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Fight or Flight

Few 'development' projects have been as controversial in recent years as the proposed Nijgad International Airport (NIA) for which thousands of hectares of forest would be destroyed.

Former Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli revived the project in 2017 as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to catapult Nepal's



GUEST EDITORIAL
Kashish Das Shrestha

economic development. Experts and activists who questioned the ecological and economic justification for the project have been trolled as being 'anti-development'.

In the years since, Nepal has been rocked by a never-ending series of corruption scandals. New international airports in Bhairawa and Pokhara built at great cost have turned out to be white elephants. Nepal's economy is in crisis.

Yet, despite increasingly vocal public opposition to the project, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said 'site clearance', which means logging the forest will be completed this fiscal year. Tourism Minister Sudan Kirati is following through.

Earlier government efforts at site clearance had been halted by the Supreme Court until an agreement with a developer was secured. In 2020, the UML government announced that such a developer had been secured.

When this lie was exposed by this paper, among others, the government said it would build it on its own, and committed \$3.5 billion. A litigation around the project's Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), which turned out to be a copy and paste job from a hydro power project, lingered.

Nijgad is not an airport project, it is a scam to log thousands of hectares of hardwood forests with risks to the economy, ecology, food and water security.

Nepal's bickering politicians are all united in this delusional project, and the basis for them to do so rests on a May 2022 Supreme Court decision voiding all previous plans and instructing the government to start the process anew, re-examine where the airport should be built, and conduct a new EIA.

Prime Minister Deuba's government then hosted a high profile event in Nijgad and commissioned a panel of experts with known pro-airport leanings which predictably concluded it should be built as originally planned in Nijgad Forest.

The Deuba government then used

the Supreme Court decision to create the impression it was following due process. The panel and its findings must be voided for explicit bias and lack of expertise. Nepal's development partners must challenge the government, activists must file public interest litigation in court, and civil society use media outreach. The new EIA must be made public.

Two new international airports are barely functioning. The government must provide the public and Parliament a cost benefit analysis of NIA that meets the highest levels of international scrutiny. Site clearance cannot begin until this process is complete.

In 2021, a statement demanding accountability on NIA was drafted and signed by 11 development partners: the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations, the World Bank and the Australian, British, Finnish, French and German Embassies. These entities must now revisit their statement since they have after all committed \$3.2 billion to Nepal's Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID) initiative. The Americans who are helping Nepal in conservation and

accountability must also join the call. So should ICIMOD.

Nepal has disregarded NIA's impact on the Terai Arc Landscape under the World Bank's REDD Emission Reductions Program. Violations of Nepal's international commitments must

inform public policy and the funding discourse.

The proposal to make Nijgad a conservation area stretching from Nawalparasi to Parsa that I proposed in this paper last year must become a part of the public and policy discourse. It would also help Nepal's economy

while offering construction contracts for research facilities and wildlife crossings. Resettling the Tangiya Basti community, promised for a long time by state, should happen regardless of NIA.

For 7 years, Nepal's political establishment has ignored activists, experts, media and the Supreme Court in a single-minded pursuit to log a pristine jungle for a project of dubious economic viability.

It has ignored an unprecedented statement signed by a large and important bloc of the international community. This defiance is a direct result of a culture of impunity in which top politicians face no personal or political consequences for abuse of authority.

Nepal is on the verge of witnessing its greatest organised eco-crime led by the highest political powers in the land. The implications will reverberate beyond Nepal's borders.

Sadly, Nepal's rulers are not on Nepal's side.

Kashish Das Shrestha is a 2019 National Geographic Explorer, and an environmental activist lobbying against NIA. Watch video online.



KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

After 7 years and 3 prime ministers, Nepal is preparing to log Nijgad Forest to build another unwanted airport.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Centre of Everything

Such is the desperation that Nepalis are ready to do just about anything to leave the country. The fake Bhutanese refugee scam could just be the tip of an iceberg.

Nothing new here. Back in 2003, Nepali Times published an investigation about how Kathmandu was a centre for human trafficking. Twenty years down the line, immigration at Kathmandu airport has become a den of middlemen. Six thousand young Nepalis leave for work or study abroad everyday. Many are harassed.

Excerpts of the report published 20 years ago this week in issue #156 1-7 August 2003:

Name any human smuggling racket these days, and Kathmandu most likely will figure in the scam.

Nepalis travelling on fake passports, often with phony visas. Nepalis deported from cities around the world because the photo on their passports have been switched. Iraqis with fake Portuguese passports travelling to Europe through Kathmandu. Chinese nationals using fake Japanese passports bought in Bangkok transiting Kathmandu en route Kansai.

Kathmandu airport is not just where Nepalis use fake documents to get out of their country, it is also getting the



reputation among the international human smuggling networks as an 'easy' airport to transit. Our lax controls, immigration desks with inadequate counterfeit detection equipment, rampant corruption, and a huge domestic demand for fake travel documents from Nepalis desperate to

migrate for a better life make it an ideal jump-off point.

Last year, a Chinese national travelling on a stolen US passport with the photograph changed, chose Kathmandu as a transit point to sneak into the US because he knew he would not be detected by airport authorities here. Interestingly, the man had already cleared immigration when he was caught, but his passport had no departure stamp. There are numerous instances where a person who cleared immigration on one passport and ticket has left Kathmandu on another.

For archived material of Nepali Times of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



DISASTROUS STATE

Two years after the disastrous Melamchi and Helambu floods in 2021 which nearly destroyed Nepal's most expensive project yet to supply water to Kathmandu Valley, locals are still coping and many are yet to rebuild their fallen houses. Follow our reporter as she takes us to Sindhupalchok and the affected areas. Watch the video and subscribe to us for more original multimedia content. Report on page 1.



NEPALI TIMES STUDIO

Watch banker turned politician Anil Shah in conversation with Kunda Dixit in the new edition of Nepali Times Studio. Shah joined Rastriya Swatantra Party last month as the head of its training department. Go online for a longer transcript of this interview.

NURSES MIGRATING

I was perplexed when I heard about this poor treatment of nurses in Nepal ('Nepali nurses gone and going to the UK', #1172). It is ridiculous to know how low nurses in Nepal are paid.

Harish Dahal

■ Dare I speak about the misery of doctors in Nepal? Associate professors are leaving Nepal in their mid-40s to start all over again, which says everything about the problems in Nepal. Why spend a lifetime in misery in Nepal when you have substantially better opportunities elsewhere?

Samaya

DANG BIOGAS

I saw biogas plants like this 25 years ago in Syangja ('Dang turns dung into energy', Santosh Dahit, nepalitimes.com). At that time, the only practical alternative for cooking in the villages was firewood. The featured project in Dang would be well advised to employ a qualified gas fitter for the safe installation of the pipework.

