















# On the move

etroleum supplies from India that eased with the election of KP Oli as Nepal's new prime minister is still only 10 per cent of normal. The annual Dasain exodus of people from Kathmandu has started, but the diesel shortage has limited public transport (pictured).

The demands of Madhesi parties are still unaddressed, and the streets of the Tarai could flare up again. Oli has his work cut out. He pushed the country to the edge, and now needs to bring it back. He needs to visit the Tarai and try to reunite the hills and

plains. It will not be easy, the anger among Madhesis this time runs deep.

Instead of reaching out, political parties in Kathmandu are preoccupied with dividing up among themselves the posts of prime minister, president, vice-president and speaker. The UCPN(M) is staying away from the presidential race, and the UML is hoping to fill that post.

Top contender is Subhas Nembang, who served two consecutive tenures as Constituent Assembly chair. But Maoist chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and

Bijaya Gachhadar of the MJF(D) are trying to persuade Oli to offer the presidentship to the NC so that it doesn't oppose constitutional amendments to satisfy Madhesi demands.

But Oli feels double crossed by Sushil Koirala for refusing to hand over the prime ministership to him as per their understanding. But he may have no choice, the NC has the numbers in parliament to prove Oli a failure. If the amendments are not passed, the Tarai unrest may continue as well as the Indian blockade.

Nepal may have a new president between Dasain and Tihar, and a new speaker by this weekend. The speaker's position is set aside for the UCPN(M) but no one in the party apparently wants the post.

# 50 years of trekking

If Nepal's trek industry is to grow and prosper, it urgently needs to innovate, diversify and recover its image BY **ROBIN MARSTON** 

**PAGE 8-9** 



Nepali Times wishes its readers and partners a joyful Dasain holiday. The paper will take its annual break next week, so the next hardcopy edition will come to you on

Friday, 30 October.

However, you can follow us online wherever and whenever.



### **FIXING WHAT'S BROKE** PAGE 2

**ONUS ON OLI AS IT HAPPENS** 

BY OM ASTHA RAI PAGE 4



BY BIDUSHI DHUNGEL PAGE 4





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WIDEN YOUR WORLD





## FIXING WHAT'S BROKE

Prime Minister Oli needs to realise that we may be able to choose our friends, but we can't choose our neighbours.

ust as we had foretold in this space in the past two months, it was only after K P Oli became prime minister that the deadlock over the constitution, the violence in the Tarai and the blockade would start to be resolved.

Oli hardly hid the fact that as a patient with a double kidney-transplant he was in a hurry to move from Balkot to Baluwatar. He may have been coy when asked point-blank if he wanted to be prime minister, but there was no doubt that ambition burned fiercely in him. Which may be why he was deliberately confrontational while fast-tracking the constitution: he wanted to be seen as that strong leader, the knight in shining armour to rescue the country from its

Events have confirmed that Oli wanted to take credit for getting the blockade lifted and bringing the Tarai back to normalcy. Sure enough, soon after his swearing-in trucks and tankers started moving in across the border, the Madhesi

parties ended their boycott and took part in the parliamentary vote on Sunday. Oli had given India a face-saver.

Here on, the new prime minister has his work cut out to fix what he broke. He needlessly antagonised the Tharus and then the Madhesi parties, played brinkmanship with India and gambled with the parliamentary vote. Now he has to solve problems that he himself helped create. One cannot expect the person who inflicted a wound to also heal them, but as Nepal's 38th prime minister, Oli is out to prove us

The prime minister's first order of business is to bring the country back from the edge that he has pushed us to. He needs to visit the Tarai and try to reunite the deep fissures that have opened up between the hills and plains. It will not be easy, the anger among Madhesis this time runs deep fueled by the perception of an uncaring state that sent police out to kill men, women and children.

There is also deep economic frustration: the plains have been shut down for more than two months. Schools are closed, hospitals have run out of medicine, hundreds of thousands of people are stuck, and Nepal's industrial corridors have all ground to a halt. Oli needs to act quickly to fix that, and not go into hibernation over the holidays.

Prime Minister Oli also needs to address some of the grievances of the plains-dwellers concerning what they perceive as injustices in the constitution. Some of these amendments have already been tabled, and should go some way in assuaging the Madhesi and Tharu groups.

Then, he needs to make an effort to mend ties with India. Relations have soured to such an extent that they have destroyed whatever goodwill Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi built during his visit to Kathmandu last year. Oli needs to reboot Nepal-India relations by going out of his way to massage hurt egos in New Delhi.

We may be the aggrieved party, India may have come across looking like a bullying big brother, but we must realise that we need them more than they need us. We may be able to choose our friends, but we can't choose our neighbours. We are stuck with India, and have to be much smarter in our dealings with them. For its part, it is in New Delhi's own strategic interest to reach out and redress deep anti-Indian feelings here by being genuinely more magnanimous, and less overbearing.

Oli reaped the political dividend by stoking nationalism, but we have seen in the past that such advantage is shortlived. Unless he delivers on the economy in the next few months, the people's support for any government will be fickle. He needs to move quickly to generate jobs by putting earthquake reconstruction into high gear to make up for lost time. That reconstruction hasn't started even six months after the earthquake is a travesty. He needs to get industry back on its feet. The damage from the agitation and blockade to business actually dwarfs the economic cost of the April earthquake.

Prime Minister Oli has several things going for him: he is decisive, plain-speaking and wants to leave a political legacy so that history will judge him as a statesman. The leader of a revolutionary group once inspired by the Naxalites across the border to behead landlords, Oli is a consummate politician.

Proof of this was his dramatic alliance with arch-rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal in June to finish the constitution and form a national unity government. It showed that there are no permanent enemies in politics. And by backing out of a deal to hand over the prime ministership, Sushil Koirala proved that there are no permanent friends, either.

So far, the formation of the cabinet shows that Oli understands the need to reach out and be more inclusive. It's a good sign, but Oli's future actions will show whether he has statesmanship as well.

# THIS WEEK

GOPEN RAI (10,790 PEOPLE REACHED,

### Most reached on Facebook

Passengers ride an overcrowded bus in Old Bus Park on Friday. There has been limited public transportation around the city as a result of the ongoing fuel crisis.





Most commented ndia-locked by Bihari K Shrestha

(30 comments)

Most visited online page

Proxy war, Editorial (7,307 views)

### **INDIA-LOCKED**

Kudos for a frank assessment of Indian government policy vis-a-vis Nepal and Nepalis ('India-locked', Bihari K Shrestha, #779). One point where I would disagree - for South Block the Madeshi issue is just a pretext. I don't think they give two bits for Nepal's Madeshis except to use/abuse for their own selfish gains. The real aim of the blockade is to assert India's hegemony over Nepal. They want Nepal to accept similar terms as Bhutan in exchange for open transit points and a 'friendly' attitude from N. Delhi.

If Nepal wants to remain a sovereign, independent nation we have no choice but to slowly start re-calibrating our relations with India and China. We will need to gradually strengthen ties with China without angering India or making them feel too threatened. As a sovereign state Nepal has every right to improve its relations and increase its trade with China. We need to start immediately with two decent highways to Khasa and Kerung - whether India likes it or not. Reducing our over dependence on India and the Indian border for our trade - essential or otherwise - is the only way South Block will respect Nepal's

YOUR SAY

sovereignty and independence. No over dependence with China too.

### Khagendra

When a country so willingly decides to ignore 40 per cent of its people and pretend that everything is fine, things cannot be right. India is merely protecting its own interest which it should because a disgruntled Madesh on its border will create a stateless actor and jeopardise Indian security. Nepali politicians are known to use India whenever convenient. Now they are stoking anti-India sentiments to appear nationalistic. If Madheshis are being mentored from across the border, then where do politicians like Oli take their orders from? Nepal's failure is failure of its diplomacy.

### Gaurav

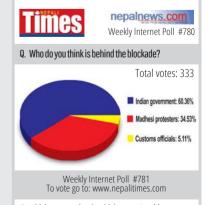
Solar and water energy are right here. We can become energy sufficient with smart roads, and public transport systems, plus online mechanisms which allow citizens to communicate with government agencies online. Nepal needs a leader with a holistic sense of commerce, industry, and transportation. We will never become 'India-free' so to speak. But at least it can be brought down to acceptable

levels. Finally, we need to address social causes for the unrest. India or no India, Madheshi issues remain within our domain.

Namah

Well-written piece but it leaves me wondering why the writer failed to include the 40 plus deaths and the apathy towards the agitating Madeshis right before and during the promulgation of the constituition. In short why was there a hurry to declare the statute with so much death and dissatisfaction around?

Ambarish Palit



Q. Which community should the new President belong to?





Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit

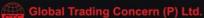
### CELEBRATE WITH SOPHISTICATION HAPPY DASHAIN



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n a hazy afternoon last winter, Madhesi and Janajati leaders were impatiently waiting for UCPN (M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Singha Darbar. They wanted to know what transpired in a one-on-one meeting between Dahal and UML Chair KP Oli, who was more influential than NC President Sushil

Dahal is poor at hiding emotions. When he is happy, his eyes sparkle. When he is sad, he is known to publicly burst into

Koirala in the constitution drafting process.



