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ALPHA MALES:
Top leaders of the three major parties at a meeting in Baluwatar early this week.

BIKRAM RAI

FIREFIGHTING

As Nepal braces itself for a third week of blockade and nearly two months of Tarai-wide shutdown, it is becoming clear that the Madhesi people's struggle has turned into a proxy war for New Delhi.

India has denied this is a blockade, and the international community is conspicuously quiet, wary of antagonising New Delhi. There is a near blackout on news about the Nepal blockade in the Indian press, and this does not seem important enough for the international media.

But even Indian customs officials at the border are not trying to hide it anymore. This is an out and out blockade, let's call it what it is.

In Kathmandu talks have begun with Madhesi dissenters. Two meetings have been held and a third round is scheduled

for Friday.

Law Minister Narhari Acharya has registered the first amendment bill of Nepal's new constitution to address two major demands of Madhesi parties: proportional representation and demarcation of election constituencies in proportion to population in the Tarai.

A parliamentary session is also scheduled for Friday to elect a new Prime Minister. But it looks impossible to secure consensus of all parties on any one name. Therefore, Parliament will begin the process to form a majority government. The UML has already proposed its Chair KP Oli as prime minister with the backing of the UCPN(M). Even if NC does not abide by its deal with the UML, Oli is hoping to be elected with the backing of fringe parties.

What Nepal now needs is

a unity government capable of implementing the new constitution, ensuring political stability and expediting economic development. But before all that, dousing the fire in the Tarai and easing supply of essential commodities before Dasain is what all Nepalis want right now.

PROXY WAR
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

NORTH AND SOUTH
COMMENT
BY PURU SHAH
PAGE 4

BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE
BY THE WAY
BY ANURAG ACHARYA
PAGE 4

INDIA-LOCKED
GUEST COLUMN
BY BIHARI K SHRESTHA
PAGE 19



FORGOTTEN SURVIVORS

Political wrangling has kept the Reconstruction Authority in limbo, prolonging the pain of earthquake survivors.
BY OM ASTHA RAI AND SAHINA SHRESTHA

PAGE 16-17

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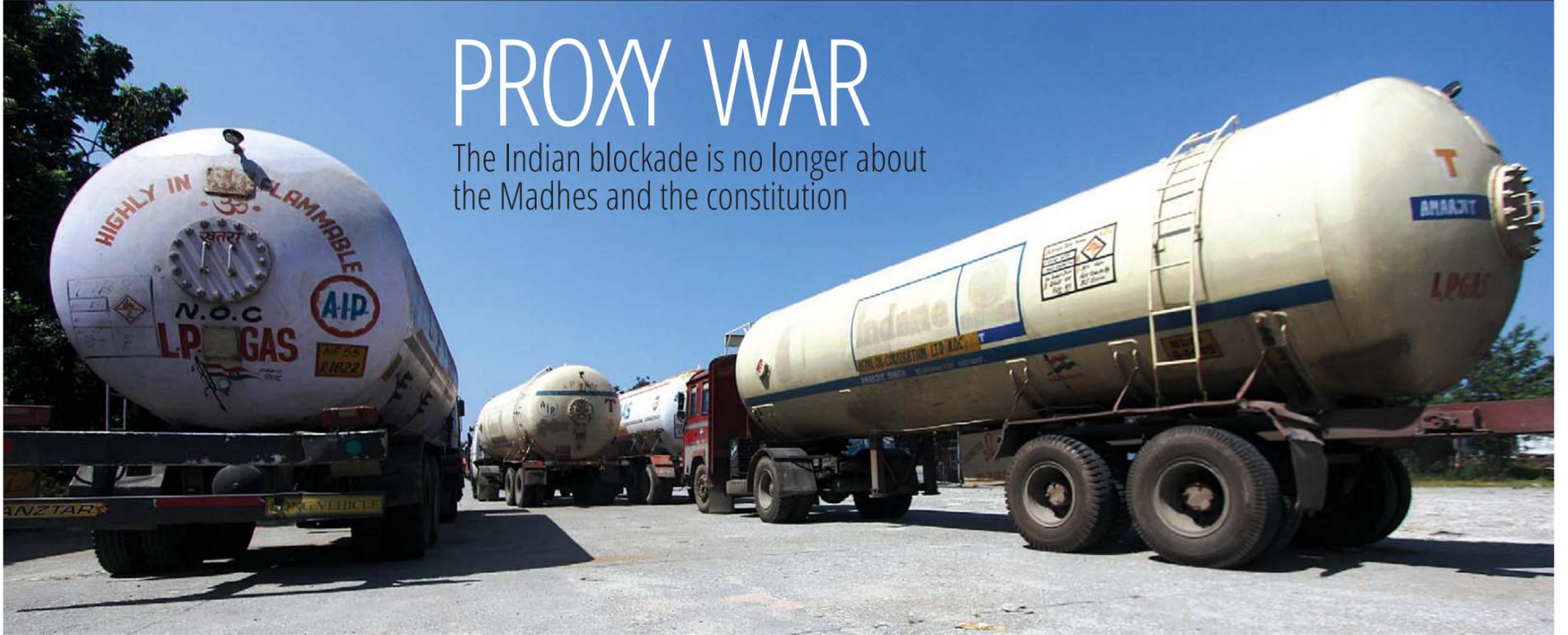
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KRISHNA SINJALI

PROXY WAR

The Indian blockade is no longer about the Madhes and the constitution

As Nepal braces itself for the third week of the Indian blockade and nearly two months of a Tarai shutdown, it is becoming increasingly clear that the standoff between the two neighbours is not really about the recently-adopted constitution or the rights of the excluded plains community. It is about bruised egos in the New Delhi establishment trying to teach Nepali politicians a lesson for not listening to them.

As we reported from the central Tarai last week, a majority of Madhesi people were not agitating in the first couple of weeks after the constitution went ahead in August. The Madhesi leaders couldn't get the people to come out in support of a street movement because voters had seen them nominating wives and wealthy businessmen as CA members under quotas meant for the poor and marginalised people.

What turned the tide was the deliberately provoked violence in Kailali and the lynching of policemen on 24 August. Riot police started over-reacting across the plains, beating, abusing, shooting innocent bystanders. As our reporter said, every abusive word, every bullet and every loss of life added fuel to the fire. And since Kathmandu didn't seem to care, it was easy for the Madhesi leaders to get their people to teach the capital a lesson by blocking the highways to India.

But by now the Madhesi people's struggle for dignity has turned into a proxy war in which they are doing India's bidding. It was not a coincidence that the Madhesi Front decided to cut off supplies to Kathmandu by blocking border points only after India's Ministry of External Affairs merely took 'note' of 'a' constitution and expressed concern over 'difficulties' facing Indian freight companies and transporters due to 'the prevailing unrest' in the Tarai.

India has denied imposing a blockade against Nepal, and the international community seems to be wary of antagonizing New Delhi to raise the issue. There is a near blackout on news about the Nepal blockade in the Indian press, and it is not important enough a story for the international media until more people die. But the reality is there for all to see: even the Indian customs officials at the border are not trying to hide it anymore. This is an out and out blockade, let's call it what it is. Madhesi parties have not staged sit-ins at all border points. But the supply of essential commodities, most importantly fuel, is not getting through even at checkpoints where there isn't a single protester.

This is now turning into a serious nationwide humanitarian crisis, worse in terms of economic damage than the April-May earthquakes. The Dasain festival is just one week away, and this seems to have bolstered

New Delhi's resolve to squeeze even harder for every last concession it can get – even on matters that have nothing to do with the constitution.

The Indian establishment first leaked seven points it wanted amended in the new constitution, immediately denied it, then this week stated that it is indeed their official position. But even that now seems to be just a ruse for New Delhi's other undeclared demands, like pressure to grant a controversial contract for a fast-track highway joining Kathmandu with the Tarai to an Indian company. India also seems to be opposed to KP Oli replacing Sushil Koirala as prime minister, and has a whole host of demands on security and other issues that we haven't even heard about. The blockade is no longer just about the Madhes or the constitution.

But what led us to where we are today is largely the doing of our own political leadership. As a country that shares a long porous border with Nepal, we should have been sensitive to India's security concerns. Knowing our overwhelming economic dependence on India, our leaders should have known the limits of our political elbow room.

Still, it is hard to figure out how antagonising most of the Nepali population will help India in the long run. Is winning an Indian state more important than losing a neighbouring country? Silly question. It probably is.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

Times THIS WEEK



SURESH BIDARI

Most shared on Facebook
Nepal is not landlocked, it is once again a victim of New Delhi's attempt to flex its muscles. India-locked, by Bihari K Shrestha (16 shares)

Most reached on Facebook
(Quote) Blockade (Unquote), by Ass (4,227)

Most visited online page
Insult and Injury, by Santa Gaha Magar (3,213 views)

Most popular on Twitter
Blockade arcade (106 retweets, 76 favourites)

Most commented
Fighting our own battles, by Jivesh Jha (25 comments)

SHOWING WHO'S BOSS

India has no respect for Nepal because the leaders that represent us don't deserve any respect. ('Showing who's boss', Editorial, #778) Until a few months ago, these leaders could not make a single decision without visiting New Delhi. How can India take them seriously this time?

Bairagi Khukuri

■ For all our bravado with India, how do we face our own people who are awaiting the reconstruction bill to be passed? We need to get our priorities right. Our relationship with India will run its course and eventually settle down – somewhere, wherever that may be. Right now, Nepalis still need aid and housing.

Namah

■ India made a huge blunder. Millions of Nepalis will remember this abuse and dragooning. There is absolutely nothing for India to gain through this unlawful blockade.

Sushil Sharma

HIGHWAY TO DHAMPUS

My expectation of the movie was it

would turn out to be mediocre. ('Highway to Dhampus', Movie Review, #778) I was right. I thought the story lacked any sort of ebb and flow. The background scores and the scenic geographic beauty did try to charm but the movie lacked a substantial story to back it up. I'm sorry to say this, but the magic was not there.

Saral

■ Whilst there is nothing objectionable about the film I just found it so dull, cliched and predictable and its view of Nepal highly unsophisticated. I kept on wondering when the real story was going to start and kept wondering right to the end. Most of the largely Nepali audience shared my view as they were laughing along with me at the serious bits.

Steve K

NOT ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION

Nepal's constitution legalizes institutional and social discrimination against women, among many others ('It's not about the constitution', Om Astha Rai, #778). The Nepali government embodies privilege to dominate others based on class, gender, ethnicity, etc.

When the glaciers are all melted in 100 years and the drinking water is

gone, good luck to Nepali privileged classes to look for friends among those it has alienated!

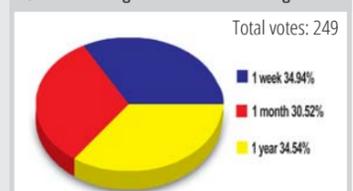
B.L. Trinlae

■ Why is India playing the villain? What is it up to? To cripple Nepal like this only months after a major earthquake is insensitive, to say the least, and amounts to a serious international crime. We must seek legal remedies through international bodies and organizations for this grave problem.

