

## NEW ARRIVALS

CHECK OUT THE LATEST STYLES!  
BE THE NEW LOOK

Scarves • Tanks • Pullovers • Cardigans • T-shirts • Wraps

info@natureknit.com | natureknit.com SHOP NO.: 213/214, SANCHAYA KOSH BUILDING, THAMEL, KTM, TEL: 4254812



NATUREKNIT

CASHMERE REDEFINED



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

## DEAL MAKING

After 150 days of unrest in the plains, four months of border blockade, and 25 rounds of failed talks, a deal between the Big Three parties and the Madhesi Front finally appears within reach.

A meeting of the top three leaders on Thursday resolved to ink a deal with the Front next week, providing a face-saver for India to fully lift a blockade it never officially admitted to imposing. The Front has already backed down from its stance to withdraw protests only when federal boundaries are readjusted, apparently after New Delhi leaned on it. It is willing to agree to an all-party mechanism to redraw boundaries within a certain timeframe.

But there is still disagreement over the legitimacy, jurisdiction and scope of the proposed all-party mechanism. The Front is now seeking a written commitment from the three parties that the mechanism will be mandated to readjust provincial boundaries.

Rajendra Shrestha, a Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (FSPN) leader who represents the agitating side in the joint task-force formed to prepare the framework of a deal, told *Nepali Times* on Thursday: "A deal is possible as and when the ruling parties assure us that the mechanism will create two identity-based provinces in the Tarai without breaking ethnic clusters."

The ruling UML-UCPN coalition and the main opposition NC are afraid that Madhesi leaders will gain the upper

hand in future negotiations if they now promise to create two provinces encompassing the whole Tarai. They are ready to give legitimacy to the mechanism by getting it passed by Parliament or adding a clause about it in the constitution, but they rule out any commitment on the number of provinces in the plains or their boundaries.

NC negotiator Mahesh Acharya proposed to "reopen and revisit" all issues after a joint taskforce meeting this week, while Deputy Prime Minister Bijaya Gachhadar, the only Madhesi leader in the UML-led government, rejected the demand for two Tarai provinces, arguing for a third for his Tharu community.

UML whip Gokul Prasad Gharti said the Madhesi parties were under pressure to show flexibility as India had agreed to begin customs clearance for Nepal-bound goods from Raxaul once a deal is reached. He told us: "The Indian Prime Minister promised our Prime Minister during their telephone conversation that the blockade will be lifted when parliament passes the amendment."

The three parties and the Madhesi Front are due to reach an agreement by Monday and Parliament is expected to convene on Tuesday, 19 January. Already there are signs of the blockade easing, as all Indian border checkpoints barring Birganj are now fully open. Even fuel tankers stranded in Raxaul are being rerouted through other checkpoints. 

Om Astha Rai

**STIRRED, NOT SHAKEN**  
EDITORIAL PAGE 2

**WITH US, OR AGAINST US**  
THIS IS IT  
BY RUBEENA MAHATO PAGE 3

**NEAR A DEAL**  
BY NAVIN JHA PAGE 6



**EX-MINOR EX-MAOISTS**

Former Maoist child soliders fight for survival and against social stigma

BY OM ASTHA RAI

PAGE 8-9

**LAVAZZA**  
ITALY'S FAVOURITE COFFEE



Hotel Hyatt Regency - Kathmandu  
Summit Hotel - Kathmandu  
For Further Information Mail to :  
lavazza@subhashingalini.com

**FUN & FUN DIVINE WINE**



For Trade Inquiry No.: 01-4032624; Mob.: 9801215111

Step in for more varieties at

**LIFE STYLE**  
DESIGN & DECOR



Show Room: SRD Building  
New Plaza, Putalisadak, Te: 4425402



**TRANQUILITY SPA**  
Relaxing Body, Mind and Spirit

**BUY 1 SERVICE GET 1 FREE**  
AT ALL OUR OUTLETS

 01-4420424

**VISIT OUR NEW SHOWROOM @ KL TOWER, Chabahil**  
☎ 4-481902



**F**  
FURNITURE LAND



**AIRLINE OF THE YEAR SKYTRAX 2015**

## Fly to Los Angeles with the World's Best Airline

Stroll down Hollywood Boulevard, go behind the scenes in the world-famous Universal Studios, or enjoy luxury shopping with a view of the beach at Santa Monica Place. This thriving global metropolis will have you on your toes with cultural and fun-filled adventures waiting at every corner.

- Visit [qatarairways.com/np](http://qatarairways.com/np)
- Call us on +977 1 4440847
- Contact your travel agency



**QATAR**  
AIRWAYS القطرية

GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# STIRRED, NOT SHAKEN

On National Earthquake Safety Day, it is worth remembering that 25 April 2015 was not the Big One everybody had feared. That one is still coming.

Every year, Nepal has been marking 15 January as National Earthquake Safety Day to commemorate the 1934 magnitude 8.3 quake epicentred in Okhaldhunga that killed 10,000 people in Kathmandu Valley. After last April’s disaster, we probably don’t need to be reminded of the devastation earthquakes can cause. But it may be well worth remembering that April was not the Big One everybody had feared — that one is still coming.

Three months before the April event on National Earthquake Safety Day we wrote an Editorial in this space titled ‘Unnatural Disaster’. In words that presaged the disaster, we had said:

*It has been accepted wisdom that there is a Great Earthquake in Kathmandu every 80 years and the next big one is due any day. Well, if it’s any comfort, Som Nath Sapkota of the National Seismological Centre tells us that the frequency of 8 magnitude quakes is more like 500 years. The last one in 1255 killed one-third of the Valley’s population, including King Abhaya Malla. There have been smaller quakes every 80-100 years, but as Sapkota says: “You don’t need an 8 magnitude earthquake to destroy Kathmandu, a 7 will do just fine.”*

As it turned out, the earthquake three months later on 25 April was not the expected megaquake. Tragic as the loss of life was, the country did not suffer catastrophic nationwide damage. This was one of the most data-rich earthquakes ever in the Himalaya, and the numbers are still being analysed. What scientists know so far is that the whole of central Nepal, including Kathmandu Valley, moved southwards by upto 3m. The terrain tilted like a seesaw, with the Mahabharata range rising as the mountains north of Kathmandu dropped.