Tony Parr

■ 'Gobar gas' technology has been around for over 50 years, and it is still not being properly utilised.

Ben-Erik Ness

DAPCHA

I hope the preservation effort works ('Dapcha's old world charm awaits', Kanak Mani Dixit, #1172). Otherwise, it will become just another gawd awful concrete jungle like so many towns in Nepal.

Roger Ray

FOOD INSECURITY

If spending money wasn't against the GoNe's primary objective which is looting the public purse, this problem could be solved relatively easily by a water pipe infrastructure taking water from abundant areas to those in need ('Grain drain', Chandra Kishore, #1172).

Aleksandr Verkovsyn

COW FARM

If service is your first priority in business, it will be fruitful in the long run as this dairy owner has shown ('Down in Sherpa's farm', Sonia Awale, #1171).

Indra Bahadur Thapa

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING

Dapcha's old world charm awaits

by Kanak Mani Dixit

As the only Newar settlement in the Valley's proximity that retains its old character, Kavre's town of Dapcha can prosper as a getaway for visitors. This must happen before the brick houses are replaced by painted cement structures, as elsewhere. Visit nepalitimes.com and read up about Dapcha.



Most reached and shared on Facebook



Grain drain

by Chandra Kishore

Nepal's poverty rate may have gone down, but hunger still stalks the land. Covid, climate change and conflict have created a perfect storm of food insecurity. Details on our website.



Most popular on Twitter

Nepali nurses gone and going to the UK

Nepali Times

A new G2G partnership between Nepal and the UK will allow Nepali nurses to migrate to Britain. But even without the deal, nurses are moving to Britain and elsewhere for higher pay, earning and learning opportunities. Join the discussion online.



Most commented

Itumbaha's living museum

by Sahina Shrestha

The Itumbaha Museum, supported by New York's Rubin Museum, opened on 29 July with nearly 150 artefacts on display. Many welcomed the Rubin's involvement, but activists are concerned that the museum is using Itumbaha to clean up its international image and criticism for housing stolen artefacts. Follow us for the latest developments.



Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Covid, climate and conflict have combined to make hunger more acute in Nepal
Grain drain | Chandra Kishore (@Kishore_chandra)



Fraser Sugden @frasersugden

Important article, but we need to acknowledge that a significant share of Tarai farmers are tenants, who lose between 40% and 60% of paddy in rent at time of harvest. Even irrigation difficult without land ownership. Climate resilience is impossible without #LandReform



Pawan राय @jjhijhiya

Not easy to cope with sudden but anticipated change in climate mostly in eastern and middle terai!



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Latest in Diaspora Diaries: Three nurses speak about higher pay, greater appreciation and learning opportunities in Britain. In the meantime, Nepali nurses don't wait for the UK deal to migrate. Weekend longread. #Nepal #UK #nurses #Migration



Maria_has_a_pen @MariaVesterlun4

I spent the winter in Nepal and I can't recall one single person under 30 who didn't talk about paths possibility of leaving Nepal to study or work in places the UK, USA or Canada. Not one.

1,000 WORDS



PRADEEP RAJ ONTA/RSS

CENTRALISED COMMITTEE: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal chairs a Central Committee meeting of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Centre) in Kathmandu on Wednesday. "Our party does not function as a party should," Dahal said.



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“We are a political startup”

Banker turned politician
Anil Shah speaks to Nepali Times about what inspired this turn in his career.

Nepali Times: How did the change from banking to politics happen?

Anil Shah: I worked in the banking sector for 31 years, 17 of them as a CEO. I left because I have always been vocal about young people needing a chance at leadership, and it did not seem fair to hold on to my own position.

I set up Lead Nepal Inc to craft leaders by sharing my three-decade leadership, management, motivation and team-building experience with political parties, law enforcement and military, private organisations as well as students.

I was in New York for my daughter's graduation, and we were crammed in an Uber on our way to take a train to Boston. The driver looked at the rear view mirror and asked if I was Anil Shah. He was Nepali who wanted to know why I had not entered politics.

I told him that politics was not for me, but he promised to donate \$1,000 and the same amount from 100 of his friends if I joined politics. The gentleman's name is Mangal Shrestha, and I thought his heart was in the right place, but did not take him seriously.

In Boston, I met Nepali students at Harvard, MIT, and Tufts. One of them said instead of complaining how dirty the pond was, I should do something to clean it up, and if you decide to get into politics we are with you.

It was a culmination of various conversations like these that touched me and made me question why I could not take this step.

Returning to Nepal, I joined the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and that same day I got a message on Facebook from Mangal Shrestha asking where he could send his \$1,000. His honesty and hope for Nepal touched me deeply.

The interactions in the US also showed the state of despondency



GOPEN RAI

people feel about what is happening to our country.

Why RSP and not RPP or Bibeksheel?

Coming back and joining the RSP was not my first thought. My knee-jerk reaction would have been to join the Nepali Congress because my family has historically been closer to NC. Subarna Shamsher Rana is my wife's grandfather. But it was not a question of joining a party for a position, or to use family legacy. I wanted to join politics to try and actually do something.

The RSP was a good fit, because it is new to politics just like I am, and the vision and thought process sort of matched with mine. I thought if I was going to jump into this pond, these are the people I want to do it with.

The RSP has made you the head of its training department. Why?

Politicians do think that they should be the ones giving training, not getting it. That is why our country is where it is right now. However, our party does not have politicians, it has ordinary citizens like myself who want to do something for the nation. And the best thing is that a lot of RSP members reached out to me to say that they were willing to be trained because they wanted to learn to become better leaders. That kind of positive attitude is a start.

A few days ago our party chair Rabi Lamichhane, MPs, Central Working Committee members and others sat down and discussed our vision for leadership. We looked at our strengths and weaknesses and how we can individually

contribute to the party. All of this makes me believe that I am in the right place.

Training is not one-size-fits-all. For the parliamentary party and the Central Committee, it is synergy, team building, teamwork, and confidence building, so we can work together as a cohesive unit.

At the end of the day, even though we are a political party, we are a startup. So when we go to the provinces, training focuses on introducing the party and our Constitution, our vision, our culture. When we go to people who want to stand for elections, at any of the three levels, we explain what leadership is, and what one is expected to do when the party is in leadership, what our role will be when we are the opposition. We train people about how to express criticism that adds value and moves leaders in the right direction.

We are clear that we are going to run the country after the next elections in 2028. We cannot be trying to figure out what to do and how to lead once we are already elected, and waste another two years in the process. That is why we are taking these years to prepare.

Nepali politics has been plagued by infighting. Can politicians be trained to change that?

