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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

## COMING RIGHT UP

Cheer up, we have a draft constitution and so far it's only been set alight by Madhesis, women and minorities.

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Kalyan Shrestha has the challenging task of restoring the reputation of a tarnished Supreme Court.

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## KASTHAMANDAP

The shrine after which Kathmandu was named withstood many quakes in the last 900 years, but came down in this one.

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BIKRAM RAI



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# FIXING WHAT'S BROKEN

Nepal's tourism was in crisis long before the earthquake struck

'Build Back Better' has become a mantra for post-earthquake rehabilitation in Nepal. As a motto it strives for an ideal outcome: the reconstruction of roads, schools, homes, government buildings, hospitals, utilities should not just be physical rebuilding, but restructuring each of these sectors from the ground up.

Nepal was a disaster zone long before the earthquakes struck. Education was in shambles because despite enrolment numbers being up, quality remained dismal. The health arena was either over-commercialised or under-served, putting basic medical care out of reach of most of the population. Kathmandu's haphazard urbanisation and unsafe buildings made it a ticking timebomb, and it was not defused by the 7.8 quake on 25 April.

The root reasons for all these problems have been poor governance, political unwillingness and a disturbing lack of accountability on the part of elected officials. The earthquake, therefore, has given us the chance for a paradigm shift not just in the 15 affected districts, but in the rest of the country as well. And the constitution offers the mechanism to make politics more just and equitable.

Much has already been said in this space about maximising job-creation during the reconstruction process, and the National Planning Commission has taken the lead in ensuring that this happens. This would be the start of a longterm process of reversing the outflow of desperate young men and women to work overseas in appalling conditions.

The other mainstay of Nepal's economy is tourism, and this has taken a direct hit from the earthquake. Saturation coverage in the international media of the immediate aftermath has spread the perception that Nepal is completely destroyed. The fact that many tourist spots like Pokhara, Chitwan, Lumbini, Muktinath or Mustang are not affected is not widely known.

In addition, alarmist travel advisories by some



BIKRAM RAI



**REBUILDING  
OURSELVES**

governments have frightened off potential visitors. Insurance companies take their cue from these blanket notices and the high premium is further deterrence. Happily, as we write this, the United States, UK, and New Zealand have relaxed their advisories and there are indications they will be revised further as independent assessments of the Everest and Annapurna trekking trails and Kathmandu's heritage sites become available.

Nepal's tourism was also in crisis long before the earthquake. Visitor numbers were stagnant, spending per tourist was down, average duration of stay was getting shorter, repeat visitors were getting rarer.

It isn't hard to figure out why: the quality of the product was going down with the chaos at the airport, the visa lines and the squalour of Kathmandu. The Annapurna Circuit and other trekking areas were marred by new highways. Chitwan suffered a 70 per cent drop in visitors after lodges

were relocated and Sauraha became more and more unpleasant. There were concerns of safety in domestic air travel after a series of crashes.

Air fare was another factor: it cost more for a tourist to fly from Kathmandu to Rara than to fly to Europe. Helicopter rescue in Nepal is as expensive as in the United States, and is the highest in the world. Then there were the high profile disasters like the Everest avalanche last year followed by government bungling on permits, the tragic loss of lives in the Annapurna blizzard raised questions of the lack of early warning and shelters along the trail.

The 'Turning Point in Tourism: Role of International and National Tour Operators' conference organised by the group, Samarth, last week drew attention to these intrinsic factors already affecting Nepal's tourism before the earthquake. Robin Boustead of the Great Himalayan Trail Alliance said: "Nepal has fantastic mountains to climb, but it is becoming a much harder place to climb them in."

Visitor numbers to Nepal have gone down in the past. It plummeted by 40 per cent after the 2001 royal palace massacre, went down by 80 per cent during the 2003 Gulf War, and shrank to a third of normal during the Maoist conflict. But in all these cases, arrival numbers revived in a few months. This time, even the most optimistic scenario predicts a 70 per cent drop in the autumn season, and a 40 per cent drop in bookings for the spring. It will take longer to bounce back this time.

The Samarth conference drew up a checklist of things to be done to revive tourism revenue:

- ✓ Set up a verifiable third party online knowledge base with up-to-date information on the safety status of trekking trails
- ✓ Relaunch the Nepal brand in target markets, especially India and China
- ✓ Clean up the airport, streamline visas, make it easy for visitors
- ✓ Don't reduce prices, improve safety and quality of services

## YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

### THERE IS A DRAFT

A very balanced solution-oriented editorial ('There is a draft', Editorial, #765) with right amount of critical outlook.

*Dinkar Nepal*

■ The person who wrote this editorial has very low expectations for Nepal. We deserve a lot better.

*Manjushree Thapa*

■ If the principle of 'my way or the highway' is what pleases the editorial writer, he is hoping for nothing but mediocrity. This settling for mediocrity principle is what let so many innocent people die in the quakes. If the foundation of anything whose age we hope to be long, turns out to be weak and mediocre, a single tremor may cause it to collapse in the future. Learn to believe in a solid foundation that garners the interest of the masses rather than a select class. The Madhes is home to half of Nepal's population. How then can you ignore them and say that it is not possible to keep everyone happy?

*Rohit*

■ My choice would be to stick with the Interim Constitution, at least it is more progressive than this draft.

*Guru*

■ The Meiji Constitution promulgated in 1889 in Japan lasted 58 years till 1945 when Japan was defeated in the Second World War. Gen MacArthur, the allied commander and the prime minister couldn't agree on a new constitution so the General got a committee to prepare a new draft in a few days and asked the government to endorse it. That Constitution is still serving Japan well. Why does our process have to be so complicated?

*Grimaljee*

■ I thought, Baburam Bhattarai, a man with a PhD, would be a different kind of politician. Alas, he is just like the rest. How can you, Dr Bhattarai, sign this filthy and rotten draft? Any respect I had, you lost it all. You can redeem yourself still if you have the guts to stand up for women's rights. Here is a piece of unsolicited advice: leave the Maobadi and start a new political force that fits your intelligence and stature.

*Rita Shrestha*

■ Sorry, but I disagree with the editor when he writes, 'Let's embrace it.' Just because the corrupted politicians from the NC, Maobadi and UML have to save their asses, we get stuck with a Constitution that does not even recognise the rights of Nepali

women. Both UML and NC are playing with fire, you cannot ramrod 40 per cent of the people. Dahal, the coward that he is, dreams of being President and will do anything for that. Why did 17,000 people die in your fake and failed revolution, Mr Dahal? This draft Constitution divides Nepali people instead of uniting them, it is doomed.

*Alex Shrestha*

### CITIZENSHIP

Nepal is a racist nation. Nepal discriminates women and treats them like fourth class citizens (#citizenshipinthenamethemother, Tsering Dolker gurung, #765). Nepali women should focus their energies on becoming the next Prime Minister or President. Only then will they be able to make laws that treat them as equals. We need a new force, a new party that will work to ensure the rights of women.

*Rekha Sharma*

■ 'Burning' is the key word here ('Burning issues', Anurag Acharya, #765) The Nepali Congress and UML are playing with fire that can engulf them and reduce them to ashes. Who is advising these immoral leaders to go ahead with this immoral Constitution? Why are they inviting trouble? Is there a foreign hand that's forcing them to act in this cowardly manner. This

Constitution is dividing Nepal, how can that be a good thing?

*Sunder Prasad Jha*

### RICE PLANTING

Interesting reportage. ('Nepal's quiet green revolution', Sonia Awale, #765). Combination of machine and SRI is fascinating and could overcome the earlier slow adoption of SRI. But, three times more production through SRI is a bit of an exaggeration.

*Suresh Dhakal*

■ Excellent article that offers a clear way out of Nepal's crisis of feeding itself. Mechanise SRI cultivation, work with cooperatives to overcome fragmentation of land-holdings, get the pricing right, and create jobs while empowering women. It is a win-win-win.

*Jens*

■ There is change in Nepali agriculture but very few people are really tracking this, need for research and policy.

*DS*

### BACKSIDE

■ The Ass is always good ('Nepali by descent', Backside by Ass, #765). Been reading him for eight years now. But this week was better than most.

*Leela*

## Times

### THIS WEEK



JANA AŠENBRENNEROVÁ (70 LIKES)

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At 100, Sher Bahadur Gurung has seen it all: two world wars, two great earthquakes but urges to rebuild and plant paddy

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Marooned by the monsoon by Om Astha Rai (25 shares)

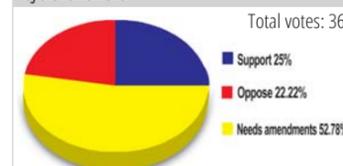
🐦 **Most popular on Twitter**  
The quiet warrior by JANA AŠENBRENNEROVÁ (65 retweets, 89 favourites)

🌐 **Most visited online page**  
Nepali by descent by Ass (1,842 views)

💬 **Most commented**  
There is a draft, Editorial (36 comments)

Times nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll #766

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



Weekly Internet Poll #767  
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will the zero-cost policy be successfully implemented?

# Egos at the door, please

Cheer up, we have a draft constitution and so far it's only been set alight by Madhesis, women and minorities

It's safe to say that attention has now fully been diverted away from the 25 April earthquake and the limelight is back on our splendid and seasoned leaders. It's as though the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction (ICNR) on 25 June was but a ploy to shortly side-track the media and citizenry, while leaders rushed in haste to pull together a grand heist.



**ONE TO MANY**  
Bidushi Dhungel

That may explain why the Prime Minister only stuck around for the inaugural session, and most Cabinet members and leaders of other political parties didn't even bother to show up. Clearly, the Conference was not as important as it was made out to be. And before the media or the public could even begin to scrutinise the pledges made, a whopping \$4.4 billion in grants and debt, national attention almost immediately afterward shifted to the draft of the constitution, which seemed to come literally out of nowhere.

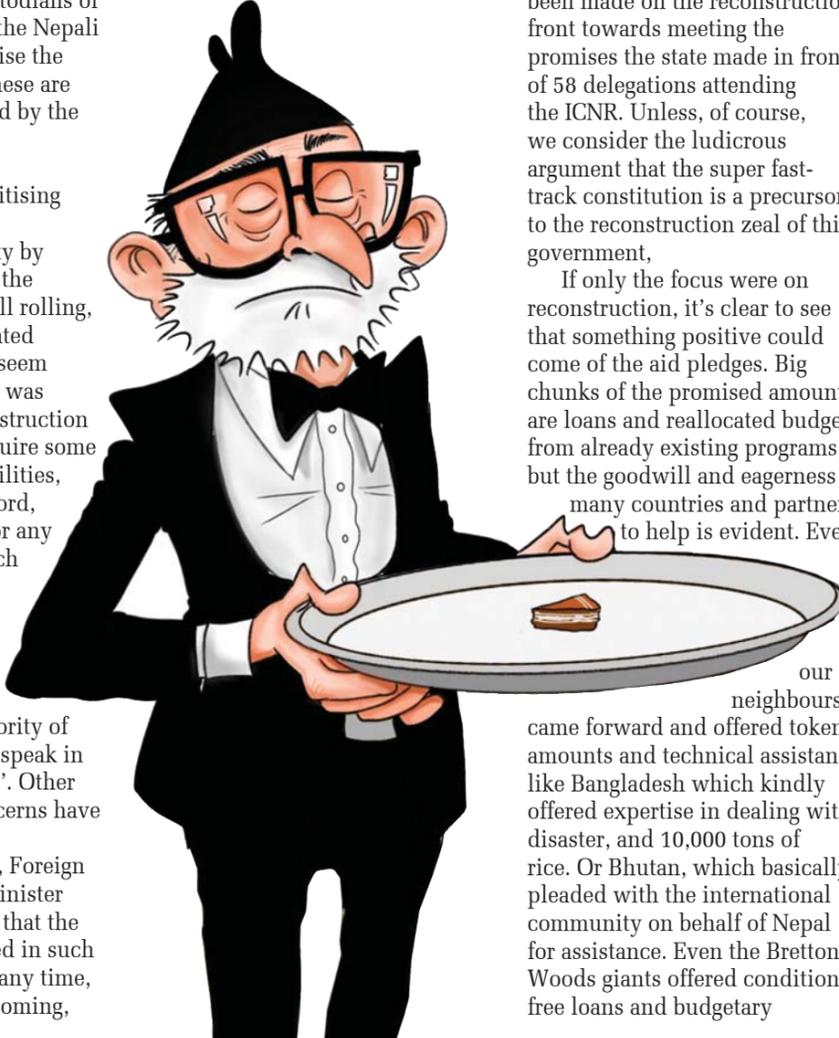
One can only imagine that as the people, security forces, international aid organisations

and youth were tirelessly conducting relief work, the political leadership sat around discussing whether or not citizenship in the mother's name was agreeable to the custodians of Nepaliness, or whether the Nepali press is too free to criticise the state. They forgot that these are rights already guaranteed by the Interim Constitution.

