The Kailali killings this week indicate how the anger was boiling over in the western Tarai, how the constitution carvers in Kathmandu seemed to be insensitive or didn’t care about the demands of the Tharu people for recognition, and how the radical breakaway Maoists were spoiling for a fight. All these factors led to the deadly confluence of events in Tikapur Ground zero in Kailali

BY OM ASTHA RAI
PAGE 4-5

that left nine dead, including a senior police officer and a two-year-old child.

Even before the Tikapur lynching, the Tharuhat Struggle Committee and Madhesi activists had shut down Nepal’s plains for a week or more, essentially blockading the hill and mountains. In Kailali, serious ethnic tensions were building up between the Tharus and NC-UML activists belonging to those supporting an ‘undivided’ far-west.

The top party leaders in Kathmandu added fuel to the fire by giving in to the demands in Surkhet after weeks of violent protests there by adding a province in the west, but ignoring Tharu demands. They have been so blinded in their dismissal of political rivals, they fail to notice things are slipping beyond the political realm, taking a dangerous communal turn.

Rulers here tend not to notice, or underestimate the anger outside. The Madhesi people may be disillusioned with their leaders, but there is simmering distrust over Pahadi politicians in Kathmandu not treating them with enough respect.

The longer the political grievances remain unaddressed, the greater the danger of extremist takeover. The Kailali killings, disturbances in Nawalparasi, Rautahat and Saptari, all point towards this danger.

MISSING MEN: Women of Manuwa village in Kailali wait for the return of the male members of their families who have all run away fearing arrests after the killing by protesters of eight policemen and a child on Monday.
That plan rested on exploiting Tharu anger at being left out. There is now quite a lot of evidence pointing to the demands of the Tharu people for recognition, and to the demarcation of provincial boundaries to a future Federal Commission and their names to state legislatures. Alter protests erupted, the parties said “coops” and went back to the drawing board earlier this month, demarcating boundaries not for eight but six provinces.

So the constitution framers went back to the maps and decided on seven provinces by dividing Province #6 into two: the trans-Karnali and the Mid-West. This put out the flames in Surkhet and Jumla, but angered the Tharus who felt their demands had been ignored by politicians from the west in the NC and UML.

It got serious enough for the Tharu chief of the MJD(P), Bijay Gachhadar, to disassociate himself from the four-party grouping and join other Madhesis and Janajati parties at the NC barricades. There is now quite a lot of evidence pointing to the involvement of ex-combatants from the Chad and Biplav groups, many of them from the Tharus, in themselves, in planning the killings in Kailali this week. That plan rested on exploiting Tharu anger at being left out again.

Even before the Tikapur lynching, the Tharu agitation Committee and Madhesis activists had shut down Nepal’s plains for a week or more, essentially blocking the hill and mountainous areas. In Kathmandu, serious ethnic tensions were building up between the Tharus and NC-UML activists belonging to those supporting an ‘undivided’ far-west.

As the number of proposed provinces goes from the original 14 to 8 to then 7, the number of parties in the constitution alliance goes from 4 to 3 and parties are newspapering the federalism nonsense. The NC-UML-UCPN(M) say they are determined to take the process forward with an amendment bill, clause-by-clause debate and voting so that the constitution will be ready. But the legitimacy of such a constitution will be questioned if so many stakeholders feel left out of it.

While we can go along with the argument that there is no compromise that will satisfy everyone, the process so far has lacked transparency, appears arbitrary and weeks of vote bank politics of the main protagonists: Sher Bahadur Deuba of the NC, KP Oli of the UML, Bijay Gachhadar of the MJP(D) and Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maoists. It is also driven by the impatience of all these gentlemen to get to power in the national unity government after the constitution is passed.

Among the parties that have most reason to be aggrieved are the indigenous Tharus who have found themselves disenfranchised by the process. Even when the demands of the Karnali was heard by the big Three in Kathmandu last week, they failed to meet the Tharu demands for greater autonomy in the western Tarai. This has brought the Tharus and Madhesis, who had no love lost for each other, together to find common cause. The government has to act urgently, and leaders including Gachhadar need to try to put out this fire instead of fanning it.

Those behaving the most irresponsibly are the Madhesis parties which lost in the 2013 elections and have been trying to win back power by drum up support. They have pledged Rs 5 million to anyone who is killed in future street protests. Three Madhesis leaders had visited Kailali a week before the violence, making irresponsible and incomprehensible remarks exhorting the Tharus to take up axes and knives and chase the hill people out of the Tarai.

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Disconnect and discontent
Let’s admit it: we in Kathmandu are a bunch of hypocrites

Tsering Dolker Gurung

BETWEEN THE LINES

The pampered, insular denizens of the capital have a stereotypical view of the rest of the country. Caste discrimination, we believe, is an evil of the past. We don’t understand why the rest of the country wants to settle down in the Valley. We consider ourselves to be liberal, unprejudiced, egalitarian and enlightened.

So when news like the one about an entire village in Siraha to many of us is just Lakeside and the Tarai as the home of barbers, fruit vendors and scrap collectors.

But when news like the one about a movie superstar, thanks to extensive reporting on the matter. Strike-hit Saptari, Surkhet, Banke, or Kailali could as well be on another planet.

Kathmandu-based opinion makers and commentators, all well-educated citizens from right across the ethnic spectrum, have also failed to speak to the voices that let us behave like the expats, with whom we have plans to take a road trip to Pokhara and Chitwan, the towns they can no longer afford to visit.

Banda enforcers, we argue, do not have genuine grievances, they are merely paid instigators with a ROFL or a smiley sticker. We are not racist, you see, we just like to judge people by their association with the group they are born into.

Kathmandu’s reaction to the ongoing bout of bandas is another case in point. It is an unacceptable form of protest as long as the Valley is affected, but the Tarai has been shut down now for nearly two weeks and one is hard-pressed to find mention of that anywhere in the Kathmandu-centric press.

When a strike is enforced in Kathmandu, however, we hit back with hashtags, tweet pictures of ourselves walking to work with #dieNepalbandhdie, and boast about being banda defiers. An indefinite strike outside the capital is rarely a cause for concern, unless we have plans to take a road trip to Pokhara and Chitwan, the towns that let us behave like the expats we are not.

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Ground Zero in Kailali

The Tikapur attack was premeditated, but the government set the stage for it to occur

OM ASTHA RAJ

Pletics together eye-witness reports and information of sources within the movement for an autonomous Tharu province now confirms that the attack on policemen in Kailali on Monday was planned. The lynchings, burning and shooting left eight policemen and a two-year-old child dead.

Leaders of the Tharu Struggle Committee had gathered ex-Maoist guerrillas in Tikapur from nearby districts with the intention of attacking security personnel, and had till the last minute tricked local authorities into believing that they would not resort to violence.

Suman Dhital, Chief of the Area Administration Office of Tikapur was with SSP Laxman Neupane, the senior most police officer to be killed by protesters that afternoon. He knew most of the protesters, and he said one of them had called him to warn the thousands of Tharus from outside Tikapur were gathering carrying spades, knives and spears.

As SSP Neupane prepared to go out and calm the protesters down, Dhital stopped him and called Kailali district in-charge of the Tharu Struggle Committee Roshan Chaudhary who had attended an all-party meeting a day before and promised to keep things peaceful during their agitation. He assured Dhital once again that protesters would not resort to violence.

Reassured, Dhital let Neupane go. The crowd had grown in the adjacent village of Manuwa and police were trying to stop them from advancing to Tikapur. There was a scuffle during which the protesters dragged down Neupane and stabbed him. Wounded, Neupane ordered his men to open fire but the police only had tear gas and rubber bullets. They watched from a distance as Neupane and others were lynched and burnt.

“We asked the AFP but they had not received orders to do so,” recounted Makendra Chaudhary, an injured policeman receiving treatment in Kohalpur Teaching Hospital. AFP constable Surendra Hamal, also in the same hospital, confirmed: “We had guns and bullets but were not given the order from our commander. So we fled to survive.”