You cannot teach old dogs new tricks. But the RSP is still a puppy, so what our entire team learns now is going to be really crucial and we want to learn the right values and skills. This is a country of countless leaders, but the RSP wants to create value-based leadership from the roots at all three levels of government. I start off by saying that if service is beneath you, leadership is beyond you.

Are you going to be a candidate in 2028 from Bhirkot where your ancestors are from?

One should never say no when it comes to politics, because you never know. If the party needs me and tells me I must stand, why not? But if I were to say right now I'm going to stand from Kathmandu or

Bhirkot or Janakpur, then I would have to devote half of my time to developing my constituency. I am confident that I can develop Bhirkot, but that will not develop Nepal.

Nepal's ageing leadership does not want to let go. How do you address that in your training?

Absolutely. I call that god syndrome. This belief that rules do not apply to us because we are in politics. But whether it is traffic rules, or having to be in a queue, we impress upon the RSP leadership during training that we must follow them.

Does Rabi Lamichhane have the god syndrome?

Everybody has an ego, including me. The question is if Rabi Lamichhane can control it, and from my experience he can. Rabi Lamichhane is a brand now. He is looked at as the face of the RSP. People could argue and comment on all of his speeches and public appearances, but he has to do that as the leader of a national party. There is a difference between being invisible and being humble. And whether it is in parliament or on the streets, he is humble but never invisible. He is a humble, god-fearing man, and someone I can follow as a leader.

He welcomed people like myself, Dr Swarnim Wagle, Shishir Khanal, Manish Jha and Dr Toshima Karki. If he had just wanted to rule, he would never bring people like us into the party, he would always have people who look up to him and surround himself with yes men. 🇳🇵



Watch Anil Shah in conversation with Kunda Dixit in the new edition of Nepali Times Studio. Go online for a longer transcript of this interview.



NMB BANK
एनएमबि बैंक

IFC's Lund in Nepal



International Finance Corporation (IFC) Vice President for Economics and Private Sector Development Susan M Lund was in Nepal this week during which she met government private sector leaders to discuss the country's development goals and investment opportunities. IFC first invested in Nepal in 1975 and since July 2018 has committed over \$560 million in long-term financing.

Bindaas Ncell

Ncell users can now enjoy 5 hours of unlimited data with no volume restrictions. Priced at Rs75, including applicable taxes, the pack is valid for 3 days. Subscriptions can be made through *17123*3# or via Ncell app.



Nepal Airlines

Nepal Airlines is purchasing five planes, three new and two old aircraft which are currently in the procurement process. Civil Aviation Minister Sudan Kirati disclosed this without offering any details about the type of aircraft.

Everest Bank

Everest Bank opened its 127th branch at Murali Chowk in Janakpur. A joint venture with Punjab National Bank India allows easy remittance reception for Indian customers. The bank now offers efficient services through 127 branches, 3 Extension Counters, 7 Provincial Offices, 162 ATMs, and a global network.



Mr Nepal 2023

Buddha Air pilot Samarpan Karki is the Mr Nepal 2023. The 32-year-old beat 17 other contestants to clinch the title. He was also chosen as Mr Intellectual. The Biratnagar native won Rs500,000 in cash prize and will be representing Nepal in either Mr World 2023 or Mr Global 2023.

Scaling up tech

BlinkNow and SmartWorks Technology Partners are teaming up to empower underprivileged students in Kopila Valley in Surkhet through tech education. The partnership will provide exposure, mentorship, and practical courses, creating new opportunities with the goal of expanding the skilled workforce in the tech industry.



Aloft is 4

Aloft Kathmandu Thamel celebrated its 4th anniversary with a space-themed extravaganza featuring live music, delectable international and national culinary delights, and an enchanting LED lights tunnel. General Manager Vikram Singh and Chair Prithvi B Pande were present.

Samsung TV

Samsung is offering a 3-year full product warranty on Samsung TVs, covering T, A, B, and C-Series sets purchased from official outlets until 31 December. This warranty includes QLED, the Frame, UHD, and FHD TV, and is valid for Samsung TVs ranging from 32" to 85". Authorised distributor Him Electronics is behind the offer.

Free credit card

Global IME Bank is offering a credit card for free as a special offer for female customers in the Nepali month of Shrawan.

Pepsi golf

Tashi Tshiring won the Pepsi Open Golf Tournament held at Gokarna Golf Club this week. With 26 Stableford points, he secured the trophy on a countback, tying with Sonam Norbu Lama. Wangchen Dhondup secured the best gross award. Chewang Sherpa won closest to the pin, and Aaisteena Tandan emerged as the ladies' winner. Former Army Chief Gaurav SJB Rana won in the senior golfer category.

Energy Museum

The Pharping Hydropower Centre will be turned into an energy museum with a price tag of Rs1 billion and will include a green park, zip lines, botanical garden, a



library and children's playgrounds. The NEA Engineering Company will develop the site as a tourist attraction with an initiative to preserve the historical hydroelectric centre, the first in Nepal.



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Times

4 - 10 AUGUST 2023 #1173

Architecture f

A solution for sustainable and earthquak

■ **Sonia Awale**

Villages across Nepal are building view towers on nearby peaks. Every municipality now wants welcome arches or stone steps on mountain trails. Bulldozers run amok, triggering mudslides on fragile slopes.

It looks like Nepal is where you go to learn about how not to do architecture in the mountains. But there is also a growing movement towards construction using locally available material, buildings suited to the climate, houses that are carefully designed to reduce energy use.

Many of these examples were on display at the first-ever conference and exhibition

of mountain architecture in Patan last week. Dozens of Nepali architects, engineering students, environmentalists and urban planners took part in the two-day event called Mountain Architecture Dialogue (MAD).

“Architecture is a problem-solving profession,” said Anne Feenstra, an award-winning Dutch architect and conservationist. “Solutions come from people who really take time to think things, not the government who just wait and watch.”

But it looks like Nepal’s politicians, planners and contractors are not listening because they are too busy mining rivers, quarrying mountains, or destroying green spaces. Nijgad Forest, the last remaining native woodlands of the eastern Tarai, is about to be destroyed to build a mega-airport that

is an economic and ecological disaster. The forest is a sanctuary for wildlife, the lungs of the plains and an area for groundwater recharge (see Editorial, page 2).

“Architecture is as much about knowing when not to build as it is about building,” said Kunda Dixit, author of Dateline Earth: Journalism As If the Planet Mattered.

But perhaps the most tragic consequences of haphazard building in Nepal are seen in residential and public buildings in the towns and cities. Substandard concrete and cement buildings have replaced traditional architecture suited to the land and climate. In fact, Nepal’s Tarai has now become one endless metropolis of concrete.

