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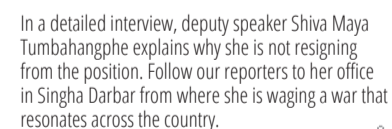
Tumbahangphe agrees. "I have sworn to

BIKRAM R.

“Tumbahangphe should realise her duty to the party and resign,” said Shrestha, in a *Nepali Times* interview. NCP co-chairs Oli

The question is not if a woman should get the job, but if her gender is preventing her from getting it. In 30 years of multi-party democracy, a woman has led the Parliament for only three. Senior leaders are mostly male, with women nominated only for

Sewa Bhattarai



nepalitimes.com

GOING PLACES TOGETHER

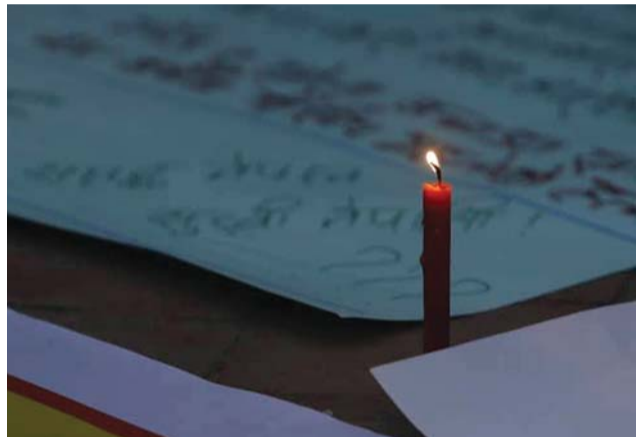


CRUSHERS OF JUSTICE

This week, in a crime that shocked the nation, a young engineering student was killed and his body crushed with a tipper truck for opposing a sand-mining contractor in Dhanusha.

Just 24 years old, Om Prakash ('Dilip') Mahato had come home from college in Bhopal in India. He was incensed about how the Churiyamai Crusher Industry was illegally extracting sand and boulders from the Aurahi River under cover of darkness. The contractor Bipin Mahato had threatened the boy's father three days previously, saying he would kill him for trying to ruin his business.

Before dawn on a fog-bound morning last Friday, Dilip heard earth-moving vehicles near the farm and went to inspect. He was attacked with an iron rod, and killed by contractor Bipin Mahato. To make it look like an accident, his body was then run over by tipper driver Munindra Mahato and Jitendra Mahato.



BIKRAM RAI

Police have reportedly extracted confessions from all four of the accused, and taken them into custody. The contractor has owned up to impaling Dilip with the sharp end of an iron rod, and the tipper driver has confessed to running over the body.

The hopes of Dilip's farming family was on this hard-working and idealistic young man who was about to graduate. He leaves behind six sisters, ailing parents and a grandfather.

As has often been reported in this paper and in investigative reports in other Nepali language media, the appropriately named 'Crusher' industry is run by a mafia enjoying political protection from local, district and provincial administrations.

While activists who have exposed illegal sand mining have often been threatened and silenced in the past, this is the first time that someone opposed to unlawful extraction from rivers has been executed by the quarry mafia.

It speaks volumes about the state of impunity in Nepal today that the perpetrators were convinced they could get away with it. Having politicians, the security apparatus and the courts in their pockets, they think they

can literally get away with murder. The crime exposes the criminalisation of politics and the politicisation of crime in federal Nepal, where instead of devolving political power, it is wrongdoing that has been decentralised in the past two years.

What an irony that the contractor had named his 'crusher' company after Churiyamai, the goddess protector of the Chure Hills. This southernmost wrinkle of the Himalayan range that rises from the plains does not have bedrock beneath, but sand, boulders and topsoil. The Chure covers 12% of the country and stretches from east to west, spanning 36 districts. The 200 rivers that originate here are dry most of the year, but turn into raging torrents in the monsoon.

Once the trees are cut on a Chure slope, there is nothing to hold the soil together and it is eroded very quickly by rain. The sediment is then swept downstream to the Tarai, raising river beds and making floods worse.

Indiscriminate logging, illegal sand and boulder mining has ravaged the Chure, especially in the east-central Tarai.

The devastating flood last year and in 2017 in Rautahat and eastwards, was caused by extreme rainfall, but it was exacerbated by haphazard embankment building and the extraction of sand and boulders from rivers which increased the velocity of their flow.

This wanton destruction of the Chure in the hands of a politico-criminal nexus puts more than 10 million Nepali plains-dwellers and many more millions downstream in India at risk of floods.

And then sugarcane farmers were in the capital's Mandala after failing to be paid by factory owners for the cane they supplied. After being given the runaround, they brought their case to the streets of the capital. They

camped out in the winter rain for several days, and the government finally signed an agreement with the farmers, assuring them that factory owners would clear their dues by 21 January.

The nefarious nexus between business and government means they scratch each other's backs, and it is very likely that this agreement will never be implemented, just like all previous ones. The farmers' agitation has already dropped off the media headlines, so the sugar barons will try to ride this one out, and like in the past the government's promised subsidy to farmers will never reach them. The Province 2 government belatedly said on Monday it will close all illegal 'crushers', but the proof of the pudding in Nepal is always in the eating.

Any surprise then that the incompetent men who tolerate these injustices will not allow their own comrade, Shivamaya Tumbahangphe, to take over as Speaker? Instead, they are pushing the candidacy of Agni Sapkota, who is accused of a war crime.

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING

Chinese farmer strikes roots in Nepal

by Josie Wang
Xiang Shaohua came to Nepal from China 10 years ago as a tourist, travelled to Pokhara and was so mesmerised by the place that he never left. Today, he has a flourishing farm and supplies produce to Lakeside restaurants. Read full story at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Nepal's suicide rates vastly underestimated

by Sewa Bhattarai
Official records show that about 5,000 Nepalis kill themselves every year, but the actual number is much greater. According to the World Health Organization Nepal is the country with the 7th highest rate of suicide in the world. Get the details on our website.

Most popular on Twitter

Back to the future in Nepal

by Anil Chitrakar
A country of 30 million is not small. And Nepal is not poor, just poorly governed. Let us stop describing ourselves as 'a small and poor country'. Having a young population is a historic opportunity that is the envy of rapidly-ageing countries like Japan. Get online and join the debate.

Most commented

Back to Nepal for good

by Upasana Khadka
Nearly 6,000 undocumented Nepali workers in Malaysia opt for amnesty to go home. Additionally, the nationalisation policies of Gulf countries and the winding-down of FIFA-related construction in Qatar means more and more Nepali migrants are returning. The country now needs to focus on their reintegration. policy.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Suicide is the leading cause of death among young Nepalis. Ingesting pesticide is the 2nd most common method. Find out what is being done to reduce this crisis in reports by @sewa_ditoe & @SoniaAwale in @nepalitimes.

@amrit_banstola
Good reporting. Also, look forward to reading other public health issues from the @NepaliTimes team.

Prasansa @Pra_Subba
Thanks for covering news about much stigmatized #mentalhealth along with info on help & services available.

CLEAN NEPAL

We are looking into submitting a proposal for Clean Nepal 2020 ('The Nepal Brand', Editorial, #992). We would love to get stakeholders together to initiate community-led cleanups under the banner of Visit Nepal 2020.
Lean up Nepal

■ Tourists who come to Nepal have money, they will choose to go on holiday and spend that money in a place with clean air ('Long road back to Shangrila', Mukesh Pokhrel, #992). Kathmandu is absolutely filthy and wearing a gas mask around town is not fun.

Maggie Kerr

■ It does seem like Kathmandu is ripe for some kind of clean-up system ... garbage pick-up, recycling, reasonable burn sites, anti-plastic bag and bottle laws, toilets, street cleaning, etc.

Sigmund Stengel

MUSTANG

Climate change and road connection aspects bring a new dimension to your already very interesting life connection with Mustang ('11-day trek is now a day's drive in Nepal'. Ghana Gurung, #992). I hope you can help support the balance among cultural heritage, nature conservation and development.

Nicky Robertson

■ Now we are enjoying delicious Mustang apples in Singapore. How is that for connectivity?

Cynthia Wee-Hoefer

NEPAL CAN CHANGE

I agree with the writer ('Back to the future in Nepal', Anil Chitrakar, #992). A country which has been deprived of political support and corrupted in several ways by both insiders and outsiders doesn't need any comparative comments from anyone. She needs help and some working brains to fix up these problems.

Shristee Pandey

■ I think the greatest asset of Nepal is her people, being rich in human resource with untapped capabilities and capacities. Nepal can change within a person's lifetime if there is a good leadership.

Raju Lama

AMA KHANDO

A sincere, spontaneous film that tells a story with which many can relate ('Ama Khando: a different road trip film from Nepal', Aayush Niroula, #992).