In revenge attacks, supporters of the ‘Undivided Far West’ which is against a separate Tharu province, burnt down the office of Fullbari FM radio and Fullbari resort owned by Roshan Chaudhary. His whereabouts are still not known. They also set on fire the house of Tharu lawmaker Janak Chaudhary.

Bir Bhan Chaudhary, spokesman of the Tharu Struggle Committee, denies the violence was premeditated and accuses the media of bias. “It was a spontaneous outburst of anger, our protesters were reacting to police firing,” he told us, “many Tharus have bullet wounds. Who shot at them if police did not open fire? Three Tharu protesters are missing; they might have been killed or detained. Has the media reported on it?”

Chaudhary accuses Police of arresting at least 31 Tharus after the Kailali incident and allowing supporters of the undivided Far West province to ransack their houses and the government of terrorising the Tharu community by imposing curfew and deploying the army.

“We regret what happened in Tikapur, but our provincial problem and the government should address it politically,” he says. “We have no animosity towards the provincial police with pro-Far West supporters, but the state seems to protect them even when they burn down others’ houses.”

Krishna Raj Sarbahara, a Tharu journalist, says the indigenous Tharus and their Bahun-Chhetri neighbours from the mountains

KAILALI CARNAGE: AFP personnel Netra Saud points to the spot where his two-year-old son Tek Bahadur was shot dead (left). A Nepal Police personnel holds out the charred set of Ram Bhari Chaudhary who was burnt alive by protesters in Tikapur, Kailali (right).

Windfall in Nepal

Industries that switch to wind power protect not just the ecology, but the economy as well

KUSHAL GURUNG

There are more than 38 cement factories in Nepal producing 2 million tons of cement annually. Even the best of times that barely meets half the national demand. Nepal imported more than Rs 2 billion worth cement last year and with the earthquake that figure is expected to soar.

Isn’t supply meeting demand? A look into another industry would clear the mystery. Tea is one of our major exports and is gradually losing ground in the international market. Despite growing consumption of tea, we have not been able to increase our market share proportionately as our tea has become more expensive than our competitors, due to increasing production costs.

The main reason for this is the need to use diesel electricity, which has increased production cost by Rs 50-100 per kg.

It’s the same story in all industries: during power shortages, industries have to rely on high-cost diesel power, which doubles their operating cost. A majority of the industries do not work at full capacity which, in turn, is hurting Nepal’s economic growth and is threatening the livelihoods of millions of people who are directly or indirectly dependent on these industries.

Production cost can be reduced by finding cheaper and reliable alternative energy sources, besides increasing efficiency. Captive renewable energy generation primarily for an industry’s own consumption can reduce costs.

Electricity generation from diesel power is not only expensive, but also climate unfriendly. Renewable energy is cheaper and cleaner. Reducing our reliance on diesel through increased use of renewable energy sources such as wind, micro-hydro, solar, waste heat recovery, and biomass is crucial in shaping Nepal’s image, not just to save the ecology but the economy as well.

Nepal’s wind map shows that most tea factories and big cement industries in Nepal are located in areas that are feasible for wind energy generation. None of them has so far exploited this available source of captive renewable energy resource. There is one big barrier for many of these industries to switch into wind power generation: initial capital cost which is higher than for a diesel plant.

The average ex-factory cost of a megawatt size wind turbine is around $1 million. On top of this, an energy storage system will increase costs. The government provides a subsidy on capital cost for small scale projects through the Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) but there is no provision for bigger industries. Even the AEPC’s newly launched financial intermediation mechanism Central Renewable Energy Fund (CREF) doesn’t address such big capital projects. Nonetheless, it is imperative to evolve along with different support mechanisms and innovative business models to overcome this issue of initial capital.

Despite the heavy capital cost, the payback period for a wind farm located in an area with a good wind speed is only up to five years. Given the fact that a wind farm can be built quickly, it would be a lucrative option for industries that are now relying heavily on diesel for backup power. A wind project needs at least one year of wind data for technical feasibility study and it takes less than a year to complete even a wind farm of up to 1MW provided there is good road access and equipment is available to transport.

Wind is a quick fix for tea, cement and other energy-intensive industries. If we can have a mechanism to address capital cost, wind is the way to go.

This article is part of a monthly series prepared jointly with the Energy Development Council of which Kushal Gurung, Wind Power Nepal is a member.
Hyatt helps

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu has donated USD 25,000 to the Children’s Protection Home as part of its community service. It has also donated mattresses, computers and a printer to the organisation, which helps orphaned children.

Etihad awards

Etihad Airways hosted its annual Trade Partners in Kathmandu. A total of 30 awards were handed out across seven categories. The ceremony was also attended by officials from Jet Airways, its partner airline.

Ncell’s App Camp

Ncell has announced it will accept applications for its app development competition, Ncell App Camp, till September 20. Interested participants were briefed about the competition recently.

For more information, visit: www.ncellappcamp.com

Kamaiya and Kamlari, how can I be anti-Tharu?” he asked. But when asked whether he would reconsider breaking Kailali between the Far West and the Tharuhat province, he retorted: “I was, I am and I will always be for an undivided Karnali.”

More than 322,000 Tharus live in Kailali, which has a population of 775,000. Nepal’s aboriginal settlers of the Tarai want the district to be a part of an autonomous province stretching from Bardia to Nawalparasi. But NC and UML leaders from the region are against it.

It is now clear that Tharu leaders and ex-Maoist guerrillas of the breakaway Netra Bikram Chand and Mohan Baidya factions were involved in the killings and used the belief among some Tharus that violence was the only way to push through their agenda.

The top party leaders in Kathmandu added fuel to the fire by giving in to the demands in Surkhet after weeks of violent protests there by adding a province in the west, but ignoring demands of the Tharus.

Tikapur administrator Suman Dhital explained: “It is what created an impression among some Tharu activists that the only way their demands would be met was if they also used violence.”

With Bachu BK in Tikapur and Keshav Rana in Kohalpur...
The deteriorating situation in the Tarai proves that Nepal’s political leadership is incapable of understanding and learning lessons. In the winter of 2006, when people in the plains first came out on to the streets demanding federalism in the Interim Constitution, they were snubbed by the NC, UML and the Maoist leadership, who were all on a high after their victory against the monarchy.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala’s refusal to listen to that demand led to Madhesi leaders in his party walking out to join street protests which claimed nearly 50 lives. Eight years later, his cousin Sushil Koirala finds himself in the same predicament.

Twenty districts across Nepal’s southern plains have been shut down for weeks, and the violence has claimed at least a dozen lives. On 18 August, a farmer on his way to the market was shot dead in Saptari by police. On 19 August, a 24-year-old boy was killed in central Tarai district of Rautahat after police opened fire at protesters. For the first time after the end of the conflict in 2006, the government has mobilised the Nepal Army to restore order.

Yet, the government in Kathmandu and the top leaders dictating the constitution writing process continue with their majoritarian stance. They have been so blinded in their dismissal of political rivals, they fail to notice things are slipping beyond the political realm, taking a dangerous communal turn.

The brutality with which police officers were killed in Kailali indicates this was not just a mob rage. The ghosts of the war may have come back to haunt this constitutional process. Indeed, the dismantling of Maoist cantonments was reduced to a logistical process overlooking the need to dismantle the militant mindset of ex-combatants.

The government has rightly recalled the CDO of Kailali and the chiefs of the Police and AFP. New faces could help douse some of the local anger, but just when we were tempted to applaud his tactfulness, Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam made an undiplomatic statement in the Parliament on Monday, accusing ‘people from south’ trying to destabilise the situation in Kailali and Rastahat.