The earthquake’s aftershocks travelled along a rupture zone eastwards from the epicentre on the Gorkha-Lamjung border. There was very little shaking and no major aftershocks to the west. The earthquake was not strong enough to release all accumulated energy in the block of crust below central Nepal, however, and seems to have fizzled out just south of Kathmandu Valley. The shaking lasted less than a minute, and the shock waves were of sufficiently low frequency, causing damage to older mud



BIKRAM RAI

and brick buildings and monuments but sparing most ferro-cement structures. These and other lucky factors, like that the main earthquake struck on a Saturday afternoon, saved many lives. Based on the number of classrooms that were completely destroyed, it is estimated that 75,000 children could have died had the quake happened on a weekday.

Seismologists say that there are now two looming dangers. One is that tectonic tension underneath the central Nepal block was not completely dissipated. This could be let off slowly and safely through what scientists call ‘creep’, but the rock strata could also snap without warning causing a major earthquake epicentred south of Kathmandu. A similar double whammy occurred during the 1833 and 1866 earthquakes in eastern Nepal, when tectonic tension stored underground was not fully released in the main event.

The other even more nightmarish scenario is the seismic gap in western Nepal between Pokhara and Dehradun in India where there hasn’t been a major earthquake for over 500 years, and the accumulated energy could lead to a sudden crustal shift of up to 10m. This is a ticking time bomb, and when (not if) it strikes, it could be a 8.5 magnitude event that

will devastate western Nepal, the cities in the Indo-Gangetic plains and also Kathmandu. The April 2015 Earthquake will pale in comparison.

On National Earthquake Safety Day, we should remember not to forget what happened nine months ago. We should be conscious of the fact that we got off relatively lightly. The earthquake was a warning for us to redesign and build seismic resistant homes, schools and public buildings, have a preparedness plan tested for coordination, and be ready not just in the 15 affected districts, but in all 75.

It is worth reminding ourselves that earthquakes don’t kill people, weak houses and bad planning do. Earthquakes should not be considered ‘natural’ disasters, they are manmade. There is a false sense of security among Nepalis after April that multi-storey concrete structures are safer. They will actually be terrible death traps in the next Big One.

The earthquake stirred us, but did not shake us out of our complacency and fatalism. There are many tottering substandard buildings that will crumble unless we heed the lessons from 2015

## YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

### KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Your eloquent prose and the heart-wrenching, despair-filled picture of the widow next to her husband's coffin speak volumes about the plight of Nepali migrant workers ('Killed in the line of duty', Om Astha Rai, #790). How come many of these young workers, apparently healthy before they left Nepal, go to sleep and never wake up? Our government owes it to the migrant workers, who as the reporter correctly points out are the pillars of the Nepali economy, to thoroughly investigate these deaths, so that some measures can be taken to prevent this ongoing tragedy.

Buddha Basnyat

### THE INEVITABLE UNRAVELING

Since every political force in Nepal has been used and spent by India to fulfill India's interest, it is time Nepalis come together, treat each other respectfully and focus on economic development. Only economic development will keep us safe from these types of conflicts ('The inevitable unraveling', Jivesh Jha, #790).

Binod

■ The constitution was promulgated with the involvement of the representatives of all communities, not just the Pahadis. The Madheshi representatives had their own input as did the Pahadi representatives.

Abhishek Sharma

■ While the Madhes movement demands “equality, economic development, health, education and jobs” for the Madhes people, they also demand the whole of Tarai to be delineated into one or two provinces. However, the said developmental benefits in the Tarai can be had only by coordinating their planning with those of adjoining hills and mountains up north.

Bihari

### POKHARA AIRPORT

Let’s just hope that they do not destroy the eco-system of an already fragile region ('Pokhara airport ready for takeoff', Siran Liang, #790).

Hurray

■ Preserving the quality of the natural environment and improving people's economic development

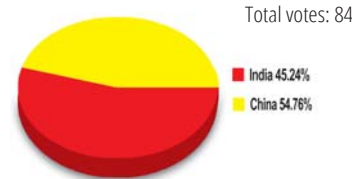
and quality of life don't have to be mutually exclusive. As Pokhara's primary attraction is its natural beauty, I do hope that the local/urban/regional/national planners will have the forethought and foresight to undertake all development activities with long-term environmental sustainability in mind. The negative lessons learned from Kathmandu's poor development and unchecked urban sprawl should not be repeated.

ANepali



Weekly Internet Poll #791

Q. Which country should PM KP Oli first?



Weekly Internet Poll #792  
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How do you rate PM KP Oli's first 100 days in office?



RSS



#### Most reached on Facebook

An earthquake survivor clears snow with a shovel in the courtyard of his temporary shelter in Barpak village of Gorkha, the epicentre of the April earthquake, on Saturday. Rains, hailstones and snow have made life difficult in Barpak and surrounding villages where thousands of earthquake survivors are still homeless. (16,692 people reached)



#### Most shared on Facebook

Killed in the line of duty by Om Astha Rai (78 shares)



#### Most visited online page

Killed in the line of duty by Om Astha Rai (2,030 views)



#### Most popular on Twitter

Killed in the line of duty by Om Astha Rai (106 retweets, 69 favourites)



#### Most commented

The inevitable unraveling by Jivesh Jha (23 comments)



Nepali Times on Facebook  
Follow @nepalitimes on Twitter  
Follow @nepalitimes on Instagram

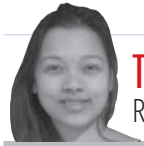
Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit  
Associate Editor: Tsering Dolker Gurung | Online Producer: Ayesha Shakya | Design: Kiran Maharjan  
Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu  
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518  
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma rachanas@himalmedia.com | Advertisers: Ram Krishna Banjara | Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal santosha@himalmedia.com  
Printed at Jagadamba Press | 01-5250017-19 | www.jagadambapri.com





After months of inconclusive talks, a breakthrough is being expected between the Madhesi parties and the government to resolve the current crisis. Leaders from both sides have hinted broadly at a possible agreement.

The blockade at the Indian border has eased at most points except Birganj. It is possible that the Madhes movement, like most movements that preceded it, will culminate in a back room power-sharing deal even though underlying issues remain unaddressed.