Whatever

Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #779

Q. How much longer will the Indian blockade go on for?

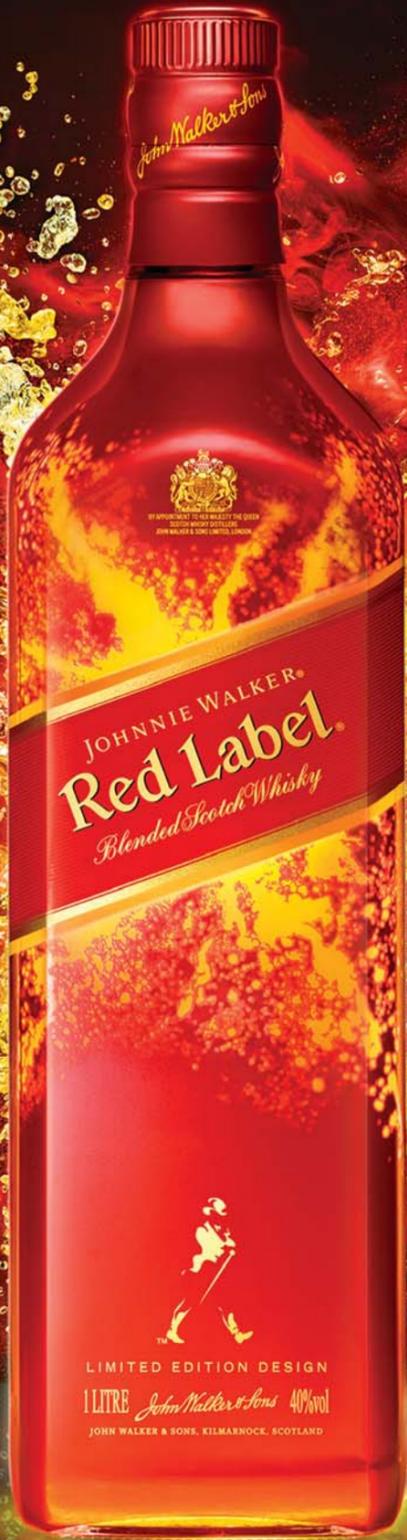


Weekly Internet Poll #780 To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who do you think is behind the blockade?



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North and South

This is an internal Nepali problem that should be resolved through dialogue, not intimidation, protests or a blockade

The disruptions that affected just the Tarai for the past two months has now spread to Kathmandu and nationwide for nearly two weeks now.

There is a crippling shortage of essential items, and the economy has taken a direct hit. Not a single Nepali is happy about it. Protests in Tarai have turned more peaceful



COMMENT
Puru Shah

and strategic which has prevented further fatalities. However, the country is now deeply divided along ethnic lines between North and South.

There are now two courses of action. One is to blame someone, whether it is political leaders of ruling parties or Madhesis or India. Another is to reflect on how we got here.

The protests continue in Tarai against the constitution and federal demarcation. Many in Kathmandu protested against India with slogans like #BackOffIndia. Blaming India and defaming it internationally is one option to get back. But so far, it seems to have only hardened the Indian position.

The constitution fiasco and Kathmandu's inability to accommodate grievances of Nepalis from the Tarai has upset

India and eroded our diplomatic and economic ties. Let us not delude ourselves: the solution to our current problem has to come from within Nepal and the only way is via a meaningful dialogue between the political parties and the dissidents in the South.

Talks are going on, but the negotiations started nearly two months after the agitation started and more than 40 people were killed. The government was simply not serious about holding a meaningful dialogue or showing any flexibility until the fuel shortages made life difficult in Kathmandu. The unfortunate reality of Nepal is that the dissidents were forced to revolt on the streets before their

grievances are heard. MJF-D was forced to leave the four-party alliance and engage in protests after its leader's suggestions were completely ignored by the three ruling parties. The Maoists popularised this technique during the conflict, and the Madhesi parties are just emulating it.

The act of blaming solely India for all problems in Nepal, including fuel shortage is misguided. The 1974 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Nepal and India obliges Nepal to import fuel exclusively from the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). By signing this MoU, our leaders literally handed over Nepal's sovereignty to India.

Energy supply is the choking

point for any region, state or country and even more so for a landlocked Nepal. To deepen this dependency, Nepal and India signed another MoU in August to build a 41 km oil pipeline between Raxaul to Amlekhgunj to supply petrol, diesel and jet fuel. Before signing the MoU, NOC had argued it would be difficult if it had to award the oil supply contract to suppliers other than IOC in future. Nepali leaders have therefore chosen to perpetuate our dependence on India.

Furthermore, while CA was in the final stages of constitution approval, UML leader KP Oli, the prime minister-in-waiting sent his trusted aides Pradeep Gyawali and Yubaraj Banskota

to India. Sher Bahadur Deuba and Pushpa Kamal Dahal also made the pilgrimage.

Does every Nepali leader need to go to India to get approval? If not, why should a leader of any sovereign country send aides to gain a foreign country's consent before assuming premiership? The world does not disappear when you close your eyes. Ignoring facts and selective reporting erodes journalism ethics and readers' trust.

Who is to blame for this crisis: the Madhesi parties, ruling parties or India? All India says it wants is for the ruling parties and the Madhesi groups to engage in a meaningful dialogue, show 'flexibility', and make a constitution that is fully owned by all regions of Nepali society. Is it wrong for a country to ask a neighbouring family to stop quarreling and make peace?

Obviously, the unofficial economic blockade has angered many Nepalis and damaged relations with India. But remember the suffering of the Madhesi people has gone largely unreported and unnoticed for two months. Who will end their suffering? Nepali state has neglected and terrorized them. Do they have a choice other than to look towards India for help? They have, and their actions have made life difficult in Kathmandu. But this may finally make Kathmandu understand what people in Tarai have been going through.

Our leaders were elected by us, so they are answerable to us. We have to make it clear to them that this is an internal problem and should be resolved through a dialogue, not intimidation, protests or a blockade. Once we resolve our internal issues, we can then deal with external ones collectively, as one nation, a united strong Nepal. 



BIKRAM RAI

Barking up the wrong tree

There isn't much sympathy in the Madhes for the pain Kathmandu is enduring

When I met Sadbhavana Party leader Rajendra Mahato in Janakpur recently, he was a worried man. He had come down to a grieving town to attend the final rites of nine protesters killed by police a few days ago.

In what looked like a revenge killing, protesters had dragged an injured policeman out of an ambulance and lynched him. The area was under a curfew and the streets were deserted.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

"Even if we call off the protests now, people will only turn against us, they won't stop. But by letting this continue, we know more people will die," Mahato said. When I asked him if there was a way the movement could be peaceful he said it was up to Kathmandu.

But insiders in the Madhesi Morcha were desperately looking for ways to counter what they say are the government's "terror tactics" to discourage them from taking to the streets. Sure enough, the streets and highways had a heavy security presence.

Today, the tables have turned. Not a single protester has died in more than three weeks, not because the police

have exercised restraint but because the protesters have effectively crippled the state while staying at an arm's length from their reach.

Until a few weeks ago, the protesters regularly clashed with police in the highway between Birganj and Parwanipur as they tried to cut the supply line to Kathmandu. The road from Jaleshwar and Janakpur also witnessed regular clashes. But the protesters have now moved over to the 'no man's land' between Indo-Nepal border, preventing the imports from entering Nepal as police watch helplessly.

Is the Indian government deliberately aiding these protests? Before jumping to any conclusion, we must first understand the mood on the Indian side of the border. People there have close kinship ties with people on the Nepal side. They share their anger and frustration against Kathmandu and have actively helped the protesters. With the high-stakes Bihar elections approaching, it is unlikely that BJP government will want to antagonise its voters by appearing unsympathetic to the movement. Call it unfair, but that is the hard geopolitical truth behind the border closure.

It is very tempting to conclude that we are in the mess because the Indians are angry at being snubbed during the final hours of constitutional drafting. We must reflect on history to understand this facet of Indian foreign policy in Nepal.

Almost two decades ago, Indians granted shelter to rebelling Maoist leaders at a time when political ties with the

government in Kathmandu and with Royal Nepal Army which was fighting the insurgents were robust. The Maoist movement had spread down to the plains in western Nepal making India, which has its own Maoist insurgency, vulnerable to cross-border activities. India's policy then was simply geared at keeping Nepal's Maoists from establishing any contact with their Indian comrades.

When the Maoists came overground and their popularity in the Madhes dwindled, the Indians sided with the regional Madhesi forces to maintain their influence over the local population. Besides, China's intentions kept New Delhi suspicious of Kathmandu. This threat perception means that Indian foreign policy in Nepal has been geared at keeping the neighboring population across the open border happy, even at the cost of chronic tension with Kathmandu.

No amount of diplomatic overtures or undiplomatic threats will force the Indians to ease the border restrictions at least until the Bihar elections. New Delhi has apparently conveyed this message personally to most senior Nepali leaders.

This raises a serious question on the intention of those like the UML's KP Oli, who seems to be in a great hurry to become the next Prime Minister. Is he using 'undeclared' blockade as an excuse and playing the anti-India card to distract attention of the populace from the real issue? Have some leaders in the negotiation team deliberately hardened their position on forging agreement for an amendment

to the constitution? Is the constitutional amendment being used as a bait to propel Oli to power?

Perhaps, it is time for informed citizens, intellectuals and the national media of this country to confront the political leadership with these questions, rather than blaming India. We must not forget that the Madhesis are even worse affected by the blockade as Kathmandu.

The fact that several petroleum laden trucks crossed over from the Indian side on Wednesday as amendment proposal to the constitution was being tabled suggests, the leaders are capable of resolving the crisis if there is an intent.

Journalist and blogger Navin Jha says that the Kathmandu mainstream and social media are unfairly prejudiced about the protests. He told me on the phone: "Here in Madhes people blame the media for failing to speak out against police brutality that left dozens dead in the last two months. As a result, there isn't much sympathy for the pain Kathmandu is enduring."

Coming out of Indian sphere of influence may be a desirable foreign policy goal for Nepal, but we are not going to achieve that by antagonising half of our population.

Addressing the genuine concern raised by Tharus and the Madhesis on federal demarcation, correcting the biased citizenship clauses, and ensuring proportional representation and distribution of electoral constituencies through amendments is still the quickest way to win over the Madhesi and Tharus to this constitution and end the blockade. 

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Sting operator

Policeman who went undercover in daring sting operations to snare wildlife smugglers awarded

SAHINA SHRESTHA

Growing up in a village in Darchula in remote northwestern Nepal, Birendra Singh Johari would often impersonate local policemen. He admired their crisp blue uniforms and knew that he wanted to be a policeman who he grew up.

That dream came true in 2001 when Johari joined in the Nepal Police as an assistant sub-inspector. Four years later, he was promoted to sub-inspector.

