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SOLDIERING ON

At 100, Sher Bahadur Gurung has seen it all: two world wars, two great earthquakes. He fought and nearly died in the battle of Kohima fighting against the invading Japanese Army. Then the Gorkha Earthquake of 25 April nearly killed him. The old soldier of Kerabari is urging his sons to rebuild their house and plant paddy. He knows what it means to be knocked down and rise again.

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JANA ASEN BRENNEROVA

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eVisa

THERE IS A DRAFT

The text of the new constitution has regressive flaws, but it the best for now.
Let’s move on, and work to improve it as we go along.

Two months after the devastating earthquake, we now have some reason to rejoice: the much-awaited new constitution’s first draft is finally ready and the Constituent Assembly (CA) aims to pass it later this month. Nearly 60 years ago, the Nepali Congress had demanded an elected assembly to write a people’s constitution. And nearly 20 years ago, the Maoists launched a war to bring transformational change through a new inclusive constitution. That conflict ended in 2006, we are now entering the last lap in the nearly decade-long marathon that has been the peace process.

It has been a long drawn-out affair. Seven years after the first CA elections and almost two years after the second we finally have a draft of the constitution. It may not have the full backing of all the parties in the assembly, but it is impossible to have one that will satisfy everyone. Besides, the whole point about having an elected assembly to write the constitution is that the body more or less reflects the wishes of the Nepali people.

As expected, the RPP-N and some Madhesi and Janajati parties have rejected the draft. As soon as the document was presented in a late night CA session on Tuesday, Madhesi lawmakers tore it up and walked out of the hall. RPP-N lawmakers shouted slogans and disrupted the CA proceedings. Even some NC lawmakers opposed the draft.

We agree that the draft is seriously regressive on many counts: citizenship, gender and inclusiveness. But we have to take into account the context in which it is being drafted. The CA was not an agenda of the parties that now dominate it. They went along with it in 2005 to end a ruinous conflict through the Indian-brokered 12-point deal. Now, there is a new political leadership in India itself that takes a dim view of federalism, secularism and even republicanism.

The 2013 elections were a test of the Maoist agenda for the constitution. Their defeat proved that the people didn’t think much of it. The Madhesi torch-bearers of federalism lost in their own region. Janajati parties could not convince voters that identity was important. So, expecting a more progressive constitution from an assembly dominated by



status quoist forces may have been unrealistic.

Given the process, the new constitution will by definition be a document of compromise. Everyone has made compromises. The NC and the UML accepted more federal units than they wanted, identity as one basis for federalism, and a constitutional court to settle disputes between future provinces. The Maoists accepted the Westminster model and agreed to the word ‘armed struggle’ instead of their preferred ‘people’s war’ in the preamble. As with all compromises, no one is happy with the final document. But they agreed to sign it because that is the best they could do for now.

We feel, however, that the drafters should have been more receptive to the agenda of other opposition forces, particularly the Madhesis. The draft acknowledges all people’s movements, armed conflict and sacrifices, but does not mention the Madhesi Movement of 2007. This is an oversight that has hurt Madhesi sentiments.

On citizenship, gender, press freedom and other issues, the draft shows that our political leaders are in a time warp. The provisions on citizenship of Nepali women married to foreigners is grossly unjust and blatantly hypocritical. Putting in place a regulatory body for the press is fine, but giving it unlimited authority to muzzle the media is unacceptable.

The constitution’s draft has been rejected by the Madhesis and Janajatis mainly because it has deferred the names and boundaries of future provinces. They fear this is a ruse to sabotage federalism. We don’t think so. In fact, giving future provincial councils the rights to name their respective federal units will be the best test of true devolution. Why do the Madhesis from the Tarai or the Janajatis from the eastern hills need their provinces to be named by this CA, especially if they are such a minority within it?

If the regional political outfit which wants a province named ‘Limbuwan’ in the eastern Nepal seek their own identity, they now must prepare for provincial elections and convince the people about their agenda. They are burning the constitution because they got rights to name their own states?

The draft also gives the right to declare their own mother tongues as official languages of their respective provinces. People living in the Mithila region, for instance, now have the right to make Maithali an official language of their province.

The excluded should now build upon these rights to feel more as part of the Nepali nation-state. A constitution can never be a perfect book of rules. So, instead of dragging on this fight, let’s embrace it and work to improve it as we go along.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

REBUILDING

'We need to invest in infrastructure and encourage post-quake reconstruction through grants and soft credit for massive job creation ('Rebuilding ourselves', Editorial, #764)'. While I appreciate the editor's vision for a better Nepal, I seriously doubt that a Dahal, Koirala or an Oli will accomplish this. Until there's a change in leadership, I don't see Nepal heading towards a positive path.

Ajaya Rana

■ Does rebuilding mean that poor Nepalis will no longer have to go to Malaysia or the Gulf states to work as slaves?

Devika Shrestha

■ The leaders are focused on getting a decent type of shelter for the homeless ('The disaster is not over', David Seddon, #764). Once people have that, working, training, etc. becomes much easier.

Namah

■ It might be a good thing that only 1% goes to local NGOs. Nepali NGOs are notoriously corrupt. Taken as a whole, often more corrupt than the government.

Konchog Dorje

■ There are hundreds of excellent organisations delivering on the ground help ('Subcontracting kindness', Emily Troutman, #764). All funds to our earthquake appeal is being used in Nepal correctly!

Fionna Heiten

INTERIM ORDER

Legally speaking, does the Supreme Court ruling overreach the constitutional boundaries ('Interim order and interim constitution', Binita Dahal, #764)?

Itisha

■ First of all, the Supreme Court decision has not stopped the CA from drafting the constitution. The decision by Justice Girish Chandra Lal has merely pointed to the CA that the new constitution should represent each Nepali community's wishes. The CA cannot promulgate a constitution that sidelines Madhesis and minority groups which make up 40 per cent of the population.

As for the author questioning the objectivity of the decision due to the writ petitioner, lawyers, and justice all being Madhesis, do you know how many decisions are made by justices from Pahadi background? Should we just assume all their decisions are biased?

Deepak

■ The author is reporting a fact (that the protagonists in this court decision are all Madhesis), and that's a useful bit of information to readers. How is the author's act of pointing out this fact any different from the Court 'merely pointing out', as you say, to the government what the Interim Constitution says? Both are pointing out something that may have escaped the larger audience's attention. How can one be right and the other wrong?

Abhishek B

■ The mainstream media is delusional. The Interim Constitution explicitly mentions that the assembly should draft the constitution of Nepal as a federation. It can't run away from the mandate of people and achievements of the great revolution and Madhesi-Indigenous Uprising. Section 138 (a) of the Interim Constitution states that to respect the Madhesi and Indigenous people, Nepal will be a federation with states. The number of states and their boundaries will be decided by the Constitutional Assembly. They can't shy away from that now.

Amit Ranjan

INDIFFERENT REPUBLIC

When the generous and caring ordinary Nepalis become bureaucrats,

their mindsets mutate from the ruled class to a ruling class ('The Indifferent Republic', Foreign Hand, #764).

Gautam Shakya

■ The truth about problems in Nepal summed up in a very understandable way.

Sarku Subba

■ Interesting how a "fallen Catholic" remembers to point out the fallacies of Hinduism in an article about corruption and incompetence of the Nepalese political and bureaucratic class which really has nothing to do with any religion or belief.

BNS

WOODCARVING

Instead of teaching semi-useless European history/education to poor children, teaching them traditional arts could be more beneficial ('Carving out a niche', Sonia Awale, #764). These children can become future generation's master craftsmen.

Pauuan Thakali

ASS

Ass, your superb comments made me LMAO ('What's so funny', Ass, #764). Can't wait for next week's column. We need the laughter in our lives, and you are a big contributor. Keep it up, homie.

Sagar Rana

Times

THIS WEEK



Most liked on Facebook
From being a Maoist guerilla to an international marathon champion, the story of Mira Rai. (188 likes)

Most shared on Facebook
Mira Rai wins the prestigious Mont Blanc marathon. (40 shares)

Most popular on Twitter
Profile of Mira Rai (44 retweets, 40 favourites)

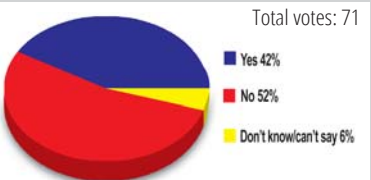
Most visited online page
Subcontracting kindness by Emily Troutman (2,095 views)

Most commented
Hold it right there by Bidushi Dhungel (17 comments)

Times

nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #765

Q. Do you think the Supreme Court overstepped its jurisdiction with its order on the 16-point agreement?



Weekly Internet Poll #766
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you think of the constitution draft endorsed by the Parliament?

A demonstration against the constitution drafting committee's decision to keep a controversial clause in the Citizenship Act that requires both mother and father of a child to be Nepali citizens to have citizenship by descent was attended by hardly 200 participants.

Netizens hit back at the change in the provision with the hashtag #citizenshipthroughmothers on Twitter and rights activists



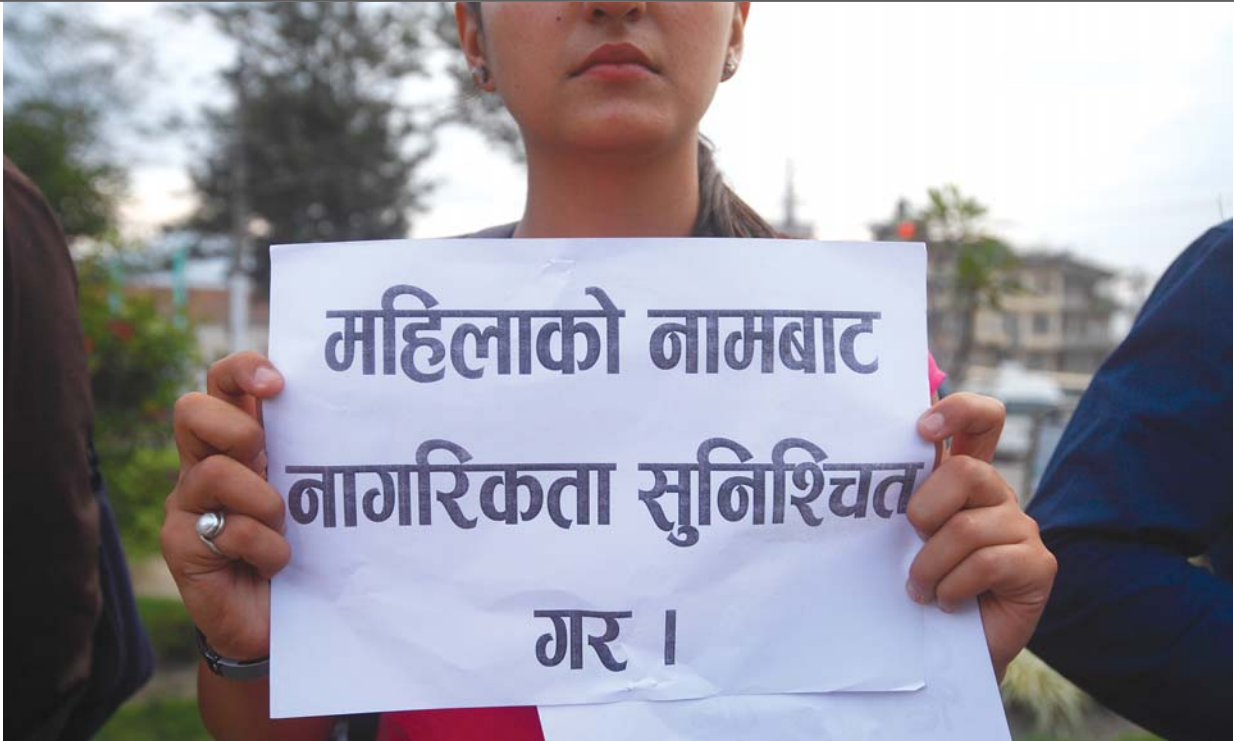
BETWEEN THE LINES

Tsering Dolker Gurung

lambasted the government calling it 'regressive'. But on the street, rallies demanding an amendment to the new provision were lackluster, had low turnout and unimaginative protest techniques.