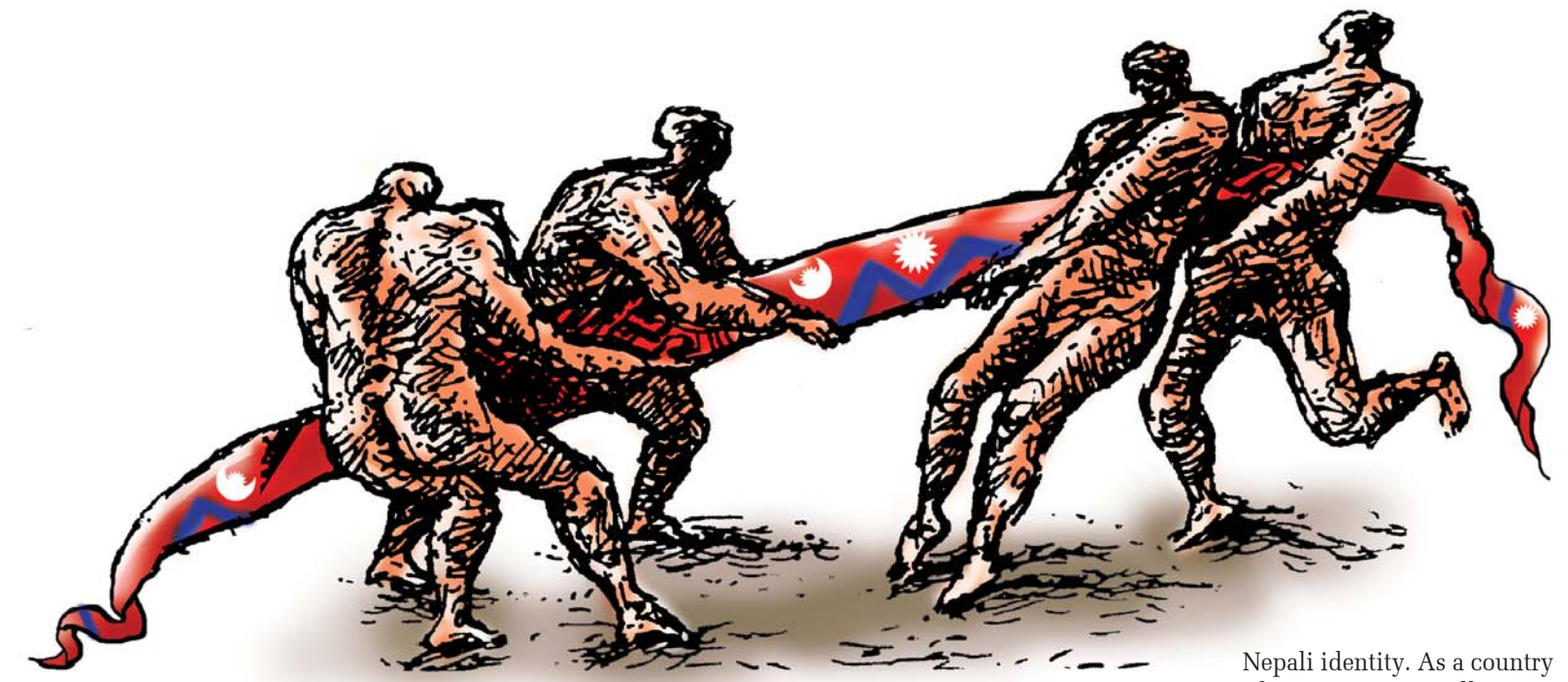
**THIS IS IT**

Rubeena Mahato

It is only a matter of time before disillusionment sets in again among those who supported the Madhesi Front despite their use of violence, terror and a border blockade. But amidst all this the most worrying trend has been the deepening polarisation between the hill and plains communities in Nepal.

All of a sudden, we were being asked to choose sides. You are either a supporter of the Madhesis and the marginalised or you are their enemies. This with-us-or-against-us mentality is so strong that Madhesis who dare raise their voice against the Front's terror tactics and their support for the Indian blockade are immediately branded traitors.

By contrast, every atrocity of the Madhesi Front is defended or dismissed as a fringe incident including setting people on fire and the bombing of public transport. The blockade was vociferously supported by a section of Madhesi activists as if it was a fundamental right, ignoring that millions of Nepalis — including the Madhesi people themselves — are suffering because of it. Many got around the dilemma of defending the indefensible by saying they support the movement but not the blockade. But few dared challenge the Madhesi leaders to change their methods. Instead of strong and forthright condemnation of the blockade and the violence, we were served



## With us, or against us

Those blindly supporting the tactics of the Madhesi Front are the ones who have harmed the Madhesi people the most

with 'if' and 'but' justifications.

The division has deepened to such an extent that people talk only about killings committed by the other side. People's lives matter only if they are affiliated to one group or the other.

As a Madhesi, it pains me to see our politics and public discourse deteriorate to such an extent. Are there any values that we won't compromise with or does the end justify all means? Does being from the 'oppressed' community absolve the Madhesi leaders of all responsibility for their actions?

As someone who has been at the receiving end of these labels, I can only say that those blindly supporting the Madhesi Front and its tactics are the ones who have harmed the Madhesi people the most. Is this struggle about equality, justice and rights or about revenge-seeking? How are we any different from those who have oppressed us if we see no problem in forcing millions of our own people to suffer to have demands met? And if indeed current methods are successful in forcing the government to fulfill all demands, would that be a victory Madhesi people can be proud of?

Political correctness has so clouded our judgement that we would rather not ask these

questions that put our 'liberal' credentials into question. Being a moderate does not mean fence-sitting, or arguing from a safe position. There are few things where one needs to take a moral position. Our civil leadership failed us by refusing to take a position when it mattered.

Like most Madhesis, I want the state to correct wrongs committed in the past through inclusive policies and political participation as enshrined by the

new constitution. I want a society without discrimination so that the law is progressive in practice, not just on paper, and lead to legal and political change accompanied by social movements.

But tearing communities further apart by dwelling on differences and past injustices is not a solution. Politicians, eager to manipulate grievances to gain political power might argue otherwise, but Madhesi identity is not contradictory to the larger

Nepali identity. As a country of minorities, our collective responsibility should be to build a nation where multiple identities can co-exist, thrive and prosper.

