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Saffron surge

GOPEN RAI

When Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in 2014, monarchists in Nepal hoped he would help roll back secularism and restore their Hindu kingdom. This week, after Modi's sweep of state elections and the installation of Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, that hope has been revived.

Modi has so far carefully refrained from pushing for a restoration of Nepal's Hindu monarchy, abolished by the Constituent Assembly in 2008. But Adityanath wants Nepal's secular and republican constitution scrapped, and even demanded the restoration of the Shah monarchy during a Hindu jamboree in Kathmandu last year.

The fact that Adityanath is the head priest of the *Gorakhpur Peeth*, the patron deity of the Shah dynasty, has emboldened the newly resurgent RPP.

It staged a protest this week against the Election Commission's removal of 'monarchy' and 'Hindu nation' from its statute (*pic, above*).

Not everyone is convinced that India's policy will change. Says UML MP Rajan Bhattarai, member of the Eminent Persons Group on Nepal-India relations: "What India wants in Nepal is guided by foreign policy that supports secularism, federalism and republicanism. The rise of Adityanath will not change that."

Journalist Yubaraj Ghimire, who covered India's Hindutva movement during the Babri Masjid Demolition in 1992, disagrees.

"Chief Minister Adityanath may not have the power to restore Nepal's Hindu monarchy, but he can use his political clout in New Delhi to reshape India's foreign policy vis-a-vis Nepal," says Ghimire, now

editor of *Annapurna Post*.

He sees the beginning of the end of the Shyam Saran Doctrine that laid out India's strategy on Nepal. The former Indian ambassador and foreign secretary was the architect of the 12-point deal signed in New Delhi in 2005 between Nepal's mainstream parties and rebels against the monarchy.

"That doctrine is failing because Saran believed Beijing's influence in Kathmandu would decline once the monarchy was gone, but the opposite happened," Ghimire adds.

Meanwhile, Nepal's secularist republicans are now getting nervous that India will do a U-turn.

Says Ghimire: "Signatories of the 12-point deal are scared, more so after the rise of Adityanath. They were wrong to seek India's help in declaring Nepal a secular republic. It will be wrong again if India tries to turn Nepal into a Hindu kingdom." □

Om Astha Rai

SOUTHERLY WIND
EDITORIAL

MODI'S INDIA

GUEST EDITORIAL
BY PUJA SEN
PAGE 2

buzz

ARTAVAGANZA

The Kathmandu Triennale puts Nepal and Nepali artists on the world map with a two-week festival of creativity

BY SMRITI BASNET PAGE 6-7



TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE

Bees are disappearing and need protection, not just for the good of the honey industry but also to pollinate our food.

BY SONIA AWALE PAGE 8-9



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SOUTHERLY WIND

Only in Nepal perhaps does the leader of the fourth-largest party in parliament who was just installed as Deputy Prime Minister sit on the asphalt in protest. Photos this week show Kamal Thapa with a befuddled Nepal Army bodyguard confronting riot police who later fired tear gas and baton charged supporters of his Hindu-royalist RPP.

Thapa was there to challenge the Election Commission refusing to accept his party's manifesto that calls for the restoration of a Hindu monarchy in Nepal. We feel it was no coincidence that the RPP protest this week came right after the dramatic power consolidation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP in state elections, and the installation of a saffron chief minister in Uttar Pradesh. It just went to prove that there must be some truth to the apocryphal adage that when it rains in New Delhi a politician in Kathmandu unfurls an umbrella ... or goes off to China.

After the BJP came to power in 2014, there has been a struggle between Modi's advisers in the PMO and the Indian foreign policy establishment for policy and control. Some of that is also a result of strained relations within the BJP, particularly

between Modi and the Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj. This tension has sowed some confusion about Indian policy on Nepal for the past three years.

Indian visitors in Kathmandu have sent conflicting signals while meeting Nepali leaders on issues like Nepal's secular, federal and republican constitution. The external affairs bureaucracy in India with its intelligence agencies have been the architects since November 2005 of Nepal's peace process that is now culminating with the constitution. The weakening of the secular Congress-Left could mean that the ascendant Hindu-Right *shakti peeth* in New Delhi will try to reboot its policy on Nepal.

The new Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is the high priest of the patron deity of Nepal's former royal family in Gorakhpur. He has been disparaging about Nepal's secular constitution, and openly spoken about restoring the Hindu monarchy. Other BJP advisers have also made no secret of their antipathy to a secular and republican Nepal.

Political infighting in Kathmandu, the intractable confusion over amendments to the constitution, and some would say even the five-month blockade of Nepal in 2015 were a manifestation of secular leftists and Hindu revivalists working at cross-purposes in New Delhi's corridors of power. Kamal Thapa and the Khum Bahadur Khadka faction of the Nepali Congress appear to be just foot soldiers in this proxy war.

Nepal's cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity is our national identity.

How Nepalis want to define themselves should not change just because there is a new power balance in New Delhi.



GUEST EDITORIAL PUJA SEN

Modi's India

India's democratic fortunes have taken another decisive turn to the right with the results of recent state assembly elections. The ruling BJP made significant gains in four crucial states: Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur, and most significantly, Uttar Pradesh (UP).

Overwhelmingly the mandate is seen to have been for Prime Minister Narendra Modi who, reports say, commands reverence somewhat akin to what Indira Gandhi enjoyed when in power. Pranjoy Roy of *NDTV* declared that this was the "new India" and that "we are all part now of Modi's nation". On one level, that statement is absurd. It signals how the liberal establishment itself has lost its grip on the very definition of democracy.

The nation does not belong to one man, but a people who have elected him, and importantly also, to those who did not. Democracy is not reducible to a formulation that the majority wins, but its highest ideals enshrine safeguarding its minorities. If anything, Modi's India, since we must call it that, represents a profound crisis for secularism and the country's constitutional values. The BJP's choice of chief minister for UP – Yogi Adityanath – represents another grotesque subversion of these principles.

Adityanath has made incendiary speeches inciting open violence towards Muslims, ("For every Hindu woman that is raped, we will rape hundreds of their women"), enforcing a ban on cow slaughter, and declaring that the freedom of women need to be curbed

lest they become unnatural. Since his assuming office, the UP (moral) police has already launched 'anti-Romeo' squads to seemingly curb harassment against women but more likely to shame and intimidate young couples.

The 2014 elevation of Narendra Modi to the highest seat of power had already signaled these shifts. Representing the rise of cultural-religious chauvinism backed by corporate power, and a general public willingness to disregard communal violence for the promise of 'development', the BJP mandate might well indicate the contours of a 'new India'. But this is a process that has been patiently engineered through the decades.

The BJP, powered as it is by the radical Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, has been making its long march through the institutions, giving the lie to the claim that once parties (left or right) come to power they automatically shift to the liberal centre. While they organise and mobilise violence socially, actively communalise the caste vote, discredit and damp down on criticism in the university and the media, their rise to power has been through democratic and electoral means. As the scholar Aijaz Ahmad once put it: "Every country gets the fascism that it deserves."



Puja Sen is a Kathmandu-based writer

Times.com

ONLINE VIDEOS



TRAPPED IN TRANSITION

Continued unrest in Tarai has increased human trafficking and resulted in students quitting studies to become child workers in Indian cities. Watch video of the rescue of Nepali children from Bihar last week.



HIVE ALIVE



One of every three bites of food we take can be traced to bee pollination. But bees are disappearing at an alarming rate around the world. Watch a lively video of busy bees in action in Godavari.

REPLUG



FUMING KATHMANDU

The *Nepali Times* coverage of Kathmandu's air pollution with the video of dust and emissions, continues to draw public attention. Reader Tashi Sherpa was so moved by the coverage he penned this verse:

Gone ...

I read the other day
Of a valley in agony,
going up in smoke,
And smog, and fumes
And daylight choked on
some toxic gravity

In a distant recall
Two scores of an age,
I'd ride a Raleigh
through seven bends south,
and west on the ring
to the Stupa and back
through fluent paddy,
emerald, undulating

In the wind's breath
or up Embassy row
Past bamboo groves
in hushed green
past huts in taupe
children frolicking
on a crystal stream
to Narayan's pond.

