, and the threat from the Biplav radicals would require full-time attention from the government. But the Prime Minister has been too busy to learn one foreign opinion after another to deduce time to these urgent crises. All this has undermined the Oli government's few accomplishments in the past year.

Oli's other bedside is internal — there are factions within factions that have prevented practical unification of the two parties. Pushpa Kamal Dahal is indeed playing to his heart's content, and seems to have suspected that Oli is never going to quit. Oli, in turn, appears to have lost touch with what the public is thinking, and has lashed out at intellectuals, civic society and media for criticism, when his real enemies are those who wish to dismantle the secular republican Constitution, undermine federalism and return the country to violence.

Yet, all is not yet lost. There is still a chance for the NCP to redeem itself and win back the people's trust, even if it is in token high-voltage projects. There are some young doctors in the Cabinet who can deliver if given the chance. Oli has no alternative but to take the people along with him for his own sake, for the sake of his party, and the nation.
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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
Who stands with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal?

It is not too late to repatriate the remaining 7,000 Bhutanese nationals still in camps in eastern Nepal

Bhuwan Gautam
and
T P Mishra

On 29 June it will be another World Refugee Day, another year in which we remember the world’s most forgotten election of a people from their homeland. Of the 160,000 Nepali-speaking people of Bhutan that the Drunk regime forced out in the early 1990s, there are still 7,000 in two camps in Dapa and Morung. The rest have been resettled in seven countries around the world.

The fate of the remaining refugees is a serious crisis because while the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has already warned it will be shutting down the two camps, the Government of Nepal has not advanced the option of long pending repatriation. On the other side, the US government, which absorbed 99,000 Bhutanese refugees under a multilateral resettlement program, has already shut the door to further admissions.

Although a majority of the just over 113,000 Bhutanese refugees opted for third-country resettlement, some among those remaining in Nepal and their leaders, including exiled political parties, continue to call for repatriation to Bhutan, but to no avail. If nothing changes, these refugees will prefer to stay in the camps.

Yet if UNHCR pulls out, a humanitarian crisis is likely to endanger the lives of hundreds of children and elderly refugees. Many among those longing for repatriation see the most vulnerable — aged and illiterate individuals who need support.

Thimphu’s strategy is to convince Kathmandu to absorb the remaining refugees permanently. Irrespective of Bhutan’s approach, UNHCR must actively and continuously promote the repatriation option.

With over 65 million forcibly displaced people around the world, we understand that the UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations want to shift their focus to other more needy refugees elsewhere in the world. However, we believe that it would be wrong for UNHCR to stop assisting Bhutanese refugees remaining in Nepal.

Despite 16 rounds of bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan that lasted nearly 20 years, Thimphu prevailed with its stance of not taking back any of the 100,000 ethnic Nepalis and Shanshops forcibly expelled in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Bilateral talks abruptly stopped in 2004, following an alleged attack on the Bhutanese Joint Verification Team at Khuthusumbari Camp, and no promising signs of resumption have been seen since.

Given the common religious heritage between the remaining refugees and Nepal, it might sound like the ideal solution for them to assimilate locally, but in reality this could be a big political blunder because an additional 80,000 ethnic Nepalis currently living in Bhutan and denied citizenship might be subject to a second forced move. To be fair, it is equally possible that some of those left behind in the refugee camps will be happy to assimilate in Nepal, as they have already lived there for three decades — enough time to feel a sense of belonging. If doing so would ensure that Bhutan will not evict more refugees, perhaps the Government of Nepal should honour those individuals’ wishes.

It would be painful for the world to see the refugees living in limbo in the camps instead of being repatriated or locally settled. India, which keeps Bhutan under its auspices, and the US, which absorbed the majority of the refugees, should start to pressure Thimphu to undertake a more realistic solution so justice is served. It is the ethical and moral responsibility of these countries, as well as Nepal and the seven other western countries that resettled refugees, to conduct talks for the rights of those remaining. Repatriation was introduced as a humanitarian solution, not a permanent one.