Maria Teresa Pessoa

ECOLOGIC WITH MISS MOTI

KRIPA JOSHI



Eco-friendly cleaning products are non-toxic, bio-degradable and help to create a safer home environment with better air quality. You can even create your own solution using household ingredients. Make a multi-purpose cleanser by mixing ¼ cup white vinegar, 1 tbsp baking soda, 1 litre hot water and half a lemon.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

National Earthquake Safety Day falls this week, and our issue ten years ago was prescient about the disaster that would strike Nepal five years later. In issue #484, Dambar K Shrestha outlines the dangers to Kathmandu Valley if an earthquake were to strike it. Reading the piece reminds us of how unprepared we were for the 2015 quake, and how we have not learned the lessons it should have taught.

There are some 150,000 houses in Kathmandu Municipality, and 4,000 are added every year. But the metropolitan municipality responsible for issuing a certificate for land sales has not been able to estimate to what extent the Nepal National Building Code has been adhered to. In fact, Head of the Physical Development and Planning Department of Kathmandu Municipality, Bimal Rijal, reckons not even 40 out of these 4,000 houses are monitored for earthquake safety during reconstruction.

It's not just old residential houses that are at risk: administrative centres such as Singha Darbar are equally insecure. According to NSET estimates, an earthquake on the scale of 1934 could destroy 70 percent of the Valley's buildings.



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Returning to Nepal has its rewards

“I was excited to give back what I owed to my country.”

Karvika Thapa was living the American dream in Boston with a promising career in the Information Technology sector. But after 14 years she decided to head back home to Nepal with her husband and two young daughters.



MADE IN NEPAL
Naresh Newar

During the three years since, she has worked hard to establish a successful international software company, Kimbu Tech, one of the very few women-led IT startups in Nepal.

“At first, it was nerve-racking, but I was excited to give back what I owed to my country where I grew up,” says the 40-year-old Karvika. “I also wanted my daughters to learn Nepali culture.”

Starting a company was not at the top of her mind when she returned to Kathmandu, but when she found that there were so few women in Nepal’s IT sector, Karvika decided to take the risk and work to create quality jobs, especially for women in a male-dominated industry.

Karvika had been one of the handful of female students in the first year of Kathmandu College of Management’s bachelor’s program in information systems. She then went to the US for her MBA and stayed on to work, over the course



NARESH NEWAR

of her years there, in IT solutions, data management, database marketing and campaigns in education, healthcare, and retail.

Today, she leads a quality team of Nepali women and men who provide software development and maintenance for companies in Israel and the US. Karvika hopes that their work will

help create a home for qualified and talented programmers in Nepal and that that in turn will build recognition globally for Nepali programmers.

There are a few other companies working in IT and Artificial Intelligence in Nepal, and the sector has great potential as an employment generator.

But Nepal’s talent pool of skilled programmers is still a well-kept secret in the IT world.

“We have very professional young Nepalis working on some of the world’s most innovative animation and block chain projects. They have also worked on Disney movies while still based in Nepal, so there is no shortage of talent here” said Karvika.

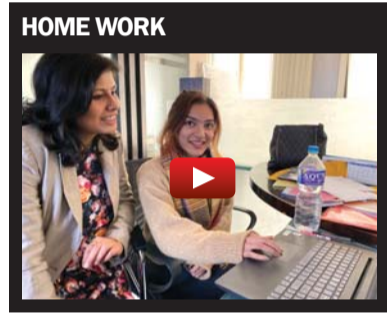
Although Karvika got her degree and worked abroad, she has learnt from experience that it is not necessary to have an IT degree to get into programming or coding. Students can enter the tech business with an arts or any other degree, and neither do Nepalis have to go abroad to find such jobs. Karvika’s company has been providing software and programming training in order to create more programmers and has been working with the Robotics Association of Nepal to provide scholarships to encourage young women.

“My dream is to see women not just become IT experts and programmers but also take a leadership role in this field,” said Karvika, who wants also to change the mindsets of parents, who are so keen on sending their children abroad for better education and jobs. She says times have changed, and it is possible to do as well right here in Nepal, especially in the tech sector.

There is high demand for programmers globally and Nepal should prepare itself to

ride this wave. There are many international companies trying to set up shop here and build our IT industry, but for this to happen the government needs to step in and take advantage of the opportunity, explains Karvika. She gives the example of Bangladesh, which until a few years ago was not known for tech, but where the industry is now booming.

Asked about her most rewarding experience after returning to Nepal, Karvika says it was when her company signed a contract with an international client. She said: “We had worked hard to get the project, and when we got it we realised we had put Nepal on the global map. It was amazing not just for our company but also for the country, for being internationally recognised.”



Listen to Karvika Thapa as she takes us on a tour of her company office in Kathmandu and explains why she returned to Nepal from the United States. She shares how it has been rewarding to put Nepal on the world map as a country with a lot of female talent in the IT sector.

nepalintimes.com



Land and Sea at the Hyatt

If you thought seafood and red meat were two different genres of food, think again. Rox Restaurant at Hyatt Regency is offering a special ‘Surf and Turf’ menu where each dish combines something from land and something from sea. Trout and pork belly are served with spinach and seasonal vegetables, and lamb shank and buhari fillet are served with mushrooms and cocktail onions.

Surf and Turf has created unique and innovative dishes that combine the best of these two worlds. Executive Chef Debarya Chakraborty has experimented with different elements, combining, for example, Himalayan whole trout with pork belly. The menu is a continental one with diversity: Italian risotto



is served with calamari, shrimp, bacon cream, parmesan cheese and green peas.

Apart from the regular meat and fish, Surf and Turf also features items like crab meat, scallops and calamari. If you are a diehard carnivore craving new flavours in new combinations, Surf and Turf is for you. Hyatt Regency is situated on the outskirts of Kathmandu Valley and offers a peaceful, natural ambience away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

This is not a place for vegetarians, but pescetarians will find some interesting dishes here.

Surf and Turf
14-28 January, 6-10PM
Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, Boudha



BIZ BRIEFS

World Bank

The World Bank has approved an additional credit of USD 200 million to the Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Project (EHRP) in Nepal. The funds will be used by the Housing Reconstruction Program to rebuild earthquake-resistant core housing units by providing housing grants to eligible beneficiaries who have enrolled in the program. The impact of the 2015 earthquake is estimated at 35 percent of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with recovery needs of about USD 7 billion.



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Ncell

Ncell has launched a weekly plan on 14 January under its existing 'Mero Plan' for prepaid customers, allowing customers to enjoy data and voice services at more affordable rates. The launch announced a 2GB and 6GB plan in addition to the existing monthly plans.

NIBL

The 33rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Nepal Investment Bank Ltd (NIBL) was held on 13 January at National Assembly Hall. In the meeting, NIBL officials decided



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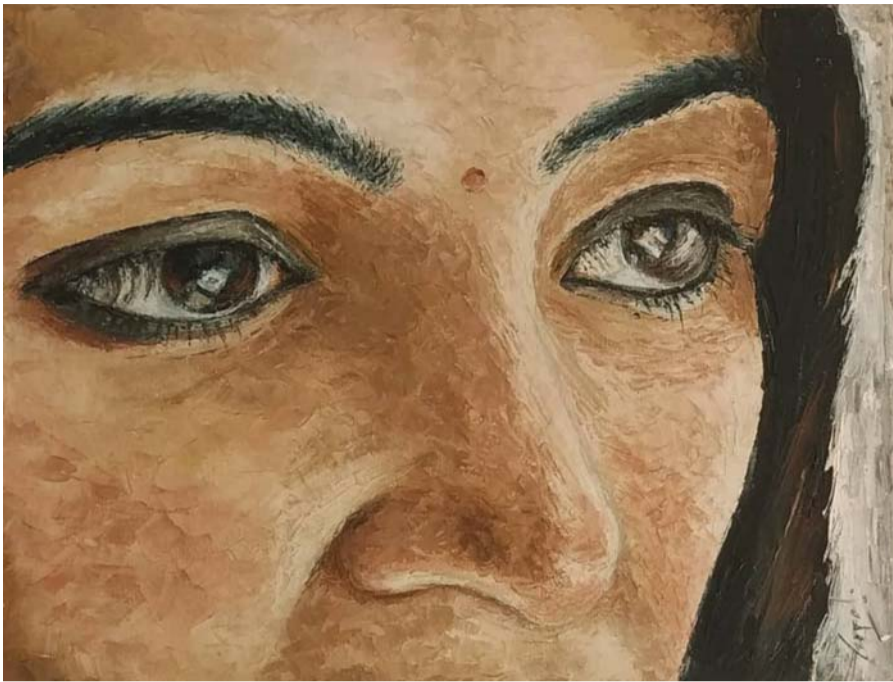


capital of Malabo on 7 February via Por Harcourt in Nigeria with thrice weekly flights. Malabo will be the carrier's 318th destination.

