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DIVAKAR CHETTRI

PULLED APART

The tragedy in this prolonged constitution-writing process all along has been that the long-term national interest of Nepal is being decided by politicians with short-term vision. Decisions on a new, inclusive constitution that will ensure justice, equity and prosperity through viable provinces are being based on electoral gerrymandering and bargaining for portfolios in the next government.

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COMMODYFYING RELIGION

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BY BIDUSHI DHUNGEL

TWIST IN THE TALE

BY OM ASTHA RAI PAGE 6

MONSOON MELANGE



More than 100 days after the earthquake, the ancient city of Patan is finding its own pace again.
BY SONIA AWALE

PAGE 18-19



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BORDERING ON BRINKMANSHIP

For a time after the 8 June breakthrough in which the four main political forces decided to push through with a draft constitution in exchange for the formation of a government of national unity to address earthquake reconstruction, it looked like the six-year deadlock on the constitution had finally ended.

Even though the impetus was short-term power, we thought the forward movement could be used to iron out the kinks as we moved along. The public consultation process, though short and plagued with shortcomings, was surprisingly effective in voicing the people’s misgivings about the draft. The top political leaders were working till late Thursday to work in the feedback into a new draft before sending it to the Constitutional Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee, a body that is as unwieldy as its acronym (CPDCC).

The Committee has its work cut out, ironically because there is little political dialogue. The leaders are, as is their wont, talking past, not with, each other because the word ‘consensus’ has become synonymous with ‘contention’. It shouldn’t surprise anyone that the main disagreement is over federalism, with the NC, UCPN(M) and the MJF(D) now agreeing that perhaps they really should have demarcated the boundaries of the provinces in the draft as directed by the Interim Constitution and the Supreme Court. And, oh yes, while they are at it they also want to cut the number of agreed provinces from eight to six. What was holding up a final agreement was the fate of the five disputed districts in the eastern and western Tarai, and whether they should have parts of the Mahabharat. This would be a compromise between the demand for geographical North-South provinces and the plains-only Madhes provinces.

The UML, whose leader K P Oli is in a tearing hurry to replace Sushil Koirala as prime minister as soon as the constitution is passed, doesn’t want any obstructions now. Which is why he is opposed to including provincial demarcations in the constitution because of the endless haggling he thinks that would entail. However, his own party colleague Madhav Kumar Nepal is for delineating boundaries in the constitution. Koirala, for his part, aside from blaming typists in his secretariat for the mistakes in

A constitution cannot be a pot-holed road to be hurriedly patched up. It is a highway to carry Nepalis to a prosperous future.



the draft constitution, is perfectly happy sitting snugly on in Baluwatar for as long as it takes for the constitution to be completed.

However, Oli may have agreed to sacrifice his demand because his opposition to demarcation was going to indefinitely delay passing the constitution. But in return for an agreement he bargained and pushed for a six-province model.

The tragedy in this process all along has been that the long-term national interest of Nepal is being decided by politicians with short-term vision. Rather than being answerable to their own people, some seem more beholden to outsiders. Decisions on a new, inclusive constitution that will ensure justice, equity and prosperity through viable provinces are being decided on electoral gerrymandering and portfolios in the next government. A constitution cannot be like one of those pot-holed city roads that are hurriedly patched up, it must be a highway to take Nepalis to a prosperous future.

We are now in the final throes of writing a new constitution. It should be a document that preserves the gains of the April 2006 pro-democracy movement that ended the conflict, the Madhes Movement that articulated the grievances of the plains, and the greater consciousness of the traditionally excluded Janajatis, Dalits, women and others in this country.

The parties have now realised that, however difficult, the borders of future provinces must be included in the draft constitution. After the first CA elections the definitions of the some of the larger concepts had got distorted. For instance, democracy came to mean only republicanism, federalism and inclusiveness seen only through the narrow confines of the political demands of some Madhesi or Janajati leaders for special rights. Secularism became a code word for conversion. Fortunately, the potentially inflammatory demands of three years ago were firmly rejected by the people in the second CA elections.

Now we have an opportunity not only to correct the discriminatory provisions in the draft on citizenship, exclusion, press freedom but also to conclude the peace process and consolidate the democratic gains of the past nine years.

YOUR SAY

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VOX POPULISM

The new constitution deadline 16 August will come and go without a constitution. KP Oli will never become PM. The Maoists will crumble, split and just disappear ('Vox populism', Editorial, #769). The people will rise again, against the tyranny of political criminals. We will fight for women's rights. Do not underestimate the power of the people, especially women.

Bandana Mallick

■ Translators of the Indian Constitution have used the expression 'panth niripekshyata' in the official text, not 'dharma niripekshyata'. The Sanskrit word 'dharma' is just too complex to be translated as just 'religion'. Religion has to be translated as pantha.

Gajraj

■ For 'secular' use 'right to religious freedom and conscience'. For 'federal' use 'union'. This was deliberately done by Dr Ambedkar though India was federal in itself. The Federation was not the result of an agreement by states to join in, so the States has not the right to secede from it. And drop 'socialism'. You cannot bind the next generation with any kind of 'ism'. Original Constitution Of India never

mentioned 'secularism' it was inserted in 1976 during the Emergency by Indira Gandhi.

Grimalji

FEDERALISM, REPUBLICANISM

The monarchy is the part of many European countries silently run coherently with Parliamentary Democracy ('Federalism, republicanism and secularism', Anurag Acharya, #769). The Vatican is allowed to run with the spread of Christianity worldwide. When all these activities are silent part of their every day functioning, why is there intolerance for any religious debate found in South Asian countries? Is Hindu belief a part of inferiority complex compared to other religion openly expressed?

Prashanta Kulkarni

■ The religious zealots are the nemesis of democracy. When a country wants to be governed without discrimination the only means to achieve it is to proclaim a country secular. But secular like France not like the US. American secularism is to protect religions not democracy whereas in France religion is a personal affair, you can do or believe whatever god you want, but within the laws of the nation without proselytisation, without exhibitionism et al.

Whatever

SHAMELESS

Leaders of modern Nepal are shameless, corrupt, without any dignity, deceitful, dishonest, disgraced, criminals, idiotic and inept, incompetent, callous, vile, disgusting, cowardly, traitors that sell national interest to foreigners, and the list is long ('Shameless', Foreign Hand, #769). Yet we keep voting them in office.

Mohan Sharma

JUMPSTARTING THE ECONOMY

A refreshing angle of political economy, I enjoyed reading it ('Jumpstarting the economy', Sarthak Mani Sharma, #769). But, I am not sure if the reason why inflation was lower than in the previous fiscal year is solely because of the fall in oil prices. The bumper harvest owing to the good monsoon last year also had a significant role in preventing inflation. Food inflation plays a vital role in Nepal and this along with the fall in oil prices prevented inflation from shooting up any higher.

Tejeshwi Nath Bhattarai

CLOUDS FROM BMOTH SIDES

■ Always beautiful in Nepal, year round. ('Clouds from both sides', Kunda Dixit, #769)

Betty Stilt

■ We're going back in April. Can't wait.

Kim Robbins-Segers

■ How right you are. My wife and I spend a few days every week in Chitlang valley, enjoying the beautiful hills and valleys, driving on the Pharping-Kulekhani road. During monsoon, the sunlight has a very special luminosity, very similar to the one which made the Provence so famous among painters. This light, along with the different clouds, makes our countryside spectacular.

Hartmut

■ Not only is Nepal beautiful during the monsoon, but for those squeamish about leeches and other discomforts at elevations below 8,000ft, once you persevere and get higher, the rainfed vegetation blossoms in variegated colours, the temperature cools and visitors are few. It is truly an incredible time to see the country at the higher elevations.

Isomlai

THE ASS

The Maoist used to say, religion is the opium of the people but look Comrade Prachanda is taking blessing from Hindu gurus. (Federalism, secularism, rheumatism, The Ass, #769). What kind of politics is this?

Niraj Bartaula

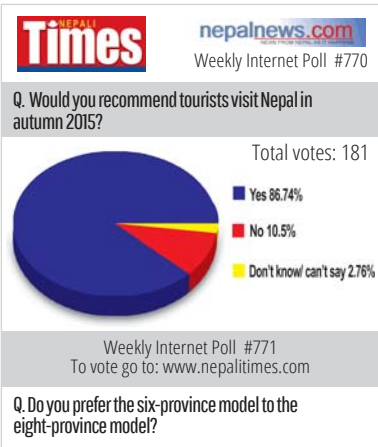
■ Ass, you outdid yourself this time.

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- Most visited online page**
The Shameless by Foreign Hand (2,303 views)
- Most commented**
Vox populism, Editorial (18 comments)



Commodifying to survive

Insecurity about secularism stems from the fear among many Nepalis they will be converted

One of the greatest fears currently among Nepalis is of the spread of Christianity. This is not confined to fundamental Hindus of the Hills and Madhes, but also among Kirants from the Eastern Hills, Kathmandu Buddhist Newars and your average hardly-go-to-temple-or-puja-but-still kind of Nepalis. The radical call for a Hindu state, however, is not borne of this general fear. That movement is far more deliberate and its most dangerous manifestations have



ONE TO MANY
Bidushi Dhungel

come to us through the open southern border. That movement is not what we're talking about here. What is less discussed is the general and more common fear among non-extremist Nepalis that being 'secular' means an invitation to Armageddon. When we talk about a secular Nepal, what is immediately thought about, but what most 'liberals' don't like to talk about is Christian missionary activity in Nepal. Ultimately, it is the fear that most Nepalis will be converted (not convert) that explains this whole secularism debacle. It is not about Buddhism or Islam (for