Indian Ambassador Ranjit Rae paid Gautam a visit the next day, which the Home Minister projected in the media as the minister ‘cautioning’ the ambassador. Then the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi posted a communiqué about the situation in Kailali. ‘People from south’ belong to Tharu leaders. We must condemn mindless violence on both sides unequivocally, but we must also understand what led to those violent acts.

Two weeks ago, 42 Tharu lawmakers including those from the NC and UML walked out of the CA. Since then, people in western, mid-western and far-western Tarai have been on the streets, protesting against the federal demarcation. The Madhesi Morcha was already protesting on the streets in the eastern and central Tarai as well. The longer the political grievances remain unabated, the greater the danger of extremist takeover. The Kailali killings, occasions in Nawalparasi, Rastahat and Saptari, all point towards this danger.

In its final few weeks, Nepal’s constitutional debate is being dictated by the personal and political interests of UML’s KP Oli and Bimal Rawal and NC’s Krishna Sitaula and Sher Bahadur Deuba. While Oli and Sitaula treat the eastern Terai districts to be their fiefdom, Rawal and Deuba think the same about the western Tarai. Irked by their high-handedness, MOD-Democratic’s Bijay Gachhadar, who had earlier forged alliance with the top three parties, has threatened to quit the CA.

Sadly, PM Sushil Koirala has failed to show statesmanship and remained a clueless spectator throughout this process. His half-hearted calls to the agitating groups for talks are as unconvincing as his leadership.

Meanwhile, as the debate on the draft constitution moves into final days, the number of empty seats in the CA has gone up.

@Anurag_Acharya
TAKASHI MIYAHARA
2020 VISION

KARMA GURUNG

“Takashi Miyahara: the 81-year-old social entrepreneur who came to Nepal first in 1962 and never left. A mountainier, he quickly fell in love with the beauty of Nepal’s pristine mountains, a stark contrast to a rapidly-industrialising Japan that was rebuilding after the war. As it turned out, he also fell in love with the beauty of Nepal’s pristine mountains. What causes these anomalies we don’t know, but what we do know is that the country in droves to settle in the West, and that there is a rising generation and transportation is the vision I have. grand. What is your vision, then? I believe the direction is towards the development of Nepal. This will not only increase national income but also help Nepal become self-reliant. What is your vision for Nepal’s future? What is your vision for Nepal’s future? Is that why you wanted to enter politics yourself? People criticise politicians for not doing their duty and for being corrupt, but they still elect the same people to power. Nepal politicians lack a vision for the country. Yes, the federal provinces are designed to secure vote banks, not for a development strategy. If you have to look for a visionary politician, you can find a little bit in Dr Baburam Bhattarai. What is your vision, then? I believe the direction is towards the development of Nepal. This will not only increase national income but also help Nepal become self-reliant. Using Nepal’s natural resources like rivers and forests and moulding them for tourism purposes and also harnessing their potential through hydropower generation and transportation is the vision I have. Why is it so difficult to do? The people only vote for the same four main parties who are only looking at their own self-interest rather than the national interest. The youth leaders need to step up. What lessons can we learn from Japan on post-earthquake reconstruction? Japan has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected. Nepal has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected. Nepal’s natural resources like rivers and forests and moulding them for tourism purposes and also harnessing their potential through hydropower generation and transportation is the vision I have. Why is it so difficult to do? The people only vote for the same four main parties who are only looking at their own self-interest rather than the national interest. The youth leaders need to step up. What lessons can we learn from Japan on post-earthquake reconstruction? Japan has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected. Nepal has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected.

BY THE BOOK: Takashi Miyahara in front of a map of Nepal showing his infrastructure-led vision for the country. Only eight out of 75 districts were affected. Nepal has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected.

Very unusual to have such huge thunderstorms during the monsoon, but it is thought to be unusual because of the change and Nepal’s inability to use its huge business. Frustrated at the slow pace of industrialising Japan that was rebuilding after the war. As it turned out, he also fell in love with the beauty of Nepal’s pristine mountains. What causes these anomalies we don’t know, but what we do know is that the country in droves to settle in the West, and that there is a rising generation and transportation is the vision I have.

What is your vision, then? I believe the direction is towards the development of Nepal. This will not only increase national income but also help Nepal become self-reliant. Using Nepal’s natural resources like rivers and forests and moulding them for tourism purposes and also harnessing their potential through hydropower generation and transportation is the vision I have. Why is it so difficult to do? The people only vote for the same four main parties who are only looking at their own self-interest rather than the national interest. The youth leaders need to step up.

What lessons can we learn from Japan on post-earthquake reconstruction? Japan has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected. Nepal has always been prepared for earthquakes. Here, only eight out of 75 districts were affected.
How far we’ve come?
A talk by Shail Shrestha, president of the Nepal Artisans Association.
9 August, 5pm, USEF, Gyaneswor, Kathmandu, (01)4410200

Art Market,
A place to sell and buy paintings, prints, posters and design products.
5 September, 12pm to 6pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, ang@yellowhouse.com, ang@uninestudios.com.np

Homage,
A British artist, Martin Travers explores the concepts of identity and self-esteemment through painting (see review on page 13).
14 September, 11am to 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babur Mohal Revealed, (01)4178048

Where to now?
A lecture by Nepali Times editor Kunda Dixit about the state of Nepal post-earthquakes.
Rs 400 for non-members (includes tea and snacks), 4 September, 9.30am, Mohel Café, jpradhan@nepaltimes.com

Building better,
A workshop and discussion on the benefits of earthbag building and earthquake resistant design.
4 September, 10am to 5pm, The Summit Hotel, Sanepa

Images of Nepal,
An exhibition of black and white images taken by Jan Møller Hansen before and after the 25 April earthquake.
Inauguration 9 September, 5.30pm till 22 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babur Mohal Revealed, (01)4178048

Run for Nepal,
A 5K virtual race to raise fund for Oxfam Nepal earthquake.
Rs 200, 29 August, 8pm, House of Music, Kanta Dab Dab is a trio of bass, drums and sitar that will take you someplace else.

Call for submission,
Photographers, curators, photo-based artists, historians, anthropologists are invited to submit works and ideas for digital projection, discussions, performances on the theme ‘TIME’. Deadline 15 September, www.theyetirun.com

The Yeti Run,
Test your strength, stamina and teamwork at Nepal’s first obstacle race.
25 September, St. Alwen’s School, Godawari, 9841226291, pratibhandary@gmail.com

Fusion Explosion,
Kanta Dab Dab is a trio of bass, drums and sitar that will take you someplace else.

Climate + Change,
A dynamic exhibition exploring the effects of climate change on the Hindu Kush Himalayan region.
10 September, 9am to 5pm, International Mountain Museum, Gharepani, Pokhara, (061)446742, nepa@internationalmountains.org, www.worldmountainmuseums.org

Support,
A special fund raising print sale to contribute towards the rebuilding of heritage sites in Patan by Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KoVF).
www.photoartnepal.com

Nepal Cup 2015,
A charity football tournament to raise funds for quake-affected schools in Nepal and promote the country as a tourist attraction.
7 and 8 October, Dwarika Rangasala Stadium, Fopardawar, info@nepolevents2015.com, www.nepalcup2015.com

Quake photobook,
Nepal25 launches a crowd-sourcing drive for printing a co-edited photo book celebrating the festival of death and rebirth will be followed by an interaction with Abdel Aziz El Hadj.
30 August, Basantapur Durbar, (01)4477724, info@nepal25.org

Wholeness,
Artist Puran Khadka whose work is a meditation of full of spiritual awakening exhibits his paintings.
13 October, Park Gallery, Pokhara, (01)5322017, siroth@parkgallery.com.np

Tirisara,
With dishes like flapjack prawns, crispy chicken, and khao soi, it would be a folly to ignore its aromas.
Lazimpat, (01)4410200

MUSIC

Open mic,
Singing all ageing singers, Every Thursday, 5pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851057572, sanzey@hotmail.com

Fusion Explosion,
Kanta Dab Dab is a trio of bass, drums and sitar that will take you someplace else.