Qatar and Deutsche Bahn

Qatar Airways has launched a codeshare partnership with Deutsche Bahn offering





Portraying portraiture at Taragaon



PHOTOS: SEWA BHATTARAI

The visitor to the Taragaon Museum is surrounded by faces: from large, realistic examinations of elderly men and women to symbolic portraits in abstract styles. An exhibition titled *A Portrait Story* studies the genre of portraiture from all angles.

The oldest exhibit is a framed photograph of Chandra Shumsher, his wife Balkumari, and two of his sons. Back in the 19th century, such portraits were a way of putting your best face forward. The means to own a camera or hire a photographer were only available to the fabulously wealthy, and portraiture was status.

Fast forward to the 21st century, where

almost everyone has a mobile phone with which to take a selfie and disseminate it to the world at the press of a key. The exhibition comes full circle in showcasing two social media ‘influencers’ who constantly post selfies.

It may seem that flattering depiction is the only purpose of portraiture. However, the genre also exists outside this narcissistic box, and this is where artists come in. *A Portrait Story* features many artistic explorations of the portrait genre.

“Artists make a lot of portraits on commission, so these are commercial,” says co-curator of the exhibition Shivangi Bansal, “But we know of artists who make portraits

just for the sake of making portraits. We wanted to see how artists are exploring this genre beyond commercial art.”

Indeed, many of the portraits on display are not necessarily flattering. On the one end of the spectrum is hyper realism, where every tiny detail on a face, from a wrinkle to a missing tooth, is highlighted.

At the other end is experimentation, where the details of the face become irrelevant as artists play with outside objects, light and shadows. Manish Lal Shrestha paints only a fraction of his forehead on top of a pillow in ‘Sirani’. Pramila Bajracharya paints a two-dimensional figure of a Nepali woman that

seems to portray her personality. Kapil Mani Dixit has an abstract piece which does not look like a portrait at all, while Sauranga Darshandhari experiments with a portrait without a face.

Contemporary artists have also experimented with digital manipulations. The picture of a Kumari with an entire temple on her head is an example, and Ishan Pariyar depicts angst with a face that is bursting out of its rope bindings. **Sewa Bhattarai**

A Portrait Story
Taragaon Museum, Boudha
9-23 Jan

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Nepal: a family’s destination

There is something for all ages in the mountains and plains of Nepal

It was our mother’s idea to do a family visit to Nepal to mark her 80th birthday. Although over the years everyone had been to visit in various combinations, the idea this time was for us Van Gruisens and our spouses to gather together along with our children, who in 2004 ranged from 17 to seven years old, and were resident in the US, UK, Australia, India and Nepal. A carbon footprint that created memories and forged cousinly bonds.



The cold months suited school holidays and we five siblings getting time off our various work commitments. In all, 21 of us gathered in Kathmandu before heading off to Chitwan, which was followed by a trek in the Annapurna foothills and New Year at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. In addition to Christmas and New Year, there were birthdays to celebrate, and palaces, temples, jungles and mountain villages to explore.

“We don’t do sightseeing, Mum,” my teenage boys warned, supported by their doting younger cousins. Nepal is one of the world’s best family destinations, offering a range of real adventure experiences that appeal to all ages. There is something here for everyone.

The Tarai in winter can be one of the coldest places in Nepal. Thick tendrils of grey fog insinuate their way into your bones, through the thatch roofs and bamboo walls, stubbornly refusing to be burned off by the weak winter sun. After warming ourselves by the fireside, my boys led their tribe of clamouring cousins, willing uncles and eager aunts on chilly wildlife safaris, elephant camp visits, misty jeep drives, boat rides and forest walks.

Rinchen’s 16th birthday party featured the statutory elephant



RUFUS VAN GRUISEN



RUFUS VAN GRUISEN



HAMISH VAN GRUISEN

dung cake as well as late night singing, Tharu dancing and animal impersonations on the mud floor of the tented camp Golghar. We fell asleep under heavy quilts to the sound of nightjars and a distant deer barking an alarm call.

Always the most keen and most intrepid walker, our mother elected to miss the trek this time. On previous visits she had walked most of Nepal’s main trekking

routes, especially enraptured by the Everest region, and in England she lived within reach of the Ridgeway with its ancient white horse carved into the chalk hills. My childhood had been punctuated with hearty Sunday afternoon walks through the ploughed fields and winter woodlands of Northumberland or, even worse, being dragged up Lake District peaks on day hikes to admire yet another view. It

was only after I arrived in the Himalaya that I learned to love the rhythm and cadence of days spent travelling at the speed of my own two feet.

Our mother left us late last year. She would have preferred to have gone a couple of days earlier. “Why does dying take so long! I wish my brain would switch off,” she sighed impatiently. “You are so strong, and your time has not yet come,”

A FAMILY AFFAIR: (*anti-clockwise*) Jeep crossing the Rapti River during a safari in Chitwan National Park.

Winter treks at low levels can be very rewarding and are enjoyed by all ages, here with dramatic mountain views of Machhapuchhre and Annapurna.

Lisa Choegyul’s mother Anne Van Gruisen at the Remembrance Day march in 2016 in Whitehall, London.

her Nepali nurse Sarita had replied while stroking her grey straying hair, something -- along with taking or laughing too loudly -- that we were not permitted to do. “Well, I don’t want to be strong,” she had said crossly.

Six weeks earlier I had been with her in the bleak, flat landscape of Oxfordshire. “It was 80 years ago today that the Second World War started – 3 September 1939. So consumed with Brexit, no one seems to have noticed.” My mother was 94 and had taken to her bed. “I remember I was 14 and it was all rather an adventure. The air raid sirens rang out that first afternoon and we all sat in the kitchen which was supposed to be the safest place. That was the beginning.”

My mother’s wartime career went on to define her. Like many women from that era, she missed out on a proper education, and found excitement in the opportunities offered by World War II. She worked in SOE (Special Operations Executive, secret stuff) based in Ceylon (as it was then), and later founded the Special Forces Club in London, located in a crescent behind Harrods and known by taxi drivers at the Spooks Club.

We had all gathered from our various corners of the globe, around her high-tech bed in a pleasant beige room in an Oxford hospital. Outside the autumn trees ebbed into gold. At her insistence there were no tubes, no sighing machines, no medical clicks and beeps. “The British national health system is very good at being born and dying, not so great in between” my sister with two medical daughters observed dryly.

My other sister, who lives in India, kept vigil each night, sleeping on the blue lino floor. “Very third world,” observed the doctor with mild disapproval on one of his rounds, spotting the mattress propped against the wall. My sister was annoyed to have missed the actual moment of our mother’s death, around the midnight hour. My mother typically made minimum fuss, and per passing must have been quiet and peaceful.

My sons Sangjay and Rinchen stood beside her bed, a little bleary after long flights. They were lucky to find her lucid and chatty on one of those last days. “We have left the world in such a mess and it will be up to you to sort it out and save us” she told them, passing the baton of responsibility. “Our generation has so much to be blamed for.”

Even with her last energy she appreciates her Nepali nurses in Oxford, and asks about Kathmandu friends. Recalling the family trip and time spent walking in the Himalaya, a distant look comes into her luminous pale failing eyes. “What I would like is for my ashes to be scattered in the Nepal mountains – at Tengboche, amongst the forest and rhododendrons with those beautiful views. Sangjay, can you arrange it?”

Thus, the Van Gruisens are committed to make their own intensely personal contribution to VNY2020 with another family visit of siblings and cousins later this year. 🇳🇵

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This is the fourth westerly disturbance of the season, and that is three too many. Heavy snowfall has been predicted across the Himalaya, with the danger of wet snow avalanches along trekking routes. Air services will once more be disrupted. There will be moderate to heavy rainfall in the lower mountain valleys, with the weather clearing somewhat by Saturday. Cloud cover will linger till early next week, with the maximum temperature in the low teens.

