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QATAR AIRWAYS القطرية

GOING PLACES TOGETHER

PARLOUR GAMES

Nepal has been ruled by a three-party syndicate after the end of the conflict in 2006, and throughout the decade-long transition after that. The main men in the major parties made all important decisions on power-sharing from behind closed doors, bypassing Parliament and even their own central committees.

Well, it looks like nothing has changed. The same men from the same parties are still playing parlour games. This week, two months after the election results became clear, the lameduck prime minister finally stepped down and the two communist alpha males have decided to co-chair their united party, and rotate the prime ministership. There is no precedent and no such provision: they just decided secretly to go ahead with it in a meeting at a private contractor's home in Man Bhawan on Tuesday, while the country was on a Shivaratri holiday.

The announcement of a Left Alliance between the UML and the Maoists just before elections last year was a political masterstroke. It ensured a near two-thirds majority for the combined parties in Parliament. The other part of their agreement was to formally unite the parties, and that has turned out to be much more difficult. The unity was supposed to happen before government formation, but now looks like it is going to be pushed back.

The NC which lost the election was in no hurry to hand over power to the winners. In fact, the NC-led coalition used the lengthy interregnum to spend lavishly and make illicit appointments to official positions. What was even more surprising is that the UML-Maoists were not in any particular hurry either to assume office.

There were many reasons for this: the Election Commission not formally announcing the final tally of the National Assembly elections till this week. This gave the three-party cartel all the justification it needed to indulge in its favourite pastime of playing political musical chairs.

For their part, the UML's prime minister-in-waiting KP Oli and the MC's Pushpa Kamal Dahal anyway needed more time to haggle over the composition of the new government as well as the terms and conditions for party unity. This, in turn, provided the caretaker NC-led coalition the opportunity to cling on to power and make non-caretakerish decisions on spending and appointments. (Even as it prepared to leave office, the Cabinet awarded

Rs5 million of taxpayers' cash to a well-to-do outgoing minister for medical treatment.)

Finally, now that both the Lower and Upper Houses are duly constituted, Oli and Dahal have their *band fand* ironed out, we can have a new government. After K P Oli was sworn in Thursday as prime minister, the Left Alliance will form the new government and to make it look inclusive will try to include women, Madhesi and Janajati figures. The Madhes-based FSPN and the RJPN have so far refused to join coalition without a firm promise on constitutional amendments, but some within those parties look sorely tempted by portfolio lollipops dangled in front of them by the wily Oli.

It was a foregone conclusion that Oli would be prime minister again, what is less foregone even now is whether his party can in fact unite with the Maoists. Oli and Dahal are so used to not keeping their word and stabbing each other in the back that it is perfectly possible that this is just going to be a coalition government of the UML and Maoists without actual party unity.

Some have argued that the Maoists need unity more than the UML. There are grumblings within the UML about a democratic party having to subsume a party that has still not atoned for the violence it unleashed on the land. Some leaders in the Maoists, like Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Barsha Man Pun, insisted till the end that Dahal should not agree to unite unless the party was given either one of the executive positions: prime ministership or chairmanship of the joint party. So they agreed to share both positions.

That is what it has come down to: if you can't agree, rotate. There are also other positions to haggle over: will the President and Vice-president stay on, or be replaced by aspirants like Jhalnath Khanal and Mahant Thakur?

So far, the portfolio distribution and the allocation of chief ministerships of the provinces have gone fairly smoothly along the agreed 60:40 formula. Party unity, if it does happen, will be more fraught.

What the Nepali people are now really waiting for are signs that the UML and Maoists separately, or together, will deliver on their election promise of stability and prosperity. So far, with the only sure deal that Dahal will succeed Oli as PM, it does look like politics is business as usual.

ONLINE PACKAGES



AIR JAM

Nepal's only international airport is too congested and if not upgraded soon, it will be a bottleneck for the country's economic growth. Watch this video summary of our investigative report on page 14-15 to learn about why Tribhuvan International Airport has not been able to keep up with passenger growth.



BRAIN GAIN

Watch Nepali software engineers experiment with artificial intelligences and test drones under a unique program to reverse the brain drain of Nepal's best IT minds. Started by a Nepali professor at Columbia University, Fusemachines trains engineers in four countries around the world, including Nepal. Story: page 7.

CORRUPT TO THE CORE

C J Parajuli has been alleged to be an imposter and an immoral man. ('Bulldozing democracy', Om Astha Rai, #896). If this is how the Supreme Court functions, why are you so surprised if others are corrupted?

Madhukar Thapa

■ Corrupt politicians have turned Nepal into a Banana Republic. Until Nepal's take stand against them, the loot will go on. We desperately need honest politicians to rise up and not sit on the sidelines.

Anil Sharma

■ Were there really no honest candidates in the local election? Or did we just not vote for them? What you reap is what you sow.

SB Bisht

MISFORTUNE

That's the misfortune of this beautiful country ('Trickledown corruption', Editorial, #896). Otherwise it would have been like Switzerland. I hope and pray it changes.

Madhu Sarda

DEMOCRATIC RIGHT

Things are starting to turn around, get better ('Great expectations', Editorial, #895). After 30 years of pain, suffering and loot, people will soon have power and the elections in the next 5 years will empower more younger leaders to seek public office.

Anil Shakya

RADIO ACTIVE

Glad to hear that radio is playing a major part in generating collective awareness against child marriage in Nepal. If properly utilised, mass media has a lot of potential in reaching a broad audience. We have also tapped into the resources of technology and developed a role playing game where the players assume the role of a trafficked person, making choices and assessing risks for themselves to find their way to freedom.

Missing Public Art & Awareness, Kolkata

WHAT'S TRENDING



Mira Rai racing to help other runners

by *Duksangh Sherpa*

Nepal's international trail running sensation Mira Rai is in a race against time to train other young Nepali girls so they have the same opportunities she had. Go online to watch Mira in Pharping where she organised a 12km mountain marathon recently. Learn about what motivates her to devote herself to help other talented runners.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most visited online page

Trickledown corruption

Editorial

The national rot has trickled down to the local level. Last week's Editorial on how local elections have thrown up mayors and village chiefs who are local businessmen with questionable reputations was our most-shared Twitter post.

Most popular on Twitter

Bulldozing democracy

by *Om Astha Rai*

One third of mayors and village council chiefs seem to have just one goal: amass personal wealth rather than serve the people who elected them. To read the investigative report and analysis, visit nepalitimes.com.

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS



Kunda Dixit @kundadixit
How Trickledown corruption is bulldozing #Nepal's democracy One-third of recently-elected local government leaders are contractors owning excavators. Read @nepalitimes investigative report, analysis and report here: <http://bit.ly/2BNGe65>



Renaud Meyer @renaudmeyer
Critical to ensure #federalization of #Nepal does NOT include decentralization of #corruption @UNDPNepal @UN_Nepal @DFIDNepal @EUinNepal @NorwayinNepal @USAmbNepal @tinepal @Ngofednepal @UNODC_ROSA @mofnepal @mofald



Devendra Raj Panday @DRP39
OMG!



Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Mira Rai is in a race against time to help others, providing a platform through which talented female runners receive the same breaks she received. Read more: <http://bit.ly/2E7pQLd>

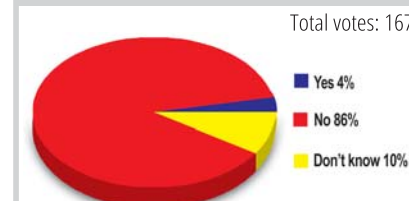


Rose George @rosegeorge3 Feb 10
The ever-smiling super-fast super-talented @mirarainepal is quite simply amazing. What a hero.