GOPEN RAI

a change) or any other minority religion – just Christianity. The fear of Christianity is, in turn, the result of the fear of the death of age-old practices. The reason for this fear is predominantly grounded in the fact that Christianity is big and its association to capitalism make it generally a very wealthy religion. Also, the world's most powerful nations, while all 'secular', are often fervently anti-secular in practice in their favour of Christianity. There are also arguments to be made regarding the rapid secularisation of households in Europe leading to the zeal of missionary work outside the continent. And in the age of market capitalism, all other religions globally are losing out in the competition. As globalised capitalism further consolidates its grip on the world, so does Christianity. All of this, in conjunction

with the 'civilising' missions of the colonial powers, which morphed into 'charity' after World War II suggests that there is a whole lot of baggage associated with notions of secularism, the word itself being inextricably linked to Christianity. Fundamentally, Christianity is associated with the work of missionaries in Nepal who offer people what the state or any other religion cannot give them: food, education, medicines and opportunities. These initiatives should be greeted with appreciation. But while free will regarding conversion in the wake of missionary activity is important, it is equally necessary to call out manipulative and fraudulent activities which take advantage of the lack of education and awareness of science and medicine through 'miracles'. Going by experience not only in Nepal, but in African and

Southeast Asian countries and even in the West (watch Jesus Camp in case you haven't already) manipulative conversion is not a myth but a reality which should be denounced by all secularists. In Nepal, it is unhelpful that aside from extremist Hindus, no one seems to want to talk about it. Like every other religion, Christianity is mired in problems and extreme proselytising, a fact which creates hurdles for democratic and open societies, especially where education is lacking and religiosity is high. In Nepal, people do not leave one religion to become secular, they leave one religion to join another and become even more fervently religious. Having said this, Nepal must remain committed to secularism in the new constitution. There is no justification for its removal. Of course, in practice, secularism will be easier said than done. Even

countries preaching secularism to others consistently fail to practice it. Former US President George Bush's self-declaration of being a messenger of God and a fervent Evangelist comes to mind. Seen as Hinduism and Buddhism and other smaller minority religions like Kirat and Bon have been so embedded into the everyday realities of so many people across Nepal, to disallow the state to participate in their active preservation would be a disservice to human civilisation and the incredible history of these places and peoples. That doesn't mean however that secularism cannot co-exist with the historical realities of the country. There can be constitutional provisions to safeguard age-old practices while remaining committed to the fundamentals of secularism. In the UK, for example, 26 seats in the House of Lords are still reserved for clergymen and the Queen must pay allegiance to the protestant Church of England. I am not suggesting we give priests a space in the legislature in Nepal, but such a provision is just an example of a way the UK is making it work. As for Hinduism, a more inclusive structure is perhaps called for if the faith intends to stay competitive in the market. In India, this has meant the creation of theme-park-esque temples like Akshardham to lure in the masses and the complete commodification of the religion. That may indeed be the only way to survive this cut-throat industry. Sitting around talking about purity isn't going to get Hinduism the numbers it wants, much less retain them. 🇳🇵

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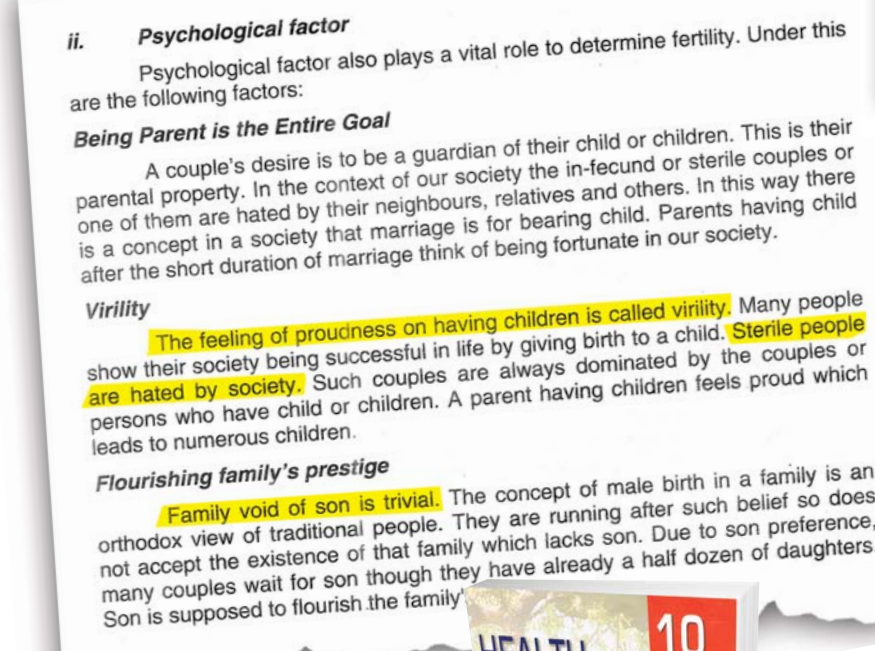
Textbooks in Nepal's schools aren't just outdated, they are outrageously bad

SARTHAK MANI SHARMA

- 'What is the main message from our martyrs?'
- 'A Sherpa is a person who takes a long walk in the hills or mountains'
- 'The feeling of proudness on having children is called virility'
- 'Journalists are fake and journalism is propaganda'

Those are just some of the more egregious examples of sentences found in textbooks prescribed for school students and hint at the larger crisis of quality in Nepal's education system.

School textbooks in Nepal have always been notorious for their substandard quality. They are poorly printed and produced and are awash in grammar, spelling mistakes and typographical errors. More worryingly, they are rife with gender and racial stereotyping, brazen untruths, contradictions and examples of ethnocentrism.



"The worst are the books for social studies in both English and Nepali," says Rajendra Dahal of Shikshak magazine for teachers which has investigated the poor quality of textbooks. "They show a very poor understanding of Nepal's geography, development and history."

| | |
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|---------------------------------------|---|

ENGLISH BOOK, Grade 6

97

One question from a prototype SLC exam paper published by the government asks students to 'Write in short how to help the bad habits developed drug users nearest friend to left the bad habits' (sic). Students are also required to respond to this prompt: 'It is repeatedly caused issue of Border conflict in Nepal due to indifference of government.'

Another question asks: 'What is the main message from our martyrs?'

Rather than instill in students the need to think creatively and explore new ideas, textbooks perpetuate ethnic and gender stereotyping. In English textbooks published by the government, a character named Kaji Sherpa climbs mountains. The book defines a Sherpa as 'a person who takes a long walk in the hills or mountains'.

In other textbooks for Grade 9, children are seen asking their father for permission to watch tv and their mother for permission to eat bread. One question asks students to look at different pictures of Nepalis and guess their ethnicity. A Grade 7 Nepali language Social Studies text book declares 'journalism is propaganda'; a recent Accounting text book said: 'Secretaries should be good-looking and wear lipstick'.

Textbooks published by private companies are no better. Health Population & Environment Education for Today (re-published by Ratna Pustak Bhandar this year) defines virility as the 'feeling of proudness on having children' and declares that 'sterile people are hated by society'. Warming up to the subject, the all-male writers of this textbook propose 'educating women to get employed' as one measure to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Math textbooks, on the other hand, are mostly error-free and contain engaging exercises to test complex concepts. However, the math curriculum recommended by the government is complex and far more difficult than Indian and British curricula at the same level. Experts are divided over whether teaching such advanced math without understanding the developmental psychology of children is correct.

Diwakar Dhungel, Executive Director of Curriculum

Development Centre (CDC), accepts that there are weaknesses but claims the textbooks do not contain major errors. "We constantly and thoroughly revise these textbooks," he told Nepali Times.

The CDC in Sano Thimi modifies textbooks every five years and completely rewrites them every 10 years, but the changes do not necessarily mean improvement. Instead of sticking to standard English, English textbooks now go for lessons in slang, asking students to learn phrases such as 'U r welcome, wanna cu ASAP 4 a drink'.

The books also have awkwardly-titled exercises such as 'Enjoy yourself' and 'Take it in turns' which give the impression of peer interaction but are only exercises in regurgitation. Writers hardly test students' true understanding, asking questions whose answers are obvious or need memorisation.

Experts say textbooks are simply indicative of the poor quality of instruction in Nepal's schools. Although enrollment is rising and the literacy rate has doubled in 20 years, the value and relevance of education has suffered. Though textbooks are faulty, teachers are not trained and are poorly motivated.

Dahal of Shikshak magazine thinks the education sector is not a priority for the government, and the most-neglected part of the Ministry of Education is the department looking after textbooks and the curriculum. "It is a dumping site. That is where the least competent and motivated people are sent," he told us.

To begin with, the government could move away from its obsession with textbooks and encourage learning aids such as toys and games to improve children's understanding. Dhungel of the CDC agrees that a more "inter-disciplinary and integrated" form of learning is needed, but says high-ranking officials do not warm up to the idea.

Dilli Ram Rimal heads the Department of Education, and when we asked him about shoddy textbooks, his answer was emblematic of the pass-the-buck mentality that infests the government and also pointed to the reason why things are in such a sorry state. He replied: "It is not our job here to go through the content and quality of textbooks." ■

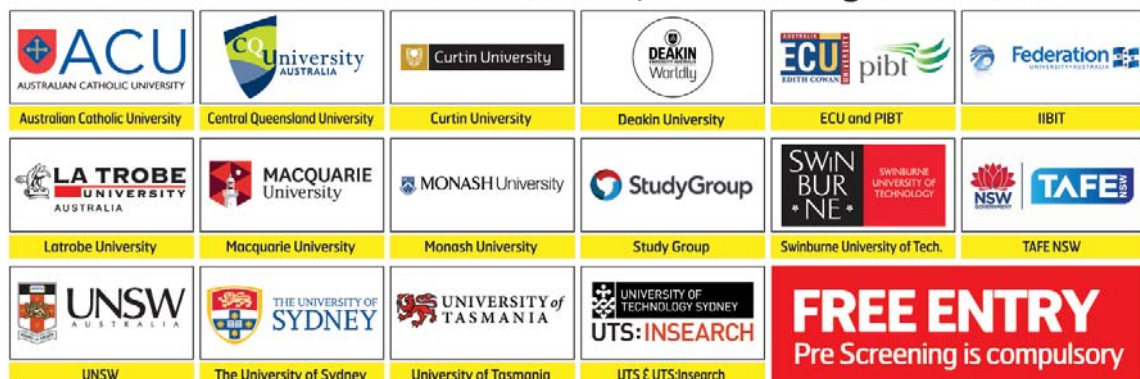
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Strategy for recovery

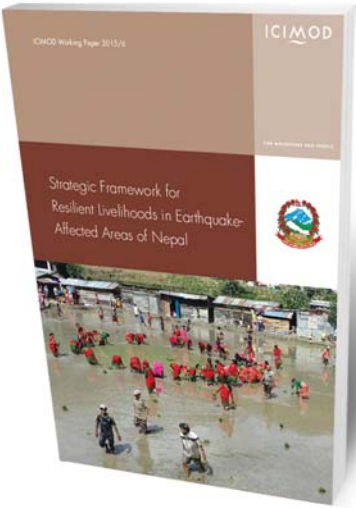
Nearly two months after the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction on 25 June, an independent rehabilitation agency had still not been set up till press time Thursday. Meanwhile, 2 million earthquake-affected people are struggling to survive and waiting for help with reconstruction.

