The blockade has a death toll, just like the earthquake did. Medical services have been crippled by the shortage of critical drugs and the inability of patients to get to hospital in time. A nurse at the Paropkar Maternity Hospital in Kathmandu shows an empty chiller for vaccines (above). WHO, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UKaid KOICA, GIZ and other humanitarian agencies supporting Nepal’s health sector warned this week: ‘The reduced ability to access health services is already affecting the vulnerable, and disruption to immunisation and other programs will have an extremely serious and lasting impact on children.’ UNICEF said last week up to 3 million Nepali children were now at risk.

But there are signs that the blockade imposed by India in support of Madhesi activists at some border points could be lifted soon. Indian leaders are known to have advised Madhesi leaders in New Delhi this week to consider a roadmap from the Kathmandu establishment: amending the constitution to meet demands for proportional representation and constituency delimitation right away, and forming an all-party committee to resolve the proposed demarcation of provinces within three months.

Upon his arrival in Kathmandu late Wednesday night, Upendra Yadav of the MJF said: “We will not call off our agitation.” Analysts say this could be posturing to avoid being accused by radicals within the movement of having sold out.

There is speculation that since tinkering with boundaries of two proposed plains provinces is so fraught, the Madhesi parties will allow their border sit-ins to fizzle out after a few rounds of talks with the NC-UML-Maoist in Kathmandu. India will then have a face-saver to quietly ease the siege.
When the nightmare of this Indian blockade is over, we must restitch the fabric of our nation.

The Madhes agitation and often-brutal crackdowns by the Armed Police Force in the Tarai in the past four months have turned the Madhesi leadership, for whatever reason, sceptical that they must be part of adjoining two plains provinces to cover the whole Tarai. The NC-UML-Maoist combine wants them to be part of adjoining hill provinces because of venal bank politics. This has been the main sticking point in talks between Kathmandu and the plains parties. Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa’s compromise proposal to push through amendments on Madhesi demands and defer delineation appears to have been broadly accepted by the Indian establishment, and that is the real reason Madhesi chiefs were summoned to New Delhi this week. This is the wrong time to be tinkering especially the question of the five disputed districts in the western and eastern Tarai which have hill majorities. Sections of the Indian establishment and their allies among the Madhesi leadership, for whatever reason, sceptical that they must be part of adjoining two plains provinces to cover the whole Tarai. The NC-UML-Maoist combine wants them to be part of adjoining hill provinces because of venal bank politics. This has been the main sticking point in talks between Kathmandu and the plains parties. Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa’s compromise proposal to push through amendments on Madhesi demands and defer delineation appears to have been broadly accepted by the Indian establishment, and that is the real reason Madhesi chiefs were summoned to New Delhi this week. This is the wrong time to be tinkering with borders.

The economy, already battered by the earthquake, has taken a direct hit. Multinational investors are bearing colossal losses, some are thinking of closing down, many domestic industries may never recover. Hydropower and infrastructure projects nationwide are at a standstill. Tourism is down by 60 per cent. The government’s revenue collection has been so badly hit, the Finance Ministry isn’t even putting up a rupee figure to it. All this has impacted on employment and government services, GDP growth this year has been scaled back to negative. If it were New Delhi’s intention to punish Nepal, it has done a brilliant job. But it is hard to see how that helps India.

Development has probably been pushed back a decade. Medical services, even emergency care, have been crippled by the shortage of critical drugs and the inability of patients to get to hospital in time. The blockade has a death toll, just like the earthquake did. Schools in the plains have been closed for more than five months, elsewhere they are just keeping classes going until winter break. Facing a harsh winter with no shelter, the situation for the two million people still homeless after the earthquake is dire.

After this crisis is over, Nepal’s and the Nepal government must not fall into the trap of wallowing in victimhood. The Indians don’t need to ruin our economy, we have been doing that pretty effectively ourselves since the 1990s.Lazy nationalism does not get us anywhere. We have been doing that pretty effectively ourselves since the 1990s. Lazy nationalism does not get us anywhere. We have been doing that pretty effectively ourselves since the 1990s. Lazy nationalism does not get us anywhere. We have been doing that pretty effectively ourselves since the 1990s. Lazy nationalism doesn’t get us anywhere. We have been doing that pretty effectively ourselves since the 1990s. Lazy nationalism doesn’t get us anywhere. We have been doing that pretty effectively ourselves since the 1990s. Lazy nationalism doesn’t get us anywhere.

We want to be in a situation where a gigantic nest door neighbour has so much power over us that they can crush us. Nepal’s best bet is to simply open up to China. China doesn’t strong-arm its neighbours as India does. China is awash in cash and is looking for allies too. India, on the other hand, has a history of interfering in the internal matters of all its neighbours.

As explained in my editorial on Wednesday, Nepal cannot afford to keep its borders shut for too long. That is the real reason Madhesi chiefs were summoned to New Delhi this week. This is the wrong time to be tinkering with borders.

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India’s External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj stirred a debate this week over her Nepal remarks in India’s Upper House. Her comments were widely criticised for being misleading.

To those who missed her speech, you can watch it in the online version of this column on the Nepali Times website.

**AS IT HAPPENS**

Om Astha Rai

The operative paragraph was: “The interim constitution ensured naturalised citizenship to Indian women married to Nepali men, but this provision is missing in the new constitution.”

The truth is that the new constitution has retained the provision about naturalised citizenship through marriage. Why did Swaraj have to propagate that falsehood? Did she deliberately distort the truth to justify the Madhesi protests which in turn is used to justify the Indian blockade of our borders to pressure Kathmandu on the constitution?

These are important questions, but what is even more crucial is: why does she – or the Madhesi people – believe that Indian women married to Nepali men will be deprived of naturalised citizenship under the new constitution?

This misunderstanding appears to have stemmed from the alteration of just one word: ‘existing’ to ‘federal’. The interim constitution stipulated that foreign women married to Nepali men can apply for naturalised Nepali citizenship as per ‘existing’ laws. The same line has been repeated in the new constitution, but ‘existing’ has been replaced with ‘federal’. Will this minor alteration have big implications? Not really. Laws in a federal Nepal will be known as ‘federal’ laws. But leaders of the Madhesi parties have misinterpreted this change and become convinced in the Indian establishment that this is discrimination and reduces the Madhesi people to second-class citizens. Swaraj seems to have bought that.

Madhesi want deletion of the word ‘federal’ and more clarity in the clause of naturalised citizenship through marriage. They believe ‘federal’ is a semantic ploy and they are not ready to trust the state that this word will never be used to pass discriminatory laws against them in future.