Reggae night,
Joint family international will be playing their prominent reggae music.
Rs 200, 29 August, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851057572, sanzey@hotmail.com

Alumni Launch,
Launch of Adrian Pradhan’s new album, ‘Muralmura’.
28 August, 5pm, Club 25 Hours, Tundikhel, (01)4437486, club25hours@gmail.com

GETAWAYS

Nedyo Monastery,
A monastery and guest house, Nedyo is home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas, leave your troubles behind and book a room.
Shiplag, Kathmandu, www.nedyomonastery.com

The end of the universe,
Stay in a family-run hotel that is located atop Mahankal hill. It is believed to be one of the oldest in the hotels at the site.
Mahankal Mandir, Nagarkot, Bhaktapur, 9774501200

Waterfront Resort,

Glacier Hotel,
Excellent value and friendly service for tourists in the Himalayan region.
Nuwakot, (01)4700426, ekam@nepal.com

Famous Farm,
Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the aankhijhyal.
Nakhelew, (01)4954053, xylthe@nepal.com
In the past four months after the earthquake, as the event faded from prime time news, the real story is that April 25 was not the Big One everyone had feared. An even bigger earthquake is still likely to strike Nepal in future.

Since 2012, Anne Sanquini, a PhD candidate of Geological Sciences at Stanford University (pic, right) has led a study of seismic resistant schools and public buildings suggested by the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) and engineers from the Department of Education with the help of Sondar Thapaliya, an MPH graduate from California State University. When the earthquake hit just before noon on 25 April 2015, nearly 7,000 schools in Central Zone came down. What seemed like sturdy pillars crumbled to dust, and empty classrooms pancaked. The few schools that survived were the ones built or retrofit to be earthquake resistant.

In 2014, Sanquini was featured in a documentary about five earthquake-safe schools she had helped build. She and Thapaliya had worked with a group of film students from Kathmandu University to produce what they hoped would be a video to test a theory on how people can be motivated to prepare for disasters. The 20-minute documentary demonstrated how school communities and property owners could learn about earthquake-resistant construction. It was tested among 800 teachers, parents and alumni from 16 schools in Kathmandu Valley.

The research indicated that the film increased belief among viewers that it is possible to make a new building earthquake-resistant, and even to retrofit an old one. It increased their knowledge of specific earthquake-resistant design, materials and methods. It also increased their intent to support a safe-school-building project and to recommend the construction of earthquake-resistant homes to others.

“The research required that we capture the true feelings of the people in communities who had invested in earthquake-resistant school buildings,” Sanquini said. EU film students Ashim Khanal, Sarun Manandhar, Bibhhu Poudel and Kiran Shrestha of Baardali Films helped make the film. Khanal was attending a class on that Saturday when the building he was in started shaking, “It disturbed me that as someone who helped raise awareness on retrofit school buildings, I could have lost my life in an unsafe classroom.”

After the earthquake, the Baardali team went back to the schools featured in the film and found out that they had suffered no damage. In fact, people from nearby areas took shelter in the schools as the aftershocks continued.

“When I saw the retrofitted schools standing strong next to most structures that the earthquake had completely destroyed, it dawned on me that reinforcements really work,” said Sarun Manandhar of Baardali.

Post-earthquake, the documentary has been updated to incorporate a positive and credible message about earthquake-resistant construction and has interviews with people who have successfully built such schools.

Naya Saraswati (A New Beginning) features parents and teachers at construction sites, a cement store and a brick factory, learning about secure schools and discussing the safety of their children. We see local masons working their craft, and school principals acknowledging community support their schools received to make buildings secure.

The film manages to empower us on how we too, can build better. As we gather to build homes and schools, we must ensure that our foundations are stronger this time.

Apurajita Acharya

evp@times.com

#773

## Times

**28 AUGUST - 3 SEPTEMBER 2015**

### REBUILDING OURSELVES

“Naya Saraswati (A New Beginning) features parents and teachers at construction sites, a cement store and a brick factory, learning about secure schools and discussing the safety of their children. We see local masons working their craft, and school principals acknowledging community support their schools received to make buildings secure. The film manages to empower us on how we too, can build better. As we gather to build homes and schools, we must ensure that our foundations are stronger this time.”

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## Build back safer

A proven documentary to inspire earthquake-resistant construction for Nepal

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**Krishnarpan**

**OPEN FROM**

6.30 PM

TO

10 PM

**How to get there:** Krishnarpan is located inside Dwarika’s Hotel at Battisputali.

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**Aila Choyela**

A proven documentary to inspire earthquake-resistant construction for Nepal.

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SAPARU
The festival of death and rebirth on Sunday carries more relevance this year

SONIA AWALE

Pratap Malla’s prosperous reign as the king of Kathmandu in the mid-17th century was when most of the monuments of the Hanuman Dhoka Palace were built. One day Pratap Malla’s young son died, and the grief-stricken queen was inconsolable.

To show her that she wasn’t the only person to have lost a loved one, the king ordered everyone in the kingdom who had lost a relative that year to bring out a huge procession. The king also asked them to try to make the queen laugh through skits that poked fun at Kathmandu’s rulers. Tears gave way to laughter, and thus began Saparu, the unique Newari festival of satire, death and rebirth.

The festival is also known as Gai Jatra in Nepali because the procession includes young boys dressed as cows. This year, the festival falls on Sunday, 30 August and will be accompanied by feasts, music, dancing and merriment. Saparu carries special significance this year because the earthquake caused almost 2,000 fatalities in Kathmandu Valley. Of the 8,844 people killed, 20 per cent were Newars.

“Death is a reality of life and we have to accept it,” says Bhuju Maharjan, 88 who survived the 1934 earthquake, “and Saparu gives us the strength to deal with death in the family and move on.” Maharjan still remembers the Saparu festival after the 1934 earthquake as a chance for his community to come to terms with their collective grief.

For a festival that commemorates death, Saparu is mostly filled with laughter, music and feasting and is a part of Kathmandu Valley’s exclusive cultural heritage. The focus this year will be on rebuilding lives and reconstruction of fallen shrines and monuments.

“The number of people taking part in procession will be higher but the route will be shorter because of the supporting beams blocking some streets,” says Maharjan. There are variations in the way Saparu is celebrated in Kathmandu, Patan or Bhaktapur. In Patan, there is an additional procession in memory of those who...
THE PAIN INSIDE

The events of that Saturday morning four months ago is seared in Nirmala Maharjan’s memory. Her four-storey building in Patan collapsed crushing her husband, brother-in-law and his family.

“I may look all right, and I smile at people but only I know the pain inside,” she tells us, eyes glistening. Nirmala (pic, right) will be joining the Matya procession this year with her two young sons, visiting the shrines in a route through Patan’s narrow lanes in memory of the rest of her family that perished in the earthquake.

Says Nirmala: “I must go so that my family will rest in peace, it is also a way for me to start anew and take care of my surviving sons.”

From early morning people dressed in traditional clothes carrying pictures of the deceased, masked dancers and musicians visit various religious shrines offering fruits, incense, or coins. It is believed that if a family member of the deceased takes part in the procession, the dead will be cleansed of their sins and make it safely to the gates of heaven.

Historically, Saparu was also a unique way to do a rough death census of the town’s population after natural disasters or epidemics. Saparu is significant at many levels this year, not just with personal sorrow but the togetherness spirit that allows people to deal with bereavement as community.

However, as neighbourhoods become less cohesive in Kathmandu there is worry that Gai Jatra is losing its true meaning, becoming simply a vulgar excuse for people to ridicule others.

“It used to be a day when people used to lampoon autocratic rulers with creative satire,” says heritage expert Anil Chitrakar, “we have to revive the original spirit of Gai Jatra that allows us to deal with calamities.”

The procession and people’s participation this year will of course reflect the death and destruction caused by the earthquake of 25 April 2015 but it will also be proof of the tenacity and strength of the Nepalis.

