SAFFRON RAINBOW: Demonstrators demanding that Nepal be declared a Hindu state are doused by water cannon in Kathmandu on Monday, as police fire tear gas at protesters trying to set fire to government buildings in Kalaiya of Bara district.

Despite the deepening deadlock and violence, the disagreements on the constitution aren’t intractable. The demands for changing boundaries of future federal provinces should not be impossible to resolve. All it needs are cool heads, statesmanship to forge compromises, and the ability to look beyond partisan pastimes at the larger national interest. Amendments that address some of the demands of the agitators may be filed by the Saturday deadline, and further changes can be made as we go along. But prolonging the uncertainty is not a good idea in the present volatile situation.

Any means necessary

The federalisation folly

Lessons from the Patel movement

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under the stereotyped assumption of being unaware, vain and social-media enslaved. Who are you trying to refer to as Kathmanduties anyway? Is it the native indigenous Newars? Do we count to as Kathmanduties anyway? Is it the ever growing populace of settlers? Should we look beyond social media, it is not just trendy, if not entirely stupid. State politics extend beyond social media, it is not just trendy, if not entirely stupid. State politics

whomever have the mandate to write the constitution.

Guruta Shisheng

GROUND ZERO

Thanks for the article. (Ground zero in Kailali) Om Asha Rai, (773) ‘As people have ample learnt from similar incidents in many countries with multiple ethnic groups, if local police force comprises of different ethnic groups there is less chance of a protest turning violent because locals can trust the police.

AK

DISCONNECT AND DISCONNECT

Very well written and an honest reflection of the reality. (Disconnect and disconnect’, Tarot Diler Gurung, (773)

Purnesh

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Peter Tobin

It is profoundly derogatory to label an entire cosmopolitan city population who have the mandate to write the constitution.

VOTE BANK CONSTITUTION


Sonny Krishan

Why blame the politicians only? Many in the media and intelligentsia are equally responsible for the current situation by parroting populist slogans of the day without any serious analysis or research.

Dev Batsya

WHOSE CONSTITUTION?

Whose Constitution? (Whose constitution is it anyway?, Anurag Acharya, (773) It was Prachanda who had wanted a new Constitution to start with rather than reforming the one existing. Perhaps, he didn’t know what reform meant. It was he who had wanted ethnic federalism. So the present trek in New Nepal is his making, including the problems with the draft constitution and demarcations.

K K Sharma

Let’s remember that those whose rights are at stake are the very people chosen by the people and

who have the mandate to write the constitution.

Sushovan Sjb Rana

If our lack of exposure to the rest of the country translates into indifference it does not mean we are hypocrites. It is important for us to bring to the attention of the Nepal that is out of our reach. Plus, when our outrage doesn’t extend beyond social media, it is not because we care less but because we are not full time activists or politicians with agenda. A blanket labelling of Kathmandu’s people as hypocrites won’t help.

Bineta Gurung

CANNABIS BAN

There are so many problems in Nepal, why would the government and cops care about marijuana, which is essentials harmless to smoke? (High time to lift ban’, Sarthak Mani Sharma, (773)

Duck Season

Yes, hemp fibre could really help to make plastic ban concrete by providing alternative too.

Sushma Joshi

If marijuana legalisation contributes to GDP growth, should we also produce poppy and export heroin to Colombia? Also, marijuana’s medical benefits are still being explored and there is no evidence that it is safe for recreational use. It should be used in research to study the social and economic costs of legalising it and also explore better economic opportunities.

Kashyap Shakya

Despite the deepening deadlock and violence, disagreements on the constitution aren’t intractable

It is difficult to find a resolution to a violent unrest if you don’t know what the demands of the protesters are. How do you address an agitation without a clear agenda? This appears to be what is happening with the violent protests that rent the Central Tarai this week. The Tharus had genuine reasons to be angry at being left by the power broken Kathmandu and when the federalism model was changed from 6 to 7, and left their demands unaddressed. Others of various Maoist persuasions just cashed in on the prevailing resentment and piggybacked a peaceful protest to butcher policemen on 24 August. It is a different story in the eight districts of the central Tarai that make up Province 2. Madhesi leaders, many of whom lost the 2013 elections, have been trying to rebuild up their prospects. Having been discarded for their lack of concern for the everyday needs of their constituents when they served in high government positions in Kathmandu, they have taken recourse in whiping up communal sentiments against ‘colonial’ rule in the Tani.

After failing to ignite the Central Tarai last month, prominent Madhesi leaders from various parties forged an alliance with the Tharu Struggle Committee and addressed a gathering in Tikapur of Kailali district in the west urging locals to take up arms and chase hill dwellers out to where they came from. We believe it isn’t a coincidence that what was supposed to be a peaceful protest on 24 August ended up in the lynching and shooting of eight policemen and a baby.

Now, the violence has spread to the Central Tarai where disparate Madhesi parties from former Maoists like Matrika Yadav and Upendra Mahato are in the fray, competing to be more violent than each other in order to build up support in their constituencies. This is why some of the Tarai towns don’t seem to be in control of the more mainstream and relatively moderate Madhesi leaders anymore. More and more, it looks like the agitation is driven by those who want to stop the constitution going through at any cost: an unlikely cabal of the extreme left to the extreme right, the Maoists to the extreme Sangh, and the extreme Sangh to the extreme left.

So the present turmoil in New Nepal appears to be what is happening with the violent protests in the Tani. It is profoundly derogatory to label an entire cosmopolitan city population who have the mandate to write the constitution.

immeasurable.

Despite the deepening deadlock and violence, disagreements on the constitution aren’t intractable. As we understand and talk to the people in Kailali, they aren’t satisfied with taking three Kailali constituencies which they have been demanding for the past three weeks, and 24 people have been killed. The cost to the national economy, the disruption to the lives of ordinary people and the impact on earthquake reconstruction is immeasurable.

As our map of the past month of unrest shows, more than half the country has been shut down now for nearly three weeks, and 24 people have been killed. The cost to the national economy, the disruption to the lives of ordinary people and the impact on earthquake reconstruction is immeasurable.

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Any means necessary

The media now needs to create a climate for compromise and put the onus back on the political parties.

I f ever Nepal needed a diligent, responsible, on-the-ground and vibrant media in the past eight years, it is now. For those of us outside of towns labelled ‘tense’ and not much else, there is a huge gap in the information that is filtering in.

We hear about rounds of bullets and deaths, but no attempt is being made to provide a larger picture which would explain the sequence of events, the emotions of those involved, the public mood and response in the areas. For the most part, the general public has been left in the dark as to what is happening in the country.

The majority of news was given that each has its own version of events. For the take the Tikapur incident of 24 August for example: while few actually made it on the ground, the majority of news was being churned out from desks in Kathmandu based on either no sources or exceptionally shoddy ones.

There were multiple incidences of exaggerated death tolls, factual errors, opinion being relayed as news and certain groups being openly pitted against one another. Television gets its kicks from pitting opposing views with one another with no intention of promoting a dialogue, but rather a showdown. This, at such an incredibly volatile time and from the supposed pillars of the entire democratic exercise.

One can earnestly hope that is a lack of resources, of skill and depth of understanding that is the reason for the coverage of the Madhes. However, it seems the media is largely just echoing the mood of the majority of the big shots in Kathmandu: Constitution by the end of the year, by any means necessary.

This is not a pan-Bahun-Chhetri agenda that many ethnic activists would have you believe, either. It is a deliberate and dangerous design harboured by a tiny political, economic and social elite in Kathmandu. Constitution is the reason for the coverage of the Madhes. However, it seems the media is largely just echoing the mood of the majority of the big shots in Kathmandu; Constitution by the end of the year, by any means necessary.

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The straight up position of all national media should indeed be the condemnation of violence and clarification that no amount of lament over past injustice can justify murder, and that the state must take responsibility for the violence which manifests within its territory. Responsibility would entail identifying the murderers of 24 August and bringing them under the law. Responsibility would entail identifying and rectifying the weaknesses of the Home Ministry for inadequately gauging the security situation in the country. Responsibility would entail at least making an attempt to address the root causes of the violence, which preceded – and continues two weeks after – the incident.

Taking responsibility would entail refraining from deploying the Army until all other means to curtail the situation have been explored. Finally, responsibility in the case of the Tikapur incident would also be an apology, at the very least, on the part of the Prime Minister for being unable to perform his duty adequately, followed by a formal apology on the part of the Prime Minister for attempting to push through a constitution without due consultation and broad agreement among political actors.