Why do Madhesi want clarity in the citizenship clause? Why do non-Madhesis not see it as a ploy? These questions are important to make sense of the Madhesi unrest.

When the blockade ends

This is neither the first nor could it be the last, we must start seeking alternatives by this very distrust of the state. So building trust between Kathmandu and Madhes is probably more important than tweaking the statute.

Leaders of the big parties must show that they truly believe in diversity and inclusion. They must go beyond the constitution to prove it. But this is sadly where the problem lies. For example, Prime Minister KP Oli, an upper-caste Hill Brahmin, has appointed 10 advisers so far. None of them is a Madhesi, Janajati or Dalit.

There are now signs that the blockade will be lifted. The whole exercise has been damaging not just for Nepal, but it has backfired on India as well. New Delhi is looking for a face-saving device to lift the siege quietly. Top Madhesi leaders in the Indian capital this week were asked to consider a four-point proposal floated by Foreign Affairs Minister Kamal Thapa so that border obstructions can be removed and India can justly ending the blockade.

The Madhesi leaders are not happy, fearing a backlash back home. But they have got the message that redrawing federal boundaries right away is not possible. So even if it rejects the deal, it will alter the form of its agitation and stay off the border. The first amendment to the constitution, agreed upon by the major parties last week, will also serve as a face-saver for the Madhesi Front to scale down its agitation.

But this doesn’t mean the crisis will end, it will just be postponed. In three months when the term of an all-party committee to be formed for redrawing federal boundaries ends, the issue is bound to come up again. The main parties must therefore show flexibility in demarcation of the two proposed Tarai provinces. All five disputed districts cannot be gifted to Madhesi, but dividing one or two of them in a way that Madhesi people will not be under-represented is necessary.

It is also important to mend the trust deficit between Madhesi and non-Madhesis. The main hill-dominated parties must try to convince Madhesi that they now live in an inclusive and multi-cultural society. Ensuring proportional representation of Madhesi, Janajatis, Dalits, Muslims and women in all party committees could be the starting point.

When the blockade ends, Nepal also must embark on a journey towards reducing dependency on fuel and diversifying imports. We all ridiculed Prime Minister Oli’s unrealistic dreams, but those should be our long term goals.

The ongoing blockade is not the first, and there may be more in future. We have to be better prepared next time. @omastharai

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**BANGLADESH**

***Dhaka***

The blockade will end when the leadership change and been able to convince Madhesi people – believe that Indian establishment is ready to trust the state that this is discrimination and many in the Indian establishment are suspicious of the state. Their perception of constitutional clauses is guided
**Every breath we take**

Despite the drop in emission due to the blockade, pollution chokes Kathmandu Valley this winter

**Sahina Shrestha**

Nepal's petroleum imports are down to 20 per cent of normal due to the Indian blockade, yet Kathmandu’s legendary winter smog is as bad as ever.

The reasons include prevailing winds from the southwest blowing in transboundary pollution from the Indo-Gangetic plains, the increase in household burning firewood due to the gas shortage, and dust particles from unfinished road construction in the capital.

The worsening air pollution in northern India this winter is purely the result of burning of crop residue in Punjab and Haryana from late October to November. Coupled with the increase in vehicular traffic this has made pollution so bad that New Delhi imposed odd-even number plate traffic restrictions that week.

“Satellite images show agricultural burning in northern India and computer models indicate the smoke is transported all over the Indo-Gangetic plains including the Himalaya contributing to regional haze,” said Bhupesh Adhikari, air quality specialist at ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) in Kathmandu. Kathmandu is a bowl shaped topography exacerbates the problem in winter by trapping warmer polluted air near the ground in a phenomenon known as inversion. The pollution is composed of dust particles, vehicular exhaust and brick kiln emissions.

The crisis caused by the Indian blockade has brought down the level of vehicular pollution, and the earthquake damaged 80 per cent of the brick kilns. However, experts say the smog is as bad as last winter because of smog from the Indian plains and the dust from Kathmandu Valley roads that are half-complete because of the fuel crisis.

In October-November farmers in Punjab and Haryana in India burn their fields to clear paddy stubble after harvest to plant winter wheat. Farmers in the Nepali Tarai have also started to burn crop residue because of the fuel crisis. In October-November farmers in Punjab and Haryana in India burn fields to clear paddy stubble after harvest to plant winter wheat. In recent years agricultural fires in northern India have been so extensive that they can be seen in NASA satellite images (April).

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ASH IN THE SKY
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In addition, the volume of flights between Southeast Asia and Europe flying over the Indian Ocean in what is called the Himalaya 1 air route to cut flying time between East Asia and India contributes about 12 per cent of global warming from the transportation sector worldwide, contrails have not been studied as closely.

The impact of contrails on the temperature of the earth’s surface is hard to measure. But after the 9/11 attacks when all airliners were grounded over the continental US for three days, scientists got a rare chance to study what happens when there are no contrails. They found evidence of the heat-trapping effect of these artificial clouds, as well as reflection and blockage of the sun’s rays.

Given the right conditions and with heavy traffic along air corridors over northern India, contrails can expand into bands of high-altitude cirrus clouds blocking the sun and preventing winter fog in the Indo-Gangetic plains from forming. In this way the sun warms the earth.

India’s domestic aviation market is expected to grow 10 per cent annually in the next decade, which is double the growth rate of the global aviation industry, and aviation plans to add 450 new jacketed aircraft and almost 100 million passengers. Indian airlines already carry nine times as many passengers as they did 20 years ago. In addition, the volume of flights between Southeast Asia and Europe flying over India is also growing.

Aerosol emissions haven't got as much attention as other fossil fuels as a contributor to global warming, in climate change negotiations, including the ongoing talks in Paris. Contrails have received even less attention.

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Aerosol emissions haven't got as much attention as other fossil fuels as a contributor to global warming, in climate change negotiations, including the ongoing talks in Paris. Contrails have received even less attention.
**Kathmandu Witch Trials**

Under the guise of corruption the CIAA is targeting those with whom its puppets and their puppets do not agree.

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**ONE TO MANY**

Bidushi Dhungel

In under a year, 20 people were killed on these false charges. The trials stand as a reminder of the way in which people, or groups of people, can be ‘legally’ and ‘legitimately’ targeted as a means to push through various religious or political ends.