I could go miles
above the rim
and almost touch
the mint white stuff
Glide thru' mist,
lose the hours
and come home
exerted, elated
Smelling snowmelt
In spring

Soak summer lavender
lapped in mustard
Or climb that wall
broken bricks
moss cloaked and all
just to pluck
that single magnolia
because she said so.

That was fun
but this is now
and it's almost gone

DOUBLE THE HARVEST

Your story on rice is a refreshing focus on farming sorely lacking in the mainstream Nepali media discourse ('The price of growing rice', Sahina Shrestha, #850). While irrigation is an important factor to add spring rice and increase rice production, the reporter may have had liked to mention SRI (System of Rice Intensification) which can more than double harvests of paddy with fewer seedlings and less water.

R. Gonzales

WHAT'S TRENDING



Most reached and shared on Facebook
(44,672 people reached, 165 shares)



Most visited and Commented online page
(849 views)

The face of hunger

by Om Astha Rai

There has been an outpouring of response to the story and video of the Biswakarma family from Dang working in a brick kiln in Lalitpur. Their youngest child, two-Buddhi Maya, 2, is suffering from severe malnutrition. Many readers pledged support, and Rs 60,000 has already been collected so far, including Rs 10,000 from *Nepali Times* staff. The money will be handed over to the family this week. The Sundar Dhoka Sathi Sewa has offered free treatment. The Suhara Foundation will help resettle the family in Dang. Donations can still be sent, please email editors@nepalitimes.com Watch video of the Biswakarma family struggling to keep their daughter alive: <http://bit.ly/2mXcd90>



Most popular on Twitter
(101 retweets, 218 likes)

Saving Shey Phoksundo

by Dawa Palden

Nepal's largest national park needs urgent attention to curb logging, poaching and raise incomes of residents. The story was most shared this week on Twitter.

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times@nepalitimes
"I know she will die. She is here on Earth only for a short time." <http://bit.ly/2myL7Eb> @omastharai #Malnutrition #poverty #Kathmandu



Mohna Ansari@MohnaAnsari
Many more Issues near by #Capital #Kathmandu @omastharai thanks for raising.



Kunda Dixit@kundadixit
.@lisachoegeyal remembers the legendary Boris Lisanevich in this week's @nepalitimes column 'So Far So Good' <http://bit.ly/2mCBjJ7>



Ram Sharan Mahat@ramsmahat
@kundadixit @lisachoegeyal @nepalitimes Legendary hotelier! Last act was restaurant in Baneshwor height, advertised 'Boris is still alive!'



Nepali Times@nepalitimes
Why should environmentalists in #Nepal suffer angst because #Trump got elected? How much worse can it get? <http://bit.ly/2mT8c6g>



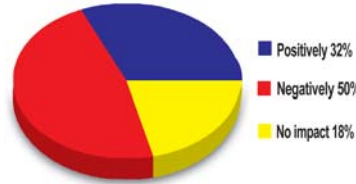
Bhushan Tuladhara@BhushanTuladhara
Trump is a wake up call for northern environmentalists. For us in Nepal, well we have to sort our own issues on environment & development

Times

Weekly Internet Poll #851

Q. How will Narendra Modi's electoral gains in India affect Nepal?

Total votes: 245



Weekly Internet Poll #852
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should Nepal restore a ceremonial monarchy?

Times

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The post-development era

The donor downturn in Nepal comes as 'development' re-orientates towards self-generated 'progress'

Swiss Ambassador Jörg Frieden, launching the Nepali translation of Toni Hagen's work *Decentralisation and Development* (*Bikendrikaran ra Bikas*, Himal Books, BS 2073) on Tuesday (see photo), remarked that international donors had lately lost leverage and influence in Nepal. He ascribed this to the reduction of donor budgets and the rise in remittances from migrant labour.



ON THE WAY UP
Kanak Mani Dixit

Indeed, the waning influence of the Western donors in Nepal is noticeable, and it is not only because of the reduced kitty, which itself has been the result of a string of factors including the rise of the xenophobic right-wing in the metropolitan North, allocations for West Asian refugees, and sheer donor fatigue. One can expect that Donald Trump's 'hard power budget', which proposes nearly 30 percent cuts in UN and USAID spending, will drastically reduce US relevance in a country where it has been 'doing development' since the 1950s.

The donors have brought the escalating irrelevance upon themselves. For long, the aid organisations have stood as imperious citadels of dollar/euro disbursement, with Nepal's politicians, bureaucrats and civil society scampering about like chicken before the farmer scattering grain.

It is the rare donor who has not succumbed to the obsequiousness of the Nepali



BIKRAM RAI

'counterparts', or the ability to play politics. A Danish diplomat told a friend in Africa a few years ago that he was seeking a posting in Nepal, "because you can be politically engaged there like nowhere else". The Danish embassy having closed down, the gentleman is unlikely to find another country to fulfil his activist streak.

Ultimately, the interventionist anthropology-backed social engineering projects during the decade of state restructuring and constitution writing had donors acting like weighty bulls in a china shop. The newfound

deference of Western donors and diplomats to India when it comes to Nepal affairs, evidently due to Asian geopolitics in relation to China, has also contributed to reduced influence in Kathmandu corridors.

Where it hurts

The donor pullback, interestingly, comes at a time when 'development' as a term and an activity is itself losing traction after half a century at centre stage, as we reorient towards self-generated 'progress'. This theme is picked up well in another new book, *Aid, Technology and*

Development: The Lessons from Nepal (Dipak Gyawali et al editors, Earthscan/Routeledge, 2017)

At the heart of the weakness of international aid is Kathmandu's inability to pick between projects. The rot set in towards the end of the Panchayat era when the then His Majesty's Government started taking anything and everything on offer. Donor influence soared from the 1970s through the 2000s, but we now seem to be approaching the end of a cycle.

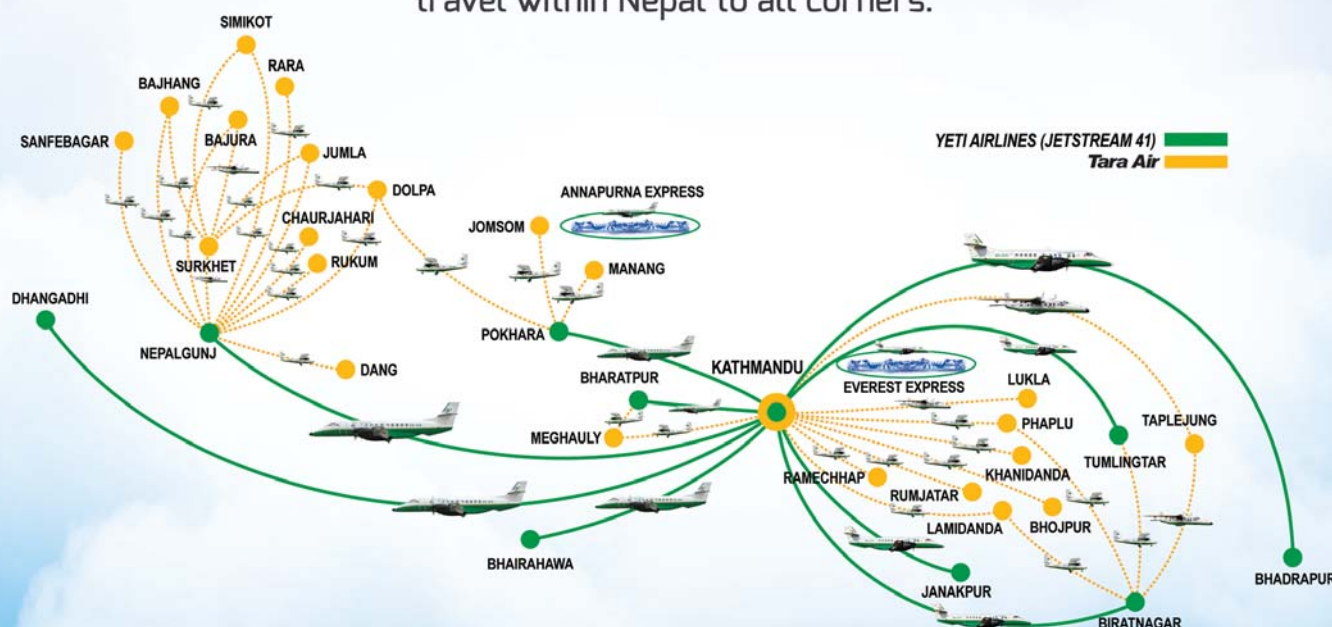
We must also consider donor money in relation to

the huge amount that the Nepal Government itself spends through the regular and development budget with a significant portion allocated to local government bodies. The problem is that much remains unspent due to political skulduggery and various inefficiencies, while huge amounts are siphoned off through patronage networks.