"It was a big day for me and my family," says Johari whose family migrated to Nepal in the late 1950s from India. "I had always dreamt about serving my country."

In the latter part of his career Johari has been involved with the Crime Investigation Bureau of the Nepal Police and heads the Mahakali Regional Investigation Team which is involved in tracking smuggling operations across India-Nepal border.

Johari's contribution to wildlife conservation earned him the WWF Abraham Conservation Award this year. He told us after the award ceremony this week: "Wildlife contraband is a transnational crime. It may have decreased in Nepal, but it continues in India, and that affects us in Nepal as well."

During his tenure in Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police,



Johari led 12 anti-poaching operations which led to the arrest of 30 poachers. Wildlife parts including five sets of leopard skin and 4.8kg of tiger bones, six sets of red panda skin and two rhino horns were also confiscated.

Most recently Johari and his team foiled smuggling operations in Kanchanpur and Baitadi where, acting on a tip-off his team hauled wildlife parts and nabbed smugglers

entering Nepal with endangered animal parts.

"Working to catch criminals who operate crossborder is not easy. There is a whole nexus with people operating in different layers," he explains. "People living near the Nepal-India border are the ones involved in poaching and smuggling. Then there are the middlemen and finally there are those with contacts in China.

Sometimes even when you catch one person, the chain is still functioning."

Johari knows his job has risks, and receives frequent threats from smugglers warning of harm to him and his family. The trick of his trade, says Johari, is earning the trust of those involved, which is why he usually changes his profile to fit in. He has spent months under cover with poachers and traders at the India-Nepal border learning how the chain functions.

"There have been more than one operation when the traders were armed," says Johari about the trips he has made to Indian nature reserves where the animals are poached.

His sincerity and hard work has earned him recognition in circles working to curb wildlife crimes. He has been felicitated with various awards from the District Forest Office in Kanchanpur and Nepal Police.

Johari believes that Nepal can become a true success story in wildlife crimes if everyone works together: "Most animals are killed in India and Nepal is used as a transit route to get them to China. Officials in the two countries need to work together to solve this crime." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Johari describes a raid on smugglers.

"An electric future for Nepal"



Sujit Acharya of the Energy Development Council spoke to *Nepali Times* about how our energy policy failure led to the current blockade, and how to plan for the future.

Nepali Times: What is your view on the fuel crisis caused by the Indian blockade?

Sujit Acharya: I do not understand why we Nepalis are angry at India for trying to impose their will on us. We need to stop blaming others and ask what have we done to be self-reliant. Slogans won't do that for us. Nationalism is strengthened by doing real constructive work and not waging

street protests. It is tragic, the total failure of what is called the Government of Nepal to move the country towards economic and political independence. And I am deeply disappointed in the bureaucracy of Nepal that has driven our country into the bottom rung of nations with their managerial and executional inabilities.

What should be our priority?

To reduce our dependence on imported petroleum products. We spend 40 per cent of our annual budget and 53 per cent of our foreign currency buying petroleum products from outside. Nepal's petrol and diesel imports went up by 14 per cent this year and the Customs Department stated vehicle imports went up sharply by more than 20 per cent. This means that we are almost fully dependent on outsiders to go about our daily lives, and more dependence on the outside means they will try to foist their policies on us which may not suit our national interest. And if we do not agree, they could try to impose their will upon us just as it is happening now with the unofficial blockade.

How is the Government of Nepal to be blamed?

Had you been riding an electric motorcycle, electric car or an electric bus, we would not be facing problems today. Had we allowed our electricity generation projects to be developed, would we care about cooking gas shortages? Instead of exempting electric vehicles and electric cooking stoves from taxes, the Ministry of Finance does exactly the opposite. Instead of building a nationwide electric vehicle charging station network, the finance ministry touts a deal to build a petroleum pipeline to import more petroleum products from India. The Ministry of Energy has also failed to fulfill domestic energy demand. And then there is the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources which has wasted its time in useless microcosmic debates on contractual irregularities instead of a macrolevel one on drafting a much needed Energy Act that ensures long term energy security. It boggles the mind why common sense hasn't prevailed.

But how is it possible to run the country without any petroleum products?

It is entirely possible. Instead of importing petrol or diesel based motor vehicles move to electric with favourable fiscal incentives. The world in the next 20 years is going to be running mainly on electric vehicles and electricity based infrastructure. So first we must convert our petrol pumps into electric charging pumps nationwide in a strategic manner. Estonia did that in four years. Bhutan will be running only on electric cars by the year 2020. Cooking stoves can run on clean electrical induction stoves. This is not a distant pipe dream, it can be done in five years.

What does the government need to do?

Convert transport and cooking infrastructure from petroleum towards domestically generated electricity. The Ministry of Finance needs to waive off all duties and taxes on imported electric vehicles and electric cooking stoves and provide even more facilities for such that will be assembled inside Nepal. It needs to waive off all taxes on energy projects for domestic consumption as it will power the entire electric cooking and transport infrastructure. The Nepal Army should be appointed sole contractor for all transmission lines, since everyone else has failed. Waive off Environmental Impact Assessment for all projects up to 200 MW to ensure more rapid generation. This needs the Ministry of Forest to sign land lease and tree cutting agreement within 90 days of developers submitting applications that commit them to planting two trees for every one that is cut. All solar projects above 1 MW that can be brought into the national grid within 1 year to get a power purchase rate of Rs 20 per unit for 30 years with complete waiver of all clearances. And finally suspension of citizenship and electricity connection to any person, community or party that creates any kind of disturbances for whatever reasons at the site areas of electricity projects.

The bottom line is this: Nepal can never ever become economically independent without developing a renewable energy economy. sujit@edcnepal.org

PHOTO
KATHMANDU

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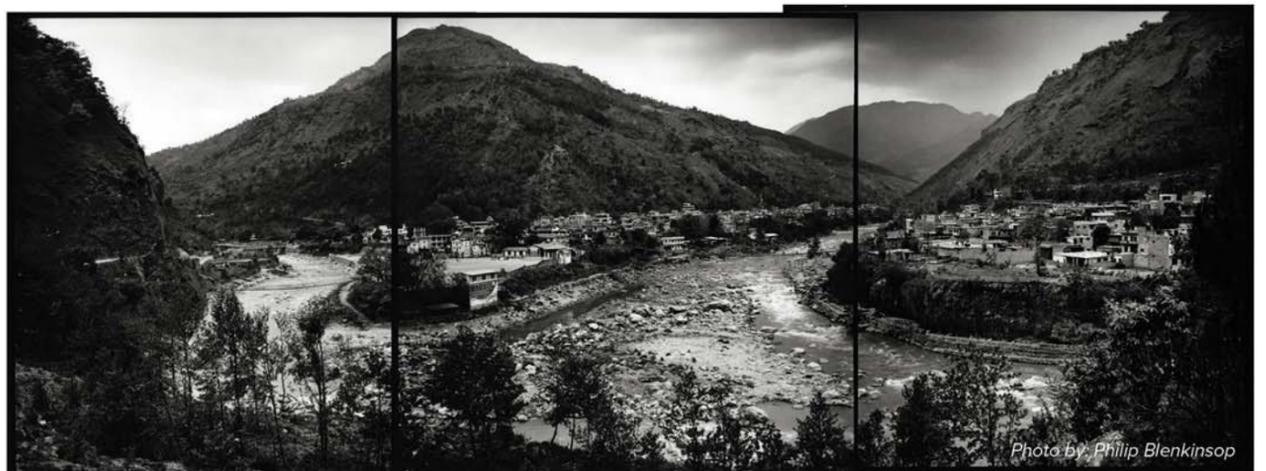
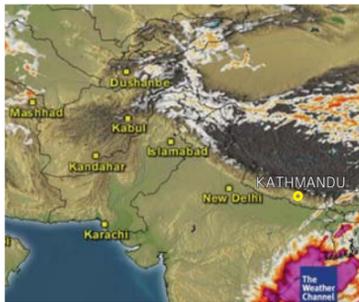


Photo by: Philip Blenkinsop



Enjoy the dry spell as long as you can because there is a low pressure circulation approaching that will bring a resurgence of the monsoon over the weekend. It will start closing up on Saturday and we will see some precipitation in Central Nepal by Sunday and into early next week. This will bring down the temperature considerably, and leave misty mornings. But the system will not linger and it should leave us with a good chance of a sunny Dasain.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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In 1998, Singaporean David Lim led his country's first successful expedition to climb Mount Everest. Since 1999, undeterred by the effects of a rare nerve disorder, he has gone to lead more than 15 mountaineering expeditions around the world. Ashutosh Tiwari caught up with the sought-after mountaineer and motivational speaker at a leadership program hosted by the National Banking Institute (NBI) in Kathmandu.



NATIONAL BANKING INSTITUTE

“Teamwork is an individual skill”

Nepali organizations face a lot of shocks, most of which are unpredictable and outside of their control. How can organizational leadership embed 'resiliency' into their framework of day-to-day work?

Resiliency, or the ability to bounce back from shocks and setbacks is both an institutional imperative as well as a personal one. Companies can, for example, develop IT solutions to back up data, and develop business continuity plans should natural or man-made disasters happen.

As research shows, personal resiliency can be learned. But in order for this to happen, people need to learn to assess the extent of the setback with perspective of what else they have experienced. This has to be followed by adapting to the new changes and habits required to move forward, and what supporting elements they need: such as close counselling from friends and confidants, and then feedback to assess if they are adapting appropriately.

How is leading a climbing expedition similar to leading teams in today's corporate environment?

It's similar in that you are coping with fast changing external environments while leading a team, often of disparate personalities, into a challenging situation. Over a longer time frame, leading an expedition requires several skills such as creating a motivational environment to thrive in, seeking debate and making decisions together, winning buy-ins for some of the unpopular decisions, and ultimately choosing the right people to spearhead the final summit attempt.

But climbers are also known to look out only for their own interests, and are not known to care whether others die or succeed. How does one reconcile

this image of a climber with what climbing metaphors signal?

Some of the best mountaineers are indeed selfish, insofar as being primarily motivated to reach their own goals. You can see this manifest itself in solo expeditions, or sometimes in commercially driven expeditions where there is a far lower history of bonding among the team members. The paid guide is there primarily to fulfill each of the clients' personal desires.

However, in other contexts where a peer group comes together with a set of shared values and agreed upon priorities and goals, you can have wonderfully enriching experiences which enable people to share the tribulations, and to support one another over the period of the expedition. Teamwork ultimately is an individual skill, where people

who share similar goals work out their mutual expectations, and contribute towards making the work a good experience for everyone.

In your presentation, you mentioned that micro-behaviours tell us a lot about people. How can executives make use of this idea?

Instead of deciding or judging people on the basis of highly subjective criteria such as personalities, perceived promises or rumours, executives should borrow concepts from the coaching world - where we focus on transforming specific, observable behaviours (SOBs) when working with people to produce specific outcomes. By focusing on people's SOBs, we move the emphasis towards actual behaviours that

support a goal. This can defuse confrontational situations, especially when a party has agreed to do a task but their SOBs say otherwise.