The Salem Trials came to mind almost immediately upon reading the headlines last week on the activities of our own beacon of justice, the Commission on Investigation on the Abuse of Authority (CIAA). It doesn’t take a genius to connect the dots. It is not new news that Nepal’s CIAA is but a mere tool which its puppeteers and their puppets do not agree. The puppeteers are either close to the UML, almost all of those implicated have been corrected this time around as ‘corrupt’ individuals who made their fortunes in the heydays of Nepali Congress politics and yet continue to rule the roost over at NCP. The irony is that no one was maneuver so well as to keep out financial irregularities and into their political bearings. Of all the nonsensical, and often outright dangerous, maneuvers that the CIAA has made, perhaps none is as foolish as going after Sajha Yatayat. It was a dead initiative that was brought back to life for public good, and anyone who has experienced a few spare minutes, list at least 20 people, or scaling up in Kathmandu. It was made, perhaps none is as foolish as going after Sajha Yatayat. It was a dead initiative that was brought back to life for public good, and anyone who has experienced a few spare minutes, list at least 20 people, or scaling up in Kathmandu. It was made, perhaps none is as foolish as going after Sajha Yatayat. It was a dead initiative that was brought back to life for public good, and anyone who has experienced a few spare minutes, list at least 20 people, or scaling up in Kathmandu. It was made, perhaps none is as foolish as going after Sajha Yatayat.

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**Award for Etihad**

Etihad Airways has been named ‘Airline of the Year 2016’ by the American aviation industry publication Air Transport World (ATW). There were entries from more than 100 airlines in the contest. ETW noted that Etihad’s growth and partnership strategies when it announced the award.

**Jet Spray launched**

Chadbury Group has launched its fully automatic Jet Spray washing machine. Its main features include a water-spray that washes off dirt and excess detergent.

**BOK’s new branch**

Bank of Kathmandu has recently opened its new branch in Bhairu, Kanchanpur. The branch was inaugurated by Deputy Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, Mahendra Adhikari. With this, Bank of Kathmandu now has 51 branches. The inauguration is part of the bank’s aim of opening more branches in mid and far-western Nepal.

**New flight for Turkish**

Turkish Airlines has inaugurated its first flight to Zaporizhzhia in Ukraine. It has become the sixth destination that Turkish flies to in Ukraine. Starting from 28 December, Zaporizhzhia flights will be operated 4 times weekly and for the first six months, there will be a special offer for its Miles&Smiles members.
The earthquake in April was not enough. Nepal is now suffering the catastrophic collapse imposed by India and enforced by aligning Madhesi parties in the central and eastern Tarai.

**This is it** Rubeeza Mahato

Retired Assistant Secretary General at the UN and one of the most respected persons in the international civil service, Kul Chandra Gautam, takes a retrospective look at events in Nepal’s recent history leading up to this crisis in his book Lost in Transition: Rebuilding Nepal from the Maoist mayhem and mega earthquake. In a brilliant counter-narrative, Gautam destroys the dominant discourse that eulogises the Maoist war as a natural and progressive-sounding slogans of certain groups like the Maoists, and activists of various ethnic and regional groups who disagree with them. He argues that the Maoist movement used grievances of the oppressed and the marginalised to launch a power grab, and in doing so destabilised Nepal’s march towards consolidation of democracy, development and human rights.

At a crucial point in our history — pushing the country into a needless and ruinous war and disempowering the state. Gautam challenges what causes theory for the Maoist war and argues that it was more an instrument for state capture than a genuine desire to liberate the oppressed who in reality have been the biggest victims of this violence.

More significantly, he argues that the Maoist war established political violence as a legitimate instrument to gain power and institutionalised the culture of impunity with repercussions far into the future. Indeed, in many ways, our current problems are tied to our uncritical acceptance of the use of violence by the Maoists and our inability to challenge them on their decision to bypass legal, constitutional and democratic means to achieve political goals and set a dangerous precedent for other political groups. The Maoists chose to wage guerrilla warfare against a young democracy that was only beginning to free itself from the shackles of an authoritarian monarchy. At a time when the state should be building institutions, ours was caught up in fighting an insurgency. In essence, that has been the story of the Nepalese state post democracy: a struggle for survival with domestic and external forces while never having the opportunity to consolidate and strengthen itself.

This continued erosion of state capacity, abetted by glorification of destabilising forces, military rhetoric and political adventurism is what is at the source of our problems. Moving forward from this mayhem, Gautam will require discarding all outdated, parochial and extremist ideologies, embracing democratic values and prioritising economic development, inclusion and good governance. This book is also notable for its strong and detailed criticism of the international community’s role in Nepal’s peace process, in particular its willingness to compromise on accepted principles of justice, rule of law and democracy in Nepal to appease radical factions. Gautam fiercely criticises the UN and its representatives internationally for codding the Maoists and ethnic extremists, and for falling to their doublespeak. He describes how UNMIN misreported events in Nepal with its visible bias for the Maoists despite frequent breaches of the CPA, how UNMIN treated Maoists at par with the state while displaying a complete distrust of democratic parties. Gautam notes how Ian Martin and Karin Landgrin’s disdain for NC and UML as ‘thoroughly corrupt, Babun-led, nativist, puppet parties’ while considering Maoists to be the exception to the rule, reminded him of King Gyanendra and his father Mahendra’s dislike for democratic parties, both of whom ended up suspending democracy and ruling as absolute monarchs.

This book is a refreshing change from the established discourse on Nepal shaped by a narrow group of elite, English-speaking writers who fail to look beyond empty sloganeering and rhetoric. The notion of Nepal into monolithic categories of us vs them, ‘progressive’ vs ‘repressive’, ‘Palashis’ vs ‘Madhesis’ and ‘Pahades’ vs ‘Madhesi’ and ‘Hill Babun Chottri’ vs the ‘rest’ ignores the complex and contradictory realities of Nepali society. For international experts that parachute into Nepal, this is a convenient framework to work with, one that fits nicely with their worldview, but does little to explain our issues, let alone find solutions. Gautam’s book is a carefully reasoned attempt to dig deeper and presents a more nuanced and sensible understanding of our problems with clear and detailed way-forwards. Despite the heaviness of the subject matter, it is a tremendously hopeful book, laying in concrete terms a roadmap with which Nepal can prosper and achieve stability.

The eloquence discourses the Indian bloated ego for once, allowing Nepal to do its obligations and future negotiations, that resonates throughout the book.

**Nepali Times:** Your book goes against the dominant narrative that the Maoists are a force for change. Aren’t you being unfair in your negative assessment of the Maoist movement in Nepal?