Where the dip in donor funding is hurting the most is the arena of social and cultural activism, and academia. The related NGOs rely overwhelmingly on donor funding because no private or government

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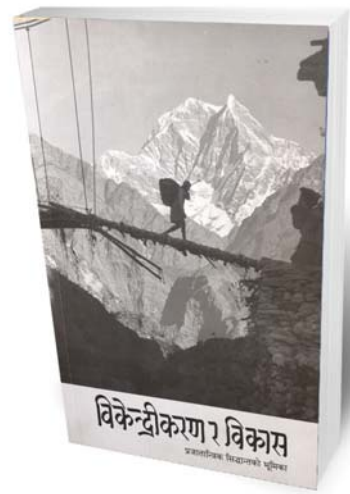


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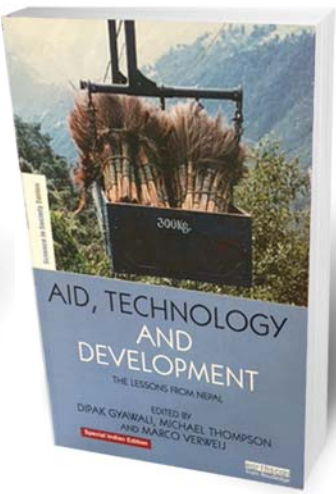
sources are forthcoming, with cash philanthropy yet to strike root in the society.

Fad aid

There have been two major failings of donors over the years: a) pushing developmental fads on an unsuspecting land, where government departments tend to slavishly follow whatever is introduced; b) the high-and-mighty approach of donor agency staffers, especially the heads, who are not in Nepal long enough to understand the society, and who enjoy clout without accountability.

One could of course defend the donor industry from various standpoints, eg. how it got socio-political ‘inclusion’ into the agenda of the Nepali state. Over the decades, certainly, there have been instances of success, from rural roads and suspension bridges to community forestry, but the question is whether there has been bang for the buck. And whether the indigenous can-do attitude of our communities was compromised.

Donor involvement during the post-conflict transition and constitution-writing was, on the whole, a negative – exemplified by the high salaries and perks provided to grey eminences and self-serving obstructionists masquerading as peace and democracy activists. Then there is the donor agency head who had the temerity to publicly announce that food aid support after the April 2015 earthquake could be diverted



to Yemen or Syria if Nepalis did not like what they got.

The education sector has for decades been controlled by multiple donors through a ‘basket fund’ that directs the Ministry of Education on a project-by-project basis, which has kept the bureaucracy from ownership and from developing programmatic continuity. And yet, there is not a whiff of recrimination or accountability among the donor agencies for the disaster of public education we have on our hands.

Decentralisation

Toni Hagen’s book on decentralisation, development and democratic practice could

not have come at a better time. As local government elections become a certainty we seem to have finally got over our fear of the populism that had condemned ‘decentralisation’ to the doghouse.

The populist propaganda had it that decentralisation would undercut ‘federalism’, and civil society and donor organisations all ran for cover. You even had the International Crisis Group last year recommending to development partners: “refuse support for local elections if a roadmap agreed with agitating groups is not in place.” But, finally, it seems once again kosher to defend ‘decentralisation’ and speak up for local government elections.

The Kathmandu intelligentsia may be steeped in self-destructive cynicism, the donors may be bewildered at their reduced role, but as the decades of ‘development’ come to a close, we will hopefully move towards a true era of ‘progress’.

There is much remaining to be done to end exclusion, and place egalitarianism and equity at the soul of the democratic republic. And the energy will come from within, because the people at large have not lost heart. 🇳🇵

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Fun on furniture

SN Joshi & Sons, sole authorised dealer of SB Furniture Thailand, has introduced special discounts in various home



and office furniture categories. Additionally, customers can

avail up to 35 per cent discount on bed sheets, pillow covers, duvet covers and other bedding accessories of Lotus Bedding.

High on appliances

Products of Japanese multinational conglomerate Hitachi were launched during an event in the capital. The brand offers products like household appliances, smart TVs, energy saving refrigerators, gas tables, vacuum



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Brand new Bajaj



Hansraj Hulaschan, sole distributor of Bajaj motorcycles, unveiled the new Bajaj Dominar

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Good news this weekend for many of us who thought winter had returned. After a low pressure system riding the westerlies makes it stormy way across Central Nepal on Friday bringing rain and hail, the weekend should be balmy and sunny. The temperature will climb back to the mid-20s which is more normal for this time of year and the minima will be in the double digits henceforth. Early next week we will see a pattern of afternoon buildup with snow flurries above 4,000m, and reduced visibility because of haze from the plains.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 23° 11°	 27° 12°	 24° 12°

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GOPEN RAI

The Kathmandu Triennale puts Nepal and Nepali artists on the world map with a two-week festival of creativity

SMRITI BASNET

For past weeks a colourful mural has come up on the wall of the Lalitpur District Post Office in Patan Dhoka (above) depicting a combination of lions and humans to illustrate the characteristic they share: pride, one of seven deadly sins. Created by street artist Kiran

Maharjan, the three-storey painting is one of many works of art that will adorn the streets of Patan and Kathmandu for the next 17 days – part of an international festival called the Kathmandu Triennale. Maharjan’s mural encapsulates what the festival hopes to promote: the existence of art beyond the confines of a gallery space. “We see Kathmandu Triennale 2017 as an opportunity to develop

newer audiences while bringing art lovers deeper into the passion for art,” said festival manager Nischal Oli. With the theme ‘The City: My Studio/The City: My Life’, the festival is expecting over 70 artists from 25 countries from 24 March - 9 April. “The focus is on the city because cities all around the world are changing and are in a constant state of flux. The festival will

look at how changes or the status quo affect us as individuals, as citizens or as artists,” said festival director Sangeeta Thapa. The Triennale will be centred in four venues: Patan Museum, Nepal Art Council, Taragaon Museum and Siddhartha Art Gallery, as well as other galleries. But the whole city is the venue. “We should not focus on the effect of art, we should





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**kathmandu
 triennale**
 March 24 - April 9
 2017

All about art

24 March, FRIDAY

9 am
 Opening Ceremony, Hyatt Regency
3 pm onwards
 Eating of the Mandala City, Nepal Art Council
6 pm onwards
 Concert at Itumbahal, Kathmandu

25 March, SATURDAY

10.30 am
 Book launch : The Chitrakars, Patan Museum
11.30 am
 Symposium: The Ephemeral: In Public Spaces and Performance, Patan Museum

2 pm

Art performances by KT 2017 and Collateral Artists
6 pm
 Traditional Concert, Pim Bahal

26 March, SUNDAY

10 to 1 pm
 Symposium: Memory and Identity, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
2 pm
 Opening: Upheavels by Bengal Foundation, Park Gallery, Pulchok
5 pm
 Opening: Built/Unbuilt: Home/City, Tangalwood, Tangal
6 pm
 Symposium: Responding to the City: Arts Identity, Outreach. Tangalwood, Tangal
 Book launch: Breaking Views, Tangalwood, Tangal

27 March, MONDAY

10 to 1 pm
 Symposium: Culture and Spaces, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
2.30 pm
 Art of Journey: Exhibition Opening and Tour, Tunthinani, Saugai
6 pm
 Symposium: The City: As a local, a visitor, an immigrant, Tangalwood, Tangal

28 March, TUESDAY

10 to 1 pm
 Symposium: Archives and Platform, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
2 pm
 "Aama", performance art at Taragaon Museum, Boudha

