The fuel crisis caused by India’s blockade has brought to a halt most reconstruction of earthquake damaged buildings and infrastructure. Already delayed due to political wrangling over the Reconstruction Authority, nearly two million survivors across 14 districts now face an uncertain future as winter looms.

The CEO appointed to head that agency, Govinda Raj Pokhrel, has also resigned from the National Planning Commission because of turf battles between the NC and the UML over the post. The $4.4 billion pledged by the international community for reconstruction cannot be spent until the agency is functional.

Humanitarian groups were trying to fill the gap, but their reconstruction and relief work is now halted due to the lack of diesel. Emergency food supplies and shelter need to be delivered to far-flung mountain villages before the snows come.

The agreement between Nepal and China to meet up to a third of Nepal’s petroleum needs is unlikely to ease the crisis. India is only allowing 10 per cent of Nepal’s fuel requirement through the border.

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A BLOCKADE IS A BLOCKADE

BETWEEN THE LINES

BY TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

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CARROT, STICK AND OIL

BY ANURAG ACHARYA

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MESSIAHS OF THE MADHES

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RESTRAINT, RESOLVE AND RESILIENCE

THIS IS IT

BY RUBEENA MAHATO

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RACE AGAINST WINTER

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HOME FIRE: Six months after the earthquake destroyed her house in Sindhupalchok, Monika Tamang, 13, is still homeless and cooks a meal with firewood inside a tattered tent at a shelter. The fuel crisis caused by the Indian blockade has added to the misery of earthquake survivors like her.
A lot of words have appeared in the press about the India-Nepal impasse that has led to a near-total border blockade for more than a month. The entire drama is also being played out on social media platforms. The situation has degenerated into abusive name-calling from Nepal with not only a false sense of bravado but hurt victimhood and ultra-nationalism. And India is behaving like an overbearing bully with a crude and cruel attempt to throttle a petulant neighbour with disproportionate muscle-flexing.

For Nepal the most glaring aspect of this entire sordid chapter in our nation’s history is a lack of preventive proactiveness and a sense of urgency that were needed to stop the situation from getting so out of hand for this long. The mishandling of the domestic political fallout of the ‘fast-tracked’ constitution, the inability to contain the violence from spiralling out of control in the plains, the excessive use of force in quelling the riots, and misconstruing Delhi’s signals were what led to this crisis.

In their haste to make up for bungling post-earthquake reconstruction, politicians of the NC, UML and the UCPN(M) decided to push through a constitution, any constitution, that would pave the way for a national unity government. This strategy was driven by the political ambitions of two individuals: the UML’s KP Oli and the UCPN(M)’s Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The NC did a volte face on its commitment towards a third layer of issues: bruised egos of politicians and bureaucrats and by not understanding the political dynamics in Delhi. Their family members are suffering. Nepal in the long run. This mantra by extremists leaders temper down their rhetoric once laden with state affairs. The NC did a volte face on its commitment towards a third layer of issues: bruised egos of politicians and bureaucrats and by not understanding the political dynamics in Delhi. Their family members are suffering. Nepal in the long run. This mantra by extremists leaders temper down their rhetoric once laden with state affairs.

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In Madhesi demands for amendments from eight to 102; the need for Madhesi leaders to launder their image; cross-border sensitivities heightened by state elections in Bihar; the ultra-nationalism of the Kathmandu ruling class; Delhi’s historical geopolitical interest in ensuring a pliant Nepal state through swing votes in a Madhes buffer; paranoia in India about Chinese inroads into Nepal.

Instead of trying to assuage an insecured Big Brother, our rulers are in the habit of constantly enraging it by flashing the China card. As India’s largest trading partner, China is unlikely to risk antagonising India over Nepal. But sections of the Indian establishment, egged on by hysterical media coverage, have latched on to China’s symbolic donation of 1,000 tons of petroleum as if it represents a declaration of war against India. Beijing obviously enjoys seeing India squirm in a quagmire of its own making, but that is not to say that it will upset its Himalayan spheres-of-influence accommodation with New Delhi.

It doesn’t make sense for Nepal to get all worked up about India’s stranglehold. It is our own doing. For the past 60 years we have only talked about our hydropower potential, and haven’t even harnessed 0.2 per cent of it. We have gone from being a net exporter to food grains to importing everything from garlic to gladioli from India. What have we done to proactively entice investors to create jobs at home? Far from being self-reliant in energy and exporting power to India, Nepal now spends more than 60 per cent of its total import bill on buying petroleum from India, and its volume has grown threefold in the last five years. We have done precious little to diversify our exports, and be more self-reliant.

This crisis is a result of the incompetence of rulers of Nepal over the years, and the short-sightness of a bunch of mean and arrogant Babus in New Delhi. We got a tantalising glimpse of a generous and friendly India last year during the visit here by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, one that rebooted relations for mutually-beneficial cooperation. But all that goodwill has now been squandered by decision makers in New Delhi who have callously turned an entire generation of Nepalis against India. This is a lose-lose for both countries. From here on, any Indian investment or joint river project will be much more difficult to implement because of hostile public opinion.

There are three steps Nepal’s new rulers should take:

Short term: Do whatever it takes to end the blockade. We can’t eat nationalism. Medium term: Jump start the economy. There is just too much distortion in politics. Long term: Diversify imports, move to a renewable energy economy.