Amidst all the confusion, a new report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) highlights the need to reduce vulnerability to future earthquakes and floods by integrating preparedness and mitigation as part of post-disaster livelihood recovery process.

As the title suggests, *Strategic Framework for Resilient Livelihoods in Earthquake Affected Areas of Nepal* is a deliberately dry document riddled with development jargon. But between the lines, it has important advice that should be heeded by the new Reconstruction Authority.

The buzzword 'livelihood recovery' appears often in the report and ICIMOD admits this is an enormous task given the extent of the quake damage. More than 600,000 homes, 7,000 schools and 700 health facilities were destroyed – it is a huge challenge to rebuild not just infrastructure but also lives.

The Nepal Planning Commission's NPC Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) report pointed out that Nepal lacks not only the financial resources for rehabilitation but also the technical skills. The NPC has



also drafted a Recovery and Reconstruction Policy that aims to 'centralise planning and decentralise implementation'. The earthquake is seen as an opportunity to create jobs for Nepalis who would otherwise migrate abroad for work.

There will be a surge of demand for workers when the reconstruction grants start being distributed. Jobs will depend on the skills for contractor-driven, owner-driven or people-centered reconstruction.

ICIMOD warns that when livelihoods are being revitalised, care should be taken not to create dependency. Instead of food aid, it advocates distributing seeds, providing farm machinery, and extension for alternative crops that require less water since irrigation canals were damaged. It suggests soft loans to bigger

farmers for the replacement of livestock, and free livestock for small and middle income farmers. It highlights the power of social media to revive rural tourism.

'While the earthquake has affected all segments of society, the impact isn't equally distributed and the livelihood recovery interventions should ensure that reconstruction process doesn't perpetuate inequalities already existing in society,' says the report. This is confirmed by the PDNA which estimates that 700,000 people have been pushed below the poverty line by the earthquake. The most vulnerable are always the women, children, elderly, daily wage workers, and the marginalised. It is they who need special attention in livelihood recovery strategies.

The reports derives lessons from the 2005 Kashmir earthquake and its recovery with the combination of new earthquake-resistant construction, Gujarat (2001) which had strong government systems for long-term livelihoods promotion. Haiti (2010) is cited for its mistake not to use local resources post-disaster.

The report's main conclusion is to 'build back better' involving existing community groups which can be a strong drivers in the livelihood recovery process. Non-affected areas of Nepal can play a vital role in supplying the required resources like construction materials, human resources and food.

Sonia Awale

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Samsung launches Z1

Samsung Electronics has announced the launch of the first Tizen powered smartphone for Nepal, the Samsung Z1. Its notable features include long-lasting battery life, enhanced web performance among others. Rs. 7,490.



Hyundai Eon

Laxmi Intercontinental offers its hatchback, Hyundai EON, for taxis, together with an easy finance service and free road tax with the purchase of every taxi.

Gionee showroom

Gionee, a global mobile brand, has opened an exclusive showroom in Pako, New Road which will feature Gionee smartphones. At present, there are 10 Gionee models available in the Nepali market.



Ford to open bookings

Ford has opened bookings for Figo Aspire for its compact sedan, Figo Aspire, at a nominal amount of Rs. 100,000. Aspire is set to go on sale this month and will be available in four different models.

Bajaj launches new bikes

Bajaj Motorcycles has launched its race sport and adventure sport RS 200, AS 150 and AS 200 bikes with telescopic front fork and long wheel-base.





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PICS: BIKRAM RAI

OM ASTHA RAI

Just when the new constitution looked possible eight years after the first Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, the same old dispute over federalism and where five disputed Tarai districts should go has resurfaced, threatening the statute drafting process on Thursday.

A CA committee tasked with revising the draft constitution by addressing public feedback missed its deadline owing to the dispute, and it appeared this week that the 16-point deal, the blueprint for Nepal’s new charter, would unravel.

However, the top leaders of the four political parties have claimed that they are now closer to a fresh deal on demarcation of federal provinces – the most contentious issue of the state restructuring. If that happens, acceptability of the new constitution will increase and some of the fringe Madhesi parties might come on board.

“Demarcating federal provinces before the new constitution is our agenda, and we might accept a deal on it,” Upendra Yadav, the new leader of the recently-revived Madhesi Front, told *Nepali Times*. “But the spirit of the new constitution must be followed when federal provinces are demarcated. The

DURING A BREAK: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, UCPN (M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal (top), UML Chair KP Oli, Bidya Bhandari and MJF (D) Chair Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar (above) during a break from constitutional negotiations that stalled on Thursday.

NC, the UML and the Maoists are creating as many as five provinces in the Tarai, which is unacceptable to us.”

However, soon after Yadav spoke to us, one of the key players of the four-party deal, the MJF (D) Chair Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar upped and left the talks for Biratnagar on Thursday evening, stalling negotiations.

Twist in the tale

Top leaders inched closer to a fresh deal on demarcating federal provinces, but a last-minute hitch stalled negotiations

Striking a new deal on demarcation largely depends on whether the dispute over the five Tarai districts gets sorted out.

Second-wrung political leaders privy to the closed-door negotiations inside the Singha Darbar this week say the dispute can be resolved by dividing some of these districts. But NC and UML leaders like Sher Bahadur Deuba, Krishna Sitaula and Bhim Rawal look resolute to not allow divisions of these districts. The UCPN (M) and MJF (D) leader, particularly Gachhadar, are opposed to the idea of merging these districts with the mountain provinces.

As of Thursday evening, the new map of the federal Nepal had six provinces: four in the mountains and two in the Tarai. Of the five disputed Tarai districts, Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa are most likely to be part of the eastern province. Kanchanpur is likely to be within the far-western province, but the fate of Kailali hangs in balance. The top leaders have been trying hard to decide on this district.

Kanchanpur and Kailali both have mixed populations of Hill Brahmins/Chhetris and Tharus. Supporters of the undivided far-western province and the Tharus have been haggling over this region over the last eight years.

“We have reached a point from where neither of us can return empty-handed,” says Ram Janam Chaudhari, a MJF (D) leader close to Gachhadar. “So the best way out is to divide these districts, include the

Tharu-dominated area in the Tharuhat province and leave the rest with the far-west province. This is a win-win situation, and none of us will feel defeated.”

But supporters of the undivided far-west province, apparently at behest of Deuba and Rawal, complicated negotiations by calling a shutdown in Kailali and Kanchanpur on Thursday. CA members representing the far-west region have also warned of dire consequences if Kailali and Kanchanpur are divided.

In the east, Gachhadar (himself a Tharu) has not formally given up his stance on Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa. But insiders say he has softened his tone, and might agree to it.

It is not merely a coincidence that the top leaders have expedited talks to draw Nepal’s federal map. When the UCPN (M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the NC leader Deuba visited India recently, New Delhi hinted at a possible solution. UML Chair KP Oli initially looked hesitant to waste time negotiating a demarcation deal as that would delay the constitution and his chance of becoming the new PM. But he relented, apparently after the Indian ambassador conveyed India’s message to him.

So, once the top leaders resolve the issue about the five Tarai districts, the draft constitution will be forwarded to the Constitutional, Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee (CPDCC) of the CA. The CA has scheduled its meeting on Friday. 🇳🇵

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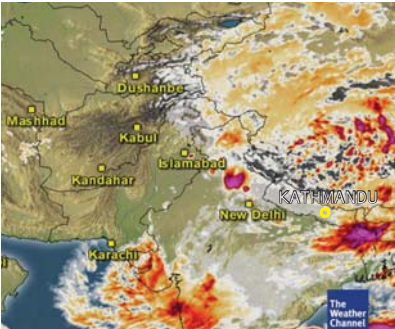
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We have had something resembling a monsoon pulse this week, which were actually the outer fringes of a circulation system that went on to batter Burma. Although it did bring copious rain to central Nepal, it did not alleviate the prevailing drought in the Tarai plains. The rains will persist into the weekend, which is bad news for landslides and good news for farmers.

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SONIA AWALE

SONIA AWALE

LIFE IN
BLACK
AND
WHITE

The provocatively positive tv talk show that spreads optimism and hope

News on tv, radio and newspapers are mostly about what is amiss in society. In Nepal headlines were about war, now it is mostly about politics, corruption or disasters. Political talk shows are seen to be essential in boosting viewership of tv stations, but in the past few years the ratings for news and current affairs are shrinking as Nepali viewers migrate to entertainment programs on Indian tv channels.

Seven years ago, actor and airline pilot Vijay Lama realised that the media was becoming a part of the problem by spreading hopelessness and cynicism in society. He launched a unique talk show, *Black and White*, which came as a breath of fresh air at a time when mainstream tv stations were competing to be more strident and sensational.

“There was negativity all around and media feasted on it. I wanted to do something that would instill positivity in the people,” says Lama who has been acting since he was 18, and flies Airbus 320s for Nepal Airlines. “*Black and White* was the perfect platform.”

The show, which airs at 20:30-

21:00 every Wednesday on Image Channel, has a unique format where guests aren’t always celebrities, but Nepalis determined to make a difference through determination and dint of hard work. *Black and White* strives to focus on hope in a country steeped in negativism by spreading the power of the good example.