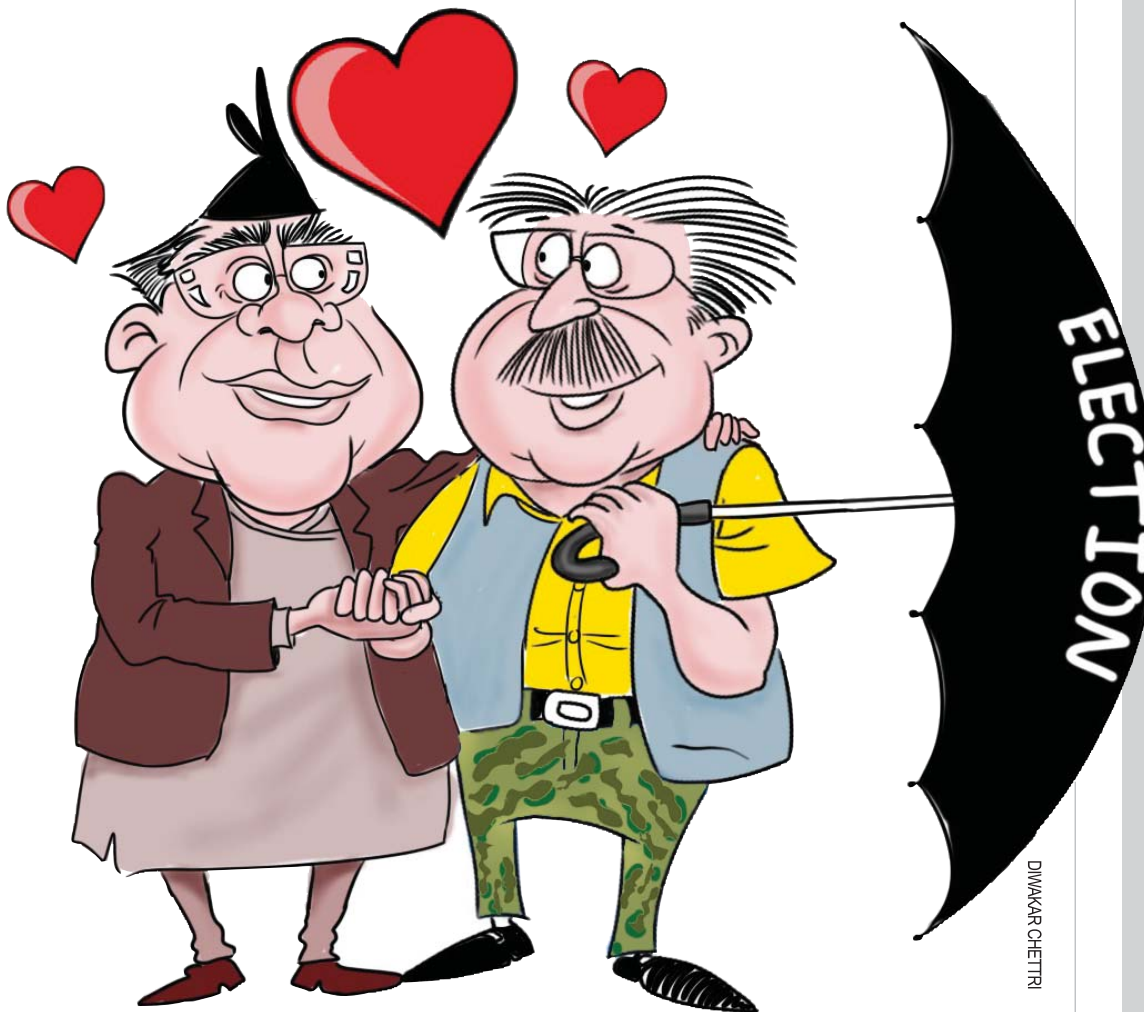
Weekly Internet Poll #897

Q. Do you think police is doing enough to investigate complaints of rape?



Weekly Internet Poll #898
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How will new PM KP Oli perform in his second tenure?



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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Aftershocks of the Blockade

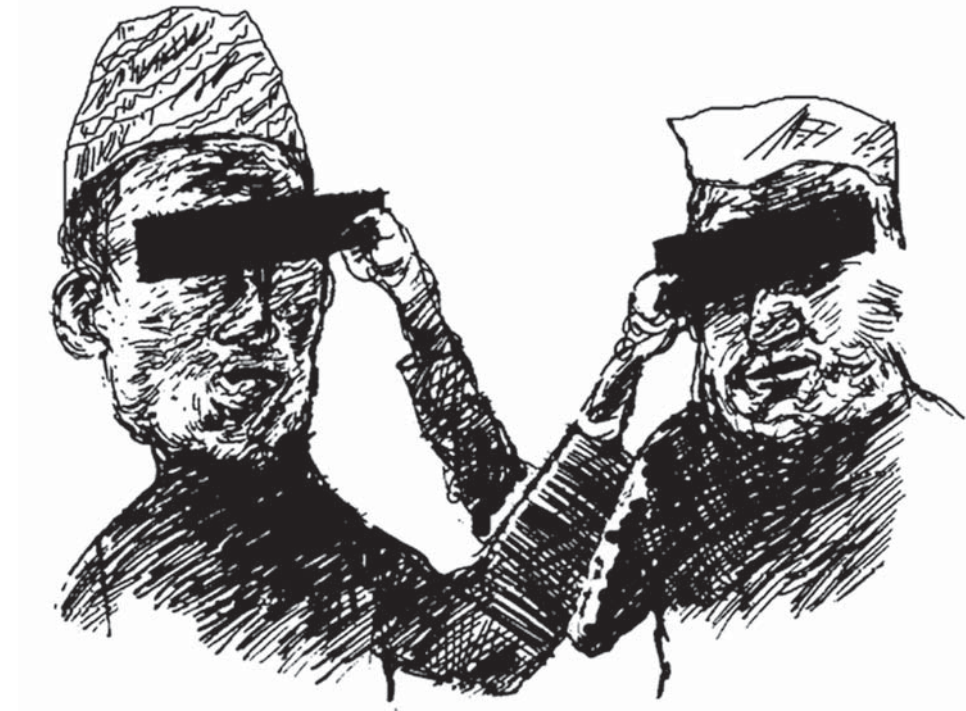
Nepal and India both need to learn their lessons, and move on to improve bilateral ties

Last week’s air dash to Kathmandu by Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj can be analysed at two levels: what was officially stated as the purpose of the visit, and its probable real purpose. “We have come to meet our friends. We don’t have any agenda,” Swaraj stressed upon arrival in Kathmandu on 1 February. But in conspiracy-minded Kathmandu, the rumour mills were on overdrive about what the southern neighbour was up to, or to be more specific, what her boss Prime Minister Narendra Modi had up his sleeves.



CONNECTING DOTS
Dinkar Nepal

There is only one word to describe Modi’s strategy: being unpredictable. And that has more significance for its consequences on India itself, than for us in Nepal. Swaraj was here a few days after Modi had called up now-Prime Minister K P Oli, his second call since Nepal’s elections. This is interesting because Oli was prime minister when India imposed a border blockade on Nepal for nearly six months in 2015 – wrecking the economy and delaying delivery of earthquake relief. Modi had visited Nepal immediately after assuming office in 2014. He won hearts and minds here by his sweepingly benevolent speech to Parliament. A year later, when the earthquake struck, Modi was the first to rush Indian Air Force helicopters to deliver relief supplies to remote areas. But soon, the Nepal handlers at South Block decided to punish Nepal with a Blockade for rushing a constitution which

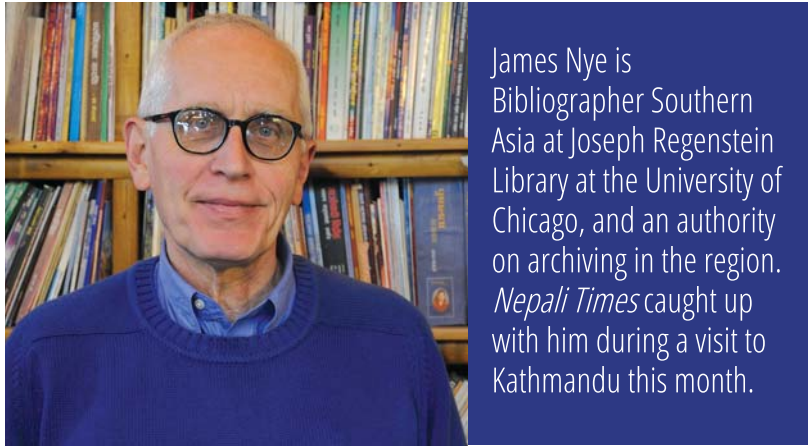


they were not happy about. Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishanker’s ill timed visit to Kathmandu in September 2015 and its unfortunate consequences led to this third blockade of Nepal by independent India. Internationally, perception management was carried out effectively. New Delhi had learnt from the 1990 blockade how to control the messaging, and leveraged its geopolitical clout to force the whole world to look the other way. All this was completely counterproductive because on the ground, where it mattered the most, the arm-twisting just made Nepalis angrier. As prime minister, Oli gave that fight a face, character and spirit. He magnified the

significance of his outreach to China to spook the Indian media. Alarmed by self-amplified coverage that Nepal was being pushed into the Chinese fold, New Delhi lifted the blockade in January 2016. Nepalis celebrated not just the end of the shortages, but also the belief that we had stood our ground. Modi lost more in Nepal than he had gained for India. In the love-hate feelings for India, the Blockade pushed the balance more towards hate, and undoing that is going to take decades. Modi is now on fence-mending mode, and is aiming to start from where he left off with the cancelled visit to Janakpur in 2015. There are many lessons