FRIDAY	11° 6°	SATURDAY	15° 4°	SUNDAY	14° 4°
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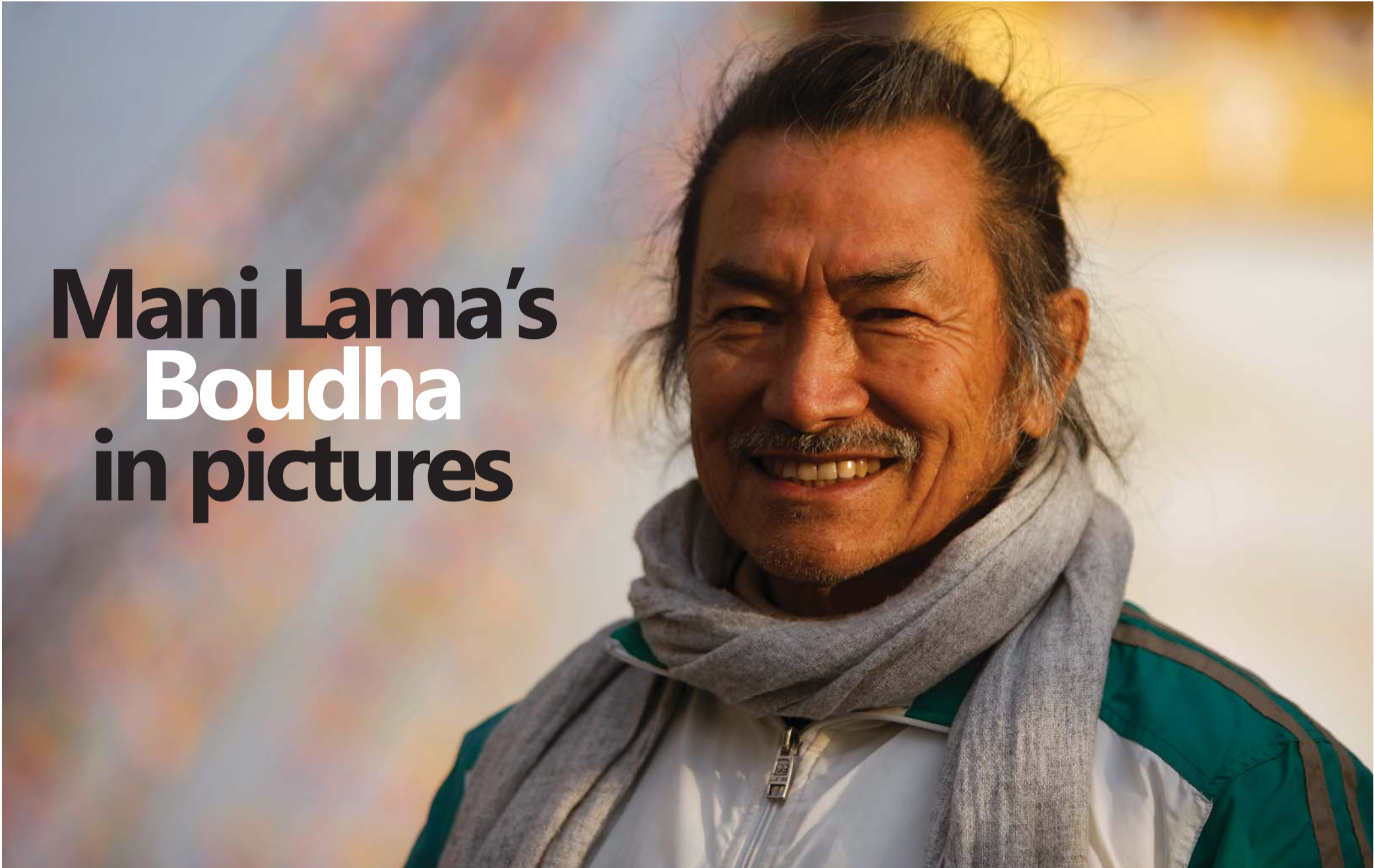
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MONIKA DEUPALA

Sewa Bhattarai

Mani Lama, 73, never intended to become a photographer. As a young man he studied agriculture in America, but destiny had other designs.

As a photographer, Lama ended up becoming the chronicler of Boudha and its unique neighbourhood. His latest work, *Boudha: Restoring the Great Stupa*, is releasing on 18 January and chronicles the shrine’s rebirth after the 2015 earthquake.

Mani Lama has spent his entire life in the shadow of the great stupa, and his family has ties with Boudha that go back six generations. His great-great-grandfather was a Chinese man from Sichuan who came to Nepal to meditate in one of the caves near Pashupati. But Prime Minister Jung

Bahadur Rana, who was preparing to invade Tibet, took him for a Chinese spy and arrested him.

After he was satisfied that the monk was not a spy, Jung Bahadur recruited him to look after Lumbini, Swoyambhu, and Boudha. Eventually the Lamas tired of travelling all over Nepal, and stuck to taking care only of Boudha. That is why Mani Lama’s ancestors were called the Chiniya Lama. The lineage still looks after the shrine, although Lama himself does not have to.

“I still have 18% Chinese ancestry,” Lama laughs, “but I am fully Nepali.”

There is Tamang and Rana blood running in his veins because the first Chiniya Lama married a woman who was Jung Bahadur’s daughter through a Tamang wife, and he is also of Sherpa descent by way of ancestors from Helambu. Lama thinks his mixed heritage has given him a wider perspective

on the world.

While his father went about his priestly duties, Lama spent his childhood experiencing Boudha, then a settlement of mud houses with thatch roofs.

“Pilgrims from India, China, and many parts of Nepal visited Boudha in those days,” he says. “They came here in autumn and stayed the whole winter when the mountain passes were snowed under.”

Mani Lama got his first camera from his father when he was 12, and took up photography as a profession when he returned from the United States and could not find a job in agriculture because of rife nepotism and casteism.

Lama started taking photographs for postcards that he had printed in Singapore. These flew off the shelves when they first appeared in New Road shops. Lama then took up out-of-town assignments, and travelled all over Nepal taking photographs and learning about

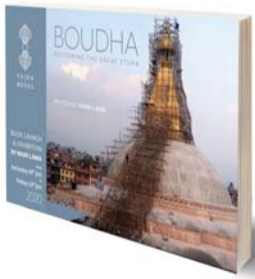
his country.

Lama’s skills and his connection to the neighbourhood came into use in documenting the damage to Boudha, an important pilgrimage and a world heritage site, in the 2015 earthquake.

“I was shocked when I saw a crack on the stupa,” he recalls. He started documenting the damage, as well as the later reconstruction. He and his camera were at the stupa every day.

The result is now a photobook that documents the reconstruction of Boudha, along with commentaries from historians and cultural experts. Lama is happy with the way the book has turned out, but he is not so happy with what has happened to Boudha.

“The commercialisation of this sacred space is a sad thing. It is very different from what I remember as a child,” he says. “I hope Boudha is able to retain its spiritual essence in the future.” 🇳🇵



Boudha: Restoring the Great Stupa
Photos by Mani Lama
246 Pages.
Rs5,000
Vajra Books, 2020

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Lifetime experience on Pikey Peak

With new roads, Edmund Hillary's favourite vantage point is more accessible to trekkers

Susma Baraili
in Solu Khumbu

It is a truism in tourism of the Himalaya that the closer we get to the mountains, the less we see of them. This holds for the Annapurna Base Camp Trek, which follows the narrow Mardi Valley where Machapuchre is hidden by towering cliffs. And it is true of the Everest Trek, where the highest mountain in the world is not visible after Tengboche, unless trekkers climb Kala Patthar.

For the best panoramas of the mountains, therefore, one has to step back to mid-mountain peaks, like Pathibhara in Taplejung for a view of Mt Kangchenjunga and Jannu, or Kalinchok for a

grandstand view of Mt Gauri Shankar. Then there are peaks like Pulchoki on the southern rim of Kathmandu Valley, Bandipur for a tour d'horizon of the entire Central Nepal Himalaya, and the famous Poon Hill for the vista of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna.

But one of the best kept secrets of trekking in Nepal is Pikey Peak in Solu, which offers a view of eight of Nepal's eighthousanders from one place, including Mt Everest. The 4,065m peak used to be a favourite of Sir Edmund Hillary after he climbed it to take a look around during the walk-in on his 1953 expedition.