**AS IT HAPPENS** 

Om Astha Rai

tears. So when he looked downcast as he stepped in, everyone figured out that the meeting had not gone well. Given Oli's publicly pronounced rigidity, it was not unanticipated.

But they were in for shock when Dahal briefed them about what Oli told him: "You will reach nowhere walking hand-in-hand with Madhesi and Janajati losers." Madhesi and Janajati leaders felt hurt. They knew Dahal was very manipulative, but they didn't think Oli would go that far even though he had been pouring public scorn on Madhesis and Janajatis.

A few days later, Oli said: "Why don't you claim Bihar as a Madhes province if you think every piece of flat land is Madhes?" He was angry at Madhesi leaders pressing for Nepal's entire plains region as a Madhes state. Madhesi leaders felt insulted and walked out, demanding an apology that never came.

Negotiations failed and the



## Onus on Oli

If Oli fails, a Dasain respite will just be an interval before a more violent climax in the Tarai

Constituent Assembly (CA) missed its 22 January deadline without a constitution. Oli convinced Koirala to push through a vote on the new constitution, provoking Maoist, Madhesi and Janajati lawmakers to go berserk in the CA. Later, Oli derided Maoist-Madhesi-Janajati vandals by comparing them with 'naked oxen'. He went on to ridicule Janajati leader Padma Ratna Tuladhar and his allies as 'nameless, faceless and useless' parties.

Despite his revolutionary past, Oli is a status quoist. He did not have faith in the 2006 Democracy Movement, which toppled the monarchy and gave birth to republicanism. Even as hundreds of thousands of Nepalis demanded democracy on the streets during what was known as the April Uprising, he mocked them saying "an ox cart cannot take us to America".

But that controversial remark has

been long forgotten after Oli became the first post-transition Prime Minister of a republic that Nepal has now become. But what should be more serious worry for him is that he is also seen as an anti-Madhesi/Janajati. Before being elected as Prime Minister early this week, he said: "I know some people call me anti-Madhesi, but I am not against any community and I will prove it through my actions."

If Oli really meant what he said, he has to start re-cultivating his image by reaching out to Madhesis and Janajatis straight away. It was easy for him to hurl slurs from Balkot, but he is now in Baluwatar.

Ironically, by voting against Oli, Madhesi parties have accepted the 'discriminatory' constitution which they burnt. They have not formally withdrawn their agitation but are now in the horns of a dilemma. The Madhesi people have lost whatever little faith they had in their leaders, especially Mahant Thakur, who they consider took India's bait.

Oli's election as Prime Minster was a face saver for New Delhi to ease the blockade. It was also an opportunity for Madhesi leaders to withdraw their monthslong agitation. But Madhesi grievances have not gone away, and Oli needs to address them if he is to keep the Madhesis and New Delhi happy.

Merely exposing the greed and hypocrisy of Madhesi leaders by promising them plump ministerial posts might defuse the Madhes movement for now, but it will be just a matter of time before the Tarai streets flare up again. The Madhes has witnessed three uprisings in less than a decade, and it is time to douse the embers once and for all.

Madhesi leaders are now facing backlash and threats from their own constituencies. There is still discontent, and the Birganj border through which nearly 70 per cent of fuel is imported into Nepal remains blocked. So it is not over yet. There might be some respite during the Dasain festival, but that will just be a lull before the storm.

The new constitution does not need to be redrafted. Madhesis just want the insertion of the word 'proportional' in the chapter of fundamental rights, election constituencies in proportion to their population and modification of plains provinces, among others. Oli must show the same urgency with which he pushed through the new constitution to fulfill these demands.

Last week, representatives of Madhesi parties waited all day long for the government's negotiators. But they never showed up because they were too busy lobbying for their prime ministerial candidates. The new government should not take talks with Madhesi dissenters so lightly. This should be the foremost priority.

Oli must prove with his actions what he said before being elected Prime Minister. His clock is ticking.

# Running on fumes

If you have been in Kathmandu the past few weeks, at one point or another, you will have felt or realised the following:



ONE TO MANY

Bidushi Dhungel

First – and perhaps foremost – an overwhelming sense of stupidity for once having brushed off or laughed at those sheepishlooking electric vehicles – and their drivers.

Next, if you have been bothered enough still to keep yourself updated, sheer exhaustion and even a feeling of creeping madness over the political developments of the past months is inevitable.

Third, the overnight change in weather as autumn settles in and you find yourself digging out sweaters and scarves from your closet.

Lastly, the festive season has officially arrived and will not end until the new year. That may either bring dread or joy—most likely some combination of both.

First things first. As you attempted to forge a space for yourself in an already-



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overly eager types did—you were quite content with your i10 or Honda scooty.

This is, of course, if you are the average Kathmanduite, not one of those 'even a blockade's

overcrowded bus-or atop one

— you couldn't help but feel

little green Reva that whizzed

glory-literally and figuratively

speaking. I guess it's the same

All of a sudden you find

environment, sustainable, easier

yesterday, didn't factor in at all.

Until yesterday, going electric

yourself thinking about how

going electric is good for the

to manoeuvre, so on and so

forth. All these things, until

kind of feeling many Nepalis

harbour towards India: of disgust and wonder all at once.

by, gloating in its green

resentment and envy toward the

This is, of course, if you are the average Kathmanduite, not one of those 'even a blockade's got nothing on me' types who are never seen on petrol queues but always manage to have some. They aren't the ones carpooling, either.

was just what the kooky and

The whole running out of fuel issue wouldn't be so bad if it were only literal. For anyone to maintain a semblance of sanity or perspective in the midst of this political whirlwind would surely require some kind of super power—at least one.

Let's look at a recap of the scenario: We have a constitution that is problematic. It is causing mass protests in the Tarai and lots of people have died. It doesn't like women and Madhesis, basically. On top of that, our southern neighbour declared an unofficial blockade and many of the protesters support/ed it. It has now kind of ended, but kind of not.

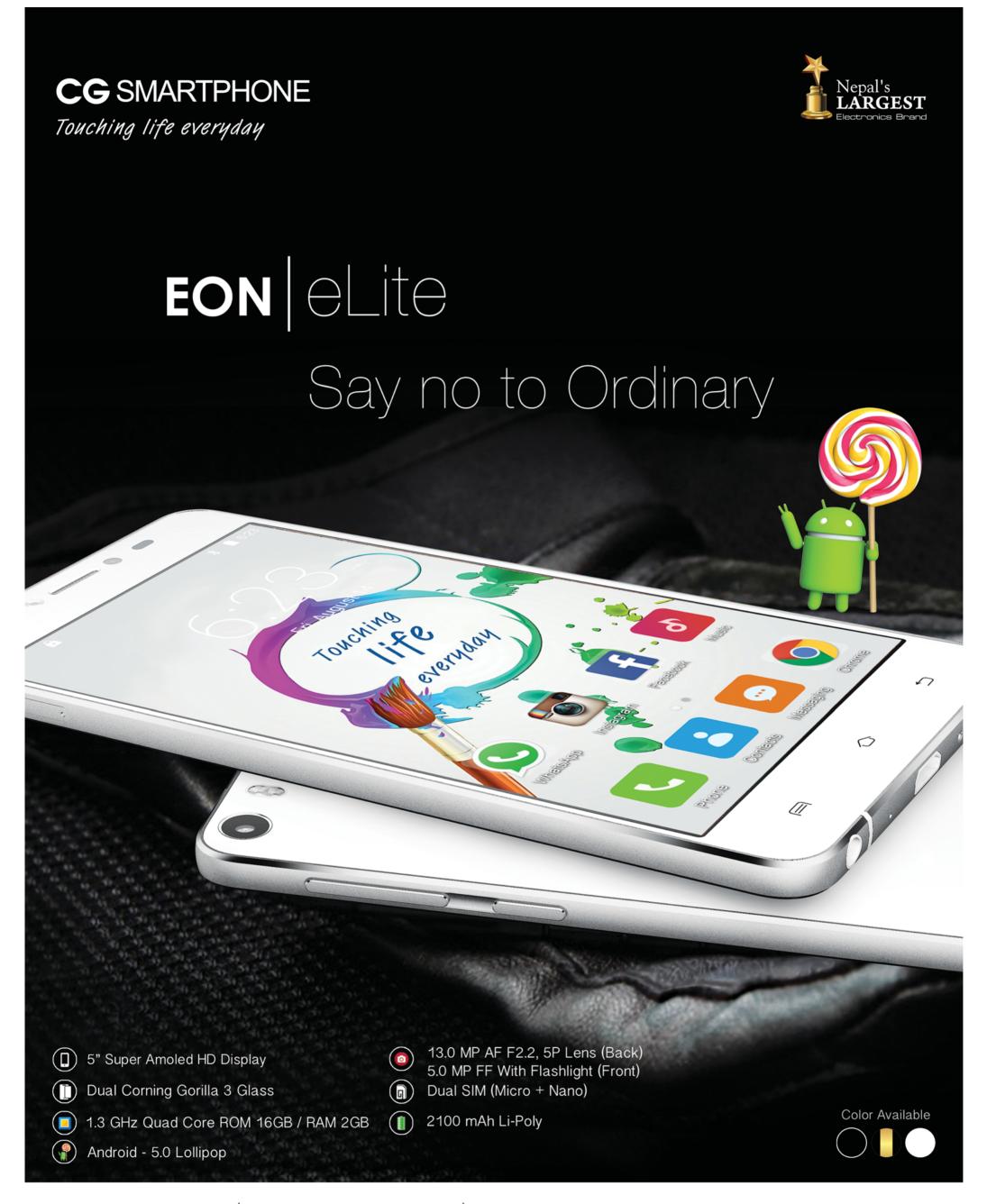
We have a new Prime Minister who became the Premier after the outgoing Premier lost in an attempt to remain Prime Minister. We are set to get a new President and she might be a woman! But even that is dampened by the fact that Mrs Bhandari has vocally denounced the very idea of women's rights and feminism. So, the hope that this government – not exactly known for its progressive values – might be in power for two whole years is all we have to look forward to.