Bhutan has no choice but to repatriate refugees while providing restitution for their property in Bhutan. It should also introduce a bill allowing political parties in exile to register for elections. If repatriation happens, which it must somehow, Thimphu should also allow resettled former refugees to travel to their country of origin. The current policy restricts them, even if they apply for a tourist visa. In the long run, this will boost the country’s growth.

While the refugees in eastern Nepal await repatriation, we hope the UNHCR will not shirk from its responsibility, and that other stakeholders will increase pressure on the Bhutanese government for the dignified return of the Bhutanese nationals. At the very least, repatriation will be a victory for the Bhutanese against their country’s ethnic-cleansing policy.

Bhuwan Gautam and T P Mishra are both journalists with the Nepal Rastra Bank. Gautam graduated from University of Nebraska in Lincoln, US, and Mishra from the University of Oxford in public administration, and holds an international studies degree from University of North Carolina and executive doctor at Boston Medical Society.
Pre-school pedagogy puts kids first

July’s Reggio Emilia Summit will examine early childhood education methods relevant for Nepal

Prakriti Kandel

A

cise focus of education in Nepal shifts to quality from enrollment rates, a major international conference is being held in Kathmandu to review the latest findings about the importance of early childhood education.

The internationally acclaimed Italian pre-school pedagogy called the Reggio Emilia approach believes in placing children at the forefront of their own education. Kids are able to channel their interests and curiosities to shape their learning, rather than simply absorbing information from an adult.

Founded by Loris Malaguzzi in 1945 in Italy after the end of the Second World War, the Reggio Emilia philosophy has been adopted in 34 countries. The approach has been corroborated by recent research that proves pre-school education lays a child’s foundation in motor skills and learning capacity in later life.

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Events Meetings Weddings
Divine intervention by ex-Kumaris

The combined power of eight former living goddesses brought down an April storm on a book launch

That in remote corners, propitious offerings to the demanding deity Durga extended beyond благодарности, goats and chickens to requiring human sacrifices.

It was only in 2014 that a new book by Isabelia Tseri pictured above with Chaitya Dhanapal, the former Patan Kumari whose starting light on the hidden practices that had successfully been obliterated and concealed for generations. For uninhibited readers such as myself, it was a revelation. Unimaginatively titled The Living Goddess, it reads like a historical thriller, exploring the tangled politics of the Shakyas and explaining the origins of their tantric traditions. Over many visits from Britain, I was deeply moved to explore the complexities of Hindu heritage, religious beliefs and Kumar worship. For me, Valley customs would never seem the same again.

First visiting Peak Street on a university holiday with her childhood sweetheart and future husband Charlie, Icyn became obsessed with uncovering the details of Kumar Lives. It took her 13 years to win the trust of their custodians and caretakers, and to coax them to reveal their judiciously kept secrets. The timing was right: the social upheaval caused by the royal massacre, new regimes and millennium change were challenging the relevance of hidden Newari religious practices judiciously kept secret over many centuries. With perfect pitch she was there with her notebook at the right moment to receive their confidence, interview the protagonists and ‘journey into the heart of Kathmandu’.

Isabelia Tseri casts a slender figure, a pixie haircut and an air of applied energy. Her Nepal book is one of several written in her modern writing shed, tucked away in the walled garden of her English home. The most recent is an acclaimed account of how she and Charlie ‘re-wildled’ their Sussex farm, bringing back a patch of wild flowers, insects and animals to save the environment.

I arrived late for supper one autumn evening, and I was putting the final touches to a wild mushroom risotto on the kitchen Aga whilst Charlie poured a plant catalogue and Highland cattle grazed peacefully beneath the lime trees in the parkland beyond the gothic windows. ‘Can you help me arrange the launch for The Living Goddess book? — I have family and friends coming from all over, as well as many former Kumari, their relatives, guardians and priests whose support was so essential for my study insights. I want something informal and informal in which we can feel comfortable together.’ April is a gentle month and I suggested we hold it outside in the Garden of Dreams.

The spring afternoon was clear as guests gathered at Kaiser Mahal for the book launch event. The flowers flourished, the bamboo rustled and the sound carried across the grass lawns marshalling their plates and glasses. But then, with no apparent warning, the sky blackened and leaves swirled in wild gusts. Books and drinks and guests were rushed under cover.