While there is much to be said about the contradictions and the lack of clarity and feasibility in the demands of the movement in the Tarai, the very idea that the politicians and their henchmen across the sectors in Kathmandu can now offset the determination of so many competing interests is foolhardy. A prominent Tharu activist recently said that “it’s too late” to suggest alternatives to the identity-based model of federalism and that Tharus and Madhesis will not stop until the state has “knocked” to their demands. “With Tharus and Madhesis united” he said, “the Nepali state will have no choice.”

And the movement in the Tarai is only the precursor for what is to come. The Dalits, Janajatis, Hindu right wing, women and the Undivided Far-west movements are yet to come out in full force. Soon enough, groups with demands unheard of will surface. This is what you get when there is a crisis in ownership of the constitution.

The media now needs to create a climate for compromise and put the onus back on this government and the political parties. The state, in turn, must come back to the negotiating table. It has no choice. Otherwise, the cost will no longer be numbered only in rupees and dead bodies. #650rub
Lessons from India’s Patel movement

Nepal’s affirmative action should be nuanced enough to avoid quotas for better-off Dalits, Madhesis or Janjatis

The same week that Nepal deployed the army to contain ethnic unrest in Kailali, India had to clamp down on a parallel outburst of violent protests in Gujarat. Nine policemen were killed, the army was on the streets in Kailali. In Gujarat, ten people including a policeman died and the Indian Army was sent out to quell caste riots. In Nepal the protests were triggered by Tharu community’s unhappiness over provincial demarcation in the new constitution, while in India the agitation was spearheaded by the Patel community demanding a share of government jobs and college seats reserved for Dalits and what they call ‘Other Backward Communities’ (OBCs).

On social networking sites, some Nepalis drew comparisons between the Kailali killings and the Gujarat violence because they were both about communities which felt aggrieved by state policy. But there may be more than meets the eye in comparing India’s Patel movement and growing discontent over reservation policy among Nepal’s Bahuns and Chhetris.

The Patel movement could be an indication of a future anti-reservation movement in Nepal, too, where Bahuns and Chhetris are arguing that caste-based reservation policy is not justified because sections of their community are poorer than Janjatis or Dalits. If an activist like Hardik Patel, the 22-year-old leader of the Patel movement in Gujarat, can succeed in uniting anti-reservation youths, there is the possibility that Nepal’s own quota policy too could be diluted. We can be smarter about it by reforming our existing reservation policy, which is flawed and fails to uplift the genuinely marginalised.

In the end, it boils down to making a distinction between caste and class. Although social inequities in Nepal have caste and ethnic characteristics, it is becoming and will continue to be more class-based. Nepal’s reservation policy was introduced not only too late but also in haste. After the 2006 Democracy Movement, which was a culmination of years of struggle for an inclusive society, Nepal finally amended the Civil Service Act-1993 to reserve 45 per cent of government jobs quotas for Dalit, Madhesi, Janjati and women.

But that law did not differentiate between privileged janjatis and under-privileged janjatis, or privileged Madhesis and under-privileged Madhesis. As a result, well-off janjatis, Madhesi, Dalits and women are now able to grab all quotas reserved for the marginalised, breaching resentment among Bahuns and Chhetris who may lag behind economically.

The janjati umbrella organisation, NEFIN, has categorised Nepal’s 95 indigenous communities into five groups: advanced, disadvantaged, marginalised and underprivileged. Newars and Thakalis are in advanced group whereas their high Human Development Index (HDI) rankings. Newars constitute only five per cent of population but already hold eight per cent of all government jobs. Now, they can get more jobs because of the janjati quota.

Some Madhesi caste groups like Raiputs and Kayastha also occupy a disproportionate number of government jobs while other more systematically-excluded Madhési people are still excluded. Then, Bahun, Chhetri or Newar women dominate quotas reserved for women, leaving out women from more marginalised Madhési, Muslims or Tamangs. Ironically, in treating all Madhési, Janjatis, Dalits or women equally we are perpetuating class inequality in Nepali society. The HDI ranking could be the widely accepted way of determining which caste and ethnicities deserve more quotas.

We can also learn from how our community forest management determines the vulnerability of forest users. In most Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs), a Dalit family is not considered vulnerable enough to get priority to use forest products just because it is Dalit. Household income and land ownership are considered, and the whole community decides. If two Dalit families demand timber at the same time, the more needy one gets the priority. Our national reservation policy should also be more nuanced like this.

The policy of reserving government jobs, college seats or higher education scholarships should be accompanied by programs to empower the most underprivileged communities to compete for the allocated quotas. Nepal reserves quotas for MBBS scholarships, but does not empower Chepang, Kusunda, Thami, Majhi or fire communities to compete with Newar or Thakali students. If we fail to reform it effectively, Newar and Thakali students will be getting more than 90 per cent of medical school scholarship quotas in the future.

To be sure, not all Newars or Kayasthas may be well off either, but it would be unfair if richer Janjatis, Madhesi or Dalit candidates got preferential treatment. This would breed resentment, and lead to a future Patel movement in Nepal, too. It is too late to be smarter about affirmative action.
The federalisation folly

Nepal's unique geography will deliver only as an integrated whole, not as fragmented enclaves

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T

he killings in Kailali on 24 August, the arson, riots and paralyzing protests that have brought large parts of the country to a halt for nearly a month could be signs of worse to come if the foolishly federalisation idea is not abandoned.

GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha

Nepal's geography and ethnic mosaic is too unique and intertwined and is not suited for federal fragmentation. The current seven-province model is bad enough, but dividing them along ethnic lines would be even worse. Nepal's topography can yield huge benefits to people and lift living standards, but only if the plains, hills and mountains are an integrated whole. Whosoever thought of cutting Nepal into pieces that don't respect river watersheds did not have Nepal's long-term economic interest at heart.

Take the example of the 750 MW West Seti Hydroelectric Project in Doti district in western Nepal that is being projected to be built with Chinese investment. In its 195m high dam would submerge 2,166ha including 670ha of agricultural land and would displace 16,221 people in Doti, Darchula, Rautahat and Bajhang. Its reservoir, however, would release 90 cu mces of regulated water in the dry season to irrigate 270,000ha for non-paddy cultivation and 90,000ha for rice in downstream districts of Bahun, Kailali and Kanchanpur. The plant would generate an average of 3,636 GWh of energy, yielding a revenue of Rs 15 billion annually.

However, with the proposed federalisation of the country, the hill districts of one province would be submerged and people displaced while its benefit would accrue to downstream provinces. In all likelihood, West Seti will be the first casualty of the mindless attempt of breaking up the country artificially in the name of federalisation. It is possible that the Chinese would just find it too politically complicated and pull out.

Nepal's unique ethnography is made up of 125 caste/ethnic groups who mostly live in densely mixed rural settlements. There isn't a community which is not inhabited by at least half a dozen different caste/ethnicities living together with shared membership in forest user groups, mothers' groups and perma traditional labour exchanges. Even though the Maoists misled the Magar people promising them priority rights in a future Magarat Province, Nepali ethnic groups live in such intermixed settlements that no one group can claim more rights than others. Nepal's tragedy is that we let a bunch of bloodthirsty gorillas mix the hill districts of one province for federal fragmentation. The 16-point deal of 8 June would have been a quick way out of the federalisation conundrum once and for all. But once again, it was messed up after Nepal leaders were summoned to New Delhi one by one and came back with instructions to include federal demarcation in the constitution. They proceeded to do just that, and all hell broke loose.

By any definition and provisions in the Interim Constitution, President Ram Baran Yadav remains the last hope as supreme commander of the armed forces in safeguarding Nepal's unity and integrity. He knows that Nepal's geography and the ethnic diversity will never allow meaningful federalisation. The President should also bear in mind that, even in the hopeless context of utter mismanagement of state affairs during the last several decades of Westminster style democracy in Nepal, the fact remains that Nepal has made enormous gains in grassroots action by devolving decision-making to local groups. Therefore, what Nepal needs is not federalisation, but all-out devolution of authority to communities at the grassroots. We hope rest with the President to step in for the country's long-term national interest. Otherwise President Yadav will go down in history as someone who wasted his incumbency and laid the groundwork for the nation's disintegration. It is not too late.
Beware of fake news

The killings in Kailali on 24 August exposed just how much of the content on the social web can be manipulated with fake images. Interestingly, the violence coincided with the launch of South Asia Check, a media fact-checking initiative of Panos South Asia.