Even the netas are getting exhausted and some are giving up or changing tactic. We do however have winter and festivities to look forward to.

It's nice to be able to leave the house in the morning in a sweater. Then again, thinking about all those earthquake victims, winter isn't looking so great, either. It is going to inevitably bring more bad news, as though bad news – and not fuel -- was in short supply. The festive season will go some way in easing the maddening situation. If only one could be spared of the seemingly endless family obligations and visits to aunts and uncles you see only once a year.

That's right, all that can undo what has been done are several stiff whiskies, some khasi ko masu and endless games of marriage – minus all the tika. Happy holidays, folks!









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## The right to have rights

The new Constitution lays bare misogynistic and patriarchal psyches that usually hide behind nationalism

### **SANGITA THEBE LIMBU**

neing stateless is a violation of human dignity and Freedom, yet countries including Nepal have failed to address this issue as they continue to maintain gender discriminatory laws by denying their female citizens the right to pass their citizenship to their children on an equal basis as males.

With the newly promulgated Constitution, Nepal has officially legitimised this discrimination. While claiming to end all forms of inequalities including those based on gender as stated in the Preamble, Article 18.1 goes further and states all citizens are equal before law. However, is 'equality for all' a beacon of hope for the marginalised or mere rhetoric?

The Constitution drafters have used biological sex as a basis to differentiate between Nepali citizens and have further reinforced unequal gender relations, particularly in the context of citizenship laws. Article 11.2.b of the Constitution states that a person whose father or mother is Nepali at the time of the birth can become Nepali by descent. The use of 'or' appears promising at first yet the subsequent clause states both father and mother have to be Nepali at the time of birth for a person to acquire citizenship by descent (Article 11.3), which clearly overrides the previous clause and possibility for change.

Article 11.5 states a person domiciled in Nepal who was born to a Nepali mother and whose whereabouts of father, who must also be Nepali, is unknown has to be born in Nepal in order to acquire citizenship through descent. However, this condition on birthplace is only applied to children of Nepali women and not Nepali

This condition puts children of trafficked women, migrant women workers and other transient women whose offspring are born outside Nepal at a



GOPEN RAI

disadvantaged position. Furthermore, the onus is ultimately on single mother to prove the nationality of her child's father as she is not allowed to confer citizenship independent of him.

Under Article 11.7, the child born to a Nepali woman married to a foreigner is only entitled to a naturalised citizenship. The issue with naturalisation is that it usually tends to be at the discretion of the state rather than a right in itself and with the new Constitution, naturalised citizens are barred from appointments to the upper echelons of political authority (Article 238).

However, the Article further states that if the

person is born in Nepal and both mother and father are Nepali citizens at the time of acquisition of citizenship, then the person may acquire citizenship by descent. This is based on an assumption that foreign spouse of Nepali woman may have acquired naturalised Nepali citizenship by then. The irony of course is that the Constitution states a foreign woman married to Nepali man may acquire naturalised citizenship (Article 11.6) but it does not specify anything when it comes to foreign spouses of Nepali women.

The citizenship provisions show there are two distinct citizens: Nepali men and Nepali women. Nepali men are Nepali citizens, who are the heads of households, primary breadwinners for their families and essentially the owners, heirs and protectors of Nepal. As for Nepali women, they are second class citizens who can give birth (to both national and foreign children) but cannot give them identity. They are harmless as long as they live within male-headed households in accordance to social norms, but should there be any 'deviations' they become 'the others' that pose threat to national unity, security and sovereignty.

The Constitution lays bare misogynistic and patriarchal psyches that usually hide behind nationalism – which is apparently the preserve of men. Such nationalism scapegoats women instead of addressing the dismal state of governance and political failures, it is worried sick about potential instability from outside yet overlooks the instability it itself creates and recreates through statelessness, which is not just 'women's issue' but that of human rights. Hypocrisy is evident and so are exclusions yet, the question remains – beyond pain and deep resentment, could we still hope and take action for change?

The Constitution has taken a progressive stance on LGBT rights (Article 18 & 42), criminalised violence against women, acknowledged sexual and reproductive rights and equal rights in property and family affairs (Article 38), yet the prevailing discrimination in citizenship provisions is not only a contravention of Nepal's International commitments (such as CEDAW) but also a missed opportunity, yet again, to recognise women as citizens in their own right.

Securing gender equality in the Constitution is of course not an end in itself, it is just the beginning but even that is proving difficult in Nepal.

Sangita Thebe Limbu is studying Gender, Development and Globalisation at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

# Collateral Damage -3 Democratising Intimidation

f alchemists strive to turn base metal into gold, Nepal's **⊥**politicians seem intent on twisting noble concepts like inclusive democracy and empowerment into base, selfserving tools in their neverending pursuit of power. The Collateral Damage series hereby



### **MOVING TARGET**

Foreign Hand

lurches forward by examining one of the more perverse outcomes of the Pointless War and this alchemy of the opposite.

It starts way back when the Maoists raised an army, attacked the state and thereby usurped the government's monopoly on the use of force. By training their cadre to harass all who opposed them the party effectively democratised the right to bully citizens. Intimidating others for the cause was suddenly open to all and the Maoist trademark style of coercion, backed by the implicit threat of violence, spread like a virus. Still copied by spinoffs and opportunists to this day, witness the on-going violence in Madhes, this legacy of confrontational politics is likely to cause problems for years to come.

Until the war, coercion was



which maintained the police and army to enforce its will. That might sound bad until one considers the alternatives. Since Kathmandu-centric governments typically ignored outlying districts the government's coercive (or helping) hand was rarely felt beyond the valleys' edge. Even during the predemocracy Panchayat era people openly criticised corruption and incompetence without fear of reprisal. With all due respect for those activists jailed during the struggle for democracy, repression on a level seen in communist or right wing dictatorships never existed here. No disappearances in the night, no government spies in the workplace, no extortion or seizure of assets and certainly no thought control.

Suddenly a second armed force on the ground had the power to control the populace and punish those who resisted. Maoist recruitment drives depended on coercion as well as promises of a New Nepal, and those who objected to contributing a family member to the revolution (or sack of rice, chicken etc) were often beaten, humiliated and even killed in front of the whole village. As were teachers, landowners, or anyone accused of spying for the feudalists. Such systemic intimidation and blatant interference in people's lives, unprecedented in Nepal's long history, traumatised many in rural areas where such abuse had never occurred before.

The Maoist leadership chose the mid-western hills as their base because the terrain is ideal for guerrilla warfare, government presence was minimal and decades of chronic neglect fed resentments easily exploited. As Maoist cadre filled the vacuum left by a retreating state they began exercising power over populations that had, until then, enjoyed the sole benefit of neglect: being left

Compared to what replaced it, neglect never looked so good. Maoist indoctrination sessions and demands for food and shelter made life more difficult and attacks on government outposts, using villagers as cannon fodder, invited reprisals that escalated the conflict. Police/army patrols looking for revenge routinely accused villagers of supporting the rebels, compounding the mistreatment and suffering of those caught in the middle.

Meanwhile, in the cities and towns Maoist trade unions brought the party strategy of aggressive intimidation to factories, hotels and other businesses nationwide. Violent confrontations between labor and management, rare in the past, became commonplace as existing unions were forcefully taken over and radicalized by Maoist cadre. The right to threaten violence to achieve a goal, previously a state monopoly, was thus effectively privatised.

Organised extortion, used to finance the Maoist war, increased dramatically after the

peace agreement. Extortion is simply intimidation with a profit motive and the Maoists created an impressive network of thugs trained in the dark arts of coercion. Their demands for 'donations' and 'revolutionary tax' from businesses and families spread fear into the lives of many thousands who had never faced anything similar in the past.