Says Chitrakar: “It is the tangible things we lost, and we can rebuild those. But we still have the intangible part, our beliefs, our values and festivals. Gai Jatra is a way to show that Nepal is getting back to normal.”

An unexpected cuisine of high quality Mo:Mo

“An unexpected cuisine of high quality Mo:Mo”

The PICS: BIKRAM RAI

SONIA AWALE

Kathmandu, Sunday 30 August

SAPARU ROUTES

Kathmandu, Sunday 30 August

nepalitimes.com

Watch interview nepalitimes.com

28 AUGUST - 3 SEPTEMBER 2015 #773
There is a special place for all the people in the world who love a well realised thriller. I’m speaking about those of us who adore something along the lines of a John Le Carré novel that has been translated into film, preferably in the style of Jean-Pierre Melville – the famous French filmmaker whose films ooze with style, minutely planned out set pieces that add to the atmosphere of suspense, and are at the same time neo-realistic crime procedurals that bring you right into the gritty (albeit stylised) world of the film, be it to do with bank robbers (Le Cercle Rouge, 1970) or with spies (Army of Shadows, 1969).

Unfortunately, Child 44 with all of its potential, written by Richard Price and clearly meant to shine in the aforementioned genre and produced by Ridley Scott himself fails as tribute to those films it seeks to emulate. While it successfully creates a whole world (that of 1950s post war Russia, ruled by Stalin) in which the main character takes on a serial killer who targets young boys, this is but a plot device which is put in place to develop the trajectory of one Leo Demidov (the usually wonderful Tom Hardy). Demidov inadvertently becomes a feted member of the insidious Ministry of State Security (MGB) after distinguishing himself in World War II.

Even at a running time of 137 minutes, I continued to watch the film, hanging on to the hope that something would click into place (with actors like that, how can things go wrong?) to salvage this unwieldy self-serious film (there’s not a single laugh, perhaps not even a real smile) that never ever lightens up or pays you back for your endless patience.

This is a classic example of how to go wrong while making a film; the script, which is usually the backbone of the film, is self-indulgent and without a disciplined director to anchor its weight. As Leo goes through a series of horrific persecutions in a terrifyingly paranoid Soviet era Russia, we learn about his life as a former orphan, his love for his wife Raisa (played by an unusually one note Noomi Rapace), and his instinctive compassion for children, yet we never ever grow to care, either for him, his troubles and certainly never for his oddly unemotional wife. What a shame to have to waste such talent in such a mundane manner.

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INKED:
Minister for Commerce and Supplies Ram Bahadur Thapa and Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas of India Dharmendra Pradhan sign the MOU for construction of Raxaul-Amlekhgunj oil pipeline on Monday.

BEST WISHES:
Tourism Minister Kripasur Sherpa hands over a Nepali flag to Japanese mountaineer Nobokazu Kuriki who is the first person to attempt Mt Everest climb post earthquake on Sunday.

BANDA:
Nepal Police personnel patrol the streets of Satdobato in Kathmandu during the two-day strike called by Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) on Sunday.

R.I.P:
Visitors pay final respects to SSP Laxman Neupane who was killed in Monday’s clash between Police and Tharu protestors at Tikapur in Kailali.

BOOKWORMS: A Japanese stall owner entertains visitors at the Nepal International Book Fair at Bhrikut Mandap in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Child 44

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British artist Martin Travers is a social worker involved with youth custody centres in the Netherlands. In 2015, he wanted a break from social work and applied for residence at Kathmandu Contemporary Art Centre (KCAC) to concentrate on his own art.

After collaborating with Nepali artists to make a mural on the wall of the British Council – launching the celebration of the bicentenary of Nepal-UK diplomatic relations – Travers went to Langtang where he was stuck when the earthquake hit Nepal on 25 April.

Even though he was advised by the British Embassy in Kathmandu to return to Europe for security reasons, he stayed on to see if he could help.

“I wanted to utilise my skills to help students deal with post-earthquake trauma,” Travers says. He ran several workshops in schools of Nepal, each one being attended by about 100 children which were sources of inspiration during his residence at KCAC which lasted two months, instead of five as initially planned.

“Inner power and adversity are recurrent themes in my work and my experience after the earthquake just fit into it,” says Travers. But while working in KCAC’s studio, he wanted to add a Nepali flavour to his paintings and came to know the work of Paubha artist Samundra Man Shrestha.

“Martin showed me the painting of a girl with a bright smile looking up, and asked if I could fill the background,” Shrestha says. He added the White Tara of Compassion painted on a cracked wall. This picture reminds us that religious buildings may have been damaged during the earthquake, but Nepalis are still buoyant.

“When I saw what Samundra had done, I knew it had clicked between us,” Travers says passionately. So they worked on two more paintings. Ten of 12 paintings Travers made during his Patan residence are currently shown in Of struggles and dreams — a homage to the people of Nepal launched last Sunday at Siddhartha Art Gallery.

This exhibition begins with a painting titled 25.04.2015 (pic), a poignant picture of a close-up of the eyes of an elderly woman in which we can see the reflection of collapsed temples. The impact of the Gorkha earthquake on Travers’ residence is clear.

But as we go round Of struggles and dreams, the pictures become more optimistic, even if the 25 April earthquake is referred almost every time. Like Art Healing which shows a girl crouching to paint. A Himalayan monal pheasant is flying away from her paper and another one is over the girl’s head. In the background are silhouettes of damaged buildings. This suggests that art might wipe away the children’s bad memories.

It is also interesting to see that among the 10 paintings shown at the launch, nine have female characters. It’s like Travers is saying that Nepal’s reconstruction will be led by women – which is somehow the case as many Nepali men working abroad couldn’t come back to Nepal after the earthquake. Many drawings made by children during Travers’ workshops are displayed on the first floor of Siddhartha Art Gallery, many of them transcribe the raw experience of the earthquake.

They show Swayambunath struck by a giant mouth coming from the ground, eating a clock stopped at 11h56, bricks covering a bleeding hand, a body falling from a waving Dharara Tower, or people running as houses are collapsing and a child asking ‘Mom, where are you?’.

Some are more optimistic, like one illustrating a damaged temple titled ‘Today’, and next to it a rebuilt temple with the inscription ‘Tomorrow’.

During his workshops, Travers was moved by the students’ testimonies, and surprised that some of them had never painted before. That’s why he is working to help the introduction of arts in their curriculum.

A portion of the sale of Travers’ paintings will go to two schools of Kathmandu, Kanti Ishwori Madhyamik Vidhyalaya and Jagat Sundar Bwonekuthi for this purpose. He has also trained teachers to conduct art classes. Of struggles and dreams – a homage to the people of Nepal by Martin Travers, in collaboration with Samundra Man Shrestha Siddhartha Art Gallery Till 6 September

More pictures online nepalitimes.com
When a 15-year-old girl from Makawanpur confided to her mother recently that her father had been sexually abusing her, she was told to stay quiet. Citing possible community backlash and the fear of social stigma, the mother asked her daughter not to report the crime. The teenager was unconvinced and with help from women's rights activists filed a complaint against her father who is now serving time in prison for incest.

In another case in the same district a student was raped by her teacher after inviting her home on the pretext of providing extra classes. It took the student several months of abuse to open up about the incident to a friend who immediately contacted the victim's aunt. Together, the three lodged a police complaint against the teacher. The student admitted that it was fear of bringing shame to her family that she hadn't spoken out sooner.

As per a report, 80 percent of rape cases involve family members and close relatives, a report published by Anvesh last year showed that only 4 per cent of victims are reported to the police. And even if they are, there is pressure from the community to settle the matter secretly in case of incest, or in many cases to get the victim to marry the rapist.

“It is difficult for children to speak out against perpetrators when they are people known or related to them,” says Bishnu Ojha of Nari Sip Srijana Kendra in Itahawa which works with rape victims. Ojha frequently receives complaints from young girls who have been sexually assaulted by relatives and family members. “In such circumstances victims are also unsure about who to trust and where to seek help," he explains.

