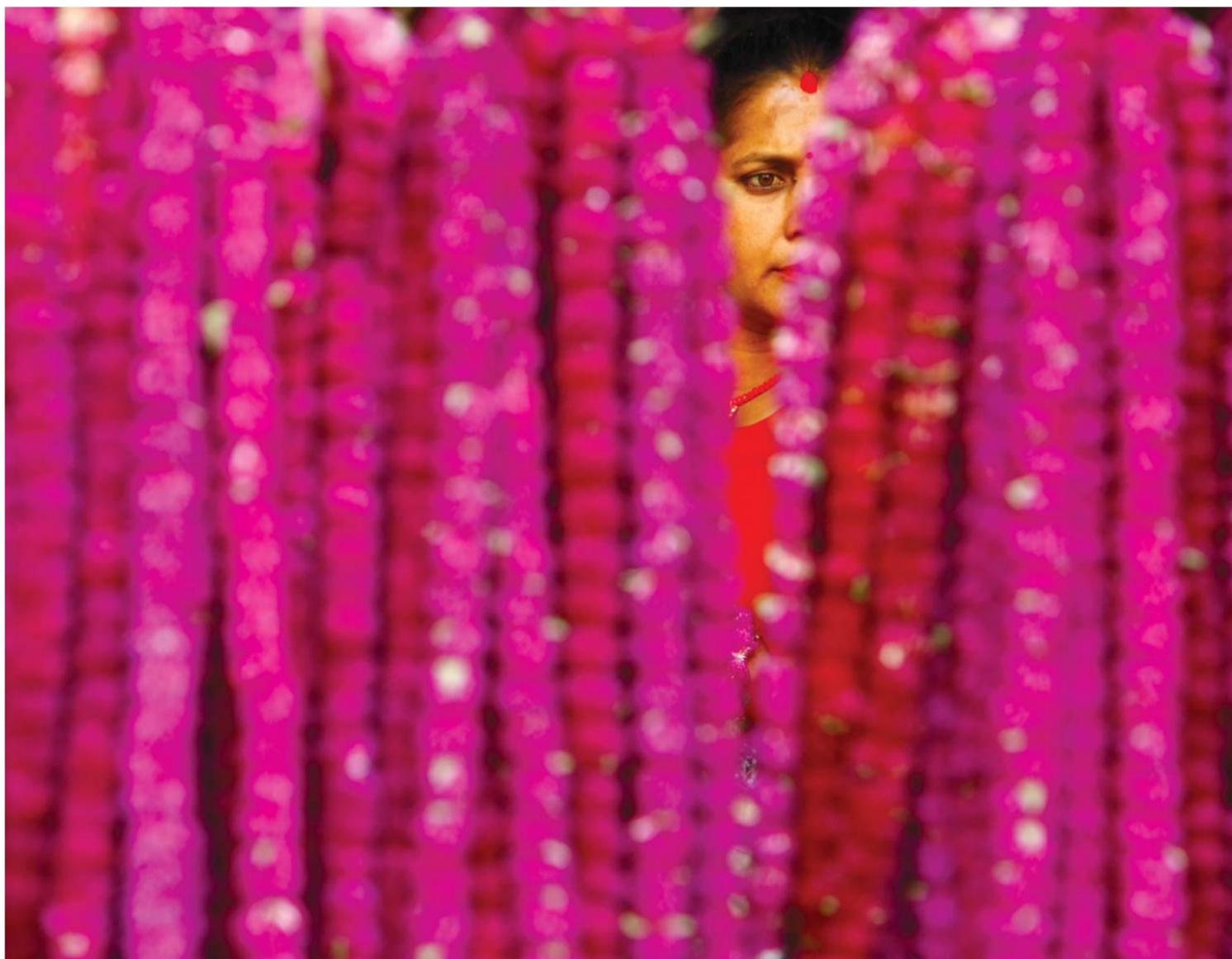


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GOPEN RAI

A partial glance

After the death of an Indian protester in Birganj this week, India has tightened its blockade on Nepal. The economic damage to the country of the two-month long blockade already far exceeds the impact of the earthquake. Yet, parachutist journalists from the international media who were so quick to descend on Kathmandu in April are nowhere to be seen. The international community is still calling it a 'fuel crisis', ignoring the fact that India has violated several international treaties by not allowing cargo to pass through its border to Nepal.

In his address at the inaugural session of the UN Human Rights

Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva on Wednesday, Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa said: 'We are currently at a very delicate situation resulting from the obstruction of essential supplies at the border points'. But chances of the blockade being lifted before Tihar festival appear slim. Prime Minister KP Oli has hinted that the blockade might last long, asking business leaders to help 'safeguard nationalism'.

Sooner or later (the sooner the better) this blockade will come to an end. It is unnatural, illegal, destabilising and detrimental to the longterm national interests of both countries.

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

Friday, 20 November.

However, you can follow us online wherever and whenever.

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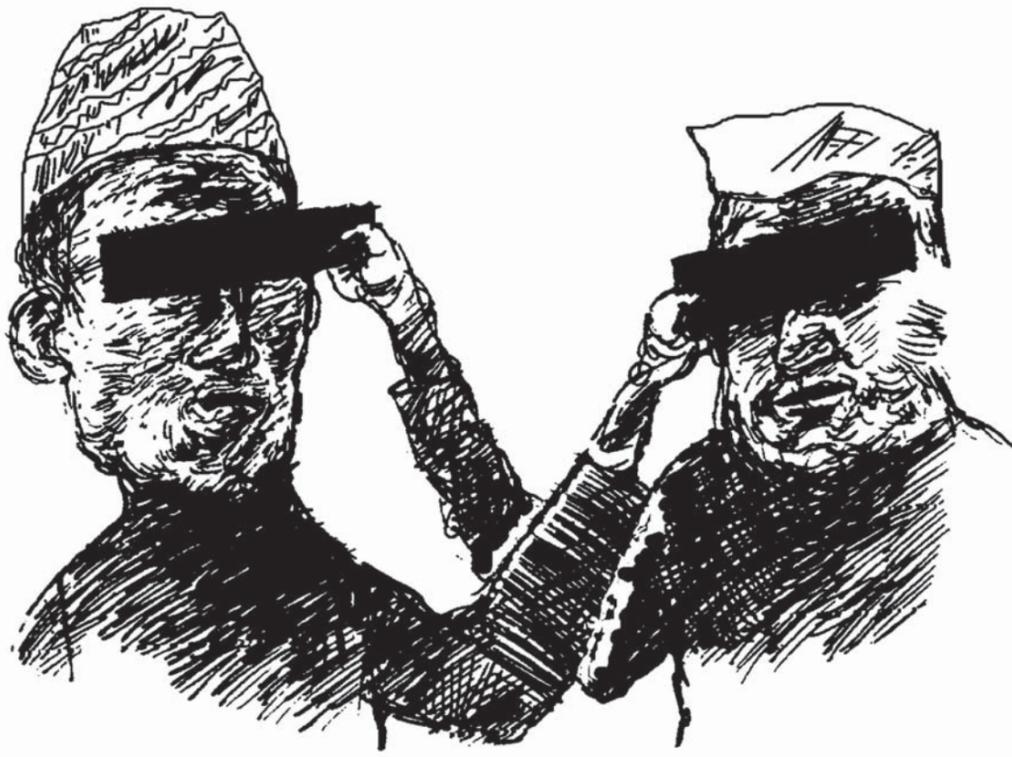
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FLAG WAVING

India expects us to wave the white flag. Our leaders are waving the national flag. Neither is a way out.

Sooner or later (the sooner, the better) this blockade will come to an end. It must. It is aberrant, illegal, destabilising and detrimental to the longterm national interests of both India and Nepal.

Once the border is open again, we will have to start counting the cost. Nepal will have borne momentous losses in monetary terms – the economic damage to the country of the two-month long blockade already far exceeds the impact of the earthquake that affected 12 districts in April. Nepal's already-shaky economy will take years to recover from the cumulative destruction -- which is far greater than the sum of its parts -- of the earthquake and the blockade. Nepal's growth forecasts for the coming years will have to be revised downwards. Development has suffered a tremendous setback.