We were putting together our findings, tweaking the online settings of our site, and scrolling and refreshing our Twitter timelines hoping to find clues into some more fact checking when the social media began to be filled with news and images from Tikapur of Kailali. Anger had been building up in the western Tarai over the demarcation of provincial boundaries for more than a week, and there was a spike in images of arson and clashes being shared on social media. Soon, there were gory images of policemen being lynched or set on fire. The death toll was initially cited in the mainstream press as 21 and later corrected to nine, even though there was no official figure until late evening.

One image that was widely circulated on social media was of a man in flames (pic) posted on a blog report about the violence in Tikapur. Although there was no caption or photo credit, the image accompanied a report about a policeman being burnt alive. At South Asia Check we found that the image was actually from a US-based website posted in 2012 of some other incident. Digital portals like Setopati and ekantipur also carried reports about the misleading image, and that magnified our reach and allowed the correct information to spread.

The next day South Asia Check started receiving requests for fact checking from readers of similar misleading pictures being circulated online. Although not all the images could be tracked to source, it was clear that many of the graphic pictures of charred bodies being shared online as depicting victims of the Tikapur violence were not from there at all. Some were so graphic they couldn’t even be posted on the South Asia Check website.

Although the Setopati piece about the misleading image was shared almost 6,000 times across social media platforms, it paled in comparison with the hate speech and fake pictures depicting the Kailali killings on people’s social media timelines. Amidst all the noise magnified by frantic tweeting/retweeting even by senior politicians and journalists the violence in Kailali had spilled over into social media.

The cover of the unfolding violence in Tikapur on Monday last week underlined how easily crucial elements of a developing story are overlooked. Sharing misleading images recklessly on social media can further fan hatred and revenge. Wrong claims by politicians in the media can also aggravate the situation.

South Asia Check hopes to correct falsehoods in public officials’ statements, and in the mainstream and social media immediately so as to promote responsible politics and accountability among public officials and the media. Fact checking is an inherent part of the media in many parts of the world, and we hope it will foster the growth of correct and credible information and images in Nepali newsrooms and the social web as well.

Bhrikuti Rai is a reporter with South Asia Check.
The monsoon isn’t in full retreat yet, but it is certainly diminishing in intensity over central and western Nepal. The advance of the southwest monsoon in June is now being played out in reverse as the reviving Himalayan jetstream plays tug-o-war with the moist warm air from the Bay. But this is not to write off the eastern arm of the monsoon just yet, there is still plenty of water vapour out there, which is mainly falling as night rain for the moment. But we should expect some daytime precipitation over the weekend. The minima is now dipping below 20 in Kathmandu making the evenings and nights slightly more pleasant.

**Watch video of Satendra Man Singh’s concert in Thailand**

nepalitimes.com

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**STÉPHANE HUËT**

A son of famed sitarist Tara Bir Singh Tuladhar, Satendra Man Singh grew up surrounded by music. His early lessons included sitting in on practice sessions and imitating members of Sur Sudha, his father’s band. By the time he turned 13, Satendra was already taking over his father’s classes, teaching the basics of the stringed instrument to students twice his age.

“Even though I knew how to play the sitar, I didn’t really know the meaning of music back then,” says Satendra who has studied tabla under German musician Gert Wagner, who is now the head of Department of Music at Kathmandu University.

Although Satendra was already gaining name as a sitar prodigy, he was unsure of his skills and wanted to study further. At 24, he enrolled in Prayag Sangeet Samiti in Allahabad, India, graduating with a Master’s in sitar.

“It was only after graduation that I began to take my music seriously,” says Satendra. For years he practiced 12 hours a day, turning to other musicians for inspiration. Though the practice hours have now been reduced to seven, Tuladhar has stuck to his ritual of playing sitar in front of a mirror. “It helps me notice my flaws, correct my posture and concentration which all goes towards creating the right stage presence,” he explains.

The sitarist, now 44, acknowledges that classical musicians of Nepal still struggle to find audience and receive payment. “Compared to our devotion and the time we spend on our music, the payment is minimal,” he says. He also feels disheartened by the lack of interest among Nepali people in classical music.

It is ironic that while Tuladhar’s name might not ring a bell for most Nepalis, he’s booked every year to perform at venues across Europe, where he also conducts classical music workshops.

Tuladhar believes classical music can still regain its prestige in Nepal. “I think children should be initiated into classical music at school, so it will have a better interest in the general public later,” he says.

He is happy that his two children, 17-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter showed an inclination towards music from an early age. “They both play sitar and tabla, and my son is becoming really good at the guitar too,” he says.

Last summer Tuladhar played at ten different venues in Europe and is now working on new compositions for his tour next year. He is also looking forward to new musical projects.

“I would like to try to mix Arabic and Spanish sounds in my own music,” he says.

Tuladhar’s dream project is to perform across countries as father and son, but says that may have to wait until his own son finishes school. And that would make three generations of classical musicians performing together.

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**FOLLOWING DAD’S STEPS**

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**EVENTS**

**Art Market,**
A place to sell and buy paintings, prints, posters and design products. 5 September, 10am to 6pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01)5553869/5522078, www.theyellowhouse.com.np

**Homage,**
British artist, Martin Travers explores the concepts of identity and self-emancipation through painting. 4 to 6 September, 11am to 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Bakto Motor Renewed, (01)4218048

**Where to now?**
Till 6 September, 11am to 5pm, empowerment through painting. The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01)5553869/5522078, www.theyellowhouse.com.np

**NCELL App camp,**
Call for mobile app developers to submit their ideas to compete at the second edition of NCELL App camp. Application deadline 26 September, 9802772267, www.nccellappcamp.com

**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, 22 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Bakto Motor Renewed, (01)4218048

**Run for Nepal,**
A 5k virtual race to raise fund for Oxfam International which is helping victims of Nepal earthquake. 12 September, www.runfornepal.com

**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.photoktn.com

**Help rebuild,**
A special fund raising print sale to contribute towards the rebuilding of heritage sites in Patan by Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVT) www.photoktn.com/shop

**Nepal Cup 2015,**
A charity football tournament to raise funds to rebuild quake-affected schools in Nepal and promote the country as a tourist attraction. 24 to 30 September, Dharahara Rangasala Stadium, Tripurtinagar, info@nepalcup2015.com, www.nepalcup2015.com

**Quake photobook,**
Nepal425 launches a crowd-sourcing drive for printing a coffee table book featuring 701 pictures of the earthquake. All proceeds from the sales will go to the quake-affected. www.nepal425.com

**Wholeness,**
Artist Puran Khadka whose work is a meditative abstraction full of spiritual awakening exhibits his paintings. 15 to 30 October, Park Gallery, Pokhara, (061)232287, contact@parkgallery.com.np

**MUSIC**

**Open mic,**
Calling all aspiring singers. Every Tuesday, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851570522, saney@hotmail.com

**Midnight riders live,**
Enjoy a mix of classic rock, blues, 70s retro disco and contemporary hits. 4 September, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851570522, saney@hotmail.com

**Jyovan Bhuju,**
This young, talented and soulful singer doesn’t disappoint. 5 September, 7pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851570522, saney@hotmail.com

**Baulu Jatra,**
Put on your shoes, gather your energy, and get ready for the ‘Stamming Brutal death metal bands’. 26 September, 8pm to 9pm. Purple Horse, Thamel, 9844925787, 9807142569, 9813041999

**GETAWAYS**

**Park Village Resort,**
Far away from the maddening crowd, yet so close to the city. Budhanikheta, (01)4357380, pah@parkvillenepal.com

**Mum’s Garden Resort,**
Head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages surrounded by a lush green gardens with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range. Lake Side, Pokhara, (061)464938, www.mumsgardenresort.com

**The Yellow House,**

**Mango Tree Lodge,**
Culture walks, rafting in the Kamali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. Bharatpur, Bardia,(084)450008, info@mangotreelodge.com

**Tranquility Spa,**
De-stress, relax and pamper yourself to a wide range of massages at any of the spa’s nine branches in Nepal. www.tranquilpahal.com

**CLIMBING**

**Climbmandu,**
The biggest climbing event in Nepal. 12 and 13 September, Astra Climbing Wall, Thamel, (01)4419365, info@climbmandu.com.np, www.climbmandu.com

**DOWNTOWN**

**Downtown,**
Go Indian at this restaurant, although it serves Chinese and Continental food too. Don’t miss out on the Biryani. Pushkawl Wood, (01)5507077

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A yearly music and cultural festival to encourage social and cultural entrepreneurship.