Within minutes we were drenched by the unexpected rainstorm, lightening streaked the sky and thunder cracked overhead with ominous persistence. The Garden of Dreams is not the place for a large group to get caught in an April deluge. The bar provision at the western end was solid with cheerful guests, even though the servers could hardly move with their precarious trays amongst the heavy, damp bodices beneath the mirrored metal ceiling. I was pressed between the large American Ambassador’s grey suit and writer William Dalrymple in flowing Indian sheets, hair plastered against his forehead. A self-conscious Hollywood actor was pished helplessly against aainty elderly artist in flood print.

When the downpour subsided we made our way to the shelter of the Kaiser café. Rachman clergies greeted their former Shakyas and Vajrayanis charges — eight ladies who had progressed from a childhood to living duties to become college graduates, professionals, wives and mothers. Despite their divine background they seemed more like ordinary women to me, dressed for the day, and excited to meet up with Icy and her young family. Although we had forgotten they were unable to eat from communal plates for purity reasons, so there was a scramble to prepare special canapes.

The launch went ahead with prayers and speeches drowned cut by the suspius storm, and stacks of books soggy and drenched. Icy was elegant and philosophical, smiling beside a wrists spotted earlier bearing heavily on his walking stick. ‘It is rare for so many to be together in one place. The combined power of eight former goddesses is so immense and we are touched that of course the elements are influenced. We should not be surprised by the effect of their presence on the weather. ’

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Motorcycle Grandma

Women should rise above their station in life, says easy rider Pushpa Lata Acharya

Gopal Gartaula

During her recent two-week road trip from Kathmandu to Delhi and back, people who had heard of Pushpa Lata Acharya’s journey through YouTube lined up by the highway to greet her as she entered past on her Royal Enfield Bullet motorcycle.

At every stop along the East-West Highway there were long queues of young girls who wanted to take selfies with the easy-riding grandmother outside her powerful bike.

The 61-year-old is an avid biker and has travelled to 76 districts across the country on her preferred mode of transport. On this journey, she rode the 790km Delhi-Agra Lucknow circuit on a single-day, covering 450km every other day. She travelled the 3,200km roundtrip with her son Andip and his friends, but got them only at the end of each day, preferring to ride on her own.

“There is just something about travelling alone, being independent and carefree,” says Acharya, who is now busy planning a Mechi-Makalu motorcycle traverse of the country from east to west.

Acharya first learned to drive two and four wheelers in 1986. By 1997, she was riding a Yamaha RX on the streets of Kathmandu, and since then has changed her ‘ride’ three times. She bought her latest, the Bullet, in 2017 for Rs400,000.

Acharya says she never liked being a pillion rider, but used to ride on the back when her husband Atma Ram Acharya was still alive. When he died five years ago, she decided custom by not wearing traditional white. Many bad-mouthed Pushpa Lata, but she is the type who doesn’t care what others say about her.

This sense of independence and empowerment is her personality, and through motorcycle trips she has become an inspiration for others, much younger, Nepali women. Acharya is also demonstrating to Nepali widows that life does not stop after the death of their partners, and they should live life to the fullest.

Pushpa Lata has been undertaking even more adventurous trips on her Bullet, and in showing no signs of slowing down. Besides cross-country and cross-border journeys, she also uses her two-wheeler to distribute books to schools in rural areas whenever she is free.

Preparing to drive off from Kathmandu to her parental home in Ramghat of Lamjung recently, she said: “Every time I ride, it is with the message that each and every woman should take a step up to rise above their station in life.”

TATA NRG
NEPAL’S YOUNGEST CUV

DRUM ROLL

Nepal's newest music festival is guaranteed to start with a bang. Durbar. Nepal Drum Jatra next week will feature the heavy beats of metal, wood and leather drums alongside delicate sounds of bells and singing bowls. The dholki, mukhi and snare will inject a Nepali flavour to this international event. "We want to showcase the variety of styles we have in drums because Nepal is so rich in them, but we hardly ever celebrate drums," says festival organiser Nabin Chaudhary. "Every major city in the world has drum festivals, except Kathmandu—so we wanted to start something new."