29 March, WEDNESDAY

2 pm

Special Symposium: Artists and the City, Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
4 to 6 pm
 Cai Guo Qiang's Public Art Event, Tundikhel
7 pm onwards
 A Night Walk in Patan, Patan Darbar Square

30 March, THURSDAY

10 am
 Masterclass: Developing and Managing an Art Organisation, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
1 pm
 Screening: The Crossing, by George Cubian, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
2 pm
 Special Symposium: Refugees in the City, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
6 pm
 Screenings: Short Waves Film Festival Day 1, Alliance Française, Jawalakhel
7 pm onwards
 Encore: A Night Walk in Patan, Patan Darbar Square

31 March, FRIDAY

10 am to 1 pm
 Masterclass: Developing and Managing an Art Organisation, Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
2 pm
 Special Symposium: Art and Visibility: Transgender Visibility Day, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
6 pm
 Screening: Short Waves Film Festival Day 2, Alliance Française, Jawalakhel
6 to 7 pm
 Book launch: Thamel: The Dark Star of Kathmandu by Rabi Thapa, Jatra, Thamel

1 April, SATURDAY

10 am
 Public Performance Art by Nexus Culture Hub, Kathmandu Darbar Square

2 April, SUNDAY

5.30 pm
 Screening: Ether Antenna by Michael Candy, Nepal Communitere, Pulchok

3 April, MONDAY

5.30 pm
 Presentation: My Studio/My Life (7) by Diana Tamane, Evoke Cafe and Bistro, Jhamsikhel

8 April, SATURDAY

11 am
 Opening: KT 2017 Encounters Exhibition at Children's Art Museum, Hattisar
12 to 4 pm
 Art Market, Yellow House, Sanepa

9 April, SUNDAY

4 pm
 Closing Ceremony, Kathmandu Darbar Square



SRAJESH TULADHAR

just do it," said Philippe van Cauteren, curator of the central exhibition of the festival, who is also the artistic director of SMAK Museum for Contemporary Art in Ghent, Belgium. Van Cauteren has curated festivals in Chile, Mexico, Germany and Brazil, and gave the Kathmandu festival an international focus.

In the months leading up to the festival, Nepali and international artists have taken the opportunity to make Kathmandu their muse as well as studio space. For artist Sujan Dangol it has been nothing short of an eye-opening experience. Recounting stories and anecdotes of his work with urban refugees in Kathmandu over the past two months, Dangol says he has had a lot to learn.

"People play musical chairs for fun, but in reality we are actually playing musical chairs," said the artist, who uses the well-known game in his video to depict the harsh uncertainty of people living in temporary camps, especially after the earthquake.

Currently overseeing Triennale production at Nepal Art Council, Dangol is busier than ever, working day and night to make the festival a success. "If there is darkness then it is art that helps bring some light in, it opens a small door," he said.

The Triennale will encompass interactive art forms: Chinese contemporary artist Song Dong will build a model town out of biscuits at Nepal Art Council. In the same venue, Romanian artist Ciprian Muresan will create a city out of paper (*above*). By having the audiences eat the biscuits or step on the paper, both artists want to depict how we are making cities unliveable.

British multimedia artist

Gaynor O'Flynn hosted an interactive show in the earthquake-damaged Basantapur Square on the evening of 22 March where the audience were asked to make a pledge for preservation while O'Flynn projected their voices on the physical space.

Some exhibitors will focus on Kathmandu's positive aspects, like Dutch artist Henk Visch. "Art is a mentally free space," says the artist who has chosen to depict the body, and the pleasures we derive from it, in his works. Visch stumbled on the idea after discovering a book on the Kama Sutra and says he was particularly fascinated with the respect given to the body in Nepal.

Anne Marie, a fourth year student of Srijana College of Art, is helping build the sand sculpture of a sleeping figure outside the Taragaon Museum.

"Nepalis usually think that anything beautiful is art. Working with him I have come to learn that there is much more than just the finish or beauty," said Marie.

Festival organisers plan to include child-friendly spaces, art workshops for the community, a book launch, screening of films and artist talks.

Brian Hodgson's *Some Birds of Nepal*, containing bird paintings of 19th century Nepali artist Rajman Chitrakar, will also be displayed. A treasured book, it is being specially flown in from the Natural History Museum in London for the duration of the festival.

But Oli has faced challenges: "The most difficult were shortages of time and money. There is little state support and private patrons are still not interested in contemporary art." 🇳🇵



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Gyaneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal



What's the buzz?

Bees are disappearing and need protection, not just for the good of the honey industry but also to pollinate our food

SONIA AWALE

Pesticide use, disease and climate change are taking their toll on Nepal's bee populations, threatening not just harvests of fruit, vegetables and grain, but also hurting the country's indigenous honey industry.

Honeybee colonies in the US are dying at a rate of 30 per cent or more a year, and although the situation in Nepal is not as critical, apiarists here are ringing alarm bells. Of the 11 types of honeybees found in nature, four are native to the Himalaya, and Nepal also has colonies of European bees – all are being depleted.

Aside from affecting honey

production, this has also drastically reduced the benefits to agriculture from cross-pollination. For instance, a survey in eastern Nepal showed that after beehives were introduced, production of cardamom rose by 45 per cent.

"There are crops that can self-pollinate and those that need a pollinating agent," explains Nepal's foremost beekeeping expert, Gopal Prasad Kafle. But the increasing use of agro-chemicals, infections, extreme weather events, practice of monoculture farming, and some say even the spread of mobile phone towers, have lead to the decline in Nepal's bee populations.

In the early 1980s, there was an epidemic of TSBV (Thai Sac Brood Virus) in Nepal, which nearly wiped out the population of *Apis cerana* indigenous honeybees, but it rebounded within a few years. Today, the threat is more from pesticides, loss of bio-diversity and global warming.

"Climate change is among the environmental factors responsible for bee declines, so we have to find ways to cool the earth to save bees. Also, diseases like TSBV have no treatment. We have to keep bees strong biologically and pay special attention to their needs," adds Kafle.

Nepal is known internationally for its wild hives, and the villagers in Lamjung who hang alongside cliffs to tap honey were made famous by Eric Valli's

Electrostatic charge on a bee is positive while plants are slightly negative

Honey stomach is a part of the bee's stomach carrying nectar back to the hive

Pollen basket is used to harvest and transport pollen back to the hive to feed the young, but rubbing pollen on the stamen of flowers pollinates them



BIKRAM RAI

HONEY MONEY



Out of 11 honeybee species, Nepal has five. While *Apis cerana*, *Apis laboriosa*, *Apis dorsata*, and *Apis florae* are indigenous to the Himalaya, *Apis mellifera* is a European bee introduced in Nepal for commercial purposes 1990. While each species of bee is equally significant for pollination, only *Apis cerana* and *Apis mellifera* are useful for honey-making.

A hive of *cerana*, which is found commonly in the hills, contains approximately 25-30,000 bees while the one of *mellifera* contains 50,000 or more individuals. *Mellifera* thrives well in plains and can travel up to 5km to seek nectar in flowers, while the *cerana* flies only up to 1km.