When: 20 November
Where: Bhikatmandap
The line-up: The Shadows, Monkey Temple, international bands yet to be announced.

Nepal Music Festival
What: A yearly music and cultural festival to encourage social and cultural entrepreneurship.

When: 20 November
Where: Bhikatmandap
The line-up: The Shadows, Monkey Temple, international bands yet to be announced.

Gharama Music Festival
What: An ode to Nepal's classical music
Where: 8 to 11 October
Where: Hotel Yak and Yeti, The City Museum Kathmandu
Highlight: International Cellist Laura Metcalf and local musician and flautist specialist, Sam Subedi perform for the first time.

Jazzmandu
What: The 13th edition of this beloved jazz festival brings in musicians from France, Morocco, Norway, and the USA.

Metal For Nepal
What: Metal bands from South Asia come together for a fund raiser concert to benefit the victims of 25 April earthquake.
When: 7 September
Where: Bhikatmandap
Watch out for: Indian bands Abrant and Demonic Resurrection

Garden Tea House
When: On Sundays
Where: Sunset View at New Baneswor on the street leading south from BICC
Garden Tea House is a proud resident of Lalitpur, where quirky cafés are aplenty. I never thought my quest for the best café in town would one day end at Baneshwor of all places.

After all, cacophonous Baneswor isn’t exactly where you go searching for good bakes and peace. So when you find these two combined with other elements (expertly brewed coffee, delicious desserts, friendly service, super clean bathrooms) in a fancy tea house on an unsuspecting road, you are pleasantly taken aback.

Reactions to this writer’s Instagram post of the lovely wooden cottage (pic, right) where the Garden Tea House is located confirmed its ‘secret’ status. Friends, followers, all wanted to know where it was.

The GTH initially served as the in-house café of Hotel Sunset View, a gem of a property that still retains the rural ambience it had when it was opened in the 1980s. The latte was refreshing, with the beans from Himalayan Java and its generous layer of blueberry compote providing just the right amount of tart.

The Lemon Chiffon Cake (Rs 190) was served with not-so-sweet creamy, and the berries provided a nice, tangy flavour. I only wished the crust had been crispier.

The GTH’s Aggogato (Rs 220) was served with not-so-sweet whipped cream on the side and was fluffy, airy and light. The White Chocolate Mocha (Rs 220) and I took the smiling waiters’ recommendation of Iced Green Tea Caramel Latte (Rs 295) (pic, right). GTH sources its coffee beans from Himalayan Java and the full aroma fills the air. The Mocha was creamy, warm and delicious and not overly sweet. The latte was refreshing, with the caramel offsetting the bitterness of the matcha perfectly. The GTH also serves green and black tea grown in Dhankuta.

Because everything on the menu looked so tempting and we had a hearty appetite, we ordered five desserts. The Blueberry Cheesecake (Rs 220) with its generous layer of blueberry compote and purée was so pretty to look at it felt almost criminal to dissect. But you got to do what you got to do. The cake was moist and
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Italian dessert which fuses gelato and espresso uses store-bought vanilla icecream. Served separately in individual glasses, you pour as much espresso as per preference over a scoop of the icecream. There’s a little that can go wrong with such an ingenious concoction: the spectrum of flavours in this coffee-based beverage is representative of the GTH’s overall menu: well thought out, balanced flavours and classic treats.

We ended our three-hour dessert binge with the homemade green tea icecream (Rs 195), partly as a measure to ease away a tiny bit of our guilt for such an indulgence. The icecream’s unique taste may not be up everyone’s alley, but this is a great last dish choice as it works as a palate cleanser. There are few savoury offerings too.

Buckwheat Crepe with egg and mushroom/ham was on offer the day of our visit.

Garden Tea House is one of the few places in Kathmandu that has managed to get right all the three elements of ambience, food, and service. Go there before everyone else finds out.

How to get there: Garden Tea House is located inside Hotel Sunset View at New Baneswor on the street leading south from BICC towards Sankhalmul.
The last, the least

PICS: JAN MØLLER HANSEN
If Jan Møller Hansen’s picture book, Images of Nepal, was a TV report it would go with one of those extra-cautious disclaimers that anchors use: ‘Some viewers may find the images disturbing’. Hansen, a Danish diplomat who served in Bangladesh and is now posted in Kathmandu, is a self-taught photographer. His hobby turned into a passion for social documentation through digital imagery and unlike other expats who inhabit Kathmandu’s social circuit Hansen spends weekends visiting and photographing people in the periphery.

Working mainly in black-and-white, the pictures are sharp, stark and offer a glimpse of the rough side of town, the dark underbelly of humanity that many of us would rather forget. Hansen drags us through the squalour of the garbage dumps to shantytowns, he takes us below the bridges over which SUVs glide, he makes visual expeditions to explore the lives of the downtrodden, the stateless, the untouchables, the outcasts. And yet, the faces we see are of hope, survival and a belief in the future.

Hansen is a regular contributor to this newspaper, and in the past four months has been documenting the aftermath of the April earthquake. What we see besides the destruction and grief is the tenacity and inner strength of the Nepali character, their resolve to rebuild.

Hansen has also thoughtfully translated the book’s introduction and captions into Nepali.

As Kunda Dixit writes in the Foreword: ‘Even when you turn to the most shocking picture in this book (of the mother weeping over the tiny body of her dead baby at Pashupati cremation pyre) you share the grief and feel this incongruous sense of relief stirring in you – relief that you are still capable of empathy, emotion and an aching hurt.’

Hansen’s book launch at the Siddhartha Art Gallery on 9 September will also mark the opening of an exhibition of his photographs. The book and images will be on sale, with proceeds going to survivors living in shelters in Gorkha district. The book was designed and printed before the earthquake, but the exhibition has quite a few of Hansen’s earthquake photographs.

“I want to spotlight things that people do not usually see so that they can learn and understand society better,” explains Hansen. Indeed, the book and exhibition force us to confront the reality of Nepal today – especially the lives of the last, the least and the left out. The result is that most viewers will find it difficult not to help in the struggle for equality and justice for all Nepalis.

Kumar Acharya

Images of Nepal
Jan Møller Hansen
Price Rs 2,300
197 pages
I

ast week I wrote about Child 44, a noirish suspense thriller with all the right ingredients that however failed to make a mark at the box office, raking in only 3 million dollars. Its budget was 50 million.

These days, the only way to make detailed crime procedurals that are both suspenseful and successful seems to be in the relatively more long form that is the television series – a subject that I addressed in a column written in the spring of 2014 titled “The Murder Mystery”.

This past week The International New York Times ran a piece that stated there are almost 400 shows currently running on American television. That number is high because of the massive success of shows such as Game of Thrones, Breaking Bad and Orange is The New Black, three very diverse shows that draw in very different viewers. While the quality of some of these shows are admittedly very high, the majority fizzle out pretty fast, barely making their way into a second season, a symptom that epitomises our consumer culture where demand is met with supply, but not necessarily quality.

That being said, British and European television has undoubtedly taken the lead in terms of the slightly more humble, but undoubtedly much weightier shows.

The Fall which has now been renewed for a third season being one of them.

Starting the breathtaking Gillian Anderson as Detective Superintendent Stella Gibson, The Fall also launched the career of fantastically famous Jamie Dornan the stars as Christian Grey in the film version of E.L. James’ mummy porn mega-hit trilogy Fifty Shades of Grey who plays a serial killer named Paul Spector who is unknown to Gibson’s team (you can see the literary bent of the script from this name).

The first season, which consisted of five parts, was intense, beautifully shot, with fully fleshed out characters and told with equal perspectives from both Stella and Paul Spector’s point of view. The second season, which builds on the first, deals with the continued chase of Paul Spector but now centres on the building psychological power relationship between Stella and Paul, bolstered by riveting performances from a great group of cast including Archie Panjabi who plays Reed Smith, a motorcycle-riding forensic pathologist.