“There are so many unsung heroes and stories to tell that will inspire others,” says Lama. The show has seen Ani Choying weep as she talked about the neglect of Nepalis by the state. Lama himself also tears up during emotionally-charged interviews like the one with Bishnu Gautam who lost both his sons within one year to road accidents. He and his wife decided that they would jump off a bridge and commit suicide, but on the way drove past a highway accident which made them change their minds. They set up Laxmi Pratisthan, a foundation that works for the education of the underserved, and to improve highway safety.

True to its name, everything on the show has a black and white motif. The guests and presenter come dressed in black and white, the set is themed similarly, even the cushions have black and white ying-yang patterns on them.

Last week, Lama conversed with

CANDID IN CONVERSATION:
Presenter Vijay Lama during his *Black and White* interview with Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal last week at a studio in Bhaisepati.

outgoing chief secretary Leela Mani Paudyal at the *Black and White* studio in Bhaisepati as if they were chatting in his living room. Paudyal reminisced about government’s weakness in post earthquake response, but also praised the strength of Nepalis, discussing future preparedness plans. To make the conversation lighter Lama asked how Paudyal manages to pack so much into a 24-hour day. Paudyal said: “Nepal will only have a future through hard work, honesty and a positive attitude.”

Lama usually starts a show with an enthusiastic welcome, shows viewers a prepared introductory video profile, the conversation flows, revolving mostly around the guest’s struggle against overwhelming odds to make a difference in society.

Lama’s latest acting role is in the Hollywood movie *Everest* about the tragedy on the mountain that killed eight climbers in 1996 which has a star-studded cast that includes Jake Gyllenhaal, Josh Brolin and Keira Knightley. Lama plays Lt Col Madan KC, the Nepal Army pilot who made the highest ever helicopter landing on Everest to rescue climbers. The film will be having its Asia premiere in Kathmandu in September.

Lama has been thinking of revamping the format of *Black and White*, perhaps record them in different parts of Nepal and focus on ordinary Nepalis doing extraordinary things. “We want to make the show more acceptable to the public and less Kathmandu-centric,” says Lama. The plan is to also live stream *Black and White* so Nepalis around the world can watch it simultaneously via the Internet.

Says Lama: “I have learned from each one of my guests. Much like they are an inspiration to others, they inspire me, too.” 🇳🇵

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■ Back to Everest in 2015 #739

■ Real Nepal #494

■ Video of Black and White episode

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EVENTS



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Rs500, application deadline 12 August, 22, 23 and 29 August, Quixote's Cove, Ekantakuna, wordwarriorsnepal@gmail.com

Collaborative photo book,
 Nepal 425 launches a crowd-sourcing drive for a book of 700 pictures of the earthquake. All proceeds from the sale of the coffee table books will go for relief through VolNepal.
www.nepal425.com



Inspire with pictures,
 In celebration of the World Literacy Day, The Non Formal Education Center and UNESCO organise an open photography contest on the theme 'Women's Literacy'.
Deadline 25 August, pe.wong@unesco.org.



Wholeness,
 A painting exhibition by Puran Khadka whose work is a meditative abstraction full of spiritual awakening. *See page 9.*
Inauguration on 2 August at 5pm, till 30 October, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307, contact@parkgallery.com.np



E Sports Carnival,
 The biggest gaming calendar event 25 August, Civil Mall, registration on *ngamersclub.com/esc2015/*

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 Bringing together a combination of film, spoken word, live music and live art under one roof.
Rs500 (includes a beer), 8 August 2015, 5pm to 10pm, Moksh Café, Jhamsikhel, (01)5528362

Call for filmmakers,
 Film Southasia invites submissions of non-fiction films made after 1 January 2013 for the tenth edition of the regional film festival to be held in Kathmandu from 19 to 22 November 2015.
Submission deadline 15 August 2015, www.filmsouthasia.org/submit

Support,
 A special fund-raising print sale to contribute towards the rebuilding of heritage sites in Patan by Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT).
http://photoktm.com/#support



Call for submission,

Photographers, curators, photo-based artists, historians, anthropologists and other practitioners invited to submit work and ideas for digital projection, discussions, performances on the theme 'TIME'.
Deadline 15 September, www.photoktm.com

Get well soon,
 An exhibition of art by children of quake-hit areas during the 'Get Well Soon' art therapy sessions.
See page 10-11.
7 to 13 August, Gallery MCUBE, Chakupat, Lalitpur, (01)5260110, gallerymcube@gmail.com, www.gallerymcube.com

In Visible,
 A photo exhibition by Rohan Thapa bridges the gap between visually impaired and sighted through perceptual experimentation.
Opening on 9 August at 5.30pm, till 14 August, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, (01)4220735, nepalartcouncil@yahoo.com


Monsoon story camp,
 Journalists and community leaders are trained in communicating about climate change so people improve agriculture production and be better prepared for adverse weather.
21 to 23 August, Patale Gaun, Kavre, storycycle@gmail.com

Earthbag Rebuild Summit,
 Workshops and discussion groups about the benefits of earthbag building and earthquake resistant design.
4 September, 10am – 5pm, The Summit Hotel, Sanepa,



The Yeti Run,
 Come out and test your strength, stamina and teamwork at Nepal's first obstacle race.
26 September, St Xavier's School, Godavari, 9841226397, pareshkshrestha@gmail.com

DINING



Bhojan Griha,

One of the finest restaurants with traditional, organic and ethnic cuisine of Nepal.
Dilli Bazzar, (01)4416423, bhojan@wlink.com.np, www.bhojanguriha.com



Little Italy,
 Go vegetarian at this new Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special, chocolate bomb.
Darbar Marg, (01)4233577

Chez Caroline,
 Authentic ambience, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more.
Baber Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070/4187

Lal Durbar Restaurant,
 Authentic Nepali dinner with cultural shows.
Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, (01)4248999, reservation@laldurbar.com

Friday BBQ,
 Enjoy a special Nepali BBQ with a can of beer or soft drink or local alcoholic beverage.
Rs2178, every Friday, 6.30, Fusion Bar & Pool side, The Dwarika's Hotel, (01)4479488, sales@dwarikas.com



Salt & Pepper Restro Lounge,
 Espresso, mocha, latte, frappuccino, cocktails, liquor, beers and flavoured shishas, with an outdoor lake-view terrace.
Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463484, 9846210568, www.saltandpeppernepal.com

MUSIC

Dubcamp,
 The fourth event by the Outtalletuals featuring Cultivation and Gnirehst.
7 August, 7pm, Places Restaurant and Bar, Thamel, (01)4700413



Metal for Nepal,
 A fund raiser concert with metals bands for the beneficiary of the earthquake victims.
Rs300, 15 August, 2pm, Club 25 Hours, Tungal, (01)4437486

GETAWAYS

Barahi Jungle Lodge,
 the first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park, spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in –one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool.
Andrauli, West Chitwan, www.barahijunglelodge.com



Waterfront Resort,
 The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and lunches on Saturday. *Sedi Height, Lakeside road, Pokhara, (061)466303/304, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*

Glacier Hotel,
 good value and friendly service for travelers on the lap of Lake Phewa.
Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)-463722, www.glacienepal.com

Neydo Monastery,
 a monastery and guest house, Neydo is home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room.
Pharping, Kathmandu www.neydohotel.com

Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,
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India's skewed rise

SUSAN FROETSCHEL

The challenge in examining inequality among countries is relativity. The United States ranks higher than India for income equality, but each country determines its own standard on poverty.

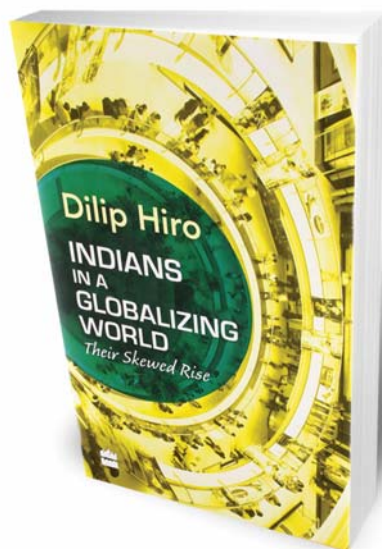
'In India, the term middle class is elastic,' writes journalist and historian Dilip Hiro in *Indians in a Globalizing World: Their Skewed Rise*. 'Whereas a middle-class household in the West has a mortgage on the house, owns a car, and enjoys an annual vacation of a few weeks, the one in India manages a balanced diet daily, sends children to school, and can afford to buy a colour television.'

India's richest 10 per cent own about three quarters of the nation's wealth, and Hiro relays personal tales of fortune and woe that offer insights into reams of complex data on inequality and India's rapid development as an emerging economy. Hiro's book, a good reminder of the complex realities for Indian policymakers,

is a must-read for employees of multinational corporations striving to do business in the country.

With the normal challenges in the developing world, let alone the lingering notions of caste, India is not an equal society. The rags-to-riches stories, the surge of ideas in the workplace or coffee shops, exhilarate and inspire, each peppered with details on deliberate plotting, hard work and clever persistence in the competition to develop one's self and business. The tragic tales are frustrating because stagnation and failure are not so mysterious with entrenched poverty, corruption, nepotism, inability to control natural resources and exploitation. The greedy and ambitious find ways to subvert government's egalitarian intentions.

For Indians, the correlation between income and education is highly visible. Even in the slums, upward mobility, though slight, is possible. Hiro's descriptions are blunt assessments. Education offers the most reliable path to comfort and affluence, and



Indians in a Globalizing World - Their Skewed Rise

HarperCollins India, 2015

by Dilip Hiro

344 pages,

Hardcover

Rs 1,000

the theme is woven throughout the chapters. Agriculture is the leading source of jobs in India, employing two out of three Indians, but uneven education


opportunities in the rural areas contribute to exploitive loans and support for subsidies, reducing India's competitiveness in global markets.

