SAVE OUR MOTHERS

Feeling at Home: Dhiru Bista, 35, was married at 15 and had her last pregnancy. Reckoning her a risk, delivery that meant death, she was left with her husband and children among seven surviving daughters.

Funding provides free treatment at Biratnagar, a model for rural Nepal.
Nepal’s maternal mortality rate has dropped from 539 per 100,000 live births to less than 170 in the past two decades, but improvement has stalled. During the pandemic, expecting mothers could not travel for check-ups, and institutional deliveries dropped dramatically.

Increased investment in health care in remote settings is necessary to further reduce Nepal’s maternal mortality rate. Nest is education for girls to discourage early marriage.

With elections a year away, political parties will race to keep promises. But for many women and children here in Achham, it is more a life or death struggle.
Aruna Uperty, a council health expert and a board member of Nyaya Health Nepal.

Far away from the media glare on the general conventions of Nepal’s main political parties and their lavish display of money and power, in a remote village here in western Nepal, Dhiru Bista is recovering after her 12th pregnancy nearly ended in death.

Saving the lives of mothers like her in undeserved communities, and new risk from the omicron variant could not be further from the minds of politicians gearing up for elections in 2023.

Dhiru Bista is only 35, but looks much older. Married at 15, she gave birth to a baby daughter just two years later. Since then, seven of her 12 babies have survived—all daughters. The oldest is now 16, the youngest 18 months old.

The stillbirth four months ago nearly killed her due to a ruptured uterus. When we met her recently at her small clay brick house in Babila village, Dhiru was out and about, spreading the buckwheat harvest to dry. Her daughters played nearby, babysitting younger siblings.

Her husband is within samsat, and Dhiru finds a quiet corner to whisper: “I only had daughters, and had to keep trying for a son. My husband does not comfort me.”

Development indicators like female literacy, maternal and infant mortality in Achham are much below the national average. Preference for boys here means daughters are married off early, and because they are so young and undernourished at childbirth, many mothers die at home, or while being rushed to hospital.
After Dhiru Bista started getting contractions, neighbours carried her to a bus that could take her to Biratnagar Hospital. She had lost a lot of blood by the time she arrived at emergency. The baby was in a transverse position with one of its hands sticking out of the cervix, already dead.

The surgery took four hours, but Biratnagar’s doctors managed to save Dhiru Bista’s life. For surgeons, this was their most difficult maternal case. The public-private partnership run by Nyaya Health, Nepal, with support from the Far-West Province, Sandesha Municipality, and international

Aruna Uperty in Achham

www.nepalitimes.com
As Nepal marks 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, Ruby Khan makes an impromptu plea for justice from her sit-in near Singha Darbar.

Ruby Khan took to the streets of Kathmandu to demand justice for her sister, who was murdered by her husband. The case has sparked a national movement for gender equality.

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari has expressed solidarity with the family of the victim and the cause of women's rights. The government has also pledged to take strict action against the perpetrator.

The police have arrested the husband and are investigating the case. However, many women's rights activists are calling for the establishment of a special court to try cases of gender-based violence.

The movement has gained momentum, with rallies and protests held across the country. The government has announced plans to establish a special court to try cases of gender-based violence.

Online packages

What's trending

Nepal's government has announced a special court to try cases of gender-based violence. The court will be established in the next fiscal year and will have the power to issue death sentences.

The move has been welcomed by women's rights activists, who have been demanding justice for victims of gender-based violence for many years.

However, some critics have expressed concern about the potential for abuse of power and the risk of retribution against those who speak out against gender-based violence.

The government has also announced plans to increase funding for women's rights organizations and to conduct training for law enforcement officials on gender-based violence.

The move has been welcomed by women's rights activists, who have been calling for increased funding and support for their organizations.

The government has also announced plans to establish a special education fund to support girls' education and to provide scholarships for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The move has been welcomed by women's rights activists, who have been calling for increased funding and support for girls' education.

The government has also announced plans to increase the number of women in决策 bodies and to ensure that women are represented in political decision-making.

The move has been welcomed by women's rights activists, who have been calling for increased representation of women in decision-making.

The government has also announced plans to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the private sector.

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TIME TO MEET AGAIN: USA

Have a healthy journey with all precautions taken down to the smallest detail for your in-flight safety.

TURKISH AIRLINES
Turkey to open embassy in Nepal

Turkey will send a diplomat to open its first embassy in Kathmandu by the end of this month, in a move to strengthen its relations and promote tourism.