And as if that wasn't enough, instead of prioritising the recently-announced Reconstruction Authority by nominating members to the board and getting the ball rolling, the leadership manipulated the narrative to make it seem as though a constitution was mandatory for the reconstruction process. That would require some serious multi-tasking abilities, which going by past record, hasn't been a strength for any Nepali government, much less this one.

Instead, what we have now is a situation where there is a draft constitution unacceptable to the majority of people, even those who speak in favour of the 'consensus'. Other pressing rebuilding concerns have been forgotten.

At the ICNR, the PM, Foreign Minister and Finance Minister all shamelessly claimed that the conference was organised in such haste so as to not waste any time, and that monsoon was coming,



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

which meant that unless swift action was taken, more disaster was guaranteed. They must have been referring to next monsoon.

Since then, no progress has been made on the reconstruction front towards meeting the promises the state made in front of 58 delegations attending the ICNR. Unless, of course, we consider the ludicrous argument that the super fast-track constitution is a precursor to the reconstruction zeal of this government.

If only the focus were on reconstruction, it's clear to see that something positive could come of the aid pledges. Big chunks of the promised amounts are loans and reallocated budgets from already existing programs, but the goodwill and eagerness of many countries and partners to help is evident. Even

our neighbours came forward and offered token amounts and technical assistance, like Bangladesh which kindly offered expertise in dealing with disaster, and 10,000 tons of rice. Or Bhutan, which basically pleaded with the international community on behalf of Nepal for assistance. Even the Bretton Woods giants offered condition-free loans and budgetary

assistance. Yes, there are all kinds of foreign interests and politics at play, but a grant is a grant and a condition free loan is better than one which manipulates the way our economy is governed.

However, the likelihood of any of this aid being channeled properly through the Reconstruction Authority, or even being approved (which would require programme proposals from the Nepali government to each donor and partner for each task) is slim, considering the government priorities and intentions. In all likelihood, the political elite will identify the Big Money and distribute the spoils quota-wise among themselves.

But, hey, cheer up! We have a draft constitution. And so far, it's only been set alight by Madhesi lawmakers, some women and minority communities. It is an 'evolving' document and there will be plenty of opportunities for reform so, in the name of progress, Nepalis, women in particular, should basically shut up and sit down. Only time will tell how 'gradual' the 'evolution' will be.

What is evident is the intent of this state, leadership and the entire political pack. A quick read-through of current events should be plenty to understand that at the root of all this 'progress' are only the pitfalls of the male ego, and its eternal obsession with power and money. 🇳🇵

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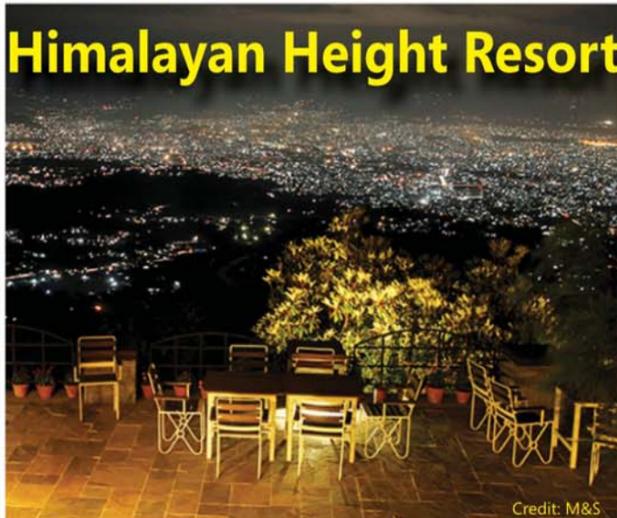
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# “India wants to start afresh in Nepal”

Interview with Deep Kumar Upadhyay, Nepal's ambassador to India



BIKRAM RAI

**Nepali Times: What initiatives have you taken after being appointed Nepal's ambassador to India?**

**Deep Kumar Upadhyay:** The earthquake struck just 12 days after I arrived in New Delhi, and I had to immediately start coordinating relief supplies even before submitting my letter of credence. Our embassy was turned into a relief collection centre. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called me immediately after the quake and assured full support. The assistance pledged by India's Foreign Affairs Minister in Kathmandu was on behalf of the Indian government, but more aid came from state governments, the private sector and the Indian people. The Indian parliament, for instance, decided to provide one month's salaries of all MPs to support rebuilding of Nepal.

**They say you have a good personal rapport with the Indian establishment. Does that make your job easier?**

It does. In India, every government official receives a month's paid leave to go on vacation. Nepal has now been added to the list of places where they can go on holiday. We also have a new agreement that allows Indians to visit Nepal using their own vehicles for one month and vice versa. It will boost Nepal's tourism. A new plan is being designed to build six-lane roads connecting the East-West Highway to India's border. We can end our power outage by importing cheap electricity from India after the construction of the Dhalkebar-Muzzafarpur transmission line is completed. Unfortunately, we have not been able to use the loan provided by India for our energy development. It took us years to decide the project's name, and we still do not know when it will start. Other countries that took loans from India along with us have already completed 40 per cent of their projects.

**The Indian bureaucracy and intelligence agencies have been blamed for hurting Nepal-India relations. Is that changing?** I feel India's new political leadership wants to start afresh and right the wrongs of the past, open a new chapter in Nepal-India

diplomacy. Indian Prime Minister Modi has taken the initiative to create a fund from the private sector to support Nepal's post-earthquake reconstruction. That will further consolidate our relations.

**So, Nepal-India diplomacy will now be guided from the political level?**

India willingly or unwillingly micromanaged Nepal's affairs in the past, but its new political leadership seems to have realised that was a mistake and should not be repeated.

**Do you really believe that?**

It's evident in India's actions so far. Instead of always making a mountain out of a molehill, we should acknowledge the change and work towards strengthening our relations. We have assured India that anti-India activities will not take place in, through, or from Nepal. We have also explained our concerns. As a result, several agreements that got stuck for years have now been inked. So there is hope.

**Was that change possible because a political person like you was sent to New Delhi as ambassador?**

Change is possible only with our own initiative. India is a vast country, and it would be difficult to fix appointments

with Indian political leaders even for our top leaders. So, we should maintain our protocol. We should be sensitive about whom we can meet and whom we should avoid meeting. We should not hurt our nationalism by meeting anyone against protocol. I think many of our leaders have a problem following protocol.

**Is it true that a section of the Indian establishment is against the draft of Nepal's new constitution?**

India's official policy is to endorse whatever decision Nepal takes. India is not against the draft, but some of its agencies might be. But they don't really matter. If they did, we would not have arrived at this point.

**How does India's political leadership see Nepal's constitution drafting process?**

They think consensus should be forged among a majority of parties if an all-party consensus is elusive. They see the constitution drafting process as being in relation with Nepal's peace and prosperity.

**There is a growing protest against the India-China deal on using Lipu Lekh as a new trade hub. Have you raised that concern?**

I have yet to fully understand the nitty-gritty of the Lipu Lekh deal. I was too busy

with earthquake-relief effort but I am now studying all agreements signed after the Sugauli Treaty. The Lipu Lekh issue will be solved diplomatically.

**What about other border issues?**

A team from the Department of Survey has just finished inspecting border pillars along the Nepal-India border. We are also trying to sort out disputes related to Susta and Kalapani at the higher level.

**Do you have any programs planned to ensure protection of Nepalis living in India?**

The data about Nepalis living in India is not convincing. Nepalis have been living in India since the Sugauli Treaty and the estimated number of Nepalis in India varies from 3-7 million. We are now collecting the real data of Nepalis in India.

**Nepal could not send an ambassador to India for four years. Has that created problems?**

India is an important country not just because it is huge and our closest neighbour but also because 82 countries see Nepal through the eyes of India. So, we should not have kept our embassy in New Delhi without ambassador for such a long time. We should give more importance to Nepal-India diplomacy.



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# Rebuilding businesses better

**Industrialist Pashupati Muraraka is the new leader of Nepal's businessmen. The general convention on 1 July of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) decided to forego an election and unanimously selected him as the new President.**

**Nepali Times: There were two other candidates to the post of FNCCI president, how did you get them agree on your name?**

**Pashupati Muraraka:** We all thought we should not sour relation by opting for elections especially when FNCCI is preparing to celebrate its 50th anniversary. When we decided to forge a consensus on the FNCCI's new leadership, I was a clear favourite because I had worked as senior Vice President in the immediate past executive committee. Former FNCCI presidents and friends from district committees also helped me secure this post.

**What do you think are your challenges?**

My foremost challenge is to retain the unity that we showed in the FNCCI convention by coming to a consensus. Wounds of those



who felt hurt will take time to heal. But there is no alternative to unity among us in the business fraternity. The earthquake dealt a blow to small and medium-sized enterprises, and we need to work together to rebuild and rehabilitate the businesses. We also face challenges in getting the new Labour Act and Company Act passed by the Parliament.

**How will you keep this unity intact?**

Disputes that surface during the

FNCCI conventions are not about ideology. We all want to help the private sector flourish. In the past FNCCI elections, those who won were too arrogant to work together with the defeated candidates and those who did not win also questioned the legitimacy of elections. But I will work together with everyone.

**Is the private sector ready to help Nepal's post-earthquake reconstruction?**

We are ready to work with the government on Public Private Partnership or any other models.

**What is the take of the business community on the draft constitution?**

Our main concerns are market-driven economy and rights over private property. We will make public our official statement on it very soon. We will demand amendments to the draft, if needed. We had interacted with political parties to express our concerns about the constitution. We hope the new constitution will certainly address the concerns about ensuring a free market competition and the right to private property.

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### Fully HD

Intex Technologies (India) in association with EOL has launched its range of new Fully HD TV in Nepal. The elegant-looking tvs are packed with attractive features.

### Friendly toilets

Laxmi Intercontinental, the sole distributor of Hyundai motors in Nepal, launched a model disabled friendly toilet at the National Federation of Disabled this week. The company is now working to make the public toilets in Kathmandu disabled friendly.



### Young scholars

IME and Global IME Bank has announced an annual scholarship fund worth Rs 1 million. The IME Global IME Akanshya scholarship aims to provide scholarships to 100 financially deprived students.

### Sharing codes

Philippine Airline and Turkish Airlines have entered into a code-sharing partnership. The partnership will offer passengers of both airlines better connectivity and travel flexibility between Philippines and Turkey.



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# Enter: Chief Justice Shrestha

Kalyan Shrestha has the challenging task of restoring the integrity of a tarnished Supreme Court, and protecting the separation of powers



justices like Baram KC, Bharat Bahadur Karki who have argued that the court can only give its view through writ petitions or unless asked by the Constituent Assembly itself. The full court's suggestion also includes extending the retirement of judges to 70 years, cancelling reappointments, curtailing the CIAA's (Center for Investigation of Abuse of Authority) right to investigate the justices after their retirement.

All these provisions are driven by the personal agenda of the justices, and send the wrong message to the public about the Judiciary. Despite his clean image, the new Chief Justice Kalyan Shrestha is equally involved in backing these demands, and he will be under scrutiny during his tenure.

Justice Shrestha will have his plate full during the political transition. The written statement regarding the interim order given by Justice Lal on the 16-point agreement is likely to come up for review by a full bench which is likely to decide to scrap it.

When we met Justice Shrestha on Tuesday morning at his residence, he said: "I have a very short tenure as the Chief Justice, and people have many expectations. I cannot bring any drastic change but will try my best to restore the public trust in the Judiciary."

Chief Justice Shrestha has established much precedence in cases involving human rights and women's issues, and has a reputation for competence and decisiveness. On the other hand some people from legal fraternity argue that Shrestha may be influenced by the non-government sector with which he has been involved.

But even if he can just start cleaning up the image of the Supreme Court as being a den of self-serving judges, he will have fulfilled a much-needed task. [@binitadahal](#)

Compared to his predecessor from whom he took over on Wednesday, Justice Kalyan Shrestha has had an untarnished 40-year career. This is a man known for his integrity and sense of fair play, and his appointment comes at a time when the Supreme Court has been dragged into controversy and disrepute.



**LEGALESE**  
Binata Dahal

When Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Shah was appointed some nine months ago, he promised that he would respect the separation of powers

and never compromise the independence of Judiciary. This was a legacy of the controversial appointment of Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi as Chairman of the Interim Election Government in 2013. But it was under Shah's watch that the Supreme Court got embroiled last month in another tussle between the Legislature and the Judiciary with the interim order issued by the single bench of Justice Girish Chandra Lal on the 16-point agreement between four political parties.

Some of Shah's other verdicts like the one on ex-crown princess Prerana Rajya Laxmi has been criticised for its lack of transparency even by other justices and the Nepal Bar Association. The case which was filed on January was

hastily decided in four months, unprecedented in Nepal's judicial history.

His decision to appoint Deepak Timilsina as the IT adviser, a person who was fired by former Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha was investigated by *Himal Khabarpatrika* two weeks ago. But the most damning blot was his acquittal of Yeshe Lama, a fake doctor from Humla who had embezzled millions from the American charity, Citta, to build a hospital in Simikot. The story has been doggedly pursued by Bhrikuti Rai of the Centre for Investigative Journalism for three years.