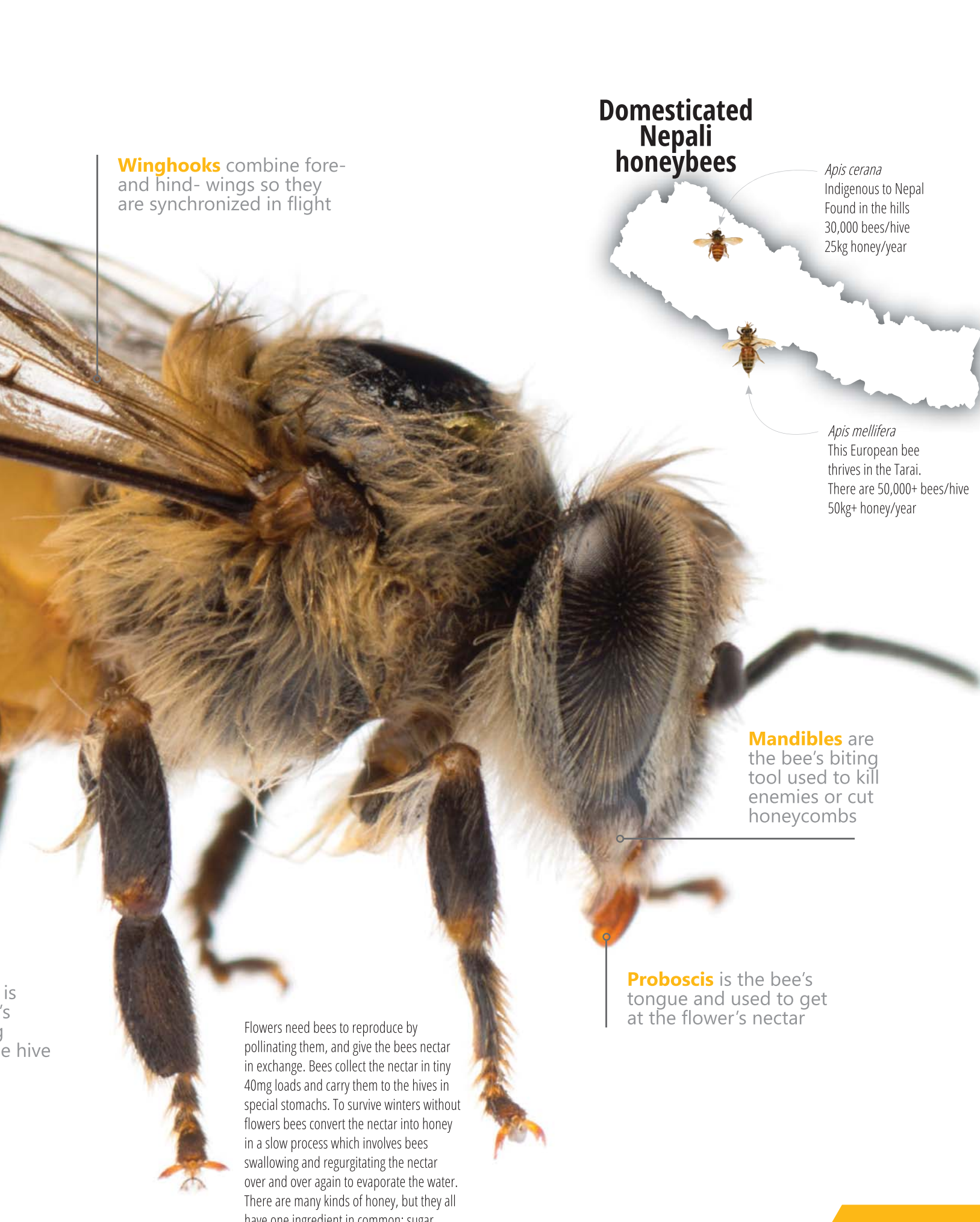
Each hive of *cerana* produces 15-25kg of honey while a hive of *mellifera* produces up to 50kg per year. However, the European *mellifera* strain of bees are more susceptible to

temperature changes and diseases than their Asiatic *cerana* cousins.

Nepal also has wild honey, and it has narcotic properties and honey hunters collect the natural sweetener from rock walls with limited equipment risking their lives. Honey from *mellifera* is cheaper and commonly found in the market in different flavours depending on the kind of flowers they graze on:

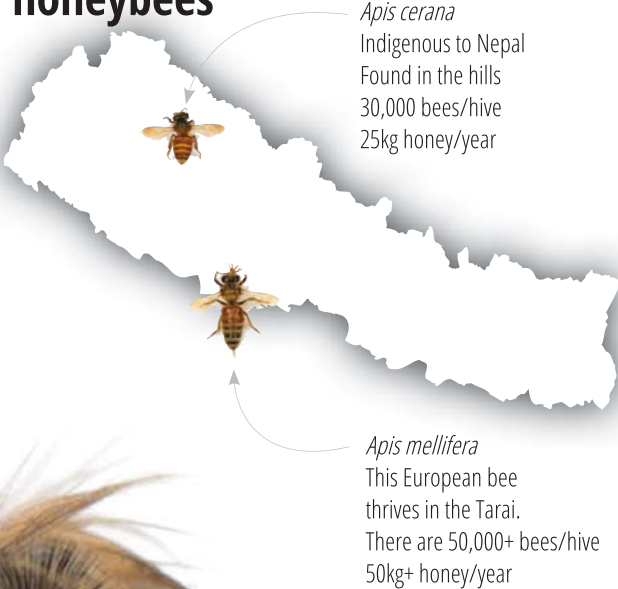
- Rudilo (Herbal flavour)
- Chiuri (Indian butter tree flavour)
- Buckwheat
- Mustard
- Litchi
- Fixed flower honey

The Beekeeping Shop in Man Bhawan, Patan sells all these flavours of honey. 01-5547278.



Winghooks combine fore- and hind- wings so they are synchronized in flight

Domesticated Nepali honeybees



Mandibles are the bee's biting tool used to kill enemies or cut honeycombs

Proboscis is the bee's tongue and used to get at the flower's nectar

Flowers need bees to reproduce by pollinating them, and give the bees nectar in exchange. Bees collect the nectar in tiny 40mg loads and carry them to the hives in special stomachs. To survive winters without flowers bees convert the nectar into honey in a slow process which involves bees swallowing and regurgitating the nectar over and over again to evaporate the water. There are many kinds of honey, but they all have one ingredient in common: sugar.

HIVE ALIVE







One of every three bites of food we take can be traced to bee pollination. It is not just the honey industry that depends on bees, but all our grain, vegetable and fruit production. But bees are disappearing around the world, including Nepal, due to disease and pesticides. Go online to watch video of bees in action in Godavari.

 nepalitimes.com

TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE

Bee populations around the world have decreased between 20-30%, and scientists say the reasons are:

-  **Decreasing abundance and diversity of flowers**
-  **Increasing use of pesticides**
-  **Spread of parasites by humans**
-  **Climate change**

In Nepal, the decrease of bees is not as severe as in other parts of the world, but there are warning signs it could be serious. Bees here mostly die due to pesticide poisoning, but also because farmers are switching to monoculture crops.

Recent research shows that some bees may be developing an immunity to chemicals and adapting to a rise in global temperatures. This could be good news, but scientists say counting on nature to take care of itself is not a solution. Evolution may be too slow to match the speed at which bees are disappearing.

Bees have a well-organised and complex social life. There are three bee types in a hive: the queen bee, the worker bee and the drone. The workers are female, the smallest and most numerous and are involved in cleaning, building, caring for the young, foraging for pollen and guarding the hive entrance. Drones are male bees whose main job is to mate with the queen after which they drop dead. The queen lays about 1,500 eggs a day and controls workers using pheromones.

Clara Bullock

documentary, *The Honey Hunters of Nepal*. Dutch aid agency SNV started helping Nepal with a Beekeeping Development project in 1990 after King Birendra's visit to The Netherlands, and a research centre in Godavari is involved in training beekeepers.

Dhan Bahadur Rawat, apiculturist at the Beekeeping Development Division in Godavari set up by SNV, says the government should encourage support for beekeepers and spread public awareness about the role of bees in pollination.

"If farmers knew they should place beehives close to their fruit farms, they could double their production and at the same time make money selling honey,"



he said.

However, it is because farmers now understand the importance of beekeeping that there have been incidents involving competition for bee grazing. Last November, farmers in Dang destroyed 75 beehives worth Rs 1.8 million by spraying pesticides when farmers from Bharatpur brought their hives to graze there.

Every season beekeepers load their beehives on trucks and take them to different locations to make speciality honey in return for pollinating farmers' crops. Sometimes, as in Dang, there is disagreement over compensation.

"Apart from obvious factors affecting the bee population, government negligence in training beekeepers and a lack of interest in the wellbeing of bees has played a significant role in their decline," says Sanu Bhai Basel of The Beekeeping Workshop in Godavari.

To conserve bee populations, scientists are trying to come up with solutions like hybridisation between different types of honeybees. Nepali farmers could also diversify cropping, and switch back to organic pesticides and homemade fertilisers. 🇳🇵



EVENTS



Chandragiri hike,

Gear up for a hike to Chandragiri hill starting from Macchegaun, going through forests and smaller villages, and finally reaching the top to get an impressive view of the city.

