















**7**hen Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Nepal next week for the third time since becoming PM, he will not only aim to reset bilateral ties but also send signals to the Madhes, his own electorate back home, and to China.

Modi will fly to Janakpur from Patna probably in an Indian Air Force helicopter on 11 May. He had wanted to enter Nepal overland, but security agencies in both countries are still assessing whether that would be a safe option.

Modi will perform a puja at Janaki Temple before receiving a civic felicitation at Ranga Bhumi ground. Prime Minister KP Oli will also fly down to Janakpur to welcome Modi.

did not allow Modi to cross into Nepal overland and address a mass rally in Janakpur. When Nepal insisted that Modi just worship at Janaki Temple, and not address a mass meeting, he cancelled his trip.

Many believe that Nepal-India relations began to sour after that because Modi took the cancellation as a personal affront. Janakpurbased analyst Bhogendra Jha says, "If Modi was allowed to visit Janakpur in 2014, Nepal-India ties would not have sunk so low."

Between that aborted trip and the one next week, Nepal-India ties have gone through a rollercoaster. Modi tried to arm-twist Nepali leaders into delaying the Constitution, and when that failed he imposed a Blockade on Nepal. Anti-India sentiments ran high in Nepal, undoing gains of Modi's successful first tip to Nepal in 2014. KP Oli, in turn, used anti-India nationalism to propel himself to power in last year's elections. "It all began from Janakpur, but it could also end in Janakapur," Iha adds. "Modi's connection to Janakpur marks the end of an unwarranted chapter in Nepal-India relations."

However, many Nepalis on social media are still calling for Modi to apologise for the Blockade on an earthquake-devastated country in 2015. They also oppose the idea of a civic reception for a leader responsible for wrecking Nepal's economy.

But there is a different tone in Janakpur. Many there say the Blockade is a thing of the past and it is time to forget, forgive and move on. Janakpur's mayor Lal Kishore Sah says: "If you keep raking up the past, you can never prepare for the future.

But many say Modi is not the kind who forgets and forgives. The importance that he has attached to Janakpur during his two-day visit shows that he wants to show Nepal's Madhesi people he has not abandoned them. He may announce aid for a 'Ramavana Circuit' that will also help him with Hindu voters in Indian elections next year. NC leader Abhishek Pratap Shah says: "From Janakpur Modi wants to give a message to the Madhesi people that he could not fully champion their cause in the





DRESS REHEARSAL: Indian Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri is briefed on Wednesday by the pilot of an Indian Air Force helicoper that rehearsed a landing in Janakpur where Indian PM Narendra Modi will be welcomed on 11 May at the start of his visit to Nepal.

A file picture of the welcome gate built for Modi's earlier visit to Janakpur in November 2014, which was cancelled.

past but will do so in the future." Modi is also trying to use his Nepal visit as an opportunity to send a strong message to Beijing by flying to worship at Muktinath close to the Chinese border.





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GATWICK

In Janakpur, there is a sense of déjà vu as preparations get underway for the visit. During the November 2014 SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, Modi wanted to visit Janakpur and Muktinath. The city had been spruced up with welcome gates along the main roads (see photo, inset) when the Janakpur part of the trip was cancelled. The Sushil Koirala government

"India thinks the Oli government is still pro-Chinese and believes Beijing has increased its influence in Nepal," Shah adds. "From Muktinath, Modi will be signalling China that India is still a dominant player in Nepal." 🔽 Om Astha Rai



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## THE LOTTERY OF MIGRATION

ll but forgotten in this week's celebration of International Workers' ▶Day on 1 May were the approximately 4.5 million Nepalis working outside Nepal at any given time. Also largely ignored was the unsalaried drudgery of domestic work, mainly by women, the labour of subsistence farmers, and childhood work.

Labour Day was formulated mainly to protect factory workers, and was inspired by early-20th century unionism in the West. We need to redefine May First to be more relevant to our times and climes.

The chief villain in this year's May Day rallies (probably because it coincided with the 200th birthday of Karl Marx) were exploitative capitalists profiting from the sweat and tears of under-paid and overworked proletariat. To be sure, Marx's Labour Theory of Value has inspired activism that has improved conditions for workers across the world. In Nepal itself, forms of bonded slavery were legally abolished 25 years ago.

Even so, a lot more needs to be done in our part of the world to guarantee not just the right to gainful employment within one's country, but also the right to at least a minimum wage, basic conditions, and protection for those in the formal sector.

What if, however, the chief villains are not capitalist monopolists over the means of production who expropriate Marx's 'surplus value' from workers, but the state itself? That is the case in Nepal where successive elected rulers since 1990 have masked their failure to create jobs by taking the easy way out to export labour.

That much would still have been all right. After all, there are countries that have regulated overseas employment, removed middlemen, and maximised the contribution of remittances by investing it in productive sectors to generate employment back home - thereby removing the need for the next generation to migrate abroad for work.

In Nepal's case, a rent-seeking state with its corrupted bureaucracy has actively promoted foreign employment so as to enrich itself. By creating hurdles every step of the way for those desperate for work abroad, they can extract fees and bribes from Nepali labour migrants in their own country -- even before they arrive at the host country often to be exploited or cheated by employers.

Politicians who are supposed to ensure the welfare of citizens are involved in this protection racket. Ministers of Labour in the past have been shadow partners in recruitment companies, most of our diplomats in the Gulf are involved in one way or other in the labour racket. Nepalis are heavily

indebted to middlemen even before they fly out of Kathmandu Airport and spend the next few years working in slave-like conditions just to pay back the loans they took. The savings they send home is mostly spent on food and education for their children. Nepal may have reaped \$6.5 billion from overseas remittances last year, but most of it went right back out to pay for imports - mostly of petroleum products and consumer goods.

The state is unable to take even the most basic steps to ensure the safety of our overseas workers. Horrific high-profile cases of abuse of housemaids in Kuwait prompted the government to over-react with a blanket ban on female domestic workers in the Gulf two years ago.

The push factor, however, is so strong that women found ways to fly out via Delhi or Mumbai, or by bribing immigration, police and the foreign employment bureaucracy through 'setting' at Kathmandu Airport. Any ad hoc ban, new rules, regulations imposed without warning, end up fattening up the people who are responsible for enforcing them.

Most of the above is documented in recent issues of this paper in investigative pieces by Upasana Khadka in Beirut, Kuala Lumpur, Doha and Dubai. What emerges is a clear pattern of recruitment agencies, the bureaucracy, immigration and police enjoying political protection to take advantage of the desperation of poor Nepali men and women.

Thousands of Nepali housemaids have been stuck for over two years in Lebanon and other West Asia countries because they went there before the ban on female workers, and cannot visit families back in Nepal because of the fear that they cannot travel back to their well-paying jobs. However, some workers who are willing and have the connections to pay for 'setting' at Kathmandu Airport have been able to visit their children and return to Lebanon.

Nepali overseas contract workers go to great lengths to make a down payment to find work abroad, even though they know the inherent risks of being cheated, provided fake visas, or face the danger of not being able to earn what was promised.

The first step is to make migration safe, the second step is to ensure fair earnings, the third long-term goal should be to create jobs at home.

Writes Khadka: 'Current migration policies ... help make foreign employment more like a lottery than a pathway out of poverty.'



#### Times.com

#### **ONLINE PACKAGES**



**CULTURAL VALUE** 

Khokana used to be a living heritage until the 2015 earthquake destroyed many of its houses and temples. Now the town stands to lose almost 60% of its fertile farms to five future infrastructure projects that will go through their sacred sites. Watch this short video where residents speak out about why they oppose the infrastructure projects that threaten their land and way of life, and much of their heritage. Story on page 14-15.



Many in Kathmandu still have fond memories of green and white trolley buses snaking through the 13km Tripureswor-Suryabinayak route. For three decades, the Chinese-gifted buses served the Valley residents, until it fell victim to political interference, poor management, and corruption. Go online to watch slideshow images of the dilapidated buses in the Baneswor terminal and all that remains of iconic trolley buses. Photo feature on page 8-9.

#### **BAN THAT BACKFIRED**

Kudos to the writer for raising serious concerns for Nepali migrant workers abroad ('Homes away from home', Upasana Khadka, #907). The consequences of the ban on female workers should be addressed immediately. Dev Chandra Rai

#### **CONCRETE CHAOS**

One thing that you must read on this week's Nepali Times ('Past disasters foretold', Om Astha Rai, #906). We should really think about the government's unscientific plan to further concretise the Valley. Respective province planners too have a lot to learn from the concrete chaos that Kathmandu Valley is

Arpan Shrestha

**Devendra Basnet** 

Brinda Dubey

#### **NUANCED ANALYSIS**

**A WASTE LAND** 

**FOND MEMORIES** 

by the year.