Do we really believe we can convert leaders' apathy into concern, get them to listen and act by forming a human chain? Or by collecting thousands of signatures? The group we have the (dis)pleasure of calling our leaders are seasoned misogynist megalomaniacs who will just ignore them.

As with most social media campaigns, all the likes and



GOPEN RAI

#citizenshipthroughmothers

Discriminatory citizenship clauses should be a national issue, not just a gender one

support displayed online for the citizenship through mothers campaign has unfortunately not translated into on-the-ground involvement.

"It's sad because this is not just a women's issue. It affects each and everyone of us," said a friend who has been attending these rallies for the past two years.

One problem is that it has been framed as a women's issue. Presenting the provisional change as being unfair to women when Article 12(a) of Part 2 of the new draft reads: 'Both father and mother must be Nepali

citizens in order for a child to receive citizenship through descent,' doesn't fully justify the claim.

One may naively argue that the new law will create as much hassles for single Nepali fathers to get a citizenship for his child as would single Nepali mothers. But this is Nepal where things don't always follow a legal course, where a constitution that has been stuck in writing for eight years gets easily endorsed in a night, and where unwed mothers are treated as social pariahs.

This is why despite the

Interim Constitution of 2006 providing for citizenship under the mother's name, it remained largely unimplemented, leaving thousands of children of single mothers stateless.

Deepti Gurung's daughters are two of them. The tourism entrepreneur has been fighting a long, hard battle against a political, bureaucratic and legal system that is weighted against women. Her case was personally heard by ex-PM Baburam Bhattarai in 2013 who directed officials to look into the matter. They looked the other way.

"Men sitting behind desks

have reminded me that my husband's identity is a must if my children are to be citizens of my country," wrote Gurung in a column for this paper.

The consequence: Gurung's 18-year-old daughter Neha had to opt to study Law because admission to a MBBS program required proof of citizenship. Her younger daughter was almost denied permission to sit for her board exams but Gurung took the case to the courts which ruled in her favour.

Makes one question when a written law cannot guarantee a woman to pass on citizenship to her children, how much more damaging will the new provision be. And how many more Nehas will have to sacrifice their choice of study because of this flawed law?

Even more blatantly discriminatory is the provision on citizenship through marriage which requires a foreign man married to a Nepali woman to have lived in the country for 15 years and renounced citizenship of his native country before being eligible to apply for a Nepali citizenship. On the other hand, a foreign woman married to a Nepali man can immediately apply for Nepali citizenship once she has started procedure to renounce the citizenship of her birth.

All this seems to be the result of a xenophobic fear that Indian men will all stream across the border to marry our women and become Nepalis. It is this misguided pseudo-nationalism that leaves thousands of Nepali children stateless. And mind you, dear leaders they are both male and female. 🇳🇵

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EDC

The sun to the rescue

Rural solar systems will not just help quake survivors meet immediate power needs, but also help us build a renewable energy future

KISHOR RIMAL

Two months after the devastating earthquake, Nepal has proved to the world that despite the death and destruction it can rise up with the energy of youth volunteers, politicians and government to promote innovative approaches to cooperation in relief delivery.

The 2.5 million affected people are all trying to get back to normal life. As with housing, education, health, in energy too we need to think about building back better. Access to energy for lighting and heating is an immediate requirement for many families living in shelters. National-level hydropower plants were damaged and some will be delayed, most micro-hydro plants in the 15 affected districts were destroyed. Here is where local entrepreneurs can step in with village grids and other renewable energy sources like solar and wind.

After basic needs like food and shelter are taken care of, earthquake survivors need energy. This doesn't just help them get back to normal life, but can also boost the economy. Access to national grid was always a question even before the earthquake happened. However, this void opens up opportunities for another source of energy: solar power, which is free and reliable at least during the daytime.

Solar electricity can be used for Productive End Use systems that are stand alone photo-voltaic arrays designed to power specific equipments. They can power grinding mills,

dairy chilling units, vaccine fridges or water pumps. Local entrepreneurs can privately own these systems for businesses and serve local communities.

Nano Grids are centralised DC system typically set up to power clusters of communities for lights, mobile chargers and tv. A typical community consists of 20-25 households and each pays a monthly charge. In northern India, MeraGao Power has successfully implemented Nano Grid models. Although its service is limited to lights

and we have more demand here, the concept is somewhat the same. Access to energy at household and community level at affordable prices that are cheaper fossil fuels should be the main goal.

Productive End Use systems and Nano Grids help entrepreneurs to scale up their businesses and side-by-side serve the local community to expand the economy. Agro-processing mills, water pumps, and water purifiers benefit entrepreneurs as well as serve the entire community. The plan for sustainable energy is an immediate need at this point of time. We can't afford to buy fossil fuel and diesel generators again to serve the needs of people in rural areas.

We have many challenges to implement these systems for local business and communities. We first need to encourage demand-driven markets rather than the donor-driven ones. For the

moment, the solar industry cannot move ahead without subsidies from outside. Government line agencies and aid agencies must realise that a subsidy driven market cannot achieve sustainability. Donors can provide funds to pilot sustainable models that can be scaled up. If they need to be perpetually bank-rolled they will not be feasible.

The next challenge here is to develop effective financial models to deploy the systems in remote areas who have the most pressing needs for lighting and energy. They will not be able to afford the solar systems, and it is crucial for banks and micro finance institutes to come to the rescue.

Longer-term financing for Nano Grids and Productive End Use system will encourage people to switch to renewable, enabling them to not just deal with their short-term rehabilitation but wean themselves away from diesel generators in the longer term.

When people start making money from generating solar energy, then sustainability takes care of itself. We focused so much on lighting from solar panels that we forgot to demonstrate that solar energy is more than LEDs and mobile chargers. A centralised fund to finance Productive End Use and Nano Grid System could take Nepal on a path to sustainable energy development. 🇳🇵

This article is part of a monthly series prepared jointly with the Energy Development Council of which Kishor Rimal is a member.
www.edcnepal.org



prabhu Bank BIZ BRIEFS



Three in a row

Qatar Airlines has won the 'Airline of the year' award at Skytrax Airline Awards, 2015. This is the third time the airlines has won the honour. It was also chosen as the 'Best Business Class Airline Seat' and the 'Best Airline in the Middle East'.

New CEO

Sashin Joshi has been appointed the Chief Executive Officer of Nabil Bank. He has been signed for a four-year term.



Swing it

The first edition of the Carlsberg Golf series 2015, which is open to amateur golfers from across the nation, has kicked off. The remaining series of the three-series tournament will be played in August and October.

Sharing codes

Etihad Airways and Pakistan International Airline have signed a codeshare agreement. The airlines will use each other's codes in flights to various global destinations.



Partners

Bank of Kathmandu and Sakchyam Access to Finance Programme have signed a partnership agreement to open six new branches in mid and far-western regions. The new branches are planned for Bardia, Dang, Kanchanpur, Kailali, Pyuthan and Rupandehi.



Miami heat

Turkish Airlines has announced seven flights a week to Miami. Customers can travel from Istanbul to Miami and back from 25 October.

Lucky 12

Laxmi International, authorised distributor of Hyundai Motors handed over prizes to winners of its "Dashain, Tihar Missi, Badshah, Ekka" offer. Ten participants won a holiday trip to Malaysia-Thailand while grand prize winner Nawaraj Baniya received the new Hyundai i20 (Sportz) and Krishna Prasad Lamsal won the new Hyundai Verna 1.4.



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Burning issues

The legitimacy and ownership of the draft constitution will be seriously tested in the coming weeks



BIKRAM RAI

After seven years of enduring transition, when the Constituent Assembly of Nepal tabled the draft constitution this week, the entire nation should have celebrated.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Instead, the document was torn to pieces inside the CA and torched in several districts around the country.

Going through the 120 pages divided into 36 chapters and 296 articles, one can safely say this is not a badly written draft. But it

has some really dubious, if not objectionable provisions that reek of paranoia and xenophobia.

The good stuff first. There are elaborate directive principles of state policy which are motherhood and apple pie issues. Provisions like Article 35 boldly allow victims of environment pollution to sue wrongdoers. Article 36 makes basic education compulsory, while provisioning free secondary education for all. This must be matched by an equally bold education policy that guarantees high quality in public education, but first things first.

Sadly, the draft falls short on guaranteeing free quality state health care for all, escaping with the platitude of free primary health care. It is no secret that some of those involved in

statute drafting are among the biggest investors in the country's hospitals. The conflict of interest clearly shows.

But it is the second part of the constitution that lays out citizenship provisions that exposes the full paranoia of the drafters. For long women and the Madhesi have been treated as second class Nepalis, deemed unfit to acquire or unconditionally pass on citizenship to their children, because men in power cannot get over their obsession about the 'purity of the Nepali male blood'. A third class citizenship provision that denies children of Nepali mothers married to a foreign national (read: Indians) from exercising equal rights in this land defeats the very purpose of the sovereign exercise.

The missing puzzle to Nepal's citizenship debate is tied to the uncomfortable question of the open border, which even the victims of these provisions dare not raise. Ultimately, it is the state's responsibility to identify and confer citizenship to those qualified and not punish legitimate citizens.

A stateless Madhesi citizen is disqualified from accessing public services including water, electricity, education, banking, etc. They are neither qualified for formal employment, nor can they apply for business loans or have land rights. The only thing they pass on to their children is their statelessness.

The numbers may be debatable, but there are many stateless citizens in this country who are vulnerable to all kinds of

exploitation including political, and their number will grow if and when this draft comes into effect.


Then, there is the contentious Article 60, which threatens to indefinitely postpone the full exercise of the new constitution. By deferring federal demarcation to a future commission, the drafters are dragging the nation into a new interim order since most of the provisions of the constitution will remain dysfunctional in its absence. For seven years, we endured a protracted transition, only to be pushed back into another transition which has no time frame.

When I met lawyer Dipendra Jha few days back, he was preparing to lodge a contempt case against 601 CA members, Speaker and the Chair of Draft Committee for violating the Supreme Court verdict that had stayed implementing the 16-point agreement that served as a basis for statute drafting.

Article 138 of the Interim Constitution clearly mandates this Constituent Assembly with the task of taking final decision on state restructuring, Jha told me. But the 16-point agreement outsources this decision to the legislature parliament. But the UML's Agni Kharel, who is among the drafters, dismisses such charges and says the four parties will try to vacate any legal charges.

Meanwhile, all Madhes-based parties except Bijay Gachadar's MJF-Loktantrik have taken to the streets. As the copies of the draft constitution were being torched by small group of Madhesi leaders and activists at Babar Mahal on Wednesday, Sadhbhavana leader Laxman Lal Karna warned that if the big parties try to bulldoze through the constitution in its present state he would disown it.

In the coming weeks, the Constituent Assembly will deliberate upon the draft and take it to the public for opinion. The drafters must listen carefully to what the people have to say and be open to amendments.

Last time the architects of the Interim Constitution ignored moderate voices, extremists gained ground in Madhes. That mistake should not be repeated.  *@Anurag_Acharya*

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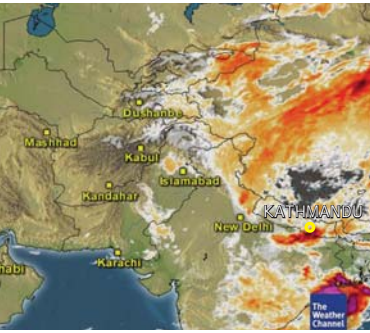
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The monsoon seems to be taking a breather after a weak start. Although this is good news for landslide prone areas of the 15 earthquake districts, for farmers across Nepal especially in the rain-fed fields of the central eastern Tarai this is a bad news. The monsoon reached northwestern India a week ahead of schedule but tapered off elsewhere. But forecasters in India say the monsoon will gather strength over in the coming week.