**Kul Chandra Gautam:** Yes, the Maoists have certainly been an important force for change. But how true is the change they advocate? In reality, it has been nothing but — glorification of so-called revolutionary violence, inciting people to destroy democratic institutions, fomenting communal discord, disrupting children’s education — all in pursuit of a globally failed and discredited ideology. The Maoists raised issues of entrenched inequity, injustice, discrimination and exploitation in Nepal, which I write in my book, but the solutions they proposed were mostly arbitrary, coercive, divisive, violent and undermined the solutions they advocated. They brought physical threats, and even elimination of opponents or those who disagreed with them. The book documents how the many progressive-sounding slogans used by the Maoists were deeply deceptives and concludes that the so-called ‘people’s war’ was perhaps 10 per cent blessing and 90 per cent curse for the people of Nepal.

You are critical of the role of international community, particularly the UN in Nepal’s constitution-building and peace process. But were you among the first people to propose a UN involvement?

**Kul Chandra Gautam:** I believe this discourse of the UN and enlightened, multilateralism in international relations. I am proud of my advocacy for UN’s support for Nepal’s peace process, consolidation of democracy, development and human rights. Indeed, the UN played a very constructive role in highlighting and preventing violations of human rights by both government security forces and by the Maoists in the early years of the peace process. The press coverage of UNMIN was very reassuring to the people of Nepal that by both government security forces and by the Maoists that they would not accept or apply in their own countries.

The UN and other international donors to Nepal were keen to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of the poor, vulnerable and historically marginalised. I strongly share and support this laudable objective. Where my view of many of my fellow UN colleagues and European donors and diplomats differed was in their inability to distinguish between progressivising-sounding slogans of certain groups like the Maoists and activists of various ethnic and regional groups whose analyses was often convincing, but whose policy prescriptions were deeply flawed. Many Western diplomats were swayed by the views of some articulate columnists, writers and analysts who presented Nepali society as sharply divided between progressive and repressive camps. Naturally, they wanted to be on the side of the so-called progressives and gave them unbound benefit of doubt.

In the ‘Deception and delusion of the international community’ I give examples of how the international community misjudged Nepal’s complex social dynamics and ended up unwarrantingly supporting certain policies in Nepal that they would not accept or apply in their own countries.

Do you think your being seen as an anti-Maoist undermined your credibility as a mediator during the peace process?

**Kul Chandra Gautam:** I never pretended to be a mediator, but wanted to play a constructive role in the peace process, and more importantly in post-conflict reconstruction and development. Perhaps my candid views were seen as partisan by some, but I know many considered them principled. My public criticism of the lotsists helped to expose the contradictory realities and alerted others, including the UN and some donors, to be more circumspect in not subscribing to the simplistic characterisation of Nepal societies as the ‘Hill Bahun Chettri’ vs the ‘rest’ ignores the complex and contradictory realities of Nepali society. For international experts that parachute into Nepal, this is a convenient framework to work with, one that fits nicely with their worldview, but does little to explain our issues, let alone find solutions. Gautam’s book is a carefully reasoned attempt to dig deeper and presents a more nuanced and sensible understanding of our problems with clear and detailed way-forwards. Despite the heaviness of the subject matter, it is a tremendously hopeful book, laying in concrete terms a roadmap with which Nepal can prosper and achieve stability.

The eloquence discourses the Indian bloated ego for once, allowing Nepal to do its obligations and future negotiations, that resonates throughout the book.

**Why couldn’t our media or public intellectuals challenge a harmful discourse that endorsed violence and helped impunity?**

The Maoists were very clever in projecting themselves as the champions of the poor and the marginalised. They portrayed all those who disagreed with them as feudal elites. They said revolutionary violence was necessary to fight what they described as an autocratic state. They were able to persuade Dalits, certain Janajatis, Madhesi, and even some leftist intellectuals that their noble ends justified violent means. Curiously, even some members of the international community bought this argument. Nepal’s moderate media and public intellectuals were unable to counter this narrative for fear of being portrayed as politically incorrect. I happen to believe that all noble objectives should be pursued using noble means. Perhaps my candid views were seen as partisan by some, but I know many considered them principled. My public criticism of the lotsists helped to expose the contradictory realities and alerted others, including the UN and some donors, to be more circumspect in not subscribing to the simplistic characterisation of Nepal societies as the ‘Hill Bahun Chettri’ vs the ‘rest’ ignores the complex and contradictory realities of Nepali society. For international experts that parachute into Nepal, this is a convenient framework to work with, one that fits nicely with their worldview, but does little to explain our issues, let alone find solutions. Gautam’s book is a carefully reasoned attempt to dig deeper and presents a more nuanced and sensible understanding of our problems with clear and detailed way-forwards. Despite the heaviness of the subject matter, it is a tremendously hopeful book, laying in concrete terms a roadmap with which Nepal can prosper and achieve stability.

The eloquence discourses the Indian bloated ego for once, allowing Nepal to do its obligations and future negotiations, that resonates throughout the book.
A sudden shift in wind direction from southwest to west has brought colder, drier air into Nepal, which has reduced the level of Indo-Gangetic haze and will bring down the minimum temperature to the mid-single digits over the weekend. Maxima will hover around 20 because of more direct sunlight.

This will in turn induce inversion fog along rivers in Kathmandu Valley and in the Kathmandu-Pokhara corridor, Chitwan Valley and parts of the Tarai. There will be some stray high altitude clouds on Saturday but these will move eastwards rapidly.

THIRTY ONE-YEAR-OLD SUMANA SHRESTHA WAS IN AMERICA, planning a backpacking trip to Europe, when Nepal was hit by the devastating April earthquake. The financial analyst from Boston put all her plans on hold, and jumped into action.

For the first month of the disaster, Shrestha worked through Facebook, coordinating relief supplies donated by friends in the US to be sent to quake-affected villages. In May, Shrestha was sent by her company, Boston Consulting Group to work with the World Food Programme for three months and decided to stay on.

An MBA graduate from the MIT Sloan School of Management, Shrestha was amazed at how little was being done to deal with the fuel crisis.

“I asked my friends if we had a platform in Nepal where people can share and get free rides. They said no and that was my cue,” says the Kathmandu native.

Shrestha got on her laptop, worked out of a café and created a Facebook group ‘Carpool Kathmandu’. The idea was simple. People who had extra seats in their vehicles could offer the same to those looking for a ride.

Within the first four days, 25,000 people had joined the group. The story of how people were carpooling in the face of the fuel crisis was picked up by newspapers and bloggers helped spread the word about the group.