You also talked about 'creating a winning culture'. How does an organization create its culture and why is getting that right more important than getting the strategy right?

A big aspect of implementing any strategy is getting people to practise winning (and not 'whining') attitudes, habits and behaviours. Winning teams that know what they need to do to keep winning know this, and will do so. But this sort of culture can only be created if top management focuses on developing the attitudes, habits and behaviours of their people to achieve the shared goals.

Talking about resiliency, after your triumphant return home in 1998 after the Everest expedition, you were diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome, which has made you unable to make use of your (natural) legs. Still, you have managed to climb mountains around the world? Where does your determination come from?

My determination comes from a fascination in finding out what I am able or unable to achieve, on and off the mountains. That's how that fascination has expressed itself, in the past 15 years in a slew of organisational improvement solutions and programs. I am still interested to find out what makes a group of people succeed. I also think that we should focus on what we can change (the future), and not on what we can't change (the past).

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HONDA



DASAIN AAYO

Both the longest and biggest festival in Nepali culture, Dasain is celebrated by worshipping goddess Durga in all her manifestations

13 October, Ghatasthapana: Jau (barley) is planted in a kalash (vessel) filled with holy water to germinate jamaara (malt sapling) that is used on the seventh day.

20 October, Fulpati: Seventh day on which fulpati (jamaara, different types of flowers and banana stalks) is brought to Kathmandu from Gorkha. Generally families bring fulpatis to their prayer rooms.

21 October, Maha Astami: The day of Kaalratri puja to worship Kali, a

demonic avatar of Goddess Durga.

22 October, Maha Nawami and Dashami: The day marks the victory of goddess Durga over the demon. The Taleju temple at Hanuman Dhoka is opened for the public only once a year on this day. Factories, machineries and vehicles are worshipped. People take tikas, jamaras and blessings from their elders.

27 October, Kojagrat Purnima: Tika goes on till this day, concluding Dasain.

EVENTS

Home Sick Blues II,

The second edition of the exhibit features more works from Danish artists Anders Brinch, Christian Finne, Jon Stahn and Melou Vaggard.
Opens 9 October, 5pm, Tings Tea Lounge, Lazimpat, Free entry

Empower her,

Eleven participants will pitch their idea of a service impact project, winners receive seed fund money.
10 October, 3pm, Amrapali Banquet, Bhatbhateni, Kathmandu, (01)443363, Tickets Rs 450

Pink rally,

A walkathon to raise awareness on breast cancer and breast self-examination.
10 October, 7am, Walk starts from Patan Darbar Square and ends at Ideal Model School, facebook.com/rosefoundationnepal, 9841467697

Hemp exhibit,

A wide range of hemp products on display.
9 and 10 October, 11am to 9pm, Patan Museum, Lalitpur, 9841430679, 9818222722



Help rebuild,

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

October beer festival,

Nepal's first beer pong tournament, with live music from Abhaya and the Steam Injuns
2:00 pm onwards, 17 October, 2015, Rs. 1500/-
Trisara, Lazimpat, 9851186972

Dhuwa,

ICIMOD is collaborating with MaHa Sanchar to produce a Nepali telefilm, 'Dhuwa', on raising awareness about air pollution from open fires
Premiering 11 October, 8:50 PM on Nepal Television

Sculpting possibilities,

Nepal Europe Art Center (NEAC) is presenting the work of Nepali and Dutch artists in a fund-raising exhibition
10 October, 12 pm to 9 pm
NEAC, Bagdol, Chakupat

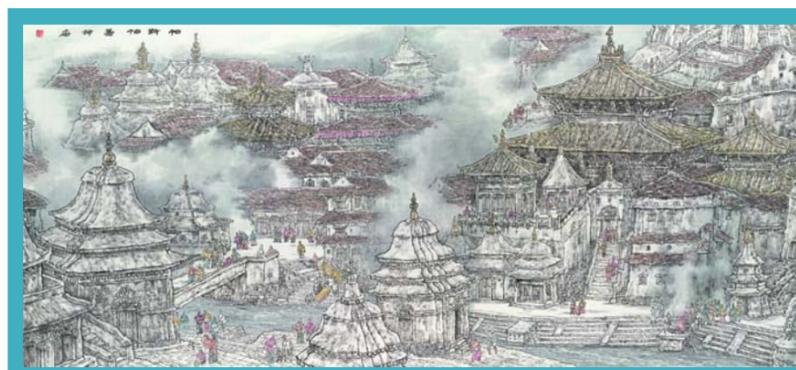
Business plan competition,

King's College is organising a business plan competition to promote social entrepreneurship in Nepal
Deadline: 9 October, 9818032872, 9841848212



Farmers' market,

The biggest gathering of local producers in the Valley selling organic produce, dairy products, artisanal bread and pastries and home-made goodies.
8am to 1pm, Le Sherpa, Lazimpat, every Saturday, (01)4006587, 9802028777



Trans-Himalayan,

Chinese artist Zhao Jianqiu's ink wash paintings on Nepal and China celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
Opens 11 October, 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, (01)4218048, 4433930, sthapa@mos.com.np

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Artist Kiran Manandhar makes a vibrant return after a long pause

After a sixteen-year hiatus, Kiran Manandhar has made a colorful return with *Shakti*, his fourth solo exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery. The highly-revered Nepali artist's latest collection explores both the mortal power and divine energy manifested in the female form.

Manandhar is both prolific and world-renowned. The recipient of numerous international awards, he has worked hard to be recognized and appreciated in Nepal's fine arts scene. In this particular exhibit, which is spread out on all three floors of the gallery, Manandhar explores the themes of sensuality, love and freedom.

In some of his paintings, like that of the goddess Durga with

her tiger, Manandhar explores the deification of female power. Relying heavily on red and yellow hues (auspicious colours in Nepal) Kiran creates a post-modern, abstract figure of the goddess. Other paintings are influenced by Nepal's pastoral scenes, depicting images of mountains, clouds and rivers. The mix of earthy tones and vibrant colours combined with the artist's signature bold, powerful lines will captivate art lovers.

In an effort to create something refreshing, Kiran experiments with his composition, colour and texture. In many of his acrylic pieces on canvas, his brush strokes create different layers that often make it difficult to determine the exact shapes or figures of the women or men in his paintings.

In this way, Kiran's pieces often remind us of the famous paintings of Picasso. Stylistically, there are some similarities. Like Picasso, Kiran uses colour as an expressive element and often depicts women and men as floating figures in his paintings. In many of his scenic paintings of mountains, one can see the abstract expressionist influence of Jackson Pollock.

While his art may have hints of Western influences, the essence of Kiran's exhibit *Shakti* remains the landscape, culture and deities of Nepal and the embodiment of power and strength in the female figure.

Madeline Zutt

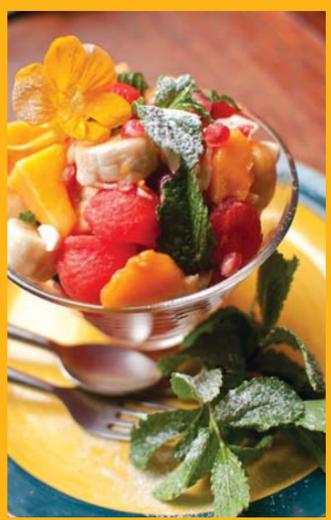
The exhibition is taking place at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal until November 10th

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Soaltee specials,

Soaltee Crowne Plaza is featuring special menus from seven award-winning chefs until November
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Bodhi Books and Bakes,

This newly opened cafe offers a rich collection of cakes and pastries and good books.
Chappal Karkhana, Maharajgunj, 9851193262



Taza,

Succulent kebabs and mouth-watering shawarmas from this authentic Syrian restaurant
Pulchowk, 9860960177

Vesper Café,

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Jhamsikhel, (01)5548179

MUSIC

The Latination,

India's reputed Latin jazz outfit brings you festive sounds from salsa and rumba to modern jazz, and Afro-Latin rhythms.
9 October, 7.30pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku Road, Tripureshwor, Kathmandu, (01)4241163

Gharana Music Festival

A one-of-a-kind international classical music festival organised by the Gharana Music Foundation.
5.30 to 8.30 pm, 8 to 11 October, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbarmarg, www.gharanamusicfoundation.org



Ankit Tiwari Live,

Popular Bollywood singer comes to town for the first time.
3 October, 3 to 8pm, Jawalakhel Football Grounds, Lalitpur, Tickets Rs 500/Rs 1,500/ Rs 3,000

Jazzmandu,

The 13th edition of Kathmandu Jazz festival
4 to 10 November, www.jazzmandu.org

Guthrie Govan,

English guitarist Guthrie Govan performing in Kathmandu to raise proceeds for the earthquake-affected
5:00 pm, Oct 23, pre-sales: Rs. 1500 and door sales: Rs. 2000 Club 25 Hours, Tangal, (01)4437486

GETAWAYS



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Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, 01-4370286, peace@wellness.com.np

Farm life,

A new weekend getaway that lets visitors experience the joys of working in a farm. Activities include harvesting vegetables, cleaning farm and feeding animals.
Starts 11 October, every Sunday, 8.30am, The Vegetable Garden, Lajimpat, Rs 2000 (includes transportation, breakfast and lunch), 9841776448



Festive package,

Three days, two nights in a deluxe room, complimentary breakfast and one free meal, lots of discounts on other services.
Rs 6999 nett per person on twin sharing basis, till 31 October, Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara, (01)4420252, (01)412999, 9818721492, 9860617403, shangrilavillage@hotelshangrila.com



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THE HOUSE OF GOD

A place of worship in New York's Little Nepal becomes a symbol of religious tolerance



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

DAMBAR K SHRESTHA
in NEW YORK

Till four years ago, the St Matthew Lutheran Church in Jackson Heights, New York used to cater to the neighbourhood's Christian community. But this area of Brooklyn has seen a sizeable influx of Nepali immigrants in the past decades and has come to be known as Little Nepal.

New York's Sherpas and other



Buddhists needed a temple of their own, and started looking around for property. They spotted an ad in the Internet saying a church was for sale and immediately called to inquire.

The location and size of a 70-year-old brick church with tile roof seemed ideal. The price quoted was \$1.25 million and the Nepalis managed to raise \$800,000 from

the estimated 5,000 Sherpas living in the New York area. The rest of the money they borrowed from other Nepalis.

Today, a shiny bronze figure of the Buddha sits below where there used to be a crucifix and altar. Instead of a cross on the roof, the former church is festooned with colourful prayer flags that flutter in the New York autumn breeze.



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DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

The local municipality did not initially give permission for the church to be sold, and agreed only after they were convinced that the church was moving elsewhere because they needed more space. That is how the building had not only a change of ownership, but also a change of religion.

Says Dawa: "We had thought that there may be opposition from the Christians living in Jackson Heights if we removed the cross and crucifixes, so we waited. We had experience from Nepal that religion could be a sensitive issue."