Family honour, lack of access to legal aid, and fear over being social outcasts seem to be the major deterrents for victims to report rape crimes. Even when victims muster the courage to speak out, they are vilified and shunned by neighbours for bringing shame to the community.

Rather than questioning the perpetrator’s character, it is the victim’s behaviour that is put under the spotlight. Many families also prefer to settle matters out of court in order to avoid public scrutiny of the case. In such circumstances it is the community members, village councils which hand out judgements, and those usually in flavour of perpetrators who tend to be powerful local men.

In Rautahat a gang rape victim was asked to leave the village while her perpetrators escaped scot free after paying the family Rs 25,000 compensation. A 60-year-old man from Kohalpur charged with raping a seven-year-old in still roaming freely because he enjoys political protection. Meanwhile the child faces constant taunts from neighbours.

“They try to make it seem like she is the one to blame,” the child’s aunt told us during a recent visit. The result is that the girls and women often suffer emotion scars and mental trauma. A 14-year-old girl from Itahawa was raped by a soldier who claimed the relationship was consensual. The girl’s family charged the man with having sex with a minor, and he is now in police custody.

Even though such cases of justice being served because of pressure from local groups are few and far between, there is now pressure from the soldier’s family to have him released if he agrees to marry the girl, who is pregnant.

The argument is that the girl will be stigmatised for life as an unmarried mother if she has the child. The reason the neighbour illustrates the mindset in society: “He is a man, he will be fine even after getting released. Who will marry her and take care of the baby?”

Keeping it in the family

Approximately 4 in 5 of all rapes are committed by someone the victim knows and 98 per cent never go to jail

ANJANA RAJBHANDARY

In HBO’s show Game of Thrones, we notice the incestuous relationship between siblings Cersei and Jaime Lannister, and it is implied it has been going on since childhood. Between siblings Cersei and Jaime Lannister, and it is implied it has been going on since childhood. I

Earlier in the year, media reported the rape of a 19-year-old by her father and grandfather. The father had been raping her daughter for eight years and he only got 18 years in jail.

The grandfather committed suicide to avoid public humiliation. The father and grandfather were especially concerned about the girl trying to commit suicide, which can be a common result of sexual violence. Any form of sexual assault can have a range of effects on the victim. It is never easy to deal with it but it can be managed with the right help and support.

Sexual assault also does not come with a timeline of how long it takes someone to recover. It can take weeks, months, and years, and there are cases when some people never move on.

It is very common for victims of sexual assault to have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Many may engage in self-harm such as cutting oneself or suicide to cope with the painful memory. Some may develop eating disorders because they tend to become ashamed of their bodies, or may start engaging in substance abuse.

The awful memory of an incident caused by a family member, who should make an individual feel loved and protected, can lead to sleeping problems, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies. Statistics on Rape About Incest Network (RAINN) says that approximately 4 in 5 of all rapes are committed by someone the victim knows and 98 per cent of rapists never go to jail.

After a couple of years of knowing her, a friend, now 32, opened up to me about her sexual assault. “I was 15 and my cousin at the bar. He raped me behind the building. He told me to stay quiet and I did. I pressed my eyes shut the whole time but my tears did not stop, and neither did he. He said it was my fault it happened because I was wearing a short dress.” She never reported it to the police.

Didn’t that make you cringe? In many cultures including ours, reporting a crime is not as prevalent because someone in the society will blame the victim as the cause for incest or rape. However, seeking justice can have a positive effect on one’s recovery as it holds the perpetrator accountable for their actions and may prevent them from repeating it.

Incest takes away the essence of one’s soul and (temporarily) destroys one’s desire to live and fight. It is a twisted form of sex but can be a twisted form of showing one’s power and sense of control over someone else. Recovering from this pain is always a long process. But, we can help those who have had to suffer this unfortunate incident. The first thing is to make the victims feel safe, and give them the space to reach out and listen to their voices. These victims, who have survived need to take care of themselves. With the right support from family and friends without judgment, and maybe therapy or medication from a mental health professional and hope, we can help the survivors try to move on.

It is very important to let survivors know that what happened is not their fault. I have no sympathy for perpetrators of sexual assault of any kind because it is wrong and there is no gray area in the issue. There needs to be a longer and stricter jail sentence for rapists without any possibility of parole.
A s the major parties throw together a slap-dash constitution that manages to upset everybody another season of strikes kicks off throughout the land. Much of the Tarai has been shut down for weeks, nationwide closures threaten Kathmandu every few days and word’s already out to stock up on essentials in case it gets worse.

MOVING TARGET
Foreign Hand

A recent eye-catching headline stated Nepal suffered 847 bandas in the past 5 years, an average of 169 per year. Reviewing the police list of major events is like taking a stroll down memory lane. The series of strikes called by the Maoists for ‘Civil Supremacy’ tops the list as the most disruptive (and gets my vote as the most idiotic), made worse by the fact all those months of rioting, taxi-burnings and wasted days achieved absolutely nothing.

When your columnist asked the Madhesi Forum strikers that cut the valley off from the plains, unleashed chaos in the Tarai, and accomplished none of its goals, Baidya’s Maoists made the list for their repeated attempts to sabotage the 2013 election, which took place anyways. You’d think it would be obvious by now, even to fools, that bandas simply don’t work. So why have them?

That was the last time this form of protest had any legitimacy. By the mid 90’s intimidation and fear of reprisal kept people off the streets. Once the Maoists began wrecking the country in earnest, bandas degenerated into little more than an exercise in bullying the people and destabilising the government. A strike’s success was no longer judged by how much support it garnered but by the amount of suffering it caused. A banda that allowed a few shops to open and minimal traffic for emergencies was deemed less successful than one that scared everyone off the streets. Maoist strikes soon gained a reputation as the most violent, dangerous, and therefore the most successful, of all.

When your columnist asked friends who’s calling a recent strike no-one knew for sure. Some guessed the RJP on the far right, others suggested Maoist factions on the far left. Apparently it’s no longer worth knowing who’s changing all your plans by shutting the country down. Paying attention to such nonsense is depressing and why argue with a free holiday?

There was a time when bandas were held to publicise grievances that were often legitimate but now, with grievances galore, legitimacy or specific reasons no longer matter. Nobody seems to know why most bandas are called, or by who. That leaves us ‘when’ another frequent source of confusion. The most common response to the inquiry ‘Is there a banda tomorrow?’ is ‘Not sure, wait and see’. That raises a philosophical question: if nobody knows who called the banda, or why, or when exactly, does the banda actually exist? Or is there any reason to follow it? Apparently so, as information passes telepathically through society and the streets are jam. They’d be laughed off the road.

A banda’s success is no longer judged by how much support it garnered but by the amount of suffering it caused the people. Reality check: imagine the UK Maoist party or even Labour calling a nationwide banda-cum chakka-jam. They’d be laughed off the stage and anyone caught burning tyres and trashing taxis would be unceremoniously tossed in jail. Better still, our Nepali Maoists should try calling a strike in the land of their hero and see how the Chinese authorities react.

It’s important to remind ourselves that forcing businesses to close and vehicles off the roads through coercion and the threat of violence is not a democratic right but a criminal aberration. Each party in turn displays their total lack of creativity by resorting to the same old bankrupt form of protest that’s wrecked the country and never accomplished anything in the first place. Will they ever learn? In a word, no.

The fact the government does so little to ensure people can go about their daily lives unmolested indicates how little respect they have for those lives. More troubling, perhaps, is the passive acquiescence by most to whatever rumour makes the rounds: without acquiescence by most to whatever rumour makes the rounds: without needing to know who, why, or what for, people are quick to give up and stay home.