“They all look the same,” said architect Biresh Shah, presenting a case study of a

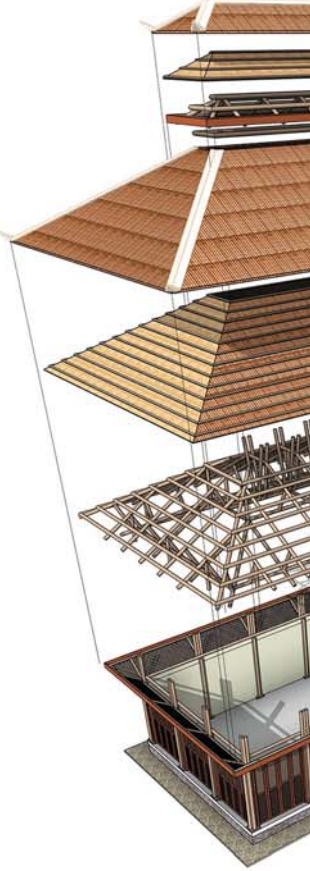
town in Damauli with concrete structures. “They show no sign of architecture or design. All our urban centres have started looking the same.”

Nepal is world renowned for its traditional architecture of elegant temples, handsome bahal courtyards, and tiled roof skylines of Kathmandu Valley, the stone dwellings of Mustang and Manang, and the bamboo and mud structures of the Tarai.

But all of this is changing because of the misconception that cement buildings are stronger. During the 2015 earthquake, many concrete structures survived, reinforcing this belief. But reinforced concrete buildings made with substandard material could actually be more hazardous in future earthquakes.

Anne Feenstra, SMA Everest Next Namche Bazar 3,780m

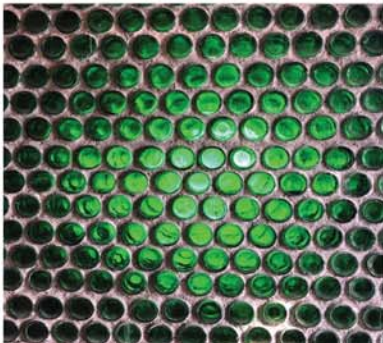
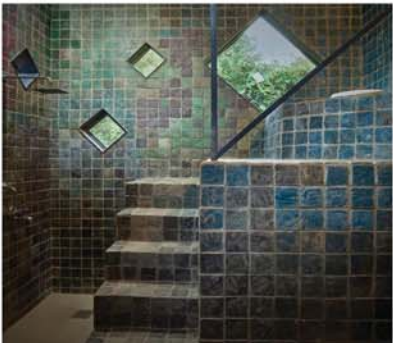
Mountaineering waste and waste generated by lodges and villages will be upcycled into building material for three main museum buildings which are resistant to earthquakes, respond to natural contours, high winds and heavy snowfall. Everest Next buildings have passive solar energy features. Chamfered stone walls next to windows allow for the warmth of the winter sun while double glazing and small windows towards the north provides better comfort.



SECTIONAL 3D VIEW AT X-X

Supertecture Community Lodge Shankharapur 2,180m

Made of recycled plastic waste, old beer bottles, metal scraps, rammed earth, soil, as well as bricks and doors left from the ruins of the 2015 earthquake, this community lodge is a unique structure. Supertecture actively sought building materials from structures that collapsed during the earthquake and renovated them to become both the façade and roof of the multipurpose wooden terrace.



SECTIONAL 3D VIEW AT Y-Y

◀

**Prabal Thapa, Hemendra Bohara and Emil Shrestha
Moksha Jomson
Lower Mustang 2,800m**

The stone and timber resort hotel reflects the architectural style of the surrounding Thakali settlements. The enclosed courtyard shelters the property from the valley's fierce winds whereas the strategic placement of the public areas and individual rooms allows for magnificent views of Mt Nilgiri and the Kali Gandaki River. The hotel features passive solar design elements to minimise energy consumption. Insulated floors, roofs, and windows reduce heat loss and gain.



◀

**Amar Gurung and Kshitiz Pokhrel
Neyshang Museum
Manang 3,700m**

Spread across only 100 sq km, the museum is designed like a maze with vertical plywood allowing for ample surface to display artefacts. The structure is built with locally sourced materials including stones for the walls from a quarry 500m away, and surrounding fields supplied the mud while the timber was from a nearby pine forest.



for mountains

ake-resistant buildings in the Himalaya

The Mountain Architecture Dialogue exhibition showcased many neat and functional designs that incorporate the best of traditional architecture using local materials with modern elements. Most are light structures that would also be flexible and safe during earthquakes.

Feenstra himself has spent 20 years in the Himalaya helping to also improve on traditional designs and practices. He gives the example of developing tents for yak herders in Kanchenjunga to replace their bamboo shelters that were prone to extreme weather and deprived the habitat and food of the endangered red panda.

Wildlife conservationists and Feenstra came up with lightweight aerodynamic tents that could withstand high winds, heavy rain

and snow. Yak herders then realised the tents could also serve as comfortable dwellings for trekkers in the mountains. This turned yak herders into small-time entrepreneurs.

The exhibition displayed examples of 36 mountain architecture projects from across Nepal. One of them was a Habitat for Humanity project that uses treated bamboo on a stone foundation for landless people in eastern Nepal. “These structures are cost-effective, sustainable and earthquake-resistant,” explains Eliza Sthapit of Habitat for Humanity.

At the higher end, the new hotel Moksha in Jomsom located at 2,800m is designed by celebrated architect Prabal Thapa using local stone and timber for the traditional designs of Thakali people. The building is difficult to

spot from the other side of the Kali Gandaki Valley – so well does it blend with the texture of the surrounding terrain. The building also uses passive solar elements, insulated floors and walls to minimise heating costs.

“Nepal has the potential to be a mountain architecture laboratory, you have the knowledge, all the landscapes, an enormous variety of building materials,” said Feenstra, who curated the exhibition.

The biggest drawback of these designs could be public acceptance at a time when bamboo, mud or stone are regarded as materials for ‘poor’ people. The challenge would be to make these local materials glamorous enough to be more sought-after than cement and glass.