Great to see so much nuanced analysis and reporting on the Nepal earthquake recovery ('1/3 empty or 2/3 full?', Nigel Fisher, #906). First up, a piece on the fallacy that 'nothing is happening' and how no country -- developed or otherwise -- fully rebuilds three years after a major disaster. Leela Mulukutla

Fallow fields and empty villages are all

Thank you for the write up ('Survival

Singh, who also knew Dieter Plage.

**RECIPE FOR DEVELOPMENT** 

potential resources.

True ('Under Kathmandu's spell', Duksangh Sherpa, #907). Nepal and Nepali just need a stable government and a progressive economy based on Nepal's

survivors', Lisa Choegyal, #907). Sharing it on my Tiger Haven Society page, dedicated to the memory of Billy Arjan

over the mid-hills of Nepal and increasing

#### WHAT'S TRENDING



#### The waste land

by Mukesh Pokhre A prolonged drought, the absence of irrigation and outmigration of young men have left farms fallow and laid waste to the land across Nepal, leading to a vicious cycle that is forcing even more people to move out because of a food crisis. Visit nepalitimes.com for this alarming field report from Western Nepal.



Most commented

#### **Birthday party**

by Deepak Gyd Devotees around the world celebrated Buddha Jayanti last week, but in Lumbini it was once again an annual reminder of how this World Heritage Site has not been allowed to attain its true importance due to the decades of political neglect and corruption. This story was widely shared, and provoked much outrage.

Most popular on Twitter

#### **US terminates TPS for Nepal**

Citing substantial progress in post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction, the Trump administration, as widely anticipated, terminated the Temporary Protected Status for Nepal which will come into effect on 24 June 2019. About 9,000 Nepali immigrants will be forced to return home



#### QUOTE 🎔 TWEETS



Utsav Shakya @utsavshakya What's stopping Patan from being the destination of choice for hundreds of thousands of people each year? We got to get the word out in ways that relate to the tourists we want. CONNECT!

Nepali Times @nepalitimes Thousands of pilgrims who will be visiting Lumbini on Buddha Jayanti this Monday will be reminded once again of how this important World Heritage Site has not been allowed to attain its true importance. Deepak Gyawali reports from Lumbini



I completely agree with the last statement. I have witnessed the difference as a local tourist during my visit back in 2011 and later in the year 2016. So yes people need to be reminded that the famous heritage is known for peace! Hopefully, this time it will last longer.

...

John A. Nesbit @moviegeekin Apr 27 Visited in 2008 and one month ago -- much more developed now but more to come

OM ASTHA RA

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Ramesh Shrestha



#AQI Air quality in Kathmandu this week has been dangerously high. On Monday, AQI level in Kathmandu was nearly double that in Beijing (153) and New Delhi (167) measured at that exact time. @USEmbassyNepal



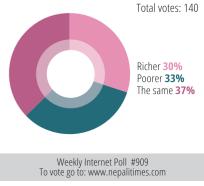


Shriya Pant @shriyapant Gaaaahhhhhhh! @Hello\_Sarkar do something! Pollution in Kathmandu on Monday was worse than in Delhi and Beijing.



Weekly Internet Poll #908

Q. A recent economic survey shows Nepalis are getting richer. Do you feel richer, poorer or the same?



Q. Are you hopeful that PM Modi's visit will reset Nepal-India ties?



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#### NATION

# Khukri Rum sharpens its act

Sikuma Rai

T it ain't broke don't fix it, the saying goes. Khukri Rum is one of Nepal's most recognised brands, the quality has been consistently superior, it has history and culture. So why fix it?

After nearly six decades of production, the maker of this world class rum from Nepal, The Nepal Distillery, felt the product was not living up to its full potential. Which is why the company has been taking Khukri on a road show to acquaint Nepali consumers with the versatility of the iconic drink.

The Nepal Distillery flew in two experienced bartenders to tailor-make designer cocktails using Khukri Rum that would be appealing to Nepali consumers. One of them, Din Hassan, Master Mixologist and Head Barman at the award winning CELAVI Restaurant and Sky Bar at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore went bar-hopping with Khukri 24-27 April in five venues across Kathmandu: Tamarind, Trisara, Opium, Booze Belly and Mezze.

Said Hassan: "We figured that the Nepali peoples' palette is still young. Many prefer sweet cocktails over bitter or sour ones, indicating that a lot needs to be done to develop a taste for the drinks we have on offer. So we started from the basics, training the bartenders themselves." Despite all that, the drinks were well-received at the Mezze by Roadhouse event on 27 April with invited guests quaffing away.

Ami Shroff, another award winning flair bartender and head mixologist at London Taxi in Mumbai (*see box, below*) was also there to lend a hand, bringing



### The woman who plays with fire

When Ami Shroff entered the lounge of Mezze in Darbar Marg at a cocktail event organised by Khukri Rum on 27 April, heads turned as she slipped behind the bar and started mixing drinks. The real show began, however, when she picked up two bottles of rum, set them on fire and juggled them to music. The invitees were transfixed.

"It is a rare niche in India as well," says Shroff, sipping water after the performance, "I have been flipping bottles since 1999 and there are still very few female flair bartenders around."

Shroff, who has won a couple of awards for her deft handiwork, works as head mixologist at The London Taxi in Mumbai, and is one of the first two female flair bartenders in India. A friend in Goa taught her the basics of juggling bottles just for fun, but it ended up launching a new career.

Breathing new life into Nepal's famous rum

Well known in India and countries in the region for her flair moves, Khukri Rum invited her to Nepal where she trained a group of bartenders for three days along with Din <u>Hassan from Singapore</u>.

"I received a lot of appreciation in Kathmandu," she says. "It is still a male-dominated profession so we need to be even more assertive, confident, in control of our own space. Sometimes, we also have to know when to put the foot down."

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Old art meets new



#### One To Watch

The new investment company One To Watch has partnered with the private equity firm True North Associates to support a new \$20 million SME fund through its Nepal Impact Investment Community 2. Suman Joshi will be Managing Director of One To Watch and will work with Willem Grimminck of True North Associates.

#### Hyundai Golf Trophy

Rabindra Tiwari won the Hyundai Õpen Golf Tournament 2018, defeating 127 golfers by 41 points at Gokarna Golf Club



#### Culinary collab

Chefs Association of Nepal and Turkish Gastronomy Tourism Association signed an MoU to further culinary exchanges between

the two countries. The collaboration is partnered with Turkish Airlines, both parties will contribute in their future business plans to increase recognition of their kitchen heritage and food tourism.

#### In-flight Internet

Qatar Airways now provides an hour of free 'Super Wi-Fi' high-speed broadband connectivity in all its Boeing 777 and Airbus



In the land of magnificent traditional artforms like Paubha and Thanka, some connoisseurs may not even know about Nepal's burgeoning contemporary art scene. Similarly, the young crowd that finds creative outlets in the digital arts, manipulated photos or iconoclastic graphics, may be ignorant of Nepal's rich legacy of highly developed traditional arts. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the group Tilicho Kala, with the support of Old Durbar, has organised a four-day art exhibition, 'Synthesis'.

"The two styles of art seem to exist in separate bubbles, and each is stubbornly ignorant of the other. Through this exhibition we want to provide a platform which encourages dialogue and interaction necessary for the growth of our art culture," says Ujen Norbu Gurung, event organiser of Synthesis and founder of Tilicho Kala.

The exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery displays traditional Paubha paintings and sculptures on the ground floor and contemporary oil paintings and digital manipulation on the first floor. Delicately rendered deities by renowned Paubha painters Lok Chitrakar, Prem M Chitrakar, Samundra M S Shrestha, and Kichaa M Chitrakar are on display along with sculptures by Pratham R Bajracharya, Punya R Bajracharya, Sapta R Bajracharya, Amir Shakya and Pradip Shakya. Also featured are works that experiment with different styles by contemporary artists Rashana Bajracharya, Erina Tamrakar and Michelle LL, and photographers Yanik Shrestha, Samir Maharjan and Aakash Pradhan.

Over 300 art enthusiasts keenly discussed and reviewed the works on display at the opening ceremony at Chez Caroline on Wednesday, 2 May. Among the attendees were Chief Justice Deepak Raj Joshi and Justice Meera Khadka. Performances by the poetry group Word Warriors, and musical bands Unplugged Aawaj, and 'The Night Band' will close the exhibition on May 5.

Synthesis Art Exhibition 2018 is the second edition of Tilicho Kala's yearly effort to support the arts and provide more exposure to Nepali artists. The company was founded four years ago, aiming to curate and promote Nepali Art and provide a platform for young talent, and this year got support of Yeti Distillery, the producer of Old Durbar blended whisky.

"The process of crafting a bottle of Öld Durbar is an art of its own. Old Durbar is a Nepali product that has created a history here, so we want to do something that connects to Nepal's identity. And the art of any nation identifies it, so it made sense for us to support Nepal's art," explained Vinaya Rajkarnikar, Brand Manager at Yeti Distillery.