So for a few months, a Buddhist place of worship was located in a building with a cross. However, the contractors renovating the church convinced them no one would have any problems, and Dawa remembers heaving a sigh of relief.

The renovations alone cost another \$150,000 and today there are prayer ceremonies in the temple every Sunday. There are also researchers working on Buddhist cultural and religious studies who make it their base. The basement, Sherpa Kidung Hall, can accommodate 200 people, and can be rented out for public functions.

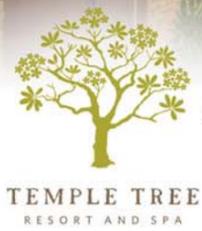
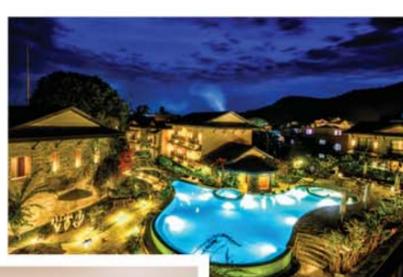
"We don't discriminate against anyone, we don't say this is exclusive for our religion only, and this temple is a living example of religious co-existence," says Dawa. Indeed, on a recent Sunday the prayer room was filled with Sherpa women in traditional dress, Nepalis of various ethnicities and American Buddhists.

Fittingly, the day four years ago that the Buddha figure was consecrated and the Jackson Heights Gumba inaugurated happened to be Christmas. 🇳🇵

"When we first came to look at this building, we immediately liked its brick construction, and wondered how we could convert a building with a cross into a gumba," recalled Dawa Jangbu Sherpa of the United Sherpa Association. "But we had to spend some money on changing the furniture and fixtures which had carved Christian motifs on them."

CONVERSION: The Lutheran Church in Jackson Heights, New York (right) that was converted into a Buddhist gumba by the local Sherpa community four years ago. Many of those joining a prayer on a recent Sunday were American Buddhists.

Dawa Jangbu Sherpa (left) of the United Sherpa Association of New York with fellow Nepalis at their temple.



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SPY

There are some terrible films that you can watch while stuffed in a plane on long haul flights that can make you happy even while you know that under any other circumstances you wouldn't be caught dead watching that kind of trash - you all know what I mean. "Spy", however, the new, hilarious, Melissa McCarthy vehicle is not one of those sometimes acceptable horrors.

While I admit to having watched "Spy" on a plane, I am very happy to report that while, as the name overtly states, the film is indeed a spoof (it has to be with McCarthy in it) on the male dominated suave spy genre - the film is anything but a "let's pass the interminable hours to my destination" kind of plane flick.

Written and directed by Peter Feig, who created the excellent but short-lived "Freaky and Geeks" in 1999 (which now has a cult following) and directed

"Bridesmaids" (2011) and "The Heat" (2013) - both hit comedies starring female leads the likes of Kristen Wiig and Sandra Bullock (and of course McCarthy), "Spy" is a hilarious hybrid animal unto itself that cleverly subverts a genre without pulling its punches, and even more importantly, stepping too far over the edge by trying too hard to be funny.

McCarthy plays CIA analyst Susan Cooper, an unlikely CIA employee who guides her partner Agent Bradley Fine (Jude Law) from her desk while he goes on hyper covert missions involving life and death and, of course

saving the world from apocalyptic destruction. The plot runs on normal spy film tropes involving deaths, double crosses and covert ops, all of which are over the top but with fairly hideous villains, causing viewers to become somewhat invested in their overthrow.

McCarthy of course makes it into the field, supported by a brilliantly talented cast of characters who will have you in stitches with their almost believable antics and ludicrous but highly enjoyable stunts which are really not too far removed from films like "Furious 7" - the Vin Diesel vehicle that delights in outdoing itself.

McCarthy herself, a brilliant comedienne is captivating as the hesitant, diffident Susan Cooper who transitions back and forth between self doubt, and fierce feistiness as she combats rampant sexism, pre-conceived biases about large women who work desk jobs and a world that claims to be a post-feminist one but is anything but. So do not be one of those people that are ridiculed implicitly in the film and do make an effort to see "Spy" - it'll have you in stitches and in a few years time you will be glad you got on the McCarthy bandwagon sooner than the rest of those doubters. 



 nepalitimes.com

■ Trailer 

HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

IN PROGRESS: Madhesi negotiators arrive in Singha Darbar on Tuesday to hold talks with representatives of the top three parties.



HIMEX

THE VICTORS: Bhim Bahadur Gurung of the Nepal Army, winner of this year's Everest Marathon, poses for a group photo with runners-up Surendra Basnet and Pasang Lama in Namche Bazar, Solukhumbu on Sunday.



GOPEN RAI

LENDING A HAND: CPN-UML provides computers to acid attack survivors Sangita Magar and Sima Basnet at an event in Kathmandu on Saturday.



GOPEN RAI

REST IN PEACE: Minister of Information and Communications, Minendra Rijal, pays his respects to Chandra Bahadur Dangi, the shortest man in recorded history, who died last month in American Samoa.



GOPEN RAI

MADE IN PAKISTAN: Women select jewelry at an exhibition of Pakistan-made products at the United World Trade Centre in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

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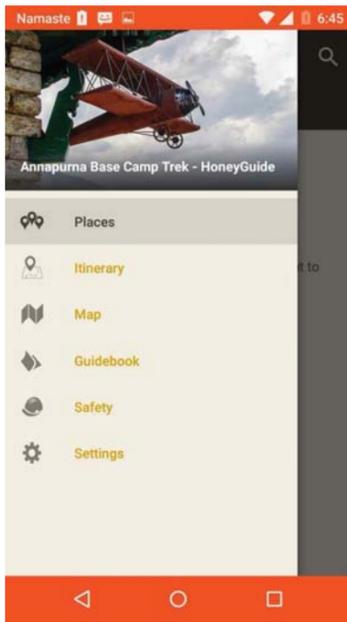
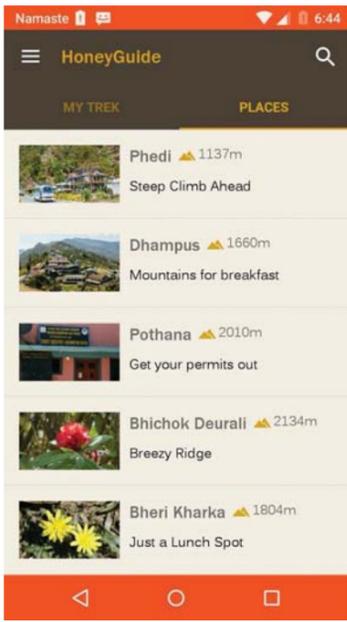
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Now, a trekking app

Throw out your hardcopy guidebook and navigate with your phone on your next trek

AYESHA SHAKYA

Long before TripAdvisor became the go-to website for anyone planning a holiday, there was Lonely Planet, the famous guidebook that helped countless travellers from all walks of life satiate their wanderlust. But not anymore. With developers churning out travel apps by the dozen, the concept of depending on a guidebook to plan one's travels is slowly becoming

redundant. And riding this technology wave is HoneyGuide apps. Conceptualised by Ashish Shrestha and Abhishek Pande, and developed by Wolfmatrix, the app is targeted at trekkers who want to travel within three different regions in Nepal: the Everest region, the Annapurna Base Camp, and Ghorepani- Poon Hill. "Guidebooks tend to dictate a person's experience. You end up having the same experience the author had when he wrote the

book and nothing more," says Shrestha. "Guidebooks have become prescriptive in nature and it is time to change that experience." Understanding the need for well-researched content in the Himalaya, the duo came up with the idea to translate the sea of information in guidebooks into three separate apps, one for each region, which contain detailed information on travel itinerary, safety procedures and even the location and reviews of lodges. The HoneyGuide app team did its own extensive research to bring users up to date with not just routes to travel on, but sites along the way and unique features of each destination. An important feature of the app is the place cards, which includes context-sensitive information that is available depending on its timeliness. To ensure the safety of

trekkers, the app also features a deviation alert system that warns trekkers when they are off a certain path, a climb alert when they have trekked too high in a day and an avalanche alert if they are walking into an avalanche-prone area. Many of these features were incorporated keeping last year's Annapurna Blizzard in mind. While all these functionalities are handy, the most impressive feature of this app is that the treasure trove of information can be accessed without internet or wifi. "We are taking guidebooks to a new generation of customers. This app is for tech natives, the millennials who look to technology for life-long experiences," says Pande. Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree forum is massively popular amongst travellers looking to venture into unknown territory, and so are TripAdvisor ratings for

hotels and destinations, user-generated information that is mostly biased. Hence, the app allows users to submit only a maximum of three reviews. One of the peeves of the app is that there are three different apps for the three different trekking routes. Although the amount of information is commendable, having to download a different app just for the sole purpose of the trekking route is cumbersome. Having it all together under one umbrella would have made the user experience better. The app is currently available free on Google Play Store, with its App Store release planned for next month. The app can be downloaded free for the coming two months. Now that Dasain is around the corner, this is the best time to download the app and plan your next trek. 



Taste of Singapore

Apart from its iconic skyline and reputation as one of the most liveable countries in the world, there is one more thing synonymous with Singapore. No, not just the haze. It is its food. With dishes ranging from Hainanese Chicken Rice, Chilly Crabs and Roti Prata, the tiny city state offers a multi-ethnic cuisine that is the most eclectic in this part of the world.