The opening of the embassy is part of a broader strategy by Turkey to deepen its diplomatic footprint in the region, following its decision to establish a consulate in Kathmandu last year.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made the announcement during a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba last week.

"Turkey is committed to strengthening its relations with Nepal," said Erdogan. "By opening an embassy, we aim to further deepen our bilateral ties and promote Turkey-Nepal cooperation in various fields, including culture, education, tourism, and trade.

The opening of the embassy will mark a new chapter in our diplomatic relations," said Deuba. "We look forward to strengthening our ties and fostering mutual understanding and cooperation with Turkey.

The embassy will be led by an ambassador, and the Turkish government is currently finalizing the recruitment process. The embassy will be housed in a modern building and will provide a range of consular services to Turkish citizens in Nepal.

Turkey and Nepal have a long history of cultural exchange, with significant contributions from Turkish artists and writers to Nepali literature. The opening of the embassy is expected to further enhance this cultural dialogue.

Turkey is already home to a significant Nepali community, with many Nepali workers and students in Turkey. The embassy will provide them with consular assistance and support.

The opening of the embassy is also expected to have a positive impact on tourism, as Turkey is one of the most popular destinations for Nepali tourists. The Turkish government is planning to promote Nepal as a travel destination, with special focus on the cultural and natural heritage of the country.

Furthermore, the embassy will serve as a platform to promote trade and investment between the two countries. Turkey is a significant trading partner for Nepal, with strong bilateral trade relations in sectors such as textile, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.

President Erdogan also discussed the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis and the need for international assistance to support the refugees. He said Turkey stands ready to provide support and assist the Nepali government in addressing the challenges faced by the refugees.

The opening of the embassy is a significant milestone in the history of Nepal-Turkey relations. It reflects the growing importance of these relations and the commitment of both countries to strengthen their cooperation in various fields.

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*Notes:*
- Turkey is a member of the United Nations and the European Union.
- Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia.
- Cultural exchange: Turkey has a rich tradition of art, literature, and music, while Nepal is known for its rich cultural heritage, including the famous Kathmandu Durbar Square.

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**Turkish Kora**

The Kora Cycling Club's 2nd photo contest was announced in 2022, encouraging photographers to participate. The winners were selected based on the quality of their work, with awards ranging from cash prizes to free travel opportunities.

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**ADB loan**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a loan of $500 million to support the Nepal Infrastructure Development Project. The project aims to improve road connectivity, access to electricity, and water supply in the country.

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**Tourism picks up**

International tourism in Nepal saw a significant increase in 2023, as the country opened its borders to international visitors. The rise in tourism is expected to boost the economy and create employment opportunities.

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**Himal journalist awarded**

Barkat Khan, a journalist from Nepal, was awarded the Himal Journalist Award 2023 for his outstanding contributions to journalism.

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**Ban on alcohol ads**

The Nepali government has imposed a ban on alcohol advertisements on television and radio, citing concerns over rising alcohol consumption rates.

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**Jyoti for the elderly**

Jyoti is an initiative launched by the government to provide support to elderly individuals. The program offers various services, including medical care, nutrition, and social services.

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**Cathay fares**

Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific has reduced its economy fares to various destinations, offering attractive deals for passengers.

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**Restaurants, vaccinations, and travel conditions**

Restaurants in Nepal are gradually reopening, with strict health and safety protocols in place. Vaccination centers are also operational, offering free vaccination to eligible individuals.

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**Prothubu Bank**

Prothubu Bank, a leading financial institution in Nepal, has announced a new campaign to encourage savings and investment among the youth.

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**Banking and currency exchange**

Nepal's banking sector has recorded a significant increase in deposits and investments, with the central bank targeting a growth rate of 12% for the fiscal year.

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**Currency exchange rates**

The Nepalese rupee has strengthened against the US dollar, with current exchange rates of approximately Rs 120 to the dollar.
Face-to-face to counter Facebook

How Nepal can develop ‘herd immunity’ against disinformation, lies and propaganda on social media

Sakar Pudasaini, founder at Marxist Party of Nepal, has explored innovation, technology, education, and their social consequences in this new monthly column for Nepal Times.

The recent release of the ‘Facebook Papers’ and public testimony by whistleblowers have drawn attention to the use of social media, specifically Facebook, as a tool of civic and political action.

