Premier league

Prime Minister KP Oli’s deteriorating health is setting off a hidden, yet intense, jostling for succession within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Oli, who is 67, had one of his kidneys transplanted 12 years ago, and sources say it has deteriorated so much that he needs to have dialysis three times a week. Doctors are said to have advised against another transplant because of age and the risk of infection.

Senior officials attending recent meetings with the Prime Minister have noted a visibly infirm appearance, and say the PM had difficulty moving about.

But Oli has surprised everyone by bouncing back from health crises, and his advisers say he has both the mental faculty and physical capacity to do the dialysis in Baluwatar itself.

“It is more important for Prime Minister Oli now to think about his health than his hold on power, and this is a good opportunity for him to live on, and not be seen as a political failure,” commentator Shekhar Koirala writes in a commentary for Himal Khaskhabar.

However, with doctors insisting that he rest more, there are now calls for Oli to step down on health grounds — leading to speculation about who next.

After the victory of the left alliance in 2017 and party unification, Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal had a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ that they would take turns at prime ministership, with Oli stopping down halfway through his five-year term. However, the PM has been publicly denying any such agreement, while Dahal tries to refresh the Prime Minister’s memory every chance he gets.

Most party figures say it is certain that it is Dahal’s turn to be prime minister, but add that he may have to give up his powerful party co-chair position. That role is wide open for the many aspirants who have emerged.

As with Girija Prasad Koirala, who conducted affairs of state from his bedside while on an oxygen machine, Oli too is now rarely at his office in Singha Durbar.

Just like during the monarchy days, it looks like Nepal’s leaders want to cling to power until the very end to ensure a succession that is to their liking. However, Dahal’s ascendancy may now be a fait accompli.

By-elections later this month in Kaski, Rukum, Bajura and Dang are seen as a referendum on the NCP’s rule. Analysts say that while the non-performance of the ruling party will be a factor in the polls, the NC is too weak to mount a serious challenge.

Explains political analyst Puranjan Acharya: “It does look like the failure of the ruling party and the opposition cancel each other out, but since the local governments are run by the NCP, they may have a slight edge.”

Salendra Rai

NEPAL

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Chitwan is venue for World Ranger Congress

Half of Nepali children still malnourished

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CENSORING CENSORSHIP

Now that all three festivals are over, it is time to remind ourselves of where we left off before the holidays. Lest we forget, in late September we saw a series of protests over freedom of expression that had a dampening effect, especially on Internet content.

Censorship and self-censorship are two words we demagogues worldwide learn fast: they have discovered that there is no need to kill — just stop anyone — it is much more effective to kill journalism.

By destroying the credibility of the media, citizens are too often unable to tell the difference between truths and lies, allowing rulers to get on (and get away) with wrongdoing. In this post-fact, fake news universe, the social web allows instances of spread of falsehoods, rumours and misinformation. This creates an environment for self-censorship, and the silenced are not written about in the press.

One would have thought that with its landslide victory in the 2017 elections, the ruling Nepal Communist Party would be able to perform, deliver services and upgrade infrastructure. The media would have automatically heaped praises. But since it has not been able to deliver on its promises, the party with the thickest majority in Nepal's democratic history has the thinnest skin.

In the past year, the NCP has taken incremental steps to suppress the press. There has not been any sudden, swift crackdown — the pressure has mounted in instalments. The intimidation seems to be taking our freedom away bit by bit so that we won't even notice when they are all gone — rather like the traditional Chinese practice of torture and execution known as skinfeet, death by a thousand cuts.

The story so far:

- Nepal’s new penal code last year criminalised the use of images deemed derogatory (section 289/1), slapped hefty fines and jail terms for recording conversations (section 290/1) and announced strict punishment for sending, receiving or uploading online data (section 290/2), even banned Photoshopped images for the purpose of satire.
- Parliament introduced a bill to prohibit journalists from publishing personal information of public officials, ostensibly to protect officials’ privacy.
- Editors of mainstream newspapers were unceremoniously summoned to the Press Council for intimidating interrogations.
- Journalists at the RSS news agency were questioned for filing a story on the Dhaulagiri II being discharged from hospital in New Delhi while President Bidya Devi Bhandari was on a visit to Beijing.
- The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology is backing a draconian Media Council Bill through Parliament, which would criminalise social media.
- In June, vlogger Prachad Gautam was jailed for five days by a irrevocable decision of a Nepali movie.
- Satirist singer Pushupil Shah was threatened by ruling party toughs to take down a music video ridiculing the corruption in high places.
- A poet was beaten down and arrested earlier this year for poking fun at the Minister on Facebook.
- The Information Technology Act contains sentences for 5 years in jail and a fine of up to Rs 100,000 for posting on social media.
- What constitutes “Improper” is so broad that anyone can be blames in on a technicality.
- Gyansundar Shrestha, who posted a video on Facebook of Tourism Minister Yogesh Bhattarai being berated by passengers for delaying a flight in Nepalgunj, was badly beaten up and was hospitalised.
- Last month, rapper Vim was arrested for a music video deemed obscene.

After all that, social media exploded with virulent criticism of the government. Ordinary citizens poured scorn on the stats for “failing nepalis (sic), losing, nepalis to go free”.

But the government is confident they can handle criticism in the legacy media, but are afraid of the free-for-all on the Internet.

The high profile arrests for posting on social media are meant to warn the public and any protest is so loosely defined that “just about anyone can be baffled in for anything.”

The government’s indifference to criticism seems to be a reflection of concern about Prime Minister Oli’s health, which has led to plotting for succession within the NCP. The former UML, the dominant party, which has at least paid lip service to liberal democracy, is being subsumed by more authoritarian comrades in the party with erstwhile Maoist credentials.

The emperor does not like it when it is pointed out that he is naked. Power does not like it when you speak the truth. If so, the knee-jerk reaction is to dismiss the passenger.

The threat to freedom of expression today is not from disasters, but elected leaders who have co-opted the legislature, judiciary and the security apparatus.

The crassness in Nepal is not as bad as in the rest of the region. But that is not saying much, and it is perilously close.

Our goal must be to strengthen the four pillars of democracy, separating their powers and forcing them to be more transparent and accountable.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

A young journalist in Kanchanpur, N.S. Bhattati, on November 9, 2012, asked about much had changed in the kingdom’s newly designated of Nepal.