An important message running across the

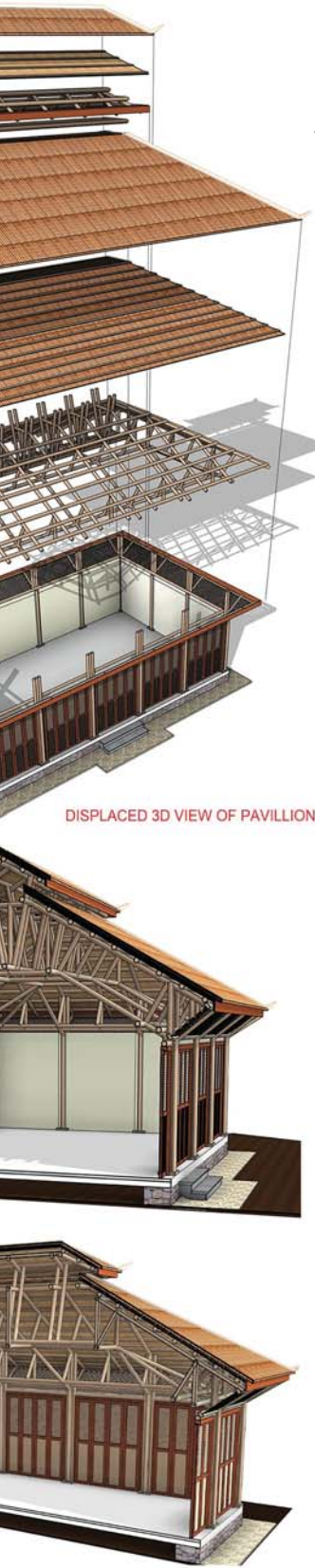
projects on display (see accompanying boxes) was to design structures that exist in harmony with nature. Such buildings are more capable of withstanding earthquakes and the impact of the global climate crisis.

Sangeeta Singh of the Institute of Engineering gave an example of a planned resettlement project for Laprak residents following the 2015 earthquake. Undertaken by the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) at a cost of Rs576 million, the houses in the integrated settlement in Gumsipakha all look the same, do not reflect traditional dwellings and were largely shunned by locals. She warned: “Building innovatively with the latest technology can spell disasters if we do not take local needs and the natural environment into account.” 🇳🇵

◀

**Krishna Aryal, Bihendra Maharjan and Green Bamboo Creation
Bamboo Pavilion
Gokarna 1,410m**

Originally designed as a meditation centre at Akasha Academy, the bamboo pagoda pavilion to house 40 people has 90% of its materials locally sourced. It has RCC columns with metal joint fabrication on the foundation and reused clay tile on the roof with a flattened bamboo ceiling. Marmoleum flooring, foldable wood, bamboo composite doors and Kattar wall partition round up the look.



▶

**Kiran Mathema
The Leaf
Nagarkot 2,175m**

All 20 villas are located strategically to reduce environmental impact while maximising the view, privacy and sunlight. The central landscape area channels rainwater towards a pond which is then filtered for reuse. The footprint is further reduced by stacking floor areas vertically, in turn increasing daylighting and cross-ventilation during summer and solar exposure in the winter in a clever effort to minimise energy consumption. Structures are made with local materials and craftsmanship.



DESIGNS AND ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF PROJECTS FEATURED

EVENTS

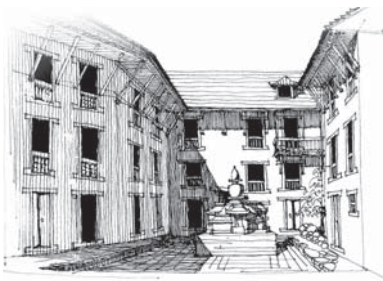


Aziiiza Bazaar

Celebrate the vibrant colours and rich traditions of Shrawan at Aziiza Bazar at Attic. 5 August, 11am-5pm, Gyaneshwor, Kathmandu

Recipe Workshop

Learn the taste of France by joining a recipe workshop to master the art of LES FINANCIERS. Register now for limited seats. 4 August, 2pm-4pm, Rs350-400, Alliance Française Kathmandu, Pulchowk



Art Exhibition

Embark on a journey through time, memory, and architecture at Taragaon Museum's latest exhibition Archiving for the Future. For a free guided tour, visit on Mondays at 3pm. 10am-5:30pm, Taragaon Museum, Boudha

Shopping trip

Experience Zaira's Shop Till You Drop 2023: An Exquisite Affair of Designer Fashion, Lifestyle Treasures, Handmade Delights, and Irresistible Treats. 8 August, 11am-6pm, Heritage Garden, Sanepa, Kathmandu



Boudha Market

Visit Utpala Cafe to embrace the flavours of community and sustainability at Boudha Farmers Market - where 'Think global, shop local' becomes a reality. 5 August, 8am-2pm, Kathmandu

DINING



Baker's Den

Craving baked goods or sweet desserts? Baker's Den has freshly baked stuffed bread, cookies, croissants and many more. (01) 4416560/(01) 4411886

MUSIC

Ciney Gurung

Catch Ciney Gurung and her band Spektrum live and revisit tunes from the 2000s. Also don't miss a live act by Aawartan. 4 August, 6pm, Club Fahrenheit, Kathmandu 9841726830



Reggae night

Groove to the pleasing rhythms of Reggae with Windpawan. Grab some signature cocktails as well. 4 August, 7pm onwards, Pauline's Rooftop, Lazimpat, Kathmandu



Space

Don't miss out on Space which involves a night of live music at Moksh. Get tickets at ticketsansar.com. 5 August, 6pm-11pm, Rs300-500, Jhamsikhel



Live Jam Session

Be part of the night dedicated to music while supporting the Shyamantak Music Scholarship Fund. 5 August, HideAway Restro, Sinamangal

Jazz Night

Chase the Thursday blues away with some smooth brew and smoother jazz at Beers N Cheers' Jazz Night. 10 August, Jhamshikhel



Koto

Maki sushi, cold or fried tofu, tempura, fried chicken, miso soup, chicken karage, Katsu Don, anything to satisfy one's Japanese food craving is right at the restaurant. 11:30am-9pm, Darbar Marg (01) 4226025

Bungalow Bar and Kitchen

At Bungalow Bar and Kitchen, one can have authentic Thai dishes like Som Tam Essan, Pad Kra Pao and Red Curry, or Asian - fusion dishes like the Pork Bamboo Shoot, Buff Lemon Grass and Fried Calamari, all with a side of refreshing cocktails. Naxal Bhatbhateni, 980106830

About Town

GETAWAY



Jagatpur Lodge

Jagatpur Lodge's special tents are no less than 5 star rooms and consist of a private viewing deck to relish the breathtaking natural beauty of Chitwan. Jagatpur, Chitwan (01) 4221711

Bandipur Kaushi Inn

Bandipur Kaushi Inn is a small, rustic place in the idyllic village of Bandipur, replete with cultural diversity and traditional architecture. Bandipur, Tanahu (065) 520083



End of the Universe

Hotel at the End of the Universe located in scenic Nagarkot has rustic cabins, sunset views and magnificent vistas of snow-capped mountains. Mahankal Mandir, Bhaktapur (01) 6680109