The ensuing firestorm has shone much needed scrutiny and triggered a debate on how to regulate the social media giant. It has also made clear that the global governance of social media will depolarize peripheral countries such as Nepal.

Both technological and human resource solutions that regulate social media are unlikely to take local needs into account. Thus, it is incumbent on domestic actors to develop ‘herd immunity’ through social consensus on how they use Facebook and other social media to advance their agenda and engage in contentious debate.

Documents from Facebook whistleblowers show that the company does not treat all countries equally. Tier 0 (higher priority countries) such as the United States and India get strong content moderation that includes algorithmic monitoring and ‘war rooms’.

Facebook develops technology to proactively identify misinformation, falsehood and inflammatory content in these high-priority markets. These technological tools, built to understand local languages and local patterns of social media use, are supplemented by local moderators with contextual knowledge.

However, in Tier 1 countries like Nepal, Facebook appears to make no proactive effort to identify and moderate polarizing content; instead, it relies on user reporting to identify problematic content. In a Tier 0 country, content consisting violence could be proactively removed by algorithms or moderators. In Tier 1 countries, significant challenges would have to be overcome before such action is taken.

To begin with, enough local users would have to flag the content as a problem. Then, a moderator who is unfamiliar with the local context would have to make a decision to remove the content. Even if such a scenario comes to pass, it is unlikely to happen fast enough to prevent significant harm in rapidly evolving situations.

It is therefore important that countries like Nepal develop mechanisms to feed for ourselves. The most important domestic actors that need to buy into the need for self-regulation are political parties.

There are three reasons:

First, disinformation, misinformation and polarizing propaganda are most prevalent around elections when both emotions are elevated and the stakes are high. With political power and its benefits at stake, political parties will be more willing to cross the line from political posturing to problematic polarizing messaging during these times. This is particularly relevant to Nepal, where federal and local elections are due in early 2023.

Second, political parties have the power to amplify content. Political leaders have massive followings on social media, but even more importantly, parties are nation-wide networks of people that can nurture and reinforce messaging. Recent research suggests that political influence on social media works differently from traditional advertising.

In traditional advertising, messaging is carried to a large number of people by a celebrity they know and trust, which is why Nepal’s Majo Jafa seem to be using everything from cement to water tanks. This is thought to drive sales by positive association with the trusted figures. Political influence on social media, however, appears to be more effective when information is (re)shared in small groups of trust, rather than by a widely followed influencer.

Finally, political parties have the means and skills to craft effective messages. While it is easy to blame technology for causing the problems of disinformation, we have to remember that a human hand guides it. Political parties have skilled communicators with a deep understanding of the public’s moods, desires and prejudices.

At their best, three people help advance democratic discourse by effectively representing the different streams of public sentiment in the national dialogue. However, this same skill in capturing public sentiment also allows them to construct narratives, disinformation and conspiracies that capture the public imagination and go viral.

It may seem fanciful to imagine that political parties, especially in the context of the battle for power, can be relied on for self-regulation. Yet, there are many examples of this in Nepal. The most obvious one is the press process that some have poetically described as leading from the ‘bullet to the ballot box’.

More encouraging, political violence, such as ‘death capture’, has steadily declined to the point where individual incidents are rare enough to be widely noted. This suggests that there are ways to cultivate consensus making political forces understand the self-interest. Political violence diminishes their legitimacy to rule and increases the risk to their person andru. Thus, it is worth trading the momentary advantage of violence in one location to ensure advantages in the exercise of national power.

Social media manipulation and polarisation through disinformation have similar, perhaps even more destructive, consequences. Around the world we see political scientists McCoy and Samer call precarious polarisation — an arc they mentalize where the drive to identify with your political tribe outweighs other sociopolitical considerations, the politicisation of masking and vaccination for example.

Pernicious polarisation fragments social and political structures as so as to make nations impossible to govern, but also creates national security risks. Highly fragmented and polarised societies are primed by their own political leaders to believe disinformation and polarising propaganda are easy targets for manipulation by international powers.

It is tempting to imagine there are technological solutions to technologically enabled problems. The Facebook Papers, however, make clear that countries like Nepal must not depend on future technological wizardry to find us solutions because we are not their priority. Technological solutions, even if they can be found, will take a long time before they can be customised for the local context. Instead, we must face Facebook ourselves.