Nepal and China suddenly began large in the media, and all harem are mentioned together in reports about China’s role in the region. The two nations are at loggerheads over their presence. In Kanchanpur, a local who had analyzed China’s increased presence in the region said: “China is not just taking over the economic and political influence in Nepal.”

The government has yet to finalize the new security agreement between China and Nepal, which is discussed about the balance between the two countries over trade from Hong Kong.

ONLINE PACKAGES

IT’S A ZOO GO THERE

Join our group on a visit to the Central Zoo in the heart of Kathmandu. Watch young animals exploring the digital Education Centre through a virtual expedition. See the large variety of animals in the enclosure, and learn more about wildlife. Story page 5.

WHAT’S TRENDS

From heads to toes

by Samendra Sijakut

Trending trends these days have been that of Nepal’s unofficial national film festivals, and it now features a fashion film. Head also is the first to introduce its own fashion fest. The film is also expected to raise funds for the National Film Foundation.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

A dog with attitude

by Samendra Sijakut

Cannes Shorty’s film is a sequel to the first film that was meant to be directed by human actors. The film is now expected to raise funds for Nepal’s animal welfare.

Most popular on Twitter

Nims Purja fans react to criticism of nepali

Some mountain climbers and climbers have been known to react to criticism of nepali

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nirmal Purja

Medicine sensationalists! Hollow glory! [Nims Purja fans need to be]... enlightened.

Eliza Shipton

Nepal is a microstate in the middle of the world. It is the heart, the lungs and the brain of the world. It is the meeting point of the world’s climates.

Andrew Weatherley

[Nepal] is the second highest country in the world. It is the home of the grizzly bear, the snow leopard and the yak. It is the home of the Himalayas.

Ed Douglas

I am a Nepalese. I am proud to be a Nepalese. I am proud of my country. I am proud of my people. I am proud of my culture. I am proud of my language. I am proud of my heritage.

Weekly Times

15 YEARS AGO TODAY

In order to keep the story of the nation alive, we should...
REST MORE

with fully flat bed & authentic sleeping kit

Business Class

TURKISH AIRLINES

Products and services are subject to change depending on flight duration and aircraft.
Migrant worker finds farming in Nepal more rewarding

Bishnu Bhujel has returned home to farm and rescue his family from bankruptcy.

The success of the Bhujels has been an inspiration to many local residents, a majority of whom are not using their land for commercial farming but prefer to lease it to migrant farmers.

Bishnu notes the irony of it all: “I abandoned farming, but it is farming that has saved my family from poverty.”

Last year, the family was able to earn $4,000,000 from the tomato patch, double the initial investment. “Farming can be profitable, but you need patience and hard work. It takes time but it is well worth it,” expla...
US pushes international religious freedom alliance

A recent international Pew survey showed that 90% of the respondents believed in a religiously restricted environment. Religious persecution and intolerance, as well as the lack of freedom of religion, are on the rise globally.

Brownback was appreciative of Nepal being an open society compared to other countries in the region. “I want to really tip my hat to the Nepali people, who have fought to maintain this openness.”

However, he added, “The erosion of the practice (of the Constitution) is concerning to us. You want religious freedom, but also social harmony. Religion is a fundamental human right — if you are fulfilling it, that is when I start raising questions. This is not a long-term sustainable path given how much integration is taking place in the world.”

Brownback does not like the word ‘secularism’ and being a person of faith, says he prefers to work for a society where there is the freedom to practice all religions peacefully.

He also has no patience with conversion using coercion and inducements, and says he has told officials in India and Nepal that bribing people to convert is a no-no. “If you know of groups doing that, I hope you will tell us about it,” he said.

But what Brownback said he is most worried about is when those in power use religion to fan populism. “Faith can be wonderful, but it can be manipulated, and that is what is happening here. Religion has now declined as a flashpoint, in fact it has increased.”

HAMMER OF FREEDOM: US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry, Mayor of Patan Thirubhuvana Manjunath and Director of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust Rishi Ranjitkar at Krishna Mandir in Patan last week.

The alliance is supposed to bring together ‘like-minded countries... to defend the unalienable rights of all human beings to believe, or not to believe, whatever it is that they choose’.

The person Trump had in mind to be Ambassador at large for International Religious Freedom, former Kansas Governor Sam Brownback, was in Kathmandu, last weekend to meet government officials and religious leaders, and to inspect the US Embassy-funded repairs on the Krishna Mandir, damaged in the 2015 earthquake.

Given the increasing polarization between the US and China, Nepal Times asked Brownback in an interview if his trip was more about Tibet and less about Nepal.

“This visit is about Nepal. It has Tibet ties, because Nepal is a major transit point for Tibetan refugees and Nepal has historically been very good about letting them come and transit,” Brownback replied. “Some of that has slowed under pressure from the Chinese, and I had some discussions with the Foreign Minister and others about it.”

Isn’t the US criticism of religious persecution in rival powers like China harsher than on geopolitical allies? Brownback makes a distinction between state-sponsored persecution of minorities in some countries like China, and rising communal tensions, as in India. Besides, he added, the US is critical of religious persecution in Saudi Arabia despite it being a key ally.

“We are sensitive to the criticism, and we try to make all our calls in this area factually based,” says Brownback, who was on a tour of the region that included Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Bangkok. “That is why we want to get the International Religious Freedom Alliance up, because we would like a much larger group internationally that would push and establish some basic standards.”

However, it is not a bit awkward for an American official to be going around the world preaching religious tolerance given what is happening back home?

“I usually tune it myself,” replied Brownback, who was governor of Kansas when two Indians were shot in his state. “I have had Jewish people killed, or white supremacists...”

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Champions of Nepal’s conservation movement

Nepal’s royals were successful in saving the country’s wildlife, but not its monarchy

It was the most splendid of glittering weddings. Fairy lights flooded through the bushes, candles glowed on the rice-wrapped tables, oil lamps marked the stone flagged paths, and white cushions padded the benches arranged around the low garden walls.