The Fall provides no easy answers, no heroes or heroines, but just a lens into the world of people who try to track down killers, and the collateral damage that kind of work inflicts on their psyches. It is because these British realisations don’t pull their punches that they are superior to their American counterparts who are constantly forced to readjust their plot points to humour their viewers, hence the oversupply and the consequent dearth of really good shows.
MINI-NEPAL IN MILAN

The Nepal pavilion at the World Expo in Italy attracts a million visitors

SUSILEA BUDATHEKI

Amidst the rows of concrete and steel structures on display at the World Expo in Milan, it was Nepal’s pavilion, designed to recreate Kathmandu’s traditional ba:ha that generated much excitement among the eight million visitors of the fair that opened in May this year.

The 27-ft high structure featuring typical Newari houses, garden, and stone sprouts was built over three years and cost Rs 600 million. Raw materials including bricks, stone and wood were all imported from Nepal.

A million people have already visited the Nepal pavilion, and organisers expect the number to double by the time the expo ends in October. Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, Milan’s Mayor Giuliano Pisapia and first daughters of America, Sasha and Malia Obama are some of the distinguished names to have visited the pavilion.

Nepal’s participation at the expo began in 1970, when king Mahendra led a team to Osaka, Japan. A replica of the Pashupatinath temple built during the fair in 1983 in Munich, Germany helped Nepal garner attention at the expo and since then the country’s pavilion continues to be one of the most visited.

In 2000 Nepal won the top spot at the fair in Hanover and in 2010 was listed in the top ten best pavilions.

“The success of the exhibition is judged by the number of visitors in each country’s pavilion,” says Binayak Shah of Implementing Experts Group (IEG), which has been representing Nepal at the World Expo since 1983. “People only think of Nepal as a poor country. We want to show we have a lot to offer.”

Many of Nepal’s pavilions built for previous expos are still intact. The pavilion created at Shanghai has been transformed into Nepal-China Cultural Center. The pavilion in Hanover has become a tourist attraction and a gathering place for Nepalis in Germany.

Scholar Satya Mohan Joshi says the expo has been an important platform for Nepal to showcase its unique heritage, art and culture to the world. More than 140 countries are taking part in this year’s expo.

Tej Singh Bista, deputy executive director of Trade and Export Promotion Center admits that lack of interest from the government has resulted in Nepal failing to cash in on the world-wide attention it receives at these expos.

The government is responsible for selecting organisers and nominating a representative for ‘Nepal day’ at the fair which falls on 23 September. It hasn’t submitted a name yet.
let's connect

Hi all,

Networking is one of the best ways to meet people and expand your social and professional circle. Social media has made it easy for people to build connections online, yet in real life it can still be challenging to communicate with people. I could not utter a word in school to strangers, but now I have made many people. I could not utter a word in networking, which I am not skilled at networking, which I am now realising is super important to get ahead in life and at work. I like to keep to myself and lack the courage to chat with strangers at official settings. Even when I do talk to people, it doesn't extend beyond the general introduction. I feel I am too careful with my words and therefore generally refrain from participating in group conversations. I wish I could be more carefree and express myself better even in the presence of people I am not well-acquainted with. A few words of suggestion?

AK: You can definitely get better at networking as you are already making an effort. I understand how it can be intimidating but you are aware how important networking is to move forward in life and at work. It is good that you are cautious with your words but don’t be so cautious that you do not get to say much.

A barrier for introverts about approaching people is the fear of not being liked by another or not being able to cast a good impression. It is practice, no matter how skilled you are with networking- everyone will not like you and you will have some awkward conversations. The trick is to realise it and walk away when that does happen. It is trial and error. Do not assume the worst. Generally people like to hear from other people and like to be approached for conversations. We are social being and we just connect with people. One of the best ways to seem interesting is to be interested in the other person and what they have to say. Ask questions and listen to the answers while paying attention to their body language: make eye contact, do not fold your arms and don’t fiddle with your cell phone. Generally some people do not know what to do with their hands so perhaps holding a glass (in a social setting) and a notebook (in a professional setting) may help. It is okay to even talk about yourself, as a good conversationalist will also ask you questions and not go on a monologue. Just try to be real and genuine, present yourself with integrity without losing your core values. It is okay to mess up, it’s just practice. Networking is an investment and with the right practice you can definitely do great. Good luck.

phi Le Bol hor is a French documentary filmmaker who explores different social issues linked to environment, food and technology. His first documentary, Not in my name! came out in 2006 and featured the American anti-war movements protesting against President George W Bush’s military intervention in Iraq.

Since then, the award-winning filmmaker has been questioning development, control, industrialisation and growth. His 2008 Alerte dans nos assiettes brought to light the risks of junk food in France, and in 2010 Eco Warriors investigated the underground world of the radical ecologist activists. Borrel’s two documentaries will be screened at Alliance Française Kathmandu (AFK) on 5 September. The first, A world beyond humans?, was released in 2012. Written and directed by Borrel, it is based on an original idea by Noël Mamère, former journalist and member of French Green party, Europe Ecologie-Les Verts. The documentary presents a somewhat gloomy picture of our dependence on technologies like computers, smartphones and robots.

Borrel questions whether we have become robots ourselves and confronts the belief based on which technology will never surpass humans and on which we invented these machines. The warnings are more eye-openers than apocalyptic predictions.

The second documentary to be screened at AFK is Borrel’s newest work, The Invisible (R)evolutions released in 2014. This can be seen as a follow-up of A World Beyond Humans?, starting with this same idea that man is unable to control his own creations: money and technology. Sociologists and economists warn us about this risk on our health is indispensable. But Borrel gradually highlights local and very small initiatives from different parts of the world - Europe, USA, India and Latin America. These people choose to leave the fast world to live in their own pace (the original French title is L’urgence de ralentir (‘The Urgency To Slow Down’).

As in his first documentary, Borrel’s latest production shines the light on those who are not heard by the elite media. The question is: can they continue to confront and resist the juggernaut of global capitalism? Borrel’s two documentaries are an appeal to revert to human values in society.

Stéphane Huët

A World Beyond Humans?, 2012, 52 minutes at 3pm

The Invisible (Revolutions, 2014, 85 minutes at 5.30pm

Alliance française of Kathmandu
(01)424283, general.afk@gmail.com
The screenings will be followed by an interaction with the filmmaker.
As part of the peace process, when former Maoist guerrillas started being integrated into the Nepal Army, the decision was criticised by many political leaders. They predicted difficulties for the national military from indoctrinated revolutionaries and feared that the army may be radicalised.

The process went ahead, and Nepal is now hailed as one of the few conflict areas of the world where integrations of fighters have happened so smoothly. Of the 1,463 former combatants who qualified for integration into the Nepal Army, 1,420 graduated from the Nepal Military Academy in 2013. Seventy five ex-PLA commanders are already serving in the Army as officers. The new graduates were deployed in the National Development and Security Directorate, especially formed to accommodate the former combatants who enjoy a 33 per cent quota in the general directorate. Nepal Army spokesperson Jagdish Chandra Pokhrel says: “The integration has been successful, each soldier has done his duty.” Although the former combatants have been assigned similar responsibilities to others in the Army, so far they have not been able to participate in UN peacekeeping missions. That also may soon change.

After consulting with the government, the office of the Chief of Army Staff this year released guidelines for the career development of former Maoists integrated into the military, including postings for peacekeeping duties abroad. As per selection criteria, a candidate must have served in the Army for six years, proved with a certification letter issued by UNMIN with admission date, and Army classification.

The guidelines also mention a quota system for integrated combatants deployed in different units within the Directorate of National Development and Security to participate in the peacekeeping missions. The first batch of former fighters will leave for peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Congo and Darfur starting next fiscal year. Selection will start in December. The policy also states that if there are two soldiers selected from integrated former Maoists or from regular recruitment procedures with equal time served, priority will be given to the more senior-ranking officer. Those opting for a second stint at peacekeeping will be selected under the 2013 Policy of Peacekeeping Force Selection or according to the current regulations of the Army. Also 14 First Class and Second Class Warrant Officers from the integrated combatants will be selected to participate in peacekeeping operations. Integrated former combatants of other ranks will be selected based on the standard regulation of the Army, so that the number of former Maoist guerrillas in the peacekeeping operations do not exceed 10 per cent. The headquarter expects both the integrated and the regularly recruited army will be deployed on peacekeeping missions on an equal and regular basis by 2019.