Mount Princess

Surrounded by mountains and forestry, Mount Princess is a haven for city-dwellers. Spend the morning sipping a warm cup of Nepali tea while taking in the breathtaking views. Dhulikhel (01) 490616



Gokarna Forest Resort

The resort is a paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out natural tunes, a great restaurant for fine dining, and an expansive golf course. Gokarna (01) 4450002

Anatolia

Anatolia's Indian and Turkish dishes are packed with spices and an unforgettable assortment of flavours. All the food is halal. Thamel (01) 4258757



Haopin Hotpot

Hotpot is best served with a side of good and hungry company. Haopin offers a wide range of meats and vegetables, along with delicious sides to keep one satisfied while it cooks. 11am-10pm, Narayan Chaur, 9808064999

WEEKEND WEATHER



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
28° 20°	27° 21°	27° 21°	26° 20°	26° 20°

Rain, rain

The monsoon in its mature phase in August starts having to balance two counteracting systems: the Arabian Sea arm with moisture-laden winds blowing in from the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal arm that sends clouds up to Nepal from the southeast. This weekend and the new week will see a clash of these two circulations, with a monsoonal trough bypassing Nepal from the south but the western system pushing it back. The combination will bring copious precipitation all over Nepal, especially in the mountains.

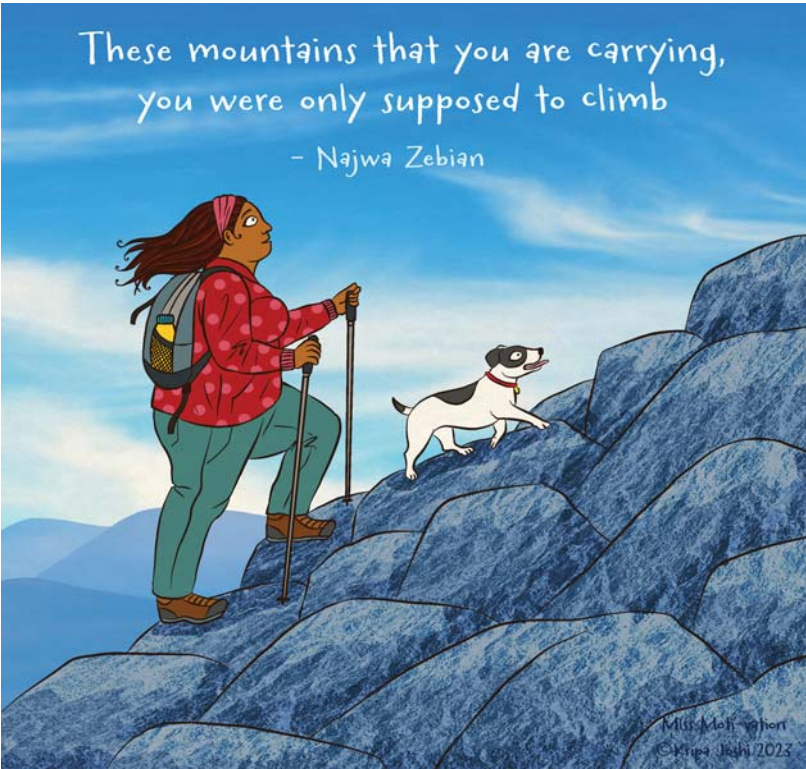
OUR PICK

In Mathieu Misset's French-Belgian thriller Black Spot, Police-Major Laurene Weiss is the chief of police of her hometown of Villefranche, where the murder rate is six times the national average. When Prosecutor Franck Siriani arrives to learn why people are dying under inexplicable circumstances, the duo team up to investigate the string of grisly crimes and eerie phenomena, in particular the mystery that surrounds the forest that borders the isolated French town. Meanwhile, the major grapples with her own past, much to Prosecutor Siriani's curiosity. Stars Suliane Brahim, Hubert Delattre and Laurent Capelluto.



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



सर्पदंश (सर्पको टोकाइ) बाट बच्न...

- घर वरिपरि सर्प लुक्न सक्ने सम्भावित स्थानको खोजी गरी त्यस्ता ठाउँहरूको व्यवस्थापन गरौं ।
- घर वरिपरि सफा राखौं, प्वालहरू टालौं ।
- खुला स्थानमा शौच नगरौं ।
- खाली खुट्टा नहिँडौं, जुत्ता वा गम्बुट लगाऔं, लट्टी लिएर हिँडौं ।
- सम्भव भएसम्म खाटमा सुतौं ।
- सुत्दा झुलको अनिवार्य प्रयोग गरौं ।
- सुत्ने वेलामा ओछ्यान राम्ररी हेरौं ।
- राती हिँड्दा टर्चको प्रयोग गरौं ।
- पराल, दाउरा आदि निकाल्दा होशियारी अपनाऔं ।



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 १० वर्ष टिकछ

चर्को घामबाट बचाउँछ

मुसलधारे वर्षाबाट जोगाउँछ

१० वर्ष वारेन्टी





■ Yugeshwor Koirala

Pritam Kunwar was born with a cleft lip and palate in Pokhara, but his family could not afford treatment for his condition. His face was disfigured, his speech was unintelligible, and the food he ate would often get into his nasal cavity.

Finally, at 15 he received cleft surgery, but without post-operative therapy his speech was still impaired. Then one day, at age 26, his life changed.

He used to make a living rowing boats at Phewa Lake, where a foreigner hopped on for a ride. He turned out to be a plastic surgeon volunteering in Nepal who referred him to Fishtail Hospital. That is where he met Shankar Man Rai.

Kunwar underwent a second surgery, and received speech therapy. Today, he holds a Taekwondo black belt, and runs an academy by Pokhara's Lakeside, training young women in self-defence.

"Before my second surgery, the students at my martial arts academy did not understand a word I said, but after I could speak properly they learnt faster," recalls Kunwar.

On average, one out of every 500 live births in Nepal is a case of cleft lip or palate, birth deformities in which the lip or palate fail to fuse. Incidence in Nepal is higher than in most parts of the world for reasons which are unclear, but may have to do with a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

However, the numbers afflicted are going down due to awareness and treatment at the Nepal Cleft and Burn Center at Kirtipur overlooking Kathmandu.

"Before the 1980s, cleft and burn treatment through plastic surgery was unheard of in the country," explains Shankar Man Rai, who is now a plastic surgeon and director of the Kirtipur centre. "International volunteer teams carried out the procedures, while Nepali doctors remained under-equipped."

Since then, Rai's team has seen that scenario change. Improved awareness of the condition means parents bring their children for treatment to the 30-bed Centre almost as soon as they are born.