Until and unless that changes, it’s highly unlikely the politicians will ever change their ways or respect the people’s wish for a stable, banda free Nepal.
There are peaks of about 40 years ago in one of Patan’s narrow alleys. Wafting through the small eatery is the distinct aroma of marijuana. A man with a joint in his hand mumbles something incoherent, and the owner doesn’t seem to notice. “I don’t allow marijuana here. I want him to leave,” he explains.

Fifty years ago, these men who are now feared in Kathmandu’s restaurants would be welcomed at Freak Street in shops called ‘Your Old & Favorite Hashish Centre.’ In the 1960s and early 70s, cheap and potent marijuana drew thousands of hippies to Kathmandu where they could readily buy one-kilogram boxes of the downs at a pittance. In 1976, mostly under pressure from the American government which was worried about its young citizens becoming dope addicts, Nepal banned the use and sale of marijuana. The decision had far-reaching implications: the hippies left, tourism was hit, the government lost tax revenue, farmers lost a lucrative cash crop, and the trade in hash went underground, criminalising a drug

In fact it is said that one of the reasons for the rapid spread of the Maoist revolution in 1996 was that the government’s ban on the production of cannabis was so stringent that it angered the Kham Magars who cultivated it as a major cash crop. Fast forward 40 years and the very country that got Nepal to ban cannabis cultivation has now legalised it for both medical and recreational uses in some of its states. Some Latin American and other countries have also legalised the drug. In Nepal, however, a major cash crop remains illegal.

Experts have always maintained that the ban created more problems than it solved. The well-documented ‘balloon effect’, for example is a grave problem as people switched to more harmful opiates. Rabi Raj Thapa, a retired Additional Inspector General (AIG) with the Nepal Police, explains: “When one drug is banned, consumption of another drug may rise. There is also so much corruption and criminality in the drug trade right now that it is time for the government to rethink its policies on marijuana.”

In the 1970s, the ban initially raised the price of cannabis and then heroin, and local users moved to a dangerous mix of cheap prescription drugs known as ‘Nepal cocktail’. Nepal, with its lax laws and corrupt enforcement, became a notorious transit point for drug smuggling to India, Europe, Japan and Australia. High-profile Nepalis were named or arrested in the West on smuggling charges. The underground trade of the drug is now in the hands of shady criminals, who are known to lace it with chemicals. Marijuana today is six to eight times stronger than it was in the 1960s and 70s. Though police often conduct arrests (779 kg of hashish was seized in the first six months of this year alone) some Kathmandu restaurants still allow their customers to smoke marijuana. A manager at a popular eatery in Patan says he just keeps the police on a retainer to avoid raids. Taken in moderation, marijuana is said to be less dangerous than alcohol and may be even less harmful than coffee in terms of dependence and withdrawal symptoms. Its healing properties are also well known. Health workers in Nepal say that marijuana helps HIV/AIDS patients by stimulating appetite and relieving pain.

To be sure, Nepal has legalised the drug for medical purposes under prescription, but how much of it is allowed is not specified. Experts say legalising and taxing marijuana may also be an effective way for the government to raise revenue. Another benefit of legalisation is that the government can control the quality of the drug, asking licensed suppliers to indicate the amount of THC (marijuana’s psychoactive element) on the drug. Legalisation could spawn other problems, though. It is not clear if open availability of marijuana will increase the number of addicts. In a country that is known for lax regulation, legalisation may end up encouraging impunity. We may have to believe a retired police officer like Thapa when he says: “The benefits of legalisation outweigh the harm. It is high time we legalised it.”

Before 2011, cannabis plantation was so common in Parsa district that elections, weapons, dowries—almost everything was financed by drug money. Sixty per cent of the arable land in Parsa was under cannabis and poppy, and their trade was controlled by Indian mafia from across the border.

District police chief at the time, Rajendra Man Shrestha, resolved to put an end to the cultivation. His efforts bore fruit: cannabis and opium cultivation went down by 95 per cent. “You will not see a single cannabis plant in Parsa now,” he told Nepali Times in 2011.

As is customary for competent officials, Shrestha was transferred to another district soon after. Now the drugs are back. The Indian drug mafia also moved to mid-western mountains to source opium. Last year, 45 per cent of inmates in Birganj prisons were doing time for hard-drugs including heroin and opium.

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soil conditions were considered ideal for cannabis. But after it was banned in the 1970s (see story alongside) the cultivation of this traditional cash crop was pushed underground. Lately, however, farmers have been lured by Indian middlemen to cultivate an even more lucrative crop: opium.

“Opium cultivation is now emerging as a serious threat,” says Police DIG for Rukum Keshav Adhikari. “Lack of information and inaccessibility of the mid-western mountains are a major hindrance.”

Adhikari says police have got tipoffs, and between March and June nearly 150 acres of poppy fields were destroyed across Rukum. But that is just scratching the surface -- opium farms dot the villages in other mid-west districts of Salyan, Jajarkot and Dailekh.

Indian middlemen and their Nepali suppliers have a network that is difficult to trace. They moved to these remote mountains after effective police action in Bara and Parsa of the central Tarai eradicated opium cultivation there six years ago. Police believe the opium mafia moved here because it is too remote and inaccessible for the government to act.

Jagbir Rawal of Syalpakha village of Rukum district used to cultivate poppy, but his crop was destroyed by police earlier this year. “I knew it was illegal,” he said, “but that was the quickest way to earn money.”

Rawal was not arrested, police just warned him and other opium cultivators not to plant poppies any more. Inspector Puran Gharti says: “Even if we arrest farmers, we cannot easily prove them guilty because they claim someone else planted poppies on their land.”

Indian traders have moved to Nepal because of crackdowns in Uttar Pradesh. The Indian state had allowed limited cultivation of opium as raw material for the pharmaceutical industry, but tightened rules after reports that the opium was being refined into heroin. This prompted opium suppliers to move across the open border to Nepal to source the crop.

Poverty, lack of irrigation and other government agricultural extension support means most farmers cannot grow enough food to feed their families and most men from these districts migrate seasonally to India for work. Police say Indian opium traders make contact with Nepali farmers through these workers and provide them with opium seeds and an advance. Farmers harvest opium pods within six months of planting and a kg of the crop fetches up to Rs 62,000.

“It is quick, easy and lucrative farming,” says AIG Surendra Bahadur Singh, who recently returned from the mid-western hills after an inspection trip. “State facilities meant for poor farmers do not reach the district capital, poor farmers in remote villages have no option but to switch to opium.”

Police have seized 60.8 kg of opium from different parts of the country over the last five years and seized 47.9 kg of heroin manufactured from opium. Police admit their anti-narcotics cell is under-staffed and under-funded, and this is not even the tip of the iceberg of the trade in the contraband drug.
**Balance sheet**

Ramesh Sapkota, Naya Patrika, 23 August

**NEPALI CONGRESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active membership fee: Rs 200 for membership and Rs 100 for renewal. NC collected Rs 31.7 million from its 317,000 members last year and hopes to increase its membership to 600,000 next year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levy from CA members: Each CA member from the party is levied a charge of Rs 5,000 monthly, earning the party over Rs 1 million last year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations: The party raised Rs 30 million during its annual convention.</td>
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**Income**

- Spends about Rs 3.5 million on vehicle expenses including phone charge, electricity fee and repair and maintenance of vehicles amount to over Rs 57,000 per month.
- Leaders’ food expenses: The party doesn’t provide its leaders food allowance, but special meals are served at every party meeting.
- Convention expenses: The party claims it spent over Rs 10 million for housing and food expenses for its members during its annual convention.
- Levy from CA members: The party raises Rs 22 million from CA members levied a monthly charge of Rs 10,000. It also asks 14% levy from the income of those members who received political posts after the party’s recommendations.
- Membership renewal: Collects Rs 10 each month from its 238,671 members and last year raised over Rs 25.8 million.
- Donations and support: Gets donations from its supporters and well-wishers during elections. This process is not fully transparent.