Stark inequality is dangerous, injecting greed into every level of society for every transaction. The longing for shortcuts to wealth costs the country in the end. Irritating moments of corruption are detailed throughout, and the chapter on 'Sleaze Grows Exponentially' details more than 10 cases that ignited public outrage – including the 2G telecom scandal when, in exchange for kickbacks and bribes, government officials sold the limited licenses at low cost to unqualified applicants, who promptly sold them to other firms. The loss in government revenues was estimated to be near \$5 billion.

The domino effect of bribes, corruption and excessive campaign spending is hard to slow. Foreign companies and investors must be wary of fraud entangled with politics. Corruption and injustice encourage extremism, as suggested

by the chapter on Naxal/Maoist opposition to neoliberal economic development, privatisation and foreign investment on natural resources in tribal areas in eastern and southern India.

Hiro is eager for the country to tackle its most glaring flaws of inequity. He details the drudgery of call-center workers, the disdain of shoppers who depend on mall security to bar entry to 'riff-raff'. He admires the industrialists, but maintains they are not the only innovators. He marvels at the resourceful in rural areas and city slums who struggle for survival and miniscule improvements for their children along with activists who risk harassment and injury to promote accountability and justice. There is hope when turnout for elections runs more than 80 percent.

The definitions of poverty vary wildly around the globe, and Indian officials estimate that 30 percent of the country's billion-plus people are poor. The competitive and democratic society has an obligation to expand its meaning of the common good.  *YaleGlobal*

Susan Froetschel is the author of five novels; the most recent is Allure of Deceit, set in Afghanistan.

Tattva Bistro & Bar



Using vegetables fresh out of its own organic farm, Prithvi Café & Bar served only vegetarian dishes for almost three years after it opened in 2012. Now the cafe has changed its name, rebranded itself and added carnivorous treats and an attached watering hole.

Besides the food, the setting inside the small café has also been slightly changed, cushions on the floor having been replaced by

rattan seats.

"We had many foreigners coming, but we observed that Nepalis are meat-lovers," explains manager Rishavh Shrestha adding that vegetarian meals were not particularly popular. In April, Tattva Bistro & Bar replaced Prithvi Café & Bar to start serving non-vegetarian food.

Discovery Channel is on tv, pictures with references to Western pop culture hang on the walls,

and the playlist shifts from Eddie Vedder to Incubus – no wonder tourists love this place. Tattva has an impressive list of appetizers and entrées. Seeing Mustang Potato Fried (Rs165) on the menu, we wondered if it was actually from the Kingdom of Lo. Alas, it turned out to be regular fries, just thicker and generously peppered.

We moved on then to the next starter, Sukuti Sandheko (Rs200) which we were sure was the right decision: thin slices of dry meat with tomatoes, onions and chilli on a papad. It wasn't just a visual but also a gastronomic treat. The onion and tomatoes complemented the taste of the tender meat, and the dish proved to be the best among those we tried.

For the main course, we wanted to test the born-again carnivorous offerings of Tattva and check if they met the vegetarian standards of Prithvi Cafe. The tofu curry was (Rs250) just fine. But it looked more




PICS: STÉPHANE HUËT

like a daube (without wine) than a curry. We reckon the cook was careful because not all diners are used to spices. Maybe he should just ask the guests how curried they would like the dish.

The Nepali-style pork curry (Rs320) was much tastier, although it could have been a little spicier. The spinach was impressive, and the dal was excellent, too. We found it strange that we were not offered more rice or lentils, as is the custom in other places. But the portion is adequate if you had starters.

For a smooth landing, the waiter suggested we end

with the whip cream of mango – which was not on the menu. That was definitely a great choice. The cream, along the pieces of ripe mango, gave the dish perfect sweetness and taste. The menu also proposes burgers and pasta. But its strengths seem to be clearly in the starters and deserts.

Tattva (which means 'element' in Sanskrit) Bistro and Bar is a cosy place where food is served quickly and at affordable prices.  *Stéphane Huët*

How to get there: from Jhamiskhel Chok, head towards Kuponhole and turn left after Greenwich Hotel.

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LAUGHING IT OFF

Dealing with trauma through art and laughter



SUNNI DAWSON

STÉPHANE HUËT

After the 25 April earthquake, the life of many Nepali children in the affected areas changed drastically. Some witnessed the death of family members, others were buried under the rubble themselves and miraculously saved, many lost their homes.

Although children are much more resilient than they are given credit for, they can suffer long-lasting emotional trauma. Volunteers, charities and the

government have been trying to help children with counselling in schools, but with 1.2 million children in the affected areas the scale of the problem is vast.

Manish Lal Shrestha of the Gallery Mcube is using art therapy, taking volunteers to encourage children to paint, dance and sing. His 'Get Well Soon' sessions end up helping not just children, but their adult relatives as well.

"While performing art, children aren't conscious that they are healing themselves," explains Shrestha pointing to children painting postcards with greetings for patients in local hospitals. In turn, injured people are delighted to receive attention from the youth.

Some of this artwork from

Poor Practice

Columns are not in straight (grid) lines

Good Practice

Columns are in straight (grid) lines

Tips for Earthquake Resistant Construction

- Columns should be placed in straight (grid) lines.
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E-mail: nset@nset.org.np
Website: www.nset.org.np

(There has been a practice of removing beams due to architectural & aesthetic reasons; this is not a good practice!).

An initiative under NSET implemented program "Promoting Public Private Partnership for Earthquake Risk Management (3PERM)" supported by USAID/OFDA.



STÉPHANE HUET



LENA BUI



RABIN KAJI SHAKYA



CMWB

the 'Get Well Soon' sessions will be displayed in an exhibition at Gallery Mcube from 7 August. "The children are proud to know their drawings or videos of their performances will be shown in Kathmandu," says Shrestha, "And that also contributes to the normalisation process."

Laughter is another form of therapy that diverts the minds of earthquake survivors from their loss. Working with laughter are Belgium-based artists Rachel Ponsonby, Hélène Pimont and Virginie Krotoszyner who do clown and magic acts for children in affected areas.

Their Clowns and Magicians Without Borders (CMWB) has travelled to other disaster zones around the world to perform to child survivors. During a show

this week in Bhaktapur there were squeals of laughter from the children as soon as the group put on their red noses.

"Sometimes children stay after our shows to dance and sing for us," says Krotoszyner, "women come and chat with us about the gender discrimination they have experienced, a subject we

sometimes address in our shows."

Pimont says she felt their work had more impact in remote areas of the worst-affected districts. "We arrived in devastated villages where people were apathetic," she recalls, "but after our show they perked up and it was awesome to see them so animated."

Another group is using the

HEALING WITH ART:

(Clockwise from top) CMWB performed at the Tourism Market of Bhaktapur for disabled children.

A collaborative performance in Basantapur launched by Lasanaa.

Villagers in Nuwakot braved the rain to watch CMWB's show.

A child draws a postcard for a hospital patient during a 'Get Well Soon' session.

An Inner Dance session with students in Sankhu.

"The main aim is to make people relax," says Ranjit, "but it can lead to so much more."

Lasanaa has organised sessions for about 500 students in and outside Kathmandu. The art collective organised a dance performance in Basantapur on 25 June during which passersby were encouraged to take part.

People who run art healing projects say individuals, families and even entire communities can regain their enthusiasm after sessions. "It's a virtuous circle," explains Shrestha from Mcube. "Once you are healed, you can heal others."

Above all, instructors and artists who met earthquake survivors were full of praise for their fortitude and inner strength. Krotoszyner from CMWB says: "The best part is that Nepalis are already laughing, they don't really need us." 🇳🇵



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THE WATER DIVINER

Russell Crowe has always been magnetic on screen despite his short temper, occasional hubris, and the recent lack of quality roles. The man is undeniably a bit of a phenom, with Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000) as a



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

benchmark for any actor to hold to in terms of stellar performances. Russell Crowe's brave, noble, humorous, brilliant and stoic General Maximus, is a mesmerising, beloved character that continues to stand the test of time.

With *The Water Diviner*, an Australian production, with Crowe

as a first time director, we have a hodgepodge of a film that is only really saved by the performance of Crowe himself. Even as he comes to life onscreen, the man behind the camera is clearly a bit confused, making a seemingly straightforward story slightly too convoluted by his poetic indulgences.

It is hard to understand why the writers of this movie, Andrew Anastasios and Andrew Knight, might have chosen such a banal story and then tried to imbue it with a hint of magical realism (perhaps as a last ditch attempt to save it from descending into utter triteness). The narrative is very facile: Russell Crowe plays Joshua Connor an Australian farmer who has lost his three sons in the Battle of Gallipoli during the First World War exactly 100 years ago. Connor's wife Eliza (Jacqueline McKenzie) never recovers from the

loss of all three of her children, and when she passes away (she takes her own life), Connor, stricken with grief, vows to return to Turkey to try to trace the remains of his sons so that he may bury them next to their mother.

The film hits its stride as Connor reaches Istanbul and meets Ayshe (played by the truly lovely Olga Kurylenko) - the owner of a charming hotel who refuses to admit to the loss of her husband for the sake of her young, adorable son Orhan (Dylan Georgiades) who develops a marked affection for Connor.

As Connor rushes around trying to find clues to his sons' remains, he 'divines' (hence the forced magical realism) that one of them may still be alive, a development that most savvy moviegoers will have guessed pretty much from the beginning. While parts of the movie are certainly very beautifully filmed and occasionally fairly thought-provoking (the death toll during World War I is estimated at over 17 million people including civilians), the film does fail to be a cohesive whole, and as some infuriated critics have pointed out, the makers mostly ignore important aspects of the larger context in which the film has been set, mainly the war, and the many issues surrounding it. While the movie is not quite a failure, one expects something better from a man who undoubtedly has a great deal more intuition than what the film conveys.

nepalitimes.com
■ Trailer

HAPPENINGS



DEVAKI BISTA

HAPPY TO BE HERE: Jhul Maya Danuwar, 70, came to Kathmandu from Dakshinkali to attend a rally organised by Dalit politicians and rights activists in Kathmandu on Wednesday to demand rights in the new constitution.



GOPEN RAI

RED CHINA: Members of the Nepal Police Brass Band perform at a ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Nepal at the earthquake-damaged Kathmandu Darbar Square on Saturday.