14 April, Meeting point: Boudhanath Gate, Rs 1000 per person, Registration till: 5 pm, 12 April, For more information: 9841704019/9861111466, hikinhnepal@gmail.com

KJC for kids,

A 10-day camp for kids where they get to learn about music, musical instruments, vocal workshops, song writing, studio recording and more fun activities. For children 5 to 12 years.

3 to 7 April, 9 to 13 April, 10 am to 4pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, Package fee: Rs 9500, For more information: (01) 5013554



Kathmandu Triennale,

Familiarise yourself with the city through artwork of local and international artists and learn about Nepal's art history in this year's edition of the Kathmandu International Art Festival. More on page 6-7.

24 March to 9 April, Multiple venues, For more information: kt.artmandu.org

Morning Coffee Queries,

For interesting business ideas and experiences, entrepreneurs, students and start-ups can participate in Monday morning coffee queries.

27 March, 9 to 11 am, Bodhi Books and Bakes, Maharajganj, Tickets: <http://www.clockb.com/events/62>

Run for Parkinson's,

Mark your calendars for this run organised by Parkinson's Support Nepal and help raise awareness about Parkinson's.

1 April, 7 to 9 am, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road, Rs 500 per person, (01) 4256909

Self defence,

Participate in self-defence classes for women with Romee Giri, fourth dan and young national referee of taekwondo.

29 April, 8 am to 11 am, RSTCA, Lazimpat, Tickets: form.jotform.me/60151655603449, Rs 2500 per person, For more information: 9813998584



Bungamati and Khokana tour,

Explore Khokana and Bungamati, both traditional Newari villages on the fringes of Kathmandu Valley.

25 to 26 March, Rs 3000 per person, For more information: 9860740270/9823660545

Mobile Monday,

A networking event to discuss market of mobile technology with a panel discussion featuring Ananda Raj Khanal, Biswas Dhakal, Anish Shrestha and Sixit Bhatta.

27 March, 3.30 to 7 pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, Tickets: bit.ly/2nDw1hM, For more information: www.mobilemonday.us

All about French,

Immerse yourselves in the francophone culture with cultural shows, games, French cuisine, screenings and concerts.

Until 24 March, Alliance Francaise de Katmandou, Dhalko Bato, Pulchok, (01) 5009221

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



MUSIC



Tap to the beats,

Mark your calendars for a live performance by Rohit John Chettri along with Ashesh Rai on tabla and percussion and Subash Slwa on guitar and effects.

24 March, 7.30 to 11.30 pm, Tangelwood, Naxal, (01) 4443904

Heritage music,

Mark your calendars for 'Echoes in the Valley', a community music festival

showcasing local music, art, and performances of every-day rituals.

25 March, For more information: echoesinthevalley.com



Festive March,

Be a part of this month-long festival and experience music in its entirety. Enjoy jazz, sarangi, reggae and many more genres.

Until 31 March, Base Camp, Jhamsikhel, For more information: 9841226397, pareshkshrestha@gmail.com

Into the night,

Spend a musical evening with Nepali bands Mukti & Revival and Anuprastha.

31 March, 8 pm onwards, Reggae Bar, Thamel



Live musical era,

Listen to hits by lyricist and musician Kali Prasad Baskota with friends and family.

25 March, 8 pm onwards, The Victory Lounge, Darbar Marg, www.femnepal.com, 9809830172

DINING



Coffee Pasal,

A place to idly sip on a good cup of coffee while looking at the Narayanhiti museum.

Darbar Marg, (01) 4246483

Hyatt Regency,

The Café is rolling out a Punjabi food festival. Enjoy Punjabi delicacies like fish amrtisari, tawa keema kaleji, samosa chat, aloo papadi chat, murg makahni and more.

Until 31 March, 6.30 to 10.30 pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, (01) 5171234, Rs 2,000 plus taxes per person



Downtown,

Go Indian at this restaurant, although it serves Chinese and Continental food too. Don't miss out on the biryani.

Pulchok Road, (01)5010751

Pauline's Garden,

Relish French and Italian cuisine as you enjoy a traditional Sufi concert at Pauline's Garden.

25 March, 6 pm onwards, Pauline's Garden, Baluwatar, Rs 700, For more information: 9803919575



1905,

Heritage boutique suites with garden dining, 1905 Suites and Restaurants is now open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Bookings open for four boutique suites with promotional rates and offers open till June.

Nagpokhari, Naxal, For more information: 9860374450

GETAWAY



Last Resort,

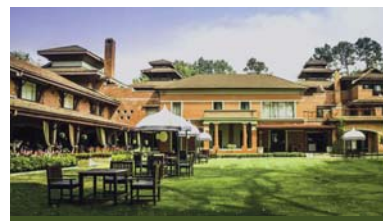
Canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping – test your limits at the Last Resort.

Bhotekosi, (01) 4701247/4700525, info@thelastresort.com.np

Hotel Shangri-La,

Make the most out of your weekends and enjoy a relaxing Saturday brunch with live shawarma and pasta counters.

Every Saturday, 11 am to 3 pm, Shambala Garden and Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, (01) 4412999 Extension: 7520/7508, Rs 1500 per person



Gokarna Forest Resort,

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Gokarna, (01)4451212, info@gokarna.net

Piano B&B,

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Ekantakuna, (01) 5000641



Pataleban Vineyard Resort,

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Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364, pataleban@mail.com.np



WAR AND PIECES

DIRGHA RAJ UPADHYAY
in SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan separated six years ago after a brutal civil war, but independence did not bring peace. Today, the world’s youngest country is a failed state mired in ethnic conflict and haunted by famine. United Nations peacekeepers from Nepal stationed here see many lessons for their own country.

More than two million people have been killed in the last 20 years and millions more internally displaced. There is no end in sight to human rights violations, which the United Nations described as the ‘most horrendous’ in the world today.

People like 32-year-old Moses Bakor are fed up with the violence, retribution and famine that stalk his land. He says: “This war has cost us everything, we have nothing left to lose.”

Nepali blue helmets with the United Nations Mission for South Sudan (UNMISS) have been praised for keeping the peace in camps for internally displaced and guarding food convoys to famine-hit areas.

There are 12,500 UN peacekeepers in South Sudan, 1,500 from Nepal. Last year, when Kenya abruptly pulled out troops after its Force Commander was sacked, no other country was willing to take its place in Wau. Nepal immediately dispatched 200 of its peacekeepers to the region to ensure food supply.

The head of the UNMISS Field Office in Rumbek, Kwame Swamena-Aboagye from Ghana, was full of praise for Nepali peacekeepers. He said: “Nepal’s soldiers have gone out of their way to protect UN staff, escort food and material, and even protect security personnel of other countries.”

UNMISS Force Commander Lt Gen John Motor Kimi Ondieke agreed. “The peacekeepers from Nepal are competent, responsible and have high integrity. They are always willing to be deployed wherever and whatever the circumstances. They can be mobilised to go to areas where others hesitate to go.”

Besides security, Nepal Army soldiers in South Sudan are also involved in education and health and are known for their easy-going nature and ability to win the hearts and minds of locals.

In the evening, after a day of patrolling and sentry duty, however, Nepali soldiers open up about their frustrations. They are not complaining about the personal hardships of a famine-stricken conflict zone, they are more worried about their own country being engulfed in similar brutal, ethno-separatist strife.

Nepali peacekeepers here keep in touch with home through the Internet and social media, where they learned about the police firing in Saptari two weeks ago that killed five people. Said one



PICS: DIRGHA RAJ UPADHYAY

ON GUARD: Nepali soldiers on sentry duty as UN peacekeepers in Juba say they worry about Nepal, seeing what happens to a country wracked by ethno-separatist conflict. Special Representative of the Secretary General, David Shearer of New Zealand, with Sushil Silwal, head of the Nepal Army unit posted in Rumbek (*right*). The UN is full praise for Nepali blue helmets, whop have served in South Sudan since 2013. More pictures on www.nepalitimes.com

Nepal Army officer in Rumbek: “This place is an example of what can happen when you mix ethnicity with politics. There is a lesson here for Nepal, I just hope that we are never engulfed in a similar ethnic war.”