Synthesis Art Exhibition Siddhartha Art Gallery Babar Mahal Revisited Till 5 May on 28 April. Tiwari who played with six handicap, scored birdies on 5 and 18 holes and drop shot on 9, 16 and 17 holes.

unveiled a vibrant

new logo for Fanta

orange and lemon.

on advice from

#### Fresh makeover



its new branding team. The company will engage the youth in other events as its marketing strategy, Country Director Ambuj Singh said.



A350 aircrafts. The feature uses Inmarsat's GX Aviation technology and can be accessed by passengers for a longer time with in-flight purchase.

#### **Cool and compact**

G O Automobiles launched its latest global product Ford Freestyle, a Compact Utility Vehicle for Nepal



at Labim Mall on 1 May. Packed with a powerful engine delivering 96ps power, the all-new Freestyle combines SUV-like design and innovative in-car technology.

🚸 prabba bank

Kathmandu's bartenders up to speed on the vast range of concoctions that are possible with Khukri. She mixed the rum with fresh fruit juices and spices, generating excited feedback as customers came back for thirds.

That eager reception has convinced the distillery that there is potential for further growth of the Khukri brand. So far, the rum has had a marked seasonal consumption pattern in Nepal with 85% of sales in the winter months. That needed to change.

Explains Shuvash Lamichhane of The Nepal Distilleries: "Elsewhere, rum-based drinks are popular at all times of the year. But in Nepal we label it a 'winter drink' because it is supposed to warm up the body, even though it is a great drink for the summer too. We are trying to change that with refreshing rum cocktails crafted especially for summers by bringing in master bartenders."

As soon as it was launched in the early-1960s, Khukri caught on fast among Nepali tipplers and quickly became a household word. But what really launched the brand was during the coronation of King Birendra in 1975, when the distillery brought out the rum in a khukri-shaped bottle.

Nearly half-a-century later, the dagger and the premium Coronation Rum it contains is still a favourite souvenir item for Nepalis going abroad. It is also exported to 11 countries including Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Italy, the US.

Novel marketing, therefore, is not new to The Nepal Distillery. Hence the rum tour last month to inject new zing to the product. Khukri XXX Aces of Rum Masterclass ended up training more than 20 bartenders to experiment with summer ingredients like fruits and spices, and to perform flair moves to entertain the audience.



Khukri Rum plans to hire 10-15 of the barpersons to be its in-house bartenders as 'Aces of Rum'. They will interact with fellow bartenders across the country, experimenting with new cocktail ingredients and making fancy moves behind the bar.

Adds Lamichhane: "As the country's first rum brand, it is our responsibility to develop the profession of serving these drinks. This course is costly for us, but free of cost for those receiving it. In the end, it is a win-win for all."

Kathmandu's many bars are already offering new summer rum cocktails in their menus. The cocktails range from easy to hard depending on ingredients, and will be served at various high-end hotels and bars. The company is expecting a big boost to its summer sales this year – but that will depend on whether Nepa Libre catches on in the Valley's watering holes.



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#### PASSAGES

## Jan Salter, the face of Nepal

The artist and animal welfare crusader Jan Salter made famous for her book of portraits, *Faces of Nepal*, and who had made Kathmandu her home, passed away on Sunday at her home in Lyme Regis in UK at age 92.

She settled in Nepal in the mid-1970s where she walked the length and breadth of the country, drawing pencil sketches of the faces of the extraordinary people she met along the way. Jan's art is a time capsule of the age-old traditional costumes and jewellery of a Nepal that is quickly disappearing.

Salter used to say: "The people I have captured . . . have much to offer in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the natural world and in the uniqueness and richness of their own cultures."

Janette (Jan) Sonia Salter was born in 1936 in Southampton and as a young woman she travelled to Africa, Australia, and East Asia, but none fascinated her as much as the people of Nepal.

Among the many interesting and significant experiences she had in her travels was a chance encounter with the renowned Indonesian painter, Affandi, with whom she painted in Bali.

Later, she began to experiment with oil paintings, which allowed her to 'explore and express a



versatility of style'. Salter's life work consists of over 300 pencil drawings and oil paintings, the greater part of which record the varied ethnic groups of Nepal. Many of these were collected in the book Faces of Nepal that she coauthored with her long-time friend, the demographer Harka Gurung.

Salter has always had a great kindness and compassion for the people around her, and exercised her greatest care and empathy to capture another facet of life in Nepal: the soulful depiction of more than 50 trafficked girls who were rescued by Maiti Nepal and form the collection of paintings called 'All Our Daughters'. In more recent years, Jan's work turned to her other passion, the humane treatment of street dogs. In 2004, she founded the Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) Centre which stabilised the street dog population, eliminated canine poisoning by the city, and greatly reduced rabies in dogs and humans in Kathmandu. All this helped transform the population's fearful attitude towards and cruel treatment of street dogs.

Jan Salter was decorated in 1997 for *Faces of Nepal* with the Gorkha Dakshin Bahu medal by King Birendra. In 2010 she received the prestigious Extraordinary Commitment and Achievement Award from Humane Society International for her groundbreaking work in animal welfare. She was cited on the New Year's Honours List 2013, and received an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II for animal welfare in Nepal.

Jan's own reflections best summarise her art: "I would be proud if my work contributed in any way to a greater recognition and respect for the rich and varied cultures my 'faces' represent. It is a small and humble offering in comparison to what I have received from Nepal and its peoples." The web launch event for Faces of Nepal will go ahead as planned on 15 May 3-5 PM at the Nepal Tourism Board. Messages in her memory can be left at: https:// www.jansalter.org



#### Christine Stone, 77

Christine Stone, an educator who devoted her life to uplift the quality of schools in Nepal, died last month in a care home in Scotland. She was 77.

Stone first came to Nepal in 1982 to join United Missions Nepal's schools in Makaisingh and Namjung of Gorkha district. She then moved to Pokhara where she made Gandaki Boarding School well known for its best-performing students. Realising that raising the quality of education in Nepal needed teachers to be better trained and motivated, she worked with the government on curriculum development and rewrote many text books that Nepali children study today.

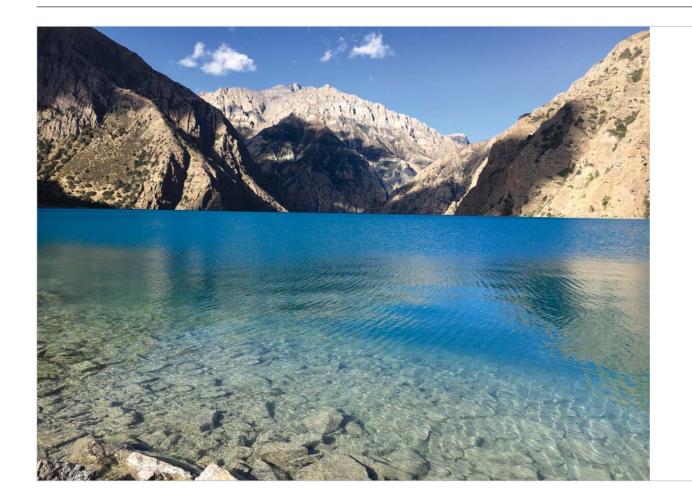
She also wrote children's books for Room To Read, among them the now famous characters Tommy Tempo, Rishi Rickshaw and Birke Bagh. She was awarded an OBE from the British government in recognition of her work with education in Nepal.



Stone was easily identifiable till recently crossing Bagmati Bridge on her bicycle with her pet Coolie, Nirmaya, riding on a basket behind her. In the Kopundole neighbourhood where she lived, she was known as the "lady riding a bicycle with a dog". She was interested in everything from astronomy to anthropology, but never owned a television or a smart phone, keeping up to date with the news on BBC World Service.

Stone grew up in Hong Kong before World War II. As the Japanese, advanced she and her mother were shipped off to Australia. He father was captured by the Japanese in Singapore and pressed into the POW gangs that built the bridge over the River Kwai, but survived. After school, Stone's spirit of adventure took her to Ethiopia and a tiny volcanic island in the South Atlantic to volunteer as a teacher.

She returned to Fort Williams in Scotland in 2015 with Nirmaya. A memorial service for Stone will be held at the UMN office on 6 May.

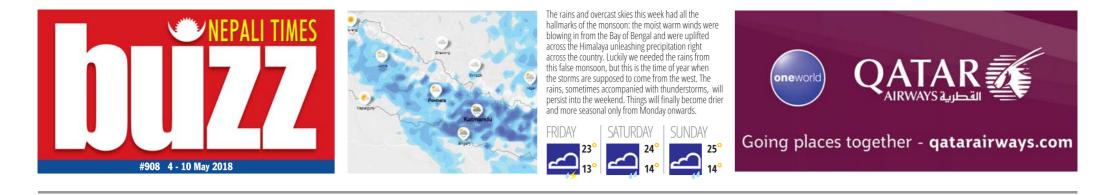


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#### **Kunda Dixit**

¬here was always a danger that phrases like 'Corporate Social Responsibility' and 'Social Entrepreneurship' would be hijacked by the corporate world, and become meaningless clichés. That is exactly what happened: CSR has become PR. Token donations under large banners in the media spotlight to extol the vast generosity of CEOs.