Shah also failed to appoint justices of the Supreme Court which has a massive backlog of cases despite saying time and again that it was his top

priority. In the end, he blamed the Nepal Bar Association for not recommending its representatives to the Judicial Council.

Justice Shrestha's foremost challenge now is to face the new constitution and its provisions related to Judiciary. Most provisions in the draft like a separate constitutional court and the reappointment of Justices after the promulgation of new constitution have always been criticised by the Judiciary.

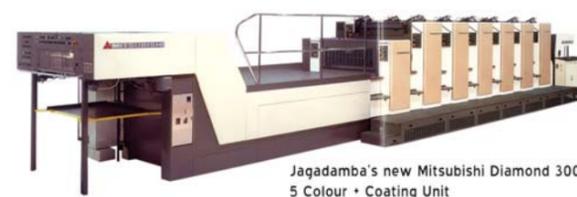
The Constituent Assembly on Tuesday put the draft up to the general public for feedback, even though the full court comprised of all the justices of apex court had suggested to the CA that some of the provisions regarding the Judiciary be revoked.

This move has already been criticised by some former



## Imitating nature

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The fact that this week's brisk showers were accompanied by localised lightning and thunder meant that this is still not a 100 per cent monsoonal. A real monsoon is relentless, steady rain covering an entire section of the Himalaya. The fact that we are still getting convection storms means that a lot of the activity is still isolated. This increases the chances of cloudbursts, landslides and destructive flooding. The rains accompanied by lightning will continue into Friday, but things are expected to settle down to quiet and sometimes heavy squalls more characteristic of the southwest monsoon.

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PICS: SAHINA SHRESTHA

**PLAYTIME:** Sushil Marik plays with toys made by his grandmother who says the three-year-old has grown smarter with increased playtime (top).

Radha Devi Thakur of Saptari uses toys she made to educate her children (bottom).

taught to make toys from locally available resources like clay, paper and old clothes. Empty shampoo bottles, juice cartons, old clothes which would otherwise be disposed are recycled to make new toys. The women also learn how to craft toys from bamboo and clay.

At the end of the workshop each participant walks home with a basket of toys for her child. Some are distributed to ECD centers in the communities.

"This is the first time we introduced the campaign here and it's already become very popular," says Laxmi Rai of UNICEF, which provided technical assistance and funding to the program.

Parents say children have become more interactive, creative and confident since they were given toys a month ago. The women in the community have also had to come out of their shells to participate in the workshops. Most of the participants are daily wage earners and work in the fields. Around 30 women participate at each workshop.

"I attended the training for my son," says 23-year-old Binita Thakur as she watches her three-year-old son Ayush play with the house she made. Thakur herself wasn't allowed to play much as a child and she doesn't want her son to suffer a similar fate. "I want my son to play as much as he wants," she says.

Even though Ayush keeps breaking the toys she makes, Thakur has no complaints about making a new set of toys almost every week. "Because I use whatever resources is available in the house, it doesn't cost a thing," she says.

The workshops have targeted women from socially marginalised communities with poor economic background.

Nineteen-year-old Kalawati Thakur says her mother Radha Devi has grown more attentive to her sister's upbringing after attending the workshop. "In my case, I was left on my own. But she's become more attentive towards my sister's development," says Kalawati.

"I did not know how to make toys or the benefit it brings to my children back then," says Radha Devi, "but things are different now and I feel glad to see the joy these toys bring to my child." 🇳🇵

# TOYS ARE US



## Mothers in Saptari get together to make toys to educate their children

**SAHINA SHRESTHA**  
in SAPTARI

Karo Marik beams with pride as her three-year-old grandson, Sushil picks up a clay bird and says 'chunmun', Maithili for baby chick. Sushil's mother, Babita Marik stands on the side, smiling. Sushil then picks up a dozen empty nail polish bottles and starts naming

the colours, one by one. Figures of birds and animals, colourful corn cobs, and rag dolls lie scattered all around him.

All of Sushil's play things were made by his grandmother who learnt the skills at a workshop conducted earlier this year by Seto Gurans, which works in the field of early childhood development (ECD) in Saptari. The workshop, a part of the Ek Tokari Khelauna (A basket of toy) campaign that encourages mothers to use

'learning by playing' method has been conducted in 30 communities in this Tarai district.

"Ever since we gave him toys he's grown smarter, he now recognises different colours and shapes," says Babita. Karo adds: "He has also become more active. Earlier he would only cling onto his mother but now he plays independently."

During the training the women are

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**EVENTS**



**Galli Patan,**

A storytelling workshop by Katha Satha in collaboration with Photo Kathmandu with a focus on using mixed media. This time the subject is Patan and the workshop will be facilitated by Prawin Adhikari, Muna Gurung and Shuvechhya Pradhan.

20 to 24 July, Application deadline 15 July, Rs 1000 (partial scholarships available), [kathasatha.org.np](http://kathasatha.org.np)



**Critical mass,**

A monthly meet up of cyclists who go on a ride, their purpose: reclaim the streets. 31 July, 5.30PM, Basantapur Darbar Square

**Community yoga,**

Learn the basics of Hatha yoga and enjoy the benefits. Classes start 13 July, 6pm, every Monday and Wednesday, Rs 350 per class, [Bikalpa Art Centre](http://Bikalpa Art Centre), [www.bikalpaartcenter.org](http://www.bikalpaartcenter.org)



**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](mailto:ride@kathmandukora.net), [www.kathmandukora.net](http://www.kathmandukora.net)



**Nagarjun Hike,**

Hike up the Nagarjun this weekend with the Hike for Nepal team which aims to motivate young Nepalis to explore a different location every Saturday. 11 July, Rs 700 (includes a T-shirt, snacks, park ticket, and first aid), 7am, Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, for bookings contact 9841178536, 9815237844

**Get Inspired,**

Co-founder of Happiness for Life and recipient of Global Trailblazer Award from Harvard Social Innovation Collaborative, Rastraraj Bhandari will share his life experiences. Open to undergraduate applicants, register in advance at the USEF library with national ID. 14 July, 1pm, USEF Office, Gyaneshwor, Kathmandu

**Child wellbeing,**

Classes on basic wellbeing skills for children aged seven to 12. Starts 14 July, 4 to 5.15pm, every Tuesday, Gyanmandala Complex (Moksh), Jhamsikhel, Rs 2000 per child

**Lato Mato,**

Set in eastern Nepal, *Lato Mato* is a tale of four porters and their struggle to make ends meet. Directed by Kiran Chamling Rai and adapted by Yuvraj Ghimire. *Shilpee Theatre, Battispatali*



**Learning meditation,**

A five-day course on fundamentals of meditation with Vishal Mishra. 12 July, Rs 3000, Sooriya Wellness Kathmandu, NLIC Building, Lajimpat

**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](mailto:general.afk@gmail.com), [www.alliancefrancaise.org.np](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.np)

**Quiz night,**

After a one-week hiatus Quiz night is back at Sal's. Bring your brain. 13 July, every Monday, Sal's Pizza, Lajimpat

**DINING**



**Café Aamu,**

If you are a rice lover and crave Chinese food all-day, all-week, then the Tofu and Chinese Black Mushroom with Rice is a must try. *Krishnagalli, Lalitpur*

**Café Nina,**

The best burgers in town. *Maharajanj*

**Dhokaima Café,**

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



**Embassy,**

Serves 'value lunches' from 11am to 3pm daily. *Lajimpat*



**The Entrance Café,**

Friendly staff, good food, and quiet ambience. *Bakhundole, Lalitpur*

**Phat Kath,**

Offering French-ish food, a takeaway crêperie, low tables and hookahs for hippies, tables and chairs for normal people, and a formidable hip hop soundtrack for everyone. *Thamel*



**Mezze,**

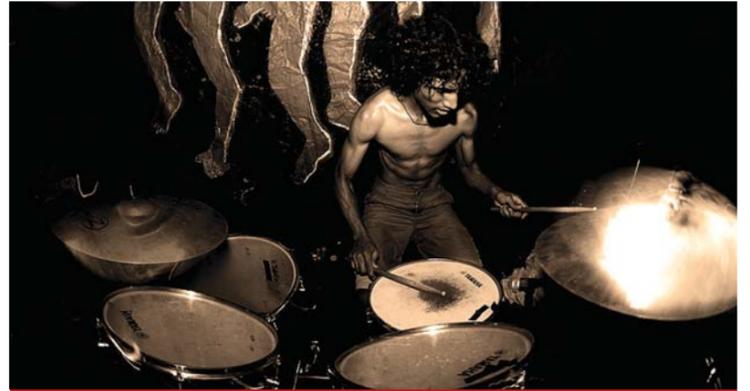
For pizzas, pasta and people watching. *Darbar Marg*



**The Old House,**

For times when you want to splurge Parisian style. *Darbar Marg*

**MUSIC**



**Himalayan glory,**

Ready to bang some heads? UgraKarma, Plague Throat, Binaash, Kaal and Vomiting Snake live under one roof. 25 July, 12pm to 6pm, Purple Haze, Thamel



**Youngguns,**

Enjoy an evening with Kramasha-Nepal. 10 July, 8pm onwards, Ai-La Lounge and Restaurant, Kumaripati, Lalitpur,



**Rusty Nails,**

Rusty Nails and Dr Suman collaborate for an eventful night. 10 July, 8pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel

**GETAWAYS**



**Mum's Garden Resort,**

Head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages at 50% off, surrounded by a lush green garden with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range. *Lake Side, Pokhara, (06)1463468, www.mumsgardenresort.com*

**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*

**Gokarna Forest Resort,**

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



**Restore Gumba,**

A 12-day trip to magical Mustang, while there volunteers can participate in restoration of the Chhairo Gomba, an old monastery of the Nyingma sect that was partially damaged in the quakes. [www.restorationworksinternational.org](http://www.restorationworksinternational.org)



**The Famous Farmhouse,**

Its converted old buildings are family friendly, the gardens and bougainvillea intertwine, the furniture and fittings are an antique collector's delight. *Nuwakot*

# Singha Darbar ko Tender

The inefficiency of government and corruption that riddles give steady grist to the gossip in tea shops, informal family gatherings and diplomatic receptions. Development projects have a way of stretching on for years: folks in Kathmandu are still waiting for Melamchi and after seven years the humble citizens of Nepal have finally seen a draft of the new constitution.

The inefficiency and the corruption that goes on behind the scenes of government are so obvious and yet so veiled. Now, Dilip Ranabhat has adapted Ajay Shukla's satirical play *Taj Mahal ka Tender* from Hindi to Nepal's parallel universe making fun of the inefficiencies and corruption that plague Nepal's politics and bureaucracy.

The play introduces the audience to Sarkar, a self-important, Candy Crush-playing, lewd video-viewing fellow whose dream is to build a Singha Darbar so his legacy lives on. He hires Thapa, an engineer with questionable morals, for



BIKRAM RAI

the project and wants it to be completed as soon as possible. But Thapa and other opportunist middlemen have different plans.

While Sarkar waits for the foundation to be laid, Thapa erects two multi-storey houses of his own, and initiates the building of a new five-star hotel. Leaders claiming to be working for the people and

contractors fill their pockets with easy money. All this has resonance in post-earthquake Nepal because there is talk of demolishing the damaged secretariat building and rebuilding it.

From creating 'Singha Darbar Construction Corporation' to setting up an international corporation to sell shares, the

audience are reminded of various real life CEOs of multinationals who control our destiny but whose true intentions are highly questionable.

First time director Ranabhat succeeds in creating memorable characters and the actors hold on to them throughout the play. Actor Bhola Raj Sapkota of the *Barfi* fame

shines as Thapa. Played by Prakash Dahal, Toya's gait and 'hajar' succeeds in raking in laughter from the audience every time the character appears on stage.

Although the play has its moments (like when the main characters talk about how hard it is to work in a system where corruption is rife without any self-introspection, hiring 601 engineers to work on the plan and a peon getting caught for accepting a cup

**REVIEW** of tea from someone while a CIAA official

openly demands the remaining 'wall' from the contractor and engineer) there are times one feels that the story has dragged on for too long. After 1:20 hours of playtime, this viewer felt a bit of splicing would have helped to keep it crisp and tight. ❑

Sahina Shrestha

*Singha Darbar ko Tender*

Director: Dilip Ranabhat

Cast: Sangeet Sangraula, Bhola Raj Sapkota, Sujan Oli, Prakash Dahal, Risabh KC, Sabir Churaute, Shrawan Rana, Awan Raj Uprety, Jiwan Bhattacharya, Gopal Aryal, Darwin Lungeli, Bijay Tamrakar. Ran for a month from 10 June to 7 July at Theatre Village.

## Revolution Café



Finding a quiet place to dine on the busy streets of Thamel can be quite a challenge. But once in a while you stumble across cafés that lets you forget your location. Revolution Café is one such place.

The café is spacious with both indoor and outdoor seating. Its garden is pleasant and despite the rains makes for the more preferable of the two seating options.