It will take some time before reservation improves representation of diverse communities into state bodies and it will be a while before people can internalise progressive change. With vigilant citizens and continued practice of democracy, that will happen. But we should be wary of politicians who tell us we cannot co-exist, who insist violence is the only way and who have no qualms sowing seeds of long-term ethnic discord for immediate political gain.

Whether the Madhes movement will endure and achieve its true goals will ultimately depend on how soon the Madhesi people are able to see through the deception of their leaders.

**dumb. paani**

**smart paani**

आज वाहिदेन!

किन दियो?

खाने पानी

- Rainwater Harvesting System
- BioSand Filter
- Greywater Recycling
- Wastewater Treatment System

**smart paani**

SmartPaani Pvt. Ltd.

GPO Box 13989, Campus Marg, Chakupat, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal  
P: +977-1-5261530, 5260506  
info@smartpaani.com  
www.smartpaani.com

**PROUD WINNER OF SURYA NEPAL ASHA SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD**

**5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

**Your favorite restaurants are not far away from home.**

**100+ Restaurants to choose from.**

**FOODMANDU**

Food Delivery Service for Home & Office

**Foodmandu App**

[www.foodmandu.com](http://www.foodmandu.com) **4 444 177, 9802 034008**

appliedvalue/16



# Ham radio to the rescue

Amateur radio can be a vital source of information in the aftermath of future disasters

SARTHAK MANI SHARMA

As phone lines were jammed and the internet went down in Nepal after last April’s earthquake, the only way Manju Sunar could find out if her daughter was safe was to ask an amateur radio operator in France, where she worked, to contact another radio hobbyist in Nepal who then sent people out on motorbikes and found Sunar’s daughter safe.

Amateur radio enthusiasts, called ham operators, can speak to each other across the world through shortwave transmitters. The 2.5 million licensed operators communicate through voice or the Morse code, a method of sending messages in a series of electronic pulses. With additional equipment, operators can even attach files and send emails through radio signals alone.

Though primarily taken up as a hobby, these devices become crucial in times of disaster when all other modes of communication fail as happened in Nepal, or during the Asian tsunami in 2004, when ham radio operators coordinated rescue.

“We probably helped search and rescue over 400 people,” says Pravin Joshi, a ham radio operator in Kathmandu.

Ham radio was introduced in Nepal by Marshall Moran, a Jesuit priest who established St Xavier’s School in Godavari in 1951. Over 50 years later in 2005, there were only five operators in the country. However, the number now has risen to 105, most of them based in Kathmandu.

“There is an increasing interest amongst Nepalis in ham radios not just as a hobby but also as a means of communication during



GOPEN RAI

emergency. People have now understood its value,” says Laxmi Khanal, a media professional, who is one of 20 female operators in Nepal.

As soon as the earthquake struck, many Nepali ham operators worked to locate and rescue survivors. Some of them went to hospitals every day to receive lists of dead and injured persons so that they could answer queries from relatives and friends around the world.

Satish Kharel is a well-known lawyer, but few know that he has been a licensed ham operator for over two decades. Last April, he worked with operators not just within Nepal but with ham enthusiasts in India, Portugal, Israel and elsewhere to answer questions about earthquake survivors.

“During power cuts, I connected the radio equipment to my own car battery and got it to work,” Kharel recalls.

Operators in Kathmandu were at first at a loss when they started receiving queries about people at the epicenter in Barpak, as the village was cut off for many days. One amateur operator, Ravindra Mul, went to Barpak with his transceiver and battery, hung a dipole antenna on a tree and stayed in a tent to answer questions.

Though ham radios helped in search and rescue efforts, experts say their role was, unfortunately, limited. The ham radio station at NSET-Nepal, an organisation that specialises in earthquake preparedness and recovery, broke down when it was most needed.

Anil Upadhyay, who oversaw



SARTHAK MANI SHARMA

**HAM OPERATORS:** Laxmi Kharel is one of 20 female ham operators in Nepal (*left*). Last April, Satish Kharel worked with operators with ham enthusiasts in India, Portugal, Israel and elsewhere to answer questions about earthquake survivors (*above*).

NSET’s communication after the earthquake, blamed the lack of training and poor practice for the inability to utilise ham radio. “We didn’t have a separate person in charge of overseeing ham radio operations,” he admitted.

There is little support from the government. Many countries now host annual ‘field days’, amateur radio drills when operators are trained to coordinate search and rescue in mock emergencies and trained to make ham radio more effective and useful.

We asked an official at the Ministry of Information and Communications if the government has any policies to promote the use of ham radios in Nepal, especially during disasters. But it didn’t seem like much thought had been put into it besides conducting license tests for interested operators. The Ministry had stopped license tests in 1998, citing security concerns during the Maoist conflict.

For ham radio to become more effective during the next

disaster, operators say there need to be more people interested and to set up a nationwide network of operators. Says Joshi: “Not many people have heard about ham radio. That needs to change.”

Joshi is active in organising awareness programs on the uses of ham radio, and this week he will set up an event in which school children will communicate with astronomers at the International Space Station through a ham radio transmitter in Kathmandu.

He admits that amateur radio was seen to be a slightly expensive hobby in the past. But the cheapest equipment can now cost as little as Rs 10,000. The International Ham Amateur Radio Union also subsidises equipment for enthusiasts in many countries including Nepal.

“We definitely need more people to join in,” says Karki. “Engineers, teachers and journalists - everybody should follow ham radio as a pursuit and help tap its tremendous potential.”



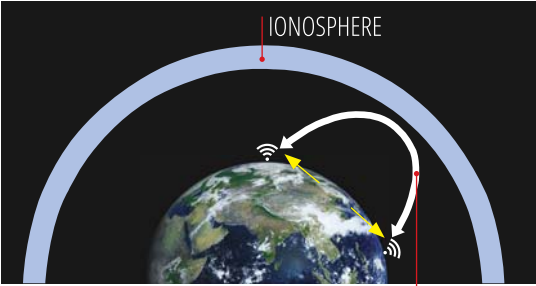
■ A transceiver is used to transmit and receive radio signals



■ An antenna tuner is connected between a transceiver and its antenna to improve power transfer



■ An antenna is used to convert electric power into radio waves



Radio waves sent by one transceiver bounce off this electrically charged part of the atmosphere and are received by another transceiver.