DEVAKI BISTA

FRIENDLIER CITIES: The wheel-chair bound demonstrating in Kathmandu on Monday for handicapped-friendly public facilities to be guaranteed in the new constitution.



GOPEN RAI

VOICE MAGNIFIED: A woman rights activist demanding citizenship in mother's name in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

HELPING HAND: Japanese volunteer Takahiro Suzuki helps clear debris in Bhaktapur on Wednesday. He came to Nepal to help post-earthquake reconstruction.

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GOPEN RAI

Puran Khadka in the abstract

In his seventh solo exhibition, Wholeness, displayed at Park Gallery, Puran Khadka demonstrates his progress in abstract painting with 25 pictures.

After graduating from Mumbai's J J School of Art in 1980, Khadka dabbled in realism and academic paintings and only started working on abstract subjects in 2000. It was neither a conscious decision nor a choice.

"It just came naturally," says Khadka. "I realised there was something beyond reality." Khadka remembers it was difficult for him

to fit into Kathmandu's art scene with his new technique at that time.

Neera Joshi of Park Gallery confirms Khadka had some hitches along the way. "I'm so proud to have Puran's work here," she tells us. "I remember when I first saw his abstract paintings in his studio at the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, he was struggling."

After delving into abstract art, Khadka's work evolved from paintings loaded with coloured shapes and meandering lines to more simple patterns. "I guess I've

reached maturity," quips the painter.

Wholeness has 25 paintings displayed at Park Gallery, but none of them has a distinct name. Khadka explains: "Wholeness depicts the seen and the unseen. These colours naturally came to me after years of contemplation."

The only colours on his paintings are red, grey, black (the unseen) and white (the seen).

Of the 25 works at Park Gallery, 19 were specially painted for Wholeness. The other


six, regrouped in one corner of the gallery were painted three years ago and have curved brown lines which Khadka says represent 'life'.

In his more recent paintings, 'life' is more discrete, the brown line passing vertically among the red, black, grey and white bulk shapes. "The straight vertical line is eternal life," he explains. "With this exhibition, I've found my constant."

Saroj Bajracharya, the curator of the exhibition, reckons Khadka's work may not be intelligible for the broader public. "People tend

to seek in art things they can relate to," he says. Bajracharya himself needed to understand the painter's way of thinking to select his work.

The exhibition could have displayed more of Khadka's work, revealing the different steps in his career. As Bajracharya says, Khadka has evolved by never altering his nature. He says: "The language may have

changed through the years, but the message has remained the same."  **Stéphane Huët**

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Ex or next?

Hi everyone, 'Cyclical relationships' are more common than you may think. Teenagers and adults seem to be getting more involved in the dramatic relationship revolving



ASK ANJANA ANYTHING
Anjana Rajbhandary

door syndrome, where you break up and get back together, Sometimes multiple times, to the misery of your family and friends. Loneliness and low self esteem may make couples get

back together for the temporary relief of reconciliation. It is much easier to rekindle an old familiar romance than to be brave and stay single. The strength also helps one move on to potentially find a partner who may better fit the individual. The chance of finding someone more compatible is highly compromised by today's generation's decision to choose the easy way out. Trying to see how the relationship might look in the long run might be a good indication of how much potential the relationship has.

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

I'm in love with my ex boyfriend. I broke up with him but we've been talking lately and it's going well. How do I win him back? XX

AR: It is normal to question the decision of a breakup, and go back and forth in your head but after some time goes by: you will (hopefully) eventually figure out what is best for you. Perhaps make a list of the pros and cons of getting back.

The majority of studies say that reconciled relationships have a very low chance of actually lasting because most of the time couples get back together for the wrong reasons. Temporary comfort is not the reason to get back together. Maybe in the time apart, take time to see if

you two would be able to have a conversation about the good, bad and flawed parts of your childhood and how it may affect your future relationship? The worst reason to rekindle a once broken romance is that you cannot find anyone better or, to put in a more direct way, because you may be too lazy, scared or comfortable to try.

There are reasons when it may make sense to get back together with an ex, for example when enough time has passed and you both have done enough soul searching, and decided you want the same things in life while willing to work on the differences you had that led to the break up in the first place. If you both believe in second chances and

are sure you want it to work then yes give it a shot.

If you and your ex-boyfriend understand each other and help each other grow into a better or even best version of yourself, then this should not be an issue. You are still in love with him but do you know if he feels the same way and wants the same thing as you? It has to be a two-way thing. I really don't think you can 'win' someone when they do not want to be with you and if they do, it's not exactly a competition. If you both feel the same way, then it won't take so much work and planning- it will just evolve naturally. Good luck. 🍀

Anjana is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Tab that kids

So you've recently bought a top-of-the-line tablet, but even before your fingers begin to get comfortable with the new device, your child takes it away from you to play (what else but) Candy Crush. When you do get your device back, most likely only after your child goes to bed, chances are it will look nothing like the sleek new gadget you had purchased only hours ago.

Like adults, children these days are gadget crazy. Most get their first tablet/smartphone even before their teens and as with every tech-freak, they want to own the latest in the market. Keeping this in mind, Samsung recently released a children's version of their popular Galaxy Tablet, the Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids Edition that is tailored to keep both the parents and their children happy.

Despite its brightly coloured exterior, the kids edition is essentially the same device as the Tab 3. However, there are a few tweaks. The Kids Edition comes with a rubbery surround case which protects it from low-

level drops. There is also an additional case which includes a carry handle that can be converted into a stand (see pic) and a large stylus on a string.

The 7-inch screen offers a decent resolution of 1,024 pixels x 600 pixels, and although the video quality fails to qualify as HD, it produces bright and vibrant pictures. There are two cameras on board, a 3 MP one on the rear and a 1.3 MP version on the front, both of which can be used with the kids' apps.

The Tab 3 Kids Edition is powered by a dual-core 1.2GHz processor, and is backed by 1GB Ram, which keep most of the kids' apps running at optimum speed, although the speed gets sluggish while playing more advanced games. Two modes of video display are available: standard Android screen and the Kids Mode, a simple colourful interface, which makes it easy for your little ones to

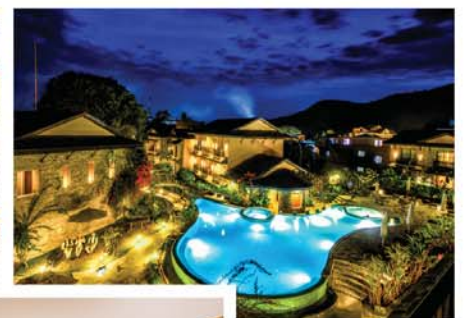


find their way around.

With 8GB of on-board memory, the tab offers a plenty of room for apps, videos, and music but if your child has a large appetite, then you can always expand the memory up to 32GB via a microSD card. But if you are worried about your child spending too much time on this new purchase, relax. The built-in parental controls and time limit settings ensure that parents get to regulate web and Google Play access and manage the time usage.

Your little ones are guaranteed to have a ball accessing a wide range of games and apps on this one. And, you are never too old to hold one yourself. If people do see you playing with one, just switch to normal mode and claim you are checking emails. At Rs 20,000 it is also much more wallet friendly than many of other tabs on sale. 🍀

Yantrick's verdict: The Tab 3 Kids Edition might just be the best gadget in the market for children today.



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Same old story

The deadly Jure landslide last year presaged the earthquake as well as its delayed rehabilitation



PICS: BINITA DAHAL

BINITA DAHAL
in SINDHUPALCHOK

Exactly one year ago this week the entire side of a mountain broke off near the village of Jure taking down dozens of houses, wiping out a 1.5 km section of the Arniko Highway and blocking the Bhote Kosi River.

More than 150 people were killed, 80 families were homeless, and there were mass evacuations downstream after fears that the 3 km long lake the landslide impounded would burst. The vital highway to China was finally reopened, and the river found its own way around the debris.

As it turned out, the Jure landslide almost became a rehearsal for the even bigger disaster that was to hit Sindhupalchok nine months later. There are signs that the delays in

compensation and resettlement of survivors of the landslide will be repeated on a much wider scale with earthquake rehabilitation.

"We were living in a shelter in Lamosangu after the landslide, but after the earthquake even that place wasn't safe so most of us have moved to Banepa and Kathmandu," says Krishna Lama, 30, who lost both his parents in the landslide.

Help poured in from all over Nepal after the landslide, and Rs 22.3 million was collected in the Jure Landslide Relief Fund formed under the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) meant for the victims. That money has been frozen after the earthquake, even

though Sindhupalchok CDO Bal Bhadra Giri said he has asked it to be disbursed since survivors of the landslides were also victims of the earthquake.

"We have categorised survivors

into three groups, A, B and C and plan to distribute funds, we are waiting for permission from Kathmandu," Giri told us.

If families affected by the landslide haven't got their compensation even after one year, many here affected by the earthquake wonder how much longer it will take for them to get the Rs 15,000 emergency and the Rs 200,000 housing grants from the government. Families whose homes were destroyed in the landslide are still living in temporary shelters one year later.

Emergency rescue and relief operations, which seemed to be reasonably effective immediately after the earthquake, are now plagued by delays, mismanagement and uneven distribution. In the absence of the Reconstruction Authority, there is confusion about rebuilding grants and relocation of vulnerable populations.

Til Maya Bharati, 71, has been living in a temporary shelter for the past three months says



STILL WAITING: Til Maya Bharati (*left*) like many survivors of last year's Jure landslide doesn't expect earthquake relief to come anytime soon. The field hospital in Chautara (*above*) after the main building was destroyed in the quake.

her main necessity is a more permanent home for her family. She says: "How long can we live in tents?"

Her neighbour Sriram Giri has got his Rs 15,000 and relief immediately after the earthquake, but now thinks the money for rehabilitation and resettlement, which the government promised, will take years to come, if ever.


"There is just so much destruction, I think the government is overwhelmed," Giri said, adding that there is much confusion about when and how the grants and loans for reconstruction will be distributed.