Judging by the presence of diners during the day of our visit, Revolution café it seems has been successful in attracting both local and international customers.

The menu is a mix-mash of popular Nepali favourites with starters like chips chilly, chicken chilly, mushroom chilly. You get the idea, right? The chef has also introduced a special menu featuring mango-inspired dishes. Revolution also serves stick food items like fried potatoes, sausages and grilled chicken. So if you ever wanted to try



PICS: KARMA GURUNG



street food but worried about the stall's hygiene, you know now where to come.

Because my partner and I wanted to have a healthy full-course meal we decided to forego the aforementioned items. To start with I had a small Green Garden Salad (Rs 270) while my partner decided on the Green Spinach Soup (Rs 200).

The salad was neither fresh nor tasty. The greens were soggy before I'd even put the dressing on them. But my partner had better luck. The soup had a beautiful

OPEN FROM 10AM TO 10PM

consistency, and tasted absolutely delicious. I even liked the brown garlic bread served on the side.

For our mains we chose the Cajun Grilled Chicken with mashed potatoes, grilled veggies and mango salsa (Rs 490). The serving was huge and enough for two to share. The dish was well presented to match the rustic nature of Cajun cuisine. The chicken was perfectly grilled and had a nice spiciness to it. The hotness of the tangy sauce was offset by the sweetness of the potato and mango salsa. A big thumbs up.

We decided to end our meal with a plate of Nutella Crepes with Vanilla Ice cream (Rs 270). While the crepe had a generous amount of Nutella spread over, it lacked the lightness that sets apart crepes from pancakes. Nonetheless, the presentation of the dish and copious amounts of ice cream and Nutella made up for the not-so-perfect pan-crepe.

For the spiritual souls, the café offers a unique breakfast experience every morning from 8.30AM to 9.30AM where a healthy breakfast is accompanied by a session of yoga.

Like many other cafes in Thamel, Revolution has also caught the live music bug with different bands playing on Friday nights.

While the dishes were a hit and a miss, I know I will be visiting Revolution Café again to try more of its mango infused dishes and to eat in quietude. ❑

Karma Gurung

How to get there: Revolution Café is located in Bhagwan Bahal, Amrit Marg, Thamel.



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# Resurrecting Kas

The shrine after which Kathmandu was named withstood many quakes in the



## SARTHAK MANI SHARMA

Rabi Bhandari was lining up for a blood donation program organised by Nimbus Savings and Credit Cooperative that Saturday morning at the historic Kasthamandap. More than 50 other employees of the cooperative had also gathered for the event. Some of the women were reclined on chairs with IV needles stuck to their arms, others were chatting with colleagues when the wooden structure started shaking violently.

"Those of us at the edge of the building ran outside," Bhandari recalls, "but when we looked back we saw that the whole structure had collapsed. Some of our friends who had been in the middle were crushed by the falling beams." The shock and horror of that day and the grief of having lost so many friends is still writ large upon Bhandari's face. Altogether 10 employees from Nimbus were killed.

"Bricks and mud started falling on us, and nearby temples began going down one by one," Amit Awale told *Nepal Samacharpatra*. He went back into the ruins of Kasthamandap to rescue alive three others, including a nurse and two blood donors.

Besides the cost in human life, the destruction of the 900-year-old structure was also an enormous symbolic loss for the Valley's cultural heritage. Kathmandu owes its name to Kasthamandap, which is said to have been originally made from the timber of a single tree, hence its name. It is also called Marusattal.

The first historical mention of Kasthamandap goes back to 1090 AD which makes the structure one of the oldest among the monuments of Kathmandu Valley - far older than Dharara which has dominated conversations about the loss of historical monuments in the April earthquake.

Kasthamandap was primarily a public pavilion, a rest-house which sat along two ancient trans-

## I witness

Suman Bhujel looks out the window at the vacant space where Nepal's glorious Kasthamandap temple stood for 900 years. Suman is 18 years old and has studied up to Grade 8. He is from Binjel of Sindhupalchok where all the houses were destroyed. He had been working in Kathmandu at rooftop Kasthamandap View Restaurant when the earthquake struck on 25 April. He watched from above as the entire Kasthamandap structure collapsed. He was filled with fear and ran up New Road to the open spaces of Ratna Park and the Tundhikhel for safety. He is now back, and is going to work at the restaurant long enough to make the money required for a passport so he can head out to Dubai for work.

Kevin Bubriski



KEVIN BUBRISKI

Himalayan trade routes as they passed through Kathmandu. Traders did not just rest here, but also stored their goods on their way to Tibet or India. They enjoyed the services of the Malakar flower sellers and Sarafi money

exchangers, who even today neatly fill up Kasthamandap's corners.

"While Hanuman Dhoka and other palaces were built for kings and the nobility and temples were dedicated to the Gods, Kasthamandap was built for the

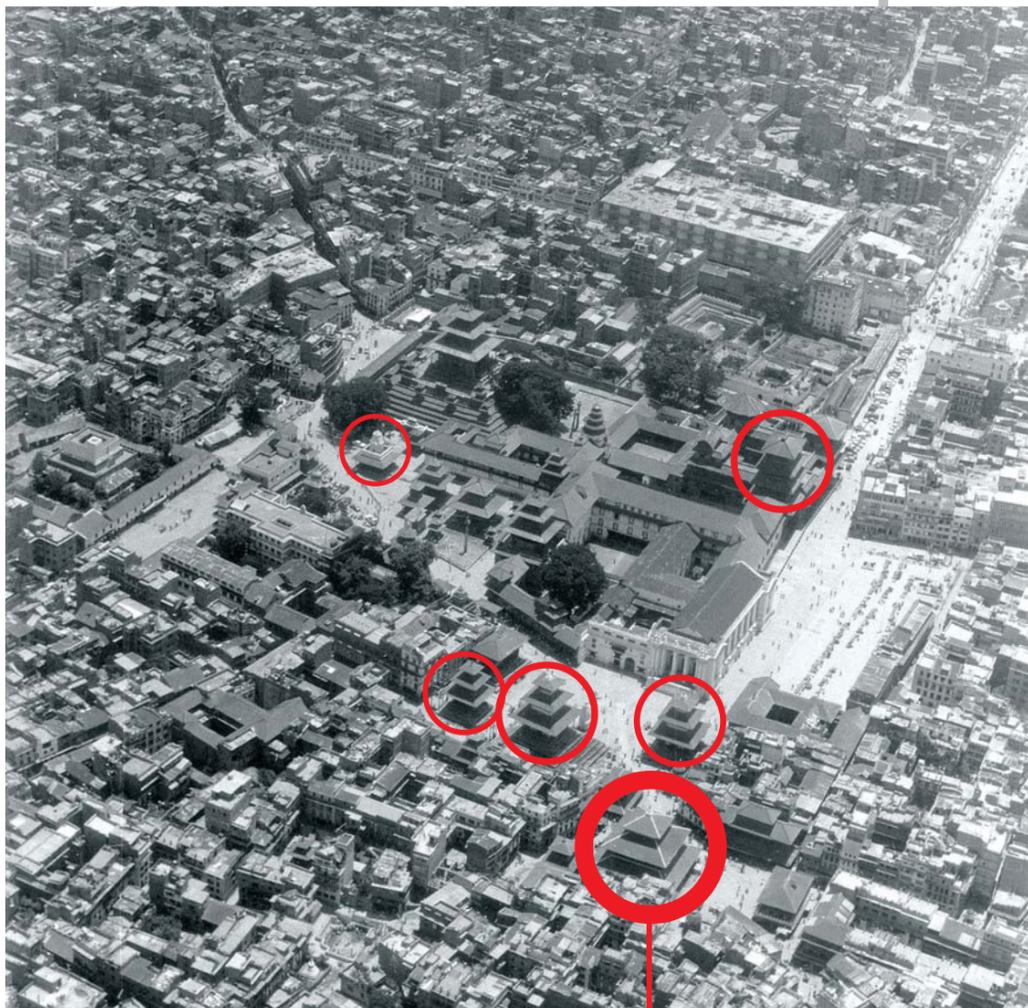
people," says Bhushan Tuladhar, a heritage conservationist with UN-Habitat. Kasthamandap had a multiplicity of functions and was also a shrine for Kanphata Yogis, a group of holy, ear-piercing renouncers. The inside of the

# Kasthamandap

the last 900 years but came down in this one

## A heap of history

DIPESH RISAL



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**RELIC IN RUINS:** Search and rescue teams dig through the rubble of Kasthamandap on 25 April (left), looking for survivors. Ten people were killed here.

Kasthamandap before (right) and in an aerial view (above) along with other temples that came down (circled in red).

BIKRAM RAI

structure had priceless ancient copper-plated inscriptions, and a rare statue of Lord Gorakshyanath, which the Yogis say is the earliest among other figures in Gorakhpur and Gorkha. All these treasures still need to be rescued from under the ruins of Kasthamandap.

Although the timber structure stood for a millennium, enduring massive earthquakes that have struck Kathmandu every 100 years or so, it didn't survive this one. "It would not be right to call this building old and weak. Structures like Kasthamandap need to be maintained and repaired often," says architect and urban planner Sudarshan Raj Tiwari. He adds it is possible Kasthamandap's wooden joints were rotting away and simply could not support the weight of the building during the big earthquake. Kasthamandap was last repaired 50 years ago during the reign of King Mahendra, but

that did not save it.

Yet, for a building with such historical and cultural significance, Kasthamandap has drawn less attention compared to other temples and shrines. For heritage documentarian Alok Siddhi Tuladhar, Kasthamandap was a memento from his forebears who were traditionally engaged in Kathmandu's trade with Lhasa. "It is possible my ancestors also rested

here, so whenever I pass through Kasthamandap with my children, I make it a point to tell them about its history and significance," he says. Nevertheless, efforts are underway to fundraise to rebuild

Kasthamandap. Dipesh Risal, a Nepali in the United States has collected and published a trove of information on Kasthamandap in an effort to ease the reconstruction process (see sidebar, right). Last weekend two fund-raising events were held to rebuild Kasthamandap.

One was The Heritage Cycle Ride and the other a marathon led by Baikuntha Manandhar.

Questions are now being raised about how true to the original material and design the new structure should be, or whether adding concealed steel or concrete reinforcements should be allowed. It is felt the project should be led by a government body and include historians, structural engineers, heritage experts and also religious groups for whom Kasthamandap holds special religious significance, like the Kanphata Yogis, who are already feeling left out of the discussions about their temple's future. There are also pressing questions of how to protect and retrieve the copper inscriptions and figures buried under the rubble.

Says Alok Tuladhar: "It helps to see rebuilding Kasthamandap as really a part of the cycle of birth, life and death. Things, like people, rise up and come down. We must accept that and move on to rebuild this great monument of our history and culture." ■

**K**asthamandap is no more. What is perhaps almost as unfortunate is that a majority of Nepalis believe Kasthamandap was built many centuries after its actual construction. For this reason experts, journalists, and city-dwellers have not lamented Kasthamandap's loss to a great extent.

But the fact remains: Kasthamandap was easily the oldest standing public structure of any kind in the valley, dating back to at least 1143 AD. While much of the building interior and facade was renovated over the intervening centuries, experts believe the large central platform (mandap) and the enormous four wooden columns most likely date back to the original construction.

The misinformation about Kasthamandap's much younger age stems from 19th century Kathmandu vamsavalis, which without fail, and for some inexplicable reason, credit Laxmi Narsingh Malla (ruled 1621-1641) for building the monument.

The rigorous Samsodhan Mandal had correctly established the antiquity of Kasthamandap more than 25 years ago in the book *Hypotheses and Proofs from Historical Research*. However, the incorrect later dating has been cited and perpetuated in most Nepali and Western publications, unfairly denying Kasthamandap the fame it deserves because it is 'only about 400 years old'.

There is now talk about restoration of the more popular structures in Kathmandu Darbar Square (Upper floors of the Basantapur Tower, a devastating loss in itself, Trailokya Mohan, build at least 537 years later, and the iconic Maju Dewal,

build at least 549 years after Kasthamandap). But few seem as concerned about Kasthamandap's fall or about the makeshift tents build right atop the uncleared and unsorted rubble more than a month after the devastating earthquakes.

Luciano Petech in *Mediaeval History of Nepal* mentions an unpublished manuscript account, according to which the Kasthamandap satta already existed in 1090 AD, during the reign of Harsadeva (ruled 1085-1099 AD). The polymath Rahul Sankrityayan, traveling under great duress to Tibet in 1936, found in the Saska Monastery a worn-out palm-leaf copy of a manuscript called Namasangiti.