However, in the last decade businesses have found that they can do better by doing good. Social entrepreneurship has been shown to be an end in itself. There is now a critical mass of companies around the world that go beyond token gestures to frame the whole purpose of their businesses in a new value system. The public good (fair trade, environmental protection or social justice) precedes turning a profit as the main corporate goal.

John Wood is the founder of the library and literacy advocacy group, Room to Read. He worked for Microsoft and was in charge of its operations in China when in 1998 he came to Nepal on a trek. On the first day of the Annapurna Circuit he saw at a school in Bahundanda of Lamjung district how deprived Nepali children were of reading material. He vowed to return, and did come back a year later - with 3,000 books for Bahundanda and surrounding schools.

Wood soon quit Microsoft at age 35 to devote his life to literacy and reading, and colleagues thought he had lost it. But such was the power of his conviction that today, nearly 20 years after he set up Room To Read in Nepal, the group reaches 12.5 million children in 15 countries. Most of that transition from corporate to cooperate is chronicled in his 2007 book, Leaving Microsoft to Change

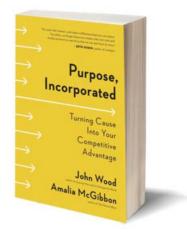
new values. Wood co-authored the book with Amalia McGibbon who works at Facebook, and that may carry some symbolism at a time when the social networking giant has been accused of commodifying private data.

There is a danger, of course, that the word 'Purpose' will also become threadbare with misuse. But Wood and McGibbon argue that companies are changing their mission and values to accommodate something larger than themselves. This new corporate idealism comes out of a sense of urgency because the world faces crises on a global scale: accelerated climate change, intolerance and xenophobia, new fears of nuclear conflict, deepening inequality and poverty.

The book tells us that for a long time there were only two types

Placement. He says the 4P's no longer define what sets a company apart.

"Purpose can show a company is unique by helping attract more motivated talent, and by actually boosting business by bonding with customers," Wood says.



The idea for Purpose, Incorporated came to Wood while fundraising for Room To Read. Business leaders who had donated to the program wanted him to speak to staff to motivate them about doing greater good to the world He told them that purpose should no longer be an afterthought, but be "embedded in the DNA" of a company.

Soon, many companies around the world started to expand their small Corporate Social Responsibility departments to ensure that good work went handin-hand with profits by building bonds with customers, hiring motivated millennials and injecting a sense of purpose to their jobs.

Wood and McGibbon hasten to add that they are not trying to be only goody-goody. They interviewed hundreds of CEOs who have discovered that the higher calling of saving the planet, being less wasteful, treating workers fairly can give them a competitive advantage. Wood says he learnt all this himself while trying to run Room To Read like a business with strategic plans, KPIs, dashboards,

hiring committed individuals and firing underperformers.

"The change I am most happy about is how what started out as one little library in Bahundanda in 1999 has become such a key part of the education system in Nepal," Wood told us in an interview. "When children learn to read bright colourful books to engage, it changes their mindset and allows them to get lost in a world that is different from theirs." 💟

# WOOD ON STUDIO



the World, translated into Nepali as Microsoft Dekhi Bahundanda Samma by FinePrint.)

His latest book, Purpose, Incorporated, goes deeper into how small and large companies across the world are shedding free market capitalism to literally incorporate

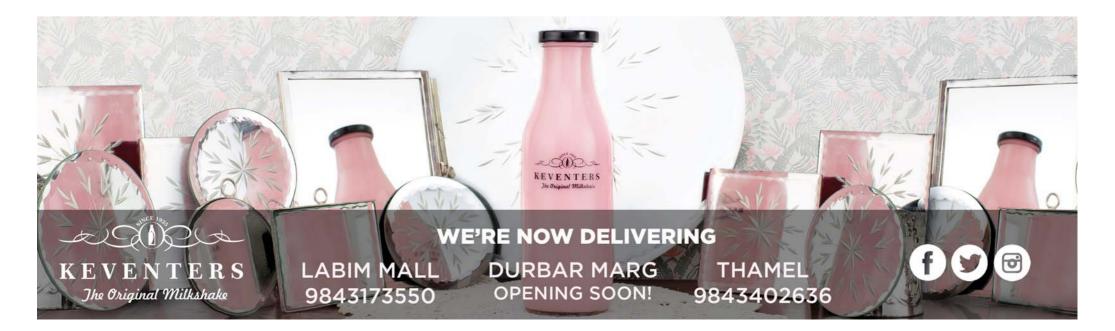
of companies: for-profit and nonprofit. Wood argues that the time has come to have companies that are driven by the goal of doing well by doing good.

He calls Purpose the fifth 'P' in the 4P's taught to MBA students: Product, Price, Promotion and

Purpose, Incorporated Turning Cause Into Your Competitive Advantage By John Wood and Amalia McGibbon Room to Read, 2017



Go online to watch John Wood in conversation with Kunda Dixit on Nepali Times Studio. Wood was in Nepal last week to open another library - 20 years after he first came to Nepal on a trek, saw the state of a school in Lamjung, quit his Microsoft job and set up Room to Read.





## Kathmandu-Bhaktapur Troley Bus (Born: 1975, Allowed to die: 2009)



The passenger cabins were worn out despite being repaired with metal sheets, making the 13km journey with 15 scheduled stops uncomfortable





In 1997 a further 10 type Shenfeng SY-D60C were donated, and the company tried to make money from advertising.

#### Peter Francon-Smith

Fifteen years ago, while operating motorcycle tours across India, Bhutan and Tibet, I lived with my family in Kathmandu. Weekends were for exploring, by bicycle or when there was petrol by Bullet motorcycle.

One Saturday we found the gates of the trolley bus terminus at Baneswor open, and cycled in. Grey scenes of decay and neglect. Tired, rusty, worn out machinery. A vintage fork-lift truck sat where it was parked for the last time. Overhead-line repair vehicles, cannibalised for crucial parts, lay awkwardly on wooden blocks. Battered bodies clung to rusty chassis. A bus parked over an inspection pit, waiting for a mechanic.

Recently demobilised Maoist

guerrillas had settled in the administrative block. Some had made homes in the old trolley buses. Red hammer and sickle banners hung across broken windows, next to laundry on lines. A young man played tunes on an old wooden accordion, a sad tribute to Kathmandu's pioneering mass transit project.

Opened in 1979, the interurban transport line covering 13km had operated for three decades. Suffering persistent faults, theft of overhead wires and lack of investment, the service finally came to an end in 2009.

The trolley bus system was opened in 1975 with a Rs40 million grant from China for 22 standard trolley buses adapted to left-handed operation. Ten newer model buses were donated in 1997. The line was operated by the Nepal Trolley Bus Service, a branch of the Nepal Transportation Corporation (NTC). In 2001, the NTC was dissolved and the trolley bus operation was suspended, as it did not turn any profit since 1990. The reasons for NTC's failure were stringent government bureaucracy and overstaffing, coupled with cronyism in management that resulted in poor technical expertise and inept operational policy.

After 18 months, Kathmandu, Madhyapur Thimi and Bhaktapur municipalities agreed to restart the service and the trolley buses rolled again. Less than a year later, the Madhyapur Thimi and Bhaktapur municipalities opted out of the scheme as the service failed to attract riders and continued to lose up to Rs2 million a month. Consequently, the line was reduced to only between Tripureswor and Tinkune, and most wirework beyond city limits was removed.

A rather marginal and unreliable service was maintained during the last few years of operation, with sporadic interruptions due to losses and debt. The trolley bus service was finally laid to rest in November 2008. A year later the Kathmandu Even after being mothballed, this trolley bus was still connected to the overhead cables in 2008 when this photograph was taken



The Shanghai Trolley Bus, type SK541 made in Shanghai, of which some 22 were in service in 1975.

Metropolitan City (KMC) permanently shut the operation and dissolved the undertaking. All assets were sold to private entities.

The project to widen the Arniko Highway threatened the removal of wirework support poles, and the closure of the service. Although there were calls for trolley buses to be revived along the Ring Road, the plans never materialised and the buses became extinct.

#### **EXTINCT BUSES**



Go online to watch a slideshow with more photographs by Peter Francon-Smith of the main Trolley Bus Service depot in Baneswor. The images of the

dilapidated Chinese buses hark back to a time when electric public transport had a future.







#### Service

As of 1990 the trolleybuses operated between 7:00-21:00 and ran on irregular headways. The officially stated headway was 6 min during rush hours, 12 min at other times. About 15 trolleybuses were operated in peak service, carrying up to 10,000 passengers daily. By 2007, the service was irregular and sporadic. The headway had increased to up to 25 min. Total running time along the remaining 5 km-long line was up to 35 min, depending on traffic conditions. Only three vehicles were operating, and average passenger loads were just above seated load.