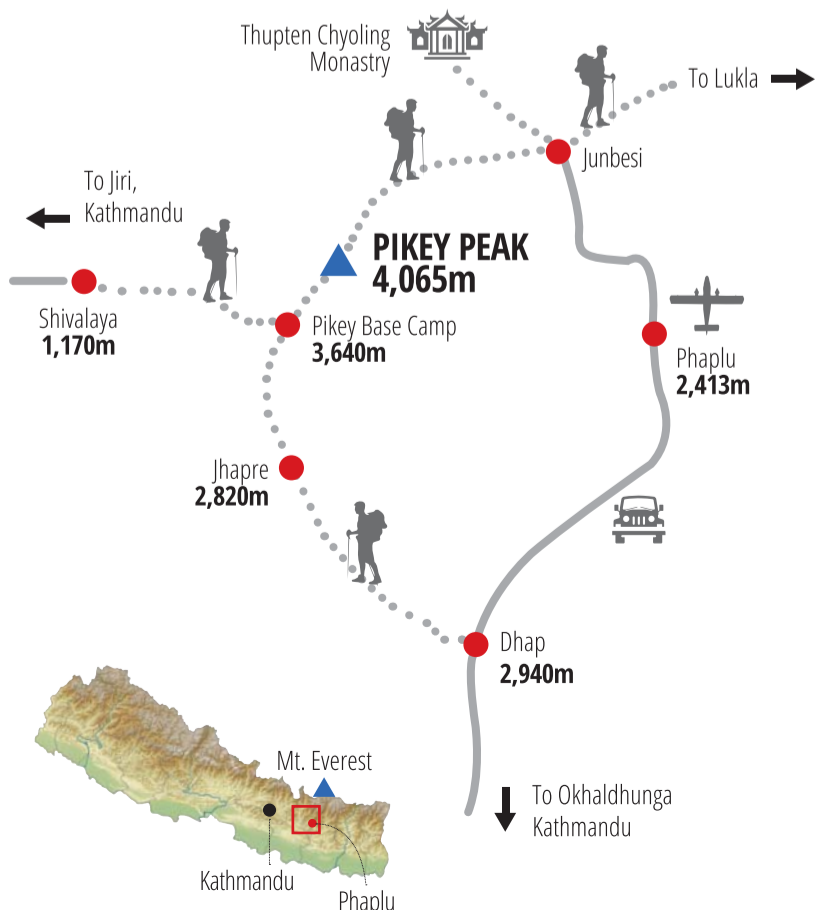
For several decades after that Pikey was isolated because it was so difficult to get to, and most people doing the Everest Base Camp trek overflowed Pikey en route to Lukla. Indeed, there is a parade of planes

overhead every morning doing the Kathmandu-Lukla ferry.

But with new roads from Kathmandu to Jiri and the Solu Highway reaching Phaplu via Okhaldhunga, Pikey is suddenly accessible. After major snowfall last month, Pikey saw dozens of Nepali youngsters roughing it out on a camping trip.

Winter is the not the best time for a Pikey hike, but the views can be stunning especially after snowfall blankets the mountains in white. The best time is actually early spring when rhododendron forests are abloom in pink, red and white and the mountains are dazzling against deep blue skies.

Since few people know about Pikey, visitors will find the trails deserted and the tea shops basic, although new lodges are now coming up, and the local Sherpa






community is trying to promote homestay tourism. Pikey is revered by the Sherpas as a deity and climbing it does seem more like a pilgrimage than a trek.

The fortunate thing about Pikey is that you can make it a circuit so you do not have to come down the same way you went up. A recommended itinerary is to drive up the Jiri Road from Kathmandu, continue on to Shivalaya, following the old trek route to Khumbu before Lukla airstrip was built in 1968.

From Shivalaya it is a leisurely three-day trek to Bhandara, Namkheli and Pikey Danda with only some steep sections. The trail winds through thick oak and rhododendron forests, with pine giving way to grasslands in the higher reaches.

What is astounding is that from Pikey on a clear day one can see more than 800km of horizon from Dhaulagiri to Kangchenjunga. All along during the walk-in, Annapurna, Manaslu, Mt Everest, Cho Oyu, Makalu, Lhotse, Kangchenjunga and other eight-thousanders play hide and seek behind lesser but nearer peaks. But smack in front is the elegant summit of Mt Numbur, standing tall above Mt Karyolung.

Sunrise from Pikey Peak is a ‘lifetime experience’ as the slogan for Visit Nepal 2020 puts it. The sun rises from behind Kangchenjunga, illuminating the peaks to the north one by one, even as the valleys below are shrouded in fog.

For the return, the descent can be down to Junbesi, and on to Phaplu, from where you can either take a flight back to Kathmandu or make the trip by road. For those pressed for time, you can make a flight in and out from Phaplu with a circuit to Pikey via Lamjura and down through Dhap. (*See map*). 



ALL PHOTOS: MANISH PAUDEL



ON TOP OF THE WORLD:
(clockwise from main picture)
A trekker on the summit of Pikey Peak, with Mt Everest visible in the distance.
Yaks graze on the ridge above Junbesi.
Sherpa community dance for homestay trekkers in Patle.
Sunrise from the Pikey ridge with the valley below blanketed in clouds.
New lodges and homestays come up to cater to the influx of trekkers.



Watch a short video of the Pikey Peak trek and check out the amazing scenery. The local Sherpa community have homestays where trekkers can spend the night and they perform traditional dances for guests. This is a perfect getaway this spring to mark Visit Nepal 2020.

EVENTS



Bhojpur Trail Race
The Mira Rai Initiative presents a documentary about the Bhojpur Trail Race, a charity established by runner Mira Rai. The event will also unveil the route for the 5th edition of the race.
17 January, 3pm-5pm, Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikutimandap (01) 4256909

Bird Watching
Join Bird Conservation Nepal to bird-watch in the lush forests of Chobar.
18 January, 7:30am, Jal Binayak Temple, Chobar-Taudaha, 9801024777

Splashes of Hope
Rotaract Club of Himalaya Patan invites you to paint with your friends in support of Yubraj Shrestha, who is seeking financial assistance for a kidney transplant. All proceeds will be used to fund his treatment.
18 January, 11am-5pm, Rs350 per person, The Garden Cafe, Chyasal



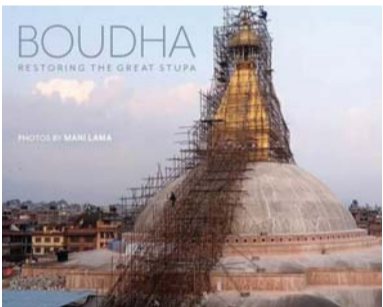
Grafting Workshop
Learn how to graft high-value and exotic fruit and nut trees using local rootstocks. This workshop is perfect for anyone who wants to plant trees at home or commercially.
23 January, 11am-4pm, Soeb Farm, Panauti, Kavre, 9803218967

Research Seminar
Prakash Subedi's "The 'Secular State' and the 'Holy Cow': Representation of Minority Religions in Nepali Literature", explores contemporary Nepali literature's engagement with ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic inclusion.
21 January, 3pm onwards, Martin Chautari Seminar Hall, Thapathali (01) 4102027



Heartfulness Meditation
This 3-day meditation workshop will teach you to be more mindful and to understand the unique benefits of breathing deeply.
19-21 January, 7am-9am, Yogmandu Studio, Mid-Baneswor, 9862909469

Character Designing
Improve your skills as a visual storyteller and learn to design characters with this 24-class workshop with illustrator Prakash Ranjit. Registration: bit.ly/drawyourstories
18 January-5 April (Every Saturday and Sunday), 9am-12pm, Rs8,000 per person, Satya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel (01) 5521812



Book Launch
Boudha - Restoring the Great Stupa is a book of images by photographer Mani Lama. It explores the stupa's rich history and its significance to Buddhists. (See page 7.)
18 January, 2pm onwards, The Taragaon Museum, Boudha (01) 6201035

BlockoutxCamp4
Meet artists and designers, learn more about screen printing on clothes, purchase original artwork and enjoy a rooftop jam session.
18 January, 2pm-9pm, Helena's Restaurant, Chaksibari, 9828881787

ABOUT TOWN

MUSIC



Acoustic Night
Enjoy the acoustic sounds of up-and-coming musician Aabhiskar KC.
17 January, 7pm-10pm, The Triangle Restaurant & Bar, Thamel, 9849485534

Deaf Panda
Listen to the best of R&B and soul in this performance by Deaf Panda.
17 January, 6pm-10pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel (01) 5528362



Sugam Pokharel
Nepali pop singer Sugam Pokharel will be igniting the stage with his electric voice. House DJs will be opening for him.
18 January, 8pm onwards, Club Fahrenheit, Thamel (01) 4441220

Samridi Rai & Rohit Chettri
Samridhi Rai and Rohit John Chettri will be performing together for the very first time. Catch their duet renditions of "Ma Dami Chu" and "Bistarai Bistarai".
17 January, 6pm onwards, Tickets: Rs1,500, Privé Nepal, Tahachal Marg, 9801090111

Acoustic Friday
Kuma Sagar Bhaktapurian, known for his hit single "Sadhai Sadhai", will be performing alongside the house band.
17 January, 6pm-9pm, The Blues Lounge and Bar, Bhaktapur (01) 6635921

DINING



Baan Thai
Baan Thai serves generous portions of flavourful Thai dishes. Try their squid salad and tom kha ghai during your next visit.
Durbar Marg (01) 4231931

Anatolia
Anatolia's Indian and Turkish dishes are packed with spices and an unforgettable array of flavours. From the Mutton Kofta Curry to the Baklava, these dishes will keep you wanting more. All the food is halal.
Thamel (01) 4258757



Surf & Turf
Enjoy flavours from land and sea, with trout and pork belly served alongside spinach and seasonal vegetables, lamb shank and buhari fillet served with mushrooms and cocktail onions, or seafood and bacon risotto. (See page 4.)
14-28 January, 6pm-10pm, Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, 9802050429