## So you want to be a Ham Operator?

They were developed long before the internet, but ham radios continue to draw loyal followers from around the world. Queen Noor of Jordan, King Juan of Spain and Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan are some famous names who have taken up this hobby.

Ham radios have helped coordinate rescue and relief in emergencies such as

the September 2001 attacks, hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake. Faster transmissions are now being developed so that operators can send any form of digital data through radio signals. With more advanced equipment, operators can also locate the GPS of their fellows during emergencies.

Today operators are also involved in

creating their own gear, participating in contests and even trying their luck at tough tasks such as using the moon or a meteor trail to bounce off their radio signals

In Nepal, Satish Kharel and his group of operators are helping Nepal Police set up, and train them to use, ham radios for emergency situations.

Amateur radio enthusiasts must apply

for a license at the Ministry of Information and Communications and sit for a written test that consists of questions on everything from electromagnetic theory to applications of ham radio. They will then be tested on the Morse code. Prospective applicants can reach out to Kharel at 9N1AA@winlink.org for help with testing preparations, use of equipment and for other information.





BIKRAM RAI

# Exorcising the Indian ghost

The lesson from this blockade is that we must develop alternatives in sourcing and managing our energy supplies

In the Hollywood film *Ghostbusters*, a group of men start a company to catch ghosts. Watching the movie as an impressionable teenager, I was taken by the movie's central message: the trick to catching ghosts is not to feel haunted in the first place.



**COMMENT**  
Bishal Thapa

As our daily forage for cooking gas and petrol becomes increasingly longer, it is clear that we are haunted by the ghosts of India. The spectre of the Indian ghost now clouds all our conversations.

The search for energy independence has once again fired the public imagination. But when you are haunted, it is easy to mistake self-sufficiency for energy independence. Sending our women folk out every morning with a sickle and a basket to gather firewood, as two-thirds of Nepal currently do, is not energy independence.

Contemporary energy independence for Nepal requires the exact opposite of self-sufficiency: deeper integration with energy markets in India and the world. India's energy market has evolved considerably over the last few decades, but our understanding of it is still stuck in the oil crisis of the 1970s. To fathom energy independence, we need to first recalibrate our understanding to how India is dealing with its energy policy.

The hegemony of India's central government over its energy market is eroding. First, state governments are becoming more assertive in the development and management of energy. Much of this is in part because Indian energy policy over the last two decades has seceded more authority to the states. Performance across the states isn't uniform. Our immediate neighbouring states, unfortunately, are some of the worst performers.

Second, the private sector has a more commanding presence within India's energy market. The domestic private sector has swept in quickly to capture the space offered by liberalisation. India's most valued companies all have strong interest in energy, and

some deal only with energy.

Even within state-owned companies, the government's direct control is eroding. New Delhi is under pressure from the stock exchange regulator to divest a bigger share of its companies to keep them publicly listed. In part, it is also because the markets have themselves become more dynamic, forcing government-owned companies to change. To adapt, they are fighting back by using them as a public policy tool. Last year, for example, New Delhi had to resort to a presidential directive to get Coal India Limited (CIL) to behave in a certain way because its board declined to tow the government line. The government owns 90 per cent of the shares in the company.

Third, although international energy companies have not yet been able to successfully penetrate the Indian energy market, India's links with the international market in coal, oil and gas has become closer. The country is adding the internal infrastructure capacity to deliver imported energy across the country. There is, for instance, a network of natural gas pipelines connected to liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals that enable import of natural gas.

Today, India is a net exporter of petroleum products with complex refineries that offer some of the better margins in the world. In most cases, India's increased interdependence with the international energy market is being developed and managed by the private sector.

The evolution of India's energy market offers Nepal an opportunity to de-politicise energy. In today's context, energy vulnerability doesn't stem from the risk that governments will shut off supplies. Outside Russia, perhaps, no one country can singularly affect supplies and these days even Russia has to think at least twice.

As this blockade so aptly demonstrates, energy shocks happen because energy supply chains are not built with big enough buffers to protect against political interference. Building northern road links to China for alternate supply sources is one option. A better idea may be to tap into opportunities extended by the evolution of India's energy market. Closer ties with state governments, the private sector and international markets could create diversification and make

energy supplies less vulnerable.

All of this requires clearer thinking on our side. Our approach must allow for greater complexity in how we source, contract and manage our energy supplies. We can't engage with today's energy markets if barter is the only form of financial contract we allow.

Most importantly, for energy independence our politicians must be able to bring in structural reforms that make themselves (oh, how do I put it) a little more redundant. The only reason we can't catch ghosts is because our minds are haunted. ☐

*Bishal Thapa is the vice-chair of the Energy Development Council.*

prabhu BANK

**BIZ BRIEFS**

## Travel away

Qatar Airways has launched a first-of-its-kind Travel Festival offering travellers different deals for their travel needs. The festival

**QATAR**  
AIRWAYS القطرية

has exclusively designed packages including discounts of up to 30%. All passengers who book online via qatarairways.com/travelfestival will also be entered into a draw to win prizes.

## Pearl black

Colors Mobile has recently released its Colors Pearl Black K3. The mobile phone comes with a slim design with Asahi enhanced glass on both sides. It is also equipped with 32 GB ROM + 3 GB RAM, and comes in two colours – space navy and platinum.



## All new

Gionee will soon be introducing the Gionee P5W in Nepal. The phone will be available in five different colors and has a 5" HD screen, 16 GB internal memory, and 2 GB RAM. Gionee is also conducting a contest on its official Facebook page and has recently opened its exclusive service center at CTC Mall.

## Tying up

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal and Grande International Hospital have recently agreed on a partnership



agreement, under which the bank's Priority Clients will receive a discount of 10% while other debit or credit card holders receive a discount of 7.5% on the hospital's services.

prabhu BANK

Put your **body, mind,**  
and **spirit** in harmony

**SPECIAL  
OFFER**

**Subscribe to Nepali Times**

&

**Get a free  
coupon of**



on your choice  
@  
Star Hotels



**Call today: 98510 54729 (Santosh)**

01-500 5601-07, Fax: 977 1 5005518 | subs@himalmedia.com





GOPEN RAI

After five long months, the Madhes Movement is finally looking like it is moving towards a settlement. After more than 20 failed meetings between the Madhesi Front and the political parties in Kathmandu working at the level of task forces this week, there is at last some convergence of viewpoints.