The stage setting enhanced the saari, embroidered gowns, beaded cliffs and passement shawls of the women, and men dressed in floral silk, high collars, and plaited long jackets—an ambassador and his wife in impeccably well-cut Italian suits. The diamonds dazzled, emeralds reflected the under-lit swimming pool and sapphires caught the blue of the fading sky. A thin sliver of moon hung suspended above the tiled and tiered rooftops as waiters glided by with laconic platters and silver trays of drinks.

Ministers and politicians mingled comfortably with the assembled aristocrats, generals, entrepreneurs and diplomats. Everyone was here. I spied political party leaders, retired Rhassan, an eminent surgeon, a Prince of Tezpur, Nagey and daughter of Tezpur Hame.

“The king is here!” A whisper rustled through the crowd.

The pavilion door was guarded with ferocity real: only the chosen few guests were allowed in to meet their ex-monarchs. The former queen appeared unusually animated, her greying hair drawn back from her painted chin. Through the glass windows, we could see much deferential nodding, submissive bows and polite conversation with the dethroned Mr and Mrs Shah.

Later, when Gyanendra came to leave, the chanting crowd parted, backing away spontaneously from the entrance with former feudal respect, but the royal couple was relaxed and festive mood.

Spotting me in the throng, he broke away and came over with a wide smile to shake my hand and exchange a few words before moving on with a light laugh. “Amazing. What a changed personality,” observed a seasoned guest. “What a smile — I have never seen his teeth before!”

Amidst the wedding reception hubbub, we reflected that in recent years he had not had much to laugh about. The personal cost of losing so many immediate family in the 2001 massacre, and the public price of losing a kingdom as the monarchy became a federal democratic republic — albeit with minimal hue and stile when the moment came to vacate his palace and relinquish his privileges.

A quick draw friend sent me a snapshot with the caption: “Taken in the best of the moment. Picture of you and your old friend and a quizmeal.

The royals and their guests were indeed frequent visitors to Tiger Tops in the formerly Royal Chitwan and Bardia National Parks when I was working there in the early days. With facilities and formality, they would arrive with the usual trappings of jeepish wardens, wildlife department and palace officials and security guards. Nepal’s absolute monarch was never referred to except as ‘His Majesty’ in the most hallowed and venerated tone, even in private.

A frisson of excitement would reverberate through the camp at the news of a royal visit. The lodge and its facilities were swept and spruced, the wood oiled and the hours polished. Tablecloths would be ironed, chicken plucked, prawn marinated, white stones repainted and green uniforms tidied. Helicopter arrivals were a rare event, so grass would be

area network was first established, encompassing landscapes in the high mountains, middle hills and Terai plains, and the incredibly wide biodiversity in Palaeartic and Indomalayan ecoregions. Previously a protected royal hunting reserve, Chitwan was the country’s first national park, declared in 1973, and South Asia’s first World Heritage Site, in 1984.

As the king’s youngest brother, Gyanendra led His Majesty’s Government’s conservation efforts and served on the World Wildlife Fund international board. In 1982 he founded King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation as a non-governmental and non-profit organisation, now the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), with innovative environmental and community-based solutions such as the Annapurna Conservation Area. Today protected areas cover over 20% of Nepal.

Based in their rural palaces at Kumal near headquarters or on the river near Nyaubadang, King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya would stop by for some quick refreshments as part of their jungle repose. But it was Prince Gyanendra who tended most often. Hosting Prince Bernhard and the then WWF 1987 Club for several days in Chitwan in 1977, we launched gharial crocodiles with Peter Scott, declared in 1979, and Peter Rich distribution with Chuck McDeeg and arranged a private dinner for the group the first October evening in Jim’s private bungalow, resonant with rain sounds, vibrating in the surrounding forest. Not long after, Gyanendra brought the Indian Prime Minister’s son to stay. Rajiv Gandhi was still a quiet dedicated airline pilot before family pressure forced him into politics. In 1986 Gyanendra secured Prince Philip to Tiger Tops during Queen Elizabeth’s state visit. Scrutiny and acerbic. Philip gawled at the press corps but was captivated by Chitwan’s wildlife and Nepal’s conservation gains.

Hosting David Attenborough in Nepal during the filming of a BBC nature series, we marvelled at Gyanendra’s collection of mounted hunting trophies. “Looks like this rhino charged through the wall of the zoo and got stuck,” giggled Sir David as we ushered through the entrance hall. “So the rhino was an ‘old friend’, in a radically changed world, certainly old acquaintances with an enduring jungle connection.

Such toils for many photographers, and to weed the Nepal Times, interview with then Prince Gyanendra during the United Wildlife Fund Annual Meeting in Kathmandu in November 2008.
Early Nepal drawings come full circle

Decades later, sketches and maps by European researchers are returned to Nepal

Sheliein Teo

For decades, Franz Frei’s drawings used for adult literacy classes in Nepal had been lost. In 1978, he visited the country as part of a UNICEF mission and, intrigued by the rich culture and art, he decided to make detailed drawings of the country's culture and traditions. These drawings and sketches were later sent to the Swiss sculptor and artist, Rainer Fetting, who used them as inspiration for his work.

However, when Fitting passed away in 2015, his family decided to return the drawings to Nepal. The drawings were then finally brought back to Nepal, where they were displayed in the Tangga Museum, providing a unique opportunity for the public to see these stunning works of art.

The drawings depict various aspects of Nepali culture, including traditional clothing, architecture, and daily life. They are a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Nepal and serve as a reminder of the importance of preserving and sharing this heritage with future generations.
Chitwan is venue for World Ranger Congress

A round the world, rangers in protected areas are at the frontlines of wildlife conservation, yet they receive little recognition for putting their lives at risk. That is set to change with a major international conference of rangers in Nepal’s Chitwan National Park next week.

Some 350 rangers from 70 countries will be in Saranath for the 9th World Ranger Congress, organized by the International Ranger Federation with the Ministry of Forest and Environment of Nepal and Wildlife Conservation Association Nepal (WildCan).

“Hosting this congress in Nepal is a milestone and an opportunity to showcase Nepal’s achievements in biodiversity conservation, as well as to learn from good practices around the world,” says Mahendwar Dhadal at the Ministry of Forests and Environment. “It will recognize the contribution of rangers in protecting nature in Nepal and around the world.”