Of more immediate humanitarian concern is the effect

that the blockade is having on the delivery of relief and construction material to nearly 2 million survivors of the earthquake so they can rebuild before a harsh Himalayan winter. This is an unfolding and ongoing disaster, and unlike the earthquake is completely human induced.

Yet, parachutist journalists from the international media who were so quick to descend on Kathmandu in April are now nowhere to be seen. This time, there aren't any visuals of pancaked temples, of bodies crushed under concrete beams, of babies rescued alive after 24 hours of being buried under the rubble. A blockade, what led to it, and what it is doing to us, is too complicated to explain to the outside world. Food scarcity, the shortage of medicines and the lack of fuel is now hurting Nepalis all over Nepal but it does not fit the definition of 'newsworthy'. So the stories take the predictable on-the-one-hand-this-and-the-other-hand-that

approach.

By now, only the propagandists and the most gullible believe that the obstructions at the India-Nepal border are a result of the Madhesi agitation. India's border SSB and officials at the Indian Oil Corporation have repeatedly let the cat out of the bag: "orders from above" not to let trucks and petroleum tankers to pass through. What is surprising is that the Indians expect us to believe it. Or maybe they don't really care what we believe which, if true, is even more baffling. The blockade will have an impact on Nepal's stability long into the future by irreversibly polarising hills-plains relations, which in turn will have a bearing on Nepali-speaking India. It will make it doubly difficult to sell any joint river basin project to the Nepali public, and further alienate the Madhesis within Nepal.

The international community is watching aghast. Doesn't New Delhi realise the impact of what it is doing, it asks. Even Nepalis who have always been sympathetic towards India are bewildered. A long-term Indian resident of Kathmandu said to us the other day: "I have never been as ashamed to be an Indian."

People here have long stopped buying the argument that this is about the constitution or the Madhesi cause, it is about India out to teach Nepal a lesson that we will not forget any time soon. It may work, or it may not. Either way, it will destroy what trust there has been between the two countries. We can merely look back at Sri Lanka and hope there is some lingering memory of the price India and its then-leader paid for playing dirty there. If it is true that this is all about Bihar state elections, then it is even more bizarre.

We will not even try to enumerate the various international treaties that India has violated with the blockade. Enough just to say that it breaches one code: the one of decency and good neighbourliness. Nepal passed a new constitution adhering to principles of democracy, trying to balance the demands of all interest groups while trying to protect national unity. Despite serious flaws, it is a document that for the first time takes a significant break from our feudal past. The points of disagreement -- over demarcation of provinces, etc -- can easily be rectified through amendments and the main parties in Kathmandu have publicly pledged to do so.

Nepal's curse is that we have rarely had the pragmatic statesmen we deserved, and never any leaders who truly lead by example. We either had populist chieftains, greedy demagogues or foolish adventurists. The current crop of leaders in the coalition is to blame for mishandling the constitution process and misreading Delhi. They broke it, so they must fix it.

India expects us to wave the white flag. Our leaders are waving the national flag. Neither is a way out.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

Times THIS WEEK



PRANAYA RANA (6,285 PEOPLE REACHED)

Most reached on Facebook
Trekking trails half-full... at least not half empty. Everest and the Annapurna regions which were not so badly affected by the April earthquake are seeing healthy traffic.

Most shared on Facebook
'Address Nepal's crisis' (27 shares)

Most visited online page
Half-assed blockade by Ass (5,215 views)

Most popular on Twitter
Restraint, resolve and resilience by Rubeena Mahato (112 retweets, 118 favourites)

Most commented
Restraint, resolve and resilience by Rubeena Mahato (25 comments)

LOSE-LOSE

A country that depends on electricity from Bihar can only complain ('Lose-lose', Editorial, #781). Let's be realistic: none of the recommendations can be taken in present situation.

Global Nomad

■ We used to have many conclaves, meetings on India- Nepal Friendship in the past in India. What has happened to that? Can we have one soon on resolving this impasse with the participation of people who can influence public opinion in both the countries?

Daniel Gajraj

MADHES MOVEMENT

Hard-hitting and right on the ball ('Restraint, resolve and resilience', Rubeena Mahato, #781). Rubeena Mahato represents the voice of the silent majority of Madhesi people.

T Kumar

■ To malign a whole movement based on few untoward incidents to suit your narrative is wrong and unethical from a journalism point of view. Yes, Madhesis made their disapproval of Morcha leaders clear in the 2013 election, but what about

the participation of thousands of them on the streets today. Doesn't that prove any point to you?

True Nationalist

■ Calling spade a spade will not work when people are forced to believe that the sun rises from the west. As long as we let propagandists work freely in Birganj and Biratnagar under the diplomatic guise, the situation in Tarai will not improve.

Binod

■ Nepalis should work with each other to resolve differences and move ahead ('Messiahs of the Madhes', Jivesh Jha, #781). Any power using divisiveness as a tool, particularly on ethnic-lines, should not be encouraged and supported at all.

Abhishek B

■ "Madhesi leaders have nothing but empty slogans and false promises for their own people." We all know who made false promises, the state signed agreements that they did not live up to. "The best move Madhesi leaders can make now is to call off the agitation for the Chhat festival, say no thank you to

the Indian blockade and work with the government for agreed amendments to the constitution." This shows the writer's own messiah-ness. How do you know what the people in Madhes want? Have you made any visits?

Salil Manandhar

HALF-ASSED BLOCKADE

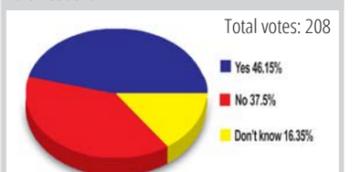
'Punishable by jail term in Tihar this Tihar' is the greatest punchline of this week ('Half-assed blockade', Ass, #781). For the uninitiated, Tihar is the name of the biggest prison in India and also one of Nepal's major festivals.

Whatever

Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #782

Q. Are you happy with Bidya Bhandari being elected the President?



Weekly Internet Poll #783
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What should the government do to resolve the current crisis?



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Prepared for takeoff

Nepal Airlines needs a complete management overhaul before further fleet expansion

KUNDA DIXIT

The Indian blockade has exposed the failure of successive Nepal governments in ensuring self-reliance in energy and import diversification, but one of the most glaring shortcomings has been the inability to maintain a robust national airline.

With or without a blockade, heavy lift air cargo capability would have allowed landlocked Nepal to be less dependent on access to the sea through Indian ports, and a flag carrier with a larger fleet would have given 4 million Nepalis abroad the option to fly their own national airline. Although Nepal Airlines is beginning to spread its wings again, chronic political interference and mismanagement have left the company a shell of what it was during its 'royal' days.

Optimum fleet utilisation for a new plane should be 18 hours a day, but the newly-acquired

two 30-year-old 757s make two flights a day ferrying on each inbound flight from Kolkata up to 30 tons of aviation turbine fuel which are then defueled to keep Nepal's domestic flights running.

The Airbus 320s burn up to 35 per cent less fuel than a 757 on the same route. This means they can fly non-stop to Hong Kong while the 757s have to make refuelling stops on Kuala Lumpur flights. However, the 320s are not suitable for flight times of more than four hours on most existing routes, and the passenger volume.

The company is planning to add at least two wide body Airbus 330s for which it would need nine sets of 36 new pilots. Conversion training has to start much before unlike the ad hoc last-minute simulator exercise in Toulouse this year with the 320s. Fortunately, cross crew qualification is possible since 320 and 330 cockpits and systems are compatible.

"The time to go for wide bodies is now, we are ready," said Capt



Capt Christoph Hiltensperger at the controls of a Nepal Airlines Airbus 320 flight to Mumbai on Monday (below). The airline is reeling from a shortage of pilots.



Srawan Rijal who liaised closely with Airbus on the 320s. "But planning must start right away."

Having widebodies would also allow Nepal Airlines to compete with carriers that use 777s and 330s on its main routes to Bangkok, Hong Kong and Doha. Passenger load for the 330s would be assured because of the huge numbers of Nepalis in the Gulf and Malaysia, and Nepal Airlines could ink code sharing deals with international airlines for traffic from Europe, North America and East Asian traffic.