**COMMENT**  
Navin Jha

According to insider sources, a deal is near and will likely be reached this week. Others are more skeptical because there have been reports of breakthroughs before, with hopes being dashed. When the new constitution was promulgated by the Constituent Assembly last September, the Madhesi Front strongly opposed the process, but major parties pushed it through on the basis of their two-third majority. The alliance of Madhesi parties is already standing against the whole process from the 16-point deal between the major parties after the April 2015 earthquake.

After many months of shadow boxing and posturing, the marathon sessions between the major parties and the Madhesi Front seem to be reaching an agreement on a new political framework under which the main demands for proportional representation in all institutions of government, electoral constituencies based on population, and easing the provision of citizenship are being guaranteed.

The major demand of the Madhesi parties is the creation of a federal system with autonomy for the provinces in the Madhes, and an integral part of this is the demarcation of the boundaries of those provinces. The compromise being hammered out is that the future boundaries of the plains

provinces will be decided by a high-level political committee within a stipulated timeframe.

Having been double crossed before, the Madhesi parties are doubtful about political committees — especially when the position of the two sides is so far apart. The Madhesi parties want a strong constitutional commitment about the political committee. “We know the political parties will once more go back on their word because they have done it before,” one Madhesi leader told me this week. “We already have our mind set on giving them another jolt in three months time if the demarcation doesn’t meet our demands.” But for now, the Madhesi parties appear willing to sign an agreement.

# Near a deal

Fearful of anarchy and criminalisation, the Madhesi parties and Kathmandu are coming close to a deal, but will it last?

The feeling in the Madhesi camp is that Kathmandu doesn’t really care about the situation in the Tarai, and is letting the uncertainty lead to anarchy. Already, the black market economy and the activities of organised crime are moving out of control of the government and the political leadership. That is one of the reasons the Madhesi parties feel a sense of urgency to sign an agreement. However, they worry that the agreement may not be respected.

No matter what the deal is, those on the ground in the Tarai will react with anger. It will not satisfy everyone, especially not the hardliners. However, the Madhesi parties also see the need to end the drift towards criminalisation and a breakdown in law and order. Such a situation benefits no one.

An agreement may bring temporary respite, and a return to normalcy along the border, but the real question is: will it last? 🇳🇵

*Navin Jha is a journalist writing on Madhes issues and blogs at dalannepal.com*



## Imitating nature

Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jagadamba Press, now makes natural colours come alive with its state-of-the-art equipment.



Jagadamba's new Mitsubishi Diamond 3000  
5 Colour + Coating Unit

**City Office**  
Bakhundol, Lalitpur  
Tel: 977-01-5529210/11

**Printing Plant**  
Hattiban, Lalitpur, Nepal  
Tel: 977-01-5250017/18  
sales@jppl.com.np  
URL: [www.jagadambapress.com](http://www.jagadambapress.com)







# Lit-Fest in Laketown

This year's Nepal Literature Festival will be held in Pokhara, with hopes of inspiring dialogue through an eclectic exhibition of art

The Nepal Literature Festival returns for its fifth instalment since its inception in 2011, and for the first time it's being held outside of Kathmandu. Celebrated as the only international literary event in Nepal, this year's festivities will take place in the scenic town of Pardi, Pokhara, from 29 January to 1 February. Organised by the Bookworm Foundation, the event in the past has seen participation from renowned international writers including Shobhaa De, Farah Guzhnavi, Ned Beuman, and Vinod Mehta, among others. This year, participants will get the chance to interact with more than one hundred local and international writers, journalists and politicians throughout the four-day event. More than 30 interactive sessions are scheduled to be held on topics ranging from literature, theatre and art to business,



economics and politics. Key speakers include writer Ira Trivedi, literary historian Rakhshanda Jalil, filmmaker Uday Prakash and celebrated screenwriter Javed Akhtar. More so than previous years, the Festival will showcase a diverse array of speakers and sessions. Events include a discourse on Naya Shakti with politicians Baburam

Bhattarai, Gagan Thapa and Ghanshyam Bhusal. Actors Rajesh Hamal and Dayahang Rai will join writer Yagyash to discuss what constitutes a 'hero' in Nepali films. Journalist Prashant Jha will be in conversation with Barkha Dutt on her first book, *The Unquiet Land: Stories from India's Fault Lines*. [nepalliteraturefestival.com](http://nepalliteraturefestival.com)

## More diversity this year

To find out more about this year's event, *Nepali Times* caught up with Ajit Baral, director of the Festival.

**Nepali Times: The festival has been organised since 2011. What is new this year?**  
Ajit Baral: The festival was more literature-focused in previous years, but the themes for this year are more diverse and will include politics, economics and much else. This is also the first time we are going to organise the festival in Pokhara.



**Why did you choose Pokhara as the venue?**  
There are several reasons. We, the organisers, happen to be from Pokhara and we want to support the fledgling literary movement there. Everything seems to be centralised in Kathmandu and in terms of academic and literary activities, places outside the capital are left out. In fact, Pokhara is an ideal place for a literary festival. It is home to bands like Nepathya and is also known as the city of watercolors - painters love to come here and turn the beautiful scenes into art. Our festival's venue, I hope, will help the economy recover after a particularly bad year for Nepal.

**English language writing in Nepal appears to be limited. What will be the festival's role in promoting such writing?**  
Yes, there aren't a lot of English language writers - probably just five or six are reputed ones. In the festival we hope to identity what has been impeding English-language writing in the country. I hope our festival and its discussions will draw the attention of many aspiring writers to the opportunities for writing here.

ATITHI RESORT & SPA

Shanti Patan, Lakeside, Pokhara - 6, Email : [info@atithiresort.com](mailto:info@atithiresort.com)

Tel : 061 466760 / 466761 / 465895, [www.atithiresort.com](http://www.atithiresort.com)



CAFFÈ  
Italiano



LA SPA



OM ASTHA RAI

In a shanty town behind Kathmandu Airport, by the stinking Manohara River, Sukmaya Tamang keeps a careful eye on her four-year-old son playing outside as she works on her sewing machine.