Good news for us, we can now experience this culinary treat in Nepal too. Soaltee Crowne Plaza is featuring special menus from seven award-winning chefs until November and we were there to sample the Singaporean/ Chinese cuisine by celebrity

chef Sam Leong that is on offer till next week. To begin with, we sampled a glass of the Wolf Blass Cabernet Sauvignon 2011. Pleasantly rich in taste, a few sips of the wine was enough to set the mood for the evening. We started off with an appetiser, the tempura lychee stuffed with crab meat (Rs 1,050). Garnished with spring onions and sweet sauce on the side, the salty and sweet components of the dish complemented each other perfectly. With its lychee exterior and crab meat stuffed inside, the mixed blend brought out a unique flavour. Although the exterior was crispy, the tempura was light and did not feel too oily. The second on the appetiser list was the Chef's signature wasabi prawns (Rs 1,150). Sprinkled with sesame seeds and resembling dumplings, the prawns were soft and the lightest tinge of wasabi was enough to tingle your tastebuds. The appetisers did what they were supposed to: make us crave for more. The wok-fried chicken made of home-made black pepper sauce with ginger and spring onions

(Rs 850) was divine. The spice from the black pepper sauce was just enough to mellow the lingering taste of the wasabi, and similar to the appetisers, the chicken was fried lightly and was just the right amount of crispy. The next main dish was the braised egg noodles with shitake mushrooms and poached vegetables (Rs 750), which left us in a gastronomic swoon. As a quintessential Cantonese dish, it was not heavily seasoned, bringing out the natural flavour of the food. After feasting on seafood and chicken, the only vegetarian option on the menu made the dinner feel wholesome. To end the three course dinner we had the mango pudding with candied pears, basil and pistachios (Rs 390). While the pear compot may have been a tad too sweet, its pairing with the mango pudding blended well. This is on a different par from food you get in hawker centres around Singapore. Chef Leong's innovative fusion cuisine lifts simple dishes to a loftier level. Suffice it to say, you won't be booking a flight to Singapore before Dasain when you have a little Singapore right here in Soaltee. The current menu is featured from 28 September to 11 October and customers can choose between a two course or three course meal, the latter featuring a free second glass of wine. The coming weeks will be taken over by Chef Takagi Kazuo for Japanese cuisine, Dean Brettschneider for bakery items and Theo Randall for rustic Italian cuisine.  Ayesha Shakya



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The silent scream

About 350 million people in the world are affected by depression, and most will never seek treatment

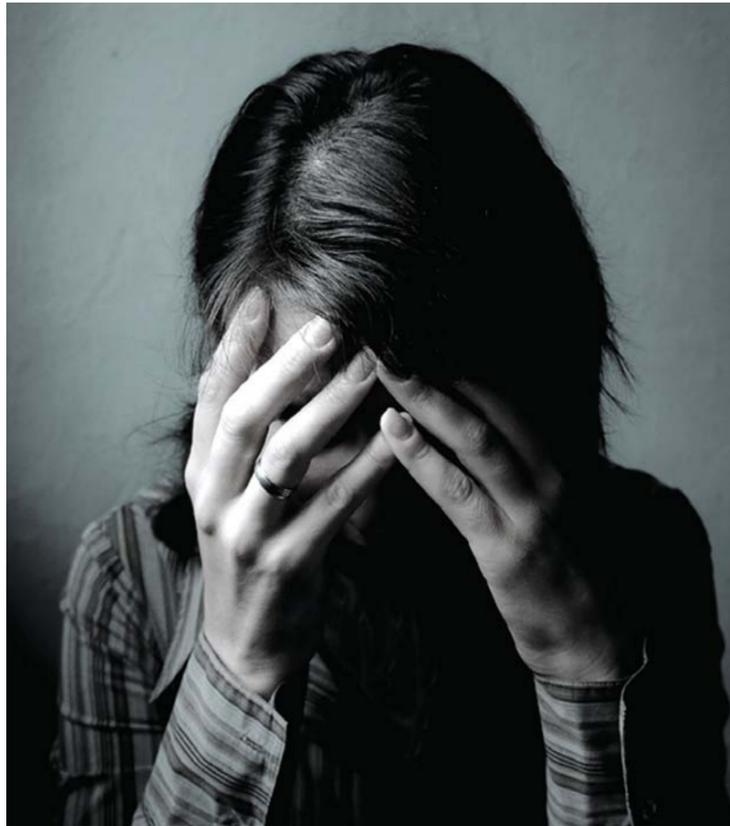
We all feel sad once in a while, and usually these feelings fade within a few hours or days. However, feeling down can sometimes be more than just a passing phase. Depression inhibits the ability to function within daily life, and causes grief to your loved ones as well. Treatment should be sought for this common, but serious illness.



ALL IN THE MIND
Anjana Rajbhandary

World Health Organization estimates that about 350 million people in the world are affected by depression. Depression can cause isolation and keep you from getting help. But it does not have to rule your life. With proper treatment and support, you can effectively treat depression, and regain control of your life.

Major depression is extremely debilitating. The ability to work, concentrate, sleep, and simply enjoy life is hindered. While you may only experience major depression once in your life, it is typically marked by multiple occurrences. Persistent Depressive



Disorder is characterised by consistent feelings of sadness and worthlessness for two years or more. Bouts of major depression are intermittent with periods where it is less severe.

Disruptive Mood Regulation Disorder is indicated by a loss of temper multiple times a week accompanied with an irritable and angry mood.

Certain other forms of depression occur in specific circumstances.

Psychotic Depression is severe depression with some form of psychosis, including delusions and hallucinations.

Postpartum Depression happens to some women after giving birth due to hormonal and physical changes, and

responsibility of taking care of a new baby. It is more severe than regular 'baby blues'.

Another type, Seasonal Affective Disorder, occurs when a person feels depression in the winter months due to lack of natural sunlight.

Depression is most likely caused by a combination of genetic, biological, psychological and environmental factors. If someone in the family has depression, you may be more susceptible. It is also possible to have depression if it doesn't run in the family at all. Circumstances such as the loss of a loved one, compromised financial security, a difficult relationship, or other emotional traumas may cause depression.

There is a wide range of signs and symptoms experienced by individuals with depression, and it differs from one person to another. Frequency and length of symptoms may vary depending on the individual.

Common signs and symptoms of depression include persistent sadness, hopelessness, guilt, irritability, restlessness, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, headaches, digestive problems, overeating or loss of appetite, and thoughts or attempts of suicide.

The effects of depression may be different from one individual to another. Not everyone

diagnosed with depression will feel the same effects. Some more common effects may include physical health problems, weakened immune system, self-harm as a way to cope, suicidal ideations or attempts, loss of self-confidence, increase in high-risk behavior, substance abuse, learned helplessness, loss of social network, end of relationships, and work or school-related problems to name a few. Depression also affects the loved ones of the individual in various ways, such as increase in stress, change in financial responsibility due to job loss, and, end or loss of relationships among others.

Depression can be managed. The most common treatment for depression is a combination of medication (antidepressants) and psychotherapy. Inpatient treatment provides patients with the necessary time and space to healthily manage their depressive disorder. With the right treatment, support of loved ones, and a healthier lifestyle, it is possible to heal from the emotional, psychological and physical effects of depression.

October 10 is World Mental Health Day. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

■ The depression battle, #728
■ End pain, not lives, #744



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Ensuring proper insurance

This earthquake is a lesson to review how homes and businesses should be insured

SAHINA SHRESTHA

Insurance claims for damaged property have soared in the aftermath of the April earthquake, but despite calls to settle claims there have been inordinate delays.

The Insurance Board directed the insurance companies not to delay payments for claims after customers complained that they were made to wait endlessly for no apparent reason. Even though claims are now being settled, a new problem has arisen: under-compensation.

Customers claim that insurance companies are under-valuing the damage to their buildings so they can get away with lower payments. For their part, insurance companies say that the payment is done according to the reports submitted by independent surveyors, calculating depreciation costs and also under-insurance by customers.

When Anup Baral, a Kathmandu-based businessman, bought a home, he took out a loan from a financial institution. As per the regulations, the institution insured the house. When the earthquake happened, he thought that the premium he had paid for years would cover the cost of his damaged wall. But when he went to claim the insurance he realised that his property had been underinsured and his insurance did not cover the outer walls of his house.

"At first, when they were insuring the property they said I wouldn't have any problems in settlements. After the



earthquake, I found out that the financial institution had insured only a part of the money I had borrowed from them and not the whole amount," said Baral.

Baral had insured his office building as well, and



REBUILDING OURSELVES

even there the compensation he received from the insurance company was hardly enough to cover the damage. He is one of many who had insured their properties and felt cheated by the insurance companies after the earthquake.

"If the amount doesn't even cover the repairs of the damage what is the use of the premium we pay every year?" asked Baral.

Deep Prakash Pandey, CEO of Shikhar Insurance agrees that people need to be compensated properly but says for that the consumers have to disclose the value of their property accurately and not limit the insurance to the amount they have borrowed from the bank.

"Knowing the right way of buying insurance and under-insurance are the two main problems I see now," he said. "There has to be a change in the traditional way of doing insurance also. People have to be careful about including reinstatement cost in their policy and ensure that their property is not underinsured."

But consumers point out that the insurance companies don't explain what the insurance covers or what underinsurance is while insuring the properties. "How are we to know that the house insurance doesn't cover the boundary walls? The sales executive should explain the policy in detail to us. And the Insurance Board should monitor these things," said Baral.

Raju Raman Poudel, Director of Insurance Board says the consumers must be aware of the policies they are signing up for. He told us: "The clauses are written in the papers the consumers sign. It would pay well for the consumers to read the clauses and be aware of them." 

The Kiwi way to reconstruction

Following building codes and strengthening existing buildings is the only way to prepare for the next one

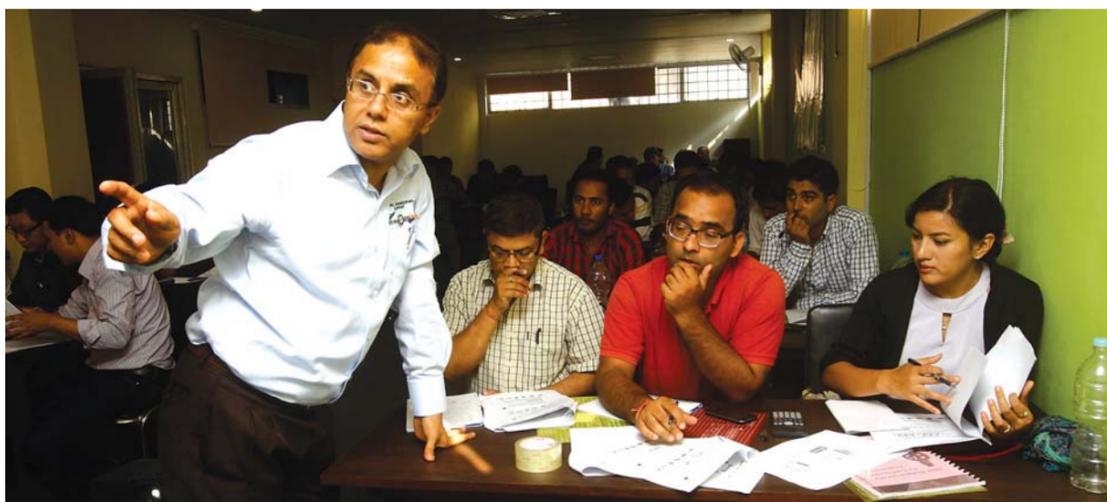
SAHINA SHRESTHA

Aside from the fact that New Zealand and Nepal sit next to each other alphabetically at international conferences, the two countries couldn't be more different. But they have one thing in common: both sit on active seismic faults and are prone to earthquakes.

On 4 September 2010, five years prior to the earthquake in Nepal, New Zealand had its biggest earthquake in 70 years. The M7.1 earthquake was epicentred near Christchurch, but it didn't kill anyone. However, six months later a weaker M6.3 quake struck again and caused structures weakened by the previous earthquake to collapse. Some 185 people were killed.

In both Nepal and New Zealand, earthquakes are not predictable but are expected. A major earthquake strikes Nepal every 80 years or so. The 7.8 M earthquake that rattled Nepal on 25 April left 8,856 people dead and 22,309 injured and destroyed 602,257 private homes. But it wasn't a surprise.

Although the peak ground acceleration of the earthquake in Christchurch was 2-3 times more than that in Kathmandu (the exact number for Nepal cannot be determined because the measuring station was too far from the epicentre) the damage although considerable doesn't compare to the widespread



GOPEN RAI

destruction in Nepal.