In the final analysis, however, Nepal Airlines needs a complete makeover in its administration and management to handle the new equipment. It is currently over staffed, there is overt political interference, and the technical backup is not up to mark. The airline has asked for bids from international airlines to handle operations, engineering, marketing and finance with 25 firms submitting letters of intent.

Says 28-year veteran at the company, Capt Vijay Lama: "Nepal Airlines is Nepal in a microcosm with the same management and systems. And like our country, the airline is also trying to reform it so it works better." 🇳🇵

Land-locked, but not sky-locked

The Indian blockade has proved that Nepal needs to expand its air links to the outside world. If Nepal Airlines had more cargo capacity, it would have made the country less dependent on Indian sea ports. And with 18 per cent of Nepalis living outside Nepal, a wide body fleet would give Nepalis the option of flying their own national airline. One of the airlines' ageing 757s is the only Combi with a forward hatch that Boeing ever made and is ideally suited for cargo operations. In fact, learning a lesson from the blockade, experts have suggested that the fully depreciated planes which have low resale value be used for air freight to and from Kathmandu. Even in normal times, the cargo business is worth Rs 100 billion a year, and Nepal Airlines has only 6 per cent of it at present.



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

Airbus 320s barely fly 10 hours because of the lack of pilots. Chronic mismanagement has hobbled the airline's ability to reinvent itself, proving once more that internal efficiency is more important than fleet expansion.

Half the pilots who went for conversion training from 757s to 320s in Toulouse this year failed simulator tests. The airline needs a minimum of 28 pilots for its two 320s, but has only 20. Five international pilots have been hired, but there is tension because of their salary differential. Senior captains in Nepal Airlines are paid only \$1,500 per month plus allowances, whereas the international pilots earn \$12,000 a month. Nine Nepali 757 captains have defected in the last eight years to the cargo airline Blue Dart in India.

With the blockade Nepal Airlines is overstretched, the Airbuses are busy on trunk routes and are flying full capacity. The



The autumn of the patriot

The leadership has no choice but to reach out to Delhi and make amends

Winter is upon us and autumn is coming to a close. It's as though nature has heard our call and allowed a pathetic fallacy to manifest, as spirits hit rock bottom and the weather personifies our hapless existence. The snow that fell in Kerung just over the border in China will soon begin to fall on Nepali soil. Premier Oli's oil tankers have made it back across the border to Rasuwagadi this time, but it seems the weather, if nothing else, will likely get in the way of his abiding love of country next time around.



ONE TO MANY
Bidushi Dhungel

The cold is settling in Kathmandu as well and the afternoon sun is becoming dear to city residents. People have begun to make preparations for what will inevitably be a lacklustre Tihar, bereft of fireworks, deusi-bhailo and kaju-badam, thanks to the ongoing India-cum-Madheshi blockade. There is, of course, also the looming gas crisis, which has heralded the invention of new cooking techniques like the 'rice-cooker daal-bhat-tarkari in one', as well as the resurgence of the old with all-out retro firewood stoves on balconies. The fuel crunch also remains unresolved, although owing to the thriving black market, more motorbikes and cars are plying the Kathmandu roads today than in the weeks gone by. The middle class is sulking about not being able to burn up their gas heaters this winter and calling contacts to

secure an extra cylinder of gas, the poor and working class are taking to the queues and that small class of unaffected elite are merrily still zooming past in their massive four-by-fours.

In the eastern tarai, summer is in full swing. The street is burning. The latest death in Birganj, of an Indian national allegedly with family in Nepal, has escalated violence in the region. The border points at Sunauli and Rupaidiha have been completely sealed on the Indian side. Apparently, the Indian and Nepali premiers spoke on the phone for 25-long minutes and yet no sign of either side 'backing off' seems imminent. Signs of a deal with agitators are also nowhere to be seen. One can only imagine what kind of negotiations are happening when the Minister responsible for leading negotiations, Kamal Thapa, is the same person who ordered security forces to open fire at protestors during the 2005-6 Jana Andolan and the agitators are those who have been fighting hard to dismantle the apparatus the former personifies.

The protests are intense, according to reports on the ground. The media has been shameful in covering them. National mainstream media is towing the establishment line for the most part, knee deep in the rhetoric of nationalism, while alternative and most international media outlets are blindly towing the line of the 'oppressed' and intentionally undermining the blockade, which, by now is crippling the country. It's become a classic question of what came first: pelted stones or live ammunition, blockade or border sit-ins? Even as it is glaringly obvious that deciphering the chicken-egg conundrum is a

waste of time. A balanced and accurate account of on-the-ground realities can be found nowhere, and one is left to one's own devices to sift through the exaggerations and propaganda to find a semblance of truth underneath it all.

The good news is that autumn is finally coming to an end. The #backoffIndia gang have at long last become mum, and an eerily familiar feeling of looming violence has replaced their shenanigans. Intellectual Kathmandu is abuzz with talk, on social media, of fears of a separatist movement, India's stubbornness, the intractable situation and sometimes the negligence of Sushil Da and Comrades Prachanda and Oli. The inter-web is pathetically polarised and often feels like a space for teenage backbiting, where warring sides engage in little more than the 'you're rubber and I'm glue, whatever you say bounces off of me and sticks to you' kind of insults.

But for most Nepalis, silence is seemingly the best response. Even the Prime Minister and his Cabinet either sheepishly defend what has been an utterly disastrous term so far or simply further alienate our southern neighbour. Speaking of which, by now our Patriots must have realised that complete dependence on India cannot be wished away with hashtags and a few trucks of petroleum from China. The leadership has no choice but to reach out to Delhi and make amends, for we have more to lose and nothing in the way of bargaining power. And the best way to do that is to address the problem this side of the border first and see what kind of result that invites.  @bidush

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Going social

Etihaad Airways was named the 'Best Overall in Middle East' at this year's Simplifying Awards. The airways received the award in recognition for its innovativeness, engagement and business impact in social media.



Book on brands

Ujaya Shakya, Founder and MD of Outreach Nepal, has launched his book Brandsutra. The author believes the book on advertising and branding will help in the growth of the ad fraternity in Nepal.

New Netbook

Colors Mobile has launched its new tablet phone-XT731 Netbook. The Netbook is powered by dual core Cortex A7 Processor and Android 4.4.2 KITKAT OS. It has a 7-inch HD IPS screen and comes with 2 MP rear and 0.3 MP front camera. It is priced at Rs 10,520.



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SUNIL SHARMA

As a fleet of Nepali oil tankers negotiated its way through a precarious road along the Bhote Kosi from Tibet, through Rasuwa (*pic*) and into Kathmandu this week, the denizens of Kathmandu imagined an end to their misery.



AS IT HAPPENS Om Astha Rai

Tanker drivers were greeted like heroes with garlands, and they said how proud they felt to be able to help lift the motherland out of a crisis.

But the euphoria was short-lived. Nepalis realised that importing fuel from across the Himalaya is more difficult than

first thought and the celebration was muted. More tankers will arrive in the coming days, but when, no one knows for sure. The Kerung Highway will be closed due to snow soon, and the Kodari link is badly damaged by the quakes.

Like it or not, Nepal cannot rely on any other country but India for the commercial import of fuel at least in the near future. So Kathmandu needs to look south and within to find a political solution to this long-drawn crisis.

Foreign Affairs Minister Kamal Thapa's visit to India last month failed, and Kathmandu seems to have made up its mind that further negotiations with New Delhi would be meaningless for now. The recent Nepal-China petroleum deal was not a manifestation of Kathmandu's tilt towards Beijing, but a symbolic move. This is not how it should

be. Negotiations are needed with agitating groups and their Indian mentors.

The Madhesi parties have been the camouflage allowing New Delhi to deny there is a blockade on Nepal. There was forward movement in talks in Kathmandu between them and the government, but the Birganj violence on Monday has stalled those negotiations for now. Home Minister Shakti Basnet ordered police to chase away Madhesi protesters from the Birganj-Raxaul border on Monday morning. That was a mistake.

The Madhesi Morcha has now threatened to pull out of talks, calling them a "ploy" by the government. India, angry over the death of 'an innocent youngster from Bihar', hinted at further tightening of the blockade. If that happens, neither the government nor the country will win. The

Look south

China cannot alleviate the pain inflicted by India on Nepal, let's look within and mend fences

people's suffering will continue.