A变了
The neighbourhood of Nepal Times is dotted with hole-in-the-wall family run eateries offering modest meals to college students and office-goers at reasonable prices. Unlike bigger, posher restaurants and five-star hotels these businesses cannot fall back on steep profit margins to purchase gas cylinders at Rs 10,000 (almost 10 times the normal rate). As a result owners have been forced to pull their shutters down, losing valuable income day after day.

Across the street, dozens of taxis wait in an unmoving queue for 10 litres of petrol that will be distributed only tomorrow. Few drivers are huddled together in the back of a car, gambling, talking politics. They will try to compensate for the lost work hours by charging customers double or even quadruple the normal rate. Who can blame them?

Back home in Ekantakuna, the last remaining gas cylinder is running low. The family is discussing alternative cooking options. My 14-year-old sister suggests building an improved firewood stove and says she has the know-how from a school project. If it weren’t for the current crisis, she would have been ridiculed by the family, now everyone is giving firewood serious thought. If her pilot project is successful Mother says she could even help other families in the neighbourhood, many of whom are already cooking in their backyards. A month has now passed since India’s blockade of essential goods to Nepal, choking life across the country it calls its ‘younger brother’. The clash of egos at the top between Indian and Nepali leaders has hurt ordinary Nepalis the most. These are people who can’t afford to buy goods in the black market, their rights India is supposedly backing. Besides being led by leaders who have zero credibility (even within their community) and are as corrupt (if not more) as those in Kathmandu, the blockade has greatly undermined the Madhes movement which was borne out of genuine grievances. The fast-track constitution paved the way for KP Oli to assume prime ministership and provided leaders a much-needed face-saver during a time when public discontent against the government for its mishandling of earthquake relief was rising high. But in their rush to reach the finishing line, the leaders failed to address dissenting voices, leaving more than half the population dissatisfied with the new constitution. However, by allowing India to arm twist Nepal on their behalf, the plains leaders have further distanced themselves from the rest of the country, including their own people. Their endorsement of the blockade which has created unneeded hardship for a population already reeling under the effects of two devastating earthquakes has made even those sympathetic to the cause question the tactic and legitimacy of the movement. What’s surprising in all this has been the international media’s silence on the issue. By choosing to call the blockade a ‘fuel crisis’ reporters have reduced the true extent of the humanitarian crisis and helped paint a false picture of the goings-on in Nepal to the rest of the world.

Even the international community has been mysteriously silent, with the EU releasing a statement calling on India to ensure essential supplies only last week. The UN released a similarly belated and mild statement. Both refused to acknowledge that it was indeed a blockade. Local media, meanwhile, has been reporting the issue with much fervour, but much of it is filled with op-ed spout jingoism. Many have chosen to highlight abuse and harassment of common people by Morcha cadres but completely ignored cases of police brutality. Nepali leaders in turn are using the blockade to stoke nationalism and pass the buck of its own failures to India. Nepalis are used to hardships, but the question is how long will it take for the people to transfer the blame from India to our own inept political leadership.

@Chenreeyang
The Indian Blockade is a reality, but so is the three-month Madhes agitation

**Carrot, stick and oil**

The Madhesi people to think about who their real friends are

*By the Way*

Anurag Acharya

From remote mountains ravaged by the April earthquake to the barren farms of the Tani hit by the bad monsoon and more than three months of continuous unrest, there is anger against government apathy. Ferocious, 43, runs a footwear shop in Biratnagar and has to feed a family of nine. For the last two months, his business is down by half because his raw materials are stuck at the border.

“I do not understand politics, but there are people on the streets protesting for over two months. Some of them I know are good people, and if they are on the streets, I guess there is a reason for it,” he says. Fifty km away, thousands of people from hill communities in Rapti and Saptari took part in a rally in solidarity with the Madhes movement. “We have witnessed deaths and people have endured much pain in the last two months, we hope to calm communal tension,” local journalist Jitendra Thakur told us.

What began as a small protest by some disgruntled Madhesi leaders in August has grown into a mass movement, gaining support from all walks of life in the plains. From the innovative ‘dhoti rally’ to creating a human chain, hundreds of thousands are on the streets protesting for the country. What did India do? How did India respond? What is India’s role in the Madhes agitation?

The Madhesi people to think about who their real friends are

**Messiahs of the Madhes**

It’s time for the Madhesi people to think about who their real friends are

The movement in the Madhes against provisions in the new constitution is now dragging into its third month. Plans leaders have successfully whipped up anti-Kathmandu sentiments, building on their past grievances. They have sown dreams of utopia, of how the Tani will turn into Switzerland once it has federal autonomy.

**COMMENT**

Jivesh Jha

But in the process they have undermined their own agitation by making the Indian establishment such a close ally. Moderate Madhesi are reluctant to express their views for fear of being ostracised, but the reality is that most plains-dwellers are against the blockade. They want to fight their own fight with Kathmandu, not have a foreign country intervene on their behalf.

Madhesi leaders are now trying to brand Kathmandu as being pro-Chinese, anti-Indian and anti-Madhesi just because a desperate government in Kathmandu is trying to find alternate sources of importing fuel supplies from China. They have been warning of anti-Chinese protests if Kathmandu imports petroleum from China.