Sudan’s civil war started in 1983 after the Muslim-dominated government in Khartoum refused to grant autonomy to the mainly Christian South Sudan. More than 1.5 million people were killed and 4 million displaced before oil-rich South Sudan finally became independent in 2011. But since a brutal multi-

ethnic conflict broke out again in 2013, millions of people have been displaced again and a severe famine threatens millions. There are more than 40,000 refugees in two camps alone adjacent to the UNMISS office in Juba.

About 60 per cent of South Sudan’s population of 10 million are pastoralists with the Dinka and Nuer being the two largest among many smaller ethnic groups which are fighting each other in inter-tribal conflicts. Last July, while peace talks were being held in Juba between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy

Riek Machar, 200 people were killed in gunfights between their armies.

The South Sudan Liberation Army (SPLA) now literally calls the shots: most provincial governors are generals. They are above the law, and were implicated in the abduction and rape of four American women last July. The SPLA has the right of way, even shooting at the US Ambassador’s car last year when it did not yield.

What started out as a liberation war has now degenerated into open multi-tribal warfare. Cattle

rustling, which used to be a marriage-related practice, is now rampant. The Dinka have split into sub-ethnicities killing each other, and the Nuer, who were rebels fighting the government in Khartoum, are now rebels again, fighting Juba.

High on a sentry box, as a red sun sets behind red hills, a Nepali soldier in a blue helmet says: “I have seen massacres, looting and famine. We should bring Nepal’s leaders here to show them what happens when personal greed and hunger for power takes over the national interest.” 🇳🇵

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Hell or High Water

It's hard to come by a good western these days but *Hell or High Water* is one of them. It's easy to see why it was one of the nine "Best Picture" nominees at this year's Academy Awards (it didn't win): it has the gravitas that the Academy tends to reward. Luckily, it also has an original mind behind it, that of Taylor



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Sheridan, the actor turned screenwriter who was also nominated for "Best Original Screenplay".

While Sheridan may not have won an Oscar for his writing, he certainly deserves immense recognition for having written original source material that is insightful, surprising, brutal with reason, and a poignant, unusual hybrid of family drama, a gripping cops and cowboys

chase, a heist film, and a brotherly romance without the usual nausea-inducing maudlin aspects.

The film tells the story of two brothers, Toby and Tanner Howard (Chris Pine and Ben Foster) who decide to rob the entity that did them in, systematically holding up branches of the Texas Midlands Bank across the state to get what they need to settle their mortgage and stop their ranch from being seized, after an unfair loan was foisted on their ill mother when she needed money most.

The brothers are polar opposites. Toby is a family man estranged from his sullen wife who takes care of his two boys and holds years of unpaid child support against him. Tanner is the felon, a crazy, happy-go-lucky sociopath whose only saving grace is that he loves his brother. On their trail are Texas Rangers Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges) and Alberto Parker (Gil Birmingham),

an odd couple that give an insight into ingrained, casual southern racism, and the continuing plight of Native Americans (Alberto is a Comanche).

As the brothers rob bank after bank, Marcus Hamilton figures out their game (somewhat) making things more interesting. But just when you think you know what's going to happen, things take unexpected turns, keeping everyone riveted in a beautifully shot film that shows so much more heart than the usual mainstream drama.

I cannot elaborate more on this fine film without giving things away, but I will say that *Hell or High Water* justly joins the ranks of eight other excellent films that were nominated for "Best Picture" this year. This is a promising turn given the dismal pickings from the past couple of years; deathly dull, derivative films have ruled in an industry where making money is the primary goal.

Hell or High Water was made for \$12 million; it made \$37.6 million at the box office to date and will certainly make more as it reaches DVD and other methods of home distribution. Not bad for a film that is original and full of interesting characters that actually seem like real people.



Watch trailer online

nepalitimes.com

HAPPENINGS



RSS

CHINA CHAT: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal consults former prime ministers and China experts on Thursday in Baluwater before leaving for the annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia to be held in Hainan Province from March 23-26.



RSS

LOOKING AT NEPAL: Chinese Defense Minister General Chang Wanquan arrives in Kathmandu on Thursday for an official three-day visit to Nepal.



US EMBASSY

PRESENT ARMS: The Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command Admiral Harry Harris concluded his visit to Nepal on Wednesday by inspecting a guard of honour at the Nepal Army headquarters in Kathmandu.



KUNDA DIXIT

HEALTHY ENTHUSIASM: The Nick Simons Institute recognised six rural health workers on Tuesday with the Nick Simon Award going to Bal Gopal Shrestha (second from left) of Baraula Health Post in Pyuthan.



BIKRAM RAJ

LIVING MEMORY: A candlelit vigil at Ratna Park on Wednesday in memory of Govinda Gautam who was killed by Indian border security personnel in Kanchanpur on 9 March.



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Prof. Dr. Rao is a Chairman of TVRLS, India. He has authored more than 50 books dealing with organizational behaviour, HRD, entrepreneurship development, among others

Prof. Dr. Raj is the faculty at Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI) Jamshedpur, India since March 1998. His field of expertise is organization behavior, managing people and leadership, managerial counseling and communication.

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After Adityanath

Sanghu, 20 March



The naming of a Chief Minister in India is of little importance to Nepal. But Yogi Adityanath's appointment as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh has shaken up Nepal's political sphere. While secularists are suspicious, proponents of a



Hindu monarchy are in high spirits. Adityanath, a firebrand Hindu cleric, shared a very close relationship with the Shah monarchs in the past, and has been advocating for the

restoration of a Hindu monarchy in Nepal. Hindu royalists are hopeful that the rise of Adityanath will help their cause. Ex-king Gyanendra Shah has not spoken about Adityanath's political feat, but the anointment of the head priest of Gorakhpur Math, the deity of the Shah dynasty, must have reassured him that he will reclaim his throne. Not just the ex-king, some leaders of the NC, which backs republicanism and secularism, are also excited about Adityanath's triumph. NC General Secretary Shashank Koirala is happy. So

are Khum Bahadur Khadka and Laxman Ghimire. Old NC leaders like Rambabu Prasain, PL Singh, Prakash Koirala and Debendra Nepali were preparing to launch a campaign for restoration of a Hindu monarch. They are now more confident about the success of their yet-to-be-launched campaign. Keshar Bahadur Bista and other nationalists who feel that Kamal Thapa's RPP use the agenda of Hinduism only for electoral gains are now on cloud nine. The RPP, too, feels emboldened now.

Beauty with brains

Bachhu Bk in Himal Khabarpatrika, 19-25 March



When reputed film maker Tulsi Ghimire asked 17-year-old Sahara Karki whether she wanted to act in a Nepali movie, she jumped at the opportunity. Now having spent a year working on the film, Karki is more than thrilled after the release of Ghimire's *Darpan Chhaya 2*, a sequel of the 2001 hit which starred Niruta Singh, Dillip Rayamajhi and Uttam Pradhan.

"Everyone is saying it is good, I am happy," said the teen debutant.

Sixteen years ago when *Darpan Chhaya* was released, it created waves and launched Nepali actress Niruta Singh's career. After the movie, Singh went on to act in more than 40 films.

Many have compared Karki to the famed actress and see her as another Niruta in the making. "On one hand I had never acted, on the other I didn't know how to speak Nepali and didn't understand much," said Karki. "The director kept encouraging me," said the actress, who sometimes doubted that she was fit for the role. Because of such challenges, getting accolades from the audience is not a small feat for Karki.

After the successful release of the movie, Karki now wants to go back to the US, where she lives with her family. She plans to study bio-chemistry and hopes to return to Nepal only after completing her studies. Said Karki, who is already beginning to get offers to do more films: "I will only start doing movies once I am done studying."

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ALL PICS: SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

Economic and political instability in the Tarai is pushing children south of the border to a life of abuse

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA
in BIHAR

When a rescue team from Nepal descended on Darbhanga Children's Home in Bihar looking for trafficked children they found grimy bedrooms, a filthy kitchen, the pungent smell of toilets and children who hadn't bathed in months.