Since the days leading up to the promulgation of Nepal's new constitution, India has been reiterating the need for 'broad-based consensus'. But consensus is not possible if the Morcha rejects talks and tries to bring the government to its knees through street protests and the blockade. The government could respond with a sincere apology as a first step to resuming talks.

This is also time for the ruling parties to be honest about those of the Morcha's demands that they cannot address. Nearly three months after it began an indefinite strike in the Tarai, the Morcha on Sunday unveiled its 11-point demand, foremost among which is the creation of two provinces in the southern plains. This is not possible because of the danger of widespread violence, and the government should convince the Madhesi parties about the same.

The Morcha is an alliance of four Madhes-based parties, none of which fared well in the last Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in their own strongholds in the central Tarai. Surprisingly, they are now claiming Jhapa,

Morang and Sunsari in the east and Kailali and Kanchanpur in the far west as parts of two plains provinces.

The Morcha does not represent the people of these five disputed districts. The four members of the Morcha collectively received 12,902 of the total 344,963 (just about 4 per cent) valid votes cast in Jhapa under the Proportional Representation system in 2013. None of its candidates won in any of Jhapa's seven constituencies under the First-Past-the-Post system, and most of them failed to secure even their deposit money. In many constituencies, the Morcha members have received fewer than 20 votes.

Even if all this is ignored, other regional parties demanding a Limbuwan province will not agree. For the sake of a compromise, these districts can be divided and boundaries of the two plains provinces expanded. But the Morcha should spend more energy on constructive negotiations rather than exploring even more sinister ways to weaken the country and hurt its people. 

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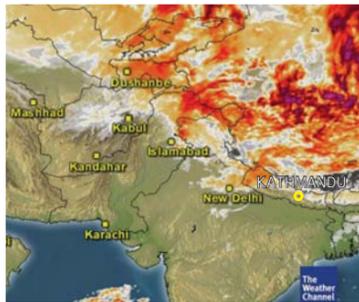
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Around this time of the year, Kathmandu Valley's own smog and morning inversion would have kept the capital's weather misty. But the blockade has reversed that, and Kathmandu will continue to enjoy good visibility. It is still warmer than usual, but expect sunny intervals with an average maximum temperature in the early 20s and minimum still in the double digits. Elsewhere, there are already reports of snow in the higher reaches, and light rain may occur in one or two places in the eastern and western hilly regions on Friday.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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THE YOUNG IN JAZZ

HANNAN LEWSLEY

Undeterred by the current blockade, the annual jazz festival, Surya Nepal Jazzmandu - kicked off with its inaugural event on Wednesday evening: Jazz for the Next Generation.

Held outdoors under the setting sun within the grounds of the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory in Pulchok, Jazz for the Next Generation showcased a high standard of up-and-coming local musical talent. Seven artists were selected by the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory to play in front of an enthusiastic crowd and guest judges: members of Katamon Cherry.

With performances ranging from covers of pop legends such as the Beatles and Tina Turner; to jazz legends such as Chet Baker; as well as a range of outstanding originals, Jazz for the Next Generation proved once again that talent is not a commodity in short supply in the local music scene.

The judges had the difficult task of choosing four titles: Best Vocalist; Best Accompanying Act; Most Outstanding Artist; and Best Band.

Announcing the winners, guest judge Haim Deskoff of Katamon Cherry, said: "The performances were so diverse... it was very hard for us to decide".

The Forty Fingers Collective (*pic, above*) were judged the best band, and with good reason. With a cohesive set, the band exhibited both talent and passion.



GOPEN RAI



Their jazz original clearly impressed both the audience and judges.

Many were surprised to listen to the music of the band, which started playing together only two weeks ago.

"We formed this band just for the festival," Mark Donald Rani, the band's drummer told *Nepali Times*. Rani was also awarded the title of Most Outstanding Artist. Other members of the Indo-Nepal band include: guitarist Anish Malla, bassist

Shawnbert Pyngrope and pianist Sanjay Shrestha.

As part of its prize, the band will be performing at Jazz Bazaar, one of Surya Nepal Jazzmandu's premier events to be held this Saturday at the Gokarna Forest Resort. The members will also get to take part in a series of masterclass workshops with a wide range of international and local acts involved in the music festival.

Not knowing each other personally



before their formation, the only commonality the band shared was the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, as well as an overwhelming commitment and skill for music, of course.

But with three originals already in its repertoire, the band is enthusiastically planning for the future: "The masterclass is the greatest prize," the band's pianist, Sanjay Shrestha admits.

When asked about the band's future plans, Shrestha expressed the organic approach the band is taking. "We'll see how it evolves," he replied.

The Forty Fingers Collective is definitely an upcoming group to keep an eye out for and those who missed out on the band's Wednesday performance can hear them at Saturday's Jazz Bazaar. 🇳🇵

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Real people, real lives

Philip Blenkinsop first came to Nepal in 2001 drawn by the then-elusive Maoist guerrillas in a war that the rest of the world didn't know was happening in the Himalaya.

But that year in June, Nepal did suddenly hit the international headlines. The royal massacre took place, and the Thailand-based Australian photographer found himself in the thick of the dramatic events in Kathmandu. Since then, Blenkinsop has kept coming back to Nepal. He is here again this week to exhibit his hitherto unpublished photographs, *In the Shadow of Hope*, at Photo Kathmandu.

"I knew after that first trip that I would be coming back," he says while setting up his exhibit at the Old Courthouse in Patan. "I have an immediate sense of responsibility to the people of Nepal."

Philip's photography depicts the silent and the invisible,

he is an ardent believer in the unfiltered projection of truth. His work is often shocking, but he uses this emotion as a tool in communicating what he terms "a catalyst for change".

The projection of overlooked injustices is a relevant concept in contemporary Nepal, but Blenkinsop's images always evoke a sense of struggle and hope. The simplicity of sparingly hung, large format black and white photographs that line the crumbling walls of the Old Courthouse *In the Shadow of Hope* contrast heavily with the vivid scenes they depict. Blenkinsop strives to make his exhibition interactive. He says: "A good photograph is one that doesn't necessarily give answers but it asks questions of the viewer."

Blenkinsop's passion is evident in his work, and he says the photographs are not just for the

viewer but for the subject as well: usually they are families of the mistreated, exploited or killed. "I can't tolerate injustice," he says, "the whole fuel and direction of my journey for the past 25 years has been against injustice. I interpret scenes as honestly as I can to show where I've been and what I've seen." These are real lives of real people, caught in a transient moment and shown to the world so that people may know, and so that people may change.

Asked to summarise his main message in the exhibition, Blenkinsop has a simple answer: "Come and look at the show, and make up your mind." 
Hannan Lewsley

In the Shadow of Hope
3 to 9 November
10AM to 7PM
Old Court House, Hakka, Patan



ALL PICS: PHILIP BLENKINSOP



TUOMO MANNINEN

Nepal, 20 years ago

Finnish photographer Tuomo Manninen first visited Nepal in 1995 with the aim to see the side of the country not portrayed in international media. Twenty years later, he returns with *We*, a collection of photos taken during his one-year stay in Nepal. The exhibition is part of the ongoing photography festival, Photo Kathmandu.

Manninen's images -all structured group portraits- lie within the blurred lines that divide art and photojournalism. The artistic nature of his work allows a visual portrayal of life in Nepal free from the constraints of objectivism.

He maintains a very dynamic perception of art. Asked where the boundary between art and photojournalism lies, he attributes the difference to purpose: "It is art, if that is what the creator intended," he says.

Fourteen out of the 30 images that comprise Manninen's collection from Nepal line the stone walls of the historic entrance of Mulchowk, within the grounds of Patan museum. The photographer is thrilled at

the opportunity to show his work to the people who made it possible.

With subjects such as the staff of the Nepal Stock Exchange Limited; a Nepali wedding band; and farmers posing in front of a timid elephant, *We* succeeds in capturing life in Nepal, rarely seen outside the country. Captured on film, and exhibited as an integral part of Photo Kathmandu, Manninen's exhibition offers a genuine insight into everyday Nepali life, twenty years ago.

Mulchowk Entrance, Patan Museum.