Once the government lost its exclusive privilege to collect taxes the democratisation of intimidation was almost complete. Maobadi trained bullies inevitably spawned 'Khaobadi' imposters who copied their techniques, soon followed by start-up political parties with names like Terai Cobras, keen to exploit the newly available right to intimidate others for cash.

Last but not least, criminal Mafias took advantage of the chaos and grew powerful enough to make themselves indispensible to those in power. The nation-state and its institutions, until recently in control of all levers of authority and coercion, was now helpless before forces better organized (not saying much, I know) and better armed. The Mafia's ability to mobilise an instant army of goons whenever the need arose has become a prop no political party can live without.

And so the process comes full circle, as the right to bully others in the name of democracy is 'normalised' and accepted as valid. Yet again, our cabal of voodoo alchemists somehow manages to legitimize the vulgar and crude at the expense of the noble and pure, turning their promises of gold into pig iron results.





recipitation, either as snow at higher altitudes or rain in ne lower valleys, but it will send minimum temperatures in

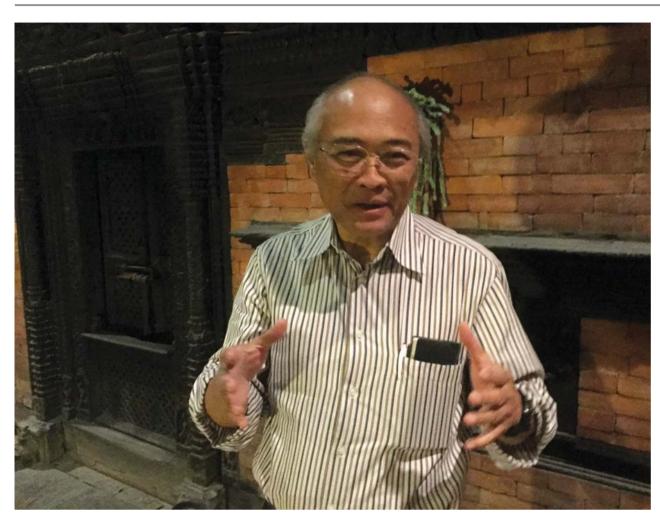












with Ashutosh Tiwari:

Kuntoro Mangkusubroto led a complex reconstruction effort in Aceh-Nias, the region of Indonesia that was devastated by tsunamis and earthquakes, from 2005 to 2009. Excerpts from his conversation

times of emergency, knowing how to harness international goodwill reduces pain and makes the work go faster.

### How did you assure donors who had made pledges that funds would be used well?

Pledges are political statements made by donor countries at conferences. Once you have formed a reconstruction agency, you ask donors for money. The longer you take to ask for money, the less interested the countries are in giving it. The first thing they want is no corruption. If you cannot guarantee corruptionfree deliveries, your government should not get involved in your work except for to provide oversight at the highest level. And you certainly do not want to do conditional cash transfers because they are easily abused.

In our case, the donors did not trust our system and so we assured them that we would not integrate their money into our national budget. Instead, we created a Multi Donor Fund (MDF), with a steering committee composed of ambassadors and heads of agencies. I was the sole government official on that committee, which met monthly to make decisions about the money. International auditors and banks were involved. All of this helped assure donors that their money was being used productively.

# "We were delivery-focused from day one"

Nepali Times: What have your observations been on the pace of Nepal's formal reconstruction

Kuntoro Mangkusubroto: I do not know Nepal's geography and culture well, but given the devastation caused by the earthquakes, I am surprised that things seem peaceful here. After meeting with government representatives, I did not get a sense of urgency, that "let's forget everything else and concentrate on rebuilding" attitude. If this happened in Indonesia, there would be thousands of people outside shouting and making our lives miserable. Maybe Nepalis are too nice.

Speaking of urgency, how did you approach the reconstruction work in the Aceh-Nias area? I made some good decisions. First,

I left Jakarta and moved to the affected area with my family. By living in the community, I saw that new problems came up all the time but I was also able to deal with issues right away. This reduced surprises and uncertainties and sped up the recovery work.

We also planned as we proceeded, there was no master plan. We did not wait for perfection. We started building houses, without worrying about mistakes, which we knew we could fix later. We said that each house should be built to withstand a seven magnitude earthquake, and that it had to cover an area between 36 and 54 square meters. These broad guidelines worked.

Because we were deliveryfocused from day one, we were soon able to point to what we built instead of merely talking about what we were planning to do. If we had not delivered, we would not have been able to protect ourselves against criticism or show that we were on the right track.

### How did you work with such diverse stakeholders -community groups, countries, donor agencies, NGOs, contractors?

We had them write a concept note in which they had to explain what they would do, where the money would come from, how they would procure materials, and how they would staff the projects. That note was then vetted by local villagers, who decided what got built where. Sometimes, I had to step in to make the final decision, but once the concept note was turned into a village plan - with input from the villagers - it was time to start rebuilding that village.

Since the villagers helped plan.

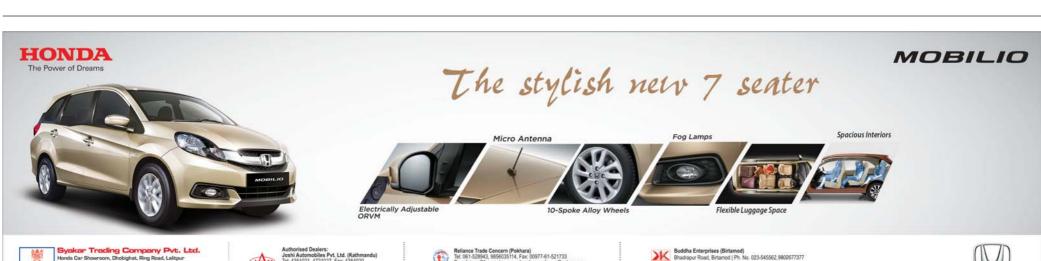
conflicts related to land disputes were minimised. Donor agencies and NGOs that wanted to rebuild had to go through this process, which streamlined coordination.

### Speaking of diverse stakeholders, how should Nepal's reconstruction efforts involve these influential non-state actors?

I don't know about Nepal's specific context, but in Indonesia, we treated NGOs and donor agencies as friends and partners. After all, we could not have completed all 12,000 projects without help. At the same time, countries and agencies had to follow our community-driven procedures. Singapore, for instance, built a port. Spain built a hospital. We made it easier for them and others to help us. This might have been an unorthodox approach, but in

### How did you measure the success of your work?

We used Millennium Development Goal indicators. The maternal mortality rate in Aceh-Nias is lower than that of the whole country. The percentage of children aged nine to twelve enrolled in school is higher than the national average. Indicators of poverty and unemployment are lower than they were before the disaster. There are no conflicts in villages. Our bottom-up approach appears to have worked well.















# TREKKING IN NEPAL TURNS

### **ROBIN MARSTON**

ifty years ago in October 1965, three American women travelled in an old jeep over a rough dirt road to the eastern end of the Kathmandu Valley. Accompanied by a team of Sherpas, the trio then began a fourweek walk-in to the foot of Mount Everest. Thus began commercial

trekking in Nepal.

Until 1950 Nepal was closed to foreigners. British climbers seeking access to Mt Everest turned east to Darjeeling from where a route led 150km north to Nathu La (4310m). This off-shoot of the old Silk route lead from the plains of Bengal to Lhasa. The pass offered the easiest access route to the north side of the Himalaya, and Darjeeling-based Sherpas,

already engaged in trading and well adapted to high altitude, were recruited by early British expeditions.

Back then there were no roads or airfields in the foothills east of the Kathmandu valley. The air strip at Lukla was still under construction. Little happened in the eastern Nepal Himalaya until the country allowed access to its mountains from the south.

Maurice Herzog led the first ever successful climb of an 8000m peak, Annapurna I. The Swiss almost conquered Everest using the South Col route in 1952, but it was Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary climbing with John Hunt's British expedition that finally scaled the world's highest

mountain.

Subsequently more expeditions arrived, giving employment to Nepali guides and porters. In 1964, Colonel James Owen Roberts opened Nepal's first trekking agency 'Mountain Travel Nepal'. Roberts had spent much of his youth trekking and climbing in the Karakoram and served with distinction in the British Gurkhas during the Burma campaign in the Second World War. His agency organised the first-ever trek for the American women in 1965.

Through 1960s to 1980s trekking in Nepal was largely a 'camping experience' which quickly grew popular among people in America, Europe, Australia and elsewhere. In the 1980s and 1990s things gradually changed as villagers in the Annapurna, Langtang, and Solu Khumbu areas built tea houses or lodges. From simple dormstyle accommodation Nepal's trekking routes today offer en

suite facilities. As more and more people used the lodges, support for tented trekking fell away, and the lodge owners and villages got a bigger share of trekking income.