While it is not possible to prevent all attempts to infect the social and political system through social media manipulation, a ‘herd immunity’ that protects us from the worst of it, can be achieved by building a self-regulation consensus among key actors, chief among them political parties, with the skills and resources to mount large-scale manipulation campaigns.

Fortunately, this is possible in the most low tech way through face-to-face conversations over countless cups of chha and many plates of aamross.

Sakar Pudasaini, founder at Marxist Party of Nepal, has explored innovation, technology, education, and their social consequences in this new monthly column for Nepal Times. The same Marxist almost to be accurate even before the release of new reports and initiatives as well as their potential to change profound change.
A painting transports the artist and viewer to life's dark period, and delivery from it.

Dipesh Nepal's dark light

FOR ART'S SAKE
Rajan Sakya

But do not dismiss the painting, give it some time to grow on you. The painting may beautifully transport viewers to painful periods of their lives, long repressed. Most of us have experienced such “dark” moments, when we struggled and persevered only to emerge elatedly on the other side.

This painting is the work of 16-year-old Dipesh Nepal (painted right) who is from a village in Bhumhi district, in the isolated mountains of north-western Nepal. An ordinary school student, Dipesh has had a difficult life in a harsh environment where food is often scarce, winters are long and dreary, and access to basic healthcare and education is minimal.

In his spare time, after finishing his household chores, Dipesh likes to draw and paint. It is his escape from the daily grind, a chance to express himself and ban his soul.

“Art was my escape from the world, and from myself,” Dipesh told me recently. “It is a way to be truly free from the chains of family and society. It is where the chance of my mind and soul find rest, art is a medium to bring it all out.”

Talking to the young artist in Kathmandu recently helped me understand the written and unwritten rules of society, least materialism and the desperate search for instant, superficial gratification which ultimately led him to seek solitude, go into hiding, and retreat into himself.

Yet, in his work, Dipesh has retained the curiosity of his childhood, the questioning and seeking, and in doing so he has discovered that art resides within him. It only needed to be kindled gently to become a powerful tool.

At first glance, this painting does not seem to inspire much. It looks ordinary and is not pleasing to the eye, either. But give it time and space to look at, and it radiates a quiet energy, like an inner applause for a battle won over negative emotions. Proof that the artist has been at a low point in his life, and is back up to show us how it felt.

As a teenager, I too had issues like Dipesh. And as a way to escape them, I travelled to the United States at age 17. My band-aid was

enthralling as an exchange student, my senior year in high school. Folks in Nepal covered my costs, and I lived with an American family for a year.

Unfortunately, I had developed village, a depersonalization skill colour. For a teenager trying to adapt to a new society, this was disheartening. With no relatives or friends, I felt totally isolated, not because I was bullied, but due to the tunnel inside me.

My horror at my own appearance and how people would view me was unbearable. I lacked confidence, kept away from people, afraid of how they would react. It got to the point where for four months I ate my lunch in the school bathroom, and then went straight to class. There was a sense of achievement in just avoiding people.

Today, I no longer feel embarrassed or inferior. I believe those hard years gave me a solid foundation to face anything and everything that life throws at me.

Dipesh Nepal’s art transports me back to that time of my own life: the sadness, the loneliness, the anxiety, the feeling of being trapped by powers beyond my control. Yet it also reminds me of a personal battle that I waged and won over myself. I would not be who I am today if it was not for that ordeal.

Dipesh’s mind has travelled farther than his young body. With an incredibly mature and unique vision of the world, one finds in his expression of angst and a yearning to be free. Painting has become an outlet to bring out his repressed emotions and feelings.

The depth in his art is there for everyone to see, but few obvious are numerous and varied technical skills he has improvised to create his painting — his choice of oils to achieve a unique blend and shades of colours. The painting is now on exhibit at the Museum of Nepal Art (MeNa) in Kathmandu.

A work of art can mean a different thing for different people, responses by definition subjective. Dipesh Nepal’s art touched the deepest and darkest parts of my own past, and reminded me of my own struggles. But it also found compassion and peace in the darkest reaches of this canvas.

Rajan Sakya is the founder of the Museum of Nepal Art and Katmandu’s Laura House. Former and continues the mission to create an art scene in Nepal. Times is now covering the dark light and discussing an art threshold in a letter.

Mothers teach daughters how to make clay murals, empowering a new generation of Maithili women

auny Thakur was married at age 12. By the time she was 29, she had three children. At 32, she still did not know how to read or write. Her world was limited to the four walls of her house. Instead of taking care of the family, her husband spent the little they had on alcohol.