10AM to 7PM

3 to 9 November

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KATHMANDU www.photoktm.com



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EVENTS

Tiharai Aayo

Nepal celebrates the festival of lights next week.

9 November, Kag Tihar: Dipawali kicks off with a puja for the bird of good tidings.

10 November, Kukur Tihar: A puja for man's best friend.

11 November, Gai Tihar: Worship Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, by paying your respects to the cow.

12 November, Mha Puja: Newars worship themselves in Kathmandu, and elsewhere people pay homage to Gobhardhan, an avatar of Lord Krishna.

12 November, Nhudaya Bhintuna: Welcome the year 1136 in the Newari Calendar.



13 November, Bhai Tika: Sisters worship their brothers to protect them from Yama, the harbinger of death.

17 November, Chhath: Celebrated by the people of the Maithili-speaking region of Nepal and India, Chhath lasts for four days. On the third day, people worship the setting sun at Rani Pokhari in Kathmandu and on the banks of rivers or lakes in the Tarai.



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

Flash mob,

A worldwide Freeze mob/Flash mob in honor of World Kindness Day organised by Life Vest Inside (LVI).

8 November, location and time to be announced

Register: www.danceforkindness.com/register

Soongava Screening,

VOW Media brings the much-debated 'Soongava' to Kathmandu, collaborating with Mitini Nepal.

10 November, 3 to 6 pm
Ghar Bar Restaurant, Kathmandu

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

Kathmandu MTB Fest,

The ultimate cycling fest with prizes up to Rs 800,000 – both cross-country and downhill.

Register: kathmandumbfest.com
20 to 22 November, Hattiban

Look Back in Anger,

John Osborne's play, directed by Shankar Rijal, portrays the disillusionment among youth in the 1950s/

5.15 to 7pm, 20 November to 2 December
Mandala theatre, Anamnagar

Climate March,

Powershift Nepal is organising a climate march in Nepal, as part of a global effort to push negotiators for climate plans towards Paris summit.

29 November, 2pm
Register: powershiftnp@gmail.com



Photo Kathmandu,

Don't miss out on the first edition of this photography festival and its exhibitions, workshops and talks.

3 to 9 November, Patan
www.photoktm.com

DINING

Thrilling BBQ,

Choose your own prime meat among fish fillet, pork chop, chicken drumstick to accompany assorted fresh veggies.

Rs 1500 per person inclusive of a glass of Carlsberg beer or Coke, every Friday, 6.30pm to 9.30pm, Mandarin Terrace, Everest Hotel, New Baneshwor.

Degaa Resto Lounge,

For mouth watering Newari and Indian cuisine.

Kumaripati, (01)5008679



Bodhi books & bakes,

A quiet, snug place offering a rich collection of cakes and pastries.

Maharajganj, 9851193262

Chez Caroline,

Authentic ambience, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more.

Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070



Embers,

A large and cosy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali favourites.

Krishna Gali, Pulchok, (01)5534766,
embers.ktm@gmail.com,
www.embers-restaurant.com



Manny's,

Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Crispy Crunch Potatoes and don't forget their signature Manny's Spicy Wings. All served with fine hospitality in an excellent space.

Jawalakhel, (01)5536919

MUSIC



Jazzmandu,

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4 to 10 November, all across Kathmandu

Julie Saury,

She is back with her magical drum skills.

6 November, Manny's Eatery and Bar
Tickets available at Manny's and Dhokaima Cafe



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



Folk Music Festival,

Fifth edition of the International Folk Music Film Festival, learn about music cultures and participate in a contest.

26 to 29 November, Kathmandu

GETAWAYS

The end of the universe,

Stay in a family-run hotel that is located atop Mahankal hill. It is believed to be one of the oldest hotels in the area.

Mahankal Mandir, Nagarkot, Bhaktapur, 9741020969

Jhule mountain resort,

Resting 2050m above sea level, the eco-resort boasts a farmhouse that stretches across a hill covered in fresh pine. Enjoy an organic homestay experience.

Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, Lapsipedi-3, Jhule, (01)6212399



Balthali Village Resort,

A small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses.

Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818

Waterfront Resort,

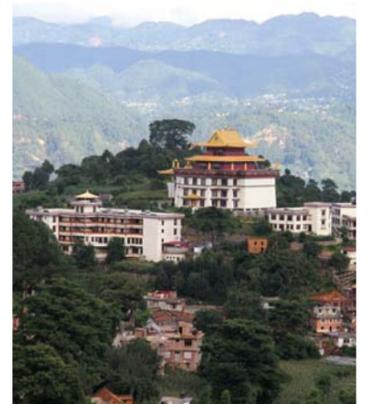
Head to this eco-friendly resort right in front of Phewa Lake.

Sedi Height, Pokhara. (61)466 303/304, 9801166311,
sales@waterfronthotelnepal.com

Gokarna Forest Resort,

Limited offer on two new promotional packages including lavish buffets, spa sessions and stay in their deluxe room.

From \$100, 5 to 9 April, Gokarna Forest Resort, (01)4451212, sales4@gokarna.net, www.gokarna.net

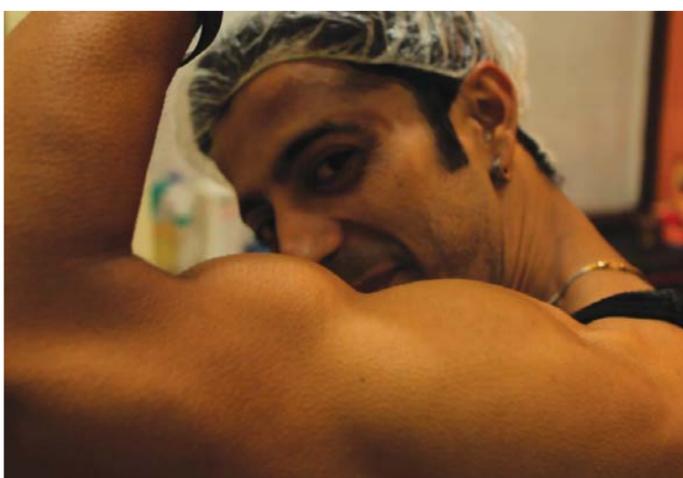


Neydo Monastery,

A monastery and guest house, Neydo is home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room.

Pharping, Kathmandu, www.neydohotel.com

FILM SOUTH ASIA 2015



A biennial festival set up 20 years ago, Film Southasia (FSA) mainly popularises documentaries, in its words, to entertain, inform and change lives. FSA organises screenings, discussions and workshops across South Asia to promote South Asian non-fiction and also contribute to initiating local changes. So far, nine editions of the festival have been held. At each festival, films are judged by a three-member South Asian jury, with the best film being awarded the 'Ram Bahadur Trophy' along with a citation and a cash prize of US \$ 2,000.

After each FSA festival, about a dozen films are selected to be screened across the subcontinent and around the world as the Travelling Film Southasia (TFSA) package. This year, FSA has 43 films from South Asia, ranging from a documentary on press freedom in a highly dangerous place for reporting to a story about a Salman Khan look-alike. FSA has also curated a package for films coming out of colleges and institutions to promote visual storytelling across the South Asian sub-continent.

19 to 22 November
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan

For schedule: www.filmsouthasia.org

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Chasing the dragon

For a long time, Kathmandu was known as a drug paradise, but mainly for 'soft' narcotics like marijuana. Lately, however, raw and processed opium from India have become available - especially after Indian growers moved into remote lawless parts of Nepal.



ALL IN THE MIND
Anjana Rajbhandary

Heroin is a semi-synthetic form of morphine, a naturally occurring substance that is extracted from certain types of poppy plants. Heroin is also derived from opium, which is the sap of a poppy plant. The name opium comes from the Greek word 'opos' meaning 'sap'. Media has glamourised heroin addiction somewhat, but the true effects of heroin are very different in real life.

The chemical structure of heroin allows for rapid travel

to the brain which creates a mild euphoria, most commonly described as feeling 'high' or a 'rush'. Heroin is considered to be the most addictive recreational substance because cravings are extremely persistent and treatment is often long and difficult, but not impossible.

Typical treatment consists of a detox period, whereby patients undergo intense withdrawals while receiving medication and counseling in an attempt to eliminate short-term relapse. However, the rate of relapse is high and multiple cycles of rehabilitation may be required.