Starry Night BBQ
Enjoy Shangri-La's Starry Night BBQ with a live performance by Tattwo band every Friday night.
7pm onwards, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs2,000 per person (01)4412999



Bayleaf
Bayleaf is back after a long hiatus. Visit their newly renovated restaurant and indulge in their wide variety of Burmese dishes. The Tofu Thoke is not to be missed!
Tangal, opposite to Attic Bar (01) 4437490

GETAWAY



Dahlia Hotel
A scenic haven just beyond Phewa Lake, Dahlia Hotel offers a space for rejuvenation and relaxation. The hotel combines traditional Malla architecture with modern designs and includes a pool and numerous restaurants to choose from.
Pokhara (61) 466505

Hotel Heritage Bhaktapur
A Newari-style boutique hotel that incorporates the rich art and architecture of the ancient city of Bhaktapur.
Suryabinayak, Bhaktapur (01) 6611628



Newa Chén
This hotel is reminiscent of the golden era of the Malla Dynasty. The open rooms and courtyards recall the palaces of the family that once ruled the city.
Kobahal, Lalitpur (01) 5533532

Hotel Barahi
Enjoy a great view of Phewa Lake, attend cultural shows, or indulge in the scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery on the hotel premises.
Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 460617/463526



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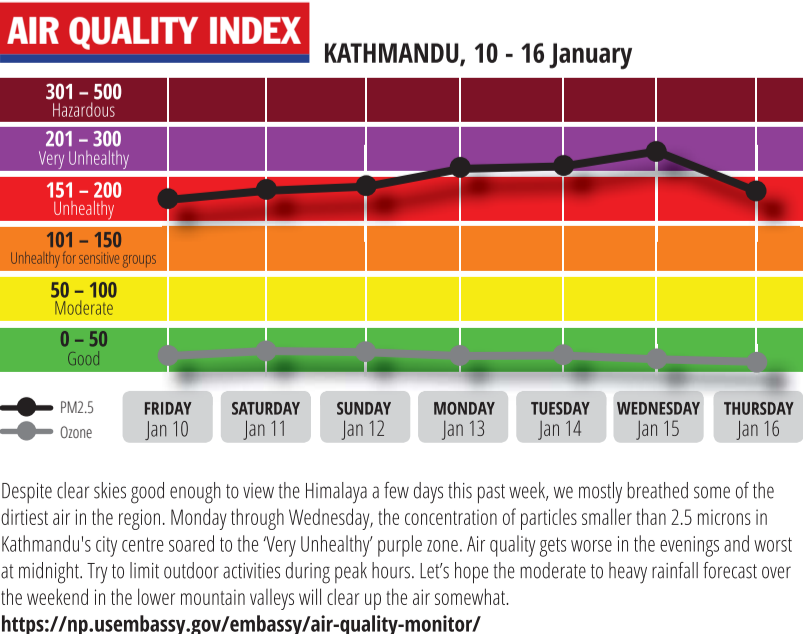
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OUR PICK

Opened in Kathmandu on 10 January

This movie portrays the burning issue of acid attacks in India, and by extension, South Asia. Deepika Padukone brings the story of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal to life. The actress, who also produced the movie, has an uncharacteristically deglamoured look in the film. Directed by Meghna Gulzar.



Giving back to Nepal what Nepal gave to them

School project bags a \$100,000 award in UAE for energy self-sufficiency plan



ZAYED SUSTAINABILITY



CHANDAN MISHRA

HONORED: Bipana Bastola, a Grade 10 student receives the Zayed Sustainability Award on behalf of her Bloom Nepal School from UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday. The school was among six from around the world that proposed sustainable energy solutions (left).

Bloom Nepal School students during a summer trip.

Three schoolmates grew up together in Budanilkantha boarding school in Kathmandu. One went to MIT for higher studies, the other to Harvard, and the third to New York University.

The three kept in touch, and often talked about what they could do to give back to Nepal. They decided that since their lives had been transformed by the top-quality education they received, thanks to scholarship support, at a premier government-run school, they would help others by creating a chain of similar schools.

The first Bloom Nepal School was started in Kathmandu with 17 students, but the earthquake brought down its building and killed a security guard. The school had to be restarted from scratch, but it rose from the rubble and now there are two campuses: one in Kathmandu and the other in Itahari, serving a total of 600 students.

"People in the rural areas of Nepal are as capable as everyone else even if they are poor. They just need the opportunity to get a quality education like I did," says Ram Rijal, who recently graduated from MIT and is now working on a PhD. "We want this school to provide a similar opportunity to other underprivileged Nepali children."

Indeed, what the three former classmates have started is a project that will try to upscale Budanilkantha into a nationwide network of affordable schools providing world-class education to Nepalis who would not otherwise be able to afford it, so that they can go to the best universities in the world and ultimately return to Nepal like its founders did.

Bloom School's first new facility is located in Lubhu and has grades 1-10 with 30 students in each class. Some one-third of the students are on scholarship paid for by sponsors and investors. The plan is to have a Bloom residential school in each of the seven provinces, so that students can rotate between the schools every semester, seeing and learning from different parts

of the country.

"I was inspired by the teachers at New York University's Abu Dhabi campus where I did my undergraduate engineering degree," says Chandan Mishra, one of the trio. "It was a campus that gave students maximum exposure, broadened their horizons and made them capable of facing any challenge."

Bloom School received the \$100,000 Zayed Sustainability Award this week in Abu Dhabi for a project to make energy self-sufficient campuses. In its citation, the Emirates award recognised the school's proposal to 'use a food-energy-waste nexus framework

through the installation of biogas units that convert up to one tonne of organic waste into biogas and organic manure every day'. The biogas can then be used for cooking in the school's canteen, electricity can be generated using a gas engine, and the organic manure produced can be used as an input for sustainable agriculture.

The school further plans on forming partnerships with local municipalities to recycle municipal solid waste and convert it into clean energy, thereby promoting effective waste management, recycling, and clean energy generation, with the effective participation of students and the wider community.

Mishra, who graduated with an engineering degree from NYU and turned down lucrative job offers in Dubai to return to Nepal to run the school says: "The award is a huge honour, and we will plough the prize money into our biogas energy program."

The Bloom Schools' curriculum has a strong environmental component, and students learn about reducing use of plastics and recycling garbage. The biogas plants will provide hands-on learning experiences about climate-friendly energy sources that will also cut Nepal's import bill.

Rijal and Mishra say they

saw the benefits of residential education while at Budanilkantha, where students spent time after class learning to do activities together, and growing up to be "independent and interdependent".

As an engineer, Mishra has tried to design the schools from lightweight earthquake resistant material, and he wants to use rammed earth technology for future buildings. He adds: "Bloom Nepal will serve as a model for affordable, high-quality schools in Nepal so it can retain talent in the country and build a human resource base for the country's future."

Kunda Dixit in Abu Dhabi



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UNIC NEPAL/TWITTER

FORGET NOT: Israeli ambassador Benny Omar educates Nepali youth about the Holocaust in the run up to the genocide's 75th anniversary on Tuesday. Also present are EU Ambassador Veronica Cody, United Nations Resident Coordinator Vallerie Julliand, and German Ambassador Roland Schäfer.



INDIAN EMBASSY/TWITTER

GRAND GESTURES: The first meeting of India-Nepal Joint Working Group on Petroleum and Gas cooperation was held in New Delhi on Monday.



NAVIN POUDEL/RSS

HEAVY DUTY: Gokul Banskota, Minister for Information and Technology, assumes additional office as Minister for Urban Development in Kathmandu on Monday.