Today, Carpool Kathmandu has over 110,000 members and an app for Android devices. With users having to add their phone numbers, the app provides an extra layer of security. Like in the Facebook group, users can ask and offer rides using #ASK and #OFFER, as well as share their experiences.

What started as a short-term measure to cope with fuel shortage is now beginning to be seen by many as an eco-friendly way to travel. Most members admitted they would like to continue carpooling even after the crisis ends.

“Carpool Kathmandu has not only helped bring the community together but also build a culture offline where people give and take lifts,” says Shrestha.

Shrestha has also created another Facebook group ‘Medication for Nepal’. As with its predecessor, this group helps match people who need medication with others who are flying into Nepal and are willing to carry them.

People offering to bring medication use #CTN (Coming to Nepal), #CountryOfOrigin #LandingDate in Nepal and people in need of medication use #MedicationForWhat #EstimatedWeight. To make it easier, users upload a photo of the prescription and others in the group help locate the medicines.

Shrestha is now working with the Department of Drug Administration to coordinate and create a database structure to help ease the supply of medications.

Says Shrestha: “Yes, there are problems. But, we need to get beyond the concept of simply complaining and thinking somebody else is going to solve them. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to solve them.”

SAHINA SHRESTHA
Stories of Nepal creator Jaydev Paudel recently travelled to the Tarai in search of tales of how people in the plains are coping with the crisis. His popular Facebook page has now been liked by over 175,000 people. Here are some of the stories.

Rabindra Kumar Dwivedi, Birganj

I am a simple farmer. I received the most basic education, and I do not understand the current situation of the country. The government and the big politicians say that they have given equal rights to the people of Madhes. The Madhesi leaders tell us that the government has given us no rights at all. And I sit here and wonder, where did all the rights disappear along the way? Who kidnapped the rights? But then again, I am a simple farmer.

Awdhesh Prasad Kurmi and Anita Devi Kurmi, Parsa

He would follow me to the door every time I left for work and when I returned he would always come and hug me. I had to feed him or else he wouldn’t eat. I still remember that day very clearly. I was at work and saw my wife come running towards me, screaming with our son in her arms. His hands were suspended in the air, he had been shot in the head and was covered in blood. I rode as fast as I could to take our dying son to the hospital, the police were still firing indiscriminately. When we finally reached, the doctor declared him dead. We are all mourning his loss, but she has taken this sorrow to her soul, and won’t talk to us much. Yesterday, our two other children came to her and said, “Ama, we are here for you.” And we all broke down.

FACES OF MADHES

ALL PICS: JAYDEV PAUDEL
Sanjay Yadav, Parsa

Every time I went to the train station to buy goods, I would see him, quietly sitting by the corner. I heard a few people say that he just arrived there one day and no one had any idea where he'd come from. I didn’t beg. I would see whenever the nearby shop-owners gave him. One day, I went to speak to him but he didn’t say much. He would utter a few words and stop. I felt sorry for him and took him home. I tried to find out where he was from, but no one knew. It has been six years since he began living with us. He is family now, and we all worry if he wanders too far.

Binita Devi Shah, Birganj

I told him not to go to the protests but he wouldn’t listen. He used to say, “If I don’t go and fight for our rights, then who will?” That day, after lunch, he left without telling me. Shortly after I got a call from the hospital saying that he had been shot. I ran to see him but they wouldn’t let me enter. I cried and told them that he was my husband. As the nurse lifted the cover from his body I saw that half his head was missing. I fainted.

Binita Devi Shah, Birganj

People used to say we were the best couple in town. He loved teasing me. He was young, only 25. When our second child was born, he was so happy. He would say, “We will tell him, not only one meal a day, but we will make sure to send these two to the best schools and make one a doctor and the other an engineer. We will do everything for them.” Now, my eldest son questions me, “Why did father sleep on top of those logs?”

Majir Miya, Birganj

I can only use these paddy stalks to seal my leaking roof, the crop is ruined.
KIMFF 2015, Over 80 films from 25 countries will be shown at this year’s Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival. 10 to 14 December, Kumari Hall, Kamalpokhari, (01)4440635, kimff.org

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

Christmas Bazaar, Shop for gifts from local artisans, enjoy traditional festive biscuits, and mulled wine. 13 December, 11am to 6pm, Bikalpa Art Centre, Pulchok, Lalitpur

Nepali drama, A new Nepali play, Katha Sarangi Gau ko (The story of Sarangi Village) by Nabin Arsubiya. Until 12 December, show starts at 4:45pm everyday (except Wednesdays), Theatre Malla, Sundhara, 9841595956

Farmers’ market, Local producers gather to sell organic vegetables, dairy products, artisanal bread and pastries and home-made goods. 8am to 1pm, Le Sherpa, Lajimpat, every Saturday, (01)4006087, 9800320777

French cinema, Screening of the Film Un vie de chat (A Cat in Paris) by Alain Gagnol 17 December, 5.30pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku Road, (01)4242832, alliancefrancaise.org.np

Photography workshop, Level 1 workshop for aspiring photographers, organised by Artudio. 13 December, 7am to 9am, Rs 4000, Artudio, Chhaukot Hospital Road, Swayambhu, register: 9851182100/9803779777

Creative Rendezvous, Workshop on 3D artwork using papier mache, clay and cloth with Rajesh Yadav. Rs 3,600, sattya.org

Art festival, Submit your piece of art for this open roof art exhibition. Exhibition: 10 am to 12 pm, 12 December, Patan Durbar Square, 9808160503

The Vesper House, Stop by for the best in Italian and other local favourites, in their breezy outdoor seating. Also a great venue for wine connoisseurs. www.vespercafe.com

Trisara, With chicken, flambeed prawns, crispy chicken, and khasi sui, it would be a folly to ignore its aromas. www.trisara.com

The Village Cafe, Authentic Nepali food that comes straight from the heart. Patan Road, (01)5540712

Bipul Chhetri Live, Celebrated singer Bipul Chhetri will perform for the third time in Kathmandu. 19 December, 2pm onwards, Sano Gaucharan Ground, Gyaneshwor

Guitar Fest 2016, A guitar competition for all music lovers. Auditions from 18 to 28 January, Ghachi Arts Academy, 9840401554

Glacier Hotel, Good value and friendly service for travellers on the lap of Lake Phewa. Gavitghat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)466303/304, 9809796571, sales@waterfronthotelnepal.com
Inside corridors of power

Singha Durbar, the new political drama being aired on Nepal Television, is not a story of celebrities trying to plot each other’s downfall. It isn’t Nepal’s version of Yes, Prime Minister. It is a sober screen adaptation of political leadership beset by familiar problems of corruption, food insecurity and migration that plague the country today.