The Congress is held every three years, this year being the first time it has been organized in Asia, at a moment when wildlife is under increasing threat in national parks around the world, putting rangers at increasing risk. More than 1,000 rangers have been killed in the line of duty in the past 10 years, with 146 killed by poachers in the past year alone — mostly in Africa. A survey in 2016 showed that nearly three-fourths of rangers had faced life-threatening situations on patrol.

“Time to look at strategies to get more women involved as rangers and also ensure they are protected while protecting wildlife, and help them cope with the threats,” says former ranger Thorunn Sighulsdottir from Snæfell National Park in Iceland who is taking part. “Having the Congress in Nepal is recognition of Nepal’s achievements in conservation.”

The main themes of the Congress will be the safety and welfare of rangers, most of whom do not have life insurance policies and lack proper equipment. In addition, the specific challenges faced by female rangers will be discussed at a time when only six percent of rangers worldwide are women.

There are also panels to look into the important role members of indigenous communities can play as rangers. National park staff belonging to Australian aboriginal groups, Maori from New Zealand, Andean indigenous communities in Peru, local rangers from Masai Mara in Kenya as well as Nepal’s own Tharus will be represented.

Among prominent participants will be Angula’s Minister of Environment Min Fatima Jordon, herself a former ranger. There are also panels on technology with rangers showcasing use of drones as well as other satellite-based GPS tracking techniques that rangers can use to combat poachers.

With more than 800 rangers and 500 attendees participating, the Congress will be one of the largest of its kind ever in Nepal. The sooner the rangers get more recognition, the safer they will be, ensuring better outcomes for the species they’re protecting.

Reeti KC
IT’S A ZOO OUT THERE

Fast running out of space for rescued wildlife, the Central Zoo wants to expand to Bhaktapur

127 species of reptiles. Most of them are students.

Much of the credit for upgrading the facility goes to Friends of Zoo. In the past 20 years it has built up a network of 400 zoos and 6,000 members that actively involve students in activities like cultural and educational tours to Aparajyoga Conservation Area Project and Chitwan National Park, a Night Guided Tour, Animal Feeding program and Zoo Clean-Up Campaign to teach young people the importance of conservation.

In February, the zoo opened a digital interactive audiovisual centre to share information about the animals through multimedia.

“Conservation education is the only means through which we can educate the general public and students about nature and its importance. It is an important component — that is why we are focusing on digital education as well,” says Chandra Prasad Pokhrel, Project Manager of the Central Zoo.

Zoo officials are often called to arrest hoarders or other wildlife in the outskirts of Kathmandu, and many of these animals are brought to the zoo for safety and treatment before being released back into the wild. Others, like a man eating Royal Bengal Tiger named Mahawasa rescued from Chitwan National Park, are permanent residents.

Other long-term guests are pangolins that have been rescued from smugglers, and even a pair of chimpanzees that were seized last year while being smuggled from Africa via Kathmandu to India.

There are also rhinos, jungle cats, red pandas, barking deer, Chinese macaques and birds like barn owls, larks, golden pheasants, owlets and the Eurasian eagle owl.

In fact, so many wild animals are brought to the zoo that it is running out of space. To address the problem, 15 hectares of land at the National Zoological Garden in Surya Biriyak of Bhaktapur have been set aside for a Wildlife Rescue Centre. The idea is to relocate the zoo itself to Bhaktapur, but a decision to that effect taken in 2018 has still not been implemented due to turf battles between different government agencies.

“We are hopeful because the government has allocated the budget for a detailed project report for the relocation, but it is a big project and it will take time,” says Pokhrel.

“We plan on shifting bigger animals to Bhaktapur while keeping the birds, reptiles and butterflies here in Jawalakhel, which we will turn into a research education center.”

Once the new space is operational, there will be a shuttle bus to carry visitors between Jawalakhel and the botanical garden 25km away in Surya Biriyak.

Don’t ignore Tooth sensitivity*

“Don’t ignore this, always consult your dentist.”
- Dr. Subir Banerji, dentist practising in the UK.

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**Prayas**

The Precious Art Class presents, Prayas’, which means “to try”, in this exhibition, Nepali artists express their creativity and emotions through various mediums. 10 November, 10am-9pm, NepalArtCenter, Dharahara, Kathmandu. @9841593069

**Beyond the Object**

Art historian Nakajima Yukie looks beyond the objects that we see everyday. In his exhibition, Yukie reflects on the human aspects, the stories and the abstract nature of everyday objects. 1-29 November, 11am-6pm, Dallal Art Space, Thamel. @01 4701666

**Art Afternoons**

Children can spend the weekend learning how to build rockets, creating mountains in sensory bins and being their creativity run wild. All materials will be provided. Every weekend - 2pm to 4pm, Rs50 per hour, Children’s Art Museum, Kathmandu. @9841870732

**CUBE OF TRUTH**

An amalgamation of peaceful static demonstration and an air performance, the Cube of Truth aims to demonstrate animal exploitation to viewers in promotion of vegetarianism. 9 November, 8pm onwards, Patan Durbar Square.

**Jazz After Dark**

Kathmandu Jazz Company’s weekly jam sessions at open-air bal and KFC invites new bands to perform alongside students and instructors. Listen to the best and brightest of the Nepali music scene here. Every Thursday, 8pm onwards, KFC, Gyanpathal. @9841362060

**Imogen Harper**

Australian singer Imogen Harper’s sound is reminiscent of Jan Mitchell and Leonard Cohen. After a long hiatus, Harper is back to move the audience with her powerful voice andinside rock tunes. 13 November, 8pm onwards, Tickets: Rs150, HKL, Thamel. @9840521244

**Places Jazz Night**

An a cappella jazz music, unforgettable performances and some of the best jazz bands in Nepal. Places to be seen: 8 November, 8pm onwards, Picnic Restaurant & Bar, Thamel. @9841569107

**Free Solo**

CFC film series presents, Free Solo, a National Geographic documentary featuring renowned climber Alex Honnold as he becomes the first person to free solo climb El Capitan’s 3,000ft granite face without using ropes or ropes. Honnold’s journey is gripping and bound to leave you on the edge of your seat. 8 November, 7:30pm onwards, Outdoor Adventure Centre, Thamel. @9841351615