Nepali paediatric and general surgeons were trained by the international teams, and for over 25 years Rai's team has been treating thousands of burn and cleft patients free of cost. The facility is funded by two non-profits, ReSurge International and Smile Train.

The facility at Kirtipur was inaugurated in 2014, but the Cleft

and Burn Center was initiated in 2002 by American textile retailer Jim Webber after meeting Rai in Nepal. Webber ran the Tibet Rug company, and organised financial support from other rug importers from Nepal to help fund the project.

Since then, the Center has been Nepal's first and leading teaching hospital specialising in deformity-correction surgery. Today, it is being run by Kirtipur Municipality and the non-profit Public Health Concern Trust Nepal (pfect-NEPAL), providing free treatment not just to patients at the centre but through camps in remote parts of the country.

Kiran Nakarmi is the head of the Department of Burns, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Kirtipur Hospital who worked with Rai to set up the centre. He says a cleft lip is easily recognised in infants, and can now even be diagnosed via ultrasound before birth.

"Timely treatment is important because it yields better speech outcomes," Nakarmi explains. "Our focus is on comprehensive care. Surgery alone is not enough, it needs follow-up with speech and occupational therapy and counseling."

The Kirtipur center's camps have reached many rural parts of Nepal, impacting more than 20,000 cleft patients. Initially, speech therapists used to go to the camps but now has trained nurses like Kabita Bhattarai Gurung to carry out the same task.

The outreach camps provide free food, lodging, orthodontic treatment, parental counseling, and speech therapy to patients, a model which Rai says can be replicated globally.

The caseload for cleft palates has fallen sharply and the Kiritpur center which used to carry out up to 1,200 cleft operations a year till a decade ago now performs half that.

Burning need

But with the decline in cleft cases, there has been a growing need to treat burn patients at Kirtipur.

Bhesh, 14, was playing in his home in western Nepal when he heard his mother shriek from the kitchen. She was cooking when the open fire spread and engulfed the house.

Four days later, both Bhesh and his mother arrived at Nepal Cleft and Burn Center. The long ride had been excruciating, and with burns over 30% of her body, his mother died shortly after. Bhesh went through several surgeries and skin grafts. Over a third of the patients admitted to the Centre are children, and half are women.

"We think that the home is the



safest place, but that is where most burn injuries occur," says Rai. "The proportion of children with burns at the Center shot up to over 40% during the pandemic. At home they were more at risk."

Rural women are exposed to open fires, and children suffer because they are largely unsupervised in high-hazard settings. Disfigured burn patients have to deal with social stigma because they are seen as a sign of bad luck.

The Center also treats burn violence usually perpetrated against women in the homes of in-laws, and this adds to the count of the 110 people who die of burns each year in Nepal.

"Burns survivors in Nepal

need more support," says Wendy Marston, co-founder and advisor of Burns Violence Survivors (BVS) Nepal. "Small acts of kindness from all of us, such as the spreading of education, and charitable giving, can go far in helping these survivors and patients."

BVS Nepal works with underserved patients in over 12 hospitals, providing funds for their treatment, therapy, and setting up businesses for survivors. Its prevention approach is shared by the Burn and Cleft Center which also holds burn awareness camps for community health workers and local people.

"For household burns, awareness is surely the first step towards prevention," Rai says. "But



REMOVING SCARS

One hospital's effort has transformed reconstructive surgery for Nepalis with cleft and burns



PHECT NEPAL



Shankar Man Rai



Kiran Nakarmi

we can't simply tell people what to do if they don't have the means to act."

A WHO study shows that burns are the second most common injury in rural Nepal, accounting for 5% of disabilities in the country.

"When we first started treating burns, we began with disabilities caused by post-burn contractures," explains Nakarmi. "If the wound is in a place such as a joint, this causes the patient to lose mobility."

The Kirtipur team prioritises comprehensive care for burn contractures. But unlike with cleft palates, they failed to see any decline in the caseload even after years of effort. Rai says this is because burn survivors are not getting the treatment needed. Surgeons hope that using flaps and grafts they can reduce the occurrence of contractures.

Nepal's difficult geography keeps patients like Bhesh from quickly receiving care. Burn survivors from all over the country are referred to the few specialised centres in Kathmandu, but there is usually a long waiting list and it takes weeks before a doctor can see them.

The Kirtipur Center has largely succeeded in minimising waits by enabling surgeons to go to patients instead of the other way round. This means patients at the Center receive the surgery they need within days of being admitted.

But there are challenges. "Your treatment is not possible here," were the words that Nepali Congress leader Chandra Bhandari heard at the Nepal Burn and Cleft Center where he was rushed there after suffering severe burn wounds in a gas cylinder explosion in February. Bhandari was eventually medevaced to Mumbai where he was successfully treated.

"It is unfair that any Nepali should have to go abroad for burn treatment," Bhandari told Nepali Times. "Our surgeons are the best in the world, yet they have had to rely solely on individual and community effort. The government urgently needs to support the surgeons, and I pledge to do what I can."

There are only 30-40 reconstructive plastic surgeons in the country, eight of them at

Kirtipur, which offers a residency program for reconstructive plastic surgery affiliated with the National Academy of Medical Sciences program at Bir Hospital, whose curriculum was developed by Rai.

While cosmetic plastic surgery is a booming profession in Nepal, the niche dedicated to burns treatment has not got the attention it deserves. Kirtipur Hospital, for instance, only has seven ICU beds. The country's only skin bank at the Center has got only 31 donations in the nine years since it was set up.

With little government support, the Center mostly runs on international help for free treatment to about 600 patients a year. But even as its focus shifts from clefts to burns, international assistance is skewed in favour of cleft palates.

"We get more donations than we need for clefts," Rai reveals. "Burns are where we need greater investment, but because they are more expensive and complex, and have higher odds of ending in mortality, there is less interest from donors."

Not only is the government not providing needed help, its bureaucracy puts up obstacles every step of the way. Kirtipur Municipality received a donation of Rs2,900,000 for urgent burn treatment supplies. But red tape has delayed delivery.

The Center now has an ambitious plan to establish a sustainable fund for free burns treatment by encouraging donations from well-to-do local Nepalis and the diaspora. The goal is not to have to turn to international donors for money.

The Nepal Cleft and Burn Center will soon open a branch in Itahari of Sunsari district with the same level of care as Kirtipur.

Says Nakarmi: "We don't need big, lavish burn hospitals all over the country. We need a lot more primary burn centers where rural patients can receive immediate care, and then be referred to the larger centers if need be."