The administration buiuldings and the buses became living quarters for former Maoist guerrillas of the Tamang Cultural Family after 2009.



After the war ended, demobilised guerrillas and the Maoist Tamang Cultural Family were allowed to live inside the buses.

TH The driver's position reveals a rudimentary wooden seat and two pedal controls, 'stop and go'.

#### **Rolling stock**

As of March 2007, a total of 32 trolley buses had been deployed. They included models Shanghai SK541 (1974) and Shenfeng SY-D60C (1997). But by 2008 only five buses were operable, all of them were 33-year-old Shanghai SK541 vehicles, which despite their age were simpler to maintain and operate. All newer Shenfeng SY-D60C remained out of use due to complex maintenance requirements. Shenfeng SY-WG110 vehicles rebuilt for left-hand operation, were to be delivered from China in 2004, but this deal never materialised. Curiously, even though adapted for left-handed operation, older Shanghai SK541 vehicles retained the driver's seat on the left side, while newer Shenfeng SY-D60C vehicles (*right*) have the driver's seat on the right.





Poor quality steel and old age take their toll on these Shenfeng SY-D60C.

#### Routes

**Tripureswor – Surya Binayak** (12.1975 – 12.2001; 10.2003 – 2004)

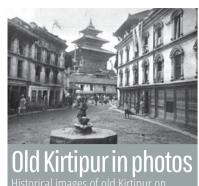
Tripureswor – The Depot (09.2003 – 10.2003) Tripureswor – Koteswor (2004 – 11.2008)



#### **ABOUT TOWN**

4 - 10 MAY 2018 **#908** 

## **EVENTS**



display at an exhibition. 5 May, 10am-6pm, Kirtipur

#### **Food tasting**

10

Taste American, Japanese, British, Spanish and Sri Lankan cuisine at the International Food Tasting Event 2018 prepared by culinary students.

5 May, 11am-5pm, Academy of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, Rs350, 9801104804

#### The Art Market

The Art Market this year represents Japan through its culture, art, cuisine, dance, music and products. Come and experience Japanese way of life. *5 May, 2-6pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01) 5553869* 

#### Food talk

Drawing from his research and fieldwork in Vietnam, Mart Stewart will give a talk on food and its history, economics, culture, identity, and future, summarising the environmental problems arising from industrial production. *4 May, 2:30-5:30pm, Martin Chautari,* 

4 May, 2.30-3.30pm, Martin Chautan, Thapathali, (01) 4238050, 4102027



#### Synthesis art exhibition

An exhibition of Paubha, sculpture and photography, redefining Nepali Art: featuring Lok Chitrakar, Pratham Bajracharya, Rashana Bajracharya, Aakash Pradhan, Sapta Raj Bajracharya and many others.

4-5 May. 2pm onwards. Baber Mahal

#### The Urban Night

Spend Friday night with friends, family and dear ones at the event featuring aerial, LED synchronization, hoop and Cyr Wheel dances, followed by an after-party and live musical performance by Fantastic Band.

4 May, 7pm onwards, Club Déjà Vu, Darbarmarg, Tickets: Rs1,000/1,500 (VIP), Table booking: Rs15,000/30,000 (VIP), 9802061119, 9849 089 493



#### Herbs expo

Nepal Herbs Ayurveda Expo 2018 exhibits a wide range of herbs and agro products available in Nepal. *4-6 May, 10am-6pm, Bhrikutimandap Exhibition Hall, (01) 4100207, 9851087981* 

#### **Moods and Moments**

Inauguration of Min Ratna Bajracharya's photo exhibition, Moods and Moments. 5 May, 2pm onwards, The Britt, Taukhel, Godavari, 9841242307



#### Cupcake class

Experiment with baking delicious treats with your favourite flavours. Join the class to learn basics and frosting with and without eggs from Shivani Agrawal. *6 and 13 May, 11am-3pm, Bake My Wish, New Baneshwar, 9801022339* 

#### **Bird watching**

Spend the Global Big Day watching birds with senior birder Carol Inskipp. 5 May, 7am onwards, Pani Muhan Gate, Shivapuri National Park, Gokarneshwor,

## MUSIC



The Aerials Nepal Enjoy Friday night with The Aerials Nepal's

funk rock music, and exotic food and drinks. *4 May, 7-10pm, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati,* 

#### Jazz jam

(01) 5008681

A jazz party with Daahoud Salim and Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory musicians. *10 May, 7-10 April, Moksh, Jhamsikhel,* (01) 5528362



#### **European folk music**

First of its kind in Nepal, the session brings together three amazing Nepali musicians who will play Norwegian, Irish, German and French folk songs. Enjoy the concert with some Danish meatballs, pickled cucumbers and a glass of wine or beer. *4 May, 5:30-7:30pm, Kar.Ma Coffee, Gyan* 

Mandala, Jhamsikhel, 9843767232

#### The Kathmandu Chorale

Lift up your spirit at The Kathmandu Chorale's new spring concert 'Draw the Circle Wide' with children from the Baluwatar School, directed by Iris Kolodji. *12 May, 2-6pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, thekathmanduchorale@gmail.com* 

## DINING



#### Mezze by Roadhouse Smart interiors and a chic terrace with

Smart interiors and a chic terrace with a view of the palace provide a great atmosphere to enjoy dinner with friends. Recommending the chef's special - smoked mo:mo and grilled chicken with linguine vegetable. *Mercantile Plaza, Darbarmarg,* (01) 4223087

#### Dhokaima

Tender chicken breast marinated with herbs and grilled, served with spinach sauce, corns and salad on the side, otherwise known as Chicken Florentine, for dinner at the café. *Patan Dhoka, (01) 5522113* 

#### Evoke Café & Bistro

Juicy and tender paneer, chicken and pork skewers served with green salad on the side.

Jhamsikhel, 9851111051

#### Ventures Café

Stop by for the best fusion menu and local favourites, and enjoy the breezy outdoor seating. A great venue for beer connoisseurs. *Baluwatar, 9851228014* 



#### The **BLVD**

The newly renovated restaurant at Hotel Royal Singi serves healthy and flavourful gluten-free meals. Don't believe? Try Quinoa Tabbouleh served with grilled skewers of paneer, mushroom, tomato, pepper and onion.

Lal Durbar, Kamaladi, (01) 4424190/ 4424191

## GETAWAY



#### Shivapuri Heights Cottage

Treat yourself to a 90-minute ayurvedic massage at Neema's Spa, followed by a healthy lunch at the Cottage. *Shivapuri Hills, Budanilkantha, 9841371927* 

#### Park Village Resort

Yoga, detox and ayurveda treatment in a quiet corner of Kathmandu. *Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, (01) 4370286* 



#### Milla Guesthouse

If you prefer the quiet and admire a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far from the city, yet worlds apart. *Bhaktapur, 9851024137* 

#### Dalai-La Boutique Hotel

The hotel provides an unforgettable experience, letting you step out of Kathmandu's chaos and into peace and serenity. Decorated with historic artifacts over 50 years old, the hotel is an attraction in itself. *Thamel*, (01) 4701436



*Revisited, 9808156915* 

9841330576



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#### Opens in Kathmandu on 4 MA

Damaru Ko Dandibiyo is a Nepali feature film, a first of its kind: a social story in the sports genre. The film revolves around Damaru, who comes back to his village to revive the sport Dandibiyo. But his father, once a reputed Dandibiyo player, opposes his decision and insists that he concentrate on his career. Damaru then challenges his father to a Dandibiyo match in order to pursue his dream. The film, shot around Ghalegaun in Lamjung, Manang, and Kathmandu, is Chheten Gurung's directorial debut. Written by Khagendra Lamichhane, the film stars Lamichhane himself along with Anup Baral, Menuka Pradhan and Buddhi Tamang.

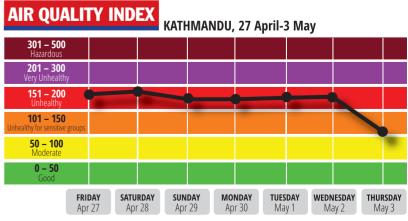
#### Empire Restaurant & Bar

Enjoy Stuffed Potato Croquette, a classic French dish, for lunch or dinner at the restaurant serving vegan as well as meat food items. *Kupondole Heights, Bakhundole, 9801112311* 



#### Peacock Guest House

Housed in a World Heritage Site, 3-storied Newari-style building provides splendid views of the Dattatreya Square and the Bhimsenthan temple. *Bhaktapur, (01) 6611829* 



Despite the rain from the false monsoon we experienced this week, the average daily Air QUality Index (AQI) at Kantipath in the centre of Kathmandu remained in the 'Unhealthy' band every day of the week except Thursday, when morning rain brought it down to an AQI of 102. Even on Saturday, when the concentration of particles below 2.5 microns usually falls because of less traffic, this week it saw an AQI of a whopping 197. Summary: Even the rains cannot wash away all the muck in the air.

https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/

## **Back in Nepal after 14 years**

#### Former Norwegian ambassador to Nepal returns to see a country transformed

**D** ven when there was a conflict going on, I always found people friendly and open during my years in Nepal from 1999-2004. Despite the warmth and hospitality, things changed somewhat as the government lost control over a large part of the countryside to Maoist rebels.