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THE QUIET WARRIOR

Two world wars. Two great earthquakes. At 100, Sher Bahadur Gurung knows better than most what it means to be knocked down and to rise again. The names roll off his tongue. “Kohima, Imphal, Chittagong, Rangoon...” The great battlefields of the Burma Front during World War II in which he fought. The soft-spoken man from Kerabari of Gorkha district came of age during a tumultuous period in the world history. He was born during the monsoon of 1915, when the First World War was raging in Europe. He was 29 during the great earthquake of 15 January 1934. “Even then, the Dharara fell,” he recalls. “Only two stories remained.”

The year after the earthquake he tried out for the British Gurkhas but was rejected due to an ear infection. The World War II soon began. The Japanese drove the British out of Burma in 1942 and were poised to invade India. Gurung recalls: “Judha Shumsher was the prime minister and he said we were needed to defend Nepal.”

Like most of the villagers of central and eastern Nepal, Gurung joined the British



FIGHTING SPIRIT: Sher Bahadur Gurung knows better than most what it means to be knocked down and to rise again. The 100-year-old fought against the Japanese in the World War II and survived the collapse of his house in the April earthquake epicentered close to his village. Gurung now lives in a temporary shelter with tin walls.

Indian Army in 1943. After a brief training stint in Peshawar, he was sent to the Burma border where British, Indian and Nepali soldiers turned the tide against the Japanese in the bloody battles of Kohima and Imphal 70 years ago.

“We were fighting the Japanese, but I looked like one,” chuckles Gurung, enjoying the joke. “The British officers in my unit called me ‘Jap’.”

The Allied forces lost more than 15,000 men in Burma, and 53,000 Japanese soldiers were killed. “We fought for each other,” Gurung says simply. “It had to be done.”

Today, having survived the collapse of his home in the April earthquake epicentered close to his village, Gurung lives in a temporary shelter with tin walls. Children come to him to hear stories, and their parents come for advice. He chats easily, a smile lighting up his face now and again.

“He used to be the most handsome man in the village,” his granddaughter says with a laugh. Gurung has aged gracefully. Slowed by arthritis and failing eyesight, he still smokes, and his favourite nightcap is raksi mixed with Mountain Dew.

Gurung is now urging his sons to rebuild the house and plant paddy to get things back to normal. He says quietly: “It has to be done.” 🇳🇵

ALL PICS: JANA AŠENBRENNEROVÁ

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MOVE

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E-mail: lemas.car@sykarhonda.com
www.honda.com.np

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Joshi Automobiles Pvt. Ltd. (Kathmandu)
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E-mail: joshiautomobiles@gmail.com
Swastik Trade Link (Narayangarh)
Lone Chowk | Ph. No: 9845141360
E-mail: tradelinkswastik@gmail.com

Reliance Trade Concern (Pokhara)
Tel: 051-528943, 9850035114, Fax: 00977-61-521733
E-mail: insp@fewanet.com.np, hondacar.reliance@yahoo.com
Amrit International Pvt. Ltd. (Butwal)
Butwal-11 Milan Chowk | Tel: 071-549704, 9857032211
E-mail: amritnondacar@yahoo.com

Buddha Enterprises (Birtamod)
Bhadrapur Road, Birtamod | Ph. No. 023-545562, 9802677377
E-mail: buddhaenterprises@yahoo.com
(Biratnagar)
Kanchantari, Biratnagar | Ph. No. 021-463805, 9802600517
E-mail: biratnagahonda@hotmail.com

MAROONED BY

LANDSLIDE REFUGEES

OM ASTHA RAI

After a 7.8 magnitude earthquake flattened his house, Muku Tamang, a 35-year-old farmer from the remote Sertung village of northern Dhading district, built a temporary shelter with a tarpaulin sheet dropped by a helicopter.

Tamang considered himself lucky because all of his five family members survived the

earthquake that killed 13 people in Sertung alone. “I thought the earthquake just destroyed my house, and I was certain I would rebuild it sooner than later,” he says.

But the earthquake turned out to be just the beginning of his hardships.

Monsoon rains have started triggering landslides on the unstable slopes, burying cropped terraces and houses that had withstood the jolt. Tamang lost most of his farm in a landslide on 15 June.

“There is no way relief supplies would reach my village, so we decided to walk down,” he says. “I was hoping I could feed my family with maize and potatoes that grew on my field but the landslide left me with nothing.”



BIKRAM RAI

MONSOON FEARS



PEREGRINE FRISSELL

PEREGRINE FRISSELL
in RASUWA

The road to recovery in Rasuwa is growing muddy. The slippery highway from Trisuli clings precariously to the mountainside, with a sheer drop down to the river. The craters on the road grow bigger with each monsoon shower. Relief trucks are stuck,

their tyres spinning in the brown puddles.

Alongside the road, the terraced slopes with transplanted paddy sparkle like mirrors, reflecting the clouds. In between there is corn and millet. And in village after village, stone and brick houses have gaping holes and collapsed roofs. Brightly coloured tarpaulin tents stand nearby, with salvaged family belongings crammed inside.

ROAD CLEARANCE: Villagers work to make the road from Saramthali passable for the aid trucks after a night of rain.

Residents in four VDCs have all received 16 corrugated iron sheets per household supplied by the group, Association for International Solidarity in Asia. The military has helped in the distribution.

The home of Tarkhuman Moktan is made out of the corrugated iron sheets, some of the only aid to make it to Saramthali. Though he lives alone, he received the same number of sheets as a family of seven.

Both schools in the area were also destroyed, and over 300 children are now attending classes in six A-frame tents all in a row made of bamboo posts and white canvas. Volunteers have begun to rebuild the school in the same site of the old one, and they are using the government’s earthquake-resistant building guidelines.

Though the school is not yet done, when completed it will be far sturdier than the homes in the areas. Many villagers have resigned themselves to a cold acceptance and crowded into the homes that provide the most cover from the rains. They have

neither the money nor the means to get down to Bidur, the nearest town in Nuwakot district. They just wait for relief workers to get here.

Khikuman Moktan has moved his family into his sister’s home, which is far smaller, because they are too scared to stay in his damaged one. The roofing material has reached his sister’s neighbourhood, but not his own which is just across the street.

The trucks and tractors may soon not be able to ply this road as the rains make it impossible to traverse. On a good day it takes two hours from Bidur to Saramthali, with landslides and mud it can take up to 11 hours, if at all.

When the road gets blocked, as it soon will, villagers will have to walk down the steep mountains to retrieve their aid, and back again with the heavy loads coiled across their back. It will take longer, be harder for the elderly and those with children, and villagers risk getting caught in the rain and landslides.

The new pickup point is in Nuwakot, and residents of Nuwakot are not receiving the same aid. Rasuwa villagers will have to trek with heavy loads through an area where the locals also desperately need help they have not yet received. 🇳🇵

TWO MONTHS LATER AT THE EPICENTRE

GORKHA -- In the hours after a devastating earthquake hit his home country, a Nepali NGO worker in Kabul met his supervisor to announce that he was going home to help.

Sudip Joshi, 26, worked for the Czech non-profit, People in Need, in Afghanistan. He knew he’d have to start from scratch, but was determined to make a difference. Within 48 hours, Joshi had hit the ground running in Gorkha to organise an emergency relief effort.

He put together a team of 18

young volunteers to first assess needs and deliver food, tarps, blankets and mattresses. Power lines were down, roads and trails destroyed by landslides and aftershocks continued, but they worked non-stop.

“For the first month, we didn’t take a day off. We were showering after four or five days, we slept in sleeping bags out in the open,” Joshi recalled.

People in Need is a mid-sized organisation based in Prague, but here in Gorkha it was big, working quietly and resolutely

in 15 VDCs completing its initial response in less than 10 days, filling the gaps left by bigger INGOs.

In order to avoid overlap and boost efficiency, local government agencies implemented a cluster approach: assigning relief groups to focus on specific sectors, such as shelter, food or water and sanitation.

With an on-the-ground team of just over 30, including volunteers, People In Need focused on food and shelter in Gorkha and Sindhupalchok. Mukesh Singh



YOUTHFUL ENERGY: Sudip Joshi was working in Afghanistan when the earthquake struck his homeland. He packed his bags and came to Gorkha to help out. Khaman Pariyar, 74,(right) lives in the Dalit neighbourhood of Kerabari. He and his wife lost everything, but the Czech group, People in Need, helped him rebuild.

THE MONSOON

Tamang's wife and three children joined an exodus of people displaced by the earthquake and ensuing landslides. They walked down for two days, finally boarded a bus and arrived at the district capital of Dhading Besi.

According to Dhading CDO Basudev Ghimire, villages in Sertung, Tiplung, Jhaplang, Ri and Lapa are threatened by landslides and need urgent evacuation. More than 550 people from 60 families from northern Dhading have arrived and are living in a tented settlement outside town to wait out the rains.

"Saving people from landslides in this monsoon is a huge challenge," he says.

Tek Tamang, 29, also left Sertung because it was impossible to live there: "The earthquake and

landslides destroyed not only our houses but also schools, health posts, water taps and water mills. The government must show us a safe place to relocate. Life is not easy here, the tents leak and the wind blows them off."

Landslides are now emerging as the next big disaster in the 15 mountain districts worst affected by the earthquakes of 25 April and 12 May. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) says the earthquakes have caused more than 3,000 landslides in central Nepal.

Apart from Dhading, districts like Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Gorkha, Dolakha and Kavre are at a high risk of landslides this monsoon. Thousands of families have abandoned their villages and have moved to wherever they can

live safely.

In Rasuwa, an earthquake-triggered avalanche on 25 April buried the whole village of Langtang, killing at least 200 people. Entire villages have been abandoned. More than 750 families from Haku are now living in temporary shelters in Dhunche and Betrawati. Rasuwa CDO Uddhab Prasad Bhattarai says six villages need to be relocated, but families there have no alternatives.

Sindhupalchok, where the earthquakes killed nearly 4,000 people, is probably the most vulnerable to landslides and many have moved to Kathmandu. As many as 54 of the total 68 VDCs are at risk. Says Sindhupalchok CDO Krishna Prasad Gyawali: "The earthquakes have torn the mountains apart,

we're afraid the landslides will kill more people than the earthquake."

In northern Dolakha, 22 VDCs were vulnerable to landslides even before the earthquakes. CDO Debendra Lamichhane told *Nepali Times*: "We're asking people to be alert particularly during and after heavy rains through local FM radios."

In northern Gorkha, the epicentre of the 25 April earthquake, as many as 12 VDCs are at risk of landslides. Lawmakers representing the district have visited many landslide-prone villages and asked people living there to move to safer places. But unlike other districts, most people in northern Gorkha have not abandoned their villages.

"We've identified some safe

places where people from the landslide-prone areas can be relocated, but they don't want to move out of their villages," says Gorkha assistant CDO Dipendra Poudel. Lack of basic needs like water, toilets, electricity, hospitals, schools and means of livelihood discourages people from moving out of their ancestral land.

All district administration offices have stockpiled relief materials and Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police have been on high-alert, but organised relocation of vulnerable villages is not happening.

Says Dolakha CDO Lamichhane says, "Geologists from Kathmandu are still preparing their report on which villages need to be relocated." 🇳🇵

FROM ICELAND WITH LOVE

When the earthquake struck Nepal in April, the faculty and students of the University of Iceland in Reykjavik immediately empathised. The mid-Atlantic Nordic island nation is no stranger to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the latest in 2010 of Eyjafjallajökull caused widespread destruction and also disruption of flights all over Europe.

Led by Nepali computer engineer Anil Thapa (*pic, right*) who is Team Leader of the Nordic High Performance Computing centre in Reykjavik, volcanologists, geophysicists, researchers, lecturers, professors and staff at the university immediately started a fund-raising drive called Earthquake Victims Support for Nepal.