"The government and the district administration should be very clear about policy and provide guidelines on eligibility for grants," says local journalist Yubaraj Puri. "It's not just houses that need to be rebuilt, people

here need livelihoods."

Assistant CDO Bharat Gautam says it is difficult to send relief out during the monsoon, and adds that many families are waiting for the rains to be over to start rebuilding their homes. Which must be why in the district administration office one doesn't see a sense of urgency to address needs of earthquake survivors.

Gautam's next remark sums up the attitude: "If we get instructions from Kathmandu we will start sending construction material in November after Tihar to the outlying villages."

To be sure, there are bright spots in local government response. Volunteer groups and relief agencies have filled the gaps left by the local administration. But the overall sense here in rural Sindhupalchok is of survivors learning from the Jure landslide to make do with whatever they have because they know help from the government if it ever comes will be too little too late. 

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Mothers and babies

Relief agencies move out, but the need for maternal and child care is greater than ever in quake-hit areas

OM ASTHA RAI
IN SINDHUPALCHOK

The April earthquake not only flattened Januka Chhetri's house but also damaged a health post she used to visit before having her baby. She was eight-month pregnant when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal, destroying over 600,000 houses and 619 health facilities.

Chhetri spent a few nights

under a tent and then shifted to her maternal home in Melamchi. Her delivery date was nearing, but the village's only health post had been destroyed. Waiting there could have cost her life.

"No one came to help us up there, so I moved down," says the 22-year-old mother.

A month after the earthquake, she gave birth to a baby boy, her second child after a two-year-old daughter. She is now living in a shed made of wooden beams and roofing sheets salvaged from the ruins of her mother's house. Her

husband is in Kathmandu trying to land a driving job in the Gulf.

In the first month after the earthquake there were lots of relief agencies and volunteer groups in Melamchi. But more than three months later, the emergency workers have left and there are no more supplies coming in. "No one is helping anymore these days," she says. "It feels like we are forgotten."

In Kathmandu, earthquake survivors are falling off the radar as political parties are busy trying to finish the constitution, and set up the Reconstruction Authority. But here in Sindhupalchok, the needs of babies and young mothers like Januka Chhetri, and pregnant women are more acute than ever.

Bimala Majhi, 21, was nine-month pregnant when the earthquake struck. Their home was destroyed, and her labour pains started while camping out in the open. Her husband was a driver in western Nepal and could not get back home.

She was rushed by her relatives to Melamchi, where she delivered her first child just five days after the earthquake. When her husband returned, their house was just a pile of rubble but the arrival of a new family member

had brought joy.

They received rice, tarpaulin sheets, hammers, shovels and Rs 15,000 to build a temporary shelter. But since then, nothing. Her husband has gone back to work, and she hopes he will send money. "We are still surviving on relief food, but it will only last another two weeks," Majhi says.

Although relief supplies have stopped, survivors have found ways to feed themselves. They are now preparing to harvest corn, rebuild water mills and plant paddy. But new mothers and newborns needing more

nutritious foods are left to fend for themselves.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the United Nations feared that the disaster could undo Nepal's progress in maternal and child health because hundreds of health facilities were damaged, pregnant women were living in tents and there was not sufficient nutritious food.

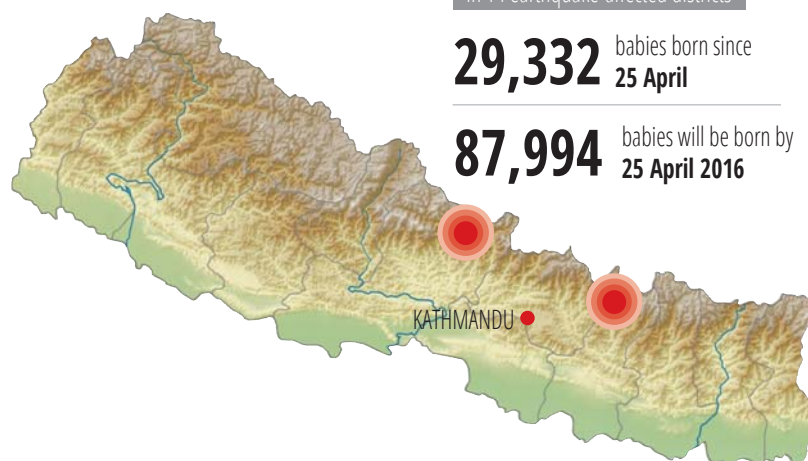
But the Child Health Division's Chief Krishna Poudel says: "Early indicators show the earthquake has not impeded Nepal's progress in maternal and child health. We don't think

DELIVERIES

In 14 earthquake-affected districts

29,332 babies born since 25 April

87,994 babies will be born by 25 April 2016



SOURCE: SAVE THE CHILDREN



SALVAGING LIVELIHOODS: Bimala Majhi (*left*) is living with her baby which was born just five days after the earthquake in a shelter next to the ruins of what was once her house.

Januka Chhetri (*below, left*) with her two children outside her temporary shelter in Melamchi of Sindhupalchok.



PICS: OM ASTHARA

infant mortality rate has gone up after the earthquake.”

Save the Children estimates that 29,332 babies have been born in the 14 earthquake-hit districts since 25 April. Another 87,994 babies are expected to be born in the coming year. Although Nepal’s infant mortality rate has come down by more than half in the last 15 years, it has plateaued off and the incidence of neonatal mortality (babies that die before 28 days) is still a high 32 per 1,000 live births.

“What we did in the first three months was satisfactory,” says Anjana KC, who is working with Save the Children’s Saving Newborn Lives (SNL) project. “But the risk remains, and we should not divert our attention from new mothers and newborn babies.”

The earthquake has completely damaged 285 health facilities while 334 more were damaged partially. Rebuilding these facilities and restoring services are necessary to prevent neonatal deaths as babies are born in shelters in the remote parts of the 14 districts. 🇳🇵



PICS: GOPEN RAI

Building back Bungamati

Historic town struggles to rebuild and overcome a shortage of masons

After the earthquake flattened her house in this historic town on the southern fringes of Kathmandu Valley, Sunita Shrestha looked for a mason to build a shelter. But the few bricklayers that were around were all busy with their own homes.

Increasingly desperate, the 25-year-old tailor spent the first two weeks with her family huddled under a tent by the ruins of the Machhindranath temple. Then, she made a temporary shed out of salvaged material.

“I had money, but there were no masons so I had to build the shelter by myself,” she recalled.

The ordeal made Shrestha realise that there was a shortage of skilled masons, and this could be her new career path. So, when a three-month masonry training program supported by the government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was offered to Bungamati residents, she applied without thinking twice and was delighted to be among the 20 people selected.

On completion of the training next month, she will switch to masonry from her current tailoring job. “I will first rebuild my own house,” said Shrestha. “And then I will work for money.”

The 25 April earthquake destroyed most of the houses and temples in Bungamati, one of the worst-hit towns in the Valley. Known for its wood-carvers and artisans, many families lost their homes. They will be rebuilding once the government starts distributing reconstruction grants later this year, but it would have been difficult without bricklayers.

Prem Shakya, one of Bungamati’s senior most masons, said most of the people in the village prefer to become wood carvers, sculptors or carpenters. “No one wanted to learn masonry skills before the earthquake,” he said. “But now interest in brick-laying has surged.”

Shakya is now sharing his experience of 40 years working with bricks with local youth. He teaches them to lay bricks, build pillars and construct houses. Yogendra Neupane, a 23-year-old overseer who helps him with theoretical knowledge about masonry, said: “We teach a fusion of new and traditional ways of construction.”

The earthquake has not only created job opportunities for masons but also a chance for the government to encourage construction of earthquake-resistant houses. The training, for instance, teaches people like Sunita Shrestha (*pictured above*) the techniques of reinforced masonry that can withstand shaking during an earthquake.



Debendra KC, a manager at Training Centre of Nepal which is coordinating the program in Bungamati, says: “After the earthquake, people want to build houses that will not collapse in an earthquake, but we didn’t have enough masons with the knowledge in earthquake-resistant construction.”

The training mainly targets drop-outs and unemployed youth, but there also college students and masons who have learnt new techniques.

Saroj Shrestha, 23, is one of them. Having graduated from Patan College, he was about to apply for a short-term Chartered Accountant (CA) course. But when he found out that people were being trained in brick-laying he decided to enroll.

“I can resume my studies later, but the skills which I gain here can be useful to rebuild my own house,” he told us.

Kanchha Shakya, 50, has worked as a mason all his life and did it in the traditional way. After seeing the devastation caused by the earthquake, he knew instinctively that traditional brick-laying methods needed to be improved.

Shakya said: “After the earthquake, people want to make safer houses by reinforcing the walls, and I want to learn these skills. It will help me to get jobs when the real reconstruction starts.” 🇳🇵

Om Astha Rai

A five month old baby at a rice-feeding ceremony at Kumbeswor Temple.



MONSOON MELANGE

PHOTOGRAPHS by
SONIA AWALE

100 days after the earthquake that destroyed much of its historic heart, the ancient city of Patan has pulled itself together. Motorcyclists ride under poles propping up houses and past debris of fallen temples. These relics of the quake have become a part of everyday life.

The cobblestone streets glisten with rain, as children feed pigeons. Devotees wait patiently in line for their turn to pray

at the Kumbeswor Temple, right next to collapsed buildings. At the Darbar Square, a woman throws grains of rice at the Hari Narayan shrine where the god is intact under a red tent, even though the temple collapsed over it on 25 April. Passersby touch their heads with fore-fingers and utter prayers as they pass Krishna Mandir, itself supported by inclined beams.

Shoppers under colourful umbrellas



Dogs sleep in Krishna Mandir after a night of rain.



Women waiting for customers to buy marigold garlands and incense near the Golden Temple in Kwalakhu.



An intergenerational chess game in Baglamukhi.



Balloon seller poses for the camera at Baglamukhi.



Motorcyclist negotiates beams holding up damaged buildings in Bhelachhen.

visit vendors selling fruits, vegetables or buffalo meat. The dogs are all well-behaved and take shelter from the rain by curling up under temples. Patan has gone back to its relaxed, easy-going pace.

nepalitimes.com

More pictures on City Blog

Watch video of Patan street



A vegetable vendor outside the Kumbeswor Temple.