Much of the attention surrounding the series has come from the casting of ace actor Gauri Malla in the lead role of a woman prime minister. But, Singha Durbar is more than just a story about women empowerment. While Malla’s character is often snubbed by her male counterparts, sexism is not depicted bluntly, so viewers are left to wonder if these men simply envy her in the same way they would another successful man.

Each episode explores a new challenge faced by her government. In one installment, a rebellion in the fictional country of Subaha threatens the safety of Nepali migrant labourers working there, inciting riots back home. Though only four of the 13 episodes have been released so far, it is safe to say that the entire series will be about how a government under the premiership of a woman confronts crises case-by-case.

Singha Durbar strikes home in reminding us that the onscreen problems are our own. Even with its sanitised image of politics, free as it is of large-scale corruption, political lies and betrayal, Singha Durbar makes a powerful case for improving our governance system and making it more inclusive and accountable.

“Singha Durbar showcases positive role models,” says Inke Stoneham of USAID, which funded the show. “It is about democratic government that protects the rights of everyone.”

Gauri Malla exudes both poise and panache, and the other impressive cast of actors including the seasoned Pramod Agnabari, who is as great as the rival politician and former RJ Alok Thapa, who fittingly plays a journalist.

But at times the dialogues feel stiff, spoken as they are in an unnaturally high level of grammatical correctness. It is also hard to imagine that politicians would speak so formally, using devanagari script inside their homes and meeting rooms. Besides, Singha Durbar would also need to take its viewers deeper into the actions of its prime minister in solving the countless problems. In the fourth episode, for instance, the crisis ends as soon as it erupts and we do not see enough of how the prime minister maneuvers to end that crisis.

Otherwise Singha Durbar is an unprecedented and powerful political drama. With overtones of social justice and explorations of accountability, sustainability, health care, it is definitely, as Stoneham says, “a show for everyone.” Singha Durbar offers these troubled times hope of a more equal and brighter future.

Sarbatk Mani Sharma

Singha Durbar airs on Nepal Television on Sundays at 8:45 pm and can also be viewed online. It is directed by Tsering Rhitar Sherpa, produced by Common Ground and funded by USAID.

In two states of mind

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness in which there is an unusual shift in mood, energy, and ability to function. The extreme shifts in mood range from a manic to depressive state. To improve the accuracy of diagnosis, the primary criteria for manic and hypomanic episodes highlight changes in activity and energy, not just mood.

**Bipolar disorder**

**Bipolar disorder I**: Characterised by the following three episodes.

- **Manic episode**: when an individual is impulsive, euphoric and full of energy with the likelihood of engaging in risky and unhealthy behaviour for at least a week.
- **Hypomanic episode**: similar to manic episode for at least four consecutive days.
- **Major depressive episode**: when an individual feels extreme hopelessness, sadness, suffers from insomnia, lacks energy and has suicide ideation for a two-week period.

**Bipolar disorder II**: When an individual has both conditions of hypomanic and depressive episodes highlight changes in activity and energy, not just mood.

**Cyclothymic disorder**: When an individual experiences symptoms of hypomanic and depressive episode due to a medical condition such as Cushing’s disease, multiple sclerosis or stroke.

Due to the mood swings of extreme euphoria to the depths of despair, daily life is difficult for the individual and associated loved ones. Depending on the severity of bipolar disorder, an inpatient treatment could be the best environment towards the road to recovery. Certified psychiatrists and medical professionals can work with the individuals and make customised plans to fit their specific needs with the right medications and therapies.

An inpatient treatment for bipolar disorder is one of the safest and most guaranteed roads to full recovery. The combination of monitored medication and evidence-based customised therapies at an inpatient treatment can help stabilise and reduce both manic and depressive episodes for the long-term, under the proper care and supervision of qualified professionals.

Some probable causes of bipolar disorder are genetic factors, stress, changes in brain activity, genetics, brain structure, prenatal and perinatal factors, and environmental and lifestyle factors.

Bipolar disorder is a chronic mental illness. Unpredictable mood swings are the most common indication of this disorder. The symptoms vary between the two states of the manic and depressive episodes. With effective and proper treatments, most people with bipolar disorder live happy and healthy lives. Bipolar disorder is a long-term, recurring illness, but the right combination of medications and psychosocial treatment can help manage the disorder by stabilising mood swings and other related symptoms. It is recommended that bipolar disorder is treated consistently over time, with no breaks, in order to maintain the well-being of the individual. Other treatments for bipolar disorder include electroconvulsive therapy (for extreme cases), and natural supplements. Although little is known about natural supplement’s effects on the disorder. Under the monitoring and supervision of a qualified medical professional, and use of right medication in conjunction with psychosocial therapy, bipolar disorder can be well-managed by the individual.

**ALL IN THE MIND**

Anjana Rajbhandary

A person in manic state will feel impulsive, euphoric and full of energy, possibly engaging in risky, unhealthful behaviour. The depressive state causes a loss of energy and interest in activities once enjoyed by the individual, accompanied by extreme sadness and hopelessness. This deep depression may cause thoughts of suicide.

The management of personal relationships, school, work, and other aspects of everyday life may be troublesome. Bipolar disorder is a long-lasting illness that would benefit from support and supervision throughout the individual’s life. According to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5), there are five types of bipolar disorder.

**Bipolar disorder I**: Characterised by the following three episodes.

- **Manic episode**: when an individual has both conditions of hypomanic episode (previous or current) and major depressive episode.
- **Cyclothymic disorder**: When an individual has experienced symptoms of hypomania and depression in the last two years for at least half the time and has not been symptom-free for more than two months at a time.
- **Substance/medication induced bipolar and related disorder**: When an individual uses substances or medication that causes symptoms similar to bipolar disorder, in which shifts between manic and depressive episodes within a month of substance abuse or use of medication.

**Bipolar disorder II**: When an individual uses substances or medication that causes symptoms similar to bipolar disorder and depressive episode due to a medical condition such as Cushing’s disease, multiple sclerosis or stroke.

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**Cyclothymic disorder**: When an individual has experienced symptoms of hypomania and depression in the last two years for at least half the time and has not been symptom-free for more than two months at a time.

**Substance/medication induced bipolar and related disorder**: When an individual uses substances or medication that causes symptoms similar to bipolar disorder, in which shifts between manic and depressive episodes within a month of substance abuse or use of medication.