More recently roads have pierced their way north up Himalayan valleys along what used to be trekking trails. Most noticeable is the route from Pokhara via Beni and Tatopani up through the Kali Gandaki gorge to Jomsom and on to Muktinath and the ancient walled city of Lo Manthang. Rough as it is, the road has allowed many thousands of pilgrims to visit the shrine at Muktinath, but the number of trekkers in the area has fallen by half.

The quality of the Around Annapurna Trek, listed as one of the 'Seven Great Treks of the World' has also degraded after roads went up Manang Valley and Helambu. Inevitably they affect trekking trails, reduce choice and detract from the classic trek experience.

In the last three years Nepal has experienced two major dramas on Everest, an avalanche on the Thorung Pass in the Annapurnas and more recently, the earthquake that affected 12 districts which were prime trekking destinations.

If Nepal's trek industry is to grow and prosper, it urgently needs to innovate, diversify and recover its image. One of the new trekking brands is the Great Himalaya Trails that hiking enthusiasts can do in installments, or at one go.

Nepal still has much to offerthe beauty of the country, the friendliness of its peoples and the awe that the mighty Himalaya can inspire. It has indeed been a wonderful first 50 years for trekking in Nepal, but which way forward the country takes will determine its next 50.

Robin Marston came to Kathmandu overland from UK 35 years ago and has been promoting trekking and tourism here.



UNDA DIXIT









# Freewheeling in Kathmandu

couple of decades ago, Kathmandu was one of the best cities in the world to bicycle around in. Not too Bhaktapur were easily pedal-able. Times changed, the city grew, traffic choked the narrow streets and the pollution choked everyone. Kathmandu stopped becoming a fun place to bicycle around in.

But one of the temporary positive side effects of the fuel blockade this month has been that the Valley is cyclefriendly again. We know it is not going to last, as the fuel supplies resume the streets will once more be too polluted and crowded to navigate in a bicycle.

This week, I rented a bike from Nepali mountain biking pioneer Sonar Gurung and pedalled to Patan for breakfast, onwards to Sanepa for a meeting past the parked Machhindranath chariot, along unending queues of motorcycles and taxis waiting for rationed petrol, and back to my lodge in Thamel. Kathmandu was so different from any other of the 28 times I have visited the city.

With proper planning, Kathmandu could easily move

to pedal power. I envied those who knew Kathmandu in the 70s and 80s, because this week I caught a small glimpse of what Kathmandu Valley must have been

I rode alongside vegetable sellers, pedestrians and savoured the cleanish air racing past humming Safa tempos with cheeky new stickers ('No Diesel, No Gas, No Problem). I was able to see a city that normally drives me up the wall in a completely different light. Wanda Vivequin





Thamel to Boudhanath 12 minutes

Boudhanath to Sankhu 45 minutes

15<sub>minutes</sub> Lajimpat to Sitapaila





### **EVENTS**



### TWELVE DAYS OF DASAIN

Both the longest and biggest festival in Nepali culture, Dasain is celebrated by worshipping goddess Durga in all her manifestations. The fifteen-day festival began on 13 October on the day of Ghatasthapana.

**20 October, Fulpati:** Seventh day on which fulpati (jamara, 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.

### Kite Festival,

Flying and designing kites plus music events and cycle rides in this year's Chariot Track Kite Festival. 11am, 17 October, Yoshingkhel Square, Kha:laan, Bhaktapur www.chariottrack.org

### October Beer Festival.

Nepal's first beer pong tournament, with live music from Abhaya and the Steam Injuns.

2pm onwards, 17 October, Rs 1500 Trisara, Lajimpat, 9851186972



### Film Southasia.

A biennial festival full of informative, entertaining, scintillating documentaries on South Asia.

19-22 November, Kathmandu www.filmsouthasia.org

For registration: (01) 4371123

### Conference on heart disease.

Conquering heart disease in the Himalayan region: the eighth international congress on the management of cardiovascular disease. 5pm, 30-31 October, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Kathmandu



### Critical Mass.

A monthly meet-up for cyclists who want to reclaim the streets, followed by a brief ride around town. This month's critical mass is to be held in remembrance of conservationist Prahlad Yonzon 5.30pm, 30 October, Basantapur Darbar Square

### Wholeness.

Artist Puran Khadka whose work is a meditative abstraction full of spiritual awakening exhibits his paintings. *Till 30 October, Park Gallery, Pulchok,* (01)5522307, contact@parkgallery.com.np

### Shakti,

Celebrated artist Kiran Manandhar's fourth solo exhibition explores the mortal power and divine energy manifested in the female form

Until 10 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

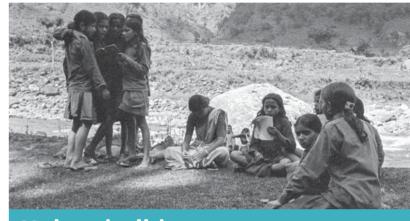
### Farmers' market,

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, Lajimpat, every Saturday, (01)4006587, 9802028777

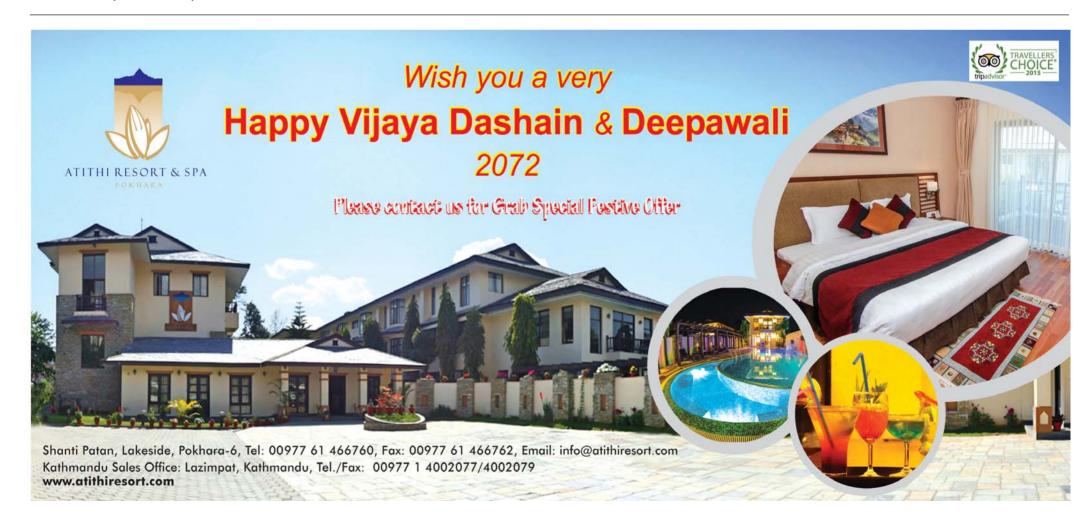
### Quake photobook,

Nepal425 launches a crowd-sourcing drive for printing a coffee table book featuring 700 pictures of the earthquake. All proceeds from the sales will go to quake-affected. www.nepal425.com



### 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







### NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.



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**GETAWAYS** 

### **DINING**

# **Grill Me,**A restaurant with a warm ambience and delicious grilled delights. Jhamel, (01)5535294

### Kaiser Cafe.

Have a BBQ lunch and a glass of wine or beer inside the peaceful Garden of Thamel, (01)4425341



### Vesper Café,

Great for leisurely dining, serves diverse foods that reflect Italian lifestyle. Jhamsikhel, (01)5548179

### Bodhi books and bakes,

A quiet, snug place that titillates the appetites of both the epicurean and the erudite.



Kairos Café

Jawalakhel, 9813173747

recharge.

### Soaltee specials,

Soaltee Crowne Plaza is featuring special menus from seven award-winning chefs until November.

Tahachal, (01)4273999

### Jazzmandu,

Mark Your Calendars for the Biggest Jazz Party in the Himalayas. Visit the Jazzmandu Facebook page for chances to win tickets. 4 to 10 November, Kathmandu

**MUSIC** 

### Nepal Music Festival,

Nepal's biggest volunteer-run music and culture festival, includes performances by noted bands and fun activities. 28 November, 12 to 8pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, Pradarshani Marg www.nepalmusicfestival.org



### Guthrie Govan,

English guitarist Guthrie Govan performing in Nepal to raise proceeds for the earthquake-affected. 5pm, 23 Oct, pre-sales: Rs 1500 and door

sales: Rs 2000, Club 25 Hours, Tangal, (01)4437486

### Open mic,

Calling all aspiring singers. Every Tuesday, 7pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com

### Glacier hotel,

Good value and friendly service for travelers on the lap of Lake Phewa Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463722 www.glaciernepal.com

### 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



### Relax at Hyatt,

Enjoy a one-night stay at the five-star for only Rs. 9,999+ Package includes a complimentary breakfast for two, spa access. (For Nepalis and local residents

Boudha, (01)4491234, kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com

### 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



### Tiger Mountain Lodge,

Situated 1000 ft above Pokhara valley, this resort offers spectacular views of Machhapuchchre, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu.

www.tigermountainpokhara.com, (01)4426427, 9849194874



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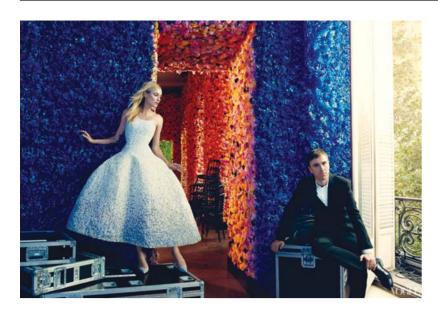












### DIOR AND I

'ost people would say that a documentary about fashion is a waste of very expensive financial resources. Dior and I though which is precisely the kind of aforementioned documentary is much more than just a film about



Sophia Pande

fashion. In addition to being a character study, a close, fairly neutral, almost anthropological examination of a very tight knit group of people who work in an extremely exclusive, opaque,

almost cultish environment (that is haute couture); the documentary unravels the creative process of fashion-- from inception to presentation.