Norway was supporting the education sector but visits to rural schools became difficult as teachers and students were terrified by both the Maoists and the security forces.

Fourteen years later, Nepal has moved from war to peace. People can move freely, and children go to school without fear. On a recent visit, I saw no armoured vehicles on the streets of Kathmandu and no APFs checking cars at night. The police checkpoints now are looking for drunk drivers.

A palace massacre, a violent insurgency, the royal takeover, new constitution, earthquake and Blockade, all in a timespan of less than 15 years – it is really too much for any nation to cope with. Still, this is just what the people of Nepal have done, and they have come out more united and confident.

My friends told me that many wounds are not healed, that the victims feel forgotten, and that there is still a big gap between the class of rulers and those being ruled. This may hopefully slowly change, the commitment of many Nepalis encouraged me.

I visited Okhaldhunga and saw that the earthquake too had hit the schools hard. But



there was a priority for the rehabilitation of schools, many children now have safer classrooms. The people were busy building new, stronger brick houses as the government support had finally reached them.

<sup>1</sup>My Norwegian friends have worked at Okhaldhunga Community Hospital 14 years. During this time, the hospital and its outreach services have grown to take particular care of mothers and children. They even offer expecting young mothers to stay with relatives at the Maternal Waiting Home, ensuring that they reach the hospital in time. The relative these days is often the husband, and many of them want to be present during delivery.

The other big change is that there are now roads everywhere. You can now drive fromn Kathmandu to Okhaldhunga and even to Solu Khumbu further north. In Kathmandu, of course, the increase in traffic has brought heavy air pollution.

Still, the rest of the country is as magnificent as ever. My visit to Nepal was timed to enable me to experience the spectacular sun rise view of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna

from Poon Hill with the red rhododendron forests in full bloom. I was not disappointed. It is one of the most stunning views I have ever seen. Somewhat disturbing was that the new road to Ulleri and Ghandruk have partly destroyed the old walking trails. Local people want road access, but it makes sense to protest the trekking routes.

One of the greater charms of trekking in Nepal is walking on paths used by local people, passing villages where farms and livestock are still the main activity. Nepal still has a living cultural landscape, which is the main draw for foreigners besides the mountain views. This may be difficult to preserve, but finding better ways to accommodate both tourism and farming needs to be explored.

Nepal has changed, but is still in many ways the same. People are struggling to keep traditions alive, to preserve national identity. I was lucky to witness the Rato Machindranath chariot being pulled by women, and was encouraged by the rebuilding of the temples at Patan Durbar Square.

Compared to 14 years ago, there are mobile phones everywhere and there is dramatic improvement in electricity supply. There are more latrines in rural areas and I was thrilled by the spread of the Open Defecation Free Zones (*pictured*, *left*).

I am glad to have visited Nepal at a time when there are reasons to be optimistic about the country's future, and I hope Nepal will find its own way to make traditions and development 'go hand in hand'.

Ingrid Ofstad was Norway's ambassador to Nepal from 2000-2004, and later served as ambassador to South Sudan and Angola.

## Why Bangladesh is booming

NEW YORK – Bangladesh has become one of Asia's most remarkable and unexpected success stories in recent years. Once one of the poorest regions of Pakistan, Bangladesh remained an economic basket case for many years after independence in 1971.



In fact, by 2006, conditions seemed so hopeless that when Bangladesh registered faster growth than Pakistan, it was dismissed as a fluke.

Yet that year would turn out to be an inflection point. Since then, Bangladesh's annual GDP growth has exceeded Pakistan's by roughly 2.5% per year. This year, its growth rate is likely to surpass India's (though this primarily reflects India's economic slowdown, which should be reversed barring gross policy mismanagement). Moreover, at 1.1% per year, Bangladesh's population growth is well below Pakistan's 2%, which means that its per capita income is growing faster than Pakistan's by approximately 3.3% per year. By extrapolation, Bangladesh will overtake Pakistan in terms of per capita GDP in 2020, even with a correction for purchasing power parity. To what does Bangladesh owe its quiet transformation? As with all large-scale historical phenomena, there can be only clues. Still, in my view, Bangladesh's economic transformation was driven in large part by social changes, starting with the empowerment of women. Thanks to efforts by the nongovernmental organizations Grameen Bank and BRAC, along with more recent work by the government, Bangladesh has made significant strides toward educating girls and

Progressive social policies and a bit of historical luck



BELAL HOSSAIN RANA/PACIFIC PRESS/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

giving women a greater voice, both in the household and the public sphere.

These efforts have translated into improvements in children's health and education, such that Bangladeshis' average life expectancy is now 72 years, compared to 68 years for Indians and 66 years for Pakistanis.

The Bangladesh government also deserves credit for supporting grassroots initiatives in economic inclusion, the positive effects of which are visible in recently released data from the World Bank. Among Bangladeshi adults with bank accounts, 34.1% made digital transactions in 2017, compared to an average rate of 27.8% for South Asia.

Bangladesh offered a better environment for manufacturing firms to achieve economies of scale and create a large number of jobs. And though Bangladesh still needs much stronger regulation to protect workers from occupational hazards, the absence of a law that explicitly curtails labour-market flexibility has been a boon for job creation and manufacturing success.

The question is whether Bangladesh's strong economic performance can be sustained. As matters stand, the country's prospects are excellent, but there are risks that policymakers will need to take into account.

For starters, when a country's economy takes off, corruption, cronyism, and inequality tend to increase, and can even stall the growth process if left unchecked. Bangladesh is no exception.

But there is an even deeper threat posed by orthodox groups and religious fundamentalists who oppose Bangladesh's early investments in progressive social reforms.

A reversal of those investments would cause a severe and prolonged economic setback. This is not merely a passing concern: vibrant economies have been derailed by zealotry many times throughout history. 1

Pakistan's history is a warning. In its early years, Pakistan's economy performed moderately well, with per capita income well above India's. And it was no coincidence that during this time, cities like Lahore were multicultural centers of art and literature.

But then came military rule, restrictions on individual freedom, and Islamic fundamentalist groups erecting walls against openness. By 2005, India surpassed Pakistan in terms of per capita income, and it has since gained a substantial lead.

This is not about any particular religion. India is a vibrant, secular democracy that was growing at a remarkable annual rate of over 8% until a few years ago. Today, Hindu fundamentalist groups that discriminate against minorities and women, and that are working to thwart scientific research and higher education, are threatening its gains.

Bangladesh also needs to be vigilant about the risks posed by fundamentalism. If it does, Bangladesh will be on a path that would have been unimaginable just two decades ago: toward becoming an Asian success story.

*Kaushik Basu,* former Chief Economist of the World Bank, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University.

#### HAPPENINGS



# Avengers: Infinity War

The only really annoying thing about this new Avengers film is that it has a problematic structural device, which, if you didn't know about (like this



reviewer) will leave you extremely disconcerted. Aside from that, the film is very enjoyable indeed. though more for the super fans who can remember all the ins and outs of the previous eighteen Marvel films that essentially build up to this one.

Astonishingly, for a film that is 156 minutes long, time flies by – indicating how entertaining this film is - even while there are few really memorable moments. For those who are wondering who is in this film, the answer is: everyone. All of our favourite and not-so-favourite characters from previous films come together in Avengers: Infinity War, including the team from the Guardians of the Galaxy (2014, 2017) who are my personal favourites, along with Thor (Chris Helmsworth), Loki (Tom Hiddleston), The Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), Captain America (Chris Evans), The Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), Robert Downey Jr. aka Iron Man, and Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) to name about half of this mindboggling cast.

Over the last couple of Marvel films, the plot has always been followed by a clue regarding the whereabouts of some of the six infinity stones that are placed around the universe. In this film,



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we find out what they are and how they came to be, finally, in a satisfactory explanation about why they yield such awesome power. Unfortunately, the brutish war criminal and genocide proponent Thanos (played by Josh Brolin), who is also, alas, the adoptive father of Gamora (Zoe Saldana), one of the Guardians of the Galaxy, and beloved of Peter Quill aka Starlord (Chris Pratt), has discovered where most of the stones lay hidden and comes into possession of them one by one.

Many sub-stories and emotional arcs are woven into this complex narrative, an achievement that should not be taken lightly by critics who may not appreciate the kind of care and skill that must go into such a daunting undertaking.

Amongst some breath-taking action, and a few really good jokes, lives are lost, hearts are broken, real evil is conveyed to the viewers, and the afore-mentioned structural flaw is a shock ending that leaves us in medias res wondering what could possibly happen in the sequel due out on the 3rd of May next year that could resolve such a mess.