Amid this, the self-declared messiahs of Madhesis, politics, Rajendra Mahato of the Sudhindra Party, told an Indian newspaper, “what is good for India is good for Madhes” and that “only a strong Madhes can win Kathmandu’s anti-India drive”. Neither anti-Indian nor anti-Chinese sentiments are good for the country. What did India expect by imposing a blockade on Nepal? That Nepalis would roll over and welcome it? It may not be practical to source fuel from China, but that doesn’t prevent Madhesi leaders from echoing the ongoing hysteria in the Indian media about “Chinese entry into Nepal”.

As positions harden on both sides, Madhesi leaders are trapped by their own rhetoric. More than 45 people have been killed since August, and there is deep resentment in the public in the plains against state security forces, but also against Madhesi leaders for stepping on the toes of the martyrs to get to power. The silent majority feel that they have been made to suffer for the past three months by corrupt Madhesi leaders who have nothing but empty slogans and false promises for their own people. Words do not fill stomachs. Destabilising the Nepali nation state will not serve the Madhesi people any good, nor will it be in India’s own strategic interest. We, Madhesi people want development and jobs, and we want an immediate end to the blockade.

Negotiations are going on in Kathmandu between Madhesi leaders and a government team led by Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa. From what we hear the government is playing hardball, while Madhesi negotiators come up with ever more outlandish demands that have no relation to the new constitution.

The best move Madhesi leaders can now make is to call off the agitation for the Chhatra Front, say no thank you to the Indian blockade and work with the government for agreed amendments to the constitution. This is what the Madhesi people want, it would be in India’s interest and it would serve the cause of democracy and justice in Nepal.

Let’s be smart and figure out who the real enemies are: leaders who allow themselves to be used by Big Brother for its own interest. It is time for the Madhesi people to figure out who their real friends are.
Restraint, resolve and resilience

The movement is no longer about what the Madhes and Madhesis really want

The crisis in the Madhes need not be intractable. A resolution should be possible if the state concedes that Madhes grievances are real and have to be corrected, their demands for rights and dignity have to be fulfilled and those who ordered and carried out terror and killings have to be investigated and punished.

The movement is no longer about what the Madhes and Madhesis really want, there is geopolitics at play.

What started as a movement for accountability of war-crimes, for democracy and for respect of human rights, has been hijacked by interest groups who are using the most sinister. How can the state concur with them and hold the entire region hostage. They want to get their demands met. They do not believe in principles and have resorted to norms, abandoned politics of international law and diplomatic borders care. They have quashed from within and beyond the country to enforce blockade just because they believe in terror, blackmail and raw power. They have no illusions, the alarmist calls for separation hold the entire region hostage.

What is unraveling in the Madhes is plain blackmail. If a solution means a constitutional and democratic path, the Morcha believes that is a means to an end. The Morcha on the other hand believes in terror, blackmail and raw power. They have no illusions, the alarmist calls for separation hold the entire region hostage.

The question is whether the Morcha and its backers from within and beyond the borders care. They have squashed international law and diplomatic norms, abandoned politics of principles and have resorted to force, intimidation and bullying to get their demands met. They have hijacked by interest groups who are using the most divisive and violent means possible to do so, fuelling communal hatred and radicalism.

There is no pretense left. The movement is no longer about what the Madhes and Madhesis want, there is geopolitics at play. Madhesi want dignity and rights, they want a stable and peaceful Nepal where they can earn their livelihood without disruption. Madhes believe there is a constitutional and democratic path, that the state has to be flexible on these.

But first the Madhesi Morcha has to end the blockade, dealign itself from interventionist forces and give up terror and violence. If they hope to bulldoze their way through unreasonable demands, they will lose the support of the very people they claim to represent.

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From 3-9 November the alleys and courtyards of Patan will be transformed into a live exhibition space as the old town plays host to Nepal’s first international photographic festival, Photo Kathmandu. The week-long festival is being organised by the photo collective, photo circle.

“Patan is an incredibly rich urban landscape - both in terms of tangible but also intangible heritage; the patas that are home to evening bhajans, the local corner shops that sell wool, aloh, sukut, choela. By locating a festival in the midst of this, by trying to weave it into the fabric of the Patan streets, we would like to both celebrate this urban landscape as well as draw attention to how it needs careful planning and preservation,” says festival director Nayan Tara Gurung Kathchepati of choosing the festival destination.

Eighteen print exhibitions showing works of both national and international artists, with the theme ‘Time’ will be on display. Organisers say each of the exhibition represents a chapter in the history of Nepal and are hopeful visitors will recognise themselves in these images.

“At this present time of great political and social transitions here in Nepal - we hope these stories will spark retrospection and reflection on our past, present and where we would like to head in the days to come,” says Kathchepati.

A curated walk through Lalitpur is also on offer. Besides exhibitions, the festival is also curating several workshops and talks on visual story telling. Pre-festival events began this week on Tuesday with a workshop on oral history writing by Indira Chowdhury, director of the Centre for Public History at the SriShakti School of Art, Design and Technology in India.