Thapa, who has been an active fund-raiser for the Help Nepal Network (HeNN) took a part of his summer leave and with the money raised bought tin sheets, food and other relief items in Kathmandu and took them to his native district. While researching the relief so far, he found that the remote villages of northern Dhading had not received any help. So he set off for



Sertung and Borlang below Ganesh Himal.

"We didn't know what we were getting into," Thapa recalls of the trip last month. "It was an extremely rough 45km road from Dhading Besi and it took us two days to reach Borlang, with a six hours drive on a very rough road and another seven hours trek past dangerous landslides."

Nine people had died in Borlang, yet 50 villagers carried the 300 tin sheets, 100 tents, 100 blankets, sleeping mats and medical supplies to the village. Thapa was helped by a group of young volunteers from Kathmandu who rebuilt classrooms of the local school, two community toilets and 10 temporary shelters for villagers.

Two school children in the village were killed, the health post was destroyed, and needs to be rebuilt and staffed with a health assistant. *Nepali Times* caught up with Thapa before he flew back to Iceland, and he said: "We were a drop in the ocean, the need is great, but I am happy to have at least done something for my motherland from so far away." 🇳🇵

evsn.org



PICS: JANA ÅSENBRENNEROVA

Thapa, 27, had just completed his masters in nutrition in Israel and had no prior experience in emergency relief, but volunteered to get the supplies out.

"It was an amazing experience," Thapa said. "It was a race against time to get the material out before the rains. But we learnt as we went along."

Bishal Shrestha, 25, is a field engineer and helped villagers rebuild their houses with corrugated sheets. "The first few weeks were crazy, in places we had to cross landslides by holding onto the roots of trees."

People In Need focused on remote villages and marginalised communities bypassed by others. It mapped out villages that were cut off, and even within those found Dalit neighbourhoods usually excluded from services.

"We showed that with the right planning and dedication, you don't have to be a massive

organisation to make a difference," said Joshi. "The best part of all this is that we are all in our 20s and we are taking responsibility."

The three-month grace period to newly registered NGOs is about to end, and bureaucratic hassles are delaying relief work. The confusion at policy level is also discouraging potential donors.

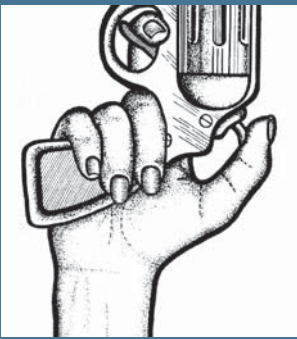
Constantly changing guidelines about relief supplies and operational standards haven't helped. "We want to follow the country standards, but we would like a consistent set of standards," said a senior official of an INGO on condition of anonymity.

Says People In Need's Maciej Perczynski: "If funds become available, we would like to move from relief to recovery and to help people rebuild their livelihoods." 🇳🇵

EVENTS

Something-Anything-Nothing,

Explore contemporary art by artists Sudeep Balla aka So Deep and Shraddha Shrestha. Drinks, snacks and music on the house. 4 July, 5pm to 8pm, Tings Tea Lounge and Lounge Hotel, Kathmandu, (01) 4414497



PechaKucha Inspire Nepal,

A new initiative by PechaKucha to encourage people all over the world to share their stories and experiences of Nepal in the 20x20 format. 3 July, 6pm onwards, Club25 Hours, Tangalwood, Naxal, Kathmandu

Citizenship debate,

Citizenship dialogue with Rita Sah and Subin Mulmi. 3 July, 3pm onwards, Martin Chautari, Thapathali

Heritage ride,

Ride 60km on your bicycle through Kathmandu's historic sites and spread the message of hope as the country starts rebuilding. Funds raised will go towards reconstruction of Kasthamandap. 4 July, 6.30am onwards, Basantapur Darbar Square, 9851074194, 9841729965, www.eventsinnepal.com/event/heritage-ride-to-restore-rebuild



Ecobriking 101,

Learn how to build your own furniture, garden and home from plastic waste and bottles, workshop by Russell Maier, founder of Ecobricks.org. Bring 600ml water bottles and soft plastic materials. 4 July, 2 to 4pm, Bikalpa Art Center, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, 9851147776, www.bikalpaartcenter.org

Motherhood,

A photo exhibition displaying images of motherhood taken after the earthquake in Nepal. 3 to 4 July, 3pm to 6pm, Mount Kailash Resort, Lakeside, Pokhara, (61)465703, nepalpx@gmail.com



Kathmandu Kora,

Join hundreds of cycling enthusiasts and ride for 50, 75, or 100 km to raise money for a birthing centre in Pyutar, Lalitpur. 18 July, 6.45am to 4.45pm, ride@kathmandukora.net, www.kathmandukora.net

French speak,

Admission open for July intake of students at Alliance Francaise in Kathmandu. 16 July to 28 August, Alliance Francaise, (01)4241163, (01)4242832, general.afk@gmail.com, www.alliancefrancaise.org.np

Waiting for Hughie,

Directed by celebrated Indian director and performance artist, Pranab Mukherjee, the play by Eugene O'Neill features Nepali actors Rajkumar Pudasaini and Aashant Sharma. Till 4 July, 12.30 pm onwards, Theater Village, Uttara Dhoka, Lajimpat, 9808041124, oneworldtheatreinnepal@gmail.com

DINING

Dan Ran,

The best Japanese food this side of Bagmati. Try one of the bento boxes with a fresh lemonade. Jhamsikhel, (01)5521027

Dechenling,

The place to head to for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, pleasant and spacious garden, also ideal for big gatherings. Thamel, (01)4412158

Black Pepper Café & Pub,

Cosmopolitan dining and fancy beverages in a traditional style courtyard. Try the apple sauce pork chops and enjoy the good service. Kopundole Height, Lalitpur, (01)5521897, (01)5536926

Dhokaima Café,

Enjoy the summer and chill with indigenous cocktails at the Rukhmuni Bar. Patan Dhoka, (01)5522113, dhokaimacafe@yahoo.com



The Vesper House,

Stop by for the best in Italian and all local favourites, in their breezy outdoors seating. Also a great venue for wine connoisseurs. Jhamsikhel, (01) 5548179, www.vespercafe.com

Kathmandu beer,

Enjoy a draught's flavour concentration from a glass, not a can or a bottle. Kathmandu Draught now available at House of Music (9851075172), Irish Pub (01-4416027)and Bunker's Hill (01-5533571).



Fire & Ice Pizzeria,

For the best Italian pizzas in town. Thamel, (01)4250210

MUSIC



Funk is back,

Get your dancing shoes on and welcome What the funk as they seek to bring the house down. 4 July, 8pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, www.facebook.com/wtfunkk



Double delight,

Trisara offers two great bands, two nights in a row. Dexterous on Friday and Fusion Mantra on Saturday. 3 and 4 July, 8pm onwards, Trisara, Lajimpat, Kathmandu, (01)4410200



Rock on,

Enjoy an evening with Robin and the New Revolution. Also try their fresh draught beer. 3 July, Rs 250, 8pm onwards, House of Music, Amrit Marg, Thamel, 9851075172

BAC Live,

Nepali folk-classical outfit comprising of table player Nabin Neupane, sitarist Anju Upreti and flutist Durga Prasad Khatiwada performs live. 3 July, BAC Art Cafe, Rs 200, 7pm onwards, Pulchowk, Lalitpur,

GETAWAYS



Park Village Resort,

Far away from the madding crowd, yet so close to the city. Budhanilkantha, (01)4375280, pvh@wlink.com.np

The Yellow House,

Bed and breakfast for the light traveller. Sanepa, (01)5553869/5522078, www.theyellowhouse.com.np



Mum's Garden Resort,

Head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages at half the price, surrounded by a lush green garden with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range. Lake Side, Pokhara, (06)1463468, www.mumsgardenresort.com



Gokarna Forest Resort,

A forest sanctuary to help you relax and breathe, and also encourages meditation, just a 20-minute drive away from Kathmandu. Gokarna, (01)4451212, info@gokarna.net

KATHMANDU ON TAP

Himalayan Brewery has recently introduced Kathmandu Premium Lager, which is also available in draught.

Draught beer is said to be best consumed within three-four days or up to a week of brewing. If it is maintained at the right temperature of 38F, it can stay fresh till 30-40 days as well. Beer consumption in Kathmandu has been increasing by five to ten per cent every year.

Ashish Pradhan, Brand Head at Himalayan Brewery says, "If you have the option to drink fresh beer, why would you drink the bottled beer? Draught Beer has a clean, crisp yet authentic taste."

Made with 100% 2-row malt, which is preferred by European Brewerers, it gives the beer a heavier and better taste on the palate.

Draught beer skips the final process of pasteurisation unlike bottled or canned beers. The freshness gives it a shorter shelf life but provides a more bona fide taste for those who appreciate a good beer.



GOPEN RAI

Pradhan adds, "Beer drinking has become more of a lifestyle and consumers have understood the significance of draught. An average beer consumer today has more diversified knowledge about beers."

Pradhan predicts microbrewing and homebrewing may be the next thing to look forward to in Nepal.

Sanjay Shrestha of House of Music, Thamel recognised the potential popularity of Kathmandu Draught Beer. "The first day we got draught beer, everyone chose draught beer over bottled beer. If the company can keep up with the quality and continuity as they have so far, I think the market is there," says Shrestha. "It is something new, and people want to try that."

Irish Pub in Lajimpat sells four to six kegs of Kathmandu Beer in just a night says Umesh Pun, a bartender at the bar. Kathmandu Beer is available on tap at Irish pub, House of Music and Bunker Hill. Anjana Rajbhandary

KARMA GURUNG

A dozen international tour operators bringing tourists to Nepal say bookings for treks and holidays in Nepal will be affected till next year and have urged the government to look into intrinsic problems of quality and safety that predate April's earthquake.

Travel advisories by western embassies in Kathmandu and high liability insurance in the past two months have affected holiday reservations till the spring of 2016, but Nepal's tourism is in decline even before the earthquake said participants at a three-day conference, 'Turning Point in Tourism' organised by Samarth.

"It took an earthquake for all of us to come and talk together. This says something about the lack of communication that exists in this market," said Mick Chapman of Himalayan Guides UK and Australia.

More than a dozen international tour operators from UK, US, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, along with their Nepali partners, attended the conference. However, the Nepal Tourism Board and government were conspicuous by their absence. The Board's Ram Adhikari left one panel discussion on Monday even before the floor discussion began.

"The international tour companies can only do so much, we need to hear from policy

Fixing tourism

Earthquake brings chance to set right concerns about quality decline and safety



KARMA GURUNG

makers who can actually bring a significant change to the tourism industry," said Suresh KC, a tour operator based in Kathmandu.

Indeed, a panel on travel advisories was attended by a sprinkling of Kathmandu-based diplomats, but what participants heard was not very reassuring. The only silver lining was the relaxation by New Zealand this week of its travel advisory. "We have lowered our risk level for Nepal, which was raised in the immediate aftermath of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in April," reads the updated advisory issued by the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Japan, while urging caution, also has not been dissuading its nationals from visiting Nepal.

While travel advisories, insurance premiums and safety were of immediate concern, many participants also raised grave concerns about the quality and professionalism of tourism services. Infrastructure bottlenecks and bureaucratic hassles were already affecting tourism from Europe, US, Australia and Japan.

Most governments said they were waiting for credible third-party risk assessment reports on trekking trails and heritage towns

in Nepal before easing their travel advisories.

The United States still bears a Travel Warning, which was last updated two months ago. The warning states: "The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Nepal and recommends that they defer non-essential travel there following the 7.8 magnitude earthquake on April 25."

While arrivals from India and China were compensating for the numbers, tourist spending, length of stay and the number of repeat visitors were already in serious decline even before April. Nepal was losing out to

competitive destinations in a globalised industry.

Although tourism had rebounded somewhat after the royal massacre and the conflict, political disarray, the poor condition of Kathmandu airport, expensive flights, the Everest avalanche has raised concerns about security and the handling of rescue.