These Marvel films are meant as pure fun, not as works of art. Occasionally they lag, they are shamelessly exploitative in their constant generation of sequels, but occasionally a classic comes along – justifying it all. It remains to be seen, till next year, if this installment, itself a sequel generating film, will be regarded as one of them. I personally, however, can't wait to see it again. 💟



PEACE WALK: Prime Minister KP Oli and Awadhesh Tripathi, Vice Chair of Lumbini Development Trust (second from right) at the peace rally organised on the occasion of 2562nd Buddha Jayanti in Lumbini on Monday.



LABOUR LEADERS: Maoist (Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and UML leader Jhal Nath Khanal during a joint event organised by communist trade unions to mark 129th International Labour Day in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



**MODIPUR:** Province 2 Chief Minister Lalbabu Raut brooms the road in Janakpur on Thursday ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Janaki Temple on 11 May. Modi is also visiting Muktinath before flying to Kathmandu for high-level talks.





**REST IN PEACE:** Federation of Nepalese Journalists and Photojournalist Club Nepal organised a candlelight vigil at Mandala on Wednesday in the memory of journalists killed in a suicide bomb in Kabul this week.



**ON THE TABLE:** Shree Ram Adhikari of Nepal Chefs Association Foundation and Gürkan Boztepe of Turkish Gastronomy Tourism Association sign an MoU in Kathmandu on Sunday to exchange food culture between Nepal and Turkey. Turkish Airlines is the official partner airlines for the collaboration.



# Lonely survival

Deepa Dahal in *www.deshsanchar.com,* 2 May

She tries to smile, but is held back by the traumatic memory of a tragedy she survived, that a dozen of her classmates did not. Samira Byanjankar, 24, cannot move around without a walker.

The medical student was one of the 20 survivors of the US-Bangla plane crash that killed 52 people at Kathmandu Airport on 12 March. She is being discharged from hospital in a few days, and needs another month of convalescence at home before she can finally stand on her own feet.

Byanjankar showed remarkable determination to recover from multiple bone fractures in the hip, but she has found it more difficult to overcome the loss of her friends.

Twelve of the 22 Nepalis killed in the crash were medical students with whom she had spent five years at a school in Bangladesh. They were returning home after final exams, while their parents were waiting for them at the airport.

At her hospital bed in Kathmandu, Bjyanjankar heard that she had passed final MBBS exams, and the college in Sylhet had invited her for an internship. But she does not want to go back to a place with so many memories of her lost friends, and the happy moments they shared, caring for each other.

"I don't want to stay in that empty room without my friends," she says, her eyes brimming with tears. "I hope the government can help me do my internship in Nepal."

Byanjankar and her best friend Princy Dhami were admitted into the same ward of Kathmandu Medical College after the crash. Dhami came to only after four days, but was unable to move her body. She kept lying inert on the bed next to her.

Dhami would shake her legs slightly whenever the nurse tried

to give her an injection. Byanjankar would soothe her with her voice, and she would stop resisting. Dhami was later medevaced to India, but she did not make it. Her friend's death further devastated Byanjankar.

Even in the plane, the two had sat next to each other. As the plane approached Kathmandu, they were chatting about how excited they were to be back home. But the plane began to fly in a strange manner, nearly hitting the terminal building, and then a mountain.

When the plane crashlanded, Byanjankar fainted and when she regained consciousness, she could not move her body below the waist. She tried to shake Dhami, but she was still unconscious. Soon, soldiers pulled her out and took her to hospital.

Says Byanjankar: "I do not know whether I am lucky or unlucky. I survived, but my friends did not."

*For full Nepali version of this story go online www.deshsanchar.com* 

### More controls on foreingers

Nagarik, 2 May

नागरिक

The government is preparing to bar foreign countries, their diplomatic missions and INGOs from spending money directly on projects in Nepal.

The National Good Conduct Policy 2018 also aims to strip bureaucrats, elected leaders and political appointees of their authority if they allow foreigners to directly invest in Nepal's public or private sector. But exceptions can be made if foreigners secure the federal government's approval, the Policy states.

The directive comes at a time when China and several western countries are seeking permission to invest directly in Nepal, pointing out that the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has long enjoyed such privilege. The embassy was first allowed to directly distribute or spend small grants up to INR300 million when Surya Bahadur Thapa was Prime Minister in 2003.

When Baburam Bhattarai became Prime Minister in 2011, the ceiling for India's direct small grants was increased to INR500 million. But the Sher Bahadur Deuba government decided to not renew the agreement under which the Indian Embassy had been directly building schools, libraries, rural roads and other infrastructure in Nepal. But the new communist government led by UML Chair KP Oli reversed the previous goverment's decision, once again allowing the Indian embassy to distribute direct small grants. And now, China wants the same privilege. Sources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs say the Kathmandubased embassies of some western countries have also expressed their interest in distributing direct grants.

The policy also aims to deport foreigners found guilty of working against Nepal's national interest, or even declare them persona non grata. It also proposes to set up a surveillance team under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which will closely monitor foreigners and INGOs operating in Nepal. Based on the reports submitted by the team, the government may scrap any agreement signed with an INGO.

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4 - 10 MAY 2018 **#908** 

# " "Our land is us, we

The people of Khokana have had enough of a state that doesn't value their way of life

#### Sahina Shrestha

For a long time in Nepal's history, all roads led to Kathmandu. Two democratic movements, a decade-long war, and many political upheavals later, all roads still lead to Kathmandu. But the locals of Khokana, a sleepy farming town 10km south of the Ring Road, are asking if it still has to be so. Do the new highways and transmission lines have to go through their sacred sites?

Khokana is famous for its mustard presses, and used to supply the oil to much of the Valley. The town used to be a living heritage museum until the 2015 earthquake destroyed many of its houses and temples. Now, the town faces a threat even bigger than earthquakes: bulldozers.

Five future infrastructure projects will affect Khokana, which sits right on the planned alignments for the Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track Highway, the Outer Ring Road, the Bagmati Corridor

project, Patan's satellite city and the Kulekhani 132kVA high tension line. Khokana stands to lose almost 60% of its fertile farms and much of its heritage (see map). "Our land is

us and we are our land," says Hem HERITAGE LIVE! Series coordinated Alok Siddhi Tuladha

Ratna Shakya, a Khokana activist. "People here have a physical, spiritual, social, cultural and economic connection with the land. We have no identity without it."

The four-lane 76km Kathmandu-Tarai Expressway project will follow the Bagmati River from the Valley to a proposed new international airport in Nijgadh. Some 6km of the highway will slice through terrace farms and ritual routes of the town, erasing important cultural heritage sites.

The Fast Track will start at

Como (18)



Sikali and go through Pingah, the funeral area, Ku Dey, Jugunti, Machaga Bagar, Chankutirtha -all important parts of Khokana's cultural circuit on the route to the next town of Bungamati.

In Sano Khokana where the expressway is supposed to start, Asha Maharjan will lose all his property. The fertile soil here is an important part of his family's history and he remembers ploughing it with his parents when he was young. His eight-member family still relies on harvests for their food and income.

"Maybe they can re-route it through non-arable land," Maharjan says hopefully. "It will save us from being homeless."

Up the road from his house, the project will take up a portion of Sikalichaur, where the annual Sikali Jatra is celebrated. In October, when the country celebrates Dasain, locals in Khokana mark Sikali Jatra -- a five-day festival with masked dances for Goddess Rudrayani and other

#### deities.

"The Jatra follows a prescribed circuit and there is a specific way to perform it. If the expressway cuts through it, the place of the masked dances will be lost," says Astendra Maharjan, another local activist. "We value our heritage, and that is not just the physical structure but the festivals and rituals as well." Noted historian Satya Mohan Joshi agrees: "We cannot avoid development, but at the same time we cannot hurt the sentiments of the local people," says Joshi. "Their grievances must be addressed and a middle path must be found before the development can commence."

For generations, Gyan Bhagat Maharjan's family has been a member of the Jatra Ta Guthi, one of the three community groups responsible for organizing the Sikali festival, which makes the food for the gods and devotees. The guthi owns a plot of land where the annual feasts take place.

"Without the land we won't be

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#### imes 4 - 10 MAY 2018 #908

#### NATION

# are our land"

LANDLESS: Masked dancers during the Sikali festival (l*eft*). The Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track will go through a part of Sikali Chaur where the dancers rest after performance. Khokana has one of the last unspoilt terrace farms in the Valley, but 60% of these fertile fields will be lost to new infrastucture projects.



its present location, says Asojh Maharjan of Lumbini Buddhist University: "It is an important archaeological site, 3,000 years old, which predates Khokana."

At Jugunti, the Jugi community of Newars will lose the cemetery where they have been burying their ancestors for generations. At Chankhu Tirtha, the expressway will go through the land where the final rites of the priests of Rato Machindranath are performed.