With over 45 international artists and many Nepali photographers from outside Kathmandu participating, the team has been forced to deal with unseen logistical challenges. However, the team is staying positive. Says Kathchepati: “If people from places as far away as Belgium and Swaziland can make it, we figure, people from across town will make an effort to come to Patan.”

PHOTO KATHMANDU IN PATAN

Nepal’s first international festival of photography starts next week
Visual thinking in the editorial process
Danish photographer Thomas Borberg will conduct the workshop and discuss how Danish newspaper Politiken works with photos and other visual elements.

1 to 4 November, 9am to 2pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Writing Photography
This four-day workshop will explore practical and conceptual approaches to critical commentary on photography. Moderated by Christopher Pinney.

2 to 5 November, 9am to 2pm
Sundhara House

Using visual media for social justice campaigns
The workshop will investigate a range of issues and approaches to use images for social justice, explore issues of representation, collaborative methodologies, and how to best prepare a communication strategy.

5 to 6 November, 9am to 2pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Beyond the camera
This two-day workshop will introduce participants to the basics of research, ethics, caption writing and digital workflows.

7 to 8 November, 9am to 2pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

TALKS
Artist Talk: After an elusive world by Anne Golaz
5 November, 4 to 4.45pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: History of South Asian photography
Christopher Pinney & Tanim Wahab, moderated by Pratyoush Onta
5 November, 4.45 to 5.20pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Artist talk: Kevin Bulakbi
6 November, 4 to 4.45pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: The Journey of the Photobook
Sohrab Hura & Dranga Jurise, moderated by Nishant Shukla
6 November, 4.45 to 5.20pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Presentation: World, Press & Photo
reflected by Micha Bruinvels
6 November, 5.30 to 5.45pm
Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka

Artist talk: Yu: The Lost country by Dragana Jurisic
7 November, 2 to 2.40pm
Baggikhana Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Talk: Living with photographs – being a collector by Isabelle Darrigrand
7 November, 2.40 to 3.30pm
Baggikhana Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: Seeing comes before words, but who tells the story?
Alisa Sett, Sohrab Hura & Frédéric Lecloux, moderated by Rabi Thapa
7 November, 2.40 to 3.30pm
Baggikhana Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Artist talk: Kevin Bubriski
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Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: The Journey of the Photobook
Sohrab Hura & Dranga Jurise, moderated by Nishant Shukla
6 November, 3.45 to 4.25pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Presentation: Students works from Danish School of Media and Journalism (DMI)
4 November, 4 to 4.45pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Talk: Iraqi photography by Philippe Van Canteen
5 November, 3 to 3.45pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Artist Talk: Why are you looking at me
like that? By Andrea Stulíns
7 November, 2 to 2.40pm
Gautamala Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Talk: Living with photographs – being a collector by Isabelle Darrigrand
7 November, 2.40 to 3.30pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Presentation: Retelling histories curricular project by Nirajan Kunwar and Shararen Raicharaya
5 November, 3 to 3.15pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Artist Talk: Finding your voice by Sailendra Kharel
8 November, 3 to 3.40pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: Professionalising Nepali photography
Bikash Karki & Raj Bhai Suwal, moderated by NayanTara Gurung & Kailash Nagpal
7 November, 4 to 5pm
Gautamala Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Presentation: Product vs Process
Ankit Suwal, Brianna Bartlet, Indu Antony, Ralph Smit, Sanjeev Maharjan & Tushikur Rahman, moderated by Philippe Van Canteen
7 November, 4 to 5.20pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

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7 November, 2 to 2.40pm
Baggikhana Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: Seeing comes before words, but who tells the story?
Alisa Sett, Sohrab Hura & Frédéric Lecloux, moderated by Rabi Thapa
7 November, 2.40 to 3.30pm
Baggikhana Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Artist talk: Kevin Bubriski
6 November, 3 to 3.40pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Discussion: The Journey of the Photobook
Sohrab Hura & Dranga Jurise, moderated by Nishant Shukla
6 November, 3.45 to 4.25pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Presentation: Students works from Danish School of Media and Journalism (DMI)
4 November, 4 to 4.45pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Talk: Iraqi photography by Philippe Van Canteen
5 November, 3 to 3.45pm
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Art
FUEL UP ON JAZZ

From 4-10 November Nepal’s Himalayan sky will once again come alive with the sound of jazz as the Surya Nepal Kathmandu International Festival, popularly known as Jazzmandu, celebrates its 13th year. The widely anticipated annual event will provide Nepalis with a melodic and rhythmic escape from the country’s ongoing blockade crisis.

Aside from being one of the leading music festivals in South Asia, Jazzmandu has established Nepal as a key player in the international jazz scene. Each year, the highly sought-after festival brings musicians from all corners of the world to Kathmandu, where the artists celebrate their musical diversities while simultaneously showcasing their camaraderie through music. Created in 2002 by Navin Chettri, the lead vocalist and drummer of Nepal’s first jazz band Cadenza Collective, Jazzmandu has successfully introduced jazz to Nepal and has over the years refined the country’s local music scene by bringing world class musicians to Kathmandu audiences.

This year’s festival line up includes performers from Norway, the USA, France, Cuba and Argentina that will join local Nepali talent on different stages at various venues around the city. Each year Jazzmandu presents Jazz for the Next Generation, a music competition that promotes music education and gives young musicians a chance to demonstrate their talents in front of international musicians. This year’s edition will continue this tradition and will also feature a free concert for young school children to expose them to jazz from around the world.