"It costs more to fly to western Nepal for a tourist than to fly to Europe," said Jo Chaffer of KE Adventure, one of the largest independent adventure tour operators in UK. Other operators suggested that Nepal should diversify into emerging tourism attractions like mountain biking and family treks.

Nepal's tourism sector has seen a significant shift in its major clientele from traditional European markets to a more Asia focused with an increase in Chinese tourists over the past few years. But the product range travel services remain the same.

"We in the industry can't just say Nepal is safe," Chaffer said, "insurance companies want a third party assessment report that is credible and has quality data sources." Some private companies have sent their own trekking guides to survey routes and assess safety, but this may not be enough to convince embassies and insurance companies.

One report commissioned by Samarth and carried out by Minamoto International to assess the Annapurna and Khumbu routes is expected to be released this week. Moving forward it is clear that the tourism industry does not only bear the burden of the short term losses due to the earthquake but also improving the quality of its tourism infrastructure and services. 🇳🇵

The Third Eye

The Third Eye, a trendy Indian and continental restaurant in Thamel, exudes a confidence that is fitting of its name. From its ambitious low-season remodeling plans to its Wi-Fi password ("since1989"), this is a dinner date possibility with an injection of locally-manufactured swagger to keep in your back pocket.

At three stories tall, the restaurant is no hole-in-the-wall. Amongst its floors include two large dining rooms, a comfortable indoor smoking room, group dining room that can be reserved for parties, and rooftop adorned with well-watered blooming flora. The rooftop has no cover, but that's ok. Filled with traditional lanterns and beautiful mahogany bars, the lower floors would be a wonderful way to weather any rainstorm.

Despite the vast size of the establishment, service is excellent. The menu is mid-sized but basic, with recommendations from the wait staff circling around popular choices such as the Chicken Tandoori and Chicken Tikka Masala.

The lack of a happy hour deal on beverages is somewhat made up for by as good a beer selection as you will find in the



area alongside a cocktail menu that allows you to substitute domestic spirits to save some rupees and contribute to the local economy as well.

The dishes average a good 100-200 rupees more than what you'll pay for the same thing at other nearby Indian places. There is also a crippling 10 percent service charge and a 13 per cent VAT tacked on to your bill at the end.

The true gem of our meal was the Bharwan Kulcha (Rs 195). This breaded flour-based flatbread is stuffed with spicy cottage cheese, potato, and spices. Best of all, it is cooked fresh to order and comes steaming in a basket. It's nice and thick, and



PEREGRINE FRISSELL

as such remained warm and soft throughout our meal. It pairs excellently with the Mixed Vegetable Korma (Rs 505), which is beautifully seasoned. The vegetables were a bit unevenly cooked, but that were carefully rendered so as to not overpower the cashew

nut gravy and also allow you to maintain full appreciation for the quality of the Bharwan Kulcha.

The Chicken Tikka Masala (Rs 575) was a bit rich for our taste. The chicken was tender and boneless as claimed, but the nuanced taste of the spices was lost in the pervasive power of the tomato sauce. We tried it with the Third Eye Special Naan (Rs 215), which was covered in roasted nuts for a robust and filling accompaniment, but wasn't as fresh as it could have been.

The pot of green tea (Rs 170) we ordered was not strong, but had a delicious, deep flavour. The complementary poppadum with mango chutney was a nice addition, and made us feel a little better about that inflated bill.

The final prognosis? No need to rush out, though you should keep it on your radar for future dinner dates particularly business-related ones. This is partly because they are taking some time in the coming two months to remodel their (admittedly huge) kitchen. They plan to reopen beginning of September and serve better food than ever. That's good, because just a tad more quality on that end and this could become a juggernaut well worth the price in Thamel. 🇳🇵

Peregrine Frissell

How to get there: Walk south from Kathmandu Guesthouse and The Third Eye is located on your right, opposite Roadhouse Café.

Khukri SPICE RUM

Blended with Select Spices and Himalayan Herbs

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Khukri XXX Rum

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Outlander

When I first read about the *Outlander* series I was sceptical to say the least. Based on the seven beloved novels (plus a few novellas in-between) written by Diana Gabaldon, a



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

scientist turned historical fiction writer (Gabaldon has a Ph.D. in Behavioural Ecology), the highly anticipated television series was already a smash hit by the time I had caught on.

So why was I hesitant? Well, here's a summary: the plot is based on a World War II nurse,

Claire Randall (Caitriona Balfe) who travels to Scotland just after the war with her historian husband, Frank (Tobias Menzies), who is due to begin his tenure as a professor at Oxford after serving in the war.


Sounds steady enough, right? Imagine my surprise when good old intrepid, outspoken Claire manages to get herself transported back in time to 1743 A.D. through an ancient circle of stones in Craigh na Dun (think a mini Stonehenge) when she goes off walking on her own in the Scottish highlands while her husband is caught up in some fusty old historical records.

As Claire struggles to process her very drastic change in circumstances, she gets by due to her wits and her knowledge of modern medicine which makes her a valuable asset in a rural, very feudal Scotland that would

otherwise have rendered a lone English woman helpless.

By the time she gets well and truly caught up (pretty much embroiled really) in the politics of the MacKenzie clan, and the arms of Jamie Fraser (the terribly dashing Sam Heughan) I was pretty much wrapped up in this odd concoction of historical fiction, fierce fighting, magic, and romance. A part of me did feel just a bit sorry for poor old Frank, who is looking frantically for Claire in the 20th Century.

If this all sounds just a bit too much, I can't really blame you. However, the writing (both in the novel and the TV series) is excellent, made so with intensive research and a precise blend of adventure and practicality with minute attention to period, that it is hard not to be swept away into the mid-18th century, with its intrigues, dashing kilted Scots, scheming Jacobites, and other mysteriously intentioned characters.

Claire and Jamie too are also one of the most romantic couples in recent literature, well matched in wit, doomed to perhaps be separated by uncontrollable circumstances. Perhaps this is why the series has been so long lived on paper, after all, how better to keep people hooked than to create two feisty, highly attractive, brainy young lovers who might be kept apart by an essentially existential conflict? 

 nepalitimes.com

■ Trailer 

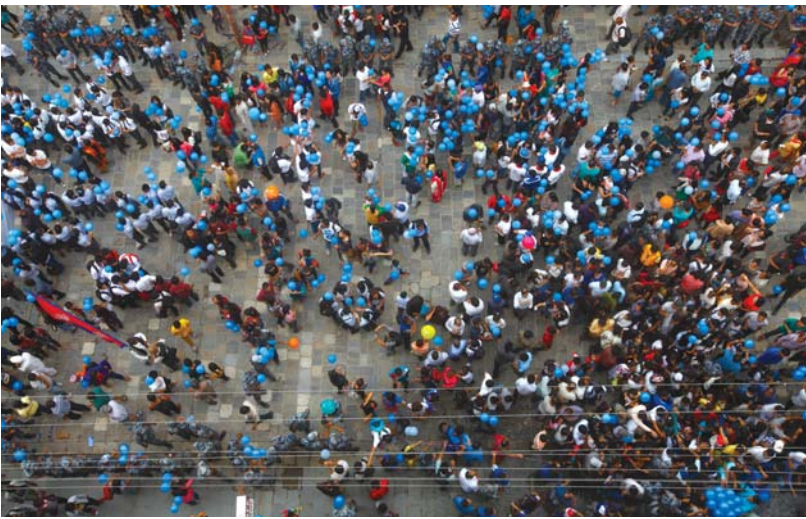
HAPPENINGS



THE 'C' BOOK: Members of the CA's constitution drafting committee speak to media after endorsing the final draft of the constitution on Sunday.



IN OPPOSITION: Parliamentarians from Madhesh-based parties walk out of a CA meeting opposing the draft constitution on Tuesday.



LET IT GO: People wait to release balloons at a memorial for earthquake victims at Basantapur in Kathmandu on Saturday.



FAITH HEALING: Volunteers of the Tzu Chi Foundation participate in a prayer ceremony at a relief distribution program in Kathmandu on Sunday.



GOLD RUSH: Hundreds of yarsagumba pickers set on to collect the valuable fungus at Meli in Dolpo.

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Ethical challenges to advertising

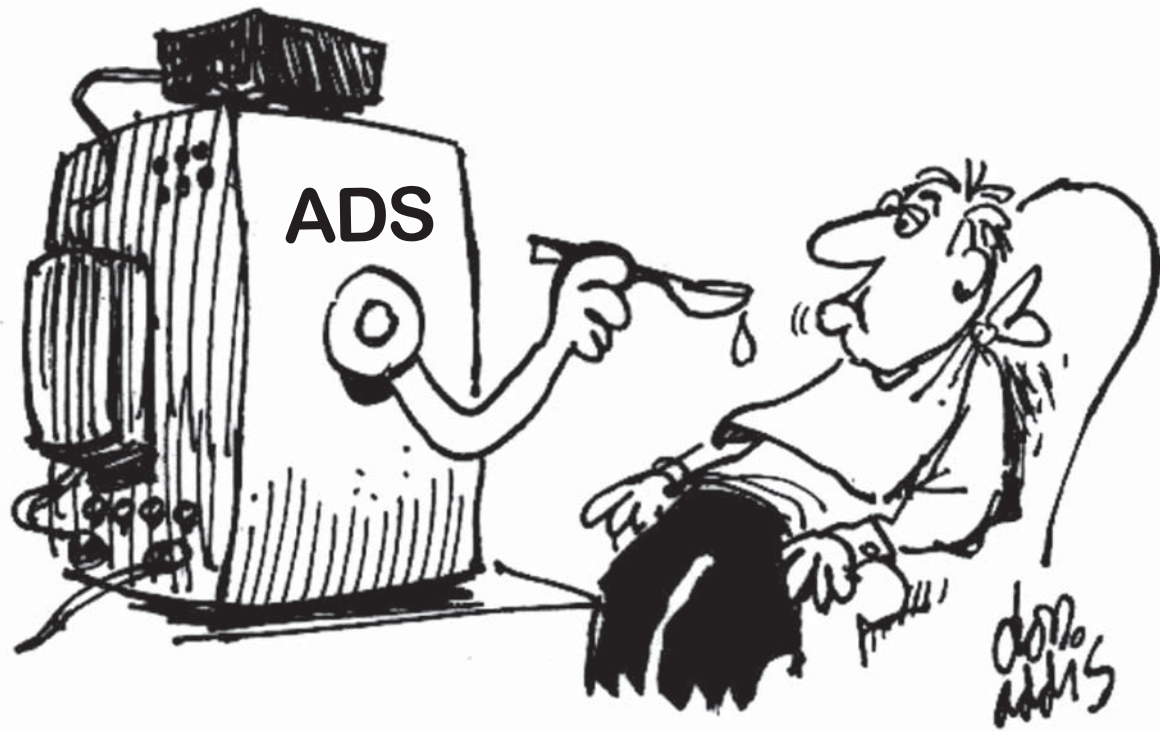
HAZEL HENDERSON

Challenges to advertisers and marketers arose in the past century. Critics deplored the role of cigarette marketers who exploited the aspirations of women by associating smoking with liberation. Such manipulations were explored by Vance Packard in *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), along with Marshal McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* (1967) and Stuart Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness* (1974). The use of subliminal advertising (rapid flashing of product images faster than human cognition) was challenged and the public discussion led to its disuse.

By the 1980s, Ian Mitroff and Warren Bennis described the deliberate manufacturing of falsehood in *The Unreality Industry* (1989), followed by William Schrader's *Media Blight and the Dehumanizing of America* (1992), Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (1999) and Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (2005). Fast forward to today's ethical challenges.

Political advertising of candidates was likened to selling toothpaste as it emerged in the 1970s and summarised by Charles Lewis in *The Buying of the President* (1996) and James Fallows in *Breaking the News* (1996). Today, the gutting of restrictions on money in U.S. elections has led to the well-financed blizzard of attack ads that lead millions of voters to turn off their TV sets in disgust. Media corporations and their TV channels have come to rely on such financial bonanzas during elections.