A transitional period in a safe and sober environment will help the patient treat heroin addiction with continued success as it shields the patient from triggers, such as individuals that contributed to the heroin addiction at the onset. An inpatient treatment for heroin addiction is one of the safest and most guaranteed roads to full recovery.

In a majority of cases, people initially experiment with heroin for either recreational or medical purposes as a means of achieving



a temporary feeling of euphoria. The first stages of heroin addiction cause the user to continuously crave or chase their initial 'high'.

Individuals that have undergone traumatic experience are more susceptible to using substances such as heroin than those who have not. It is also more likely for someone with a mental health illness to use substances to 'self-medicate' or cope with their current situation. Some common causes of heroin addiction are the environment, genetics, suppressed physical pain, escape from reality

or an addiction acquired from birth.

Heroin use gives the individual a 'downer' effect while providing temporary relaxation and euphoria. Similar to other opiates, heroin use inhibits the brain's ability to feel pain. Heroin users may be able to hide the use for a short period of time, but if you suspect a family member or a friend is using heroin, some potential signs and symptoms to look out for are track marks (the areas on the skin and blood vessels damaged by a needle) possession of paraphernalia,

sudden change in behaviour or levels of motivation, sudden weight loss as well as an increase in time spent sleeping.

Heroin is a dangerous and addictive drug that affects the individual, including their loved ones. As the user increases their dosage, a result of increased tolerance, more physical symptoms become increasingly visible. Heroin may affect various aspects of an individual's life: physical, psychological/mental and family/relationships. Its use leads to strained relationships and also ends many of them.

There are effective and successful treatments available for heroin addiction, including medications (methadone, buprenorphine) and behavioral therapy (cognitive-behavioral therapy). These methods help repair and restore brain function and behaviour to a degree that allows patients to lead normal lives, with a decreased chance of relapse. But the most effective approach consists of using a combination of both medications coupled with behavioral therapy under monitoring and supervision of a qualified medical professional.

nepalitimes.com

- New Opium Epicenter, #773
- The silent scream, #779



GOPEN RAI

Phalano Coffeeghar

generous with the portion, we had a few quibbles. Bits of bacon was used sparingly, and it turned out, they were sprinkled only on the top. The sauce and cheese cloyed, overwhelming the taste of the dish and leaving the bacon in the sideline. If Phalano used less sauce and cheese and more bacon, the dish would be far better. But what little it faltered in taste the kitchen more than made

up for in the spaghetti's presentation.

It was easy to see that Phalano cared about how its food looks. When the Seafood Hakka Noodles (Rs 190) came, we were struck by its presentation. And luckily the taste matched up to the look: the noodles were spicy and tasted authentic.

By the end of our third dish, we were so full, we had no space left to try

the Coffeeghar's much recommended cakes. But knowing we would be back for more visits, we felt no qualms about foregoing desserts this time around.

With its most reasonable prices and great atmosphere, Phalano Coffeeghar is a welcome respite from the usually over-priced eateries around Pulchok and Jhameel.

Sarthak Mani Sharma

How to get there: Find Sajha Petrol Pump in Pulchok. Phalano is a few metres west on the same line.

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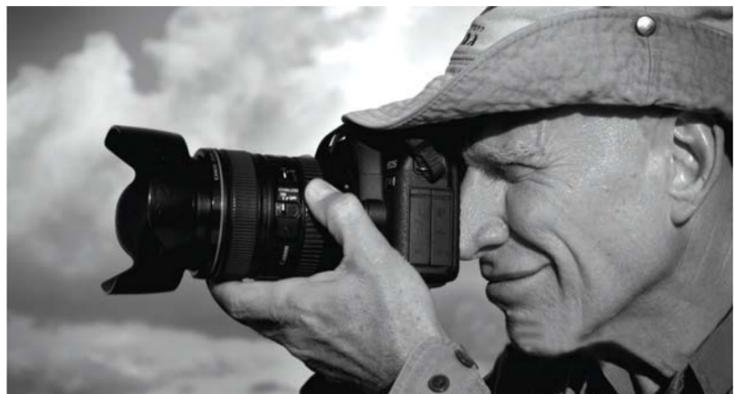
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The Salt of the Earth



“**W**riting with light and shadow” (“photo” being “light” and “graph” meaning “to write” in ancient Greek) is a suitably poetic interpretation of photography and a particularly apt beginning for a film that is a deeply personal, impressionistic rendering of the life of Sebastião Salgado, the revered Brazilian photographer who is now in his early seventies.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Started as a project by Salgado's older son Julian Ribiero Salgado, Wim Wenders, a highly experienced film-maker and family friend, was invited onboard in an effort to keep some essential

perspective in a film that might have otherwise veered into a family self-portrait without much structure.

Filed without any of the usual talking heads *The Salt of the Earth* explores how Salgado discovered photography as his medium, transitioning from a consulting economist for the World Bank to one of this century's most important photographers.

Making a documentary about a photographer may seem somewhat redundant - after all both are visual mediums that can be engaged independently from each other- but the film starts to make sense as we hear Salgado's thoughts in his very intimate, candid, trustful voiceover speaking about his own evolution as a photographer as he becomes ever more deeply engaged with his subjects. As a result, Salgado's photography is piercing. Almost

always in black and white with that essential, dramatic light and shadow - the products are likely to sear into your retina, such is the power of some of his images.

Working with Lelia's constant support, Salgado's oeuvre spans over 100 countries, documenting innumerable subjects ranging from gold mining to Rwandan refugees. It is the people who are the salt of this earth, he says, and that connection he has with the breadth of humanity is what stands out in his pictures as photograph after photograph shows us the human condition at its zenith and nadir.

We can always try to engage with art on its own, away from the context of the artist's life, but there is an undeniable richness that comes from linking the man to his works - which is why this dreamy, sometimes indulgent, but frequently powerful documentary is so riveting, elucidating the man behind the machine.

Photography as a medium has changed the way we perceive the world in our ability to capture moments. In the hands of a man like Salgado, pictures can indeed become testaments written in light and shadow. As we welcome Photo Kathmandu - our first international photography festival, this is a film that illustrates just how effective a photo can be given care and thought; a useful thing to remember in these days of “point and click”.

nepalitimes.com

Trailer

HAPPENINGS



GOPEN RAI

NEW ROLES: President Bidya Bhandari administers the oath of office to Vice President Nanda Kishor Pun at Shital Niwas on Sunday.



BIKRAM RAI

LEADING NOWHERE: Leaders of Madhesi Morcha call a press conference to condemn the killing of an Indian national by security forces in Birganj on Monday and said talks with the government were turning 'meaningless'.



USAID

POWER PLAY: US Ambassador to Nepal Alaina B. Teplitz (centre) with actor Gauri Malla (left) and director Tsering Rhitar Sherpa on Tuesday at the launch of Singha Durbar, a tv series funded by USAID.



GOPEN RAI

PHOTO FIESTA: Visitors check out an exhibition, part of Photo Kathmandu, an international photography festival, which began in Patan on Tuesday.



GOPEN RAI

FRESH SOUND: A band performs at the 'Jazz for the Next Generation' competition at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory in Pulchok on Wednesday.