**Beyond Boundaries**

Sudha Singh’s exhibition of ceramic paintings and pens in ink drawings depicts Nepal in an abstract and enchanting manner. Exhibition opens on 8 November at 5:30pm. 8-22 November, 8pm onwards, Kathmandu Art Gallery, Le Shisha, Kathmandu. @9841960760

**Bala Lake Village Resort**

A small, easy retreat with a bird’s eye view of green terraces dotted with admiring painted flowers. Poonkot, Kirtipur. @9841987122

**Tahar Shrestha**

One of the most promising young photographers in Nepal, Tahar Shrestha, is back and better than ever. The band is launching its first album after the much awaited music career this year. 8 November, 8pm onwards, KFC, Gyanpathal. @9840615000

**Meghna and Pranav**

Listening to the soothing sounds of this acoustic duo, Meghna and Pranav, is a treat for music lovers in Kathmandu. 8 November, 8pm onwards, Hotel Shangri-La, Chobar. @9841647400

**Achaar Ghar**

Nothing beats a home-cooked meal flavored with an assortment of pickles prepared from mistress that have been passed down from generations. 7am-2am, Patan. @9841357952

**Unlimited Dosmas**

Thin, crisp, savoury dosas filled with spiced and unspiced potatoes are the idea afternoon meal. Don’t miss Executive Chef Vikram Darlaman’s innovative take on this delicious South Indian dish. 5-21 November, Weekends only, 12pm-8pm, Shangri-La Hotel. @9841472299

**Winter Barbeque**

Inaugurating a Nepalese-style barbeque offering dishes from herb-fueled Tundikhel Meals to Shrimp, Mojo, Chorizo 8-10 inch Tandoori Fish, Honey Soy Pork and Cajun Spiced Sausages. The sweet, savoury, umami and spicy flavours are sure to leave your taste buds tingling. Every Friday, 12pm onwards, Rs166++, Prateek, Hotel Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. @9840202649

**Fusion Wednesdays**

Why wait for the weekend when you can kick back on Wednesdays? Enjoy an evening of live music, delicious food and magnificent view of Kathmandu. Every Wednesday, 6:30pm-10:30pm, Terrace Garden, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. @9841378818

**Emira Restaurant**

Emira Restaurant offers an upscale fine dining experience with chef curated continental dishes. With a team of staff approachable and at your assistance, every course turns into an elaborate meal experience. 10 November, Hotel Shangri-La, Chobar. @9841455057

**OUR PICK**

**Jagatpur Lodge**

Jagatpur Lodge’s four luxury rooms and private viewing decks offer two special experiences. While one former brings you closer to nature, the latter provides a breathtaking view of the Hills. Jagatpur, Ghalegaon. @9840327477

**Hotel Barahi**

Located just beyond the banks of Phewa Lake, Hotel Barahi offers stunning views and luxurious rooms. The rooms are decorated with rustic pieces, earthy tones and a clean design that will leave you feeling relaxed. Lakeside, Pokhara. @9841468377

**Banalha Village Resort**

A small, easy retreat with a bird’s eye view of green terraces dotted with admiring painted flowers. Poonkot, Kirtipur. @9841987122

**Grand Norton**

Take a trip to the footsteps of busy Kathmandu to the serene nature of Golum. A stay at the Grand Norton, with its spacious bedrooms, ecstatic hills, golf course and garden, will leave you feeling brand new. Golum. @9841537193

**Temple Tree Resort and Spa**

For a luxury stay, Temple Tree Resort and Spa is the place to be. Surrounded by majestic peaks, serene foothills and a lake, Temple Tree Resort offers a relaxing stay alongside amazing spa amenities. Gyangtse, Lobache, Welhat. @9841458175

**Kingfisher**

Kingfisher is now the official sponsor of Nepal Cricket. Live the spirits of the cricketing game with Kingfisher. For a 2 litre bottle, we are requiring an Air Quality Index in Kathmandu to be met before the event. The inside of the dressing rooms and the outdoor area at the match will be 100% smoke-free. Nepal and Nepal Air Asia handles the logistics and ensures 99% smoke-free environment. Nepal and Nepal Air Asia handles the logistics and ensures 99% smoke-free environment. Nepal and Nepal Air Asia handles the logistics and ensures 99% smoke-free environment. Nepal and Nepal Air Asia handles the logistics and ensures 99% smoke-free environment.
Film Southasia 2019

Documentary festival spotlights free expression just when it is under threat across South Asia

Sewa Bhattarai

Film Southasia is held every two years, and in 2019 the theme of the documentary film festival says it all: ‘Where the Mind Is Free’. Indeed, since the last edition of Film Southasia, the space for free expression has been increasingly constrained throughout the region.

From 14 to 17 November, 64 documentaries from the Subcontinent will be shown at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan — many of them films unlikely to have a public screening anywhere else in South Asia.

“By the region’s increasingly cloistered space, exclusion seems to be a common concern of the documentarians,” says festival director Mita Varma. “The films focus on the marginalised, like growing up in Ladakh, transgender love, and the crisis of Koliangus and Thalis. Many of the films focus on people who have little in terms of resources but a huge store of empathy and compassion for all living creatures, that marks them out as more human than many in the so-called mainstream.

There are five films on Kashmir, and several films on migration and education.”

By its very definition, the documentary is a genre that takes time to dwell on social injustices and delve into the structural reasons for discrimination, Inequality and exploitation. Filmmakers tend to give voice to the voiceless and spotlight the plight of neglected or despised people whom the mainstream media ignores.

With the space for dissent and the marketplace of ideas shrinking across the region, Nepal remains the last bastion of free speech. This year also, Film Southasia will showcase films that could not be screened elsewhere.

The focus of the festival this year is Pakistan, and the opening film Indus Blues profiles the country’s disappearing musical instruments and folk art, given the rightward movement of the state. Other films on Pakistan investigate theing ships on the Arabian Sea beaches and the murder of an activist who sought to provide a cultural space called ‘The Second Floor’ in Karachi, where all art forms could be shared and different issues could be freely debated and discussed.

With most of South Asia living under social-political conditions, the subject matter of the films focus on concerns common to all countries. However, there is a lot of experimentation in the form of filmmaking.

Film Southasia includes a documentary shot mostly at night with striking visuals (And What Is The Summer Saying) and another that simply records conversations that swirl inside a taxi stop at the centre of a heated religious debate (Chai Darbar).