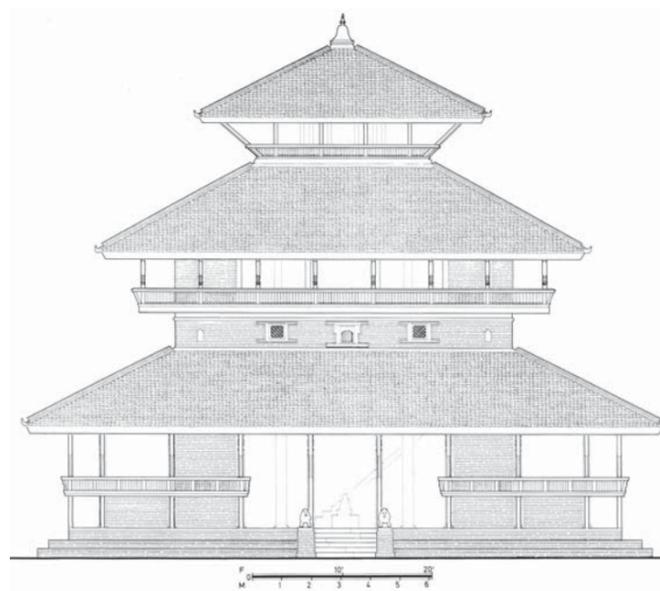
The colophon of this manuscript contains the word Sri Kasthamandape and is the first confirmed record of the name 'Kasthamandap' to date. According to Petech, this colophon and transcription was completed in Brahma Tol, Kathmandu in 'the last hours of Friday, September 24th, 1143' during the reign of Narendra Deva and somehow made its way into Tibet.

That makes Kasthamandap around 900 years old at the time of the 2015 earthquake. If we do not restore Kasthamandap, and search for the historic treasures within, we will lose a part of our heritage and a part of our identity forever. ■

Read the full original of this post by Dipesh Risal in [rebuildingkasthamandap.org](http://rebuildingkasthamandap.org)



REBUILDING OURSELVES





# Call the Midwife

Earlier this week, *The International New York Times'* two veteran film critics, A.O. Scott and Manohla Dargis, published a discussion, as they periodically do, on their thoughts regarding a marked rise (at least



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

this past year) in female centric films such as *Pitch Perfect 2*, *Spy*, *Inside Out*, and most recently *Mad Max: Fury Road* starring Charlize Theron as a ferocious, furious character who makes war against the patriarchy.

Their discussion is a crucial one at this time as films and

TV shows move further away, however slowly, from white, male centric plotlines that are designed for the usual audiences that mostly consist of the aforementioned.

Both Ms. Dargis and Mr. Scott (the latter of whom self-admittedly falls into the above category) speculate on the effect that increased female viewing power has on the nature of the content of successful shows, which brings us, quite neatly, to the question of the smashing success of *Call the Midwife*, a wildly unlikely BBC One production that is now firmly in its fourth season with a fifth in the works.

Based on the memoirs of Jennifer Worth, a real life midwife who served in London's impoverished East End in the 1950s and 1960s - the series follows the dedicated nuns, and the trained midwives who commit

to Nonnatus House and its mission of delivering infants from all walks of life safely into the world.

If the words "midwife" and "babies" have already sent you screaming into the hills, whether you are a man or a woman, I would regardless ask you to watch this gem of a series, so rooted in historical context, with a spectacular ensemble cast, and written with equal parts humour and compassion, with many episodes that will leave you openly weeping. To quote Dargis who, in turn, so astutely and eloquently quotes George Eliot, "to imagine and to feel the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling, erring, human creatures."

Watching cinema is an instinctive act of empathy. If we are to evolve further, and not just in the way we view art and cinema, we must extrapolate the lessons learnt from the arts, moving towards practicing a deeper, truer version of empathy starting with the writing of our constitution. The drafters of which do not seem to understand that the country around them is made up of a complex mixture of people who may differ from them in gender, culture, and colour but are as deserving of the rights as themselves. 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Trailer

**HAPPENINGS**



**COURTESY CALL:** American ambassador to Nepal Peter Bodde meets Prime Minister Sushil Koirala at Baluwatar on Monday.



**FIRST DAY:** Newly appointed Chief Justice Kalyan Shrestha takes office on Tuesday.



**GRANTING HELP:** German ambassador to Nepal Mathias Meyer and Finance Secretary Suman Prasad Sharma sign a grant agreement on Wednesday. The German government has announced an assistance of €29 million.



**HERITAGE RIDE:** Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal participates in a cycle rally to raise funds for reconstruction of Kasthamandap on Saturday.



**WE ARE HERE:** Tourists take a selfie in front of a temple at Kathmandu Darbar Square last week.

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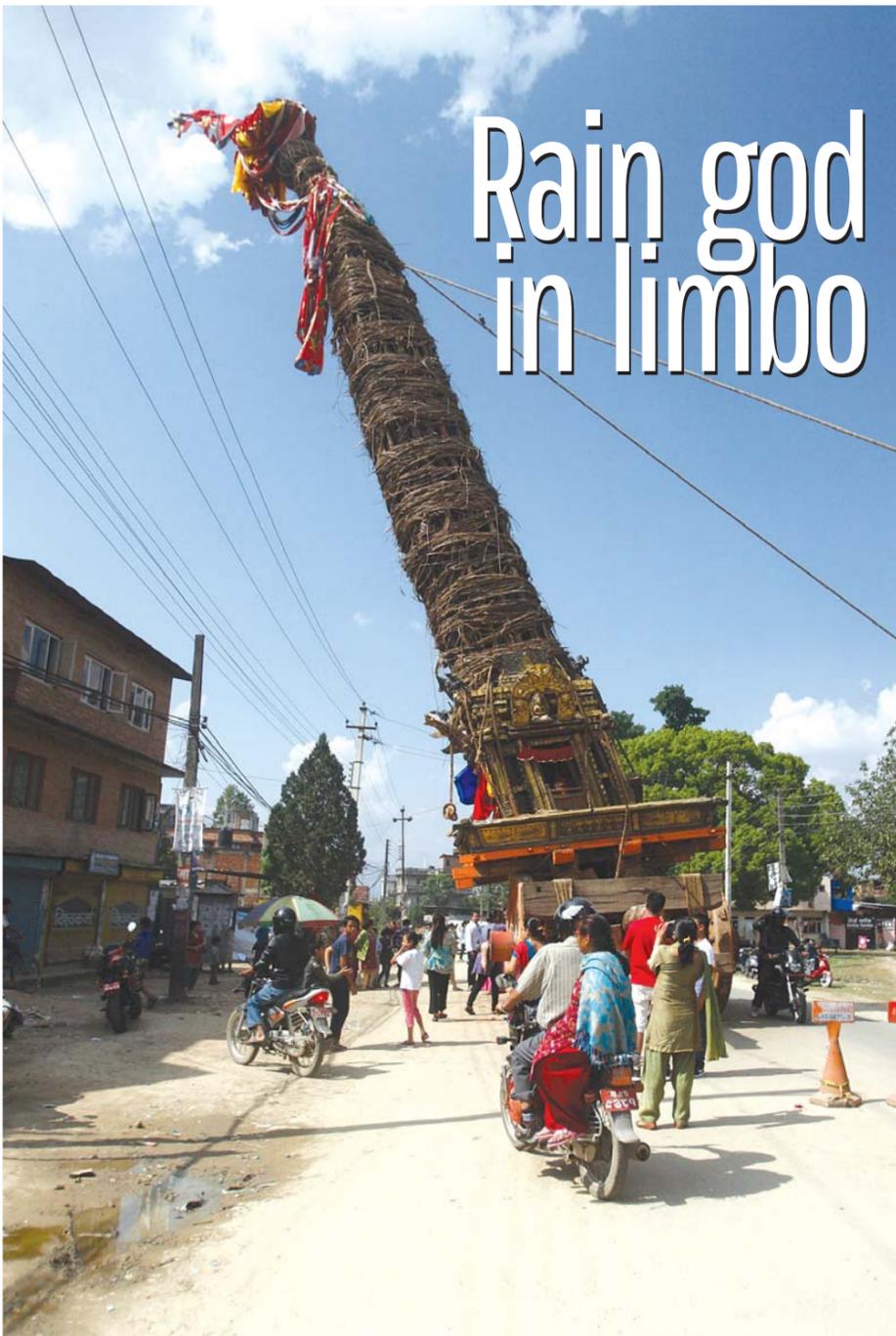
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# Rain god in limbo

**SONIA AWALE**

The chariot of Machhindranath was on its way from Bungamati to Patan on a more-important-than-usual 12-yearly commemoration of the annual festival when the earthquake struck. The chariot had arrived in the township of Chyasikot with its colourful pendants flying in the breeze, and excited youth pulling it with fervor.

But at 11:56 AM on 25 April, everything came to halt. Houses started swaying and temples came tumbling down. The tall wooden chariot itself swayed from side to side, although it did not topple. In Bungamati itself, the temple of Machhindranath where the deity is usually housed, collapsed. But the god survived because it was in the chariot.

Tradition demands that every 12 years the chariot has to be rebuilt from the scratch by the Barahis and Yewals belonging to the community of Newari carpenters with their chariot-making skills passed down from generation to generation. This year, they used special types of timber, reed and ropes since nails are not allowed to be used on the holy chariot. Unlike the journey in other years, the festival route this time was different: every 12 years the chariot is pulled from Bungamati to Patan and Jawalakhel, and back to Bungamati.

If there hadn't been an earthquake, the festival should by now have been in full swing with the Bhoto Jatra in Jawalakhel attended by the President. But this year, the chariot is still in Chyasikot, exactly where it stopped on 25 April. It needed repairs even before the earthquake, but now has additional structural damage. It has to be completely rebuilt

before it can complete its journey. However, no one seems to know when that will be.

"The chariot should be pulled and must complete its journey, it must be concluded," said Dil Kumar Barahi of the Barahi Society. Popular myths of doom and destruction have always surrounded Machhindranath if the journey is disrupted for any reason. In 2000, the chariot of the red rain god toppled over and the Bhoto Jatra festival that the King would have attended had to be postponed. The very next year was the royal massacre in which King Birendra and many other members of the royal family were killed.

Myth or no myth, the show must go on, and the chariot has to be pulled to its destination. The Guthi Sansthan which is responsible for the construction of the chariot had decided to rebuild it after an inspection, but it has yet to send out a formal letter to the carpenters. This hasn't only left the makers of Machhindranath uncertain about the future of the 12-year festival, but also disrupted their everyday life.

"We are carpenters, we'll rebuild it but when the organisation that has to speak up is quiet, there isn't much we can do," said Barahi. "But the bigger issue is we have other jobs we have to complete to earn a living. Rebuilding the chariot will take two months."

Also waiting for Machhindranath to arrive in Jawalakhel is the chariot of the consort goddess, Minnath, which is itself parked at Gabahal in Patan.

Ashok Raj Shakya, the priest of Minnath, says that there is nothing to do but wait until the Guthi Sansthan decides on rebuilding Machhindranath so that the festival can go ahead. Despite this, there are still devotees who come to worship at the chariot. Says Shakya: It is unfortunate that the earthquake happened in a year when Minnath invites Rato Machhindranath as a guest. ❏



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# Foreign affairs

Hi again,  
The rise of foreign employment has led to an increase in the number of extramarital affairs in the country. While having relationships outside marriage is condemned in almost every



## ALL IN THE MIND Anjana Rajbhandary

country and culture, in Nepal married couples usually turn a blind eye to their partner's unfaithful ways because divorce still continues to be a social taboo. The result: a lot of unhappy families, where the children will

most likely grow up questioning the sanctity of marriage.

Please send more questions to: [askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com](mailto:askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com) or @AnjyRajy

**Dear Anjana,**  
I am a 28-year old married woman living in Kathmandu with my five-year old son. My husband and I have been married for six years. He works in Doha so I only see him once or twice a year for a few weeks at a time. I feel like we barely know each other. We behave like strangers when together and the atmosphere automatically gets tense around us. I don't think we love one another anymore. But I would never consider divorcing him. My family would disown me!

**On the other hand, I hate being alone. A man I have known for several years recently suggested having an affair with him, and I must admit I found the offer extremely tempting. After all I need a friend and want to be intimate with another person. I know I am a good mother, but I don't know how long I can continue being a good wife when my husband is a distant stranger?**  
Sincerely, Loveless in Lalitpur

**AR:** Long distance marriages are challenging. Long term absence can pose a significant risk to a family's stability as you have stated, however, in your case you clearly do not want to stay with your husband and are only with him for the sake of your

family. You could either choose to stay in an unhappy, loveless marriage and suffer for a long time or address the problem by talking to your family and putting an end to the relationship. This will take a lot of courage but will most likely make you happier in the long run. Being a divorcee brings new sets of challenges in a society like ours. That said, living a life to please society is something that does not seem practical to me when the society actually does not really care about the person's happiness. You have a son and you probably want to provide the best for him, the choices you make will affect him in the long run. As for your friend's offer, it is entirely your decision. Does it have the potential to become something

more? Are you comfortable with having a secret companion? How will this affect your friendship? Most extramarital affairs do eventually end, and given your child, it is important you consider the consequences of all your possible options. Personally I would never endorse an extramarital affair, but in the end it is your decision and you need to do what you feel is right for you. Remember, it is impossible to please everyone, so choose the one whose happiness is most important to you before you take the next step.