Nepali Times: How will the country’s current fuel crisis affect this year’s festival?
Navin Chettri: This is an interesting year for us. Despite the current crisis the country is facing, we want to have the festival, more than ever. We want to show that Nepalis are strong and ready to bounce back. It is also our way of getting more people to visit Nepal. We hope that we can make do with the shortcomings we are facing right now given the country’s current situation.

How is this year’s Jazzmandu going to be different?
We try to get different artists each year to attract a mix of people from all walks of life. We want to attract Nepalis as well as foreigners. This year we are collaborating with Photo Kathmandu to bring different aspects of visual art to the music festival. We are also trying to get school students more involved with jazz by offering a free concert to young kids so they can enjoy and experience jazz.

In addition, we have started the Jazzmandu Education Initiative where students meet every week at my studio, The Music Room, for an intensive course in music. Through this initiative, students who are dedicated to study music are given the chance to come together to learn and perform in different ensembles. Some of these student-teacher ensembles will be featured either at the Jazz Bazaar or the school concert on 5th November.

“Nepali Times spoke to the festival’s director, Navin Chettri, about his expectations for this year’s festival.”
The experience I have had so far conversing with Nepali people has been extremely heart-warming and welcoming. Kathmandu has definitely been on my list of places to visit, and it makes me truly happy that I will get to discover and explore this magnificent part of the world through music and art. I look forward to building global music connections in a city of such rich cultural heritage. Based on what I have read so far about Jazzmandu, it seems like it’s more than a festival, but a spiritual institution that encourages global music connection, interaction, growth and prosperity.

-Magda Giannikou
Babarmahal the female form. power and divine energy manifested in
Celebrated artist Kiran Manandhar’s
Shakti,
this solo exhibition explores the mortal


Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel
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A one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and
healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel.


Himalayan Wellness Centre,
A one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and
healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel.


"Try Indigenous Cocktails @ Rukhmuni Bar, Dhekheim Cafe."
Watch Dhuwa review, Nepali Times presents a list of some of this week's popular dishes, typically momos and noodles. Before Dasain, the popular food delivery service, Foodmandu, was still on the go, delivering morsels to nervous customers who had run out of gas. But even these undaunted fighters are now in a pickle. A stroll through Pulchok and Jhamel, which pullulate with restaurants, quickly reveals that many have their shutters down. Others are offering special 'Blockade Menus' consisting of a few popular dishes, typically momos and noodles. Foodmandu now delivers food within restricted areas.

**Blockade menu**

**ROADHOUSE CAFÉ**

Once you arrive here, the waiter ruefully tells you that the Blockade Menu includes "only" pizzas and salads. Which is a lot!

**EMBERS**

The whole menu is available.

**LE TRIO**

This cafe offers a Blockade Menu which includes, thankfully, its famed jhol momo and a variety of salads.

**THE BAKERY CAFÉ**

This popular eatery is offering almost the entire menu.

**DHOKAIMA CAFÉ**

The Blockade Menu includes all the popular items, including the momos which are cooked in briquette charcoal.

**GHIR-ER-KEBAB**

Ghir-e-kebab also has a temporary Blockade Menu which includes chicken tikka, naan and sheesh kebabs.

**Ghir-e-kebab**

The witty dialogue and animated characters make the film a fun watch and the producers succeed in raising awareness about pollution. Dhuwa informs the viewers about the main sources of air pollution, describes its effects on health and climate and points out measures individuals can take to reduce air pollution.

The storyline is a bit rushed, however, with too much information packed into 40 minutes. The moments of epiphany for both characters seem a tad forced. Do they really have to get sick to realise their misconceptions? Malli are master comedians and have used the infotainment medium for various programs including HIV/AIDS. Dhuwa is not in the same artistic league, but is a good start to raising public awareness about air pollution and its links to health and climate.

**Sahina Shrestha**

**Director:** Malli

**Story/Script/Dialogue:** Hari Bansha Acharya

**Concept:** Anirbro Panday

**Maheshwar Rupakheti**

**Duration:** 37 minutes

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**Le Trio's "NO FUEL" food menu**

**ARGENTINA**

- NTex (Rs 240)
- Arroz y Salteado (Rs 215)
- Pollo al Ajo (Rs 215)
- Pollo Bandejas (Rs 260)
- Swan Moro (Rs 175, Rs 200/250/300)

**VENICES**

- Veuve Clicquot (Rs 200/300/250/300)
- Veuve (Rs 150/200/250)

**SALAD**

- Caesar Salad (Rs 240)
- Garden Salad (Rs 200)
- Tomato & Mozarella Salad (Rs 200)
- French Salad (Rs 320)

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**Nepal Times Presents**

An animation to appeal to viewers of all ages, Dhuwa was broadcast on 18 October in Nepal Television, was produced by the ICIMOD and directed by Maha. The storyline is a bit rushed, however, with too much information packed into 40 minutes. The moments of epiphany for both characters seem a tad forced. Do they really have to get sick to realise their misconceptions? Malli are master comedians and have used the infotainment medium for various programs including HIV/AIDS. Dhuwa is not in the same artistic league, but is a good start to raising public awareness about air pollution and its links to health and climate.