In-charge at the Home, Govinda Kumar, offered this excuse: "Today is an exception. We ran out of water and haven't been able to clean the home."

At another location, Nirdesh Bal Griha in Muzaffarpur, most of the 13 children had skin problems and complained of

physical abuse. Another child, Parvati Kumari Paswan, 16, from Mahottari, was confined for three years at Sewa Sankalpa Girls Home in Muzaffarpur.

In total, 33 Nepali children were rescued by ChoraChori Nepal and the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB) Nepal from Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga. Twenty-seven of them are from Tarai districts, mainly Siraha.

The Tarai has been engulfed in political turmoil for almost a decade. The current dispute over Province 2 has brought even more instability, causing people to lose jobs because of prolonged political unrest and schools to be disrupted so that students quit studies to become child workers in Indian cities.

Raja Ram Sada was just four

years old during the first Madhes Movement in 2007. It brought to power Upendra Yadav of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, now the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal, who went on to become Foreign Minister. Sada became a child worker in India. His school remained shut for almost a year after the 2007 agitation, and he never returned to class. He is now 14, and preoccupied with earning money to support his family, whose situation has worsened with the unrest.

"Education is not my priority anymore but work is," says Sada, adding, "I saved Rs 6,000 in a few years by working in the fields with my parents, and left my hometown to work in Ahmedabad without telling anyone."

COMING HOME:
(Counter-clockwise from top)
Children from Siraha at Darbhanga Children's Home in Bihar a day before they were rescued.
Rescued children enjoy carom board at ChoraChori Nepal's Rescue Centre in Godavari.
Ratna Bhatta of Bardiya at Nirdesh Bal Griha in Muzaffarpur to receive her son.
Children at Nirdesh Bal Griha in Muzaffarpur listen carefully as a CCWB official questions them.
Parvati Kumari Paswan (left), rescued from Sewa Sankalpa Girls Home in Muzaffarpur, shows a photograph of her friends to a girl as they return home.

Sada was only 13 when he crossed the border to work in India, taking a train from Jainagar to Darbhanga to go to the western state of Gujarat. But he was caught by police in Darbhanga before he could change trains and was handed over to the government-run shelter.

"My parents had no source of income. So, I went to India to earn money to build a house for them. I was convinced my parents wouldn't be able to do that," says Sada, who was kept at the Children's Home for six months.

Bihar shares its border with 12 Tarai districts. While children like Sada voluntarily cross the porous border, traffickers take advantage of widespread poverty to lure others into India. In fiscal year 2015-16, 1,502 Nepali



GOING SOUTH

Arun Kumar Sada, 15, and seven others from Siraha district were travelling to work in a pizza outlet in Ahmedabad one and a half months ago. All of them were arrested at Darbhanga train station and sent to Darbhanga Children's Home. Most of them are below 16.

Arun Kumar had already worked in India before he was detained. The boy left his studies following Grade 5 because of financial difficulties after his father lost his job as a result of the Tarai unrest. Father and son travelled together to India to find work.

"My house has a leaked roof

and my parents can't afford to build a stronger one," says Arun, who is now at ChoraChori Nepal's Rescue Centre in Godavari. "I want to be like other men in my village who work abroad and come back to build a nice house."

ChoraChori Nepal has traced the families of both Raja Ram (*see main story*) and Arun Kumar, who will be repatriated soon, but the boys don't want to go back to school or stay in the village. They say they have to support their family financially. Many children fear going back, but Hasibul Nadaf of Dhanusa is very excited about returning home. Having worked in hotels in India for months and been confined at Darbhanga Children's Home for five months, he has now realised the value of studies and family. "I will never run away from home now. I want to go back and continue my studies," says 14-year-old Nadaf, smiling.



children were reported to have gone missing and only 408 have been located to date, according to the National Centre for Children at Risk, in Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu.

Many children who work in India face abuse from employers while those taken to shelter houses are often kept in inhumane conditions. Namuna Bhusal of CCWB, who was in the rescue team, says a process is needed so that the Nepal government can keep track of Nepali children in Indian shelter houses.

"The children's home in India run on their own whims, which makes the rescue process extremely arduous," says Bhusal

adding, "we will soon set up a mechanism to facilitate future rescues."

The 33 rescued children this week were getting medical check-ups and psychosocial counselling at the Rescue Centre. Shailaja CM (*see box*) of ChoraChori Nepal says the group will repatriate the children after a few weeks. She said: "Children whose family couldn't be traced will be kept at our shelter and sent to schools."



See the horrible conditions that Nepali children were living in before their rescue from shelter homes in Bihar by ChoraChori Nepal and CCWB.

nepalimes.com



Unsung hero

The rescue of 33 Nepali children from various shelter houses in Bihar, India, got all the media attention last week, but very few people know about Shailaja CM, the hero behind the scenes. This is the biggest rescue CM has done in her 17-year career, yet she remains extremely humble.

"The children were successfully brought to Nepal and I couldn't be happier," says CM of ChoraChori Nepal, with a contented smile. "Children are like butterflies, they shouldn't be locked up."

Born as the sixth daughter in a lower-middle-class family of 11 in Trivandrum, Kerala, CM left nine years of religious life as a nun to move to Nepal, after dreaming of working for trapped children. Arriving here in 1998, she has never returned, and has already rescued more than 900 trapped children from Indian shelter houses and circuses.

CM recalls the rescue of 23 girls from a Christian organisation in Tamil Nadu in 2011 as one of the most challenging operations in her life. "The Tamil Nadu government put me

under house arrest for two days and I didn't receive support from the government in Nepal either," says the 45-year-old. She even got death threats once the children were brought to Nepal.

Despite that experience, her fight for child rights continued. Working in collaboration with police, she has been able to send 18 child traffickers behind bars.

Rescuing Nepali children from Indian shelter houses and circuses is not easy because of a lack of coordination between the governments of Nepal and India. Before rescuing the children languishing in shelter homes in Bihar, CM held rounds of meetings with local child welfare councils and brought the CCWB of Nepal on board.

Her dedication has given many children new starts. They have been able to return to school and many have been repatriated with families after years. "I can go to any extremes to rescue children locked up inside high walls," says CM, who has adopted two children who were abandoned by their parents and wishes to acquire Nepali citizenship for their sake.



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Clashing cymbals

The good news is that we are finally going to have local elections. The bad news is that the Election Commission has run out of party symbols for its ballot papers. Since symbols like Sun, Moon, Tree, Cow are reserved for the 4-Party Cartel, there aren't enough signs for the other 100 or so political parties contesting local elections.

The Ass has had to rush to the rescue once more to sneak new symbols into the ballot papers just in the nick of time before they went off to the press this week. Voters can now go boldly forth on 14 May and confidently stamp the swastika on the Hammer and Sickle.

In order to enlarge the pool of election symbols, the Ass had to

take full advantage of Nepal's biodiversity to include the country's flora, fauna and sauna. The Uncastrated He-goat, Bull, Water Buffalo and Yak already adorn the existing ballot papers. To accommodate the political parties that are missed out, we have assigned them the Scorpion, Yeti, Vulture, Porcupine, Snake, Snail and (the Donkey is pleased to announce) a Jack Ass. No prizes for guessing where the Donk's swastika is landing.

Since the Hammer and/or Sickle is now such a discredited election symbol, we have replaced it with Handcuffs. The disgruntled Big Plop fraction of the Maobuddies get to keep the Grenade if they change their mind and decide not to sabotage

एउटा कोठाभित्र मात्र मतसङ्केत (स्व) गर्नुहोस् ।

elections by burning tyres. Speaking of which the Burning Tyre symbol is up for grabs and will go to any party that organises the most shutdowns this year. My guess is that one of the Madhes-centric parties will qualify.

The Family Party which seems to always get a ministership even though it never wins a single seat in parliament must have the Condom as its erection symbol. The New Force Party had been assigned the Shakti Wheel, but adopted an AK-47 instead, Bibeksheel gets a Dust Mask and Sajha Party is assigned a Bus.

Here is the final Ballot Paper. Memorise the symbols and what they stand for before you vote. May the best ass win.



The Ass

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