The reason is simple: New Zealand has stringent building codes and actually enforces them. The original building codes go back to 1935 and although the earthquake design really only started around 1960s, the codes have been strengthened time and again and the builders have to undergo 3-4 years of apprenticeship.

"From what I have personally observed, the best way to move forward for Nepal is to continue to increase compliance with the building codes," said Steven Knowles, leader of a team of seismic structural engineers from New Zealand who are working with Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC), Nepal Engineers' Association, Institute of Engineering to train Nepali

structural and civil engineers.

Jitendra Bothara, a seismic engineer based in New Zealand agrees: "Both urban and rural buildings are covered in building codes, only the implementation part is lacking." Bothara, who was also involved in preparing the building codes for Kathmandu in 1992-94, says it is a good thing the government is revising the codes. He says that while modern buildings have come a long way since the building codes were first introduced, they are not up to the mark. "It is a continuum. We need to revise and implement as we move forward," he says.

The team is training 150 structural and 70 civil engineers on how to assess, retrofit and strengthen the existing buildings in a bid to build back better. A single batch of engineers receives trainings for eight days on

masonry and reinforced concrete buildings.

"Building back better is not enough because you can only build back what has come down," said Rajesh Dhakal, a professor at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. "We have to strengthen the existing buildings as well. In Nepal, retrofitting and strengthening are reactive after the damage has occurred whereas these are actually means of better preparedness."

Apart from the loss of life and property, the other consequence of the earthquake was that the ground over a large part of the country has moved by several metres. Kathmandu Valley itself moved 1.8m southeast and rose 1.15m in elevation, disturbing the existing geodetic network. This means the coordinates in geodetic databases and GIS network are now way

off their actual locations. This can pose a serious problem in disaster recovery efforts because coordinates determined before the earthquakes will not match the real location on the ground.

Professor Christopher Pearson, a geodetic expert from New Zealand is working with Survey Department to help develop a deformation model as well as revise national datum for Nepal.

"Working with Chris we realised that we needed to find out how much change has occurred to the previous coordinates," said Niraj Manandhar, a geodetic scientist at Department of Survey, Nepal.

The geodetic control points used for different types of mapping are not only the bases for the design of most infrastructures but also serve to measure the movement of the earth during earthquakes. Hence, having a modern geodetic data is crucial for disaster recovery process.

Dynamic geodetic datum can be achieved by establishing networks of Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) or active control points. A study conducted by Geodetic Survey Branch suggests a distributed network of 147 CORS at a 30km inter-station distance to achieve real time geodetic network. Says Manandhar: "If active control points are installed, it is going to be a major leap since the existing datum is collected by passive control points." 



Reconstruction in ruins

Political wrangling has kept the Reconstruction Authority in limbo, prolonging the pain of earthquake survivors

OM ASTHA RAI and SAHINA SHRESTHA

Nearly six months after a deadly earthquake, political aftershocks have prevented the 3 million affected people from receiving through the government the \$4.1 billion pledged by the international community for rebuilding their homes.

The government formed the National Reconstruction Authority two months after

the 25 April earthquake, and then on 13 August appointed Govinda Raj Pokhrel as its CEO. But parliament failed to ratify the ordinance to set it up, so Pokhrel is heading an organization that doesn't formally exist.

"I was off to a flying start," says Pokhrel. "We had collected a strong team and policies were being formulated. So it was a complete shock when I found out that the Reconstruction Authority was no longer a legal government entity."

Most agree that Pokhrel, who headed the National Planning Commission, was the right man for the job. He had shown to be an efficient manager who had prepared the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction two months after the earthquake and finished a Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) report in time for it.

But before Pokhrel set up his new office and hired staff to begin reconstruction works, the ordinance through which the

authority was formed expired without being replaced by a bill. And the new bill through which the authority could have been legally institutionalised is unlikely to be passed by parliament any time soon because the UML doesn't like Pokhrel, who is seen as an NC appointee.

To be sure, the main opposition UCPN (M) had also delayed the parliament proceedings on ratification citing provisions in the bill. But now it is the UML that is putting a

spanner in the works. Parliament has forwarded the bill to its legislation committee, which will cut down the number of amendment proposals and send it back to the full house.

UML legislators say the present draft of the bill is 'very weak' and will not be strong enough to rebuild earthquake-hit areas. Most importantly, they have sought a political person as the authority's executive chief and involvement of legislators from the earthquake-affected districts.

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started preparing post-earthquake housing modalities, administrative and financial guidelines and donor coordination mechanism. Pokhrel had even initiated a process to bring on deputation the Finance Ministry's Infrastructure Section Chief Bhisma Bhusal and the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC)'s Heritage Division Head Shriju Pradhan. He was also trying to get on board Swarnim Wagle from the NPC as a focal person to coordinate with donors.

The reconstruction ordinance was issued by President Ram Baran Yadav on 30 June, and it was to be replaced by a bill by 29 August. But after the bill was tabled in the parliament on 23 July, the Speaker Subhas Nembang called the next parliamentary meeting only on 1 September.

In the meantime, the government got busy in drafting the constitution, and the Tarai was embroiled in violence. Ministers from the NC were carelessly unaware of the cut-off date of 29 August for passing the reconstruction bill. They now allege that Nembang cunningly called the next parliamentary meeting only after the cut-off date and the parliamentary secretariat, dominated by pro-UML bureaucrats, did not bother to alert the government.

The UML and the UCPN (M) were in no hurry to approve the bill and let it lapse. NC leader and Law Minister Narhari Acharya says, "We initially thought the UCPN (M) was trying to block the reconstruction bill, but we later faced real obstacles from our own coalition partner, the UML."

He adds: "Some of the points of amendment registered by UML legislators are duplicated and even nonsensical, and their real motive seems to delay the reconstruction authority until the next government is formed."

Some donors who pledged money for Nepal's reconstruction are now thinking of channeling their money through local groups and NGOs – some of them run by UML leaders involved in filibustering the bill.

Says Pokhrel: "The delay in the bill has already affected survivors, and they must get money for reconstruction before winter sets in." 🇳🇵

"You cannot rebuild the country with an authority that ignores the role of elected representatives of people," says UML legislator Sher Bahadur Tamang from the worst-affected district of Sindhupalchok. "A technocrat cannot lead a reconstruction authority, we want a political leadership."

But the UML's real intention seems to have its own man at the helm of the well-endowed authority so that it can have full say in disbursing the reconstruction budget, and get credit for it. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala had held out for Pokhrel and got the UML's KP Oli to agree. Oli had even promised Pokhrel "full support" before his appointment, but now that Oli is designated as the next PM, he seems to have changed his mind.

Pokhrel did not wait for the Authority to be formed and had



DHRUBA DANGAL

Paying the price for what Kathmandu didn't do

Earthquake, blockade and a stillborn Reconstruction Authority have left survivors to fend for themselves this joyless Dasain

KISHOR BUDHATHOKI in SINDHUPALCHOK
and **KIRAN LOHANI** in GORKHA

After the 25 April earthquake destroyed his mud-and-stone house in the remote village of Pangtang in Sindhupalchok district, Laxman Tamang built a timber and tin shelter on the edge of his maize field.

He lived through the monsoon in this flimsy, leaky structure. Tamang, his wife, children and elderly parents are now bracing themselves to survive a harsh winter in that crowded hut, since there is no sign of any help from Kathmandu to rebuild his home.

"I have nowhere else to go," Tamang told us this week. "I had hoped to build a warm house before the winter, but that is unlikely to happen."

In Kathmandu, the Reconstruction Authority has been stuck because of political wrangling over who should be its CEO and over its structure and rules (see adjoining article). Which means the \$4.1 billion pledged by the international community to rebuild homes of families like the Tamangs' is unspent.

"I don't know what's going on in Kathmandu," said Tamang. "I have heard that I cannot rebuild my house in the same way, but no one has told me how I can do it. I have also heard that the government will give us some money, but I don't know when and how much."

Although the earthquake had its epicentre far away in Barpak village of Gorkha district, Sindhupalchok was the worst hit with more than half the fatalities reported from here. Nearly 70,000 private houses were damaged, most of them irreparably, in Sindhupalchok alone.

Those who lost their houses spent this year's monsoon in temporary shelters, and they are now worried about the winter season. Political wrangling over the authority is just prolonging the pain of the earthquake survivors.

Ram Chandra Sapkota is an earthquake-displaced person in Sindhupalchok. He has been living in a temporary shelter near where his house once stood. "My children cannot sleep well, they are always scared of snakes and insects," he says. "But I do not have enough money to rebuild my house on my own. Nor has the government told us what earthquake-resistant housing

models would be like."

Dasain is just a week away, but families like the Sapkotas are in no mood to celebrate. On top of the earthquake damage, there are the woes of the Indian blockade. "This year's Dasain will be joyless," he says. "Those who lost their relatives are still in mourning, and the homeless like me are not in a mood to celebrate."

Sindhupalchok's CDO Balbhadra Giri says: "We're doing nothing about reconstruction yet, we are still waiting for the Reconstruction Authority to begin its work."

The government wants the reconstruction grants of Rs200,000 per family to only go for seismic resistant house designs, but because the authority doesn't legally exist yet, the plans have not been made public.

Because of this, villagers in Barpak, near the epicentre of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake, have been rebuilding with the same unreinforced masonry. Gorkha's assistant CDO Dipendra Poudel says: "Given the scale of damage, reconstruction might take longer and require more resources in Gorkha."

With Kathmandu preoccupied with political issues like constitution, the Madhes unrest, the blockade and the formation of new government, some earthquake-affected people and communities in Gorkha have started reconstruction on their own without waiting for the authority to approve new quake-resistant housing modality.

In Barpak, the April catastrophe taught the locals that building safe houses was the best way to survive disastrous earthquakes. So they waited for the government to come up with a master plan to build back Barpak in a better way. But they are now frustrated with the sluggish government, and a third of them have already rebuilt their homes.

Jit Bahadur Ghale, a local tourism entrepreneur in Barpak, says: "The newly rebuilt houses might look a bit more sturdy, but they are not fully earthquake-resistant."

The locals of Barpak say the government left them with no choice but to follow the same unsafe housing model by delaying the formation of the Reconstruction Authority. 🇳🇵

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Editorial in *Annapurna Post*, 6 October

अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट

Once perceived to be a Maoist ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai is now no longer with the party that he nurtured alongside his comrade Pushpa Kamal Dahal for two decades. He is now claiming to be just an ordinary Nepali. Even so, whatever he speaks or does will create political ripples for some time because the media and the international community still view him as the torch-bearer of a liberal Maoist ideology.

But when he was Prime Minister, Bhattarai performed no better than his predecessors in terms of effective service delivery. While in the party, he spent much of his time and energy justifying what Dahal's leadership did. He is now speaking his mind as a free citizen. But will he do the soul-searching necessary? Will he publicly admit to his party's mistakes during the war?