A man prays at the Swotha Narayan Shrine in front of piles of timber and bricks salvaged from the destroyed temple.

MISSION UNACCOMPLISHED

Dambar Krishna Shrestha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2-8 August

Nepal’s labour recruiters went on strike last month for the right to keep on cheating poor migrant workers and make them pay for their visas and tickets. Thousands of workers waiting to board flights to Malaysia and the Gulf were held hostage until the government relented.

They agreed to lift the strike but are now using all their political connections to abort the government decision which would have required employers abroad to pay for the ticket and visas of Nepali workers.

The agreement between labour recruiters and the government looks like a ploy. Labour Minister Tek Bahadur Gurung knows he will no longer be in government by the time the three months come to an end, while the recruiters now have time to lobby for a rollback.

Labour recruiters started picketing the office of the Department of Foreign Employment at Tahachal, stopping pro- zero cost migration agencies from applying for labour permits. After a series of failed negotiations, they accepted the policy on 25 July for three months. But they compelled the government to revise the policy by forming a high-level committee.

The committee led by Labour Secretary Surya Prasad Shrestha also has representatives of labour



GOPEN RAI

recruiters as its members. The committee will visit Malaysia and the Gulf countries in the coming months, find out if employers are ready to provide free tickets and visas and submit a report within two months. The government will revise the policy if necessary based on the report.

Although Labour Minister Gurung is adamant he will not backtrack, there are fears that he will be forced to do so when the Shrestha committee submits its report. Powerful manpower agencies have already convinced Prime Minister Sushil Koirala that the policy will have negative impact on migrant workers and the remittance-driven economy.

Koirala has reportedly already asked Gurung not to implement the policy, but the minister balked. Koirala then sent

instructions in writing to Gurung to implement the policy only after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with destination countries.

“On the pretext of signing MoU with destination countries, a pro-poor policy is being aborted,” migration expert Ganesh Gurung told us. Labour recruiters appear determined to force Gurung to withdraw the policy because it will prevent them from squeezing outbound migrant workers.

Even before the zero-cost policy was announced, nearly 45 per cent of employers in Malaysia and the Gulf used to bear the cost of migrant workers’ airfare and visa fee. But Nepali labour recruiters would share this money with their counterparts abroad. Most migrant workers were overcharged Rs 200,000 for

airfare, visa fee and insurance.

The zero-cost policy allows labour recruiters to charge only up to Rs 20,000 from migrant workers for their service fee, insurance, labour permit cost and contribution to their welfare fund.

A labour recruiter told us there is unhealthy competition among manpower agencies to grab job quotas, and some of them go to the extent of persuading Malaysian and Arab employers to give them just quotas and not bear any costs of workers.

“In such cases, they just pass on that added cost to the migrant workers,” Gurung says. “Some Nepali labour recruiters have given cuts to Malaysian and Arab middlemen in advance to grab employment quotas. If the zero-cost policy is implemented, they will lose those cuts. That is why they are against it.”

Officials at the Department of Foreign Employment also want a cut of the money charged with every worker, and that is the reason there is reluctance in the bureaucracy with the policy.

Bal Bahadur Tamang, former Chair of the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA), says labour recruiters are not against the policy but just want time to be prepared for it. “We could have accepted the policy had the government given us just three months to prepare for it,” he says.

Labour recruiters say the zero-cost policy sounds good but accuse Minister Gurung of trying

to take advantage of it since he used to run a recruitment company himself, which he has now divested to his relatives.

NAFEA’s Kumud Khanal says, “His sole purpose is to make a policy that will help companies belonging to his relatives.”

According to Khanal, Gurung received 2,500 free ticket-visa job quotas and distributed them among his relatives in January 2015. In June, he received an additional 2,500 free ticket-visa quotas from a Malaysian company. Khanal alleges that a Bangladeshi agent whose company is lobbying with Nepal’s government to introduce biometric system for migrant workers is providing free ticket-visa quotas to manpower companies close to Gurung.

Labour recruiters say those manpower companies that can grab free ticket-visa job quotas will benefit from the new policy, and most of these companies are indirectly owned by Gurung. It is possible that Gurung would have benefited, but there is no denying that the zero-cost policy would have ended exploitation of Nepali migrant workers.

Advocate Som Luintel, who advocates on behalf of migrant workers says: “Whatever the truth, the new policy is in favour of migrant workers but manpower agencies have the political clout to sabotage it.”

Pen mightier than khukri

Himal Khabarpatrika, 2-8 August

Amid a flock of foreign writers at a weeklong book exhibition in Hong Kong last month there was one unexpected Nepali face: Tim I Gurung, an ex-Gurkha soldier-turned-writer.

Gurung is not very well known in Nepal because he writes in English and has lived abroad. In addition, he left for Britain as a teenager to join the British Army, and has been living in Hong Kong for the last 20 years.

At the festival organised by the Hong Kong Business Development Committee Gurung was busy autographing his books: *Missionary Or Mercenary*, *A Tree Called Tenelpa*, *Five Steps*, *Afterlife*, *The Cursed Nation* and *A Nation For Refugees*.

Gurung was born in Dhampus of Kaski district and comes from a long line of Gurkha soldiers in the British and Indian armies. But six years into being a soldier he realised that it wasn’t for him, and his true calling was writing. He finally retired after 13 years in the service and went on to work in China.

The road ahead wasn’t easy. There were language problems, discrimination, and having to work twice as hard as local



employees to gain recognition. Still, he made a place for himself and now owns a furniture manufacturing company in China which his son now runs. With retirement, and after years as a soldier and then as a businessman, Gurung has now finally reunited with his passion. His time in the army is providing him with the subject matter to write about. So far his fiction books have been set in Okinawa, Japan, Kashmir and he is planning to publish a novel based on Hong Kong soon.

“True, the army is a profession people like me are born into but I didn’t quite fit in, I’ve realised that the pen is indeed mightier than the khukri.”

For someone who has only completed high school it was a challenge to write in English. Gurung’s knowledge of the language was limited to what he had learnt while in the army but he has to write well in English. Although he spent much of his life in Hong Kong he hasn’t forgotten his roots. “Last year I decided that I never want to work for money again but give back to Nepal,” he says.

Gurung is already helping underserved children with education in his home district with money from the sales of his books. And to sustain the funding, he plans to write two books a year.

From left to right: Mahakali, Rapti, Lumbini, Gandaki, Bagmati, Sagarmatha, Mechi

twitter

Rajesh KC in Twitter

प्रस्तावित :) Proposed :)

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“What political leaders say resembles our cinema scripts.”

Actor Rajesh Hamal in *Setopati*, 5 August

RUNWAY HAZARD



Nagarik, 4 August

A building near the airport at Koteswor that flouts the building code and obstructs air traffic has prompted airlines to complain to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) but the owner Shanta Lal Shahi has ignored warnings because he enjoys political protection. International airlines say they are forced to impose load-penalty on takeoff, incurring huge losses.

The 8-storey building is located 300 m to the south of the runway threshold. Said one representative of a Gulf-based airline: “Our repeated appeals to take down the building have fallen on deaf ears.” Shahi ignored warnings and even added another floor. “There has been a serious problem of flight safety due to the construction of tall buildings around the airport,” admits Birendra Shrestha of Nepal Airlines. When the runway is extended by another 300m, the building will pose an even greater hazard.

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WANTED: Prime Minister (1)

The Landlocked Federal Kleptocratic Oli-garchy of Nepal recently hit by an unnatural disaster and on the verge of being declared a flailing state has urgent vacancy for a tall, pot-bellied, homely, convent-educated teetotaler, fair-skinned vegetarian DV-eligible upper caste Prime Minister to replace incumbent who is getting a bit long in the tooth, and to prevent another dude in a desperate hurry to get the job, from pulling a fast one.

Age, disabilities, gender if any, marital status, eating habits, incontinence and incompetence no bar. The post-holder ideally should be octogenarian or above, and have served multiple previous tenures as prime minister wherein he/she/it should have paid

ample lip-service to “people’s democracy”, exercised the freedom to execute class enemies following torture, indulged in bombing passenger buses, wanton vandalism and arson. Candidate should have a demonstrated talent for coercive fund-raising (known in some dialects as ‘extortion’), shown a can-do attitude towards backsheesh, and exhibited decisiveness when it comes to bandfand and bhagbanda.

The prospective prime minister must have a proven ability to obstruct parliamentary proceedings for up to, but not exceeding, three months at a stretch. Should have blocked off the entire country and parts thereof for a cumulative period of at least 36 days in any given year. Candidate should also submit signed affidavits from

international contractors to attest for experience in delaying projects of national prestige through wheeling and dealing. Must have recommendations in writing from at least three referees from the country’s leading business houses to guarantee the capacity to amass ill-gotten wealth.

Candidate should be of sound mind and body, and be in possession of at least one kidney and/or a functioning heart. Should have wife to assist with creative account-keeping. Should have wide, but expandable, girth.

DUTIES INCLUDE:

- Dozing through Cabinet meetings and taking cat-naps in parliament.
- Build personal rapport with leaders of a certain neighbouring country to the south whose capital is made of two

words that begin with ‘N’ and ‘D’ so that no decision, however small, is taken without their nod.

- Wear outsized badges, cut ribbons, and blabber inanities from the podium for live nationwide broadcasts on state tv after awarding plaques and shields to victors in inter-services taekwondo tournaments.
- Keep a collection of well-preserved skeletons in the Cabinet.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED:

- Should have stamina and endurance to wear 25-kg marigold garlands, have at least 20-year experience in lamp lighting, khada wearing and bouquet accepting with flair and aplomb befitting of the prime minister of a Least Developed Country.
- Must have obstructed constitution-writing, refused to extend the tenure of local bodies, and sent goons to beat

up journalists during past tenures.

- Must have a Masters in Horse-trading and a PhD in Sycophancy from an unrecognised university.
- Must have made an Ass of himself/herself at least once in career.

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