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**Concept:** Anirbro Panday

**Maheshwar Rupakheti**

**Duration:** 37 minutes
The opening scenes of Diplomacy are slightly jarring. Set during the extremely grave moments towards the end of World War II when Nazi-occupied Paris is about to be liberated by the Allied Forces, the film begins in the wee hours with the most intimate moments of the commanding General Dietrich von Choltitz (Niels Arestrup). Choltitz is a German officer who has been ordered by Adolph Hitler himself to destroy all of Paris before they lose control of it. We are left wondering why such a person, with all of his physical frailties would be so humanised on the cusp of such events.

So begins a film that starts slowly but is written with such precision (unsurprisingly, it is adapted from a theatre version) that every moment is calculated to build up to another, however insignificant it may initially seem. As General Choltitz wearily starts this fateful day at his residential offices in the Hotel Meurice, which has been entirely commandeered by the Germans, we learn with growing horror the level of havoc and destruction that this failing army intends to wreak upon the Parisians. Working with a reluctant, dismayed French engineer, the Germans have planted thousands of explosives at strategic points, including all the bridges, stations, landmarks (including the Eiffel tower and the Paris Opera) intending to kill and maim as many people as they can before they withdraw, leaving the beloved city unrecognisable.

The film is set almost entirely in General Choltitz’s rooms as he fields his own orders and reflects on his own mortality. It is when Raoul Nordling (Andre Dussolier), a Swedish diplomat who has lived in Paris all his life, sneaks into the General’s offices via a secret passageway that Choltitz is forced to confront the enormity of his orders, and what the willful destruction of an entire city at the end of a losing battle might mean to Germany for decades to come.

Nothing cajoles, flatters, reasons, and appeals to all of Choltitz’s humanity to try and achieve what he wants, always putting his cause ahead of himself in an act of bravery that is so quietly stoic that it can almost be dismissed as a fluke if one isn’t watching carefully.

We ourselves are at a crucial time in our history when a lack of professional diplomacy (which could also arguably be interpreted as an utter lack of care) has placed an entire nation in dire straits. It is heartening to watch a carefully crafted film that elucidates the usually (sometimes necessarily) clandestine meetings that must take place in order for reason to triumph over madness. Now we just have to hope that the same, somehow, prevails here. nepalitimes.com

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EPSON
EXCEED YOUR VISION

BRAND NEW: Hero Motorcycle Nepal launched its all new 111 CC Hero Dash on Thursday.

ANOTHER BLOOMING FESTIVAL: A woman picks marigolds from a garden on Tuesday. The flowers are used extensively during the upcoming Tihar festival.
Special page 1 editorials

Naya Patrika, 28 October

By punishing Nepal, a state that may be geographically smaller but has a bigger heart, India has nothing to be proud of in the international arena. In fact, India hasn’t done much to improve relations not just with Pakistan, but also with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Even Bhutan and the Maldives regard India with suspicion. By browbeating good neighbour Nepal to teach it a lesson by raising its economy, the world is going to ask India: “What kind of superpower are you trying to be?” Power is not just about territory, population and military might—it is also about international legitimacy. By losing the confidence of neighbours on all four sides, India has jeopardised its status as a regional power, and this can only have negative consequences for the aspirations of 1.25 billion Indians and their leader Narendra Modi. True, Nepal hasn’t tried to internationalise this sensitive dispute directly, but a world exposed to social media is not unaware of what has been happening. The UN and the EU have already spoken out, and tomorrow there will be more voices from all corners of the world to the world’s largest democracy. India will find it difficult to defend why it is stopping the transportation of medicines and food to this earthquake-ravaged country. There is no alternative for India but to lift the blockade and restore its reputation. This is in the interest of both India and Nepal.

Kantipur, 28 October

Fuel crisis is just the most visible manifestation of India’s blockade against Nepal. In fact, it has affected Nepal’s overall economy already devastated by the April-May earthquakes. At a time when they should have been busy rebuilding the earthquake-devastated country, Nepalis are now forced to spend days and nights in petrol queues. This is unfortunate, to say the least. It is already late to find solutions to problems created by the blockade. Diplomatic efforts to get the blockade lifted have not been any sort of explanation. Its interventionist activities in Nepal must also stop. For this to happen, Nepal’s rulers must not hesitate to raise the issue of the blockade in the international community. Likewise, Madhesi protesters should also stop staging sit-ins at border points, vandalising buses and attacking traffic officers. They must work to find a peaceful solution to this crisis by stopping their protests and engaging in talks with the government. But the government must first create a conducive environment. The talks that have begun with the protesters have been positive so far. As soon as possible, both the agitating parties and the government should immediately end the blockade, which it has been imposing without any sort of explanation. Its interventionist activities in Nepal must also stop. For this to happen, Nepal’s rulers must not hesitate to raise the issue of the blockade in the international community.

Nepali Times, 28 October

India has been denying imposing a blockade in Nepal, blaming the current situation on the protests at the border. In recent days, however, there have been no protests at borders crossing other than Birganj. But supplies are not coming in even from these areas. The protesters on the other hand have continued to vandalise public vehicles. From current events it is clear that if both the government and the agitating parties don’t resolve the internal conflict, the pressure from India will build up further. While India needs to lift the blockade on Nepal immediately, both the government and the disgruntled parties need to create a conducive environment for positive outcome of the ongoing dialogue. If both the parties move forward by bearing their responsibilities in mind, the agitating parties can be included in the mainstream.