for India’s foreign policy establishment as it now tackles similar crises with its other neighbours. ‘At the beginning of the era of independence, by way of a foreign policy establishment, India had only Jawaharlal Nehru,’ writes M K Rasgotra in his book, *A Life in Diplomacy*, “the world listened to him with attention because his ideas was the voice of an India which the modern world had not heard of for two hundred years.” For Nehru, India’s foreign policy was a means of making India’s presence felt in the world. Not only had Nehru claimed the grandiose role of an idealist global leader committed to non-alignment, he had also imagined an India that provided an all encompassing guardianship to its neighbours. Nirad C Chaudhary wrote in 1952 that it was because of Nehru that India, a country without ‘material, men or money’ had gained a position of credibility. ‘India’s word was listened to with respect in the councils of the great.’ While Nehru was aggressively championing Asia’s resurgence, China invaded and annexed Tibet. In Parliament Nehru expressed his hope that the matter would be ‘resolved peacefully’. He felt India had ‘to be careful not to overdo’ criticism of a neighbouring country that was also emerging from domination. Under Nehru’s leadership, a commitment to idealism, restraint, ‘avoiding a flashy role in international affairs’, and ‘sincerity of purpose’ were the keys to early India’s grandstanding, and that worked. Modi has made no secret that his aim is to wipe out the Gandhi-Nehru legacy in almost everything in India. But some settling of scores can go too far, the lessons can become too costly and the damage irreparable. A rising and belligerent China aggressively rearranging the global balance of power should precisely be the reason to make Modi’s India more cautious in selecting the tools to deal with its neighbours. And Nepal’s leaders, including Prime Minister Oli, also need to be mature enough to understand that in realpolitik there can be no permanent enemies or friends. 🇳🇵

Digitising archives, sharing knowledge



James Nye is Bibliographer Southern Asia at Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, and an authority on archiving in the region. *Nepali Times* caught up with him during a visit to Kathmandu this month.

***Nepali Times:* What is the single most important change that has taken place in archiving in South Asia in the last four decades?**
James Nye: Without a doubt, it has been the rise of collaboration between institutions for archiving, collection development, and preservation of resources. Almost everything that is important for the future will build on the solid foundations already in place and will benefit from expansion of our collaborative programs in Nepal and elsewhere in South Asia. Some types of institutions are more suited to joining in collaborations than others. Within South Asia and also in Europe we have found that non-governmental organisations and private collections have been much better partners than government institutions. Our collaboration with Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP) in Nepal is a fine example of impact -- we have worked together in microfilming rare Nepali resources through the South Asia Microform Project, ensuring that periodical publications in the Nepali language are preserved and made accessible for use by researchers. More recently, MPP has been wonderfully successful in continuing programs funded by several grants from the Endangered Archives Program at the British Library.

What are the advantages and challenges of digital technology in archiving?

The Endangered Archives Program is an excellent example of how large audiences of readers around the world can benefit from easy access to rare archival resources in digital form. At the same time, some readers need to use original resources like paper manuscripts, printed books, photographic negatives, gramophone records, and other such objects. Some scholars studying the history of the book benefit from examining the paper used in printing and the watermarks on the paper as evidence for book production. Digital copies are not adequate to meet those special needs.

Has there been any effort to assess Nepal-related collections, say, across libraries and archives in the US?
Three decades ago North American research collections participated in a program called the Research Libraries Group Conspectus, created to provide a uniform evaluation of collections in all disciplines and from all geographic regions. The University of Chicago declared our Nepali collection to be at the research level. That is, we collect major published source materials, including all important reference works and a wide selection of specialised monographs, as well as maintain an extensive collection of journals. A few other US libraries like Cornell University also described their collection on Nepal in similar terms.

The University of Chicago itself has a strong Nepal collection. How was this achieved?
Chicago has been fortunate in two ways. First, Maureen Patterson, the pioneering Bibliographer for Southern Asia from 1959 through 1984, was able to purchase rare books in the antiquarian marketplace --in South Asia and Europe -- at a time when many rare books on Nepal were available for sale. Second, the cooperative acquisitions program run by the Library of Congress since the early 1960s has provided the University with books and periodicals from Nepal. Staff at the Library of Congress Field Office in New Delhi, working with book dealers in Nepal, have selected the most important contemporary publications, cataloged them, and delivered them to Chicago for addition to our collection. We have, however, not acquired manuscripts. Antiquities laws and our concern to respect cultural patrimony have made manuscripts out-of-scope for our collection.

Academics here are pushing for greater access to Nepal-related holdings elsewhere. What do you think would be the best way forward?
People in Nepal have every right to expect that their own heritage is available to them. We need to develop both human and material infrastructure for archiving in Nepal and in the US. We need to arrange for training in technical skills, enhancing language knowledge, and improving sensitivity to the rich heritage of Nepal. In the near future I see several important programs expanding their work and new programs beginning to contribute to our shared cause. The South Asia Materials Project is now digitising as the means of preservation, and many of the resources are being made available online. Further, the newly formed South Asia Open Archives initiative is laying plans for massive efforts to digitise and make available important cultural resources for open access.

As a Fulbright Specialist, what are your expectations from this visit to Nepal?
We have been exploring private and institutional collections in Tansen, Lumbini, and in the Valley with the intention to expand Madan Puraskar’s networks and linkages. This work of exploring other collections is also being used to develop an instrument for surveying collections throughout Nepal. It is delightful to see how our collaborative work is building important knowledge about cultural heritage needs in Nepal that will fuel planning for South Asia Open Archives work over the coming years.

**BIZ BRIEFS**

Service swap


Turkish Airlines and Tranquillity Spa in Kathmandu have signed a year-long MoU allowing the airline’s employees 50% discount on the spa and passengers

**TURKISH AIRLINES**

30- 50% additional time on services on presenting their boarding passes. Tranquillity staff and customers also get discounts on Turkish Airlines.

Cathay connection


Cathay Dragon has added Jinan, the capital of China’s Shandong province as its 28th destination in the mainland. The



airline will start the four-times-weekly service from Hong Kong to Jinan, also known as the city of springs, from 26 March onwards.

Tourney in Doha


Qatar Airways and Qatar Duty Free sponsored the Qatar Total Open Women’s Tennis Tournament 2018 in Doha on 12



February. Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark competed against several of the world’s top players from Romania, Ukraine, Spain and Czech Republic.

NIC in Lumbini

NIC Asia Bank formally inaugurated four new branches in Nawalparasi and three in Rupandehi districts on 11 February. The Bank




currently has 170 branches, 168 ATM counters and 4 extension counters all over Nepal.

Sony at Sherpa

Nepa Hima Trade Link inaugurated a new showroom at Sherpa Mall for Sony products like Bravia TV, Sony Xperia Smartphone, Alpha and Cyber-shot camera, home theatre system, personal entertainment along with MDR series headphones and more.



NIBL Capital Markets and Ace Capital merged this week to operate jointly under the brand name ‘NIBL Ace Capital’. The consolidated entity with a paid up capital of Rs 270 million will cater to more than 142,000 DEMAT accounts and provide RTA/RTS services for 38 companies and over 1,000,000 shareholders.





JANE MINGAY

SHIPRA JHA

Every year, 15 million girls around the world get married before they are 18, and Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world -- with 37% of girls married as children.

Growing up in Bhojpur, 15-year-old Ramila had seen girls as young as ten dropping out of school to be married. She might have become one of them, had it not been for her favourite radio star, Junimava.

“Junimava got married while she was still a child, but it turned into a nightmare for her. Her story taught me that we shouldn’t marry without finishing school and being independent in life,” says Ramila. “She inspired me to fight for my rights as a girl.”

Junimava is one of the characters in the radio drama series Mai Sari Sunakhari (Orchid, Like Me) produced by Population Media Center which broadcasts radio programs in more than 50 countries, and is among 900 members of Girls Not Brides: The global partnership to end child marriage. In Nepal it has two long-running radio dramas Mai Sari Sunakhari and Hilkor (Ripples in the Water) both addressing issues such as child marriage and sexual violence.

Junimava’s story may be fictional, but for millions of child brides in Nepal and around the world, the devastating consequences of child marriage are very real. Married girls have their childhoods cut short and their education is often abandoned. They face serious health consequences by becoming pregnant at an early age. They also face an increased risk of domestic violence.

Nepal has the third highest rate of child marriage in Asia, after Bangladesh and India. Although the legal age of marriage is 20 for both men and women, many children, predominantly girls, continue to be married early as a result of poverty, insecurity, or to avoid the higher dowry prices demanded for older girls.

An increasing number of organisations are using entertainment through radio, TV, film, street theatre or even magazines and comics in Nepal and India to try to spark conversations about issues like child marriage. Public Awareness Campaign Nepal is also a member of Girls Not Brides, and uses documentaries and radio programs to raise awareness about child marriage among communities in Janakpur.