What kept Manju going was her love of art. Like generations of Maithili women before her, her mother had taught her how to make traditional clay murals and paint the walls of their home.
Even after getting married, she spent hours painting the walls and floors of her home. What she did not know was that the art she learnt as a child would help her gain fame and independence now in her 50s.

“Mithila paintings have taken me not only around the country but also around the world,” says Thakur, who has been to the United States and Spain to exhibit her paintings.

In 1986, when American visual artist Claire Burkert came to Nepal to document Mithila wall paintings, she asked Thakur to paint something for her. She was paid Rs10. That was the first time Thakur realised that despite being illiterate, she could still earn money.

She was then offered a job at the newly established Janakpur Women’s Development Centre (JWDC) which was set up by Burkert, and is still run by women artists.

“I went from living for my family to contributing towards their livelihood,” says Thakur, who now supports her household with earnings from her art. She has bought a plot of land in her village and supports her children’s education.

This economic empowerment has also meant that her role in the household has changed. Three days, she makes most of the family decisions, her husband playing a supportive role.

Living in a society where women are usually relegated to household chores and confined within the walls of their homes, it was not always smooth sailing for Thakur. It took her 25 years to change the perception of the society.

Although it was difficult initially, I am more confident now and have gained a lot of respect and love because of this art,” she says.

Thakur is in Kathmandu this week with three other women from JWDC to prepare a mural for the Kathmandu Triennale 2077 festival. Just off the busy streets of Boudha, up the entrance of Tundhikor Museum, the four women clad in colourful saris and traditional silver jewellery are busy painting and creating mursals using a mixture of clay, song, and flour.

“When we paint, we forget everything. When we travel to new places, we gain more confidence,” says Madhumala Mandal, a part of the art troupe. Mandal’s earnings help pay for care for her son who suffers from spinal cord injury.

When Siddhie Katri’s husband died 20 years ago, she struggled to raise her only son. She remembers people gossipping when she went to train at JWDC. Today, her son is a graduate and works at a bank.

Three days, Katri spends time with books, some of her favourites being Pramchhag, Ramayana, Srikat Sagar, Bhagwad Gita, Mahabharat and Sita Ram. “I get more ideas for painting after reading books,” says Katri. In Kathmandu this time, she wants to spend a part of her earnings to buy more books to take back home to Bhairab.

Another artist, 50-year-old Rewa Mandal, is also happy to have pursued Mithila art as a profession. “I earn more through painting than toiling the fields right now and day,” says Mandal, who is the sole breadwinner in her family.

Her sons live separately, but because of her skill, Mandal does not have to ask them for money. “I earn my own keep. I earn up to Rs10,000 per job. That is enough for me to buy groceries for an entire year,” she adds.

All four women believe that opportunities trump luck, and give a break a woman can do as well as, or better than, menfolk in every sphere of life.

Sheelasha, the curator of Kathmandu Triennale 2077 says that the event will set an example by highlighting traditional women artists. She says: “Traditional art done by women is still not counted as art. That is why we need to highlight art forms like Mithila art. After all, women empowerment begins at home.”

Art empowers Nepal’s women.
KATHMANDU
OUR PICK
AIR QUALITY INDEX

The coming monsoon flow in India and Pakistan have been disrupted, but there is still high chance of heavy rainfall in the area. Continuous wet and humid weather makes Kathmandu Valley prone to smog and smoky conditions. The AQI will remain high this week. The impact will not be as bad as previously expected because of a shift in wind direction which will bring cleaner air from the northwest. There is a chance of some pollution until mid-week, and again over the weekend which will wash down smog and improve AQI.