Conservationists say the new infrastructure can easily be realigned to the west bank of the Bagmati without much extra cost, which would preserve heritage sites

Says Asojh: "We are not against development, but they are forcing projects on us that threaten our way of life." 💟



Festival Route

- Bagmati Corridor Road
- Kathmandu-Tarai Expressway
- ♣ Kulekhani 132kVA transmission line
- Outer Ring Road
- Bus Park / Proposed Dry Port

#### **CULTURAL VALUE**



The residents of Khokana speak out on camera in this video to passionately explain why they oppose infrastructure projects that threaten their land and way of life. The anger against an uncaring state that doesn't value heritage is palpable in this historic town

# Not the first time

When no one listened to their grievances, and they were on the verge of losing their farms and most important heritage sites, the people of Khokana finally took to the streets.

Last month, they joined others protesting loss of property to road-widening at a march from the Mandala to Parliament. The peaceful protest turned violent as police deployed its newly-acquired water cannon carrier and tear gas. Khokana finally hit the national headlines.

The people of Khokana had voiced concern about their land being taken away for decades. First, it was the Army that nationalised 70 hectares of their farmlands to conduct paradropping exercises. The Army still retains a small part of it, and the rest was sold off to private housing. Khokana farmers got nothing.

Then the government nationalised another 100 hectares for a leprosy hospital, a training facility for the Armed Police Force and a prison. None of the land was used for the intended purpose and was sold off to private builders.

Nati Kaji Maĥarjan, 75, had to give up his land for the prison that was never built. Now, it will be the Tarai Expressway that will rob him of the remaining land. "We are farmers. We depend on the land, without it how are we to eat?" asks Maharjan. "How can they take our land and sell it to someone else?'

Following widespread protests, the government has said it may re-route the expressway, but having been deceived so often, Khokana residents remain wary.

Asks activist Asojh Maharjan: "How much more land should we give to them before they are satisfied?"

PHOTOS: BIKRAM RA

able to continue with any of the

road will cause us to lose all our

land. Our culture, our traditions

also lose the temple of its ancestral

deity, Pingha, and the expressway

from where music is played during

Khokana believe their ancestors

first established the settlement—

before moving up the ridge to

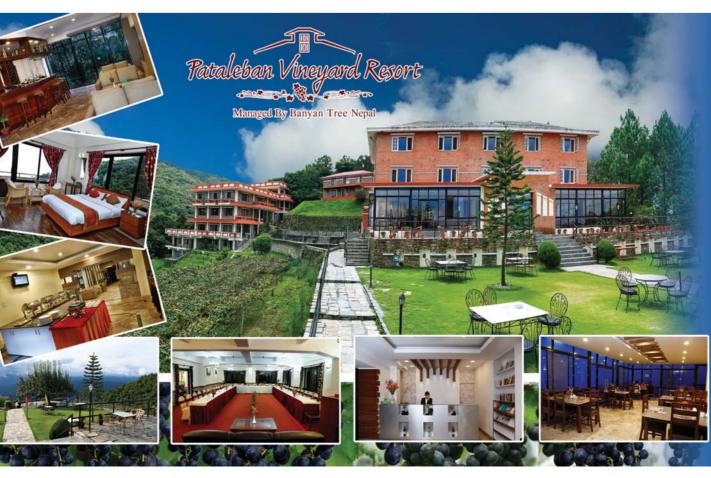
Ku Dey is where the people of

will die." The community will

will take away the funeral area

cremations.

rituals," says Gyan Bhagat, "and the



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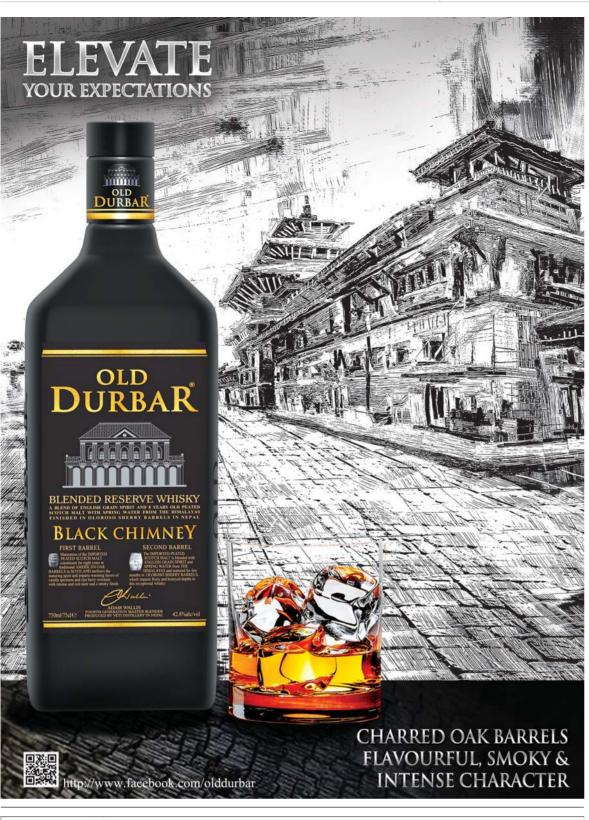
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#### BACKSIDE





## The Golden Age of Democracy

Don't listen to the naysayers, the cynics who are always poking fun at Nepal's march towards federification, secularitarianment and democretinism. They're just jealous.

Look at the progress the country has made in just two months of The Oligarchy: we have gone from leaps to bounds. From a few tolas of gold that used to be smuggled in false bottoms of passengers, we moved quickly up the ladder to 33kg of contraband biscuits, and by the time we had parliamentary elections we weren't just satisfied with biscuits, we were hauling tons of gold ingots in containers through Tribhuvananthapuram Interception Airport.

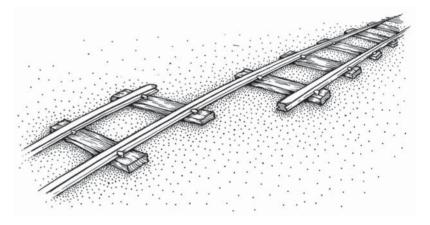
This is the kind of growth and prosperity the Left Front gobblement promised during its election campaign, and they have delivered it even before the honeymoon period is over. At the rate we are going, we are going to be the leading entrepôt (What is that odd thing on top of the 'o'? – Ed) for the trade in gold in this part of the world. We are entering Nepal's Golden Age.

However, there is a fly in the

gold mules very seriously, and proof of this is the x-ray machine at the escalator at the arrival concourse of Kathmandu airport between immigration and the baggage carousels. This is to thwart any attempt by individual passengers to eat into the profits of the wholesale contractors involved in the gold trade.

Sadly, however much we increase air capacity at our international airports, planes just don't have the economy of scale. Which is why it is vital for the Tibet Railroad to be extended from Xigatse to Kerung and on to the Indian border. Nepal, being a country in transition, stands to benefit even more from the Trans-Himalayan Railroad. Nepal's mafia can then profit from smuggling in both directions: shipping gold by train from north to south, and smuggling spare parts for tigers, rhinos, and pangolins from south to north.

Primetime Minister Oli's main agenda during his tenure before he hands over the reins to Comrade Lotus Flower is to improve connectivity. Now we understand why. Among the intermodal transportation ideas he has floated are:



oinkment. There is a dark cloud behind this golden lining. The bottleneck for the smooth passage of even more concealed gold is Kathmandu Airport itself, which everyone knows is not the epitome of efficiency when it comes to moving large volumes of cargo and passengers. This is why the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Collusion has announced it is going to allow the airport to operate 21 carats a day.

It is also extending the apron and taxiway so the airport will be able to double the volume of gold it handles at present. A new domestic airport is being built in Banepa to ease congestion and allow even more gold-carrying overseas flights to land in Kathmandu. Two new international airports are coming up in Bhairawa and Pokhara to handle the burgeoning trade in gold. Ex-Royal Nepal Airlines is going to bring in two Airbus 330s which can carry double the amount of gold bullions than its current single aisle aircraft. Pretty soon all our narrow-bodies are going to be wide-bodies. The airport takes freelance

1 Railway from Raxaul to Kathmandu To make the ride as lengthy as possible so passengers can enjoy the scene-scenery, the track will follow the same alignment as the Tribhuvan Rajpath.

**2** Railway from Kerung to Lumbini via Kathmandu Rolling stock will be plated with 24carat gold so that entire wagons can be smuggled into India.

**3** The Chinese and Indian railroads will connect in Kathmandu (*see above*) to facilitate trans-Himalayan trade in gold and wildlife.



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Kathmandu Business Park, Teku Tel: 977-1-4104522, 4104523, 4104524 Email: info@emporiosnepal.com Web: www.emporoinepal.com **4** Inland Waterway: The Kosi and Ganges will be made navigable by building the Kosi High Dam so that containerships flying the Nepal flag will be able to dock in Sunsari. This will exponentially increase the volume of contraband traded.

The Ass

**5** A tunnel beneath the Chicken Neck and will drive Nepal-Bangladesh trade underground.