**Expenses**

- Office expenses: Spends Rs 800,000 every month.
- Health expenses for leaders: Supports leaders financially when they need treatment, but a proposal must be submitted to the office prior to treatment.
- Other expenses: Spends most of its money on its annual convention, for which it must pay for the food and housing expenses of thousands of its members.

**UCPN MAOIST**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levy from CA members: Raises Rs 12,000 as levy from its 84 CA members every month totalling Rs 1 million monthly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levy from party members: Claims party has not raised levy from its members because its structure is in a mess.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations and support: Raises donations during elections and conventions. Not fully transparent.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenses**

- Office expenses: Spends Rs 300,000 every month.
- Health expenses for leaders: Supports leaders financially when they need treatment, but a proposal must be submitted to the office prior to treatment.
- Other expenses: Spends most of its money on its annual convention, for which it must pay for the food and housing expenses of thousands of its members.

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**Planning to kill**

When Madhesi leaders Upendra Yadav, Rajendra Mahato and Amaresh Singh provoked Kailali’s ethnic Tharus to drive away ‘outsiders from their lands’ three weeks ago, supporters of the Tharuhat movement were involved in the killings. But they were divided over their response. Some wanted to use violence to jolt the state into taking notice, while others wanted to use the protests as an opportunity to settle their own scores. But Tharu leaders don’t provide its leaders food allowance, but special meals are served at every party meeting.

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"I was, I am and I will always stand for an undivided Karnali." — NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba speaking at a press conference on 25 August

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**Violence not solution**

Rabindra Mishra interviews former kamalari and CA member Shanta Chaudhary in BBC/Nepali, 25 August

BBC Nepal: You wrote on Facebook that innocent Tharus were used as a human shield in Tikapur to kill security personnel. Yes, some people fished in troubled waters. They used the Tharus’ protest as an opportunity to settle their own scores. But Tharu leaders cannot get away saying that there were infiltrators. They should take moral responsibility. Whether there were infiltrators will be investigated later. They failed to keep the protests under control.

But isn’t it true that thousands of protesters brandishing axes, spears and guns were indeed Tharus? I don’t think they were there to kill anyone. I am not defending them just because I am a Tharu. I believe in issues of class, not ethnicity. But Tharus consider themselves as descendants of the Buddha, and I don’t think they can engage in such criminal activities. We should find out who used us and why. At a time when the new constitution is being written, it is natural for everyone to fight for their rights. But the country should be our foremost priority. If you burn your country down, you will be burning yourself.

Do you support the demand for a Tharuhat province? More than demanding a state, Tharus are fighting to be in one province. They do not want to be divided between two different provinces.

As a Tharu, do you have a message to your community at a sensitive time like this? We should exercise restraint. Violence is not the solution to our problems. Although the government tends to overlook peaceful protests, we should not resort to violence. We should not tarnish our image of being peace-loving and honest people.
The most desperate battle in history

This is part seven of the series about the Gurkhas at Gallipoli exactly 100 years ago this month.

9 August 1915

The plan of the attack, as concocted by General Godley, had involved five入睡-er other battalions, and a brigade of four battalions under Brigadier General A H Baldwin now set out to reinforce the forward unit of Gurkhas pinned down below the summit of Hill Q, but again the gunners lost their way and this force failed to advance very far.

Baldwin’s column was still a long way from the crest of the ridge when the battle was driven off the hill. It was a lost cause now as the British and Ottoman forces remained on theient of the gallant episodes in the whole campaign.

Major Allanson of the 1/6th Gurkhas recorded, after the barrage ended:

`I had my watch out, 5.15. I never saw such artillery preparation; the trenches were marvellous, as we were just below. N.5.18 it had not stopped and I wondered if my watch was wrong, N.5.20, silence; I waited three minutes to be certain, as great as the risk was. Then off we dashed, all hand on hand, a most perfect advance, and a wonderful sight. At the top we met the Turks; Le Marchand was down, a bayonet through the head. I got one through the leg, and then for about what appeared to be ten minutes we fought hand to hand, we bit and fought, and used rifles and pistols as clubs. And then the Turks turned and fled and I felt a very proud man; the key of the whole peninsula was ours, and our losses had not been so very great. The Allies retained only a foothold in Dardanelles, suddenly when they had managed to join the assault on the hill top.

The plan of the attack, as mentioned in the Fading Vision, comments that the ‘lonely advance of the British and Gurkha skirmishers to the crest of the ridge when the battle was driven off the hill and the Gurkha skirmishers to the crest of the ridge when the battle was driven off the hill...

position of the night before, below the crest of the Hill. For the whole of the following day, the Gurkhas and the British troops were marooned on the rocks below the peak, under the baking sun with no water and running low on ammunition. The wounded, of whom there were many including Allanson himself, were in a parlous state. Allanson and all the British officers except one having been either badly wounded or killed, it was Subedar Major Gambir Singh Pun who effectively commanded the battalion, together with the Medical Officer Capt Phipson.

It is my most cherished conviction that if we had been given more Gurkhas at the Dardanelles we would never have been held up by the Turks.

General Sir Ian Hamilton
Culture Shock Nepal

Every time human beings find themselves in a different cultural milieu than the one they are familiar with, they suffer from a phenomenon known as culture shock and need expert guidance in local customs and etiquette. This is especially true of countries like Nepal where the habits of easy-going natives may not be familiar to first-time visitors: like the tradition of taking a forced three-day nationwide holiday twice a month. The rules of the road are fairly simple: Two Legs Good, Four Wheels Bad, Three Legs Bad Unless It Is Three Wheels And Has Wings. Rollerblades Are OK, Cable cars Are Not, Rickshaws Are Fine, Autorickshaws Are Not.

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Public Grooming
Nepalis love to nitpick and can be seen doing this in public on the sidewalks, on terraces and balconies at all times of day and night. Usually anyone can nitpick anyone else, but since looking for lice on someone else’s hair is an indication of some degree of mutual intimacy it is frowned upon if it involves two or more individuals of the same sex. It is perfectly acceptable, however, to approach a stranger sitting next to you in a long-distance bus and after necessary introductions start looking for nits in each other’s hair. Besides being a great way to pass the time, it is also mutually hygienic.

Toothpicking is another favourite past-time and, luckily in Nepal, there are no rules governing how people with advanced halitosis should pick their teeth in polite company. This is why many foreigners opt to make Nepal their home because they don’t have to worry about exhuming items of food from their molars within earshot of guests sitting around the table. We are proud to say that there is complete freedom within Nepal’s territorial waters as far as self-exploration of the oral cavity is concerned.

The nose is another orifice that we Nepalis are proud to call our own. Thanks to our ancestors who risked life and limb to explore its uncharted upper reaches, the terrain map has been handed down from generation to generation through word of mouth so that today we modern Nepalis are quite familiar with our nooks and crannies. The probe of choice for nasal expeditions is the pinkie with a nail that is designed to grow into the shape of a tiny shovel that can efficiently mine nuggets of precious booty deep inside our snouts.

Because of space constraints we can’t go into the conventions of etiquette governing the grooming of each other’s body parts. Suffice to say that Nepal also has a laissez faire attitude about expelling body fluids. A visitor to Nepal need not be unduly concerned about clearing the throat in public. It is done with a quick intake of breath to dislodge the primary target area in the oesophagus, pneumatically roll it into an aerodynamically stable glob, and then with the same technology used in shoulder-fired heat-seeking Stinger missiles expectorate this biological warhead at an innocent bystander.

Next week we will be looking at the endearing Nepali passion of rummaging through the toolbox in public.

PAST PRESENT FUTURE
DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Why don’t we EVER work on our achievements? Why do we always DEMAND and PROTECT only?

It’s become a COLLECTIVE habit. We can’t think of doing anything else.

If you don’t PROTEST, who will?

We DEMAND secularism. We got it!
We DEMAND federalism. We got it!
We DEMAND a new constitution. We got it!

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