KIMFF 2021
The 19th Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival will light up stories that reflect the realities of mountain communities in sustaining and protecting their natural environment through the year’s finest adventures.
3–9 December

RAM KRISHNA DHAKAL LIVE
Musoan Ram Krishna Dhakan will pay tribute to Narayan Gopal on the anniversary of the icon singer’s passing.
3 December, 4:30pm. Blue Acre Café, Swayambhu Animal Farm
She-Katu Chhetri’s Nepalisation of George Clooney’s over-walnut Animal Farm. Film screening from 21 November till 4 December. Tohers, Jessel, Knoss Theatre, Taihu

RAITHAANE MUSIC
Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory’s Raithane Music concert will feature artists like Dumchu Limbu, Sera, and others who will play native instruments in a presentation of traditional Nepal music fused with western elements.
4 December, 4:30pm onward, Myka

STOP KISS
Adapted from playwright Diana Sor’s Stop Kiss and directed by Pambhini Tikathar, this one-act play’s production is not merely a reprise play from the 1990s North America. Read review page 9.
5–10 December, Tickets: BS 800/day from raw aun, Dukalp Theatre, Bhatkathal

GOKAMA FOREST RESORT
The resort is paradise, thick with century-old trees hosting natural lawns and great restaurants for fine dining. The gift course is set against the backdrop of the Himalayas.
Gokarna, (01) 445788

MEGHALI SERAI
The serai is located in the heart of Chitwan National Park overlooking the Rapli River, offering views, as well as accommodation that integrates local culture and art.
Chitwan National Park, (01) 307196

SOORIYA STUDIO
Join Sanyo Wellness and Yoga centre’s studio for yoga and meditation sessions, or for virtual studio sessions for self-purification at home.
Lampang, (01) 3847092

THE ART MARKET
The Art House, a space for artists to exhibit, buy, and sell artwork, will rewire with its Christmas edition.
5 December, 4pm–9pm, Maya Malar

DANCE CLASSES
Sign up to be Shanarayan, Baby, Hip Hop, Yoga, and contemporary dance classes from Sudha Arts Academy. Call the academy for details.
(9845652266

CHRISTMAS CONCERT
Jalwaja Medis’ Christmas concert will include original songs and feature performances by Sherpa and Laya artists. Call or go to Jalwaja Medis’ Facebook page for details.
10 December, Soup Restaurant, Tinku, (01) 3949686/161780

BEKEH MHALI VIII
A classical architectural marvel, the historic Bekeh Mhali VIII is now a quiet landscape house with modern elements, Moslem designs and Taza influences.
Bartek Mhali (3066) 457165

HANKOOR SARANG
Satisfy the hankering for Korean food with a variety of mouthwatering dishes like ‘Bibimbap’, ‘Pork Jeon’, ‘Kimbab’, and more from Hankook Sarang. Phone (01) 4271717/910100245675

ORGANIC SMOOTHIE BOWL
Perfect for those looking for healthier food options, Organic Smoothie Bowl and Cointreau fresh, fast and Instagram-worthy smoothie bowls, sandwiches, drinks and more.
Lampang, (01) 4851812

AIR QUALITY INDEX

PERSPEOLS

ABOUT TOWN

KATHMANDU

KALSEE ECOLOGIE
This quaint collection of cottages in the midst of forest hills with a magnificent view of Annapurna and Machhapuchhre is located in Tinku, a ridge 30km northwest of Phewa on the Luggage, Manku (987) 308877

SOOTAHE WESTEND PREMIER
Located in the green plains of Nalayija, this spacious resort is one of Nepal’s most energy efficient and eco-friendly getaways.
Nalayija, (01) 337147

PICK

OUR PICK

Directed by Manoj Sapkota and written by Perrance, Perenn is a 2007 annotated biographical drama based upon Sapkota’s autobiographical graphic novel of the same name. The film follows Sapkota’s childhood in Tibet against the backdrop of the 1959 Tibetan revolution, subsequent political upheaval, and the Khampa war. In the film, Sapkota is appointed to the Fundamental club to fight for his safety, and his parents send their child abroad to Europe, where he later marries a girl who is a communist. What happens next will be a series of events that will result in Sapkota’s death and the fall of Tibet. The film explores the themes of power, politics, and love, with a focus on the human experience.

PERSPEOLS

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"YOUR BEST TRAVEL EXPERIENCE"
The price of a kiss

After a pandemic-induced break, One World Theatre stages a drama of first love

Theatrical review

Review

The class of 1969 of St Xavier's School is deeply saddened by the untimely passing on November 25 of their friend and classmate Birendra Kumar Singh. Always upbeat, cheerful and generous to a fault, Birendra was the life of all class get-togethers with his phenomenal memory of our school days.

Birendra could recount in minute detail events, conversations, and happenings involving students, teachers and staff of Gavdiar school and was the unofficial archivist of our collective past.

Birendra had a long and distinguished career with the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, where he served Nepal with professionalism and integrity.

We pray for the eternal peace of the departed soul and offer our deepest sympathy to his family and loved ones.