By combining entertainment and education, TV and radio dramas can address sensitive subjects in a non-threatening and

engaging way, raising awareness about the consequences of child marriage and helping girls to understand their rights. A 2017 review by Girls Not Brides of media programs addressing child marriage found that it had a measurable impact on attitudes about the issue, listeners of some shows were up to six times more likely to state that women should be 18 or older before marriage.

Mahendra, now 22, got married when he was 15 years old. He is a big fan of Mai Sari Sunakhari, and says he wishes the show had been around when he was at school.

“Early marriage was the culture in my village,” he says.

On air to deter child marriage

How radio is helping prevent Nepali girls from being married young

“I had to quit school after I got married, but then I couldn’t get a job and I realised that marrying without completing education is a terrible thing to do.”

To be truly effective, however, the programs need to be part of a broader approach that provides alternatives to marriage and prevents girls from being married off in future. This includes empowering girls to understand and exercise their rights, and ensuring they have access to education, healthcare and legal protection.

Nepal has taken important steps over the past few years to promote gender equality. In March 2016, the government hosted a Girl Summit, launching a national strategy to end child marriage by 2030. But for change to happen, these commitments must be backed by the resources needed to make a real difference in the lives of girls. If not, millions more childhoods will be lost.

To 18-year-old Sangita, a Mai Sari Sunakhari fan from Sunsari District, the message is clear: “We might fall in love at this age, but we shouldn’t make any big decisions like marriage. Getting married young will ruin your education, kill your dreams and make you dependent.” 🇳🇵

Shipra Jha is Head of Asia Engagement at Girls Not Brides: The global partnership to end child marriage.

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 900 civil society organisations from over 95 countries committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.

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“Tell me more ...”

Liz Hawley said goodbye and thank you, then expressed surprise to be still alive the following morning

Miss Hawley is hunched over her electric fan heater avidly scouring The New York Times as I enter the austere apartment in Dilli Bazar, her home since 1960. The walls are thick and the floor a cold concrete, and the white painted double doors are secured with awkward metal bolts. The furniture is the same vintage, dark and heavy, with low hard sofas whose cushions do little to provide comfort.



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

Bookshelves and file cabinets stuffed with her mountaineering collection line the dim sitting room, securely bolted to the wall to avoid their tipping over in earthquakes. They contain her life work, hundreds of files of dusty pages of detailed information about thousands of expeditions in the Nepal Himalaya. The sprightly 94-year-old is still as sharp as a tack. “Look, the Polish are attempting a winter ascent of K2,” she marvels. “What a feat. A difficult and dangerous mountain.” On this visit I’m interested in coaxing her to talk about the past, not current affairs. Elizabeth has finally retired from gathering of climbing information, and most of her day is spent reading or re-reading detective novels – Dorothy Sayers is her favourite.



LISA CHOEGYAL

DRIVING MISS HAWLEY: Elizabeth Hawley's trusted driver Suben said: "She loved me more than any of her mountaineers."

“Tell me more about your friend Micky Wetherall, whom I never knew. Is it true he was the only man you considered marrying?” I nudge her into reminisces. “Oh that was mostly speculation on my part,” she confesses brightly. “I doubt he ever knew. He was splendid, born somewhere like Darjeeling, he started one of the first private construction companies in Kathmandu with Krishna, you know Muggy’s father, Col Jaya Prakash SJB Rana. He eventually married the British Ambassador’s secretary who was Australian,

Commonwealth, you see, and they moved there after leaving here – both dead now.” She rolls her eyes. “Lots of people confuse my long friendship with Sir Ed as romance, and Bernadette’s book was full of wild inaccuracies about others, but the only real fling I had was the Sudanese gentleman on the riverboat in Egypt.” Liz’s Nile adventure had taken place during her early travels, before first arriving in Kathmandu in 1959, and I reckon the stolen kisses on deck with the married postal worker was the closest she came to

a relationship. “What use would I be as a wife? I can’t cook, and I’m not interested in homemaking. I’d be hopeless.” In a magazine interview in 2004, I had described her “passion” for Nepali politics and for collecting mountaineering facts. “Lisa, please remove that word from your article,” she snapped. “I simply record facts - I am not passionate about ANYTHING.” I ask her about trekking-founder Col Jimmy Roberts, and Mike Cheyney who worked with him at Mountain Travel. “Jimmy’s life was almost entirely in the Himalaya, first Indian Army then Nepal. He had a couple of aunts in Wales – can’t remember their names and doubt Jimmy could either. He was quite a character and of course never married. If you ask me, I think he was afraid of women.”

In April 2016 I had received a rare summons: “Lisa I have to see you urgently. I need to discuss my future.” The future? At her age? It sounded sinister. My regular visits had diminished from long lunches to regular drop-ins, lending her books, catching up on news, hearing her grumble at my travels, checking her nurses were taking care, and that the Himalayan Trust downstairs was managing her bills. She had a well-ordered life, but I arrived with some trepidation. A shrinking figure determinedly upright at her table, Liz gestures with irritation to a pile of brown expedition folders

at her elbow. “I can’t do it, Lisa. I can’t concentrate and these files of information don’t make any sense to me anymore. My mind goes blank. It’s too hard.” She sighs with dejected impatience at her own frailty. Long anticipating this moment with a backup plan in place and willing hands poised to take over, I touch her pale bony hand and smile encouragement. “How wonderful, Elizabeth. Finally at 92 years old you have retired. How exciting for you, and many congratulations.” Her worried expression gives way to a cautious smile of relief. “Ah yes, that’s what it is. Retirement.” Liz’s retirement lasted less than two years as she left us last month, with enviable peace after a short bout of pneumonia in hospital surrounded by people who cared, and with her wits and humour still about her. Ever organised, she said goodbye and thank you, then expressed surprise to be still alive the following morning. Her death was front-page news in UK, US and New Zealand as well as Nepal. We gave her a fitting farewell, a brocaded Sherpa cremation at Swayambhunath, and a memorial tea party at Dwarikas. “A committed rationalist, she would not have wanted a fuss,” said Kanak Dixit in his tribute. Her favourite nephew came with his wife from Colorado, her nurses were in tears, and her driver Suben claimed: “She loved me more than any of her mountaineers.” Accolades and admiration poured in from household-name climbers, journalists, colleagues and friends from all over the world, her uncompromising exactitude a common theme. The last thing she had said to me the week before as I left the country on a job was: “I’m in CIWEC with a chest infection but don’t worry, it’s not serious.” She got that one wrong. 🇳🇵



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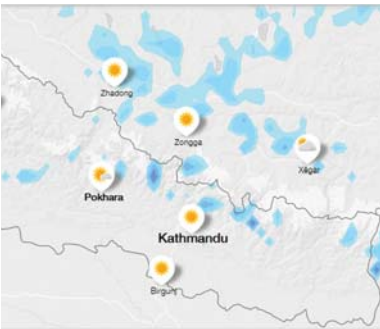
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CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF: Artificial intelligence programmers take their drone on a test flight in Khokana last week (*left*).

Sameer Maskey of Fusemachines with his fellowship students during an orientation on research projects (*below, left*).

currently in session in Kathmandu. Selected students get a \$1,200 scholarship and are provided with in-house mentors previously trained under Maskey himself. Students work on online courses and get involved in research projects in the company. Rupak Shrestha of Fusemachines Nepal says: “We want to be a platform where students can learn and implement their ideas.”

One of the 2017 fellowship students is 22-year-old Sushil Shakya who says that if it hadn’t been for Fusemachines he would have to switch to another subject, or go abroad.

Indeed, Fusemachine’s Situ Shrestha says one of the goals for the project is to reduce Nepal’s brain drain and build the country’s human resource capacity: “We want youngsters to learn, work and stay in Nepal, and by doing so, we also reduce the outflow of our young talent.”

Rojesh Shikhrakar, 25, is another fellowship student who completed his bachelor in Mechanical Engineering and is currently working on a drone-making project.

“Nepal has huge scope for drone application to overcome a lot of limitations that we have,” he says, “we can use drones to control and monitor traffic and crowds, deliver medicines to remote areas, or protect wildlife from poachers.”

Both Shakya and Shikhrakar want to stay on in Nepal after their fellowship to help other Nepali students.

And Maskey is around to encourage them: “With proper training and guidance Nepal can someday produce AI and Machine Learning specialists who are as good, or even better, than elsewhere. We can give them the opportunity to work with global companies or build advanced AI systems for Nepali right here in Nepal.”