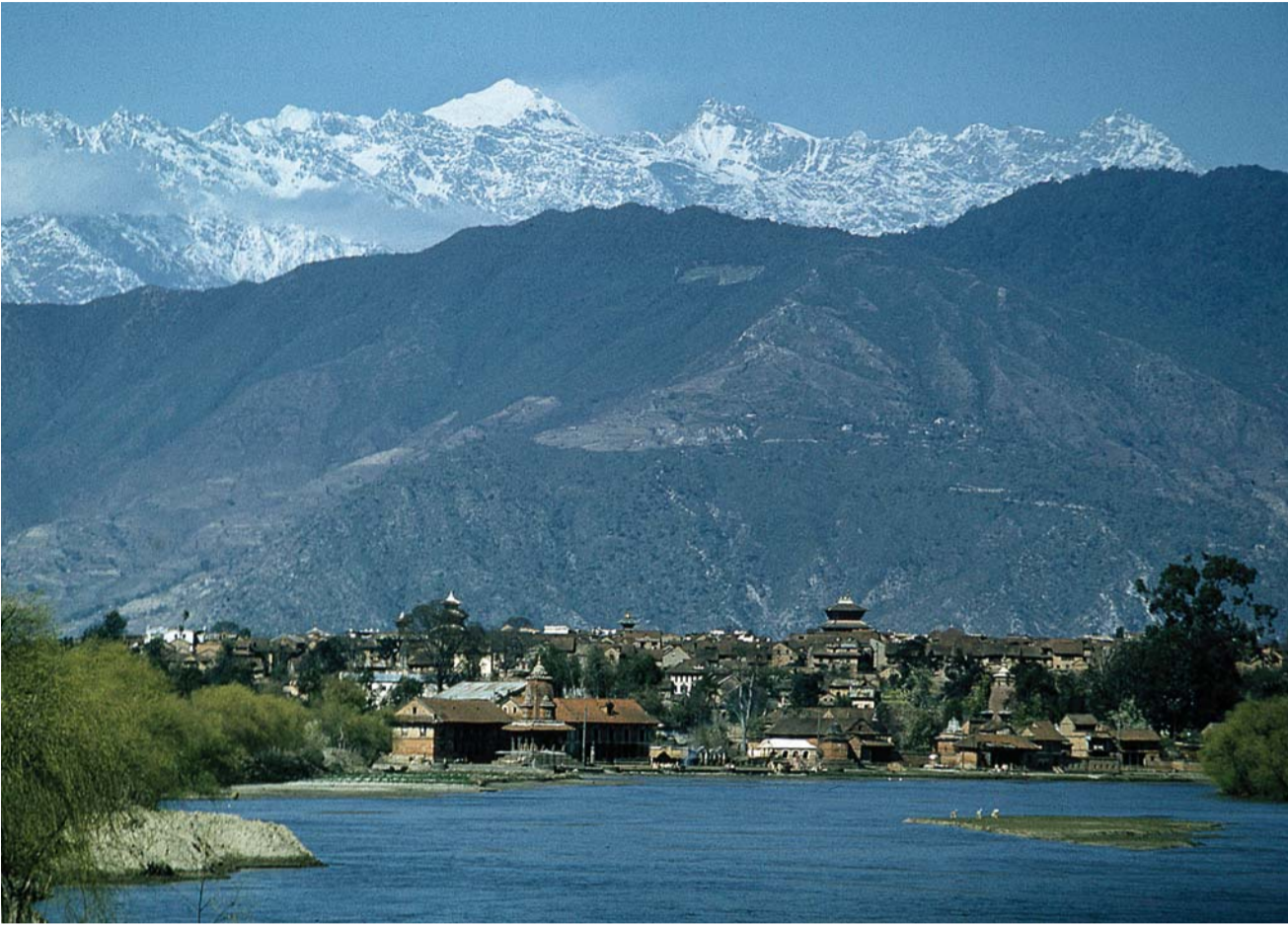
RATNA SHRESTHA/RSS

HEALTH BENEFITS: Minister for Education Girirajmani Pokhrel, Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Health Bhanubhakta Dhakal and others practiced yoga in Singha Darbar on Wednesday on the occasion of National Yoga Day.



NICOLA POLLITT/TWITTER

SERIOUS BUSINESS: British Ambassador Nicola Pollitt and Minister of Federal Affairs and General Administration Hridayesh Tripathi discussed support and capacity-building at provincial and local levels on Wednesday.



A new book of Toni Hagen's archival images of the Valley from six decades ago

Swiss geologist Toni Hagen first came to Nepal in 1950 and crisscrossed the mountains and plains on foot to find out what kind of rocks the country was made of. His detailed stratigraphic cross-sections of Nepal gave us for the first time an idea of what lay beneath our feet.

Along the way he also took thousands of photographs and films, which have been carefully archived by his family in Switzerland. Toni Hagen passed away in 2003, but his images constitute a time capsule of a land and a people, and show us the way we were.

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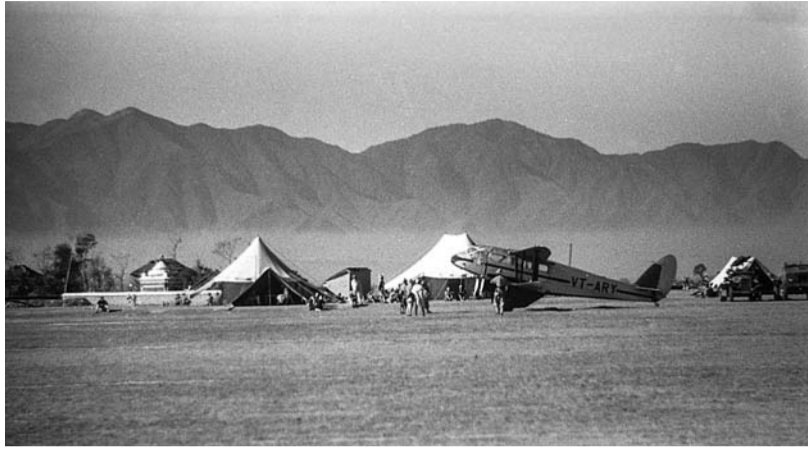
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capsule of Kathmandu



ALL OUR YESTERYEARS: (clockwise) The Vishnumati flows clean and blue as Langtang peers over Shivapuri ridge.

In December 1950 at Gauchar airfield in Kathmandu, a Haviland biplane hired by the government for Toni Hagen for an aerial survey.

The rice terraces of Kathmandu Valley as seen from Sangha, with Manaslu, Himalchuli, Annapurna II, Annapurna I and Machhapuchhre visible on the horizon.

Some of these photographs were included in the multiple editions of *Nepal* -- the book, first published in 1962, which introduced Nepal to the world and, through its Nepali-language edition, to Nepalis themselves.

Now, the Nepal Heritage Society has published another collection of Toni Hagen's photographs of Kathmandu Valley, some of which were included in an exhibition at the Nepal Art Council in 2015 on the centennial of Hagen's birth.

Toni Hagen: Photos of Kathmandu Valley 1950-1960 is edited by his physician daughter, Katrin, with extended captions by history professor Poonam Rajya Laxmi Rana. The book contains photographs that have not yet been published and accompanying historical text. This is an important work that shows us Kathmandu in aerial photography 70 years ago. Here we see neighbourhoods and street scenes no longer to be found, but also plenty of inner-city bahals and squares that have not changed much in the six decades since the photographs were taken.

"The photos and films by my father have immense value not only for the archives but for the studies of glaciers, as many of them have changed due to climate change," writes Katrin Hagen in her preface. "The pictures of the old days are somehow a cultural heritage ... there was no water supply, no sanitation facilities.

But the water of the Bagmati was clean, there was no plastic waste."

Indeed, the book allows us to travel back in time to a Kathmandu where the Bagmati reflects the deep-blue monsoon sky; dark, rain-heavy clouds drape the familiar outline of Pulchoki; and green paddy terraces encircle towns with earthy brown, sloping tile roofs. And, possibly because he was from Switzerland, almost all of Hagen's photographs have as their backdrop Nepal's snow mountains.

Buffaloes wallow in Chapagaun with Dorje Lakpa in the background. Oxen pull a plough as Ganesh Himal glistens on the horizon. Women in Kot Danda carry firewood, with the entire panorama of the Central Himalaya spread out behind them. In one photograph taken from Sanga on a clear day, you can see straight across Nepal to the Annapurnas.

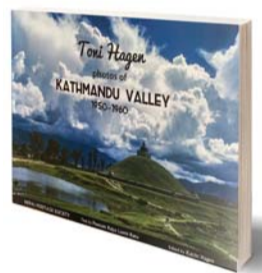
In 1950, Hagen chartered a six-seater Haviland biplane in Patna and flew it into Gauchar to take the first ever aerial photographs of Kathmandu Valley. One black-and-white photograph from above Hanuman Dhoka looking east towards Tundikhel shows just how much the city has changed and how much of it remains the same. There is Tundikhel with the khari tree in the middle, the temples of Kathmandu Darbar Square, Bhugol Park, the open

space around Dharara and the two-storey buildings of Khichapokhari.

Ambica Shrestha, President of the Nepal Heritage Society, says in an introduction: 'Sharing these photos reminds those who witnessed Kathmandu's past, and those who did not have the good fortune to do so, to see and experience the scenes and atmosphere of the time.'

Rana's explanatory text provides historical context for the images. The words accompanying the rare aerial photograph of Singha Darbar, for instance, trace the history of neo-classical Rana architecture. There is one anecdote about Jung Bahadur being asked by a foreign visitor why his palace did not have an indoor toilet. His answer: "We do not go to the toilet, the toilet comes to us." 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit



Toni Hagen: Photos of Kathmandu Valley 1950-1960
Edited by Katrin Hagen, Text by Poonam Rajya Laxmi Rana
Nepal Heritage Society
Vajra Books, 2019
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A shot in the arm for vaccines

As anti-vaccine rumours spread globally on social media, Nepal has a different problem: an unmet demand for immunisation

Sonia Awale

Last month, the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* published a study of the successful trial of a new typhoid vaccine that could prevent the deaths of many children around the world. The vaccine research was conducted at Patan Hospital by a Nepali researcher.