What this confirms is that advertising



influences media owners and the content of programmes and often distorts news coverage, leading to subtle commercial censorship rarely recognised as a threat to free speech in the US Constitution's First Amendment. Civic groups limited funding precludes challenging false and misleading advertising and the greenwashing of many companies' poor environmental records.

This is why I founded the EthicMark Awards for advertising that uplifts the human spirit and society.

These Awards recognise that advertising, a global 500 billion dollars a year industry, can be a powerful force for good beyond consumerism, in educating, inspiring and showcasing the best innovations for growing more inclusive, greener, knowledge-rich and

sustainable societies. The newest challenge to advertisers comes from Silicon Valley with the many apps that allow users to skip and block ads, including AdBlockPlus (downloaded 400 million times), as well as add-ons to Chrome and Firefox browsers. Ad block users have grown to 200 million a month, according to PageFair.

Advertisers could redeem their reputations and business models via Truth in Advertising Assurance Set Aside (TIAASA) which would disallow their tax exempt funds on false advertising and then award these funds to civic challengers to hire ad agencies to prepare counter-advertising campaigns. All this highlights the growing vulnerability of media business models in the United States, other industrial societies and worldwide.

Many new media business models which no longer rely on advertising are debated in *The Death and Life of American Journalism* (2010) by Robert McChesney and John Nichols who compare media access policies in many countries which subsidise investigative journalism, such as the BBC. In the United States, foundations support news organisations such as the *National Geographic*, the Center for Public Integrity and ProPublica, and media outlets such as the *Columbia Journalism Review*. *The American Prospect* and *The Nation* are largely funded by subscribers as well as PBS and NPR in broadcasting, along with many internet-based media such as The Real News Network.

Google banned ad-blocking apps in

2013, yet alternative web-browsers such as UC Browser already claims 500 million users, mostly in China and India, and Eyeo launched its ad-blocking browser available for mobile devices running Google and Android. These battles will rage on until legal systems always lagging behind technology catch up. Two reports from the Aspen Institute's Communications and Society Program led by Charles Firestone *Navigating Continual Disruption* and *The Atomic Age of Data* discuss the digitisation of ever more sectors of industrial societies and the internet of things (IoT).

In the United States, the monopolising of internet access by Comcast, AT&T and Verizon has restricted broadband access to millions in less affluent, rural communities and prevented small towns from competing with public broadband systems, as reported by the Center for Public Integrity and Susan Crawford in *Captive Audience* (2013). The good news follows the analysis and proposals of Kunda Dixit in *Dateline Earth: Journalism as if the Planet Mattered* (IPS, 2012) and includes Dan Gillmore's *We the Media* (2004) on grassroots journalism; David Bollier's *In Search of the Public Interest in the New Media* (2002); *Democratizing Global Media* (2005); *Making the Net Work: Sustainable Development in a Digital Society* (2003) from Britain's Forum for the Future; and Jaron Lanier's *Who Owns the Future?* (2013). 📧

Hazel Henderson is president of Ethical Markets Media (USA and Brazil) and author of Mapping the Global Transition to the Solar Age and other books

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Cheating hearts

Hello everyone,
In most extramarital cases, husbands stray while wives stay. It appears that most men feel having an extramarital affair does not endanger their marriage as they believe the affair is acceptable



ALL IN THE MIND
Anjana Rajbhandary

to their wives, since they are the providers. However, men tend to be less tolerant and forgiving when the wife has an extramarital affair. Cheating breaks a relationship and worse it permanently affects the child/ren who are caught up in between. How can someone grow up valuing love and marriage knowing

their parents have cheated?

Please send me more questions to: askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com or @AnjyRajy

"I recently found out about my dad's affair, although I had been suspecting it for awhile. Mum knows about it too. We think he might have a separate family with the other woman as well. My mum is in denial and doesn't know what to do. I am also in dilemma since I don't know if I should patch them up or tell my mother to file for a divorce. Part of me wishes things would resolve but I can't stand my dad treating my mum and I like this. What should I do?"

AR: I am very sorry that you and your mother had to find out this unfortunate truth, and

that this has been going on for a while. Personally, I don't see any excuses for cheating: once you break someone's trust, it's done. It's easy to say, let go and move on but in our society it is much harder for women to bounce back even when it is not their doing. The embarrassment of what people will say will probably haunt you, but remember this is your family issue and it is not society's business. Your father is clearly very selfish as he did not think of your mother or you when he decided to cheat, and it is sadly impressive how he managed to hide it for so long. I actually feel sorry for him because he was not able to see what he has lost in this process, and it is your respect and trust.

I can understand the pros and cons of why you may want them



back together or not, but in the end it is between your parents. I would suggest try to be supportive of your mother because right now, she needs you. Try to stay strong for yourself because it cannot be easy to see your main male role model fall from the pedestal, but remember not to let this affect how you see men in general. This will be hard for sometime but trust me, with time it will get easier and you will overcome this. It is okay to be upset and angry, but remember that there are

good people out there who will appreciate and value you and will never do anything to hurt you, and that is something to always look forward to. Sadly, your father is not one of them and it is his loss. Stay strong for yourself and your mother, this too will pass. See a counsellor if needed. I will be thinking of you. Good Luck. 🍀

Anjana is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician and has four years of experience in adult mental health in Maine, USA.

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GIZMO by YANTRICK

Quake alert

The 25 April earthquake killed over 8,000 people and reminded millions of Nepalis just how seismically active Nepal is. Although the damage from the 7.8 quake was far lower than predicted it would be unwise to forget the dangers of quakes.

In the long-term, we must focus on retro-fitting old houses to make them more earthquake-resistant and implementing tougher building codes so that the newer structures are more capable of withstanding a jolt. And even as our ministers and government officials turn their attention from earthquake relief to constitution drafting, it is worth remembering that even something as basic as investing in early warning systems like quake alarms will help save lives and limbs.

Manufactured by JDS Products, an American company with more than two decades worth of experience in the safety products market, the Quake Alarm is a simple, yet extremely effective device. Weighing in at just over 900 grams and a mere eight inches in size, the alarm is extremely easy to mount to wall. The white casing houses a nine volt battery (with five years warranty) and powers the device. But it's the reverse pendulum detection system which endows the alarm with life saving powers.

When an earthquake strikes, two types of waves emanate from its epicentre: P waves (compression waves) and S waves (shear waves). While the P waves travel faster, the S waves, although slower, carry the quake's destructive power. When the Quake Alarm's pendulum detects the speedier P waves originating from hundreds of kilometres away, it produces a loud, distinctive sound warning residents of the impending quake. Depending on how close and deep the epicentre is, the gadget can provide up to 30 precious seconds for its owners to flee to safety.

Although you can't really put a price on the valuable seconds the device gives you by eliminating the guesswork involved in detecting an earthquake, Quake Alarm can be ordered from Amazon or Harilo.com for approximately Rs 6,000 (including VAT, service charge, and shipping). A small investment today will go a long way in protecting hundreds of lives tomorrow.

So prepare your earthquake survival kits, practice your safety drills, and when the alarm goes off, gather your loved ones and head to safety. 🍀

Yantrick's Verdict: With fault lines along the Himalayas ready to snap any time, the Quake Alarm is an absolute must for every school, office, and home in the Valley.



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GIRL TALK: PERIOD

More than 20% of girls miss school during their period finds a new study

ANJANA RAJBHANDARY

When girls hit puberty, it is a time of much excitement and significant trauma resulting from the amount of changes that take place.

Opposite (and/or same) sex start to look more attractive, irrespective of their actual appearance for which one can blame the hormones. Here we will discuss what unique situation puberty puts girls in. Different cultures have different customs and perhaps a more or less, 'traditional' view on the subject.

It is politely called 'that time of the month' or 'period' and more scientifically called 'menstruation'. I will not assume men have much knowledge on the topic as recently a 25-year old male friend asked how often this "incident" that makes women more emotional occurs. *Mahinabari* (menstruation in Nepali) happens once a month, on average.

First for those who are more informed, when women get their period, they don't want to twirl, they don't want to go swimming in white bathing suits or play competitive field hockey with a huge grin on their faces.

An aunt once told me, "You



ALEKSANDRA PERCYNKA

are lucky because in the past, when chaupadi was widely practised, women had to sleep outside in the shed with cows."

In Kathmandu even in present day, most households don't allow women having periods into kitchens, temples, or let them eat with the family, touch the tap or sleep on their beds.

Mitini, an initiative of Mitra Samaj, started with a vision to break these taboos. In February 2015, the organisation found more than 20% of female students missed four days of classes in a month during their menstrual period. Almost 98% of the students said they would go to school if sanitary napkins were provided.

Shreyana Shrestha of Mitini said, "Across the hard hit earthquake areas, the need for

sanitary napkins was highly prevalent. We provided a month's supply of sanitary napkins." Mitini is now entering the second phase of its distribution program.

Lack of proper hygiene and privacy during periods is one of the main concerns for women living in tent shelters.

In some rural parts of Nepal (and certain parts of Kathmandu), girls are not allowed to touch books during and after their period for three to seven days. This leads to them falling behind in school and ultimately dropping out.

A modern 24-year-old educated woman said she is not allowed to touch plants during her period.

Another educated professional was emotionally

coerced into going to a cousin's wedding to show her respect yet not allowed to participate in the ceremony. "I just sat there on a plastic chair 50 feet away watching it all happen, and my entire family and their friends knew I was having my period."

Girls and women are made to feel ashamed for this natural process and then treated like an outcast in home or social setting. Isn't this a form of discrimination in the name of religion? They say, God will be upset.

This is not meant to disrespect any culture or tradition, but to address the levels of awkwardness and discomfort experienced by

women. Haven't we moved forward enough in the world to not scrutinise women who may be having their period?

The other side is that if a girl or woman, never gets her period, she is considered 'barren' which also does not have a positive connotation. You just cannot win.

It's important to teach young girls that having periods are natural, and it is nothing to be embarrassed about. Society will always find a way to test you and make you uncomfortable, so it's up to you how much power you let society have over you. We have a long way to go for this to apply in rural areas, but in cities like Kathmandu this obsolete treatment needs to go.

We have learned to live and dress like the Western world, shouldn't we at least try attempting to treat women the same way too? 🇳🇵 @AnjyRajy

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Mechanised farming and cooperatives are increasing productivity, empowering women and creating jobs



Nepal's quiet green revolution

SONIA AWALE
IN SUNSARI

Sweat trickling down her face, brow furrowed in concentration, Sabita Chaudhary steers her power transplanter with precision, seeding paddy in neat rows on a flooded field. The seedlings are stacked in trays at the back of the machine which plants them over 1.5 hectare land in one hour, a job that would have earlier taken 25 people two days to do.

Even as Nepal's annual rice production keeps dropping due to the shortage of farmland, fragmentation of holdings, labour shortage and falling productivity due to government neglect, here in the plains of eastern Nepal there is a quiet green revolution happening.

"I was scared of the machine in the beginning but now I can't imagine planting with my hands," said Chaudhary, while

she took a break on Tuesday, observed as rice planting day. She was among 25 women trained to drive power tillers and transplanters by the Biratnagar-based Nepal Krishi Company which is working with farmers' groups to mechanise and improve productivity.

Nepal's average annual paddy harvest is 6 million tons, and another 600,000 tons is imported from India. However, cheaper Indian rice is a disincentive for many farmers. Harvests are also stagnant because arable land is shrinking: Morang district alone lost 10 per cent of its area under rice cultivation to urban sprawl in the last ten years.

"If we can increase average production by one ton per hectare, we will not have to import from India, and we have proved that Nepali farmers can achieve that," said Rajendra Uprety at the District Agriculture Office in Morang, who has convinced farmers to switch to System of Rice Intensification (SRI), a

technique which allows farmers to double crop yields with half the amount of seeds.

Combining SRI with mechanisation and setting up farmers' cooperatives, boosts productivity, creates jobs and empowers many women like Sabita Chaudhary. If what is happening here can be scaled up to the national level, Nepal could even export rice again.