A journalist’s request

I have been reporting on the Madhes movement for a long time and despite the challenges brought on by continuing protests and economic blockade, I continued to do so. My reports have highlighted the movement. But the regular closure of the region and the blockade has caused an acute shortage of fuel and resulted in the flourishing of black market. As I need to travel regularly on motorcycle for coverage, I have been forced to buy petrol at exorbitant rates. During the course of my reporting I was harassed by cadres of Madhesi Morcha, who spilt the petrol from my motorcycle’s fuel tank all over the road. It is impossible to continue reporting from the ground given the circumstances. I apologise to all leaders, cadre and well-wishers of the Madhesi Morcha, but there’s no way I can do my job in such difficult times.

RK Patel
Journalist with Prabhat Daily/Radio Birganj on Facebook, 25 October
Despite predictions that Nepal’s tourism industry would collapse due to the earthquake, the real damage has been done by the Indian blockade. Even so, some of the trails like the Everest and the Annapurna regions which were not so badly affected by the April earthquake are seeing healthy traffic.

There is considerable trekking traffic along the Everest trail, with about 12 flights every morning from Kathmandu to Lukla. In the peak season last year there were sometimes up to 30 flights a day. Lodges along the way say they are seeing half the number of tourists as in normal times, and admit their real problem is the shortage of cooking gas.

The entrance to the Sagarmatha National Park used to see up to 200 trekkers per day during the peak season last year. Park authorities say the figure is down by 50 per cent this year.

Despite predictions that the trekking trails around the Annapurnas are surprisingly busy this season. Although the figures are not as high as this time last year, a substantial number of tourists have still come to hike after information read that the trekking routes had not been damaged by the April earthquake.

Between January and September of this year, 53,208 tourists visited the Annapurna region, a sharp decline from the 69,488 tourists it received in 2014. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, only 1,066 tourists were recorded in May whereas 9,578 tourists visited during the same time last year.

In Manang and Mustang, lodges aren’t full, but there are tourists. According to Pranaya Rana, who recently trekked up to Tilicho Lake in Manang, the Tilicho Base Camp Hotel in Khangsar was full, with at least 15-20 people sleeping in the dining hall because they couldn’t get rooms. However, most of the visitors were foreigners and the number of Nepali trekkers is still low. In October, 2,183 tourists visited Manang, compared to 4,517 last year.

In Lo Manthang, tourists were scattered around lodges during the annual Yartung festival in August, and the region received only 1,717 tourists in October. However, ACAP figures showed that the numbers are steadily increasing. ACAP registered 5,353 trekkers in the region in September alone.

Despite the earthquake and the Indian blockade, and dire predictions about dismal tourist arrivals, the trekking trails around the Annapurnas are surprisingly busy this season.

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A race against winter

The Indian blockade has impeded reconstruction and humanitarian efforts to protect earthquake survivors before winter sets in

OM ASTHA RAI

The walls of the Ramche Health Post of Rasuwa cracked when the 7.8 magnitude earthquake jolted central Nepal six months ago, but health workers are still working inside the damaged building. They have no other option. Health workers were hopeful that they would have a prelab structure before the Dasain festival, but the fuel crisis caused by India’s blockade against Nepal has dashed hopes.

“Now, I don’t know for how long I will have to work here,” says midwife Maiya Kharel. “It’s very risky. I can see outside through the cracks, and mothers are afraid to deliver babies inside.”

Karuna Foundation, a Dutch-supported charity, signed an agreement with the Ministry of Health to set up prefab structures for all the earthquake-damaged health posts in Rasuwa. The construction of a new Ramche health post building is part of this project.

“Our plan was to complete three health posts, including the one in Ramche, before Dasain,” says Karuna’s Country Director Deepak Raj Sapkota. “But the fuel crisis brought everything to a halt. We are not able to transport construction materials to Rasuwa.”

In Sindhupalchok, Radio Siddhi is still operating from inside a makeshift tent set up after the earthquake. “We wanted to move to our new building before winter,” says station manager Ratna Prasad Shrestha.

“The fuel crisis has halted transportation of construction materials, delaying whatever work organisations and individuals had started in the quake-ravaged districts, Sindhupalchok’s CEO Balbhadra Giri says: “Full-fledged reconstruction has not started due to confusion over the government’s policies, but whatever work was going on has also now stopped.”

Post-earthquake reconstruction was already in shambles due to the government’s failure to revive the suspended National Reconstruction Authority by passing a bill through parliament. The CEO appointed to head that agency, Govinda Raj Pokhrel, has now resigned also from the National Planning Commission because of turf battles between the NC and the UML over the post.

Amidst confusion over reconstruction policies, some people or institutions had already started rebuilding structures damaged by the earthquake. But now, there is no way to get construction material to the remote villages.

After India imposed a blockade against Nepal last month, the flow of petroleum products has dried up. Heavy trucks and containers are off the roads, and the supply chain of construction materials has been disrupted.