As per the new arrangements, the integrated army will only be deployed within the Directorate of National Development and Security. Promotions and training will depend on individual ranks. The procedure also gives equal accreditation to the training and bridging course undergone by the former combatants making it easier for them to rise up the ranks. They also get similar pensions to the regularly recruited army and opportunities to train abroad. Deepak Prakash Bhatta, a member of the secretariat of the now defunct Special Committee for Army Integration believes that providing equal opportunities to the former combatants is a success story of the peace process. Says Bhatta: “The uniqueness and success of Nepal’s peace process will be further validated once the integrated army gets equal opportunities to serve in the peacekeeping missions abroad.”

War-makers to peace-keepers

Former Maoist guerrillas now in the Nepal Army prepare to leave for UN peacekeeping missions

INTEGRATED

Colonel 1
Lieutenant Colonel 2

INTEGRATED

Major 13
Captain 30

Warrant Officer First Class 14
Warrant Officer Second Class 42

Sergeant 165
Corporal 189

Lance Corporal 177
Private 763

Total: 1420

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Repair of Minor to Medium Cracks (cracks width 0.5 mm to 5mm) in Masonry Building

Construction Materials

- Plastic/Alumimum nipples of 12mm dia. (30 to 40mm long)
- Non-shrinkage cement
- 1:3 cement sand mortar

Equipment required

- Compressor for injecting the slurry

Procedure

Step 1: Remove the plaster in the vicinity of crack exposing the cracked bare masonry.

Step 2: Make the crack in the V-shape by chiseling out

Step 3: Fix the grouting nipples in the V-shape groove on the face of the wall at spacing of 150-200mm or so.

Step 4: Clean the crack with the compressed air through nipples & ensure that the fine and loose material inside the crack has been removed.

Step 5: Seal the crack on both faces of the wall with cement mortar 1:3 (1-cement : 3-coarse sand) and allowed to set.

Step 6: Inject water starting with nipple fixed at higher level and moving down so that the dust inside the cracks is washed off and masonry is saturated with water.

Step 7: Make cement slurry with 1:1 (1-shrink cement: water) and start injecting from lower most nipple till the cement slurry comes out from the next higher nipple and then move to next higher nipple & so on.

Step 8: After injection of grouting through all the nipples completes, replaster the surface and finish the same.

For more information on Earthquake Safety National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET)

Ward No. 4, Bhairabapati Residential Area, Lalitpur, Tel: (977) 1 3591000, 3592522, 5563000, Fax: (977-1) 3592692, 5592693

E-mail: nset@nset.org.np
Website: www.nset.org.np

An initiative under NSET implemented program "Promoting Public Private Partnership for Earthquake Risk Management (P3ERMA)" supported by USAID/DFID.

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Narayan Chaur, Naxal, RR Building
Tel: 014430586, 9841370656
How politics blocks

Will the survivors of the earthquake suffer the same fate as the victims of the Jure landslide who are still waiting for compensation and relocation?

O

n 2 August 2014 the entire side of a mountain in Sindhupalchok broke off, swept away the village of Jure, a section of the highway to China and blocked the Bhote Kosi River.

Local authorities jumped into action establishing a relief trust for surviving families and raised Rs 22.4 million in three months. CDO Gopal Prasad Parajuli submitted a report to expedite the relief and rehabilitation, but he was transferred and the document gathered dust.

The area is represented by six powerful CA members from all four parties: Mohan Bahadur Basnet, Amrit Kumar Bohara, Sher Bahadur Tamang, Amni Sapkota and Ramesh Lama. They are engaged in an epic struggle to get their hands on the relief money which means the real victims have got little. The 25 April earthquake pushed back rehabilitation of the Jure survivors even further. Two CDOs have come and gone, but all the survivors have got so far are platitudes. “The guidelines are now in place, we will go ahead with the disbursement process soon,” CDO Bal Bahadur Giri told us. Understandably, the locals are furious that the authorities are sitting on the funds meant for them while they continue to live in temporary shelters.

Shrestha was at the temple last week to observe the one year death ritual for seven family members who were killed in the landslide. Shrestha has been homeless for a year now, and appeared stoic about the loss. “I am a refugee now, I am here just to perform the rites for the family I lost.” He seemed to have all but given up hope of piecing his life back together.

Panchalal Shrestha was at the temple last week mourning the loss of 12 family members who were swept away by the landslide. He too has given up hope of ever receiving any help from the government.

Despite losing everything, some survivors like Panchalal Shrestha were beginning to get their lives on track. But the April quake once again...
reconstruction

Ready to build safer

Dhan Bahadur BK, 40, has been working as a mason for the past 18 years. When the earthquake struck, many of the houses in his village of Lamichhane collapsed. BK thought his house was built well, and would stand. “It came down, but luckily none of my family members were hurt,” says BK (right). “Many other houses I built also came down. I felt sad, and also puzzled about what I did wrong in the bricklaying process.”

BK is one of the 55 masons trained in seismic resistant masonry during a training organized by National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) with support from Bhimtewa Municipality, Department of Urban Development and Building Construction, and US Agency for International Development (USAID) recently. After attending the five-day training, BK says, the houses he helps build from now on will be stronger and better things as well as what I was doing wrong, all this,” says BK who adds that his challenge will be to convince home owners to spend a little more for sturdier construction and teaching his fellow masons from his village to build back better. The 55 masons are the first of over 5,000 who will be trained in new techniques and also in retrofitting older houses. The course is part of a long-term effort by which the USAID and its partner NSET aims to contribute to the Government of Nepal’s goal of training 60,000 construction professionals in disaster-resistant building skills. The masons were trained in earthquake basics, site selection and building configuration, quality assurance, construction of earthquake-resistant buildings using stone, brick, and reinforced concrete framed buildings, periodic repair and maintenance, and an introduction to seismic retrofitting.

Said USAID’s Nepal Director Beth Dartnell: “Stronger homes, schools, hospitals, offices will form the foundation for Nepal’s earthquake recovery. Skilled builders who have the knowledge and tools to build back safer will play a critical role in that recovery.”

is helping with equipment and demolition expertise. Trade and tourism too has suffered because reconstruction can’t start without first demolition of the collapsed structures. At the Shree Mahendra, Higher Secondary School, where all the classrooms collapsed, they are waiting for the government to get its act together. The school’s 350 students are now in temporary classrooms. Says Principal Kabindra Das Shrestha: “Rebuilding the school will take a couple of years and that too if we get the needed help urgently. We are managing, but we can’t continue like this forever, the children need to be in proper classrooms so they feel safe.”

We asked Dolakha NGO Devendra Lamichhane about the reason for the delay in rebuilding. He says his office is waiting for the Reconstruction Authority to develop guidelines and send instructions and for the moment is working with voluntary groups and NGOs. “There isn’t any separate budget allocated for reconstruction and rebuilding and we are working with what we have in the best possible way,” says Lamichhane. “But only after the Reconstruction Authority starts its work can we start offering help to rebuild.”

Help from far

The picturesque valley of Lele on the southern outskirts of Kathmandu was badly hit in the April earthquake, with 44 out of 52 families losing their homes. Most are still living in makeshift shelters, braving the rains at night and the heat during the day. Some have also lost their livestock, and are struggling to rebuild their lives. The local school is damaged, and the road is in poor shape.

But one morning this week, villagers woke up to the sound of celebration. A band played music, the sound of trumpets, cymbals and drums reverberating. As the mist moved up the hillside, villagers peeped out of their tents and huts.

A Chinese-American with a shock of white hair and dressed in a smart white shirt and red tie got off a car, and proceeded to greet villagers with namaste. A former US Army surgeon, Wan Shao Pong (pic. below) had come here to pledge $50,000 to help rebuild all 50 homes in Lele.

Wan, 65, had attended a big international kidney conference in Kathmandu last November and had been struck by the warmth and friendliness of the Nepali people.

When he heard about the earthquake, he immediately offered to help and got in touch with Nyansapan, a volunteer group that has been helping children in the mountains with warm clothing for the past ten years. “I got many breaks in life, and I believe the earthquake survivors of Nepal also need a break,” said Wan, who also supports medical units in Palestine and education in China.

“I believe in helping people who can help themselves and also in reaching the neediest of the needy,”

As he examined the ruins of houses, Wan’s eyes welled up. An elderly woman had just thanked him, saying, “You’ve come all the way from America to help us. We really appreciate your help.”

rendered families homeless. He was forced to leave his rented room in Lamamgung and move to Kathmandu after the earthquake damaged it. He lives with his family under a make-shift tent on a hillside.