The randomised control trial of the typhoid conjugate vaccine (TCV) was conducted among more than 20,000 participants in Lalitpur district, and the efficacy of the new vaccine was found to be 81.6% -- a major improvement on previous vaccines. (See box).

The positive news from Nepal came as various parts of the world, including the US, Europe, Samoa and Africa, struggled to cope with the biggest measles outbreak in decades. Most of the cases have now been associated with people forgoing recommended preventive shots because of fears of side-effects fanned by social media.

Fear of vaccination started ever since a paper in 1998 in the medical journal *The Lancet* cited a link between autism and the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine.



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The research was later found to be fraudulent and retracted, but the anti-vaccine movement gained traction again in the past year after the rumours resurfaced on the Internet resulting in families rejecting early childhood immunisation against diseases like polio, rubella and measles.

“The good news is that unlike in the rest of the world, people in Nepal demand vaccines. If we miss to vaccinate a child for any reason, parents come knocking, asking for the shots,” says Jhalak Gautam of the Family Welfare Division at Teku.

Sameer Mani Dixit of The Centre for Molecular Dynamics

Nepal concurs. “Entire communities actively participate in vaccination programs and are well aware of the benefits. Every mother in Nepal knows the immunisation schedule by heart.”

The Centre for Molecular Dynamics Nepal has just completed a study on why the country has been so successful with its

immunisation program, and the results will be published later this month. This study and similar studies underway in Senegal and Zambia are being conducted with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in an effort to analyse the success of vaccination programs in developing nations.

Nepal’s national immunisation



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program started in 1988 and now vaccinates some 620,000 children under 15 months of age every year against 11 infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, polio, pneumonia and measles.

The last case of polio was detected in Rautahat district in 2010, and Nepal was declared polio free four years later. The country also eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2005. Similarly, Japanese encephalitis, diphtheria, pertussis and pneumonia have all been controlled, and there are regular vaccinations against congenital rubella syndrome and hepatitis B.

Despite the high immunisation rate, thousands of Nepali children continue to die due to easily preventable and treatable communicable diseases like diarrhoea and according to Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2016, one in a hundred Nepali children have still not been vaccinated against any infectious diseases.

Immunisation coverage data from last year also shows a worryingly high dropout rate. While 93% of newborns received BCG jabs, the first in the national immunisation schedule, the coverage dropped to 73% by the time children received the last vaccine, an immunisation against measles and rubella, recommended at the age of 15 months.

Several cases of measles have been detected in Kapilvastu, Dang, Makwanpur, Sarlahi and Manang districts recently, and Nepal has not been able to meet its previously set target to eliminate measles and

rubella by 2019. The new goal is to eliminate the diseases by 2023.

“Dropout rate is a challenge, we have not been able to reach the remotest corners of the country, and children miss their shots because of migration,” says Jhalak Gautam. “We now have a strategy to identify missed pockets and deliver shots at home if required.”

The Immunisation Section of the Ministry of Health is now gearing up for a nation-wide measles-rubella vaccination campaign aimed at those who might have missed routine shots. Three million children between the ages 9 months to 5 years are expected to participate in two phases of the campaign later this year.

Polio drops will also be administered at the same time to 1.5 million children under five in 19 Tarai districts. The Immunisation Section is also introducing a new vaccine against rotavirus this June to reduce the prevalence of childhood diarrhoea.

The new challenge to vaccination comes from an unlikely quarter: federalism. There is confusion about where the vaccines are sourced and who should pay for them. There is concern about the quality of vaccines, many of which need a cold chain with refrigeration to the point of delivery.

Warns Patan Hospital physician Buddha Basnyat: “Nepal’s immunisation program is a model of success, but we cannot afford to be complacent. We have to introduce newer and more effective vaccines while also prioritising hygiene and sanitation simultaneously.”

Successful trial of new typhoid vaccine



Over 20,000 children between 9 months and 16 years of age in Lalitpur district participated in the first large-scale randomised controlled trial of a new vaccine against typhoid, a disease that affects millions across South Asia.

Half of them received the vaccine and the other half received control shots. The efficacy of Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) was found to be 81.6%, and the results were published last month in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Prior to this, a small-scale TCV trial was conducted in Britain, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has since strongly recommend the use of the vaccine for countries and regions where the water and food-borne infection is most common. “Pakistan has been able to control typhoid with this vaccine and Vietnam has eliminated it,” says lead author of the paper, Mila Shakyia, “Administration of this new, effective vaccine by our government will help control the most common bacterial disease in Nepal and South Asia.”

Typhoid is a contagious infection caused by the bacteria *Salmonella typhi*, which is found in contaminated food and water and which causes fever, diarrhoea and vomiting. It can easily be prevented with awareness, safe drinking water and frequent hand-washing.

The vaccine is useful because it is a prophylactic in places where preventive measures are taking time to implement. There are some

21 million typhoid cases and 161,000 typhoid-related deaths annually worldwide. South Asia has been often dubbed as the hub of typhoid and there are some 500 cases per 100,000 population in the region.

“This study is Nepal taking a lead in preventing typhoid, after never having really prioritised it. It might not kill as many people as other diseases do, but it still affects thousands of school-going children,” says physician Buddha Basnyat at Patan Hospital.

TCV is not the first typhoid vaccine to be developed. Currently there is an injectable unconjugated polysaccharide vaccine for persons aged two years and above, and an oral capsule for those over six years of age. But they do not work well on young children and they provide protection

only for a few years. TCV on the other hand can be given to children below 2 years and the immunisation lasts up to five years.

“A single dose of the new vaccine is safe, immunogenic, and effective, and the deployment of the vaccine will reduce the burden of typhoid in high-risk populations,” stated the interim analysis. “This new evidence of efficacy is especially timely with the recent spread of extensively drug resistant typhoid fever, which threatens child health in affected regions.”


Pakistan, which has been struggling against an outbreak of drug resistant typhoid fever since 2016 is already using TCV with positive results and its Sindh province will become the first region in the world to include TCV in routine childhood immunisations.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which has earmarked \$85 million to fund the introduction of the vaccine in the world’s poorest countries, is supporting the program. Nepal is also eligible for funding from the alliance.

Says Basnyat: “We should take action before we are also hit, like Pakistan, by the drug-resistant typhoid. What are we waiting for, when Gavi is ready to fund the vaccination program for free and its benefits are so clear. This is a case of vaccine under-utilisation.”

Sonia Awale

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You think it's funny?

It has come to the notice of the powers that be that despite the IT Act, the Media Council Bill, and the Mulki Ain, there are still people ridiculing those who hold the highest offices in the land.

You, standing at the back, wipe that smirk off your face, otherwise you will face five years in prison or be fined 5 lacs, or both. You find that funny? Guards, seize that man. Take him to the dungeons, and tickle his armpits.

Yes, as I was saying before being rudely interrupted, it has come to the notice of the higher-up authoritarians that there is a disagreeable amount of uncontrolled and spontaneous laughter taking place in isolated parts of the feral republic. It goes without saying that such unrestrained mirth could spread, and undermine national security. It must be nipped in the bud forthwith. What is so hilarious, anyway? The government has amply ensured that the state of the country is no laughing matter.

Our founding grandfathers had the foresight to promulgate the Laughter and Satire Act 2073 BS which categorically states that in times of grave national emergency the state can, for a temporary period, suspend an individual's perfectly natural urge to giggle, snigger, chuckle, chortle, or even guffaw if the situation so demands.

Such a crisis is now at hand. Laughter could spread by word-of-mouth and foot-and-mouth, lowering the morale of our uncivil servants. It is to protect the organs of the state from grievous harm that the government is invoking the Claws 5 of the Laughter and Satire Act to ban all unauthorised jocular and mirth until further notice.

However, Nepal is a civilised state where there are some constitutional provisions to protect the universal right of citizens to, from time to time, let off some gas. There are people who, for medical reasons, cannot stop laughing. Others do not know whether to laugh or cry. For them, the government has announced a special nationwide anti-laughter vaccination campaign. Field trials have shown that administering jabs pre-tested on laboratory rats can halt an outbreak, and stop infectious laughter from going viral.

Diplomats are also exempt from the Laughter Ban since their conduct in the host country is governed by the Vienna Convention and its Annexure 13 (d) which states: 'In cases where the recipient state has suspended its sense of humour, consular missions and their resident staff will enjoy diplomatic impunity and be allowed to vent a little steam as long as they don't indulge in boisterous glee that could contaminate passersby.'

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister warned Nepal's heartless editors on Tuesday to be careful not to cross the line, since he who laughs best laughs last.



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