Nepal has seen major improvements in burn and cleft palate surgeries in recent years thanks to doctors like Rai and Nakarmi. Says Rai: "I am sure we will see a day when no patient seeking treatment in Nepal has to live with scars, both figuratively, and literally." 🇳🇵

Home away from home

Tales of valour and a serendipitous family bond of a British Army colonel who made Nepal his home

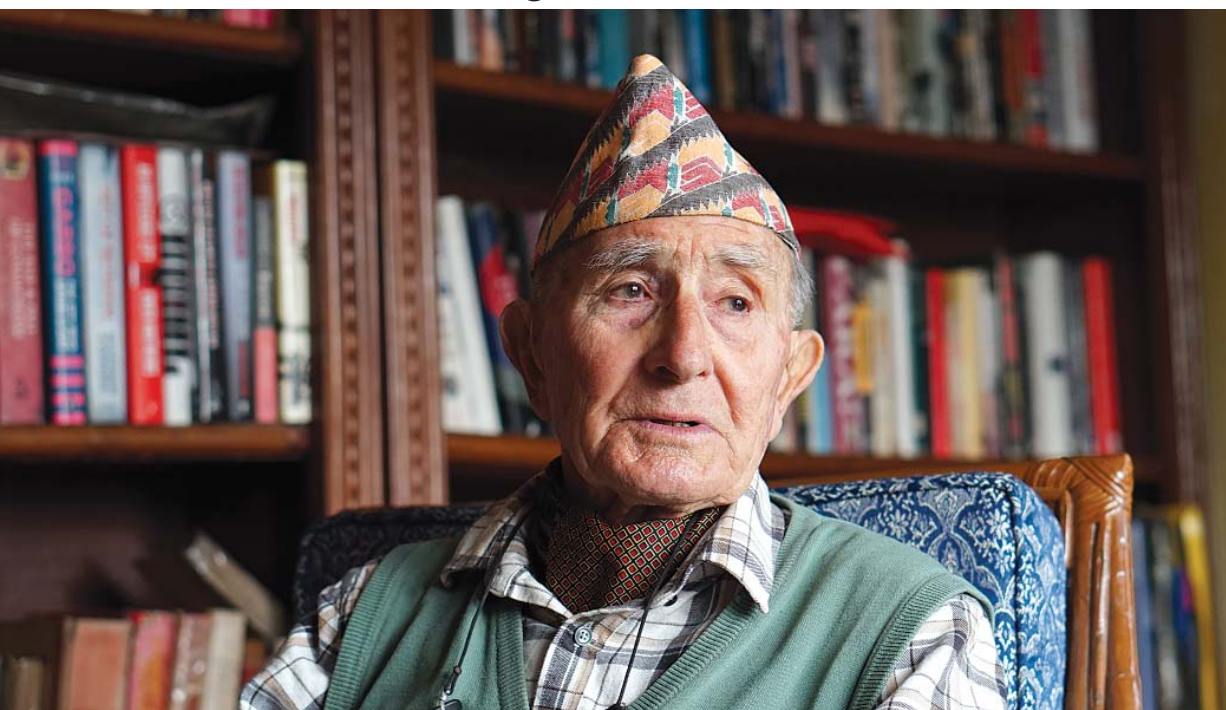
■ **Durga Rana Magar**
in Pokhara

Mention “Cross Sa’b” and anyone on the path along a forested ridge above this scenic central Nepal town will point out his house amidst terrace fields of maize.

In Dhampu Niwas resides Colonel (Retired) John Philip Cross, self-proclaimed Nepali who has found solace, love, and an unconventional family in these mountains. “J P” was also known as “Brain prince” for his audacious exploits in Sarawak during the war against insurgents.

At 98, the Colonel is still a lean and sprightly man, looking like a fair-skinned Brahmin in his Dhaka topi as he took Luka, his faithful canine companion, for a walk through the monsoon mist. Cross spends his days embracing life’s simple joys: playing, writing, reading, spending time with great-grandchildren, and sipping his favourite milk tea.

Young J P joined the British Army at age 17, and was immediately transported to the European theatre of World War II.



After the war ended there, he was sent off to India where the allies were still fighting the Japanese.

It was there in the Gurkha training camps in Dehradun that his association with Nepal began. He learnt Nepali from his fellow soldiers and developed a deep admiration for Nepali culture.

Soon, he got caught up in the turmoil of Partition, as the departing British hastily drew a line on the map separating India and Pakistan. Millions died. Cross recalls: “Some days, I would go to sleep in India and wake up in Pakistan.”

Even after Indian independence in 1947, there were still wars to

be fought: in the jungles of Malaya and in Borneo. He was captured by insurgents and was about to have his head chopped off by a notorious commander, but quick thinking and language skills helped him escape.

After 40 years in the military, Cross retired as a decorated Lt Colonel, and then immersed himself in his real passion: languages. Besides his mother tongue, he is fluent in Nepali, Roman, Urdu, Cantonese, Malayalam, Iban, French, Hindi, Thai, Vietnamese, and Tamang, Gurung and Magar languages of Nepal.

“I was interested in languages and history. I studied, but the

government made me a soldier,” Cross says with a chuckle. Cross even got a degree from Tribhuvan University and worked as a researcher at the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS).

Cross first visited Nepal in 1946, and remembers walking up to Kathmandu via Chitlang and being warmly received by Prime Minister Padma Shumsher Rana. He returned in 1976 to head the British Army recruitment camp in Paklihawa.

Fate brought Cross face-to-face with Budhiman Dura Tamu “Dhamphu” in 1975, a young man from Lamjung who was not selected for the British Army because he

was half an inch shorter than the required height. Budhiman worked for Cross in Paklihawa, helping him with chores. Budhiman had no family, and having left England so long ago Cross did not either. So he adopted him.

“It’s been 47 years. He is like a son to me. I am his father. This is my family,” says Cross, remembering that an astrologer once told him and Budhiman that they were born from the same mother 400 years ago in England.

After many years in Nepal, King Birendra issued an edict allowing him to buy and own land and a house. But with the end of the monarchy, he had to apply citizenship which was not an easy process.

“After 32 years, 6 months, and 2 days of struggle, I finally obtained Nepali citizenship,” says Cross, proudly displaying his citizenship card.

Nearing his 100th birthday, Cross is hale and hearty, and only has problems with his eye sight and hearing. Before Covid, he used to hike 20km a day and even now does a fair bit of walking. “Exercise is the best formula for staying young,” he says.

Cross has written 21 books including titles like Gurkhas at War, The Fame of the Name, Jungle Warfare and It Happens with Gurkhas. He is getting ready to publish his 22nd book.

In fluent Nepali of the central mountains, Cross says, “I’ve been to more than 40 countries, but my heart, mind, and body are in Nepal. I will take my last breath here in Nepal.” 🇳🇵

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