Dak Narula lost his house in Kathmandu after the earthquake. He lives with his family in Lamasangu and move to Kathmandu after the earthquake and is working as a mason for the past 18 years. When the earthquake

There is an old saying in Nepal: “One man’s gain is another man’s loss.” So today the earthquake that claims lives and property is also adding to the stock of Nepal’s disaster literature. But the tragedy is also, as the saying goes, adding a new chapter.”

Nanyopan’s engineers are working to bring the steel trusses and roofing material and the locals are already at work digging foundations and salvaging bricks and timber from the ruins for their new homes. Nanyopan’s Vajray Lama expects the whole project to be finished before winter sets in.

“In the project goes well, we could use our limited resources to support other villages in southern Lalitpur,” Lama says. “Although it is so close to the capital, this area has been bypassed by most relief teams.”

Wan used the trip to climb up the ridge to another neighbouring hood that needs help and listened carefully as villagers told him what they need. He is also helping Yarsa Hospital in Kathmandu with a $10,000 fund to treat patients who cannot afford emergency surgery, and is helping bring rural Chinese ophthalmologists to be trained by Nepali doctors in cataract surgery.

Wan was born in Hong Kong. After his parents fled the Communist government, the family moved on to Taiwan and then to the United States. Wan served all over the world as an army surgeon and retired as a US army colonel. He now has a private practice and teaches medicine in North Carolina.

From a ridge overlooking Lele, Wan looks down and says: “I struggled in life, but I got help at crucial times to have a successful career, and I see myself in those who are left out by the mainstream.”

Sarthak Sharma in Lalitpur

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Getting away with murder

Ibhekha Bahadur Thapa in Ayu Patraka, 31 August

When I was Nepal’s ambassador to India from 1997 to 2003, there was a meeting of Nepal and Indian survey officers in New Delhi to sort out border disputes. Nepali survey officers were well-prepared, with experts like Buddh Narayan Shrestha and they presented verified maps showing Kalapani as a part of Nepal’s territory with land revenue receipts from Nepali citizens residing between Limpiyadhura and Kalapani to prove it. Indian survey officers did not have such strong evidence to claim Kalapani was in India and could not refute the proof presented by the Nepali team.

Eventually, an agreement was reached. But the Himalayan nation never forgot the gravity of the incident. It weakened the national pride and self-esteem of the people of Nepal.

So it is no wonder that someone besides the king had granted Kalapani to India. I maintained that not even the king or parliament had the right to hand over territory to a foreign country. He did not reply. Later, India’s National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra told me: “Our force does not feel secure to leave Kalapani though the land belongs to Nepal.” That was the last conversation I ever had with him. I maintained that not a single ruler of Nepal, and which the Tharus consider their homeland?

What suddenly triggered this violence in the central Tarai? There had been no major clashes despite Madhesi parties’ promise to provide Rs 5 million to families of those killed during the anti-government movement.

The answer is the traditional rivalry between two Madhesi political forces. The way the Armed Police Force (APF) dealt with the situation also made things worse.

An alliance of Federal Socialist Forum Nepal, Madhi Madhesi Democratic Party, Sudhavahana Party and Tarai Madhi Sudhavahana Party had announced an indefinite Tarai shutdown after a Madhesi protestor, 25-year-old Rajiv Raut, was killed in police firing during a Madhesi movement.

But things started turning ugly from Monday morning. The protestor was killed in police firing. His death triggered a violent uprising.

The APF’s reaction was to increase its raids and even to threaten to use force. The APF’s action was in line with its usual pattern of provoking violence. The APF’s action was in line with its usual pattern of provoking violence.

My hope is that the Madhesi parties will take a different path. They should not resort to violence. They should work for the betterment of the Madhesi people through peaceful means.

“His Highness gave us Kalapani”

POST BAHADUR BRATAN in www.sinopsis.com, 27 August

After protesters demanding a Tharuhat province murdered eight policemen and a child in Tikapur this week, a ‘progressive’ commentator tweeted that it was “an outburst of the long-suppressed anger of the Tharus.”

It is like saying that a husband who murdered his wife may have his reasons for doing so: he would not have killed her if she had not cheated on him. This section of the intelligentsia believes that, itself as ‘progressive’ argues that social injustice is the root cause of most violence. They believe that the oppressed cross a threshold where they can’t take injustice anymore and begin a ‘people’s war’. They said since the Maoists waged what the intelligentsia has justified as ‘progressive’ intellectuals defended Maoist war, or it might not. But it was cunningly disguised as ‘progressive’ arguments that social injustice is the root cause of most violence. They believe that the oppressed cross a threshold where they can’t take injustice anymore and rise up.

So when Tharuhat protesters massacred police and a child in Tikapur, the ‘progressives’ heaved a sigh of relief. It was a dramatic proof of the proletariat striking back. They argued that the murders finally woke up the state, and argued that constitution drafting should be suspended to address the people’s aspirations for ethnicity-based states.

The ‘progressive’ intelligentsia justified violence as a means for the liberation of the oppressed ever since Maoists waged what they dubbed as a ‘people’s war’. They said it was a just uprising against the structural violence of the state. The only way to end the conflict, they said was to fulfill their demands.

These intellectuals ended up becoming uncritical apologists of the Maoists. Not only did they justify violence, but they also proved that their relevance was not over as the conflict, they said was to fulfill their own rhetoric. Federalism in Nepal itself as ‘progressive’ argues that Che Guevara’s ‘revolutionaries’ overnight. They died their republics and redemptory by moving, beyond mediating, and proceeded to radicalize society and convince the public that an equal society could only be forged through a violent uprising.

Society therefore began to believe that political violence was okay. The end justified the means. Such crimes would not be subject to the criminal justice system. After the war, some radicals

As violent protests erupt in the western plains, Biju Gachhadar finds it increasingly more difficult to stick to the agreement he signed. The Maoists are also under pressure from the reactions in their ranks. A few days after a meeting with the NC delegation, they now say that denying a Tharuhat province would be catastrophic.

What will happen if Kalapani district with its mixed population of Tharus, Bahuns and Chhetris is placed in the Far West Province and not in Province 5 which stretches from Nawalparasi to Bardia, and the Tharus consider their homeland?

Even if Kalaii becomes part of a future Tharuhat Province, Bahuns and Chhetris will not lose anything. And if Kalaii becomes part of the Far West province, the Tharus will lose nothing. They will still be all equal citizens of Nepal. Yet, the leaders of neither communities want to compromise. NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba is-sticking the fire by insisting that not a single village of Kalaii, let alone the whole district, can be separated from his Far West province. Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai is adding fuel to the fire by saying that Kalaii is the soul of the Tharuhat province and putting it in the Far West Province would be like “beheading the Tharus.”

The demands for the undivided Far West and the Tharuhat province are both offshoots of a radical interpretation of federalism, and Deuba and Bhattarai are trapped by their own rhetoric. Federalism in Nepal is nothing but an experiment in devolution, democracy and governance. It might work, or it might not. But it was cunningly linked with ‘ethnic liberation’ in our mixed society — people were made to believe that federalism would be panacea to all their problems. Any murders, including murder, could be employed to attain it. In this state of impurity, political violence will continue, and tragedies like Tikapur will keep happening.

And our ‘progressives’ will keep finding excuses for it, saying it is justifiable. The agitations and anger of the oppressed. Even the murder of a two-year-old child can be justified.

More violent than others

Navin Jha in www.dainainopan.com, 2 September

Protests spearheaded by Madhesi parties were largely peaceful in Birganj until Sunday evening. No one had died and only a few protestors had sustained minor injuries in the first two weeks of the indefinite Madhes shutdown.

But things started turning ugly from Monday morning, and five protestors were killed in police firing in the next 48 hours. One more protestors died in the adjacent district of Bara. Some of the injured were rushed to Kathmandu for treatment. On Tuesday afternoon, the government declared Birganj as a riot-stricken area and deployed the army to contain the violence.

What suddenly triggered this violence in the central Tarai? There had been no major clashes despite Madhesi parties’ promise to provide Rs 5 million to families of those killed during the anti-government movement.

The answer is the traditional rivalry between two Madhesi political forces. The way the Armed Police Force (APF) dealt with the situation also made things worse.