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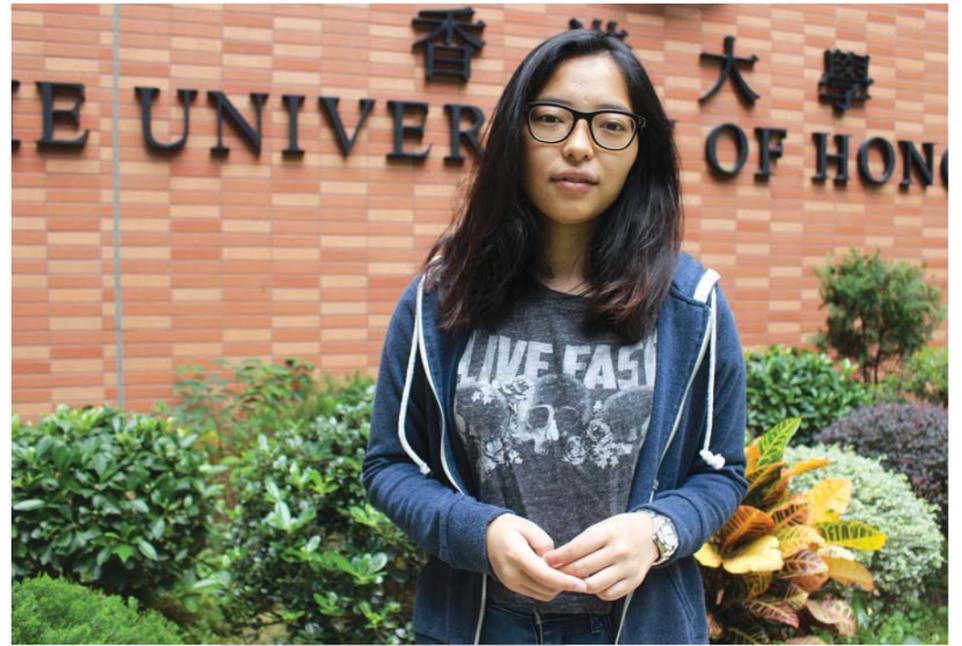
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The tug of the motherland

The third generation of young Nepalis in Hong Kong are eager to return to earthquake-hit Nepal



PICS: SONIA AWALE

SONIA AWALE
in HONG KONG

Their grandfathers fought for the British Army and were stationed with the Gurkha garrison in Hong Kong. Their parents toiled to build a decent life for their families here. Now, some from the third generation of Nepalis in Hong Kong want to go back home to help their earthquake-hit motherland.

The young Nepalis feel the urge to return partly because the descendants of ex-Gurkha soldiers find it difficult to fit into Chinese society. Even those born here live in tightly-knit Nepali communities, and still regard Nepal as home.

"I felt relieved and guilty when the earthquake struck Nepal," says Eina Gurung, 20, a student of European studies at the University of Hong Kong who has been living in the city since she was one. "I was relieved that my family was safe but guilty that I could not be of much help to my country in its time of need."

Merina Sunuwar, 21, also

“After my studies I want to go back to Nepal some day and contribute to my country.”

Eina Gurung

studies at HKU and shares the sentiment. She moved here at eight with her siblings and is studying social work. She says: "I want to further my education and then return to Nepal and work to help people there."

Both Gurung and Sunuwar come from the families of Gurkha soldiers who served in the British Army in Hong Kong. After the handover in 1997 some brought along their families from Nepal in the hope of a better life, and there are now about 40,000 Nepalis here working as security guards or in construction. But the third generation is increasingly trying to find its roots, and help Nepal especially after earthquake.

As much as young women like Gurung and Sunuwar

feel the tug of their homeland, there are other Nepalis too busy making a living to think about returning because Nepal has little to offer.

Mandip Limbu, 29, who works at a Thai restaurant and was born and raised in Hong Kong, is one of them. He has spent most of his life here, and doesn't wish to go back.

"I have things going smoothly here, what is there to go back to Nepal for?" he asks. His father was a former British Gurkha soldier and now works as a security guard.

Prem Thapa runs three restaurants serving Indian and Nepali cuisine and has been living in Hong Kong for 17 years. He is encouraged that even though their grandfathers were soldiers and their fathers may have been construction workers, a new generation of Nepalis is pursuing higher education. "That gives me hope," he says.

Many descendants of Gurkhas left Hong Kong after Britain allowed families of its former soldiers to settle in the UK from 2005. But there were

“I want to further my education and then return to Nepal and work to help people there.”

Merina Sunuwar

some who preferred to stay on in the former British colony. "We could have moved to the UK but we didn't want to," says Mandip Limbu. "I like it here and it's like home now."

Sumyang Hang Limbu was seven when she first came to Hong Kong while her grandfather was in the British Army, and has been living here for more than a decade. Now 26, she is a welfare worker in a charity helping non-Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong. She says: "I don't see myself going back to Nepal anytime soon but I'd like to get involved with the youth in Nepal to help rebuild the country."

One of the reasons some in the third generation feel like going back is that they are not fully assimilated into Hong

Kong society, and few speak Cantonese. "I still feel like an outsider despite having lived here 19 years. I grew up in a Nepali culture, we hang out among ourselves, have our own circles," says Gurung.

Sumyang Hang Limbu agrees: "We all have an identity crisis, in a way we don't really belong in Hong Kong, there is a language barrier, immigrants are stigmatised, the system doesn't favour minorities and we Nepalis also don't make an effort to integrate into Hong Kong society."

Says Gurung: "We have to try to fit into Hong Kong society and at the same time help develop Nepal. After my studies I want to go back to Nepal someday and contribute to my country."

Nepali students at the University of Hong Kong launched an earthquake relief campaign in May and have raised US\$40,000 which they plan to spend on improving health care in Gorkha and other districts where their families are from. 🇳🇵



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Qatar is reforming labour

Under sustained international criticism Qatar has reformed its controversial laws governing migrant workers. But for significant improvement in labour conditions there have to be changes in the way the Nepal government and recruiters treat their own workers.

After Qatar's king approved an amendment to the law last week, more than 400,000 Nepali migrant workers, mostly hired for construction of infrastructure for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, are hopeful it will now be easier for Nepalis to return home or switch jobs more easily.

The new law will affect all 1.8 million foreign workers in the Gulf state, 400,000 of whom, are Nepalis. Unskilled and illiterate migrant workers from Nepal and

other South Asian countries are expected to benefit the most from reforms in the notorious 'kafala' system.

"We are happy that there will be less restrictions on us," says Kumar Karki, a Doha-based Nepali migrant worker.

Kafala allowed Qatari employers to treat foreign workers like bonded labourers, requiring workers to have the employer's permission to leave Qatar or join other companies even after the end of a fixed-term contract.

"You cannot return home even if a relative dies, you cannot find a job elsewhere even if you do not get your promised salaries," says Abhiman Singh Lama, a Qatar returnee now working for Prabasi Nepali Coordination Committee. "Kafala used to give unlimited arbitrary

power to employers."

As soon as migrant workers reach Qatar, their passports are seized. And if they attempt to escape an employer, they would be rendered illegal and slapped with a heavy fine.

One year after it publicly promised to amend its law under pressure by rights groups, Qatar finally reformed Kafala to allow migrant workers to apply for permit exits directly from a Qatari ministry as opposed to their employers. But the amended law, which will come into effect only next year, still restricts migrant workers from leaving the country without the consent of their employer. The amended law promises to set up an authority to hear grievances of migrant workers who are denied exit permits by

OM ASTHA RAI

Nepal first needs to reform its own laws to protect Nepali migrant workers in the Gulf

Working away

ALL PICS: PATTABI RAMAN



MOHAMED SALAUDDIN IS A NEPALI WORKING AS A CLEANER AT SOUQ- THE ART HUB OF DOHA.

laws, but is Nepal?

their employers.

Qatar-based Nepali entrepreneur TB Karki told *Nepali Times* by phone: "It's a great start, and we hope more reforms are on the way."

Despite the reforms in Qatar, however, the Nepal government itself is dragging its feet to reduce exploitation and abuse of its own workers. The proposal for zero cost migration, for instance, is still in limbo.

"Kafala system is not the sole reason behind the suffering of Nepalis in the Gulf, Nepal first needs to stop sending unskilled workers like cattle," says Karki. After winning the 2022 World Cup bid Qatar has been hiring more Nepali workers than any other country. But this has increased the risk of death

and exploitation. Nearly 200 Nepalis died in Qatar alone in 2014, and there are complaints about being denied promised salaries, overtime payment and other facilities.

Nepal's former ambassador to Qatar Surya Nath Mishra says the source of most problems facing Nepali migrant workers is actually in Nepal itself. "There is a cut-throat competition among Nepali labour recruiters, and they lie to uneducated youth about salaries and facilities," he explains. "They make fake contract letters to mislead workers, and some Nepali labour authorities are involved."

Mishra says Nepal's own Foreign Employment Act 2007 is full of flaws and loop-holes. "Qatar's Kafala system is a medieval law, and it needs to be

reformed," he says. "But before that, we need to reform our own law."