‘The Sixty-niners’

Birendra Kumar Singh

1954 - 2021

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‘The Sixty-niners’
The enigma of

The re-consecration in Kathmandu of a sacred sculpture 40 years after it was stolen sets a precedent, but throws up new dilemmas

- Ashish Dhakal

A narrow street behind Patan’s Patan Durbar Square was once a busy confluence of culture and commerce. But today, it is a quiet backstreet where the Charmatari temple, dedicated to the goddess Laxmi-Narayan, has been abandoned for decades. The temple was once a bustling hub of activity, with worshippers coming from far and wide to seek the blessings of the goddess. But today, it is a quiet, almost forgotten place, with only a few devotees coming to offer prayers.

The goddess Laxmi-Narayan, also known as Lakshmi and Saraswati, is one of the most revered deities in Hinduism. She is the embodiment of wealth, prosperity, and beauty. Her image is often depicted as sitting on a lotus flower, with her husband, the god Vishnu, lying beside her.

The temple was once a center of trade and commerce, with merchants from all over the world coming to do business here. But today, it is a quiet, almost forgotten place, with only a few devotees coming to offer prayers.

Laxmi-Narayan finally found first time since the theft in a DMA catalogue in 2013, but the case of a missing statue is far from over. The statue was discovered in a New York City art gallery in 2013, and is now on display at the Dallas Museum of Art. The gallery is offering a $100,000 reward for information leading to the return of the statue.

The statue was carved in the late 19th century and is considered one of the most important pieces of Nepalese art. It was stolen from the temple in Patan in 1970 and was later sold to a New York art dealer.

The statue was reunited with its home in Patan in 2013 after being sold to an American collector.

What about all the other sacred objects?

American arts crime professor Kim Thompson believes that appeals for the return of objects from now on can be made to museums and collectors using two arguments: legal and ethical.

"Private collectors often hold the objects on loans from museums, so you can appeal to their love of culture," Thompson says. "They can be offered an opportunity to experience the meaning of the object first-hand by having them in their own collection.

With the museums, the approach has to be different, as the recent restitution of several sacred objects from the United States, Austria and other countries have shown.

"Museums do their research, record provenance, and as such do not have an excuse to say they did not know if a certain object was stolen or not," says Thompson. Indeed, more than legal arguments, museums can be pressured by naming and shaming on media, raising ethical concerns, diplomatic pressures and negotiations.

"Publicity is really important in this case," adds Thompson. "Since their collections are driven by public interest and attention, and the Laxmi-Narayan restoration sets an important precedent.

The return of the 800 year-old idol shows that these are objects of living worship by communities, attention should be paid to restoration and not just repatriation."
The arrival of Nepal's gods

Thompson, "But that’s not legally true since the objects are still essentially stolen no matter when. In the US, the legal climate is changing and public prosecutors have been seeking antiques, no matter when they were stolen. For artist Joy Lynn Davis, the return of idols to their original homes is vindication of her activism to raise awareness about stolen deities. "I wanted to ask through my art if it was possible to imagine a future for the idols and the shrines," says Davis, who like Thompson, has flown to Kathmandu to attend the consecration rituals at Pashupati. Patan Museum has been holding several stolen objects that have been repatriated from abroad. At 11AM on Saturday, the Lalit Narayan will be adopted with a special copper gateway and carried to a procession from the Museum to Pashupati in a ceremonial procession for the kalasha puja - a ritual seeking forgiveness. "This ceremony is a historical event, the Lalit Narayan also restates our faith and belief," says Rishad Mishra of the Lalit Narayan Museum, who is involved with the Nepal Heritage Recovery Campaign. The Campaign was launched in September 2021 as a collaborative international effort for the repatriation and restitution of Nepal's sacred stolen objects, as far as possible to its original community in Kathmandu Valley. The driving force for the Campaign as well as the restitution has been the continued significance and role of the sacred sculptures in Nepal’s culture, faith and heritage. The figures used to be actively worshipped when they were stolen, but became silent objects of art when exhibited at museums, or in the living rooms of rich collectors abroad without any context.

At the Dallas Museum, the Lalit Narayan was a manuscript corner of the gallery with a tag that just mentioned the statue’s name, date and Nepal as place of origin, so unless you knew something about Nepal and Nepal’s culture beforehand, that was really all you got," says Joy Lynn Davis. "Unlike other ancient objects, it was not dug up but rather stolen, that too not long ago."