**Bipolar and related disorder due to another medical condition**: When an individual experiences symptoms of hypomanic and depressive episode due to a medical condition such as Cushing’s disease, multiple sclerosis or stroke.

**Due to the mood swings of extreme euphoria to the depths of despair, daily life is difficult for the individual and associated loved ones. Depending on the severity of bipolar disorder, an inpatient treatment could be the best environment towards the road to recovery. Certified psychiatrists and medical professionals can work with the individuals and make customised plans to fit their specific needs with the right medications and therapies.**

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This year, the Kathmandu International Film Festival (KIMFF) may have surpassed itself, at least based on the films this reviewer was given access to.

Serdhak - a Nepali feature film set in Jomsom, is a folky, funny, tender tale about a young man, Lhakpa (Tsewang Rinzin Gurung) who returns to his village after studying in Kathmandu. Village life sucks him in, and he quickly falls into a rhythm, teasing his sister, providing emotional and physical support to his mother, and trying to pre-empt the already too far gone, albeit quiet, alcoholism of his father.

Events conspire to keep him in his home village, working the fields, even as more people around him choose to abandon traditional livelihoods as they move to America - jumping at the chance of a less grueling life, rather than eking out an existence as subsistence farmers.

Slowly, along with Lhakpa we rediscover the simple pleasures and the real hardships of life in Upper Mustang, even as we are smitten by the beauty of the landscape which has been captured to perfection.

Directed by Rajan Kathet, Serdhak - The Golden Hill conveys, without histrionics, the very real bind that almost every Nepali is facing today -- to stay, and struggle against the odds or to leave and try to find a better life elsewhere, even if it means losing your culture and being separated, indefinitely, from your family.

Serdhak is a sensitive, thoughtful film, and while the acting is not always up to par, the actors (all of whom faced cameras for the first time) are so charming in their portrayal of the characters that one feels compelled to stick with them.

Often, films press for drama and story, with twists and turns that are too absurd to take seriously. This is not one of those. Serdhak affects you with its quiet attempt at neo-realism, in my mind the right step in the direction towards creating true independent cinema.

Tashi and the Monk - a documentary by Johnny Burke and Andrew Hinton is another charming, but also heart-wrenching film showing at KIMFF this year. It chronicles the valiant attempts of Lobsang Phuntsok, a Buddhist monk who has returned to the hills of Northern India to open Jamtse Gatsal - The Garden of Love and Compassion, a children’s home that hopes to help and rehabilitate those children who are either unwanted or cannot be taken care of by their families.

Phuntsok, his team, and the children they care for in the setting of the green Indian foothills make for a strikingly unforgettable series of vignettes that outline the extraordinarily difficult task that is helping emotionally vulnerable children - a little girl named Tashi in particular being the subject here.

The makers are able to give us an unaffected account of the inner lives of the children at Jamtse Gatsal - a testament to their skill and patience, and while Phuntsok is clearly a profoundly compassionate man, he still remains a bit of a cipher to this viewer at least - adding a layer of complexity to this must-see film.

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

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Tired and demoralised

Kanti Shah in Annapurna Post, 10 December

After more than two months of staging sit-ins at the Birganj–Raxaul border, and with no political solution in sight, Madhesi demonstrators in this area are beginning to lose enthusiasm.

The number of protesters which earlier measured around hundreds has taken a sharp dip in recent days. "When we first began blocking the border, there would be around 300-400 people participating, even during the night," says a Madhesi leader, "Now, it’s difficult to get even 20-25 people to camp out." During the day time too participation is low. When the protests first began three months ago, hundreds of demonstrators from Parsa and Bara districts regularly travelled to the protest site. Various organisations also took out rallies, calling for participation in enforcing blockade. Protesters here express disappointment over the government’s apathetic attitude towards their cause despite over three months of campaigning for the movement.

"We are not allowed to say this openly, but even the leaders are starting to get demoralised," says a central member of a Madhesi party who asked not to be named. A central member of Nepal Sadbhavana Party Shiv Patel says, "Even at border posts where there are protests, large amounts of fuel and essential supplies continue to get smuggled regularly. The people who are smuggling in goods are also Madhesis, this has made demonstrators question their motives." However Samajwadi Forum Nepal General Secretary Ramsahay Yadav says the blockade is still in full swing. "It is the planting season, so this is why the numbers have decreased. We will continue to close the border until our demands are fulfilled."

Imitating nature

Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jagadamba Press, now makes natural colours come alive with its state-of-the-art equipment.
Perched on top of terraced slopes and commanding a stunning view of Bauddha Himal, Barpak was once famous for its bucolic setting popular with homestay backpackers, relatively good infrastructure and round-the-clock electricity. All of that was destroyed in the 25 April earthquake. Now, eight months later, as the temperature dips to minus at night most of the town’s 15,000 residents continue to live in flimsy makeshift shelters. With remittance from Gurkha soldiers, Barpak is better off than most other villages in northern Gorkha, it got a lot of media attention and emergency relief in the weeks after the quake.

But even here rebuilding houses has been agonisingly slow. Rubble from collapsed structures still lay strewn across the village and only a handful of houses have been rebuilt. If this is the situation in Barpak, one can imagine what it is like in remoter settlements like Ulya and Keranuja.

“We believed the government would help build our homes, but after waiting and waiting we have realised that we have to rebuild our village on our own and not rely on others for help,” says...
Information to rebuild

In the immediate aftermath of the April earthquake, information technology played a crucial role in disseminating information, mapping affected areas and helping coordinate relief efforts. Storycycle's 'Impacts Stories' is one such digital initiative that highlights stories and data from earthquake-affected areas to direct support for projects and enable rebuilding.

"Technology on its own does not work, it is the emotional connection you create through it that will help in the rebuilding process," says Saswot Dhakal of Storycycle.

Highlighting villages like Barpak, Rastaur and Thame, users can start their own campaigns by creating a profile for a village and fundraising related to it. Storycycle has also started 'BuildCamp' in which the building process of an area is facilitated by a mixed group of architects, engineers and storytellers who contribute their expertise to design the ideal community.

The first BuildCamp in Barpak involved community leader Bir Bahadur Ghale and documented stories with community mapping which increased the town's digital footprint.

Along with fostering rebuilding techniques in Barpak last week.

“Food for assets enables people to be actively involved in urban renewal, but such efforts are needed from the government’s side as well,” says pioneer community leader Bir Bahadur Ghale who put up a microhydro plant here in the 1990s, long before the rest of the district was electrified.

The 130 kilowatt plant was destroyed in the earthquake, and is being rebuilt.