"We are aiming at a paradigm shift in the way we do agriculture," said Birendra Basnet, founder of Buddha Air whose interest in farming led him to set up Nepal Krishi Company which now helps four cooperatives in Sunsari and Morang to upgrade management and mechanise agriculture.

Using power tillers to level fields, transplanters for seeding, weeders and harvesters makes SRI even more viable by saving time and cutting waste. SRI plants 10-day old seedlings one row at a time so that weeders can be used. This system needs less water, and

BEST JOB IN THE WORLD: Sabita Chaudhary, 25, drives a transplanter seeding a rice field in Morang on Tuesday (*above*). Twenty-five farmers would have spent two days to transplant rice in this 1.5 hectare field that she finished in just one hour.

Trays with 10-day-old seedlings at the back of the automatic transplanter (*below*). Mechanising rice farming boosts productivity.

Nageswor Majhi and Raju Singh Chaudhary (*right*) of the Samjhana and Samuhik cooperatives in Sunsari have transformed agriculture in the district.



individual seedlings can give up to 27 tillers (*see box*).

While Nepal's average rice production is 2.8 tons/hectare, mechanised SRI in cooperatives here yield up to 9 tons/hectare,

using half the amount of seeds and slashing costs. But even with this, farmers cannot compete with cheap Indian rice, so Nepal Krishi Company is moving into premium Basmati varieties.





PICS: SONIA AWALE



Outside the all-Tharu village of Simariya, transplanters have been at work all day seeding rice in the flooded fields of members of Samjhana Cooperative. Visitors to a nearby greenhouse are greeted



Best of both worlds

Govinda Dhakal wades into his field of ripening rice in Govindapur of Morang district to gather 27 tillers that have grown from a single rice seedling he planted in April. Dhakal (*pic, above using a weeder on his transplanted rice field*) is an avid follower of the technique called System of Rice Intensification (SRI) that uses less seed to yield more rice and needs less water. “It seems like a miracle, and it is,” Dhakal tells *Nepali Times*, “I am living proof of that.”

Indeed, governments, international agricultural organisations, and even farmers have been slow to adopt SRI because the technique first adopted by a Jesuit priest in Madagascar in 1983 seems almost too good to be true. Most people ask: so, what’s the catch? The surprising thing is that there isn’t.

Traditional rice planting in Asia floods the fields mainly as a deterrent against insects and for weed control. But flooding reduces rice output. Also, farmers transplant clumps of up to eight one-month-old seedlings at one time in the hope that some of them will grow. But this makes the rice seed compete with itself, reducing harvests.

SRI plants just one seedling at a time on a wet field that is not flooded. This means that for half the seeds, farmers

can double their rice harvest. SRI can be used for local or hybrid varieties alike, and just needs to be planted in neat rows to allow weeding machines to pass, and further apart (20cm) so seeds don’t have to compete for nutrients and light.

The downside of SRI is that it can be more labour intensive if weeding machines are not available, and it needs knowledge of timely drainage and careful planting. But the benefits in greater harvests far outweigh these shortcomings. In Morang, SRI produces up to 9 tons per hectare, compared to Nepal’s national average of less than 3 tons per hectare, and it does so using 35 per cent less water, less than half the seed and fertiliser.

SRI promoter Rajendra Uprety says combining SRI with mechanisation can increase benefits even more: “Using power tillers, transplanters and weeders makes SRI even more productive, it is the best of both worlds.” Indeed, even with partial SRI farmers in Morang have doubled their harvests and reduced their costs by half.

“With agriculture contributing 80 per cent of the GDP, there should be more research and newer technologies to increase productivity,” said Hari Dahal, former secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture. “And that could be achieved by mechanising agriculture.”

by the sweet, distinctive aroma of Basmati seedlings growing in trays. Vivekananda Jha of the Nepal Krishi Company hopes Basmati will be the cash crop to make the cooperatives prosper.

“Growing Basmati with mechanised SRI in cooperatives is a win-win-win,” explained Jha. “It will bypass the problem of cheap Indian rice and increase income.” Jha is now helping farmers with working capital loans, storage facilities and even setting up their own rice mill in future.

Nepal’s agriculture is caught in a vicious cycle: young men don’t have jobs so they migrate, and the shortage of men affects farm output. From Simariya alone, 1,500 young men have migrated to Qatar and Malaysia in the past year.

But Raju Singh Chaudhary, 30, wasn’t one of them. He decided he wouldn’t allow himself to be cheated by middlemen to go and work in 45 degrees heat in the Arabian

desert. He got together with five other young men to set up Samuhik Cooperative in his village of Arabani. Family income has gone up, the women drive power tillers and transplanters, and the group has created jobs.

“Look there, they are all working, not a single person has gone abroad. They don’t even go to Biratnagar to look for jobs anymore,” Raju Singh Chaudhary said.

One would think that as CEO of Nepal’s largest private airline, Birendra Basnet would be more at home in an air-conditioned office in Kathmandu. But he is in his element here, sweating in the mud. “We are still in the pilot phase, but word will spread when the harvests come in,” he said. “Farming is my passion, you are dealing with lives and you are making things grow.” 🇳🇵

 nepalitimes.com

■ Watch video of women farmers using transplanter



You eat what you sow

Besides other hardships, earthquake survivors will have to deal with a rise in child undernourishment

SAHINA SHRESTHA

Malnutrition among children was a public health emergency in Nepal even before the earthquake struck in April. Now, with rains blocking road access and with erratic nutrition intake in shelters children are especially vulnerable.

Following the earthquake, 70,000 children under five are at risk of malnutrition in the 15 affected districts and require urgent humanitarian support, according to UNICEF. Although, the nutritional status of children in Nepal had seen an improvement in the past five years, there is a danger of backsliding post-earthquake. Higher malnutrition leads to a higher mortality rate.

“Before the earthquake, we were making relatively good progress in terms of reducing child mortality. Now there is a fear of sliding back to higher mortality again,” said Stanley Chitekwe, Nutrition Chief at UNICEF.

Chitekwe stressed the need to maintain dietary diversity for children over the age of seven months to avoid malnutrition. “When you feed a child you must give him food from four out of the seven main groups of food,” he said.



To ensure child nutrition welfare, UNICEF and partner agencies are focusing on five areas: breastfeeding, complementary feeding, therapeutic feeding and care, supplementary feeding and providing micronutrients to children and women.

“Nutrition is a major concern after a natural disaster like this, because farmers resort to coping mechanisms, including reducing the number of meals they eat and the diversity of their food,” said Somsak Pipoppinyo, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Representative in Nepal.

Disease and deficient dietary intake can cause malnutrition, but lack of access to health services can be an underlying cause. Post earthquake, although the damage to standing crops was not extensive, stored grain was buried, and the loss of livestock was high.

The Agricultural Livelihood Impact Appraisal conducted by Nepal Food Security cluster in six of the hardest hit districts of Sindhupalchok, Dolakha, Dhading, Gorkha, Nuwakot and Rasuwa found that there had been a significant drop in the consumption of animal products. Kitchen gardens were destroyed and there is a shortage of food. One in four households in the affected districts are female-headed, and these were found to be more vulnerable. With landslides cutting off access to many areas, malnutrition is expected to persist.

Nutrition experts are worried about the effect junk food and micronutrient powders distributed by aid agencies may have in children’s health. “Most food distributed as relief is packaged junk food. The government is distributing micronutrient powder and plum peanuts when it should be ensuring children get proper local grain and vegetables,” said nutritionist Aruna Uprety.

While the disruption in agriculture in the affected districts has not affected the whole country, it has put families dependent on subsistence farming at risk of nutrition security. There is also concern that emergency food distribution in some cases makes farmers dependent, and they stop growing their own food.

“To improve the nutrition of the most vulnerable farming families, we must continue to provide seeds for vegetables, wheat and other staple crops and feed supplements for animals,” said Pipoppinyo. “We also need to build more resilient livelihoods and support rehabilitation projects looking at landslides and irrigation systems.”

The government has worked with FAO to distribute 423 tons of rice seeds. FAO has also distributed 20,000 airtight grain storage bags, with 20,000 more to follow, nearly 20,000 bags (25kg) of animal feed, and 50,000 packets of mixed vegetable seeds.

But experts say this is hardly enough. “Nutrition and food security go hand in hand,” says Hari Dahal, former secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture. “It is imperative that the government continues emergency food supplies to the affected districts for some more time, and plan to ensure long-term food security.” 🇳🇵

Man in a hurry

Tufan Neupane in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 28 June-4 July

Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Shah is retiring on 6 July, and he is being replaced by Supreme Court’s senior most Justice Kalyan Shrestha.

But Shah looks like a man in a hurry. After acquitting fake doctor Yeshe Lama from Humla who had embezzled \$1 million from an American charity earlier this year, he is now embroiled in a scam to purchase computer equipment in violation of the Public Procurement Act 2007, and hiring employees on two-year contract against the SC’s own recruitment process.

On 24 December 2014, the apex court’s Information Technology Committee (ITC), also headed by Shah, had called a tender to buy 375 desktop computers. International Electronic Concerns (IEC), a Kathmandu-based supplier, submitted a proposal to sell desktop computers per piece at Rs 60,630 (excluding VAT).

But the ITC rejected the IEC’s lowest-price bid and accepted another proposal by World Distribution Nepal (WDN), which quoted much higher price of Rs 71,400 per piece (excluding VAT).

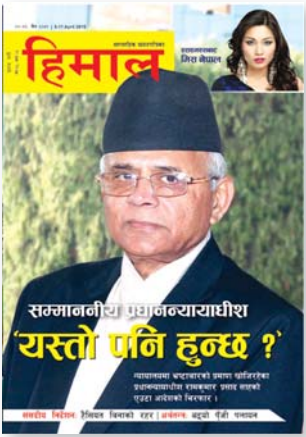
The ITC had to pay Rs 4.38 million more to purchase 475 desktop computers from the WDN. The IEC moved the court, arguing the ITC violated the article 47 (6) of the act, which says the lowest bidder’s proposal should be accepted. But the SC quashed the IEC’s petition, dubbing it ‘baseless’ on 5 May.

Article 25 (3) of the same act stipulates that the price at which goods are procured should not be 15 per cent higher than the lowest

bidder’s proposal. But the ITC cunningly disqualified the IEC and other low-price bidders by adding a line in its tender notice: ‘data security and chassis intelligent management tool’.

Computers of all brands with ‘operating system windows -8.1% have this tool but ‘chassis intelligent management tool’ is mentioned only in Dell computers, and the WDN supplies Dells.

Observers close to the investigation say the tender was tailor made only for Dell. The Act says particular details, signs and words cannot be mentioned in tender notices to make only a few bidders eligible without justifying



the reasons. Shah was ITC chief even when he was not Chief Justice. He was dismissed as the ITC chief by former Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha, but was later reappointed by Chief Justice Damodar Sharma. Chief Justices usually do not head any SC committees, but Shah did not resign from the post even after becoming Chief Justice.

Shah also seems desperate to hire 75 employees, including information technology director, managers and maintenance officers, on two-year contracts before his exit. On 21 April, the SC published a vacancy notice and 472 candidates submitted their applications.

The SC follows a long process of written exam, interview and technical exam to hire contract employees. But this time, the SC short-listed 279 applicants for interview without taking their written exam. Several associations of the SC employees say the recruitment process was cut short to hire specific people before Shah’s retirement.

Interestingly, the ITC’s System Network Administrator Bishwas Khatiwada, who is a member of the SC’s recruitment committee, is among the short-listed 279 applicants and is ready to be interviewed for the post of manager. Interestingly, the ITC had purchased desktop computers from the WDN based on an evaluation report prepared by Khatiwada.