Indeed, deities stolen from Kathmandu Valley were part of a vibrant living culture still in practice. An anonymous initiative on Facebook, Lost Arts of Nepal, has been tracking down on Nepal’s stolen heritage, including Lalit-Narayan, abroad. The administrator told Nepal Times: "The restitution of the Lalit-Narayan sculptures is a milestone in ongoing restitution efforts. It will show to the world how important our gods are to the country’s cultural heritage."

Objects stolen from Nepal?

Museums abroad often argue that the objects are much safer in their collections than in Kathmandu. And the theft of a rare stone deity in Godawari’s Naw Bhairav this week bolsters that argument. However, Thompson believes that the Lalit-Narayan’s successful return to its original temple makes a strong case for museums abroad to return other stolen gods they are holding.

"Having seen the communities and shrines firsthand, I know that it is the sacred objects that are safer in museums abroad," says Thompson. "It is ridiculous to think that Nepal does not care about these statues and sculptures."

Egypt and Greece have for decades been demanding that the British Museum and the Louvre return antiquities stolen from them in past centuries. In October, Germany and Nigeria signed an agreement setting out a timetable for the return of 1,100 objects from German museums. Artist Joy Lynn Davis says there is now a more conclusive international climate for repatriation of antiquities, and Nepal can take the lead: "Now, there are other countries, such as Cambodia, which are looking up to Nepal’s efforts in repatriating their own stolen artifacts."

Appealing to the conscience of collectors has worked in the past. In August 1994, an American collector voluntarily returned four stolen gods after he was shown Lalu Singh Bangalia’s photographs proving their public ownership. A 12th-century Siva, a 14th-century Buddha, and a 14th-century Vishnu. In 2004, the Museum für Indische Kunst in Berlin returned the 12th century Uma-Maheshwar statue from Cambodia in 1982.

In April, a 13th century Chaturmukhi Shivalinga was handed over by the Art Institute of Chicago to the Nepal Embassy in Washington DC, and in September the Denver Art Museum returned the 10th century Uma-Maheshwar that had been stolen 50 years ago from Dehi Hill of Patan. One pressing concern is that the original shrines may have been destroyed or damaged in the 2015 earthquakes. Some communities may also not be prepared to take the objects back right away.

Suresh Man Lakhe of Patan Museum says that while the best option is to give the repatriated objects back to the communities, museums in Nepal should also be prepared to hold them for safekeeping until the community is ready.

"The priority is always full restitution," Lakhe says, "but when these objects return, they do not immediately go back to their original places. So, Patan Museum is opening a gallery for returned objects while they await re-installation."

Apart from safekeeping, museums can also conduct necessary documentation and research, since some returned objects may not have been properly identified. Lakhe adds, "To install them in situ is our priority. The deities became stale and stagnant in museums. Restored to their shrines, the gods can be worshipped once again."

Asthah Vishal
Animule Farm

Go back to sleep, we’ll wake you up when things start getting really exciting around here.Politicians are up to their ears wagging party conventions, and nominating maccos.

The UML started the ball rolling, and showed it has regained its fire in the public eye. In a move at convention, maccos is a ranked two-legged one-hared thing holding the party flag. (Does this is a family trangepun, we have put red writing on the upright thing of cost) Nepal is a nation of hippos, and it is only a nation of time before the other parties also name mascots. To save time that they can devote to election-lands, the UML offers these ideas free of cost.

The RPP is having its convention this week, and its mascot can only be the Holy Cow. There is still time to craft kingly cattle and place them at strategic locations at the convention venue.

The next in line to hold its party convention is the Nepali Congress. Since Shiva Buddha is likely to be re-elected party prez, the mascot will have to be a lion. But since there are no lions in Nepal, Congress will have to make do with a tiger as mascot. Meow.

The Maoist Centrists need to insult farm in Nepal by reminding them of the party’s violent past, but it is a gentle sort of way. Which is why we recommend an awesome Mutant Ninja Turtle character for its party mascot so it can show who is boss.

Then there is the JSP, for which a superhero holding the party’s umbrella on its backpack would be the most appropriate.

Rabindranath Salha will need a cartoon character as a convention mascot as it appeals to the younger voters.

As long as we are at it, the Suniti would like to name Nepal’s new president for President of its own, Adhine Party of Nepal (Revoluotional).