Kathmandu will reverberate 24-29 June with Drum Jatra concerts that will feature Nepali sounds like Neykhoba, the drumming of the butcher community in Bhaktapur, which was almost lost due to caste stigma, and Tamang Sela, which embodies the history of that hill community.

Foreign rhythms will sound out courtesy of the Australian didgeridoo and in the person of Edo Brandes, an acclaimed drummer from Vienna who will add a Balkan flavour.

Along with performances, a series of workshops by experts will allow aspiring drummers to tap into Nepali percussion styles and Afro-Brazilian beats. Events will take place all over the city, culminating with the finale at Summit Hotel on 29 June.

Sewa Bhattarai

Esad Halilovic

Jazz drummer, composer and music critic from Vienna, the top-giving Halilovic has composed and performed at renowned international jazz festivals. He will also be giving workshops on hand techniques for drummers and improvisation of drum sets.

Performers: Traditional folk music from the Balkans in the language of contemporary jazz.

Kathmandu Baja Puca

A young group performing in the Neykhaba tradition. They refer to Newari butchers, with whom the tradition originated. Baja is an instrument that is considered untouchable, and their musical legacy was feared as younger girls rejected it because of the caste stigma.

Performers: The recovered Neykhaba repertoire with pride, with determination to preserve it for future.

Abhaya Krishna Shrestha

Musician, composer and ethnomusicologist with expertise in traditional drumming in Kathmandu Valley. Shrestha documents different Nepali drumming traditions, exploring ways to bring them into the academic realm and international contemporary music. His initiative to learn the Neykhaba of Bhaktapur’s Newar butcher community was covered in print.

Performers: Dholbajja, HawaBajja of Bhaktapur, Neykhaba of Bhaktapur, and Saphi music.

Salil Subedi

A pioneer didgeridoo player who has explored the ancient wind instrument's potential beyond music, employing it in theatre, performance art, sound art, and social and public art for educational, social and cultural causes. His central theme is nature and spirituality.

Performers: unique styles of didgeridoo as a percussive and rhythmic instrument, revealing the versatile nature of the instrument and the performer.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

24 June
10:00 am - 11:00 am / Hand technique for Drummers / Salil Subedi
11:00 am - 1:00 pm / Nepali Folk Percussion Presentation - Abhaya Shrestha
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm / Essential Grooves for Jazz Drummers - Raven Chenri
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm / Afro-Cuban / Brazilian Rhythm Section - Salil Subedi

25 June
10:00 am - 11:00 am / Dilla on Drums - Rkan Shahi
11:00 am - 12:00 pm / Modular Tuning - Narech Pradip
CONCERT SCHEDULE

JUNE 23

Navin Chettiri

JUNE 25

Navin Chettiri

JUNE 27

Navin Chettiri

JUNE 28

Navin Chettiri

JUNE 29

Navin Chettiri

JUNE 30

Navin Chettiri

A percussionist's dream team, with special emphasis on hand drum and tabla, and featuring a wide variety of percussion instruments from around the world.

A unique combination of global music and the rich heritage of Nepali folk music, featuring a dynamic and diverse range of instrumental and vocal performances.

A unique blend of global and traditional sounds, featuring a range of instruments such as tabla, drum, and cymbals, performed by a group of skilled musicians.

A fusion of global music styles with a focus on the tabla, featuring an array of percussion instruments and live programming.

A percussionist's dream team, featuring a range of instruments such as tabla, drum, and cymbals, performed by a group of skilled musicians.

A performance featuring a range of globalization sounds and rhythms, showcasing the diversity of global music.

A group of percussionists from around the world, featuring a range of percussion instruments and a broad spectrum of musical styles.

A unique blend of global music styles with a focus on the tabla, featuring a range of percussion instruments and a wide range of musical styles.

A unique blend of global music styles with a focus on the tabla, featuring a range of percussion instruments and a wide range of musical styles.

Mangal Man Maharjan

As an accomplished Nepali percussionist, he performs with a group of young Nepali percussionists, blending traditional and modern sounds to create a unique and captivating performance.

Rabin Lal Shrestha

A unique blend of traditional and modern percussion sounds, featuring a range of percussion instruments and live programming.