Directed by Frédéric Tcheng - *Dior and I* examines the famous French fashion house's transition into the hands of Raf Simons, a Belgian designer who had previously helmed Jil Sanders - a brand known for its minimalist ethos. At the time of the transition in 2012 Simons was a bit of a risk for the very formal House of Dior which has always been known for its ultra-feminine couture designs made famous by Christian Dior himself. The legend's memoirs are laced through the film in a dreamy but surprisingly relevant voice over describing his experiences, hopes and fears as he created the famous

brand.

The documentary works mainly because of the incredible access that Tcheng has into the inner workings of the fashion house, capturing everything from the very first introduction of Simons to the long standing artisans who painstakingly cut, pin, sew and execute the frighteningly complex designs to the opinions of the people who own the LVMH (Louis Vuitton Möet Hennesey) empire that in turns owns Dior and therefore pull the purse strings.

Tcheng's documentary style is mostly cinema verité interspersed with some skillfully framed talking head interviews, which are essential to understanding the inner workings of such an establishment. While the film itself doesn't particularly look glossy, it is does do something extraordinary - which is to not over glamourise the fashion industry.

This is a film about huge egos, shimmering dreams that are realised by hordes of extraordinary detailed oriented craftspeople, and in the end it does prove that while the highest of fashion is indeed an art form, only the richest of the rich can have access to it. The documentary builds towards Simons' extraordinary debut set in one of the most decadent places in Paris giving us a taste of what it might be like to actually attend such a fantastically ephemeral art event. Capturing that occassion in all its wonder is the true magic of this particular film.







NEW CHAPTER: Indian ambassador Ranjit Rae congratulates Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at his swearing-in ceremony at Shital Niwas on Monday.



UNENDING: Leaders of the Madhesi Morcha announce plans to continue protests at a press conference in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



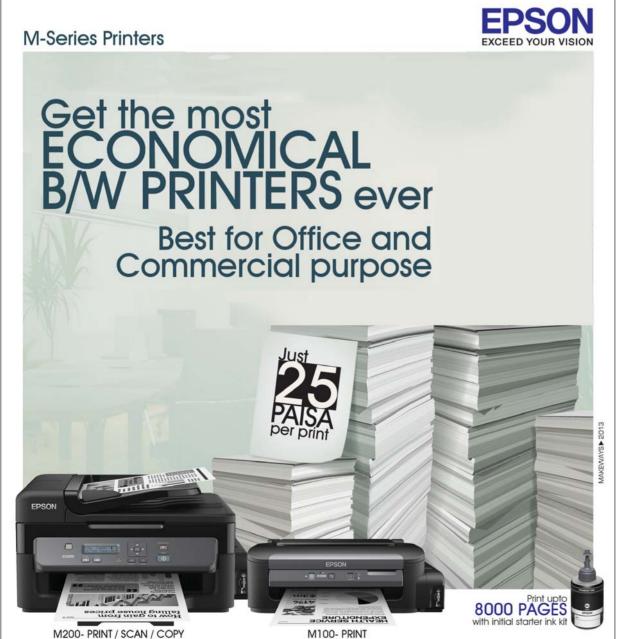
PAVING WAYS: Speaker Subas Nembang and Vice-Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar submit their resignation at Singa Darbar on Wednesday.



LONG WAIT: Hundreds of motorcycles wait in line outside a petrol pump on Tuesday.



SACRED VEST: A Guthi Sansthan official displays the bejeweled vest known as Bhoto during the Bhoto Jatra festival at Jawalakhel on Monday.



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# CHRPTER 2 HIE RSSETTBLY STORY RID HRY BY: RIJSH RRJ. JOSH



# Otaku Next

swapped the handwritten font used in the last issue for a computerised font, giving a cleaner and clearer look

Three ongoing mangas, Wind Walkers, Demon Ignition and Moonlight Chaos, make a comeback along with five new series: The Bird Song, The Daily Lives of the Igarashi Siblings, The Guardian of the Crimson Flame, The Unholy Sanctum and Trust and Betrayal.

Demon Ignition is an action series by Anish Raj Joshi that revolves around the soul survivors, a group of people who are able to see demons and who also have the

power to seal them. The series picks up pace in the latest issue. Not only is the art better but the author gives enough room for character development. By the end of the second chapter, the reader gets a good idea of who the characters are as well as a general feel for the overall storyline. The other two continuing series, Moonlight Chaos and Wind Walkers, would do well if they focused a little more on character development and the flow of the story, respectively. But then again, it may require reading beyond the second chapter to expect everything to fall into place.

The newer entries - The Unholy Sanctum by Rasik Rai and Bikin Ghimire and The Bird Song by Ksaurus - look promising. In the former, two friends are thrown into a virtual world where an experiment with reality goes haywire and the readers are left with the impression that an evil antagonist may be behind it all. But we don't know yet, it is just the first chapter. The Bird Song introduces a little girl Mari who is ill, living in a hospital deep in the woods, and who loves hearing stories about the Birdkins,

mystical creatures who look like humans, but with wings, and who are said to cause the death of all those who hear them sing.

Sandip Rai's story, Trust and Betrayal, was published in the last issue and has been turned into a manga with Pranisha Gurung's art in the latest issue. The manga's storyline stays close to the original story.

To be sure, there are definitely some shortcomings in the mangas artwork and storylines but, considering that the mangakas are just starting out and that most, if not all, of them have to juggle between drawing and writing the manga and keeping up with their schoolwork, what they have achieved is commendable.

The editors need to pay attention to details and maintain consistency in the reading styles. For the series Wind Walkers and Demon Ignition, the reading style has been changed from right-left in the first issue to left-right in the latest issue. Whether this is deliberate or accidental, it can confuse the readers. And while all eight series are heavily influenced by Japanese manga, it would have been nice to have a Nepal-based manga for a change.

If you are looking for a place to relax and enjoy a lazy meal, the busy streets of Pulchowk may not be the first place that comes to mind. Unlike the restaurants at nearby Jhamsikhel, which has developed quite the reputation for satisfying the cravings of even the biggest foodies, Pulchowk's list of eateries is still fairly limited to the everyday restaurants that serve quick meals to office-goers nearby.

**SAHINA SHRESTHA** 

apan's cutting edge pop-

youths are no exception. The

more popular, and catering to

the country's young crowd is a

home-grown manga magazine,

warm welcome for its debut issue,

released in December last year, the

The new issue of Otaku Next

boasts a better design and layout.

These improvements are evident

boring plain blue cover for a series

white backdrop, befitting a manga

anthology. The editors have also

right from the cover (pic) of the

new issue, which ditches the

of manga characters against a

second issue was launched at a

cosplay event last month.

Otaku Next. After receiving a

manga-verse in Nepal is becoming

culture has earned fans from

all around the globe and Nepal

So when we headed to BAC Art Café, tucked neatly at the end of a short alleyway beside Hotel Meconopsis, we were pleasantly surprised to be greeted by a lush garden and comfortable open space. The café, although easily accessible from the main road, felt miles away from the noise and dust outside.

The restaurant is situated on the premises of Bikalpa Art Center and, as such, you can choose between sitting outside under the trees or cozying up indoors with the art collection, which features work from in-house artists when it is not hosting other exhibitions. For those who prefer to spend time between pages, the café offers a selected number of titles and for the facebookers and twitteratis there is always free wi-fi.

We chose to sit outside and enjoy the cool Dasain breeze and balmy afternoon. Having heard regulars rave about the trout and crispy-spicy BAC fried chicken we were disappointed when the café staff apologetically informed us that only limited dishes were available due to the fuel crisis.

Not letting the limited menu dampen







PICS: SAHINA SHRESTHA

## **BAC Art Café**

our spirits, we ordered a Caesar salad (Rs 350) and a Greek salad (Rs 280) for starters. Although the salads' lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers were fresh, the Greek salad did not strike us as anything special. The Caesar salad came with a generous helping of cheese and the crunchiness of the lettuce mixed with the bacon's saltiness made every mouthful a treat.