A documentary about old Delhi, with a 400-strong cast of actors, straddles the line between fiction and nonfiction (Ghade ko Aalde Khilane Le ke Rupa Hanu).

“There are quiet films with little dialogue, where the story is told with visual imagery, or with the neutral eyes of a fly on the wall,” explains FSA organiser Alok Ashishkar.

“The filmmaker takes a backseat with these observational techniques and lets the story tell itself.”

This year the festival is going digital for the first time. It accepted submissions online instead of asking for DVDs to be couriered to Kathmandu. The number of submissions soared to more than 2,500, testimony to the rising interest in this form of storytelling.

Pakistani actress Sania Saeed will be chief guest at the festival, whose jury comprises filmmakers Dumitriu Srechman from Sri Lanka and Ayisha Abraham from India, and Nepali journalist Kunda Dixit.

8 FILMS FROM 8 COUNTRIES

KABUL, CITY IN THE WIND
Abousar Amini, Afghanistan
A glimpse into the strained, serious life in Kabul, where violence is a constant backdrop to daily life.

PARIAH DOGS
Jesse Alk, India
A group of people, themselves outcast, poor and living in dums, take care of street dogs in Kolkata, India.

OPHOM WARS
John La Raw, Myanmar
People in Myanmar who live under dangerous circumstances is being aired in a trade war, while the state turns a blind eye to issues of remittances.

OPIUM WARS
John La Raw, Myanmar
Men who work under dangerous circumstances are being exploited in the opium trade, while the state turns a blind eye to issues of remittances.

SCRATCHES ON CELLULOID
Vindhya Budhathoki & Timothy PA Cooper, Pakistan/Sri Lanka/United Kingdom
With the rise in multiplexes and home entertainment, days are numbered for traditional mainstream theatres.

BAMBOO STORIES
Shahmin Dil Rias, Bangladesh
The use of bamboo is dying out, but there are still many people whose lives depend on the bamboo trade, who continue to need bamboo for their livelihood.

THE NEXT GUARDIAN
Aaseh Bhattarai & Dorottiya Zurobo, Bhutan
A priest in rapidly modernising Bhutan warns his son to retain his profession, but the boy would rather play football and look for a job.

THE WINTER TAP
Aashish Limbu & Debina Rai, Nepal
The story of a project to build a water supply in a remote Himalayan village, which is not as simple as it seems.

NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.
Times.com
"Nepal is a microcosm of all of the changes in world health"

Sir Jeremy Farrar is a British medical doctor and researcher with 30 years of experience in tropical and infectious diseases. In 2013, he was appointed director of the Wellcome Trust, one of the biggest global charities working in medical research. *Nepali Times* caught up with Farrar this week in Kathmandu, a place he visits often. Excerpts from the conversation.

Nepali Times: What explains your interest in Nepal? Jeremy Farrar: I first came to Nepal in about 1989 or 1990. Since then, I have been working mostly on infectious diseases but increasingly on non-infectious diseases. I spent 18 years in Vietnam and moved back to London 6 years ago. I’m interested in where there are inequitable challenges of health, which I can see getting worse than better, and I think science as part of society can make a difference, and all of that is true in Nepal.

You were with Oxford University collaborating with Patan Hospital. Most of my work was based on tuberculosis in Vietnam and Dr Buddha Rauty of Patan Hospital quite rightly termed South Asia as the ‘capital of tuberculoid’. The burden of tuberculoid in this part of the world is massive. So in 2010 I came here and started a partnership that has been ongoing for the last 15 years. It started with tuberculoid, but now it has branched out to include other infections particularly important in Nepal.

Since you started coming to Nepal how has the health situation here changed? In some ways Nepal is a microcosm of all of the changes that are happening in low and low-middle-income countries. Nepal is still struggling with the burdens of infectious diseases but it is now also having to deal with the double whammy of infectious diseases that have not disappeared and the increasing burden posed by non-communicable diseases. The real problem for countries such as Nepal is dealing with both at the same time, and those require quite different public health measures, and require governments to make informed, evidence-based policy decisions.

We just suffered an unprecedented dengue epidemic in Kathmandu. Dengue is the infectious disease of the 21st century because it is driven by all of the changes we are going to see: environment change, climate change, urbanisation, travel and movement of people and therefore vectors. Cities like Kathmandu are perfect breeding grounds for the Aedes mosquito. Kathmandu’s climate is changing and the city is growing exponentially in a haphazard way and the mosquito loves highly dense populations of people. If you put together environmental and climate change and the mosquitoes gradually spreading further north from India into the Terai and increasingly into Nepal, it’s inevitable that Kathmandu and the lower lands of Nepal will suffer from dengue outbreaks.

On top of that, we still have TB and leprosy. In my professional career of 35 years I have been more optimistic about tuberculosis. If you take the big three infectious diseases of the world (TB, HIV, malaria), in 30 years HIV has gone from being a death sentence in a few weeks after diagnosis to a difficult disease but one you can manage long term. In the last 20 years there has been amazing progress in malaria with insecticide-based bed nets and the Chinese herbal drug called Artemisinin, the most important malaria drug ever invented. TB has not made that much progress. We are still using a diagnostic test invented in the 19th century. There has been no new tuberculosis drug since the last 40 years. We have not really understood how it transfers from one person to another. But that is being transformed. With the coming of a new pipeline of drugs that are now being used in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the treatment period will shorten, making it much easier. But perhaps more important than that, for the first time there is the possibility of a tuberculosis vaccine that will prevent infection and disease. We have to make sure that it gets developed properly, then manufactured and made accessible in an equitable way at a price that is affordable for everybody.

Wellcome Trust is also involved with snakebite research. What are the real problems tackling this? Snakebite is the biggest disease nobody has heard of. It affects mostly impoverished people in rural communities who have no political voice. Snakebite treatment is still using 19th century or early 20th century interventions, which are expensive to produce, difficult to access and not available to those who really need them. If people are bitten in low or low-middle income countries, chances are they will never get treated. We are interested in bringing in technologies that have been used in cancer and infectious diseases to produce a treatment that counters the snake venom.