Nareesh Prajapati

A percussionist's dream team, featuring a range of percussion instruments and live programming.

Kiran Saha

A percussionist's dream team, featuring a range of percussion instruments and live programming.
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**Yatri Suites and Spa**

**Namlo Buddha Resort**

**Events**

**Let’s Hike**

**Living Tradition**

**Embraces**

**Understanding the Himalaya**

**Private is Political**

**Cityscape**

**Fantastic Night**

**Music Day 2019**

**Kaiser Cafe**

**Republic Weekend**

**Flekké + K/C**

**Kleo**

**New Orleans**

**Evoke Cafe & Bistro**

**Pizza & Pasta**

**Namo Buddha Resort**

**Music**

**Dining**

**Kathmandu Valley**

**Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Index**

**Air Quality Index**

**Kathmandu, 14-20 June**

**INFO**

**Hotel Heranya**

**Heranya Villa**

**Heranya Lakes**

**Tourist Attraction, Patan**

Information about the Hotel Heranya and the surrounding area. 

**OUR PICK**

**Kathmandu, 21-27 June**

**Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Index**

**Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Index:** The AQI (Air Quality Index) has improved somewhat, but there is a moderate warning. The concentration of hazardous particles is still high, in relation to the AQI. The river is still not safe for swimming. In the river, all activities are prohibited. 

**Gaida Wildlife Camp**

**Mount Princess Hotel**

**Yatri Suites and Spa**

**Namlo Buddha Resort**
Another harsh winter this year in the part of the Tibetan Plateau that is located in Nepal’s Upper Mustang region has resulted in a massive loss of livestock.

Mustang’s nomads have been particularly hard hit, losing hundreds of yaks, sheep and goats. Blizzards in February killed many of the goats and sheep in their pens, and yaks in the upper regions also died. The nomads have a close bond with their sheep and goats, giving each of the baby animals to the correct mother every evening after grazing.

The nomads who live on the Nepal side of the border with China are resilient, and know how to survive in the bitter cold winters of the high plains. But nothing prepared them for the ferocity of this year’s storms. A series of blizzards in February and March left up to 1m of snow, and before it had a chance to melt, more started falling.

This is the third winter in the last seven years with unusually heavy snowfall, and the nomads have suffered the loss of a large percentage of their livestock.

News of the blizzards did reach faraway Kathmandu and the provincial capital of Pokhara, but no help came. The nomads, many of whom are Tibetan refugees without Nepali citizenship, do not have monetary savings and survive on barter, so they had no way to recover their losses.

Local communities and trekking groups have been helping the nomads living near Lo Manthang recovers. One of them is Khamang Journeys, which specializes in trekking tours to camp and travel with the nomads.

It has set up The Nomad Fund, and says the money collected from its Adopt a Goat program is delivered directly to nomad families. Despite its name, the $100 per goat collected can be used by the nomads as they need, whether for food and supplies, medical care or to purchase replacement livestock.

“The Adopt a Goat project is very close to our hearts as we have been trekking with these resilient, warm, generous and tough nomads for nearly two decades,” says Kim Hannister of Khamang Journeys. “We provide families with financial help when they lose their animals during winters, and help with sales of their hand-woven textiles.”

To contribute to Adopt a Goat and the Nomad Fund go to: https://www.khamangjourneys.com/
**Art of everyday living**

The exhibited collection of Living Traditions Museum gives history and art lovers the sense of diving into Nepal’s rich cultural past.

Inense perfumed the hall as visitors entered a room full of photographs hung on the white walls of Narayan Museum on a recent Saturday evening. The guests quickly dispersed, drawn by the pictures from every corner of the country, photographed by Judith Conant Chase in her travels crossing Nepal since 1976.

Below the photographs 400 everyday objects were lovingly displayed, from Chase’s collection. Together, such photos and objects make up the Living Tradition Museum, opened by Chase in 2012 in Changa Narayan, but damaged in the 2015 earthquake. Luckily, the collection was saved and after rebuilding, the museum will reopen in a few months.

The photographs present a vivid replication of the past. An 88-year-old Newari woman with a widecloth face walks holding the hand of a woman (aka patan) Newar drees behind three small monks as they celebrate her 88 years, 8 months and 8 days jambha.