Suitcase: Foreign aid
Bag: Reconstruction

नेपाल
Rabindra in *Nepal*, 28 June



DEVAKI BISTA

Searching for son

Devaki Bista in
Himal Khabarpatrika,
28 June-4 July

Every time a person visits the village of Dadhikot, Devraj Khadka hopes she has brought some news on the whereabouts of his son Sabin, who has been missing since the 25 April earthquake.

Sabin Khadka, 27, a Captain in the Nepal Army was posted at Langtang National Park when the earthquake struck. Ten other soldiers are also missing after an avalanche wiped out the entire area. Only the body of Keshav Bista was later recovered.

Devraj was bedridden with fever when the news of Sabin going missing reached the family, three days after the earthquake. He immediately packed his bags and left for Dhunche to search for his son. Unable to get any information, Khadka returned home dejected.



Since then he has made the same trip thrice and handed out Sabin’s photos along with his own contact details to dozens but any news, good or bad, is still to reach the family.

On 22 June, when we reached Khadka’s residence, the family was performing a puja for Sabin’s welfare- it was his birthday. Although the past two months has been nightmarish, the family still hasn’t lost hope, “We will continue searching for our son till the day we die,” said Khadka.

Forgotten Taplejung

Sita Niraula in *Annapurna Post*, 28 June

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

Of the 39 people killed in the landslide in Taplejung two weeks ago, the bodies of 16 have still not been found. The bodies that were retrieved were buried nearby since villagers couldn’t take them down to the river for cremation because of the landslide. The air is still putrid with the smell of rotting bodies. Hundreds of cattle were also buried by the landslide. The whole village is silent, there are no sounds of children playing or families getting ready to plant fields. There is only the sound of hungry livestock, left unattended. Even where houses are intact, people are not taking chances.

The terrace farms that were being readied for paddy plantation have turned into grey slopes of mud. The villagers of Liwang were self-sufficient and content, overnight they became destitute and have nothing to eat.

Buddhiman Limbu of Liwang lost his son and daughter-in-law and their bodies have not been found. His house and fields are gone. He has two other sons, two daughters and a wife, but they are all homeless and are camping out in a neighbour’s land.

Bhadra Lal Giri lost his wife and son in the landslide. Their bodies have also not been found. A total of 376 houses were destroyed or damaged in the massive landslide triggered by a cloudburst on the night of 10 June. Some 200 houses are at high risk. More than 700 people have been displaced.



SAJANA BARAL

Farmer nurse

Sajana Baral in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 28 June-4July

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

After working as a health professional at Nepalganj Medical College, Revata Rai from Bhojpur went to London where she studied Nursing in Health and Social Care at Thames College. Upon completing her degree, Rai worked with dementia patients for five years.

Her dream was to open a dementia research centre in Nepal on her return in 2011. But things

didn’t go as planned. Despite her passion Rai couldn’t find any investors to fund the project.

The 42-year old then turned to animal farming.

“Many people questioned my career choice. Why do you have to raise cattle when you have a nursing degree they asked,” says Rai.

But Rai knew what she was doing. She had seen how effective farm houses were in treatment of dementia patients. In countries like Japan and the Netherlands there are model villages being opened

especially for dementia patients.

“With the income collected from the farm, I hope to open a treatment facility with international standards for dementia patients,” says Rai who has seen how badly they are treated here.

Majority of elderlies who suffer from dementia lose their learning ability and start behaving like children. Instead of being given proper treatment, doctors and relatives in Kathmandu Rai notes give dementia patients sleeping pills and lock them up in their rooms.

Rai’s farm in Bhaktapur’s Bode is spread over 3 ropanis. At present she makes Rs 1200 to Rs 2000 a day selling eggs.

“Nepal Airlines can be world class”



COURTESY: PRASANNA KC

Sugat Ratna Kansakar, the new Managing Director of Nepal Airlines, interviewed by *Karobar*, 2 July

कारोबार

Karobar: Why did you return to Nepal Airlines as Managing Director after serving as Executive Chair?

Sugat Ratna Kansakar: After Nepal Airlines Managing Director Mukesh Kharel resigned, my former colleagues requested me to step into his shoes. I was hesitant, but they argued: if Vladimir Putin can become Prime Minister after serving as President of Russia, why can't you work as MD? I thought they were right, and I also felt that I could turn the airline around.

How are you going to do that?

I want to transform Nepal Airlines into a world-class airline. I can't do it all by myself so we are hiring top consultants. We aim to introduce online ticketing from next year. People, whether they are abroad or in Nepali villages, should be able to buy our tickets online.

Is Nepal Airlines heading towards bankruptcy because of the flawed deal on the recently-acquired Chinese planes?

I don't think so. Yes, we have been incurring more loss after we imported the Chinese planes because of their high insurance cost and load-penalty. But we will solve this problem soon. We have asked the Chinese to come to go over the cost of operation. It is also an issue of Nepal-China diplomacy, but we cannot operate the planes at a loss.

Do you think Nepal Airlines needs strategic partners?

Strategic partner means privatising and bringing in more investment. When I was Executive Chair, the Tourism Minister asked me what can be done to revive the ailing airline. I advised him to sell 51 per cent of the government's share to the public. I prepared a proposal about it and sent it to the tourism ministry and it was approved by the tourism ministry and transferred to the Ministry of Finance (MoF). But it got stuck there.

What is the status of the management deal with Lufthansa?

Lufthansa's proposal is so attractive that we should not hesitate to accept it. But there are legal obstacles. Our law does not allow

us to do it that easily. Before we sign a deal with Lufthansa, we want to have a better system like the ones developed by Thai or Singapore Airlines so that no plane needs to get grounded here.

You say Nepal Airlines will increase competition and force other airlines to lower their ticket prices. How?

To start with, we need more planes. We now have just four planes for international routes, and need to add at least one new plane every year. I have convinced all board members about this. Hotel



owners, tour operators and tourism entrepreneurs are more desperate than us. They know tourism will not grow if Nepal Airlines fails to flourish. But our government took a really long time to realise that simple truth, and we had to wait 24 years to buy the two airbus 320s. But things are now a lot easier with the amendment of Public Procurement Act-2007 which has a separate provision for procuring aircraft making it easier for Nepal Airlines to buy planes.

ALL IN ONE: Nepal Airlines' entire international fleet of two brand new Airbus 320s and two 30-year-old Boeing 757s in a rare photo taken last month. The Chinese MA60 turboprop is also seen.

Are you phasing out the two Boeing 757s?

We have already decided on our new destinations. We are flying to Bangalore and Mumbai from September first week and then to Guangzhou, Dubai and Dammam. Only when we add two more planes to our fleet will we decide on what to do with the 757s. But replacing the Boeings may not be feasible for the time being.

Nepal Airlines does not have enough planes to serve remote rural areas of Nepal.

A foreigner once told me: it is a big thing that a small country like Nepal has 52 airports. Unfortunately, we are able to fly our planes to just 22 of them. We do not have sufficient planes to fly to all the destinations. We did not add a single plane to our domestic fleet for 45 years until we bought the Chinese aircraft. That is why we are unable to provide service to all Nepali villages. We should not just look at profits. We are eying lucrative markets so we can subsidise the loss-making flights to inaccessible areas within Nepal. For this, we need to add at least six more planes.

Stuck in Syria

Manisha Duwadi in *Annapurna Post*, 2 July

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Sabitri Magar of Magargaun gets phone calls on her mobile everyday from abroad, and every time she picks it up hastily in the hope that it has something to do with her daughter, Sunita, who is in war-torn Syria. Before she can say hello, Sunita pleads: “Mom, they'll kill me and throw my body somewhere. If you don't do something, I won't be back alive.”

Sabitri blames the recruiters for sending her daughter to such a hell. Sunita had separated from her husband, and left her young children in the care of her parents before she left to work abroad to be able to pay for their education. But she got duped by a middleman named Raju Dhungana of Pokhara and was abandoned in Syria, for which Nepal does not even issue labour permits.

Dhungana got her a job with a family in Syria. She later learnt that the middleman had already taken her income of amount \$5,000 from the employer as advance even before she started working.

“Her children keep asking for her and Sunita herself cries everyday on phone, but what can an old woman like me do?” asks a tearful Sabitri. “He has duped many young women and is currently hiding out in India.”

In a phone conversation Sunita told us she was treated fairly well in the beginning but when she asked for her salary, she was told it had already been given to Dhungana. She was beaten, denied food and not allowed to make phone calls. Sunita ran away from her employer and is staying with her agent, who is trying to pressure her to take another job. She had already worked for 2 years and should have earned \$2000. The employer has her passport and is demanding Sunita return the \$3,000 of the advance to get it back.

After finding out about Sunita, NRN Finland's Balkrishna Shrestha is trying to bring Sunita back to Nepal. “We sent her tickets, but now they want the \$3,000,” Sabitri has appealed to the Safe Migration Project but the Nepal Embassy in Israel isn't showing much interest.



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Nepali by descent

As the members of the august house put finishing touches to the new constitution of the Patriarchal Demographic Republic of Nepal, we are glad to see that great care has been taken to prevent people from unnecessarily becoming citizens of this country. It's already crowded here. Go away.

Our rulers have decided that even babies born wholly within Nepali territory to Nepali mothers cannot be Nepalis by descent. In this day and age, this is a vital precaution to conserve the Nepaliness of the DNA strands in the Nepali Y-chromosome so that it is not contaminated by any foreign bodies

One can't be too careful about ascertaining the purity of our race when millions of men are queuing up at the open border to cross over and marry our women in droves. That is why we'd

rather offer citizenship to non-resident Nepalis than to non-Nepali residents. We should be proud that this country's democratically elected rulers are well aware that the rest of the world is just dying to become citizens of Nepal so as to avail themselves of the world class quality of life that we enjoy here.

There are many advantages to being a proud Nepali citizen, and I enumerate some of them below:

- 1. Nepal was never colonised, and this proud fact we cannot quantify in dollars and cents or in per capita GDP.
- 2. Nepal has the potential to generate 73,000 megawatts of electricity, living proof of the adage: "It's the thought that counts."



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12. Emigrate to Kathmandu, it's still dark at night. The only capital in the world from which the Milky Way is visible. This week's attraction: Venus and Jupiter tight and bright in the western sky.

13. Experience the joys of living in a patriarchy and former monarchy.

14. Look at the bright side: no one chops off your hand for stealing.

15. ... or executes you for corruption.

16. In fact, there is always a way to get a citizenship card. Psst, call me.



A lot of valued clients thought the Ass was joking when last week's column declared a moratorium on laughter given the state of emergency that has been declared in Kathmandu. Well, guess what, it wasn't a joke. It is our duty to inform all concerned authorities, heads of constitutional bodies, public sector torsos and members of the international communists that laughing in public is henceforth banned in all 75 districts until further notification.

Guffaws, giggles and chuckles are hereby declared against the national interest, since they distract attention from the reconstruction and rehabilitation that is being undertaken on a war-footing. This will allow us to focus exclusively on our country's most serious problem: the continued inability to take things seriously.

All four big parties as well as the 33-member opposition

alliance have signed in to stop the misuse of laughter in all its forms, and they will start with the live broadcast of CA proceedings which is the source of much mirth all over the country. It is extremely detrimental for our national morale, our territorial imperative and sovereignty that the entire nation breaks into gales of laughter while watching the Minister of Agriculture trying to plant his seedlings. It's not funny, OK. Agriculture makes up 80% of Nepal's GDP.

I don't speak in jest when I assert that the mouth organs of government lack a certain gravitas. They will therefore be forced to refrain from outright comedy while slinging mud at each other, to wit: they will be forced to look and sound more crest-fallen as befitting the times.

Political parties (motto: "He who laughs last is history") also need to be disciplined since they don't seem to realise that there are limits to the average per capita duration that an adult Nepali can break into paroxysms of laughter on any given day. Spare a thought for those compatriots who just can laugh no more. Journalists also need to be reminded that the draft of the constitution will curtail their freedom to laugh at themselves since this will have a negative impact on our sense of national self-esteem, self-importance, self-aggrandisement and ultimately erode our self-defence. After all, we are all Nepalis in descent.



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