One such loophole is Article 15 of the Labour Act that allows the Chambers of Commerce of Gulf countries to attest documents related to recruitment of Nepali migrant workers. Labour recruiters have been duping Nepali workers by getting fake documents attested by unreliable and unaccountable agencies.

The Nepal embassy in Doha has been operating without an ambassador for more than one year, and protecting migrant worker rights has never been a priority there. A bilateral agreement on labour signed in 2004 has not yet been renewed, and Nepal has been announcing a minimum wage on its own even though Qatari companies are not obliged to pay minimum wage.

"Nepal needs to renew the labour agreement with Qatar, convince Qatari authorities to raise the minimum wage and focus on sending skilled manpower," says Karki.

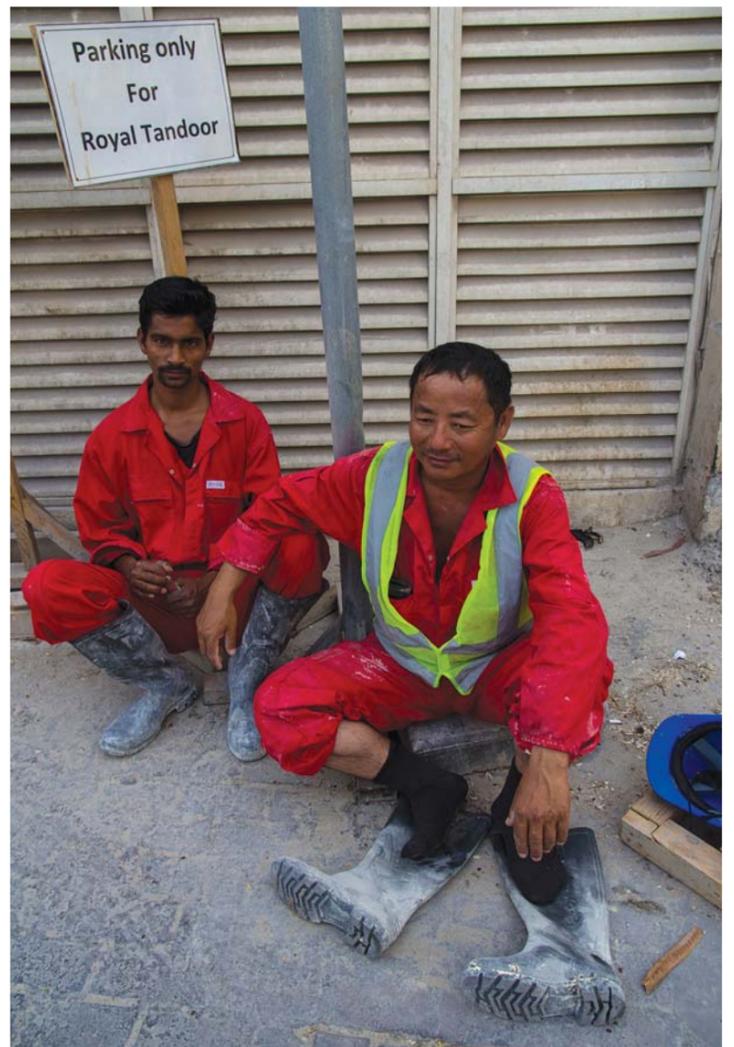
This year the Labour Ministry in Kathmandu said Nepali workers going to Malaysia and six Gulf countries need not pay for their air tickets and visa fees. The policy faced stiff resistance from labour recruiters, and a committee was formed to review it.

With the government changed, no one knows what will happen to that policy. Says former Labour Minister Tek Bahadur Gurung: "If the new government cares about poor Nepali migrant workers, the policy should be implemented. But I am not very hopeful." 🇳🇵

from home



NEPALI AND INDIAN MIGRANTS WATCH A BOLLYWOOD MOVIE INSIDE THEIR CAMP.



NEPALI MIGRANTS RELAX DURING A BREAK.

PATTABI RAMAN
in DOHA

'Qatar deserves the best' say signs along important roads in Doha, the capital of Qatar where one in every five people is a Nepali migrant worker. The whole city looks like a construction site as the country builds railways and stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Qatar has the third-largest reserves of natural gas in the world, and has the highest per capita income in the world. Nepali, Indian, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, Filipino, Pakistani and Egyptian workers can be seen in protective gear toiling in the 45 degree midday heat.

There are concerns about labour conditions. A worker is owned by his employer, there are often prolonged delays or non-payment of wages which means workers fall behind in repayment of debt that got them here in the first place. Every migrant worker must have a 'sponsor' who must also be his employer. The migrant worker cannot change jobs without permission, and cannot leave the country since the employer keeps the passport.



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The Day of the Donkey

HEALTH WARNING: Some readers may find this week's column disturbing and objectionable because it will make no reference to the unofficial "Blockade" imposed by so-called "India" on purported "Nepal". It will instead concentrate on my favourite festival of the year, Tihar, when we set aside one day to worship our favourite animal, or thing. This column also contains some flash photography.

9 November Day of the Crow

British scientists recently discovered what we in Nepal have known all along: that crows are collectively smarter than human beings. To test this hypothesis, they placed a treat in a test tube, and left a piece of copper wire casually lying around. Guess what the smarty pants crows did: they bent the wire into a hook, fished out the said treat and had a picnic. They even knew how to talk with their mouths full. Over at NAST, Nepali biologists were pretty blasé about the whole thing. Our ancestors have known all along just how smart the birds are, which is why they chose the crow as the aide-de-camp to the God of Death over a short-list of other applicants

including the Female Anopheles Mosquito, The Tick, and the Fruit Bat. The reason we worship crows in Nepal is that they are not only numerically superior to human beings, but they also have far higher IQs than them. In fact, the time may have come for Nepal to have its first Crow Editor-in-Chief, first Crow ex-King, and if we had a Crow Prime Minister heading a Cabinet of Ravens, Rooks and Jackdaws, perhaps we'd not be in the mess we are in right now.

From my own personal observation at our favourite neighbourhood garbage pile (which is about ten metres away as the crow flies from where I am sitting now) I can tell that several of the crows feasting there deserve PhDs. British crows may use primitive tools to extract treats from test-tubes, but their cousins at Krishna Galli have discovered fire. Yes, they actually set the trash ablaze this Halloween and organised a pot luck barbecue. And since crows are socialist animals they even invited crows from as far away as Babar Mahal for the party.

So, on 9 November we honour Yamaraj's roving ambassador and plenipotentiary and feed them the innards of a deceased Water Buffalo, which itself is the vehicle of the God of Death. Quite how that works, I have yet to figure out.

November 10 The Day of the Dogs

This is the day when dogs are gods for a day. We worship man's best friend and reward Kaley, Setay and Khairey for being around when we need them most to provide us with security in these troubled times by howling non-stop all night at everyone in general and no one in particular. Disregarding our own personal discomfort and sleep deprivation we get up at the crack of dawn on Dog Day to round up the neighbourhood dingo pack and feed them body parts of fellow animals, resisting the temptation to lace it with pulverised sleeping pills. Veneration of our nocturnal canine choir is a tradition that has been passed down to us from generation to generation ever since, as British scientists recently discovered, the first dog was born 75,000 years ago in what is now Nepal. Not in India, so there.

11 November The Day of the Cow

Then comes Friday, the day in our animal kingdom reserved for none other than the Holy Cow which was

recently elected by parliament for a third term in office beating the One Horny Rhino 7-5 in a tie-breaker. It is an indication of the reverence we accord to our National Animal that we give her the privilege of serving as bovine traffic islands at the Jorpati Intersection weekdays from 9-5. The cow's terms of reference is to not budge, especially if Prime Minister Modi's motorcade whizzes by. On Friday, let us show that we are gender balanced by also paying respects to oxen and bulls.



12 November Gas Cylinder Day

This year, Bhai Tika has been replaced by Gas Cylinder Day when we will garland the half-full cylinder that took three days of waiting in line at Salt Trading and pay it divine reverence at an auspicious hour designated by the ex-royal astrologer.

From this year, Tihar has been extended by a few more days to include new items of reverence in New Nepal. Which is why on 13 November we will take our prized 1l plastic mineral water bottle filled with petrol, place it in the altar and venerate it.



14 November Day of the Donkey

The Ass

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