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

# Local is best

Instead of micronutrient additives for children living in earthquake shelters, we should promote nutritious local foods

When the National Planning Commission carried out a post-disaster needs assessment last month, its final report underlined the need to use local indigenous foods wherever possible to overcome malnutrition among children and infants living in temporary shelters.



## GUEST COLUMN Aruna Uprety

That was a welcome statement, however that is not what is happening. In fact, the reason nutritious local foods are not being used is because we are inundated with so-called 'emergency' food supplements and micronutrient additives.

Children everywhere are nutritionally vulnerable when disasters strike not just because of the lack of proper diet, but also because of poor hygiene, sanitation and physical stress. Post-earthquake children in the 15 worst-affected districts suffer from deficiency in the intake of iron and other trace elements in their diet because of emergency dry foods like biscuits and noodles they have been eating.

In Sindhupalchok a parent told me recently: "We have food, they have given us enough noodles to last us a year." This is worrying. Children brought up with this diet will refuse to go back to their healthy staple



of grain, vegetables and meat which carry all the energy proteins and micronutrients their growing bodies need.

The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) has taken steps to address this problem. Combat those challenges through the community management of acute malnutrition including Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), counselling, breast milk substitute code monitoring, and establishment of Outpatient Treatment Programmes (OTPs) in health facilities in the affected districts.

Another worrying aspect of emergency food relief is the distribution of

supplementary Micronutrient Powder even though donor surveys have found that its use in normal settings over the past five years in 20 districts haven't produced any of the anticipated nutritional outcomes that benefit health and population of children. Indeed, one report says: 'Large and strong experimental research has shown that in populations where malnutrition is common and so are diarrhoea and pneumonia among children micronutrient powder aggravates diarrhoea.'

Mothers I have met in the districts have also said the children don't like the taste of the powder and they confirmed that children

had diarrhoea after consuming it. Our argument against Micronutrient Powders in Nepal is that we already have nutrient-rich food but this fact is ignored by those who bring in these supplements from outside and pressure local communities to use them.

Why don't donors pay as much attention to traditional foods available locally which have all the micronutrients children need? These are easily available and much cheaper. An Ethiopian doctor once told me how his country was able to reduce malnutrition among children by making flour from dry sprouted soya beans and chickpeas. Being full of protein, vitamins, calcium and other micronutrients, it helped Ethiopia overcome malnutrition among children.

The Nepali diet has sprouted beans, and this could easily be distributed to earthquake affected areas instead of imported supplements of dubious efficacy.

In emergency situations, nutrition interventions tend to focus on the treatment of acute malnutrition through therapeutic feeding and food aid. But it should not be blanket use, and interventions should be based on the need of the child. Assistance may also be required to help restore local food production and community access to safe and nutritious foods, and we have enough experience in that here.

For instance, we have sesame (til), flax seed (alas), peanuts, many local green vegetables and pulses rich in micronutrients which can be used for children as well as for adults. Research on the preparation of carrot mixed baby food in 2009 published in *Food Research Bulletin* by the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control revealed that using locally-available wheat, maize, soya bean, carrot powder, ghee, sugar and water provided adequate micronutrients. But such locally-produced formula have not been promoted by MoHP, and the question is: why not?

*Aruna Uprety is a nutritionist.*



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# Gurkhas at Gallipoli - 4

July 1914

In 1914, Nepali Gurkha battalions ('Gurks') and Allied forces were deployed in what would prove to be a disastrous campaign to take control of the high ground of the Gallipoli peninsula in order to threaten Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. This is the fourth installment of a series of flashbacks of the involvement of Gurkhas in the First World War.



## DAVID SEDDON

The casualties suffered at Gallipoli by both sides at the end of the first week of June 1914 were appalling. After the failure of the assaults mounted in late May and early June by the Allies, they were exhausted. The Ottoman forces, which had attempted to take advantage of this by launching a counter-attack, had found resistance greater than they anticipated.

In the bloody fighting that ensued, all three Gurkha battalions (1/6th, 1/5th and 2/10th) were engaged, often using their khukuris to good effect. The Ottomans lost an estimated 10,000 men in a week, but the casualties

on the British side were also terrible, around 7,000.

With both sides badly punished, only a few small-scale attacks were launched by the warring sides during the rest of June and Allied progress was slow. Towards the end of the month, however, the right flank had been pushed forward and Hunter Weston decided now to take the left flank forward as well. Three brigades, including 29th Indian Brigade, were ordered to drive the enemy back 1,000m from their position northwest of Gurkha Bluff. They would advance along Gully Spur and Gully Ravine.

The first assault of the Battle of Gully Ravine began on the morning of 28 June 1915. The battle went well on the left but

very badly on the right. The 2nd/10th Gurkhas followed up the heavy bombardment which the British guns had maintained for about two hours and moved under a cliff, then, using all the cover available, climbed to the top of the cliff and routed the defenders. It was, perhaps, the most successful set-piece attack of the whole campaign, for the battalion took five lines of Ottoman trenches.

The 1/6 Gurkhas on Gurkha Bluff were heavily involved, as were other Gurkha units. The battalion moved over and extended the line, by which time the Ottoman troops had been pushed back half a mile. Then the enemy counter-attacked. These counter-attacks hit each Gurkha battalion in turn, and

for eight days and nights the struggle continued, with hand-to-hand fighting, in which the Gurkhas again used their khukuris to deadly effect.

But the Ottoman soldiers countered with their knives and bayonets. Carlyon describes how 'the Turks bombed the Gurkhas out of their trenches, then the Gurkhas took them back'. Hamilton seemed pleased that the Gurkhas 'got into the enemy with their khukuris and sliced off a number of their heads'.

During the short period between 28 June-5 July, the Ottomans lost 16,000 troops, most of them around Gully Ravine during their counter-attacks on 3rd and 5th July. But the British and allied casualties were also heavy. General Hamilton expressed himself well pleased with the result of the Gully Ravine battle, but the repulse of the Ottoman attacks on 5 July marked the end of serious fighting for the 29th Indian Brigade in the Helles area, and after a few days spent in bivouac on the coast, it was moved on 9 and 10 July to the island of Imbros for rest and recuperation. By then it had been reduced to a skeleton. The three Gurkha battalions were badly affected but so were the other units of the Brigade, particularly the Sikhs. But it was the shortage of British officers that was the primary reason for withdrawing the brigade from the front.

The 2nd/10th had lost 40 per cent of their force, and by 1 July, only three officers, all subalterns, remained with the unit. Under the command of these young men and the surviving Gurkha officers, the battalion held on to all its territorial gains but was effectively decimated by 5 July. It was only five weeks since their arrival at Gallipoli. The 1/5th and 1/6th Gurkhas had to be temporarily amalgamated because of their losses, and the 14th Sikhs were by now so depleted in numbers (they had only one British officer, 1 VCO and 117 other ranks) that they were attached to the 2/10th Gurkhas for rations and maintenance. Like the 14th Sikhs, the 1/5th Gurkhas had only one surviving British officer, with only eight in the 5th Gurkhas as a whole, including the staff officers, and every unit was severely reduced in numbers.

The three big battles of June and July together cost 12,300 Allied casualties, the equivalent of a division, while the Turks had lost some 30,000 men. As Carlyon comments: 'Hunter Weston had butchered every division he had been given'. Rest and recuperation was desperately needed by the survivors. 🇳🇵

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# Will the AIIB work?

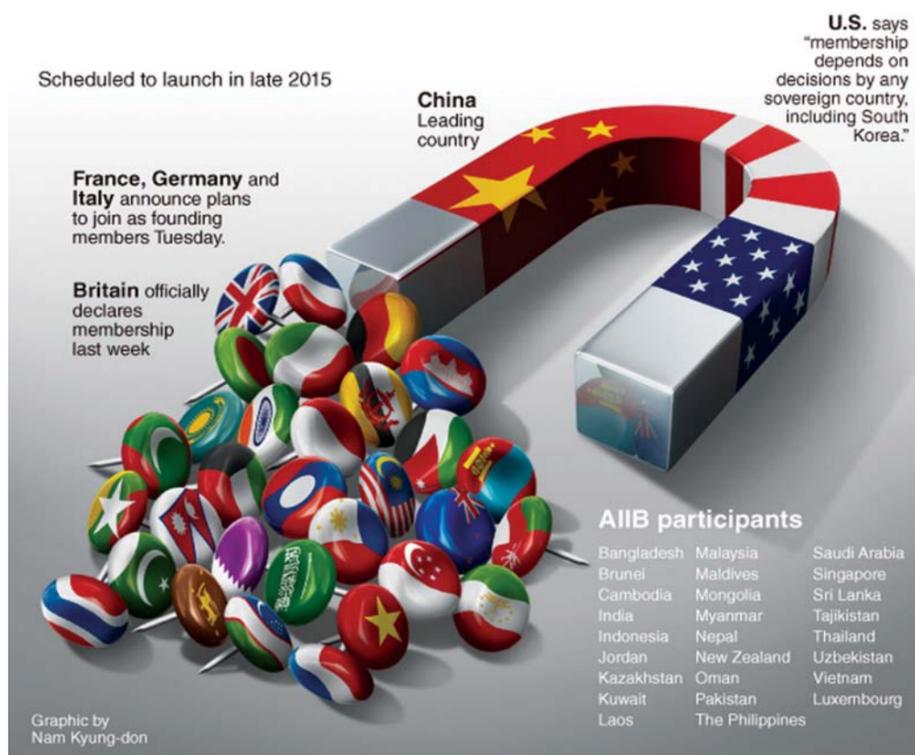
## KENNETH ROGOFF

CAMBRIDGE – Most of the debate around China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has centered on the United States' futile efforts to discourage other advanced economies from joining. Far too little attention has been devoted to understanding why multilateral development lending has so often failed, and what might be done to make it work better.

Multilateral development institutions have probably had their most consistent success when they serve as "knowledge" banks, helping to share experience, best practices, and technical knowledge across regions. By contrast, their greatest failures have come from funding grandiose projects that benefit the current elite, but do not properly balance environmental, social, and development priorities.

There is a general tendency to overestimate the economic benefits of big infrastructure projects in countries riddled by poor governance and corruption, and to underestimate the long-run social costs of having to repay loans whether or not promised revenues materialise. Obviously, the AIIB runs this risk.

That said, there are huge infrastructure needs across developing Asia, and it is high time for China to play a greater role in international lending institutions. Moreover, the official US argument – that China should invest its money in existing institutions, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, because a Chinese-led bank would likely have governance problems – smacks of hypocrisy. The US also worries that China



may use the AIIB to advance its economic and political interests. But anyone who is even vaguely familiar with the US approach to multilateral lending knows that no other country has been as adept at exploiting its power and leverage for strategic gain.

With China's growing importance in the world order, it needs to be given space to forge its own approach to global economic leadership. Besides, China is already pouring money into the developing world, often through highly opaque

channels.

While the world should generally welcome China's initiative, the real question is what kind of aid developing Asia needs. Anyone who has worked in developing countries understands that weak institutions and poor governance are often far bigger obstacles to growth than a lack of funds. And, however great a project looks on paper, practical implementation is often a sobering experience.

My interpretation of the

World Bank's record is that its role has been most consistently positive when it helps countries with "soft" development infrastructure: technical assistance and serving as a global knowledge bank. When its main role has been to provide financial muscle, the results have been less impressive.

Indeed, a strong case can be made that development aid would be more effective if it took the form of outright grants, rather than loans that ultimately need to be repaid. Headline aid numbers might seem less impressive, but long-run results would be better. Moreover, the world is awash in liquidity right now, and even where a government's own money is inadequate, it is often possible to establish public-private partnerships to build genuinely high-return projects. Competent government is a far scarcer commodity than cash.

Unfortunately, it is far from clear that the Chinese model of infrastructure development can be exported universally. China's strong central government overwhelms opposition from people displaced by new roads, bridges, and dams, and for many years ran roughshod over environmental concerns and workers' rights. Whereas, in democratic India, for example, it took eight years to rebuild Mumbai's airport, because courts forced the government to respect the rights of squatters on its outskirts.

Given the legacy of problematic loans and projects funded by Western-led infrastructure banks, it is reasonable to ask whether another one is needed. Still, if the AIIB views itself mainly as a knowledge bank, rather than a funding vehicle, it could provide real added value. 🇳🇵  
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# The trilateral path

Nepal stands to benefit from the rapprochement between India and China, and not just in earthquake reconstruction

During his visit to China last month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a pitch for trilateral cooperation to help Nepal with earthquake assistance. He and Chinese president Xi Jing Ping agreed to work with Nepal for mutually coordinated reconstruction and rehabilitation.



**GUEST COLUMN**  
Bihari K Shrestha

No doubt, this is a great leap forward in Indian foreign policy, which has traditionally preferred to deal with its neighbours bilaterally. In fact, New Delhi has steadfastly opposed any attempt by Nepal and Bangladesh to work together with India in regulating the flow of Himalayan rivers.