Duksangh Sherpa

Natural intelligence

Nepali software engineers have been migrating for jobs abroad in droves, but one company is trying to reverse that trend by creating a specialised talent pool here on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and drone making. Many people still think AI is science fiction, and that it doesn’t have too many applications in Nepal. But AI is already ubiquitous in everyday life: sorting emails in order of importance, or in the

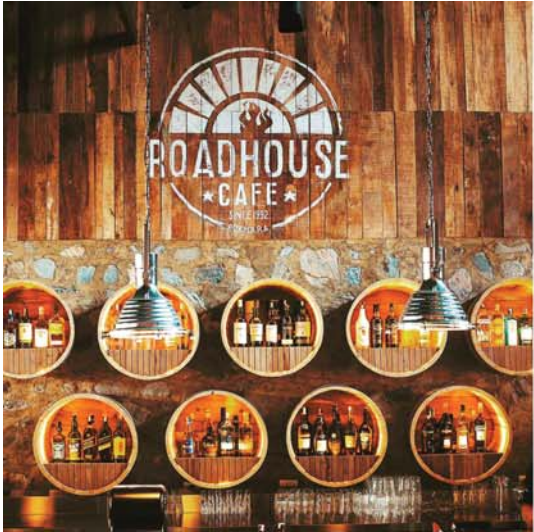
Internet of everything. That is where Sameer Maskey, founder and CEO of Fusemachines Inc, sees an opening. “With the talent shortage for AI engineers around the world, Nepal has the potential to become a leader in the space and help fulfill the growing demand,” says the computer science professor who teaches Artificial Intelligence at New York’s Columbia University. Maskey felt Nepali engineers

could be just as bright as his students in the US, given the right resources and training. However, despite the worldwide demand for AI engineers, specialised courses were not yet available in Nepali colleges and students had to go abroad. All that is changing with the fellowship program that Fusemachines has launched in Nepal, on completion of which students receive a degree certified

by Columbia. The one-year course gives students the opportunity to get world-class education in Artificial Intelligence. Says Maskey: “The aim is to help develop Nepal’s software workforce and enable companies to benefit from the power of machine learning. Our mission is to democratise AI.” Fusemachine’s first batch in 2017 had more than 400 applicants for 27 seats. The 2018 course is



PHOTO: FUSEMACHINES



Not so long ago

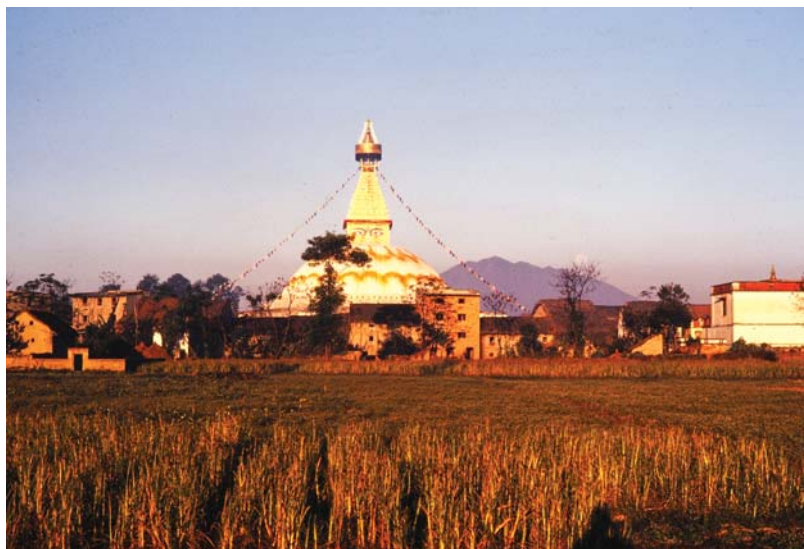
Remarkable images of Kathmandu Valley show how much and how fast we changed



KATHMANDU-BHAKTAPUR TROLLEY BUS STOP 1975



STATUE OF JUNG BAHADUR RANA IN TUNDIKHEL 1972



PADDY FIELDS SURROUND BAUDHA STUPA 1974

PHOTOGRAPHS by DANIEL W EDWARDS

There are many photographs from the early 1900s that give us an idea of what Kathmandu Valley looked like a century ago. Most of those pictures were commissioned by the Ranas, who brought in photographers from Calcutta to take snapshots of their opulent palaces. They are a valuable visual documentation of a Nepal before the country opened up to the outside world.

To see how much and how fast Kathmandu Valley has changed, however, you don't need to go back a 100 years – four decades is enough. A new picture book by Peace Corps volunteer Daniel W Edwards (*pictured right*) shows us a Kathmandu from not so long ago.

Even as recently as 1970, you

see in the photos how clean the capital's air was, how uncluttered the streets were, how much of the rice fields, even within the Ring Road, were intact.

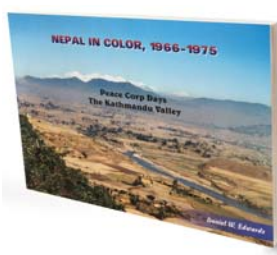
But Edwards tries to look at the bright side, and explains in the Introduction to his book: 'While much of the physical landscape has changed dramatically since the 1970s, readers will note that one may still see multi-storey traditional houses in Patan or Bhaktapur, and one may observe festivals and religious ceremonies that are carried out much the way they were many years ago.'

Edwards says the lively children he sees in schools and shops are better dressed and less shy today, but they still remind him of the Nepali youngsters he taught in the 1960s. Indeed, the book is another invaluable addition to the corpus of writings that have recently been put in the public domain.

Edwards has let the photos speak

for themselves, including only brief captions to show when and where they were taken. Many images stand out: Lagankhel and Lainchaur in 1966, the view of Tinkune from a plane landing in Kathmandu in 1972, the green fields near Baudha, a trolley bus-stop in Bhaktapur and the Chobhar cement factory.

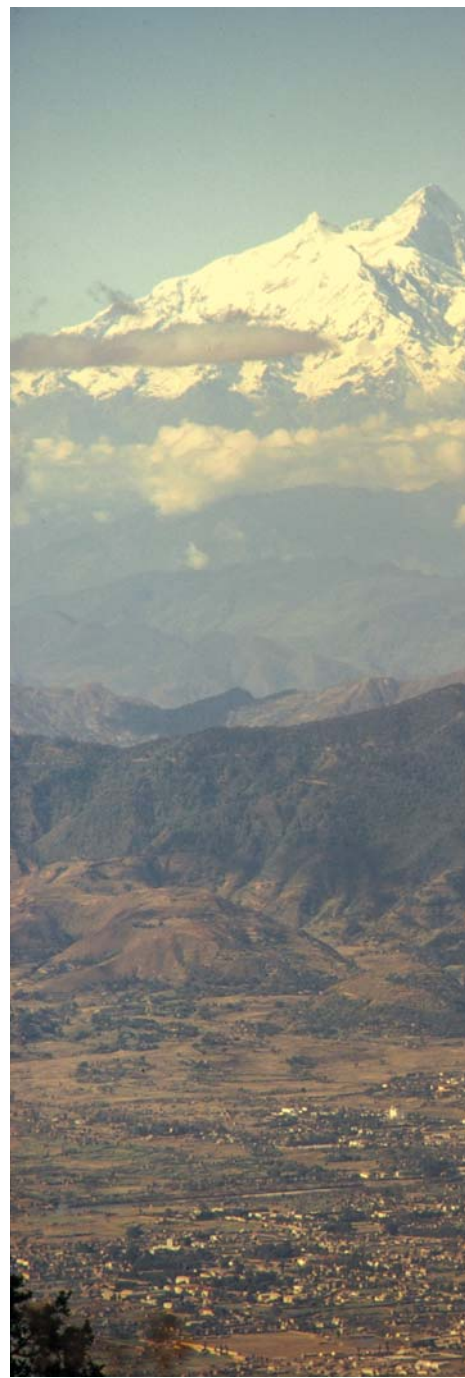
One of Edwards' former math student, Bijaya Bahadur Mali, writes in his foreword: 'Looking back I feel our development process has gone terribly wrong. We embraced modernity on a wrong footing. We dumped trolley



buses and ropeways for polluting and costly fossil fuel transport systems. We turned our rivers into sewers, and did nothing to stop the haphazard growth of our towns. My eyes were moist when I looked at the wonderful pictures of a Shangri-la when life was serene, innocent and less complicated.' 🇳🇵

Nepal in Color, 1966-1975
Peace Corps Days
The Kathmandu Valley

By Daniel W Edwards, 2017
Rs 1,500



HIMALCHULI AND MANASLU TOWER OVER KATHMANDU WHERE R



ANA PALACES STILL DOMINATE 1973



TRAFFIC-LESS NEW ROAD GATE 1972



NEW ROAD 1966



POTATO FIELDS IN KOPUNDOLE 1975



TERRACE FARMS ABOVE BHAKTAPUR 1975

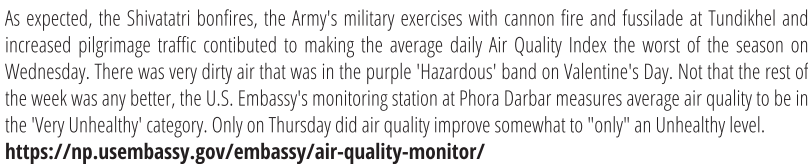


TINKUNE AND THE BAGMATI FROM A LANDING JET 1972



KATHMANDU AIRPORT TERMINAL, 1966

GETAWAY



Land Reform in Cold War Nepal

The first US Ambassador came to Nepal 65 years ago this week to push for socio-economic reform