Tamang, now 24, joined the Maoist 'People's Liberation Army' when she was 13 years old, studying in Grade Six of a school in Batase of Sindhupalchok. Two years later, she was part of the guerrilla force that attacked the district capital of Chautara.

"I was too small to lift a heavy machine gun, but I was still trained to fire it," she told us, taking a break from her sewing. "I have no more dreams, the party I was ready to die for has forgotten me. The man I loved tortured me. I don't trust anyone, I am just alive to see my son stand on his own feet."

After leaving her abusive husband three years ago, Tamang has been working and living amidst the teeming squalour of this settlement of the landless and dispossessed as big jets roar overhead. Her neighbours are unaware of her warrior past.

Tamang was among nearly 1,000 Maoist guerrillas who in April 2006 captured Chautara District Hospital and used it to attack an adjacent army base guarding a telecom tower a day before king Gyanendra restored parliament and the conflict came to an end. A month earlier, she was nearly killed when army helicopters dropped bombs on a Maoist gathering in nearby Thokarpa.

Tamang was talked into joining the Maoist militia by senior girls of her village who were 'whole-timers' in the party. "They convinced me not to pursue the bourgeois education, and I was thrilled when I first got to wear combat fatigue, I thought I was fighting for the people's liberation," she recalled.

But four years later, after the peace accord in November 2006, Tamang was sent off to Shaktikhor, one of the seven United Nations-supervised camps for the 19,000 Maoist fighters. At the end of three years there, the guerrillas had a choice of being integrated into the national army or taking a voluntary retirement package.

Like most ex-Maoists she wanted to join the Nepal Army, but Tamang was devastated when she



# EX-MINOR EX-MAOISTS

Ten years after the conflict ended and exactly five years after they were discharged, former Maoist child soldiers are now in their 20s fighting for survival and against social stigma

was disqualified because she was a minor at the time of signing of the peace accord. She was among 2,972 Maoist guerrillas let go by the UN because they were child soldiers. Another 1,036 minors were disqualified as they were recruited only after the peace deal, and just given bus fares to go home and wait to sign up for vocational training.

Five years after the UN-supervised camps were dismantled those disqualified for being 'minors' feel betrayed by the party and stigmatised by society. "The party dumped us," says Pradip Karki, a former child soldier. "We cannot go home because we have the label of being 'disqualified' hanging around our necks."

The former child soldiers are now in their mid-20s, and most have children of their own. The

struggle to survive after the war has been more difficult than the war itself. They say they were brainwashed to abandon 'bourgeois education' and to join the rebel army. Without school certificates, they now find it difficult to get decent jobs and many have paid their way to work in the Gulf and Malaysia. Some were so disillusioned, they committed suicide.

Karki, a veteran of several battles lost his closest friend in Malangwa. He says: "Our biggest mistake was to quit school. When we were discharged, it was too late to go back to studying."


The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) offered vocational training to discharged combatants. But many who signed up

ended up learning nothing useful. A former child soldier who was trained to be a cook found no one would hire him when they found out he was a Maoist. Their 'glorious' party has split into five factions, and their 'revolutionary' leaders have now become like the politicians they once fought.

During the 1996-2006 conflict the Maoists recruited children as spies, cooks, porters and even front-line guerrillas. As young men became harder to get, the Maoists went to schools to conscript children, indoctrinate them and then destroyed the classrooms.

Although the UNMIN disqualified about 3,000 ex-combatants, the Maoist

leadership delayed their release for three years so they could bargain for bigger rehabilitation packages. As a result, child soldiers were released only when they had grown into young adults. By then, their rehabilitation had become much more complex.

In 2010, the Maoist leadership released the child soldiers without substantial rehabilitation packages, and did so only after fears that they may be charged with using minors in conflict. Maoist leaders have never acknowledged their use of child soldiers, either justifying the use of child soldiers or apologising to them and their families. 







PICS: YU WEI LIEW

**MAJOR PROBLEM FOR MINORS:**

Ex-Maoist child soldier Sukmaya Tamang (*above*) is now mother of a four-year-old son. Disillusioned with the party she was ready to die for, she says she now lives only to see her son stand on his own feet.



# CRUEL REALITY

Khadka Bahadur Ramtel (*above*) was just 11 when he was abducted, sent to indoctrination camp and recruited as a whole-timer by the Maoists. He is now 25, and married to Motisara Khadka, also a child soldier. Ramtel still vividly remembers the day a group of gun-wielding rebels stormed into his school and captured all the students.

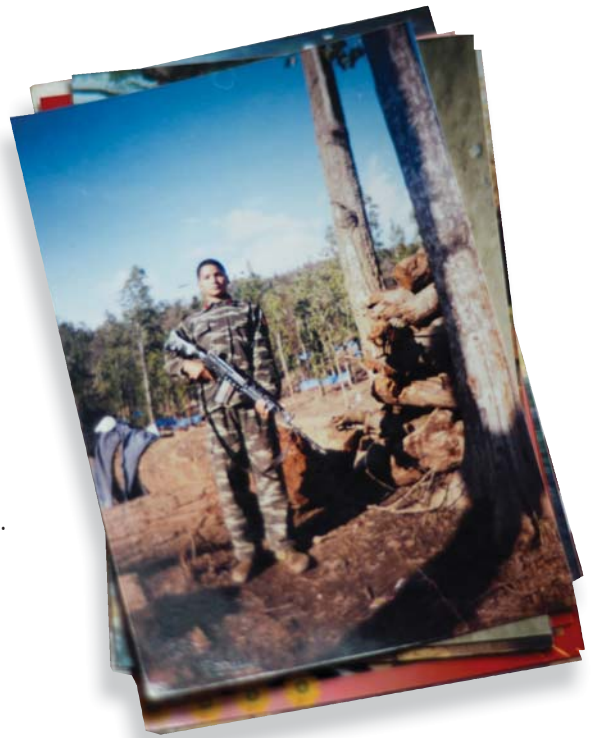
"I was in the middle of writing a test," he recalled, "they didn't even let me submit the paper. They took us up a mountain and we had to learn about communism."