The objects displayed are simple items, like a brass vessel used to store and carry water, a spinning wheel for weaving shawls and mats, and a special coat called a garmi worn by the man of the Nyo girls. The objects of the men exhibit a warm and savory masculinity.

“I appreciate the old potpourri for the workmanship,” says the exhibition’s curator James Giambrone. When he first came to Nepal, in 1976, all the items exhibited were in daily use. Today, the items exhibit how our ancestors have to cook and eat. One of the things we want to showcase here is that people make murtis to worship. Art to showcase,” Giambrone added.

The exhibit reminds us of the rich culture and diversity of Nepal, from the Tarai, to the hills and the high Himalaya. It opens a window for younger generations to see how utilitarian objects were created and used in daily life.

“Communicating the basic nature of Nepali arts and cultures, emphasizing the distinguishing qualities unique to each culture, i.e., why things are made, how they are made, what they tell us about their social and religious context,” is the goal of the Living Tradition Museum. According to Chase’s book, The Beauty of Purposeful Living, which documents the places and people who have visited and the objects that are essential to their daily lives, was also launched at the opening.

**Dazed:** Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli is after visiting the CERN high-energy physics laboratory in Geneva during his Europe tour last week.

**Guns and Roses:** Popular singer Yasheshwor Aniya hands flowers to riot police at Marpha Mandal on Wednesday as the protests against the Guthi Bill resumed.

**Blood Drive:** UN Ambassador Rundy Berry donates blood at the Nepal Red Cross Society in Kathmandu last week.

**No Sacrifice:** Activists march in Kathmandu demanding a ban on animal sacrifices at the Gadhimai Festival, which sees the mass slaughter of animals every five years in Bari.

**Sports Deal:** Country Manager of Turkish Airlines Abdullah Tuner Kenki and Sugamshika Cement sign a sponsorship deal for the annual Nepal Sports Journalists’ Forum (PSJF) Sports Awards Day at 2 July.
Himalayan meltdown from space

Declassified US spy satellite images confirm Himalayan glaciers are melting faster than we thought

Nina Pullano
in New York

U
s spy satellites that secretly kept watch over the Himalayas during the Cold War are helping researchers piece together the most detailed array yet of the region’s accelerating ice loss.

The US military used the satellites to take thousands of photographs worldwide as part of its surveillance of the Soviet Union, China and other countries, dating as far back as the 1970s.

Now declassified, the satellite data is helping researchers track the melting of the Himalayan glaciers, and it is showing changes across the region that scientists say are consistent with global warming. The results could help communities in Nepal, India, China, Bhutan and downstream countries that rely on those glaciers to prepare for future flooding and changes in their water resources as the climate changes.

Scientists analyzed images of 650

Himalayan glaciers as the ice changed over four decades and found that, on average, the glaciers melted at a rate between 2000 and 2016 as they did from 1975 to 2000.

“This is a clear picture yet of how fast Himalayan glaciers are melting over this time interval, and why,” said Josh Maurer, the study’s lead author at Columbia University’s Earth and Environmental Sciences program.

The melting was driven by increases in air temperature due to the greenhouse effect, according to the study published Wednesday in the journal Science Advances. Since the melting was consistent across the region, the researchers could not attribute it to more variable, localized effects, such as black carbon, which darkens ice and absorbs more energy, or precipitation.

Eye in the Sky: A 3D model of the changing Himalayan glaciers using spy satellite images from different angles dating back to the 1970s.

“That doesn’t rule out impact by these other sources,” said study co-author Summer Gropper, at the University of Utah. But the evidence suggests warming temperatures are driving the extensive melting, and both are picking up speed.

Being able to track changes over time helps researchers piece out trends connected with global warming. “You remove some of the year-to-year variability and you get what the actual long-term change looks like,” Gropper said.

Until now, researchers have mostly looked at changes in the amount of ice and the glaciers over time, Gropper said, adding, “but that doesn’t actually tell us how much ice or water is being lost.”

To gauge the change in glacier volume, the scientists came up with a method to essentially do what our eyes do naturally, using overlapping images to construct a three-dimensional image of the terrain.