TOM ROBERTSON

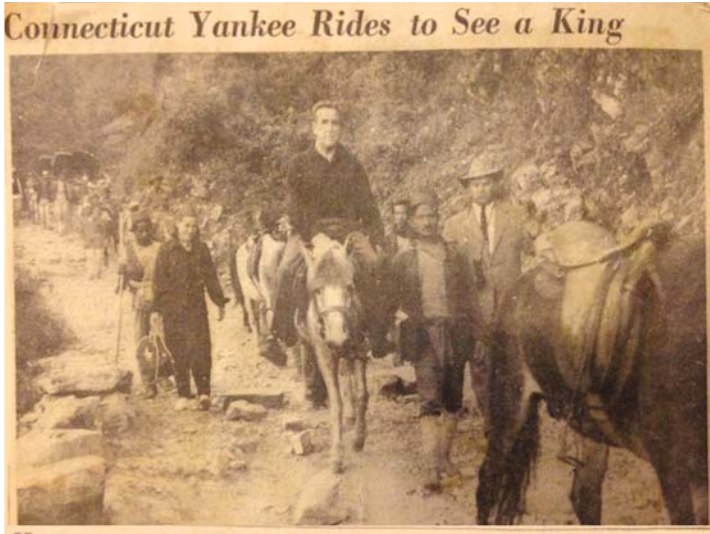
The first US Ambassador to visit Nepal arrived not by plane or car, but by horse. In February 1952, US Ambassador to India and Nepal Chester Bowles came to Kathmandu for meetings with King Tribhuvan. At the time, most 'thulo manche' who came overland from India were carried by porters in dandies, but not Bowles.

This was political theatre, he wanted to show he was different than the Britishers who had ruled in India, and prove that Americans understood the troubles of ordinary people. In Delhi, he had impressed the Indians with his fondness for bicycling around town and had also enrolled his children in Indian schools.

A year later, exactly 65 years ago this week, Bowles was back in Nepal to push a program for land reform aimed to improve the lives of average Nepali citizens. He met government officials, with Paul Rose and the members of the new US Operations Mission in Nepal (the precursor to USAID). In the 1940s and 50s the US was pushing for land reform around Asia, including Japan, Taiwan and South Vietnam as a way to counter the appeal of Chinese communism.

Bowles had worked in domestic US state politics, but had almost no international experience. Historian Robert Merrill has lauded Bowles' 'boundless energy' and reformer's zeal, but criticised his 'go-getter style and natural optimism'. This optimism led Bowles 'to misjudge the seriousness of certain harsh realities', such as the caste system and the lack of political will in India for structural change.

Two events convinced Bowles that Nepal needed serious land reform. First, B P Koirala had stressed on land reform and the abolition of 'birta' land given tax-free in perpetuity to elite friends of the Rana regime. Second, a UN report had noted that one-fourth of



Connecticut Yankee Rides to See a King



The New Ambassador Arrives by a Rocky Mountain Path

ALL PHOTOS: CHESTER BOWLES PAPERS (MS 628), MANUSCRIPTS AND ARCHIVES, YALE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

BY GONES: Coverage of Chester Bowles walking to Nepal in *The Daily Mail* of 26 February 1952. Bowles on horseback and the cover of his book, *Ambassador's Report*, 1954

the cultivable land in Nepal was birta and that much other land was owned by the zamindar landlord class.

In 1953, Bowles journeyed to Nepal from his base in Delhi to deliver a letter on land reform to King Tribhuvan. In the letter, he called for the king to abolish birta tax exemptions and to reform land tenure practices. He stressed that land reform to help peasants, is the 'most fundamental task which should be undertaken without delay'. He wrote: 'More than half the land was owned by large holders, many of whom charged exorbitant rents by all modern standards.'

Without real reform, political upheaval might erupt. Bowles wrote, "Communist agitation for land reform is beginning to show itself in Nepal, this agitation strikes a responsive chord in the heart and mind of every cultivator." The communist card, it seemed, could be used to squelch leftist dissent but also to prompt monarchs to move more leftward.

Bowles combined great faith in science and technology, with a sense of social justice. He wrote to Tribhuvan: 'Modern science and



technology can overcome the threat of malaria, to open up inaccessible mountain valleys, to harness the streams for electric power, increase the yield of human labor many times over, and to secure a more fair return for their labor.'

Bowles gave the letter to the king and read it out loud to his top officials. 'I read (the letter) very slowly,' he wrote to Washington a few days later, "emphasizing various points about income

tax, full tax for the now tax free birta lands, land reform and other measures which are essential if we are to keep the results of our efforts from simply making the rich richer and the poor, poorer.'

He admitted to feeling 'slightly uncertain' because the king's advisers were 'among Nepal's richest property owners'. Nonetheless, there was a 'general nodding of heads on all my various points'.

Separately, Bowles made a similar case to Field Marshal Kaiser, one of Nepal's biggest landowners and perhaps the real force behind the government, as well as to B B Pande, the secretary of Planning and Development, M P Koirala, and Khadgaman Singh, a left-leaning official.

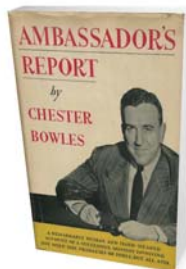
Bowles left Nepal optimistic. Before his departure, he received word that King Tribhuvan had agreed to implement his ideas and had made a public announcement to that effect. Because of the government's 'willingness to tackle the essential reforms', Bowles concluded that Nepal's situation 'is gradually improving'.

Paul Rose and the USOM team shared Bowles' drive for land

reform. Over the next decade they created a program to give land in Chitwan to the landless and impoverished people of Nepal.

But land reform in Chitwan, as in Asia more generally, would prove extremely challenging. As a Taiwanese peasant explained in the early 1950s to a visiting American official, land reform is like "negotiating with a tiger for his fur." This proves the case in both India and Nepal, especially as American commitment to socio-economic reform waned in the 1960s. 🇺🇸

Tom Robertson is an environmental historian and Executive Director of Fulbright Nepal. A longer version of this article will appear in *The Long 1950s, Vol 2: The World in Nepal*



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The Cloverfield Paradox

For sci-fans, there is nothing better than the equivalent of a locked room mystery in space: the classic spaceship lost in space trope that encloses a crew full of stressed out scientists trying to



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

get out of the ship, away from the monsters inside, away from their worst selves, out of an alternate universe, and back home to their loved ones who they talk to fondly on giant screens.

J J Abrams's latest production, and third, but entirely stand-alone, installment of the Cloverfield films, The Cloverfield Paradox is a classic, watchable, thrilling,

imperfect but enjoyable example of this type of sci-fiction that thrills you using the void of space as the main antagonist.

While the preceding two Cloverfield films (2008, 2016) have not really interested me (they are based on behemoth, terrifying creatures taking over the earth, but both have gimmicks which I cannot revel for fear of totally spoiling your thrills), this one, just released on Netflix in an hitherto unheard of kind of deal between Netflix and Paramount, caught my eye, and kept me fairly enthralled through its brief but intense, action packed 102 minutes.

Based on the already much used premise that the Earth is running out of fuel, a team of scientists must stay in space on the Cloverfield, a spaceship designed to hold the Shepard particle

accelerator that is being tested for the first time, but is far too powerful to try out on earth; if it were to work, it would provide our planet with an infinite amount of energy. Two years later, Ava Hamilton (played by the wonderful Gugu Mbatha-Raw) and her crew are still stuck in space racing against time (the Earth is on the brink of war over fuel), to get the Shepard to produce a stable beam.

With an ensemble cast that includes David Oyelowo, Zhang Ziyi, and Elizabeth Debicki, the Cloverfield jumps into an alternate reality – in essence the titular Cloverfield Paradox, and experiences some of the creepiest happenings I've seen yet on cinema.

Equipped with gore, horror, thrills, secrets, and mysteries, the film never bores, even while the decision to release on Netflix instead of in theaters was reportedly prompted by fears of box office failure. However, despite these misgivings, this is a perfectly fine film about the horrors of space and the abuse of science and technology, packaged in a sleek looking film inhabited by some pretty amazing characters, each of whom managed to convey a distinct personality due to the innate talent of the actors.