At the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction in Kathmandu on 25 June, India and China together pledged more than half the \$4.4 billion in grants and loans – leaving Nepal's traditional bilateral donors trailing far behind. This was the best indication yet of how the world's economic power centre has shifted to Asia. It is Nepal's great fortune that we have these two giants as our immediate

neighbours to the north and south.

Nepal's governance failure pre-dates the earthquake. In fact, ever since 1990, we have seen a polarised partisan paralysis that has kept Nepal from leaping ahead in energy, infrastructure, investment and tourism. Even with Nepal's much-touted successes in community forestry and maternal-child health, the groundwork was laid with the move towards decentralised development during the Panchayat.

For now, it is clear that Nepal's needs in post-earthquake reconstruction is not so much in cash to rebuild physical infrastructure, but to enhance our governance and management capabilities. That is not something money can buy.

Besides their monetary assistance, therefore, India and China should aim at building the management capacity of their landlocked neighbour so that it is able to emulate both of them in accelerated, sustainable and equitable growth. India, under Prime Minister Modi, has departed significantly from the policies of previous New Delhi rulers in dealing with neighbours and beyond.

Indian analysts themselves have said that New Delhi's earlier strategy was to create 'intrinsic instability' in the neighbourhood in order to gain advantage in bilateral dealings with them. India seems to have

shed this policy and, particularly in relation to constitution drafting in Nepal, has left it more or less to the elected Constituent Assembly to come up with its own solution. There seems to be a sense that Nepali politics is so unpredictable that micromanaging affairs here either backfires, or is counterproductive to India's own interest.

China and India are bound by a convergence of interests in Nepal's stability. China has an additional sensitivity about Tibet, and has been openly casting doubts about whether ethnicity-based federalism along Nepal's northern border is desirable in the

long term.

The failure of Westminster-style democracy in Nepal to ensure development, growth and stability worries both our neighbours. With its feudalistic and stratified state structure, a large proportion of the population has been confined to perpetual poverty. The entrenched interest of the high caste elite who have traditionally dominated rent-seeking extraction from the governance process has kept the country backward. Chronic corruption among politicians, the bureaucracy and even the private sector is just one of the

manifestations of this culture. So, while most people have continued to suffer in this 'democracy', its elected leaders seem to be always in the seats of power to perpetuate their plunder and neglect.

Now, following the massive commitment of aid for earthquake rebuilding there is new dynamic in sight. The constitution-drafting process has dragged on through two elections since 2008, but a handful of politicians have now got together to bulldoze a new constitution through the CA and the so-called public hearing process. The driving force here is not the constitution, as we all know, but power-sharing in a new national government that will include the opposition which wants its hands in the earthquake relief honeypot.

However, without some far reaching transformation in the political culture, even the massive earthquake aid package would be unable to make a lasting impact on the lives of the poor in this country. What Nepal needs is the reformulation of her polity to build democracy from the grassroots up. Since both India and China have dealt with Nepal's politicians from close quarters, the two countries must contribute to redefine Nepal's democracy and eventually help the country grow to become a well-governed and prosperous neighbour between them. 🇳🇵



**Nepali Times: What is your first impression of the new constitution's draft?**

**Laxman Lal Karna:** We had a lot of expectations. We were hopeful that the draft would accommodate aspirations of all marginalised groups like Dalit, Janajati, Muslim and Madhesi, Tharu and Women. But it didn't. The draft has ignored the Interim Constitution's guidelines for proportional representation of marginalised groups at all levels of the state.

**But the draft guarantees an inclusive state, doesn't it?**  
Even the Panchayat-era constitution

had called for an inclusive state, and the king handpicked a few from marginalised communities to garnish his institution. The question is not about whether the state wants to be inclusive, but about constitutional provisions that guarantee it. The word in itself carries no meaning unless proportional representation is guaranteed in the constitution.

**How will the Madhesi Front respond?**

We have objected to the big parties' high-handedness by symbolically rejecting the draft. We could go a step further and dissociate ourselves from the constitution writing process altogether.

**But you already tore up the draft inside the CA and burnt its copies outside.**

The front is now distancing it only from the way the constitution is being written. But if they do not address our issues, we will not only dissociate ourselves from the constitution drafting process, but from the state itself.

## POLES APART

After the Constituent Assembly (CA) endorsed the first draft of the new constitution on Tuesday and presented it to the public for comments, *Nepali Times* asked Laxman Lal Karna of the Sadbhavana Party and Agni Kharel of the CPN-UML for their views. Excerpts:

**What is your first impression of the draft?**

**Agni Kharel:** I am aware that the draft has several contentious issues that require serious deliberation.

**The Supreme Court issued an interim order against the 16-point deal. Isn't the draft a violation of the court's verdict?**

I have read the full text of the verdict, and I find it difficult to believe that the SC actually issued it. I don't understand why the SC issued this kind of verdict without listening to our arguments. But we are clear that the statute drafting is a jurisdiction of the CA and no other state organ can take that away, not even the apex court.

**The SC says the draft violated Article 138 of the Interim Constitution which gives the CA full mandate to restructure the state.**

Drafting a statute is a political process, and every decision that is taken to this



regard is also political. Having said that, the future legislature parliament that will take final decision on demarcation of federal units will have the same members of this CA. Simply put, the CA's involvement will not end with promulgation of the constitution.

**So the CA will not honour the SC's verdict?**

We will not end the process because we have a mandate from people.



**PAPERS PLEASE:** Police checking the papers of a migrant worker at the gate of the Department of Foreign Employment on Wednesday. The office has been closed after a protest by recruiting agencies.

OMASTHARA

# Who is against zero-cost migration and why?

Labour recruiters are protesting their right to keep on cheating poor Nepali migrant workers

**OM ASTHA RAI**

After the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) began issuing labour permits from its Tahachal office last year, the road leading to it past Soaltee Crowne Plaza was perpetually teeming with migrant workers lining up for their travel documents.

But this week, after the government's new zero-cost migration policy came into effect, the road is crowded not with workers but with labour recruiters to protest the rule that would exempt Nepali workers from paying for visa fees and airfares.

The 'manpower agents' say the new policy that would benefit hundreds of thousands of Nepali workers is "impractical" and accuse Labour Minister Tek Bahadur Gurung of favouritism towards those who own big recruiting companies.

"We will not move from here unless this zero-cost policy is retracted," said Janak Khadka of Deluxe HR Solutions Pvt Ltd which enlists Nepali migrant workers for jobs in Qatar. Khadka is among hundreds of others that have locked out the DoFE in Tahachal and say they will not give up unless they are allowed to charge Nepali workers air fares and visa fees.

They say the zero-cost policy sounds good, but will be practical only when all employers in the Gulf and

Malaysia agree to bear the cost of visas and air fares. "Only big employers are paying for air tickets and visa fees of migrant workers," said Khadka.

To be sure, Labour Minister Gurung did own a manpower company before receiving a ticket from the Nepali Congress (NC) to contest the last Constituent Assembly (CA) elections from Manang. After winning the election he transferred ownership of all his recruiting companies to relatives.

The NC's decision to appoint a former manpower agent as Labour Minister was already a case of conflict of interest. And it is possible, as the protesting recruiting companies say, that Gurung was motivated to implement the zero-cost policy to benefit agencies run by his nephews and brothers.

However, instead of persuading the Gulf-Malaysia based employment companies to provide free air tickets and visas in tune with international conventions, protesting recruiting companies have been lobbying for withdrawal

of the new policy. This would mean Nepali workers going overseas would have to bear the additional cost of visa fees and air tickets.

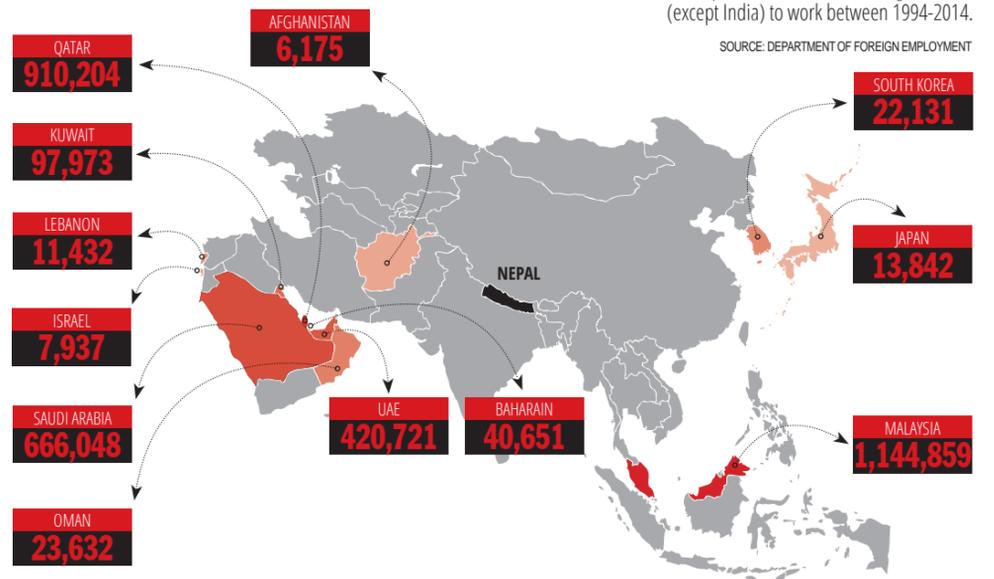
Gurung defends the zero-cost policy, saying it will end exploitation of Nepalis. "Poor migrant workers have to sell or mortgage their land, borrow from loan sharks or spend most of their savings to pay for airfares and visas, and then they end up not getting the salaries promised," he told *Nepali Times*.

Gurung admits that the zero-cost policy may lead to a 30 per cent drop in the outflow of migrant workers, but he says at

## Where we are

Numbers of Nepalis who went to receiving countries (except India) to work between 1994-2014.

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT



least they will not be exploited. He is adamant that the zero-cost policy is irrevocable and he will not back down.

Some leaders of the UML, which is a coalition partner of the NC in government, have publicly criticised the policy and are putting pressure on Prime Minister Sushil Koirala to persuade Gurung to back down. Even within the NC there are some leaders opposed to Gurung who is said to be from the Sher

Bahadur Deuba faction.

Meanwhile, as the sit-in by the agents goes on, it is the workers waiting for their labour permits who are suffering the most. A policy meant to protect them from being overcharged is jeopardising the jobs waiting for them overseas. 🇳🇵

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■ Zero cost migration #753  
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BIKRAM RAI

# Letter to the President

Setopati, 9 July

सेतोपाठी

Honourable President, Sital Niwas, Kathmandu

I am glad you fulfilled your official duty as President to read out the government's official policies and programs in parliament on Wednesday. An honest and competent leadership can implement these programs, of that there is no doubt.

Mr President, I have read that you have repeatedly expressed the wish that ordinary Nepalis should not be inconvenienced while you travel to and from official functions. In fact you have instructed the

government not to let the public suffer on account of a VIP motorcade. However, on the very evening after you read the government's policies and programs in parliament on Wednesday, I had the misfortune of being caught up in a monstrous traffic jam caused by your official carcade.

There was a torrential downpour, and many of us pedestrians, those on bicycles and motorcycles were looking for shelter from the rain and were drenched. Passengers in stationary cars just sat there, not moving. Actually there was already an indication that this was going to happen when there was a rehearsal the previous day. Unless

the government calculates that the loss to citizens adds up to loss to the nation, we will be forced to conclude that the state is only giving us hollow assurances. This will only push us backwards.

Mr President, if there aren't any concrete changes we will be forced to conclude only the personalities have changed for the torture we are forced to bear on the roads when a head of state passes. Still, we haven't given up hope that you will be able to convert your official good intentions into action.

Suraj Poudel, Koteswor  
Read original in Nepali.  
[www.setopati.com](http://www.setopati.com)

# Leaving home to rebuild it

Dhruva Dangal in *Nagarik*, 8 July

नागरिक

Sang Temba Sherpa of Ghortali in Sindhupalchok owned a provision store at the Tatopani Liping border. The earning from the shop was enough to run his household and pay for the education of his children in a private school. But the earthquake on 25 April brought down both his house and shop, setting one challenge after another for the father of four. He has now decided to go abroad to build back his life.

"We cannot depend on relief materials forever. What will we eat once the emergency food stops coming?" asked Sherpa as he stood waiting in line outside the District Administration Office (DAO) in Sindhupalchok for documents to get his passport process started. "I know how to drive and will work as a driver abroad." After receiving a recommendation from the DAO office, Sherpa left on a bus for Kathmandu. Sherpa's eldest daughter, Choedon is giving her SLC exams this year and he knows he has to make extra money to pay for her college.

When Motimai Dong of Nimlung returned home last month after working in Kuwait for four years, she thought she'd never leave the country again. She wanted to get married and settle here but the quake

destroyed Dong's family house and turned to rubble whatever little they owned. Dong is once again preparing to leave for Kuwait.