Is mental health an area you are working on? In addition to funding discovery science, we have a small number of focused areas, where there has been little progress in the past. Mental health is the next one we are launching. Mental health has not attracted much investment or young people interested in working on it, and it’s often placed into different parts of the health system, with separate hospitals. Mental health still carries enormous stigma everywhere in the world. So we’ve not had the investment in science, public health and in clinical care of people, and we haven’t had the advances in prevention and treatment. This is not only a health issue but also of social justice and economy. Working in collaboration with various partners we are trying to transform mental health from being an issue of stigma and no progress to one that people are willing to talk about, that becomes a normal part of society and then we make scientific and health progress that will reduce the burden of this massive problem.

**IN SYNCH:** Foreign Minister Fredrikk Gyawali and Norway’s Minister for International Development Dag Inge Ulstein on 8th November signing an MoU to establish a joint commission. Norwegian Ambassador Lea Bjørn Johannesen is signing the document.

**THE RIGHT FOOD:** UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore inspects a community nutrition program and learns about local women’s knowledge of healthy diets for children during a visit to Nepal this week.

**BEING TERRITORIAL:** Political activists gather at Makaltar Vihara on Wednesday to protest India’s apparent incursion of the Lipulekh Valley, which is claimed by Nepal and India, in the latest map of its territory.

**GOOD SPORTS:** Outgoing British Ambassador Richard Morris and Japanese Ambassador Masaomi Ito just prior to the Rugby World Cup 2019 final in Kyoto.
Nims Purja fans react to criticism of climb above 8,600m with Purja this year. Another team member, German Tamang, summited seven of the world’s highest mountains with Purja this spring.

In a recent Facebook post Purja wrote: “We are not the A-Team; Mingma David Sherpa, German Tamang, Galen Sloper, Lakpa Denzi Sherpa, and Halding Dorchi Sherpa. The journey of 147 has tested us all the way through at many levels. Together we have been through so much, we climbed not only as a team but as brothers with one sole goal to make the impossible possible, pushing the human limitations to next level. Now, the NOBODYBETTER that we share between us is even STRONGER!”

Writing in The Times, British mountaineer and Everest summitteer Kenton Cool said: “I’m eating a lot of humble pie because what Purja has done is super, super, impressive. I’m the first to say I didn’t think he was going to do it. His ambition was so high, I thought he needed a delay of vaccines.”

Yet some mountaineering experts and climbers have downplayed the achievement, saying Purja used supplemental oxygen above 7,500m on all his climbs, had Sherpas fix ropes and did not give members of his team enough credit.

The Times newspaper quoted Chris Bonington, the British climber famous for the first ascent in 1975 of the southwest face of Mt Everest, as saying: “What he has done is quite extraordinary, but it isn’t mountaineering. Real mountaineering is exploration — finding the unclimbed peaks... I don’t see this as a major event.”

German mountaineer Ralf Dujmovits told the adventure magazine: “It is completely ignored that Nirmal Purja is using bottled oxygen. It’s a performance that looks spectacular, but it is not spectacular.”

The first Briton to climb Mt Everest without oxygen, Stephen Venables, also told the paper: “The fact that he used supplementary oxygen detracts from the feat. I know he also used fixed ropes. It isn’t exactly alpinism as I understand it... It will certainly make it into the Guinness Book of Records, but in the history of mountaineering it will only be a footnote.”

The unkindest cut of all came from Amit Chowdhury, the head of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation in New Delhi, who called the climb “mindless sensationalism”. He told The Times: “We don’t support this kind of gimmick. If you have 20 people supporting you, of course you can achieve this. But you are putting so many people’s lives at risk, including your own. What for? We want people to climb safely.”

Using GHG inventory tool, the calculated carbon emission was 19.665 tonnes of CO2e. Our aircraft operations were responsible for nearly 19.648 tonnes of CO2e emissions, with our vehicle and facility operations producing only 0.173 tonnes of CO2e.

From 2017, we reduced our emissions through fleet upgrades and reduced fuel use. In future, we will initiate to reduce emissions from our main source of emissions, i.e. aircraft operations and build private-public partnerships to make greater impact together as per the Government of Nepal in the 2013 Action Plan on CO2 Emission Reduction. We have embarked journey of carbon neutrality by purchasing certified emission reduction equivalent to 2018 emission through UNFCCC Carbon Neutral Platform.

As an airline industry highly depend on fossil fuels, we seek to offset any avoidable emissions through feasible technological replacements and carefully selected projects from credible and certified sources.
Nearly half of Nepali

Progress in reducing malnutrition has stalled. What can be done to ensure enough of the right food for all?

Sonia Awale

For the first two decades after 1990, Nepal took great strides in reducing malnutrition. But progress has stalled. Nepal registered one of the most dramatic reductions in undernourishment among children and women after the government and international agencies took action in recent decades to reverse shocking statistics that showed half of under-5 mortality in the country was due to insufficient nourishment.

"Nepal is the best country to showcase how political will can implement a multi-sector nutrition program," says Brenda Kellen, director of Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), which is holding a global nutrition conference in Kathmandu this week.

"From being one of the countries with the highest malnutrition in the 1990s, with stunting at 57%, to have reduced it to 36% — Nepal can offer lessons for the rest of the world and its model can be replicated elsewhere," says Kellen, who added that holding the fifth SUN global gathering in Kathmandu was recognition of the country’s achievements.

Over 5,000 delegates from 61 countries are attending the conference to discuss the progress, challenges and priorities in ending malnutrition by 2030, a target set by the United Nations World Health Assembly.

However despite initial progress, figures for stunting, wasting and anemia in Nepal have plateaued. UNICEF’s report, State of the World’s Children 2018 released last month, stated that 43% of children under five in Nepal were malnourished.

"Malnutrition is still very much prevalent in Nepal, mainly among young children, adolescents and new mothers. We are not satisfied with the progress and there is still much to do," says Anirudha Sharma at UNICEF Nepal.

According to the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) wasting (low weight for height) among Nepali children under 5 still hovers at 19% — a mere 1% decrease from 6 years ago. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) require Nepal to reduce wasting to less than 5% by 2030. Stunting needs to be well below 15% in 10 years to meet the global target — it is about 30% now.

Says Swarmil Wagle, former vice-chair of the National Planning Commission who helped draw up Nepal’s Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan: "While a 20% reduction of chronic malnutrition in two decades is quite impressive, 30% stunting is still very high and unacceptable in this day and age. Conventional approaches will not help achieve targets.”