Next, we ordered a margherita pizza cafe (Rs 380) along with a pepperoni pizza (Rs 24 420). While both pizzas came with generous but toppings of cheese, the pepperoni pizza was easily the star of the meal. The smell wafting through the air when the waiter brought it to our table was enough to make us jump at it as soon as it was placed on

the table. Its crispy thin crust, flavourful oregano-infused tomato sauce and spicy bits of pepperoni made us wish we had ordered a second one. We probably should have ordered two because, to be honest, we could have done without the margherita pizza. To borrow words from a friend, "whatever was underneath the cheese was really bad".

Upon the recommendation from the café's staff, we ordered chicken momos (Rs 240). The leaf shaped dumplings were light but nothing out of the ordinary. We would

have liked to sample one of their three desserts -chocolate mousse, carrot cake and apple cake - but like most things on the menu, these were unavailable. Thank you, fuel crisis.

The restaurant's menu looks

promising and caters to a wide clientele as it offers a mixture of Nepali, Continental and Italian dishes, which judging by the recommendations online does not disappoint in taste. To enjoy what the restaurant has to offer to the fullest, we recommend waiting till the current situation gets better. But for those of you who don't mind the usual fare of momos, sandwiches and pizzas for now and just want to relax with a glass of wine, coffee or cocktail in a creative environment away from the shortages in real life, pop into BAC Art Café.

Even without its full menu, BAC Art Café is the perfect place to unwind and relax with your friends and family while enjoying good food and a cool ambience. Sahina Shrestha

How to get there: BAC Art Café is located at the end of the alley beside Godrej showroom, opposite to Sajha petrol pump.



# Weigh your options, not your self worth

### Hello everyone,

Eating disorders are severe psychological disorders characterised by particular eating patterns that negatively impact your physical and mental



ANYTHING

Anjana Rajbhandary

health. The most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa (when one eats too little and has abnormally low weight due to fear of gaining weight), bulimia nervosa (when one binge eats and then purges to avoid weight gain), and binge-eating disorder (when one eats too much, too regularly and feels a lack of control over their eating habits).

While there is no single cause for eating disorders, weight and body shape concerns seem to be important factors. The most common causes of eating disorders are genetic, environmental and psychological. If you or anyone you know may have an eating disorder, please seek help as it can be a lifethreatening disorder.

Send me your questions to askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com

### Hi Anjana,

I have struggled with being fat for a long time. I have very low self esteem because of how I look. I am 23 and my mother says if I do not become thin, no one will marry me. She has also put me on a strict diet. I buy food that I like when I am out because I am always hungry at home.



I hate how I look but I cannot stop eating. Eating is the only thing that makes me happy. I am embarrassed to eat in front of people. I read your article on gaining weight but you lost weight easily, please tell me how to do that so my mother doesn't call me fat anymore.

### **Hurt Soul**

**AR:** I am sorry that this is very painful for you and I completely understand what you are going through. Our society does value superficial beauty and it puts a lot of pressure on people to look good.

People with certain medical issues (thyroid, diabetes) have a tendency to gain weight more easily. I would recommend meeting with a physician to check to see if the cause of your weight gain is related to your physical health.

From your description, it seems to me like you may have binge-eating disorder but you will have to meet with a mental health professional to get a proper diagnosis. You are overeating because you are not allowed to enjoy food at home and you are made to feel bad,

which, in turn, causes you to eat more unhealthy foods in order to make yourself feel better. The first step to wellness is acknowledging you have a problem and the second is wanting to change. The third step is realising that it will be difficult at times and that you will want to give up. Honestly, you will probably falter at times but you can

get back on track, so don't be discouraged.

My struggle with being overweight did not have anything to do with medical issues. What worked for me may, or may not, work for you but I would be happy to share my tips. How you perceive yourself has a lot to do with how successful you will be in changing yourself. You do not need to be thin to fit in. You should aim to be at a healthy weight that is right for your body

It will not be easy but it is not impossible. I would suggest meeting with a therapist if possible. If I were you, I would start by making small changes. Instead of eating unhealthy foods, try to eat more fruits and vegetables. Drink lots of water. Try to do something physical every day, maybe walk around the neighbourhood. Accept yourself for who you are, and believe in yourself. If I did it, you can too. Love yourself. Good luck. 💟

### nepalitimes.com

■ A little cup of self love, #767 ■ Keeping it in the family, #773

### 

### CG's 7 new phones

CG has launched seven models of the CG Smartphone and feature phone, with one PDA and six feature phones in the Astro series. Features include Super Amoled display, sleeker design and greater durability among others.

### Asian Paints' new scheme

Asian Paints Nepal has announced a new consumer scheme under which customers purchasing Asian Paints Emulsions worth Rs 50,000 or more will be eligible for participating in the scheme and get chances to win bumper prizes.

British College graduation

British College recently concluded its first graduation ceremony in which 63 students participated. The college has affiliations with the University of the West of England and the Leads Beckett University in Britain.

### Johnnie Walker limited

Diageo PLC, along with its official distributor, Global Trading Concern, recently launched limited edition one litre bottles of Johnnie Walker Red Label. The drink comes in a red bottle to represent good luck and celebration.







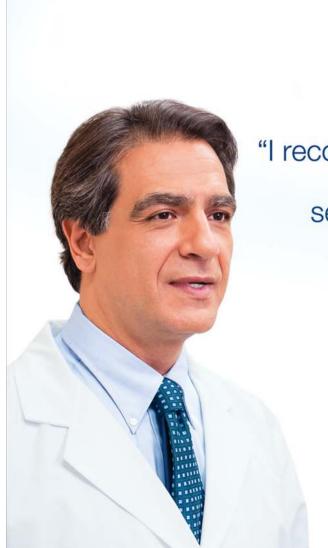
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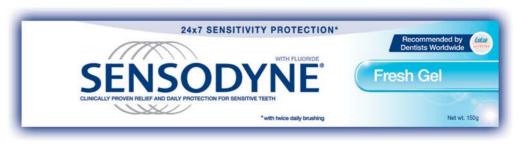
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### **China roads**

Dambar K Shrestha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 11-18 Octobier

दिमाल

After India cut off Nepal's trade lifeline with the south three weeks ago, the Nepali authorities have weighed multiple options to ease an acute shortage of fuel and other essential commodities. Their first option was to import petroleum products from China, but that turned out to be the least workable one because the earthquake has blocked the two main roads leading north: Tatopani and Rasuwagadi. The Rasuwa road reopened this week with Chinese assistance but the Tatopani highway remains blocked by huge boulders.

Ananda Prasad Khanal, the former Director General of the Department of Roads (DoR), is not surprised by the slow pace of repairs. "Nepal has never given priority to increase its land connectivity



with China," he says.

DoR officials say the government was not serious enough to reopen the Tatopani road until the Indian blockade. Only Rs 6 million was allocated to reopen the Tatopani road, even though repairing just 1 km of the damaged section requires around Rs 10 million.

Laxmi Dutta Bhatta of the DoR, says the

budget allocated for the Tatopani road was merely a drop in the ocean. "We needed at least Rs 50 million and if we had that we could have opened the road even before the blockade," he says.

The sluggishness with which the Tatopani road is being repaired bears testimony to the fact that Nepal has never given due importance to building connectivity with China, thereby relying heavily on India for essential commodities. In the wake of a crippling embargo enforced by India, Nepal finally seems to have realised the mistake that it made by not maintaining alternatives.

Khanal says: "If our political leadership had foreseen the risk of relying on one country for trade, the Indian blockade would not have choked us."

Apart from Tatopani and Rasuwagadi, six other Nepal-China highways are now under-construction. Two of them are likely to be completed within the next few years, and work is in progress along the 406 km highway connecting India's Sunauli with Tibet's Korala through Jomsom and the 291 km road from Janakpur to Phalate.

The 391 km Kechana (Jhapa)-Olangchungola (Taplejung) and the 340 km Biratnagar-Kimathanka (Sankhuwasabha) roads in eastern Nepal and the 682 km Nepalganj-Hilsa (Humla) and the 398 kmlong Brahmadev Mandi-Tinkar roads in western Nepal are other important underconstruction trade routes.

But the construction of these trade routes are moving slowly. In 2010, Bijendra Bade of the DoR had told us vehicles would start plying along all eight Nepal-China roads within 10 years. Five years later, there isn't sign of much progress.

China looks keen to push the roads, but Kathmandu is dragging its feet. Nepal's ambassador to China Mahesh Maskey says the two countries had agreed to open six more border points when Chinese premier Wen Jiabao came to Kathmandu in 2012. But the Nepal government did not show interest to follow up with that agreement.

Many believe that Nepal's political leadership does not want to offend New Delhi by accelerating Nepal-China roads. But with the blockade, there is growing pressure to accelerate the roads to the north.

### More seats for the Madhes

Tufan Neupane in Himal Khabarpatrika, 11 October

हिमार

A few days after the promulgation of the new constitution, a New Delhibased think-tank published an article by Hari Bansh Jha who described the demarcation of constituencies as the document's principal weakness. The author pointed out that the mountains and hills, together home to less than half of the country's population, are allowed 100 seats in parliament whereas only 65 are allotted for the plains.