While the cinemas provide little entertainment and as the Western world gears up for its usually empty awards season, you can entertain yourself, and maybe scare yourself a bit silly with this little, delectable piece of science fiction madness – designed to keep you hooked for the next Cloverfield film.



Watch trailer online

nepaltimes.com

HAPPENINGS



RSS

UNIFICATION DIARIES: Leaders of CPN-UML and Maoist Centre during the joint party coordination committee meeting held in Man Bhawan on Wednesday.



INDIAN EMBASSY

INDIA'S ARMY: Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat calls on President Bidya Bhandari on Wednesday in Kathmandu. General Rawat was in Nepal from 12-14 February.



BRITISH EMBASSY

BRITAIN'S, TOO: Visiting British Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster (*third from right*) at Kathmandu's Humanitarian Staging Area on Monday. Also pictured is British Ambassador to Nepal Richard Morris (*second from right*).



RSS

POETRY GENERAL: President Bidya Bhandari confers the title of Honorary Brigadier General on National Poet Madhav Prasad Ghimire at a ceremony organised on the occasion of the Nepal Army Day at Army Headquarters in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



TURKISH AIRLINE

DEAL SEALED: Abdullah Tuncer, General Country Manager of Turkish Airlines (*left*) and Bhuwan Phaiju, CEO of Tranquility Spa (*right*) shake hands after signing a year-long MoU between the two companies on 8 February.

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Bird census

Himal Khabarpatrika 14-20 January
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Last month, the census of birds in various nature sanctuaries around Nepal showed that the number of indigenous and migratory birds found in the country are steadily declining.

Ornithologists say the main reasons are habitat destruction, use of agro-chemicals, depleted fish in rivers and lakes as well as hunting along migratory routes. Even so, there are more than 884 species of birds in Nepal, with 527 of them in the Kosi Tappu Nature reserve along the Kosi River in eastern Nepal.

Counting bird species and their total numbers every year in Nepal started in 1987 simultaneously with other parts of Asia under the initiative of Wetlands International. The idea was to carry out the census all together across the region during the winter migration period so that there is no double counting.

“Counting the birds at one go all over the world is more accurate,” explains Nepal’s foremost ornithologist and coordinator of Wetlands International Nepal Hem Sagar Baral.



KAMAL RIMAL

This year’s census was carried out from 6-22 January across Nepal’s wetlands and national parks. Preliminary results show a decline in not just the total number of water birds, but also the species count for water birds.

However, it is not easy to count birds flying all the way from Siberia to Kosi Tappu and other national parks in Nepal. There were 300 volunteer birders in ten groups who fanned out across the Kosi banks, and they later went to the 55 protected water bodies and wetlands across Nepal. The enumerators don’t just count birds but also collect information in areas where there is illegal hunting and habitat destruction.

“Kosi Tappu is really special because nowhere else in Nepal do you see such a large variety of birds in such a small place,” says bird enumerator Samjhana Karki from Barachetra. Among the 50 species of birds she spotted, most were water fowls with the Brahminy (ruddy sheldduck) being most numerous.

The numbers of Brahminy ducks were down from last year, but this year the birders spotted the Greater White Fronted Goose for the first time in 17 years in Kosi Tappu.

Says Baral: “The reason for the declining number is mostly human encroachment into wetlands and river banks. If this trend continues, the birds from Siberia will just fly on to India without stopping here.”

Tourist lodges and eco-tourism entrepreneurs in Kosi Tappu are worried that the proliferation of livestock, use of pesticides in fields, and the decline in fish in the river will lead to further declines in the bird population.

Says bird researcher and tourism entrepreneur Badri Chaudhary: “We need to make sure that the birds are undisturbed, we can dig wallows so the buffalos don’t go into the river.”

Kantipur, 11 Feburary

कान्तिपुर

Devendra Raj Pandey has been in the limelight for the past 30 years after suddenly resigning from the Panchayat civil service in 1980. He spoke to Hari Bahadur Thapa and Janakraj Sapkota of Kantipur. Translated excerpts:

Kantipur: Two months have passed since elections, we don’t have a new government.
Pandey: It has been a long time since our hopes and confidence have been dashed, that the leadership would step up to its responsibilities, and that politics would move in a certain direction. Despite this, we have to hope for the best.

Is the delay because the incumbent government doesn’t want to step down, or because that is the way the constitution was written.
I often ponder that, too. But whatever the constitution says, we should have followed certain democratic norms and values.

“We cannot change federalism, but we can change leaders”



B P Koirala used to call in all kinds of people to debate issues. Aside from some exceptions we don't see that now.

But we have not seen a change in leadership style despite political transformations.
Parties need an organisation to back them, there must be an ideology, principles and vision. They need a leader to steer them with a long-term plan, which we lack.

It looks like our foray into federalism is spreading despair rather than hope.
What happens at the centre will affect the local level. We are all part of the same society. And then, those who fought for republicanism and federalism are on the outside. And those who think federalism will ruin Nepal or who doubt republicanism are leading the country. The Maoists have also fallen from grace: there isn't much difference between them and the other

According to this logic, the winning party forms the government and the losing party sits in the opposition. But it even looks like the parties that won a majority are not getting together to claim leadership. This is a bit strange.

So, does that mean that the parties did not foresee this possibility?
It may be that because the debates about Madhesi and Janajati rights, or delayed earthquake relief prompted the government to act in a hurry. The leaders were also not competent: we have been seeing their ethical and moral behavior and their misuse of the budget. There is also a tendency among the leaders to reward sycophantic behaviour, and not listen to expert advice.

parties. There is still a lack of understanding of the kind of state structure that was being formed.

Is there any reason to be hopeful about federalism?
Not at the rate we are going. The leadership is not a result of federalism: it is because of the leadership that we have federalism. We cannot change federalism, but we can change the leaders. How can you have effective decision-making if even the privileged class finds it has to latch on to a party to secure its future? Civil society has also become weak. Transformation needs a spark, I haven't seen civil society in the past 10-12 years. Where is the spark?

You have just written a book on governance and corruption. What is your conclusion?
We have made a lot of laws in the past 20 years, but there is a lack of integrity in the state structure. I have included examples of other countries. There isn't just one reason for the rise in corruption. There has to be all-around reform, but it must start with the leadership.



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AIR JAM

Congestion at Kathmandu airport due to delayed expansion is choking Nepal's economy

OM ASTHA RAI

It was December 2010, with the war over, Nepal was looking to the future with optimism. The tourism authorities put up an ambitious target of bringing two million tourists in ten year's time. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) sanctioned an \$80 million loan to upgrade Kathmandu airport to handle increased aircraft movement.

Eight years later, the volume of passengers has surged: migrant workers are using the airport in record numbers, and even though Nepal is unlikely to meet the 2020 target, nearly one million tourists visited Nepal last year. International passenger volume at Kathmandu airport has grown by 20% between 2012 and 2017.

However, the phase-wise plan to increase the airport's traffic capacity has been stalled, leading to heavy congestion in the air and on the ground. Nepal's only air gateway is turning out to be an economic bottleneck.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) fired Spanish contractor Constructora Sanjose after it reportedly failed to meet one deadline after another. Sanjose had hoped to source earth filling material from the nearby Pashupati

area, but when that was not allowed it tried to renegotiate the terms and delayed the project to extend the runway and expand the international terminal building.

A messy court battle is dragging on in Singapore, with Sanjose said to be pressuring the Civil Aviation Minister Jitendra Dev to sack CAAN chief Sanjeev Gautam to reclaim its security deposit. The minister backed off after the media exposed the plan.

The airport expansion project has now resumed and is being carried out by four contractors. "We learnt from the Sanjose episode that it would not be wise to put all our eggs in one basket," CAAN

spokesperson Birendra Shrestha told us.

Work on extending the southern threshold of the runway by 300m as well as expanding the international terminal has resumed. One more contractor is due to be selected to expand the international apron and extend the parallel taxiway to both ends of the runway, which requires 1.2 million cubic metres of earth fill. (See map). The much-delayed \$92million project is now expected to be finished by 2020.

Despite rapid recovery after the earthquake and Blockade, tourism authorities have more or less given up hope that there will be two million tourists by 2020. The

main reason being that the airport just cannot handle that volume of traffic.

"Our only international airport is so congested, it is choking tourism industry," says Binayak Shah of the Hotel Association Nepal (HAN). "We cannot bring in two million tourists a year without first fixing the airport."

The government has now pushed back the target, saying it hopes to attract 2.5 million tourists by 2025. But even for that, the airport improvement needs to move immediately into the next phase of building a brand new international terminal building, moving the domestic terminal to the existing

international building, adding aprons and remote bays and adding taxiways.