The satellite data spans India, China, Nepal and Bhutan. Each of those countries, in and downstream from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan, are members of the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), which has been studying the changes now underway in mountain glaciers.

ICIMOD released an assessment earlier this year stating that, in a worst-case scenario, Himalayan glaciers will lose more than one-third of their mass by the end of the century.

And if greenhouse gas emissions continue at current rates, two-thirds could be gone.

That melting could have devastating consequences for communities in and near the Himalayas, many of whom already face poverty and malnutrition. Glaciers melt into those vulnerabilities, threatening floods, landslides and the loss of their water supply.

“With glacier melt, the impact is bigger for mountain communities who are already dependent on glaciers,” said ICIMOD’s David Maltby.

Communities that rely on Himalayan glaciers for water already see the effects of shrinking ice. Maltby said. As canals that channel glacier water to communities run dry, they have to dig new ones. Higher in the mountains. “You can look at the mountain and see these stumps of canals fitting the glacier,” Maltby said.

Researchers hope their findings can create a framework that will help communities adapt to potential changes and variability in temperatures continue to warm. “What does that actually mean in terms of downstream water resources? We can see some potential projections to communities,” Maltby said.

Gropper said the spy satellite findings could be important in helping to persuade policymakers to plan for the effects of climate change. “It’s strengthening the case that climate change is coming more rapidly than we expect,”

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The fire has not gone out

With the nation in ferment, banned revolutionary songs from the past find resonance again

Sewa Bhattarai

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The nation in ferment, banned revolutionary songs from the past find resonance again

Nepal, Nepal. Let’s march forward with the flag of revolution in our hands.

The genre came to be known as jodal, and the songs were revived during the Panchayat when four young men, Ramchandra Raj, Manindra Khatiwada, Manashi and Atirat, established a group called Ralsa.

“At the time, the only songs were about love, not about the harsh life of poor people,” remember Raj, who today heads the Nepal Academy of Music and Dance. “Our intention was to bring awareness and to change society through music.”

The group went on to create revolutionary songs like Gaun Gaun Bade Usha and Gharke Ko Chameli and toured Nepal singing songs protesting against the Panchayat regime and establishing the pragatibhakti, which shares many features with protest music worldwide.

The songs mainly dealt with social injustices and injustices. The music was often easy and easy to repeat and understand because it was based on simple folk tunes. When performed in dances, the songs were deliberately non-sexual, featuring uniformed men and women.

The tunes were instrumental in the success of the pro-Panchayat people’s movement of 1996 and the anti-monarchy protests. During the 1996-2006 insurgency, the messages focused on injustice and an exhortation to rise up and fight. There were jodal songs containing songs on the battlefields andOUNTUS about martyrs.

“The function of revolutionary songs was to recruit people to the revolutionary cause, and to rally the people,” recall Mani Thapa, who headed a Maoist cultural group. “They were relevant at a particular moment in history, and we don’t really sing such battle-ready songs anymore.”

Many of the songs are now lost because they were never recorded, but also because the cause dissipated after the war. Writer and musicologist Ramu Ghimire believes this is the fate of all revolutionary songs: “They are associated with a particular ideology and are only relevant as long as the movement needs them. They are never going to be popular in the mainstream.”

The Maoist party’s cultural wing attracted many talented lyricists, composers and singers, but it was later dismantled.

“After the ceasefire we had intense debate about which way we should go, towards peace or towards another revolution,” remembers Lakmi Gurung (pictured above) who joined the Maoists out of revenge after her leftist father was disappeared by state security and her husband killed. It is her voice in dozens of revolutionary songs, including Rana Mardar Ma, in which a line says, ‘the lives of brave warriors bloom in the battlefields’.