With support from the US-based Gorkhaly Foundation, a diesel generator used to provide power four hours every evening, but that has been reduced to two because of the fuel shortage.

Says Bir Bahadur Ghale: “Electricity is necessary to power tools in reconstruction, and people here used to electricity so we have to restore the service as soon as possible.”

Barpak Rural Electrification won the National Geographic Society Great Energy Challenge grant of $70,000 recently to rehabilitate the 1.13 kW micro-hydro project and use the electricity to help with reconstruction.

With work in full swing, 24-hour electricity should be back in Barpak by February.

However, the earthquake reminded us about the importance of wider roads for safety and emergency services,” explains Yam Bahadur Chale, the Bauddha Himal Academic Boarding School.

Along with fostering strong community values, the reconstruction has also become an opportunity for locals to earn food rations. Every fortnight, the World Food Programme (WFP) and its Food for Assets initiative distributes rice and lentils to those involved in reconstruction.

Local families are reluctant to those involved in reconstruction.

“The connectivity allows villages to benefit from many services and does not require them to come all the way to the cities. The need to connect is not just after natural disasters, it has become an everyday necessity," Pun told us.

After receiving a grant of $80,000 from the Internet Society’s Wireless for Community Program (W4C), Pun was visiting Gorkha in week to establish internet connectivity and get communities involved in its long-term use and maintenance.

Pun says: “Local communities need to be involved and committed to using the service, if no fees are paid to maintain the system it will be a waste of money.”

Gorkha’s wireless network will run on solar electricity from Gham Power and will be ready in a month. After Lamjung and Gorkha, Pun plans to expand the program to schools in Sindhupalchok and Kavre.

“Overseas Nepalis donate $1 million”

Among the many Nepali individuals and groups that galvanised relief to survivors of the April earthquake, the one that stands out is the organisation of overseas Nepalis, Help Nepal Network (HeNN) which has raised more than $1 million mainly for housing, health and rebuilding schools. Although HeNN has been active since 1999 to fundraise for development projects in Nepal, it has been after the earthquake that HeNN has really grown and spread its activities.

“We are really proud to have crossed the one million dollar milestone in our fundraising effort for earthquake relief and reconstruction in Nepal,” says Abhaya Shrestha of the US Chapter of HeNN who says nearly half the money has already been disbursed to build 2,000 temporary shelters and running over 60 health camps in the affected districts.

HeNN partners with nearly 100 community organisations across 18 districts to provide food, medicines, construction materials, set up temporary learning centres, and latrines in schools.

In the next phase of its activities, HeNN is working with the Department of Education to redesign schools affected by the earthquake, and some pilot schools have been selected in Sindhupalchok and Nuwakot.

Shrestha says: “In 2016, we plan to focus primarily on rebuilding schools.”

Some 700,000 homes and 8,000 schools were destroyed in the earthquake and aftershocks in April and May.

More than 2 million people are facing winter in temporary shelters, and the work of HeNN and other volunteers and private groups have filled the gap left by the government’s late and inadequate response.

HeNN is the largest charitable network of Nepalis around the world.

nepalitimes.com
Half-Ass column

We begin today’s news bulletin with the main headlines:

Khadga Slams Basnet
Thapa Blasts Swaraj
Swaraj Smacks Thapa
Karki Kicks Ass
Nepal Pokes India
India Whacks Nepal

Now that we have that over and done with, there is really not much to add. That’s it for today, folks, go home to Mama. Scat.

You are still hanging around, go away, show’s over. What’s that, again? You are insisting that you paid for a full column and feel you are being cheated that this week’s Backside is only 10% its normal word length? What do you expect, don’t you know there is a Blockade on? But if you still want to argue about it, meet me outside in 5 minutes and I’ll show you who’s boss around here.

As Nepalis we are being short-changed everywhere, it’s the name of the game. Only 10% of fuel trucks are getting through. You wait 3 days for 4 litres of petrol and the gas station wallah has tampered with the pump and you only get 3.8. The LPG cylinder is always less than half full. So, this is a half-Ass column, what’s the big deal?

Besides, we Nepalis have to learn to have a more positive mental attitude. Stop complaining, na. When you get a half-empty gas cylinder, isn’t it much better to regard it as being half-full? Be optimistic, look at the brighter side.

Just see all the opportunities that this crisis has presented us with. All we have to do is grab what we can, which is exactly what everyone is doing. There is so much going for us that the Oli Government should now send an envoy to New Delhi to request the Indian autoritarrians not to lift the blockade. So much money is being made on both sides of the open-ended border by everyone up and down the food chain that it would be foolish and against the national interest to lift the siege.

This seize is good for the economy, it is creating wealth, raising Nepal’s GDP per capita and we have empirical evidence of parameter stability in particular caused by breaks in the stochastic performance of exogenous variables and disturbances attested by the Reverse Kuznetz Curve and other hyperbolic discounting formulae in order to ensure that everyone dead, alive, and yet to be born receives benefits that will accrue in the forthcoming fiscal cycle from this so-called blockade.

Besides the economic advantages of the blockade, there are also political, cultural, zoological and astrological benefits. We list some of them here in no particular order:

- Now that Bihar is going dry, it makes sense for Nepal to keep the border closed so that smuggling can be reversed and we make up for paying through our noses for Rs 350/l of diluted petrol by spiriting across Khukuri Rum and selling it at double markup to thirsty Biharis.
- India started building a crossborder petroleum pipeline from Raxaul to Amlekhganj, but cunningly turned off the supply of petroleum. This National Prestige Project symbolising India-Nepal Friendship and Cooperation can still be salvaged if instead of pumping diesel, we reverse the flow and employ the force of gravity to pipe rum, gin, ayla and raxi down to Bihar much more efficiently than in gas bullets.

We now know it for a fact that Nepal is in a mess mainly because of the Raxaul Mess that fed hundreds of blockheads for three months and was funded by the BJP and a couple of NRNs. It would be wise to keep this Mess running as long as God wants it since everything in our secular republic is in God’s hands anyway.

Considering the importance smuggling is to the national economy, the Oli Government would be wise to allow smugglers ply their trade without let or hindrance and set up a Ministry of Black Market and Black Magic, and have as its terms of reference the smooth flow of contraband pomegranates across the border to meet Nepal’s basic necessities.

More importantly it should shortlist professional faith healers who can use voodoo and occult rituals to cast a spell on the ViceRae.

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHERTRI

Modi government has not imposed an embargo on Nepal!

This is not the first time India imposed an embargo on Nepal!

...but if God wishes the embargo can be lifted in 6 or 7 days!