She says that with her experience she can earn 100 dinars per month. "The work is easy, if they increase my salary I'll go there. If not, I will go to Kyrgyzstan where the pay is better," said the 25-year-old.

Teenage brothers Daulat and Dale Lama of Selang were also waiting outside the DAO for a recommendation. The brothers who were studying in Grade 10 say they have no choice but to go abroad to earn for the family.

"We have no home, the landslide destroyed our farm and we need to feed our family," said Lama who has seven other siblings.

Although a large number of Sindhupalchok's residents were already abroad even before the earthquake struck, the number of people applying for passports has shot up after the quake. Deputy CDO Surya Prasad Upadhyay says earlier young Janajati and Dalit men formed a majority of passport applicants, now it's an equal mix of men from all communities.

Since the DAO resumed office on 25 May, more than 2,500 passports had been issued. It receives up to 70 forms a day and recommends 10-15 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs daily.



DHRUVA/NAGARIK



Box: Draft constitution

हिमाल

Bhanu Bhattarai in  
*Himal Khabarpatrika*, 5-11 July

# Combat gauze missing

Santosh Pokharel in *Nagarik*, 29 June

नागरिक

A consignment of life-saving combat gauze donated by an American drug company for treatment of people wounded by Nepal's earthquakes has gone missing. No one knows whether the consignment was misplaced or stolen, which could have probably saved many lives after the disaster.

Z-Medica, manufacturer of QuickClot Combat Gauze, had couriered 2,750 packets of these first-aid kits to Nepal, and these were meant to be distributed by Nepal Share, a Kathmandu-based NGO, to all hospitals in the earthquake-affected districts. Mohan Pahari, who previously worked for Z-Medica, had requested the company for these first-aid kits, which are now widely used by US troops to stop bleeding from wounds and cuts.

"I got a call from Nepal Airlines cargo to receive the delivery, but when I went to the airport, the shipment was missing," Pahari says.

Kamal Gyawali from the cargo department of Nepal



Airlines says, "We searched for the consignment in every possible place, but we didn't find it. We are not sure if it went missing after being delivered to Nepal or it did not arrive here at all."

Max Khatri, President of Nepal Share, says QuickClot combat gauzes were precious first-aid items and could have been helpful to save lives of people wounded by the earthquakes and landslides. "We lost a precious gift due to someone's negligence," he says. "Nepal Airlines must investigate the matter."

# Which Chief Sec?

Nagarik, 7 July

नागरिक

Three candidates are in the running to replace Chief Secretary Lila Mani Poudel when he retires on 8 August after completing three years in the post. The three probable civil servants are: Ministry of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation secretary Shreedhar Gautam, Ministry of Federal Issues and Local Development secretary Somlal Subedi and Ministry of Industry secretary Jay Mukunda Khanal.

All three candidates were promoted to their posts on 13 April 2011. According to tradition, the present chief secretary stays on holiday a few days before his retirement date and the new chief secretary is announced by the cabinet. The Civil Service Regulation states that the government promotes a secretary to the post of Chief Secretary on the

basis of seniority and competence.

Education Ministry secretary Bishwa Prakash Pandit is said to be in the running too, but not through the usual process. If he becomes Chief Secretary, Shreedhar Gautam will have to retire on 31 July 2016 because of the age limit of 58. This is why Bishwa Pandit is supporting Gautam who has a clean reputation, but is said to be indecisive.

Som Lal Subedi has worked for a long time in the Ministry of Local Development and has a PhD in Financial Decentralisation and has served in the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and most recently in National Planning Commission. He is known to be close to the NC. Jaya Mukunda Khanal served as CDO in various districts and is a quiet person, close to the UML. Who becomes Chief Secretary will hinge on the composition of the national government next month.

SANTA GAHA MAGAR

Nepal's earthquakes killed people belonging to all castes, class, ethnicities and religious groups. But it was the Tamang people who traditionally live in the 15 worst-affected districts who were disproportionately hit.

The death toll from the 25 April earthquake and its 12 May aftershock has been put at 8,844 by now, with 3,012 of them members of the Tamang community. More than half the people killed were in Sindhupalchok district northeast of Kathmandu, which has a high concentration of Tamangs. As many as 1,385 Tamangs died in Sindhupalchok.

It may seem inappropriate to break down the victims by caste, ethnicity, gender, or religion but the fact that more than half the victims were women has gender implications. So does the fact that more than 50 per cent of the people killed were from marginalised communities ranked low in the Human Development Index (HDI).

Analysing these statistics offer glimpse into which communities are most vulnerable to natural disasters, and how they should be protected while designing post-earthquake reconstruction projects.

"In Tamang villages worst affected by the earthquakes, we should now implement integrated reconstruction programs with their active participation," said economist Keshav Acharya.

The most apparent reason behind why the earthquakes killed more Tamangs than people from other castes and ethnic communities is that they lived in Sindhupalchok, which bore the brunt of the shaking, and their stone and mud homes didn't stand a chance. Sindhupalchok also got a double whammy: from both the 25 April and 12 May earthquakes.

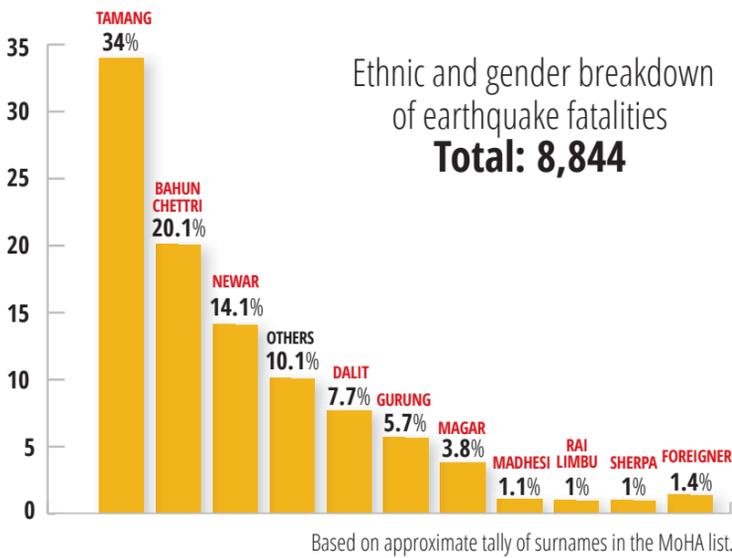
The Tamangs are the largest ethnic groups in eight of the 15 worst-affected districts. Even in the other six districts, the Tamang population is significantly high.

Anthropologist Mukta Singh Lama says despite living in the vicinity of the capital the Tamang community which he belongs to have historically been as neglected as the people from Nepal's most underserved Karnali zone in the HDI listing. It is the poverty, neglect and outright discrimination against Tamangs that makes them even more vulnerable to disasters like



DEVAKI BISTA

# The Tamang epicentre



earthquakes, landslides and floods.

The literacy rate in the Tamang community (62.6%) is lower than the national average (65.8%). Only 38.3 per cent of the Tamangs can reach nearest health facilities by walking for 30 minutes. In terms of access to safe drinking water, the Tamangs rank sixth from the bottom. Almost all indicators show that the Tamangs have not benefitted from their geographical proximity to the capital Kathmandu.

Kumar Blon, General Secretary of the Nepal Tamang Ghedung says most houses built by the Tamangs are on unstable slopes, exposed to rockfalls, and along river banks. "These places are not safe to live in

even when there is no earthquake," Blon said, "the earthquake just made everything worse."

Around 80 per cent of concrete houses in the Kathmandu Valley withstood the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in April and its 7.3 magnitude aftershock in May. But houses made of stone and clay-mortar by untrained masons in unsafe areas went down. Most Tamangs were living in such unsafe houses.

According to the latest report by the Ministry of Home Affairs the earthquakes damaged 607,212 buildings (private, public houses, health posts and schools). Of them, 381,976 buildings were in areas dominated by Tamangs.

Jagdish Chandra Pokhrel, former Vice Chair of National Planning Commission, says it is also an opportunity to understand why the Tamangs are vulnerable to natural disasters and what can be done to protect them from future calamities. He says the government needs to learn from its past experience to help the Tamangs rebuild their lives.

Pokhrel cites the example of the Tamang families displaced when the Kulekhani reservoir in Makwanpur was built in the early 1980s. Around 500 Tamang families whose lands were acquired by the government didn't want cash compensation, but to be resettled elsewhere. "But the government

gave them money anyway, and very few bought land with that," Pokhrel said. "Soon, the money was gone and they were destitute."

Pokhrel says that mistake should not be repeated in helping survivors of the earthquake from the Tamang community. He said: "Before we plan reconstruction, we must have an understanding of the community's economic activities, social status, education and literacy level and cultural aspects."

Anthropologist Lama agreed: "If the government does not come up with effective reconstruction programs, us Tamangs will be even poorer and we will be pushed back 50 years." ❏

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# Advisory on advisories

A word of advice for all of you out there who take seriously travel advisories and warnings about visiting Nepal: your government is just trying to cover its legal ass. Be brave, ignore it. Better still, hire your own lawyers and bring them along for your Annapurna trek.

Now, here is a little known fact: three times more Nepalis left Nepal in the last fiscal year than tourists entering Nepal. Which means that we should be more concerned about the security of our own nationals than the safety of visiting alien anti-nationals. We shouldn't take all those advisories by western countries lying down because according to the Vienna Convention and its amendment on Rules Governing Reciprocity in International Relationships to which Nepal is a signatory, we reserve the legal right to declare war on countries that restrict their nationals from visiting us.

So, while the Nepal Army gets preparations underway to launch a military expeditionary force to invade Great Britain (and continue where we left off before being rudely interrupted in our hostilities in 1816) in retaliation against the FCO's travel advisory, it may behoove GONE to think about issuing tit-for-tat advisories for Nepalis visiting other highly hazardous



countries in the western and southern hemispheres.

In order to assist the Ministry of Affairs with Foreigners (MoAF) which is currently too busy issuing passports to think about anything else, the Ass has prepared below a list of suggested travel advisories for Nepali nationals desirous of travelling abroad. Don't say we didn't warn you, and ignore these at your own peril:

### FOREIGN TRAVEL ADVICE For Nepali Nationals

**1. UK**  
MoAF advises against all but essential travel to Great Britain at the present time, mainly because it's all but impossible for a Nepali to get a bloody visa. But if, by some divine luck, you are awarded a visa and are sober enough the next morning after a night of wild partying to catch your flight out, Nepalis are

strongly advised to be on high alert. Skinheads are not Brits who are in mourning, and if they wear swastika tattoos it may not necessarily mean they are Hindus. Approach with extreme caution in East London, do not greet them in Hindi with "Namaste". Avoid other extremists with distinctive red necks, wearing heavy boots, studs and rings in their eyebrows.

**2. USA**  
MoAF has upgraded the threat level for all Nepalis travelling to the United States in the unforeseeable future. All but the bravest of the brave should defer travel to the US because of an uncertain international situation caused by the lack of Nepali passports. All non-essential travel has therefore been suspended unless such journeys are absolutely essential for purposes of illegally overstaying, and if you are willing to stand in line for three months outside Naryanhiti

for your MRP.

But, if you have to go then you have to go. However, exercise maximum caution when visiting inner city Chicago, south-central Los Angeles, Miami, and parts of Texas unless armed with your own khukuri, the Knepali's Knational Knife. MoAF says that although there are no instances of Nepalis being specifically targeted because they are from Nepal by dudes carrying automatic assault rifles, visitors are nevertheless warned to exercise extreme care, and wear Kevlar suits, body armour, helmets and groin guards at all times when venturing out. Oh, yes, and avoid all essential travel to California unless accompanied by Dwayne Johnson aka "The Rock".

**3. Malaysia**  
Nepali contract workers going to Malaysia should be aware that they face high risk from immigration officials, manpower agencies and labour brokers -- at Kathmandu Airport. Travellers should exercise extreme caution, and offer appropriate baksheesh, otherwise they may be prevented from leaving. Despite a government order abolishing fees and airfares for Nepali workers, manpower agencies have padlocked the Department of Labour to demand their right to exploit and extort fellow-Nepalis. Things should be fine once the workers actually reach Malaysia.

**4. UAE**  
Nepali researchers working on PhDs on migrant workers, academics, and anyone who has ever used the hashtag #futureguggenheim, are forewarned that there exists a slight possibility of them disappearing without trace for a few days after landing in Dubai. MoAF strongly advises Nepalis not to talk to strangers on the streets, carry Mace, and drink lots of water to prevent dehydration.

**5. Planet Earth**  
MoAF advises all Knepali knationals against non-essential travel to Europe because of heightened tensions in Ukraine and the danger that it could escalate into full-scale World War III, engulfing the planet in a nuclear winter. Nepalis are also urged to exercise caution when travelling with dependents anywhere in the world because of the threat of catastrophic volcanic eruptions accompanied by giant tsunamis that may plunge Planet Earth into a new Ice Age. There is also the possibility that the sky will fall one day, and the world will end when the Earth is hit by a giant asteroid. So, stay home. Don't go anywhere.



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