After quitting the party, Bhattarai claimed that there was a conspiracy to finish him off during the war. What he meant was that Dahal wanted to kill him when they fell out over strategy. He did not name Dahal, but no one but the supreme commander of the Maoist army had the power to terminate him.



SUBHAS RAI

Bhattarai was indeed stripped of his responsibility and put under house arrest. But his political line prevailed, and he led his party to the peace process following an India-brokered 12-point agreement with other parliamentary parties.

Nine years after the peace process, Bhattarai's allegation carries significance and needs to be investigated. Dahal has to answer. But before that, Bhattarai has to himself answer many other more serious questions. He was the chief of the so-called parallel people's government of the Maoists. So he is not less guilty of the deaths of the 17,000 people. What did Nepal gain or lose from the slaughter of so many people? Bhattarai is as responsible as Dahal is. He will not be able to justify his much-talked-about new political force unless he answers this question.

Bhattarai was an elected representative of people in the post-1990 parliament. But he insulted the people's faith in him by quitting parliament, just as he did now, and waging a decade-long war that led to the deaths of so many people. Maoist rebels butchered political opponents. He has still not forgiven Dahal for the latter's alleged conspiracy to declare him a traitor and terminate him. But has he forgiven himself for the deaths of innocent civilians? Is he sorry to the families of those killed by his party? If he is not, accusing Dahal of a murder conspiracy and forming a new political force will just be yet another sign of his hypocrisy.



हिमाल

Bhanu Bhattarai in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 4-10 October

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Is India trying to show to the international community that there is no blockade by sending rotten produce?”

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala addressing youth leaders and representatives from various organisations, 7 October

Blatant nepotism

October 6, 2015 www.onlinekhabar.com

onlinekhabar.com

What might the leaders of the Madhes-based parties do if they are granted an autonomous province? How will they govern?

They will not be bothered much by those who lost their lives during the current agitation, they will be back to wheeling and dealing. Madhes-based leaders misused the votes they got from citizens by offering positions in the Constituent Assembly (CA) to their own wives, relatives and wealthy individuals from the hills. The choices they have made in the proportional representation (PR) to the CA is the strongest evidence of nepotism.



Madhes-based parties won 82 seats in the first CA election but came down to 49 in the second one. Among those just 12 were directly elected ones, and the rest are based on proportional representation. Rajendra Mahato, who chairs the Sadbhavana Party and is known to be an aggressive activist for the rights of the Madhes, has given one seat to his own wife, Shail Kumari Devi. Another leader, Raj Kishor Yadav, who broke away from the Madhesi People's Rights Forum handed the only PR seat for his party to his wife, Sarita Kumari Yadav, who has no prior political experience. Similarly, Anil Jha gave the only PR seat for his party, Federal Sadbhavana Party, to his wife, Dimple Jha, who is an ayurvedic doctor.

Sharad Singh Bhandari of the National Madhesi Socialist Party didn't give a PR seat to his wife. Instead, he gave it to a woman who is widely thought to be having a relationship with him: Nirjala Raut, who is an American citizen. After becoming a member of Bhandari's party, Raut has revoked her American citizenship. Indra Jha of the Tarai Madhes Democratic Party, a member of the CA, also happens to be Mahanta Thakur's relative.

Meanwhile, Madhes-based parties have also sold off positions to wealthy individuals from the hills. In a meeting of the Sadbhavana Party, Narendra Shah was handed a PR seat after others failed to pay more than Shah's Rs 10 million committed. Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum Demoratic's Bijaya Gacchadar is also known to have sold positions to Gita Rana, Baburam Pokhrel and Subodh Pokhrel.

A former personal assistant of Mahanta Thakur seized Thakur's car after complaining that he was not given a PR seat that he was promised.

Remembering the 1989 blockade

Tek Nayaran Bhattarai in *Nagarik*, 5 October

In 1989, the Rajiv Gandhi-led government imposed an economic blockade against Nepal because of a dispute over transit treaties and its uneasiness over Nepal's growing closeness with China.

As the Minister of Commerce and Supply, Nar Bahadur Budhathoki was responsible for ensuring the smooth management of supplies. "Coincidentally, the 1989 blockade also took place after an earthquake," said Budhathoki.



Rather than kowtowing to India, the Panchayat government led by Marich Man Shrestha prepared to bring in fuel from other nations when the transit treaty came close to its expiration. "The government decided to import oil through the private sector. Soon after, India announced an official blockade," he said.

The government then started planning ways to end the blockade. Firewood was distributed at a subsidised price, and so were electric rice cookers and electricity. The government made sure that black market didn't thrive. Within 45 days, Nepal drew the international community's attention to the problem. "We brought in fuel from Bangladesh and planned to bring in more from Tibet," said Budhathoki.

India refused to send supplies, deciding not to relent to international pressure. It did, however, agree to let fuel to be brought from Singapore but made sure that the process was difficult. Budhathoki himself went to fetch the oil from Calcutta.

The government prepared to import 50 per cent of the fuel from a third country and initiated the establishment of a stock tank in Panchkhal. World Bank and other donor agencies agreed to provide loans at a minimal interest rate.

The plan was to bring in the pipeline till Xigatse in the first phase, Lhasa in second phase and Panchkhal in the third phase. "We kept it a secret so that India wouldn't get a chance to sabotage the plan. Only the King, Prime Minister and I knew about it," said Budhathoki. After India discovered Nepal's plan, it proposed to build a pipeline till Amlekhgunj, but the government rejected the offer.

According to him, Rajiv Gandhi had tried to contact the King but the latter was on a hunting trip. Realising that Nepal wouldn't give in, Indian leaders including the former Indian Prime Minister came to Nepal and pressed Nepali leaders to overthrow the Panchayat system. Nepal did overthrow the Panchayat system. "When Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's government decided that India's fuel stock was Nepal's stock, we lost the battle," said Budhathoki. "If the movement for democracy had been delayed by six months, we would not have been in this situation now," he added.

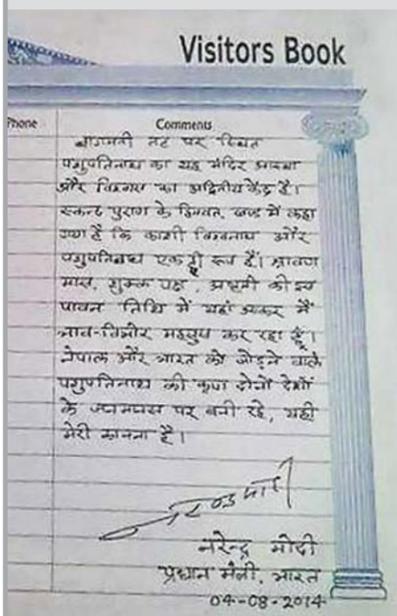
Budhathoki added that leaders should not compromise the country's sovereignty. "Internal matters should be taken care of within the country. If people are not satisfied, India will get a chance to play games again," he said.

MODI BACK THEN

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's entry into the guest book at Pashupatinath Temple during his visit in August 2014:

The Pashupatinath Temple located on the banks of Bagmati is the centre of our faith. It is written in the Himwat Khanda of Skanda Puran that Pashupatinath and Kashi Bishwanath are one and the same. Coming here on this day, I feel extremely emotional. I hope that the blessings of Pashupatinath, which connects both Nepal and India, will be bestowed on the people of both countries.

Narendra Modi





India-locked

Nepal is not landlocked, it is once again a victim of New Delhi's attempt to flex its muscles

SURESH BIDARI

India has blatantly blockaded Nepal to back a splintered bunch of disgruntled Madhesi politicians, who were humiliatingly rejected by the Madhesi voters themselves in the last election. They won a mere 11 seats of the total of 116 constituencies in the Tarai, and turned to India.

delegation. The delegate passed on a threat that sounded exactly like the one recently issued by the Indian foreign secretary, S Jaishankar.

Soon after the 1989 embargo and regime change in 1990, India helped the ethnic cleansing drive of its protectorate, Bhutan, and ferried more than 100,000 of its own citizens to the Nepal

border and dumped them there. Furthermore, while India has all these years complained of terrorist incursion by Pakistan, New Delhi has been complicit in providing a safe haven to Nepali Maoists whom India's government has officially declared to be terrorists.

No matter which party is in power, strangulating Nepal into

submission to India's whims of the day seems to be the only affordable arena where India can show its emerging power status despite the fact that it continues to remain home to the largest number of hungry and homeless in the world.

We should also somberly reflect that no country in the world has come to Nepal's rescue

on the blockade. Let alone material support, there hasn't even been verbal sympathy. No country wants to antagonise India and jeopardise its big market. Even China is cautious, but there is nothing stopping us from improving our road and air links to China. Even if we survive this blockade, there will be future ones. ❑



GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha

New Delhi, mysteriously, finds it in its interest to side with Madhesi 'outcasts'. The agitating Madhesi Morcha is a fractious coalition of at least four sub-morchas which in turn is the coming together of over 13 different entities, more than one of which is a self-declared *Bharatbadi*.

Their main demand has been the implementation of the agreement that two of these parties had signed some nine years ago with the then Girija Prasad Koirala government that, among others, provides for delineating the whole of the Tarai as one province under federal Nepal. Given Nepal's variegated geography, this makes no economic sense, and it would also be potentially suicidal for Nepal because it would put the plains in the hands of Madhesi politicians and their mentors across the border.

What is even more perplexing is that India, which is aspiring to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has got itself embroiled in this misadventure out of which it has no perceived advantage or exit strategy. India's foreign policy has become the subject of ridicule around the world, even from pundits within India.

Humiliation does not seem to matter to the Indian establishment. Back in 1989 during the previous blockade, the World Health Assembly passed an amendment proposal by the Nepal delegation, which I had the distinction of leading, to a Palestinian resolution against an Israeli embargo calling for it include all landlocked countries.

After three exchanges between me and an Indian delegate, the Assembly adopted an amended resolution to the utter embarrassment of the Indian



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Dasain postponed

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

It is hereby notified to all concerned that this year's Dasain Festival has been postponed. The festival was originally supposed to be held in five phases starting 13 October, but has been put off because of the rowdy behaviour of some neighbours. All concerned should watch this space for new dates, but expect it to be held in April 2016 or thereabouts when it will be celebrated in conjunction with the new year to save diesel. Goats and buffalos earmarked for martyrdom will now be allowed to carry on with their daily lives until such time as they may again be required to be decapitated in the epic struggle of good against evil. For further information, contact the Department of Human Sacrifices.

BLOCKADE DIET

Still looking for a painless way to lose weight fast without having to forego the ice cream? Visit Nepal now and participate in the world's most effective weight loss program, that guarantees to burn off your love handles in one week flat or your money back. Blockade Diet begins with the trek from Kathmandu Airport itself and follow Hillary and Tenzing's walk-in from Banepa to Lukla. Carrying 14 kg rucksacks, high protein diet combined with chronic giardia will make you feel instantly lighter. After return, all sightseeing in Kathmandu will be carried out on all fours.

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The Ass

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