"We will increase the number gradually to reach 2.5million by 2025, and a lot of it will depend on whether the airport expansion plan goes smoothly and if the Bhairawa and Pokhara airports are completed on time," says Suresh Acharya of the Tourism Ministry. (See box)

Congestion is now so bad that aircrafts are required to hold for hours to land, parking bays are often full, and passengers have to wait for hours to collect their luggage from turnstiles. Despite this, Nepal Airlines is bringing in

PHOTO: GOPEN RAI



Alternate airfields

On Monday this week, when visibility was below the minimum required for a standard instrument approach into Kathmandu airport, most international flights were diverted. A flight from Doha had to go to Kolkata after a costly hold for over two hours. Another flight from Dubai was diverted to Delhi.

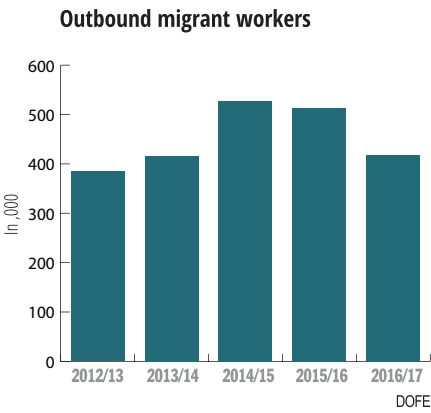
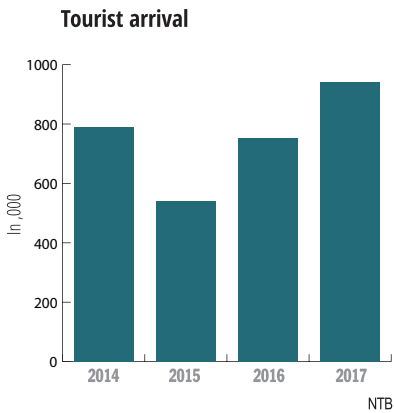
If the new Bhairawa Airport was completed as scheduled in December 2017 some of those flights would not have to go to India



-- reducing delays and saving money. But just as Kathmandu airport improvement was delayed because of a dispute with the Spanish contractor, Bhairawa also faced problems with its Chinese contractor.

Only 30% work has been completed so far in Bhairawa, and CAAN's Pradip Adhikari himself admits: "It is a sick project, and the progress is not satisfactory at all." Adhikari is also overseeing Pokhara and Nijgad International Airports. Much-delayed Pokhara is now picking up speed and is expected to come into operation by July 2021.

When Pokhara and Bhairawa start operating international and domestic flights, the hope is that congestion in Kathmandu will ease, but by then the volume of passengers is also expected to increase. For which the new radar in Bhattedanda (left) will be useful. But congestion in Kathmandu will not lessen until the international airport in Nijgad is completed in the coming decade.



Artist's concept of the new international airport terminal (inset, above)

Overcrowded departure area of Kathmandu's domestic airport (below) is a regular affair.



KUNDA DIXIT


two wide body Airbus300-200s this year, Himalayan airlines is adding four more Airbus 320s, Buddha Air and Yeti Airlines are expanding their fleets with three more ATR-72s each.

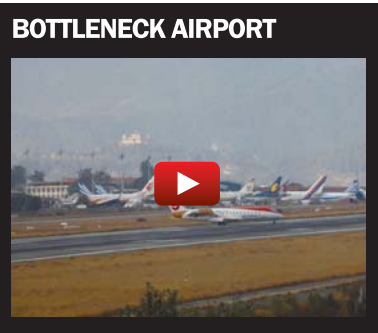
The hospitality industry is gearing up for an increase in tourist numbers. International chains like Sheraton and Hilton are putting up new hotels, several new luxury resorts are coming up in Pokhara, Chitwan and Nepalganj — adding

4,000 new rooms over the next two years.

But these investments could go sour if the airport is not fixed. Negative international publicity about the chaos and filth at the airport is dissuading travelers. Says aviation expert Hemant Aryal: “We can mitigate the problem, but we cannot solve it completely unless the second international airport in Nijgadh and the fast-track highway connecting it to Kathmandu are

built.”

Aviation experts like Aryal say some measures like extending taxiways to the threshold of the runway could have been done long ago. This would have increased the frequency of landings and takeoffs, reducing long and wasteful holding patterns. They say the new radar on Bhatte Danda that came into operation this month won't ease air traffic, unless the taxiways are extended first. 



Kathmandu's airport is choking at the seams -- not just on the ground but in the air as flights have to hold for hours to land. Watch video summary of why Tribhuvan International Airport has earned a well-deserved reputation for being one of the worst in the world.

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Cricket glossary

Asia is divided into two types of countries: those that play cricket and those that eat them. The Line of Control between these two eco-biological domains passes along 118 degrees East meridian in the vicinity of the Andaman Sea that separates China, Philippines and Japan (which play basketball and baseball) with India, Sri Lanka and Australia (which play cricket). There is also a third type of country in Asia, which is the one that likes to play with crickets by tying pieces of string on their hind legs, and gambling on cricket races (Thailand and Laos). But in general, it would be safe to say that west of the Abdomen Sea, cricket is a sport, and to the east, it is a meal.

Since Nepal was never colonised by leg breakers, and therefore did not inherit a sport with a scoreboard that looks like the result of a three-tier general election, we have never really been passionate about cricket. And since we have never played off square leg in The Asses, we as a nation, are not up to speed on cricket terminology. Although we knew it was a nail-biting finish in Namibia the other day, many of us had no clue why it was so exciting.

That is why, as a public service to the nation at large, the Ass takes time to list a truncated glossary of cricket terms so you can follow the running commentary of not just cricket but also political games that are currently ongoing in Nepal:

Agricultural Shot: A batting lineup that includes giving the Maoist Centre a shot at being the Minister of Agriculture.

Bouncer: KPO was already batting on a sticky wicket since he started his innings as Skipper, but his team-mate PKD suddenly bowled a Bouncer from behind him by saying the unity deal was off unless he also gets to be skipper after two-and-half years.

Century: The time it will take for the Batting Team under the present Skipper to fulfil the promise of stability and prosperity without Queering the Pitch at any time.

Chinaman: Unnamed left-wing wrist-spinner who spoke to Krishna Bahadur Mahara some years ago offering him 50 corrodos to change sides.

Donkey Drop: The Ass has absolutely no idea what this is, but it has a nice ring to it because it seems to describe accurately the dilscoops that our politicians indulge in from time to time.

Drinks Break: What happened at Man Bhawan the other night as one faction of one party met with another faction of another party to plot against rival factions in both parties, usually well lubricated with Maotai and Toddy.

Full Toss: What will happen if Parliament follows the tradition of the First Constituent Assembly when chairs were defenestrated from the floor of the BICC. Why stop at chairs, why not upgrade to bigger furniture, and maybe someday even propel a couple of Honourable Members of the August House out the window?

"Howzat": Blood-curdling cry, often emanating from cabinet members, when the Finance Minister is manhandled while trying to present the budget. The Speaker is not required to rule on the physical appeal for dismissal unless asked in this way. But, if asked, he is mandated to form a Task Force, an Inquiry Board or an Investigation Commission.

Jockstrap: Also known as 'groin-guard', mandatory gear for all newly nominated ministers whose gonads could be the targets of well-aimed Yorkers, especially if they are fielding at Silly Point.

Leg Break: A form of 'bowtick carbuy' practiced during the war by Baddie Bowlers, but still being employed selectively in order to dismiss opposition Batsmen from time to time. Also known as Leg Bye-bye.

Luncheon: The first of the two intervals (see also: Drinks Break) taken during a full day's session of the House, which usually occurs at lunchtime at about 12:30pm Indian Standard Time and can last anywhere up to three hours.

Match Fixing: The accepted behind-the-scenes method of cobbling together a coalition government which involves bribing players with the promise of cabinet berths, or housing plots in Hetauda.

No Balls: This happens when an ex-minister repeatedly shows a lack of scrotal fortitude in the field, and is obsessed instead of performing Quickies with Maidens.

One Day International: A junket in which a Lameduck Finance Minister flies half-way around the world for a one-day international conference in Australia so he doesn't have to rescue the economy from collapse.

Overthrow: Prolonged poor delivery could lead to the fielding team from the Left Alliance staging a violent takeover, leading to a batting collapse.

Partnership: An alliance of convenience by Batsmen from two parties with completely different ideologies, for example between PKD and SBD, that lasts as long as one of them is either a Golden Duck or a Lame Duck.

Powerplay: The block of overs that offers temporary advantage to the Coalition Government in an endgame struggle to be in Singha Darbar by hook or by crook. Mostly by crook.

Rest Day: Every day.

Wicked Keeper: Another name for party boss, the guy who is Caught Behind while keeping party faithful faithful.

Yorker: Opposite of Googly, as in: 'PKD delivered a Yorker on a jockstrap-less BRB by calling him an Indian stooge. BRB then quickly bowled him a Googly in retaliation.'



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