Anemia among Nepali women has always been very high, but instead of declining it actually increased from 33% to 41% between 2011 and 2016. Anemia in children below 5 rose dangerously in that period: from 46% to 53%.

Exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months also declined, and is now 6% against a target of greater than 50%. There has been no significant change in low birth weight either, which declined only 1%, to 27%, in five years. The SDG target is below 5%.

WHAT THE TERMS MEAN

Malnutrition: Lack of nutrition, either due to not having enough to eat, or not eating enough of the right foods.

Stunting: (also known as chronic malnutrition) A child who is too short for his/her age.

Wasting: (also known as acute malnutrition) A child who is too thin for his/her age.

Anemia: Deficiency of red blood cells or anemia due to iron deficient food.

Low birth weight: An infant born weighing 1500 grams or less.

Childhood obesity: Children above the average weight for their age and height.

Exclusive breastfeeding: Feeding infants breast milk only until the first 6 months.
children still malnourished

"Improvements in nutrition levels are stagnant because we have not reached the most vulnerable communities such as Dalits and people in remote western Nepal," says public health expert Aruna Upadhyay. "We see no reason to boast about our past achievements when the present level of chronic malnutrition is so serious."

Nutrition levels are affected not just by food intake, but access to safe drinking water and education about the right selection of food.

Underweight children in cities and the rise in obesity are a result of the proliferation of junk food replacing traditional nutrient-rich grains.

Childhood obesity has decreased from 1.4% in 2011 to 1.3% but the figures need to drop below 1% to meet the SDGs target.

An article in The Journal of Nutrition earlier this year found that infants in Kathmandu were getting 25% of their calories from junk food and instead of being fat, those who consumed the most junk food were on average shorter than their peers.

Brenda Kellen agrees that while there is a lot of concern about hunger and food security, there is not as much awareness about whether food is nourishing or not.

"Let’s look at all the tools available to reduce malnutrition. Fortifying foods can mean that people get micronutrients but it should go hand in hand with promotion of locally produced foods," Kellen says.

Nutritionists believe that Nepal is on the right track, but it needs to make nutrition a political priority, scale up its programs throughout the country and target groups susceptible to malnutrition.

UNICEF’s Sharma says: “Nutrition should be universal, households should not be left behind. The government has to increase national investment on raising nutrition standards.”

Private sector for nutrition?

Do the private sector and nonprofits have a role to play in reducing malnutrition? Does their involvement allow the government to shift its responsibility of ensuring nutritious food for all?

The issue arose this week at a global conference on nutrition in Kathmandu. Among the 5,000 delegates attending the gathering were representatives of Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network, which tries to build strong alliances between the private sector and government to reduce malnutrition around the world.

There are many small-scale enterprises that are looking for opportunities to provide local solutions to nutrition-related challenges," says Brenda Kellen (picture above) of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, which organized the global gathering in Kathmandu, 4-7 November.

In fact, Nepal’s Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan 2018-2022 underlines the need for government to partner with business. Experts say that while it makes sense to involve food manufacturers and traders to improve nutrition, there is an inherent contradiction between businesses that are out to maximise profits, and the need to ensure nutrition for communities that cannot afford adequate food.

Nutrition activist Aruna Upadhyay is against private sector involvement in ensuring proper nutrition for all: “If you involve businesses they will look first for profit, not adequate nourishment. It is 100% the government’s job to reduce malnutrition.”

Upadhyay last week quit the Ballyo Nepal Nutrition Initiative, which is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), because it would mobilize Nepal’s private-sector food companies to raise nutrition levels among Nepalis.

Ballyo Nepal was launched by President Bidya Devi Bhandari on 1 November (picture above).

Ballyo Nepal Chair Swarnim Walgi, former vice-chair of the National Planning Commission, says the organisation is not trying to take the place of the government but complement its efforts precisely because of the persistence of chronic malnutrition in the country.

Ballyo Nepal was launched into controversy recently after offering one of its buckwheat, the Quinoa Foundation, Food and Vegetable in Western Nepal.

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Now that all 3 festivals are over and done with, let’s all sit back, relax and recuperate from the exertion to prepare for the next holiday. After consuming all those water buffaloes, it is time now to burn their bones for fertiliser and spread the aroma through the city. If air pollution is an index of a country’s rising per capita GDP, then Delhi and Kathmandu are both steaming ahead to an affluent future in our co-prosperity sphere.

Those watching the body language of our politicos at various political tea parties after asain last month couldn’t help wonder why these back-slapping, jovial leaders observed laughing their heads off at each other’s off-colour jokes, can’t seem to agree on anything during closed-door meetings? And why, if the struggle for succession to replace the ailing prime minister is heating up so much, were they not stealing each other’s biscuits? Why haven’t they strangled each other yet?

In any other country, a self-respecting Communist Party never allows a power struggle go waste. The dominant faction physically exterminates the dissident faction in an internal purge long before it can even think about breaking away. Could it be that our totalitarians are less totalitarian than other totalitarians?

Those of you following the news from Washington DC these days will have noticed that political pundits have had to resort to Latin to explain the byzantine world of Trumpland. The English language just does not suffice to describe what transpired in the phone conversation about the threat to withhold US military aid unless the Ukrainians handed over dirt on Biden.

The Ass fails to see what is so noteworthy or objectionable about a quid pro quo. In fact, in Nepal quid pro quo is the modus operandi and habeus corpus of our status quo and, it goes without saying, the quo vadis, quo facto, cum laude, and ad nauseum. We have been handing out quids for quos for centuries, and without such palm greasing, our system of government, and indeed the whole state super structure, would collapse in no time.

Take Kalapani. It was a quid pro quo between Nepal’s rulers, who wanted to curry favour with the hegemonic successors of the British Raj. We got the quid, they got the quo. Carving out chunks of Tundikhel to the Army was also a similar give-and-take to keep the generals happy.

Our landlinked Himalayan ex-kingdom where the Buddha was born, to which Kalapani belongs, and which has never been colonised by aliens had a nice long vacation and now, fully rested, we once more plunge head-first into the task of de facto prolonging the political mea culpa and sine qua non, not to mention the quid pro quo and rigor mortis.