Manish Kumar Sah, an officer at the regional election commission office in Banke wrote in a post on his Facebook page: 'If the seats were allotted in proportion to population, Tarai should have been given 83 electoral constituencies. But according to the existing provision in the constitution, which allows one seat per district, the Tarai gets only 20 seats. Among the rest of the seats, which are determined by the population of each region, the

Tarai gets another 45 seats. The hills and mountains region get 20 per cent more seats than Tarai, even though it has less population and area.'

Both analysts as well as activists of the Madhes-based parties are misinformed. Actually the number of seats in the Tarai are more or less proportionate to the population of the plains, according to Netra Prasad Dhital, a member of Constituency Delineation Commission-2013. He explains that the confusion surrounding the division of constituencies mainly arose because of a misinterpretation of provisions in the constitution. As seats are allotted based on each region's electoral constituencies, the number of seats may not be exactly in proportion to their population.

Based on the amendment tabled on 7 October, the Tarai will now have 79 seats for 20 districts, four fewer than the 83 that they have been demanding. According to Dhital, the parliamentary seats are determined using 'modified cent log method', the same formula used to determine

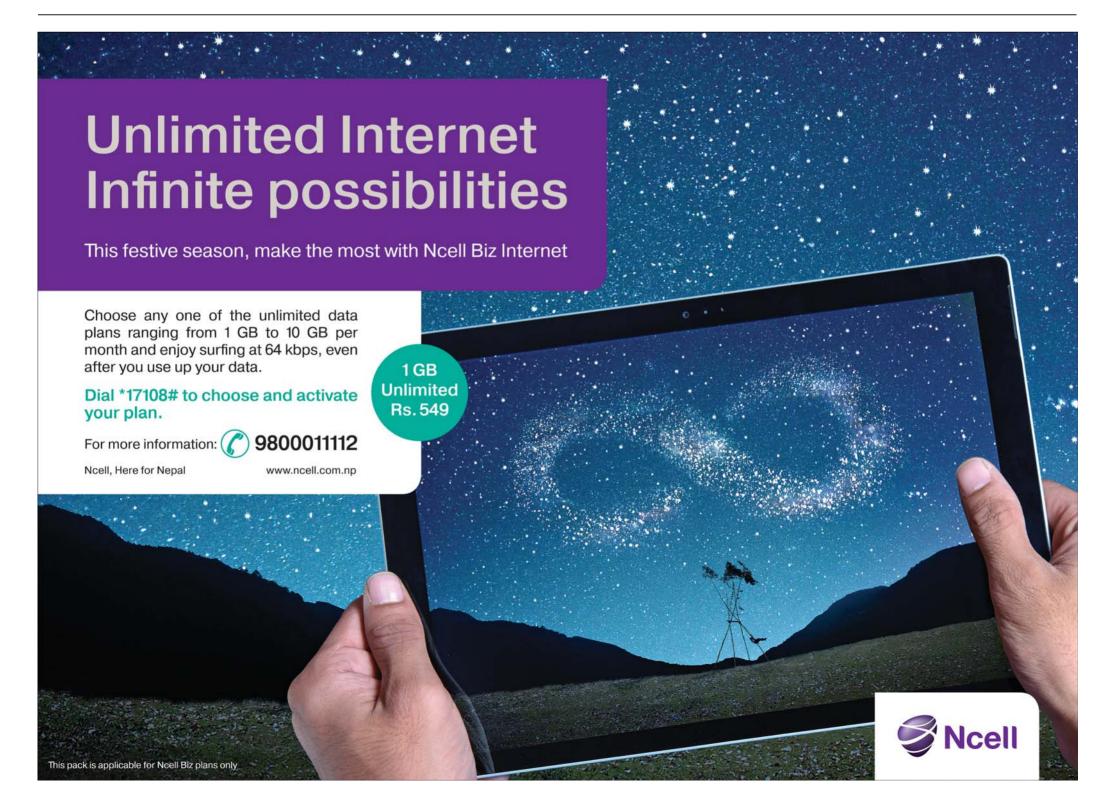
the ratio of CA members to the votes received by a political party.

An employee of the Central Bureau of Statistics who previously helped the Election Commission to calculate the ratio of CA members, worked out the number of parliamentary seats using the log method for *Himal*.

Under the 'higher quota', one seat was allocated for 18 districts in the hill and mountain regions for districts with lower-than-average population. The remaining 147 seats were distributed to 57 districts using the aforementioned method. While the number of constituencies for Kathmandu remained the same, it decreased for other districts.

When 147 constituencies are allocated to 57 districts, the average population in each constituency is 173,303. Except Bardia, Dang, Kapilvastu, Rupandehi, Chitwan, Dhanusa and Sunsari, the population in the remaining 13 districts of Tarai will be less than average. The only district in Tarai with a population of more than 200,000 is Bardia.

On the other hand, 16 districts in the hills and mountains have populations higher than average. The populations of several districts in the hills outnumbers Bardia. This suggests that, as a result of the provision that mandates one electoral constituency per district, the majority of the population load is indeed borne by districts in the hills themselves.



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### News we can use

Tere at *Nepali Times* we believe that in the end the ugly truth will ▲ prevail. That is why we take our job of holding tooth to power seriously, even when we've had a couple of teeth knocked out ourselves over the years.

But, as a rule, we always offer the other cheek. We'd rather pontificate ad nauseum and ipso facto until the enemies of press freedom fall asleep than strike back. We carry all the news that is unfit to reprint. That is why they call us 'the newspaper of records': we hold the world record in many categories, including in covering the record-breaking 64kg flower garland for Prime Minister Oily.

Despite having so much fun in our job, however, it is our duty as scribes and pharisees to bring events of national importance to the notice of our royal readers and loyal leaders and let the chips fall where they may, even while taking careful aim at the salsa dip.

What worries us is that during the Dasain break many perfectly good news items will have to be discarded into the

trash heap of history. Why? Because as responsible journalists we all take a break from breaking news, and don't bring out our newspapers for a whole week. However, due to popular demand, we have decided this year to pre-empt some items of hot news that would have never seen the light of day if it hadn't been for our determination to shine the beacon of truth without fear or favouritism. You can read them at your leisure while waiting in the petrol queues. Here they are:

### Nepal to have a wet port By **Our Maritime Correspondent**

**BIRGAN**] - After the grand success of finally getting Nepal's one and only dry port off and running, the government is about to sign an agreement to set up a wet port in the near future even though, as far as we know, the country is not blessed yet with a coastline. "This is a slight unforeseen hitch," GONe's Minister of Shipping and Oceonography told us. "But we can overcome it by requesting our southern neighbour to expedite permanently submerging our border areas

by building higher highway embankments." News that Nepal would no more be landlocked was greeted with jubilation by the business community which saw great potential to promote beach tourism along our southern shores. Others sounded a note of caution: what if our wet port is blockaded just like our dry port? Said one India-baiting, ultra-nationalist Nep Nabob of Negativism: "By gifting us a petroleum pipeline India just made it easier for itself to turn the tap off." Asked to comment, an Indian Embassy spokesperson clarified: "We would never officially turn the tap off. Only unofficially.

### Nepal enters ox-cart age

**KATHMANDU** - Finally some good news amidst all the gloom and doom about the petroleum shortage: the government has decided to cut excise duty on bullock carts in order to revive Nepal's once-extensive bovine public transport network.

Carts pulled by oxen and buffaloes were the mainstay of Nepal's economy until the advent of the internal combustion engine, but at this time of national emergency the gumment's tax incentives will bring back these Four-Legged Drive ox-taxis and bull-pull buses. Finally, Nepal can wean itself away from diesel and petrol vehicles and convert to a more self-reliant public transport system that depends on grass and chewing the cud for locomotion.

Said the Spokenperson of the Ministry of Aviation and Livestock, "To replace motorcycles we will get

mountain goats to pull go-carts."

The gobarment has also come up with a cunning plan to counter the petroleum blockade by installing automatic pooper-scoopers harnessed upon the backsides of the draught animals to collect do-do and convert it into flammable methane gas that can fill LPG bullets. This crisis is an opportunity for Nepal to become self-reliant in enerji.

### **Vodka stations** By Our Alchoholic Analyeast

The government on Thursday announced yet another clever idea to overcome the current energy crisis that would use one stone to kill two birds in the bush: to convert Nepal's distilleries into gas stations.

To replace diesel and petrol, Nepal will convert its total capacity to produce 850 kilo litres per week of high spirits into high octane bio-ethanol. A Spokeshuman of the Ministry of Rehabilitation said: "We are not reinventing the wheel here, we are just reinventing the inner tube. It is surprising why we didn't think of it before."

Motorcycle drivers who run out of fuel on the Bhaktapur Highway can now run into a roadside bar, buy a 500 ml bottle of vodka, empty it into the tank and drive off. It's strong stuff.

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