An alliance of Federal Socialist Forum Nepal, Tarai Madhes Democratic Party, Sudhavahana Party and Tarai Madhis Sudhavahana Party had announced an indefinite Tarai shutdown after a Madhesi protestor, 25-year-old Rajiv Raut, was killed in police firing in Saptari on 18 August. This alliance had been holding peaceful protests every day. Anil Jha of Nepal Sudhavahana Party and Matrika Yadav of CPN (Maoist) felt left out, and they formed another alliance to take credit for the Madhes uprising.

The democratic alliance of four parties and the federal alliance of two parties engaged themselves in a competition to become the real savours of the Madhes. They started outdo each other to be even more aggressive.

Top leaders of the democratic alliance addressed a mass rally in Kalyaia of Bara on Sunday. In a desperate attempt to gain more prominence, cadres of another alliance blocked the Nagawa by-pass road of Birganj. After a brief scuffle with police, they left the road. But that night, an APF patrol harassed locals and thrashed anyone loitering outside.

Enraged by the APF’s act, Nagawa locals started attacking police from Monday morning. Top leaders of the democratic alliance were scheduled to address a rally in Birganj that afternoon. But protests turned so violent that they were held up in their hotel rooms throughout the day. Both alliances tried to lead the Nagawa protests, but situation spiraled out of control. Madhesi protestors from both groups set government property and vehicles on fire and ransacked the UML party office.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“I pray that Nepalis will stop killing each other and resolve their problems peacefully”

Govinda KC in an interview with BBC Nepal Service, 2 September
A long time ago in what seems like a far-off galaxy the warring parties came together and signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Then, despite difficulties and disagreements, they managed to establish an interim government and draw up an Interim Constitution that was reasonably progressive, and to organise elections for a Constituent Assembly that were judged reasonably free and fair, and on a basis of mixed forms of representation that resulted in the most inclusive representative body ever formed in Nepal.

It was agreed that Nepal should be a republic and that there should be a ‘restructuring of the state’ which, unfortunately, involved some form of federalisation. There were high hopes for a new Constitution, based on the deliberations of the elected Constituent Assembly, followed by elections to a national and local assemblies (the first for more than a decade in the case of the latter) giving birth to a ‘New Nepal’ that was democratic and fully inclusive in a political sense.

That process began nearly a decade ago. Since then, there has been failure after failure to progress towards those hoped-for goals. Gradually, the so-called leaders of the three main parties – the NC, the UML and the UCPN(M) - came to dominate the debate and decide the future of the Nepali people. As time wore on, their priorities appeared increasingly to be determined more by party priorities and personal position and status than by any vision of a democratic future.

The drafting of the Constitution proved impossible, and the first Constituent Assembly was dissolved. The struggle for political supremacy among the few replaced the struggle to transform the state to ensure greater democracy at the local level and to invigorate a stagnant and failing economy.

Rightly angered at their effective marginalisation from the process of decision-making, other political forces representing a variety of interests (but couching their dissatisfaction and dissent in terms of the misguided and misleading mantra of ‘social inclusion’ along regional, ethnic, caste and gender lines, and adopting the disastrous and divisive notion of federalism and autonomous states or provinces) railed against the political dictators.

Rarely was there mention of exploitation, oppression, social discrimination and inequality, lack of social justice and lack of democracy, except in terms of the very partial and essentially divisive notion of ‘social inclusion’. There was no mention of class as the basis for the profound divisions of Nepali economy and society, not even from the Maoist party that had led the ‘People’s War’ as part of the class-struggle.

For years now, Nepali politics has been embroiled in a futile and entirely unnecessary debate not about ‘federalism’ as opposed to other forms of decentralisation that might provide a better framework for a more active and effective democracy. The debate is simply about what form of federalism, how many autonomous states and what boundaries between them.

Meanwhile, the leaders of these dominant parties have increasingly dictated ‘the direction of travel’ – continuing to marginalise all other political forces, including those outside the formal political arena in the wider civil society. They imposed their priorities on the second, less representative Constituent Assembly and now, it seems, whipping their party members on the Assembly to do their bidding in the final stages of this farce of ‘constitution drafting’.

Readers of this column may not be familiar with ‘The Mountain in Labour’ – one of Aesop’s Fables. The earliest surviving version of the tale is in the first two and a half lines of a four-line Latin poem by Phaedrus: ‘A mountain had gone into labour, and was groaning terribly. Such rumours excited great expectations all over the country. In the end, however, the mountain gave birth to a mouse.’

In this case, that of the new Constitution of Nepal, it seems that the mountain is about to give birth to a flea-bitten, emaciated, disease-ridden but hungry rat which will plague it for years to come.
Annis horribilis

Where we are just halfway through 2015, and what a year it has already been. After much back-and-forth, to-and-fro, hither-thither, pillar-to-post, not to mention hemming-and-hawing, it was bound to happen: we are stuck with the ‘F’ word.

In their hurry to get to power, the Four-party tried to bulldoze through a quickie constitution via Federal Express. Now, all hell has broken loose. No one is happy. The grunts are disgruntled. Brahmins are on warpath even though the deal was done between the all-Brahmin leadership of the parties, the Madhesis are all worked up but they’re not exactly sure what they are so worked up about, the Saffron Brigade is brandishing tridents, the Tharus are up in arms, the Newars are planning a motorcycle rally. Everyone has called for infinite, nationwide overlapping bunds. Most parts of the country have multiple shutdowns on the same day, including curfews which are government shutdowns enforced from Kathmandu. All we need now is for someone in Kathmandu to also declare a bund. Everyone has called for infinite, nationwide overlapping bunds. Most parts of the country have multiple shutdowns on the same day, including curfews which are government shutdowns enforced from Kathmandu. All we need now is for someone in Kathmandu to also declare a bund.

1. Nepal saved 500 million litres of petrol and diesel in three weeks thus wiping our Balance of Payments deficit with India. If we have another month of this, we will even have a trade surplus. Of course there is a shortage of LPG in Kathmandu, but as the Great Heisman himself once remarked you can’t make a cheese omelet without melting the yak.
2. Till last month, there used to be 50 highway fatalities in Nepal every week. Which means the nationwide shutdowns have saved 150 lives so far. This is a stupendous achievement for which the full credit goes to the arsons and the security forces. Nepal, it used to be criticised internationally for being a bully, now they just get the blame.
3. Our back of the envelope calculation also shows that in the past three weeks, 65 goats, 27 ducks and 450 chicken that would have been victims of road accidents. This has enhanced the purchasing power of the population, and had a multiplier effect on the economy.
4. Earlier, when India blockaded Nepal, it used to be criticised internationally for being a bully, now they just get the blame. A new national sport has been launched to replace the juntis, baja gaja, sumptuous banquets and other unnecessary wedding expenses were not incurred.
5. Nepal all over the country saved another 100 million litres of petrol and diesel in three weeks thus wiping our Balance of Payments deficit with India. If we have another month of this, we will even have a trade surplus. Of course there is a shortage of LPG in Kathmandu, but as the Great Heisman himself once remarked you can’t make a cheese omelet without melting the yak.
6. The bunds have achieved what decades of government policy interventions have not managed to do: reduce outmigration to the Gulf and Malaysia and induced thousands of Nepalis to stay on in Nepal. The reason being that just couldn’t get a bus to travel to Kathmandu to take flights out.
7. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of jobless youth were provided three weeks of full-time employment on a daily minimum wage basis setting up highway barricades, setting fire to buses and carrying out target practice with projectiles aimed at fast-moving motorcyclists. This has enhanced the purchasing power of the population, and had a multiplier effect on the economy.
8. Nepal’s annual GDP growth rate has therefore now been revised to go up by 1.5% this fiscal year also because of the dramatic increase in the sales of gin, vodka, whiskey, rum, beer and moonshine during the bund period.
9. A new national sport has been launched to replace the juntis, baja gaja, sumptuous banquets and other unnecessary wedding expenses were not incurred.
10. Tourism entrepreneurs have short-sightedly called for a ban on bunds. That would be counter-productive. We should look at marketing hurt-alls to potential visitors by having niffily designed signage promoting deserted streets, pollution-free cities and free treks from the airport to hotel.
11. And it’s not just Nepal that has benefited. India has also come out smelling like roses. Earlier, when India blockaded Nepal it used to be criticised internationally for being a bully, now they just get the blame.

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PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI

These fasts are unhinging our plans to fleece patients.

Do you know what will happen if Dr KC’s demands are met?

Annus horribilis

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