“More bloodshed will not be good for the country,” says Gurung now, adding that it is hard to survive as a singer in peacetime. Other members of her troops, like Meha Lama who sang songs exhorting guerrillas to battle, have
become politicians.
Fragat Maha of the Maoist Pratibidh Cultural Group today sings songs about social ill and transformation. “The songs about battles are a part of history,” says Maha. “Now that our revolution is over, we are more focused on the need of the day.”
Meanwhile, the original Ralls generation is still active, perhaps more so than the Maoists who came after them. But even they have distanced themselves from politics. As head of a government institution, Raayan is focused on promoting Nepal’s folk art. Rammesh also shuns political affiliations, even though Ralls’s songs were used by many political movements: first against the Panchayat, then by the Maoists, who saw them as precursors to their own revolutionary songs, and finally by political parties during the 2006 anti-monarchy protests.
Rammesh is now more active as a children’s song creator. “We sing people’s songs, which speak up for the poor and disenfranchised.

If anyone wants to use them for a good cause, they are welcome. But using it for vested political interests is a crime,” he says.

Unlike Maoist songs, Ralls numbers are everywhere because they speak of the larger causes of justice and equality. Their is a lesson there in what makes a song endure, while others disappear.

Jewan Sharma, who established the Bakhtin Cultural Group, is among the few revolutionary singers who have gone mainstream. “The people always need a voice, and songs that speak truth to power. If they do that, songs do not need to be associated with any political party, they can have a life of their own.”

Sharma’s own song of the life of the disenfranchised, “Simil Chhaya me Raunam,” has that long shelf-life.

Since the Bakhtin Cultural Group was associated with the NCP, Massal led by Mohan Bikram Singh, Sharma’s songs were unofficially banned during the monarchy days and the composer himself was semi-underground during the Panchayat and the war years.

Ironically the Maoists, who once promoted revolutionary songs, are today cracking down on protest songs. Those who claimed to speak for people’s rights now try to ban songs like Pushupati Sharma’s “Lutana Sake Loot.”

Rammesh himself is still writing songs, and his latest shows the fire has not gone out:
A great storm area
To raise the fallen head of justice
Their defeatful face is now clear
Now we know they are repressive.

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Go online to listen to excerpts from revolutionary songs from the Maoist era, and hear from those who feel abandoned as the leaders who led them into the war are now trying to restrict freedom of expression.
Boutique Airport FAQs

In preparation for Visit Nepal Year 2020, Kathmandu’s Tauluken International airport (TIA) has been rebranded as Boutique Airport Nepal (BAN). This is a canny strategy to take the mints off the facilities that a normal airport should have, but which are lacking at Nepal’s only international gateway.

So, what exactly does a Boutique Airport have that an International Airport does not? I put some FAQs to the head honchos of the Civil Authority and Nepal’s Transportation (CAN’T) and got a rundown of the following features:

- The only airport in the world that has a life-size rhinoceros with call ready to charge at deplaning passengers.
- In keeping with Nepal as an adventure destination, the airport gives visitors a pre-taste of what to expect in Khumbu, proving once more that Nepal is not for the faint-hearted.
- Kathmandu Airport has been voted among the Top Ten Worst Airports in the World for the third year in a row. This is a clever move by CAN’T to get free international publicity for WWNY2020.
- A Boutique Airport must stand out by not having a boring steel and glass concourse. Which is why the Department of Irritating Customs has ensured that arrival formalities are a maze: there are separate serpentines queues for filling out the e-visa form on a dysfunctional console, to pay the visa fee, for the immigration stamp, lining up for an hour at the x-ray to check if you are metal free and have no gold stuck up your Ass. This is all a very subtle way of showing Nepal is such a popular adventure destination that people are lining up just to get in.
- The baggage carousels at a Boutique Airport have to be designed differently from other international airports. Which is why at KTM no information is provided about which conveyor the luggage from your flight is on. This keeps arriving passengers on their toes, keeps them guessing, and there is never a dull moment at the start of a Nepal holiday.
- The decibel level of the public announcement system at a Boutique Airport is always deliberately kept at maximum as a courtesy to those who are hard of hearing. The audio volume is also adjusted so as to hurt the ears of those who have normal hearing.
- Arriving from Hong Kong, you are shanghaied by taxis.
- To give you more bang for the buck, the Ministry of Tourism and Museum has now ensured your trek starts at the airport itself by allowing passengers to descend a steep trail with the assistance of Sherpas to a parking lot located in the valley below.
- To make it easier for tourists to navigate, departure procedures at the Boutique Airport are in exact reverse order of the arrival process.