Jiban Shrestha, who runs a hardware shop in Chautara of Sindhupalchok, says: “Not a single truck with construction material has arrived here after the blockade, our stocks are running low and reconstruction has stopped.

With reconstruction a hopeless cause, humanitarian agencies are now racing against time to deliver food and emergency shelter to far-flung mountainous villages before they are cut off by snow. But the severe shortage of diesel has prevented even that from being delivered.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has been providing food and cash to earthquake survivors for rebuilding quake-damaged infrastructure like roads and irrigation canals in six of the worst-affected districts. But the UN agency is worried that even this activity may have to stop.

WFP Nepal’s Communication Officer Isolanda Jaquemet says: “The diesel we now have will not last more than 10 days.”

Jaquemet says helicopters used by WFP to deliver relief to the inaccessible parts of Nepal are also running low on fuel. “If we fail to deliver food and emergency shelter to inaccessible villages for three to four months before winter, there will be a serious humanitarian crisis,” she warns.

The earthquakes left nearly 6,000 people dead, and destroyed more than 600,000 houses. Humanitarian agencies say they have provided food to nearly two million Nepalis in the six months after the earthquake, but they add that much more needs to be done.

The European Union last week urged India to ensure essential supplies get through to Nepal, saying the blockade only hurts Nepal which is still recovering from the April-May earthquakes. But India has not admitted that it is a blockade, thereby ignoring to lift it.

Sapkota of Karuna says: “A prolonged blockade would mean that more Nepalis will be pushed below the poverty line.”

(With input from Kishor Budhathathi in Sindhupalchok)
Half-assed blockade

What you discuss in the privacy of your own homes is none of the Ass’s business. However, if the subject of your conversation these days is blockade-stockade then it becomes a matter of national security and must be divulged in the public domain. Refusal to do so is punishable by a jail term in Tihar this Tihar, or a fine of INR 5 lacks in counterfeit Indian currency, whichever comes first.

A word of warning to those of you whining and dining about the Indian Blockade: how dare you complain about something as petty as the shortage of oxygen at hospital ICUs when fellow-Nepalis are sitting out in the hot sun day and night manning the barricades in Birganj? What’s that? Of course, the sun doesn’t shine at night, you oxymoron. Isn’t it just so predictable for the permanent elite of Nepal from the hill Brahmin ruling class to quibble about such small things when the marginalised are camped at the border to uphold the principle of might is right in international relations?

For those of us old enough to have survived the 1988-89 Indian Blockade and lived to tell the tale, let me reveal to you youngsters that what we are experiencing now is a picnic. In fact, as an authority on the subject, I would go so far as to say that this is a half-assed blockade. Even the Indians are so embarrassed that they are loath to call it a blockade lest they have to enforce a real one in unforeseeable future. This alleged, ostensible, purported blockade therefore lacks several of the essential criteria necessary for a Very Big Country to squeeze the gonads of a smaller neighbour to achieve the desired outcome.

The architects of this particular whatchamacallit in Dilli should be reminded that it’s not doing the trick. The Nepis are thumbing their noses at you and going about their daily lives as if everything is hunkydory for the hillbillies in the boondocks. They are just not taking India seriously enough, and to show them who is boss it is now time to make this a really air tight blockade that lives up to its name.

In order to do so, we are furnishing 10 unsolicited suggestions to the Indian authoritarians. Only if these are implemented will the Nepal government be forced to give India whatever it is that India wants but doesn’t even know it, without further national embarrassment to both sides:

1. The problem has always been the open border, how can you enforce a blockade when people can just walk over and fill their jerry cans with petrol? Seal the border now! Build a 1,500 mile 20 ft high wall, plant landmines on no man’s land, and beef up (as it were) India’s security.
2. Expedite construction of unnecessarily elevated Indian highway embankments side so that the entire border strip is permanently flooded on the Nepal side. Aside from the wall, this will also serve as a crocodile-infested moat as further deterrence to those trying to break the embargo and smuggle essential supplies like pomegranates, into Nepal.
3. Stop doling out medical scholarships to the offspring of Nepal’s political leaders. That should teach them a lesson, the ungrateful wretches. Those already in medical schools should be rusticated on national security grounds and be deported back to Nepal.
4. If China doesn’t halt the supply of petrol to Nepal through the back door, India should also blockade China.
5. If that doesn’t work, close down all Chinese restaurants in the National Capital Region and once and for all banish the dish called ‘chowmein’ from the Union Territory.
6. Drill oil wells in northern Bihar and suck up underground crude deposits so there will be nothing left on the Nepali side.
7. This week Nepal was ranked #2 in the World Bank Index for Ease of Doing Business in South Asia, while India was at #4. India shouldn’t lift the blockade until it can overtake Nepal.
8. What kind of blockade is this when Indian air space is being used for flights to and from Kathmandu? Scramble the IAF MiGs.
9. Stop diesel supplies to all embassies in Kathmandu that dare to issue statements about a ‘humanitarian crisis’ in Nepal caused by the blockade.
10. Reinstate capital punishment for all crossborder petrol smugglers.

These are all highly classified tips and I am revealing them to readers in the strictest confidence on condition that you do not tell anyone else. If you do, you will immediately be sent to Tihar this Tihar.