The abducted students were then allowed to meet their families one last time before being trained to kill or die. "I had no choice," Ramtel says, "they would have harmed my family if I hadn't gone with them."

So, in 2001, Ramtel left his village of Maila in the remote Humla district for the life of a guerrilla. His job was to deliver confidential letters to guerrillas. As a Dalit who had experienced discrimination, what appealed to Ramtel about the Maoists is that they did not believe in untouchability.

Ramtel got the nom de guerre 'Samrat Birahi' after joining the Maoist militia, but he was physically too weak to use heavy guns. "I was shorter than a rifle, so I was just trained to clean, maintain and repair guns, and also to make bombs," he recalls.

At 13, his unit was sent to Jajarkot and two years later he took part in attacks on security bases in Surkhet and Banke districts. His commander was killed during an attack on an army checkpoint on the



East West highway, and he was so traumatised he nearly deserted. He says: "I wanted to go home, but there was no way out of the war."

After the ceasefire in 2006, Ramtel was sent to a UN-supervised camp in Surkhet (*in photo, above*) where he fell in love with Motisara. Both were disqualified from joining the Nepal Army because they were minors during the war.

Motisara is from a 'high' caste and her family did not accept Ramtel as their son-in-law. Despite raising arms against it, Ramtel found caste discrimination alive and accepted in his own village. The couple moved to Kathmandu, but found that they had no money and limited education. They took up construction work for the first two years.

Ramtel now drives a three-wheeler to feed his wife and young son. "The dream I had of an egalitarian society was an illusion," he confided, resignation in his voice, "I have just woken up to reality, and it is very cruel."

Om Astha Rai



# A BOY NAMED LENIN

Lenin Bista, 24, is livid at the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) that supervised the demobilisation of Maoist guerrillas for classifying former Maoist child soldiers as 'disqualified' and not eligible to join the national army or opt for voluntary retirement. He says the term has been humiliating and has labeled them as failures in society. "We cannot go to our villages because we are looked down upon as 'disqualified' people," says Lenin, who now heads an organisation of ex-child soldiers to seek reparations. He even led a group of other 'disqualified' child soldiers to attack UN vehicles in Chitwan.

They were promised by Maoist leaders Barsaman Pun and Janardan Sharma that the party would look after them. But when nothing happened, Bista laid siege to the Maoist party headquarters. Says Bista: "They must say sorry. The party wants to forget about us, but we will not let them forget."





## EVENTS



## Maghe Sankranti

For many, Maghe Sankranti immediately conjures up images of *ghiu chaku*, *teel ko laddu* and other goodies in the mind. The first day of Magh, which falls on the 15th this month, is an event of special meteorological and religious significance for many ethnic groups in Nepal. Similar to many solstice festivals

around the world, Maghe Sankranti or Maghi as the Tharus call it, marks an end to the inauspicious month of Poush, in which all religious ceremonies are put on hold. Beginning this day, the sun is thought to start its northward journey after leaving its most extreme position in the south, bringing an end to the gloom and doom of cold days.

*Ghiu chaku* (molasses), *teel ko laddu* (balls of sesame seeds) and *tarul* (yam) are just some of the food items relished during Maghe Sankranti celebrations.



### Maan vs Mati,

Kedar Shrestha's scintillating new play on the nature of spousal relationships is not to be missed. Until 16 January, 4.45 pm onwards, Theatre Mall, Sundhara Contact: 9803245590, 9841595956

### Farmers' market,

European cheese, fresh fish, artisanal bread and pastries, organic honey, home-made chutneys and other delicious stuff on offer. Every Saturday, 8am to 1pm, Le Sherpa restaurant, Lajimpat

### CAN Info-tech,

The year's most exciting info-tech and entertainment conference. 28 January to 2 February, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Road

### Nepal Literature Festival,

Talk literature and more with India and Nepal's top journalists and writers. 29 Jan to 1 Feb, Pokhara www.nepalliteraturefestival.com

## DINING



### Café Aamu,

If you are a rice lover and crave Chinese food all-day, all-week, then the Tofu and Chinese Black Mushroom with Rice is a must try. Krishnagalli



### Embassy,

One of K-Town's most chic and happening restaurants. Lajimpat

### Manny's,

Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunchy Potatoes and don't forget their signature Manny's Spicy Wings all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. Jawalakhel, (01) 5536919



### The Entrance Café,

Friendly staff, good food, and quiet ambience. Bakhundole, Lalitpur

### Mezze,

For pizzas, pasta and people watching. Darbar Marg

### Alfresco,

For homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal

## MUSIC

## Reggae with JFI,

For some soulful reggae. 15 January, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, Rs 300



### Plebeian live,

Drummer Salil Thakuri's rocking farewell gig. 15 January, 8pm onwards, Irish Pub, Lainchaur



### Blues n' Roots,

Come see Mukti Shakya and other star artists perform. 23 January, 2 to 8 pm, Attic Bar, Tangal



### 90s grunge,

All Stars, Sound Chains Pilots and Newaz will conjure up the awesome 90s grunge. 20 February, 1pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel

## GETAWAY



### 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

### 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



### 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



### Waterfront Resort,

Head to this eco-friendly resort right in front of Phewa Lake. Sedi Height, Pokhara. (61)466 303/304, 9801166311, sales@waterfronhotelnepal.com

### 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

Enjoy  
**Unlimited Buffet**  
of

**Dum Pukth Biryani**  
on Jan 16, 2016  
12PM-3PM  
at **Aalishan**  
@ **Rs. 500.00**++ per person.  
Location: Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur  
For Reservations: 5542032

**REMO**  
Research & Monitoring  
System

DATA COLLECTED IS  
CENTRALIZED  
SIMULTANEOUSLY

GENERATE INFORMATION ON MAPS

SAVE  
EFFORT  
TIME  
MONEY

redefining  
research

REMO is Research and Monitoring System that can capture, analyze and visualize data together. Tremendously useful and cost effective, REMO opens a new frontier on how surveys are conducted. Smartphone-enabled and tablet-compatible, surveys can be created in a fly and modified on the go. Data Collected gets seamlessly aggregated on the system allowing web-based access that dynamically produce meaningful reports in real time. Using complex algorithm, data is instantly converted to intelligence.

**rooster logic**

Rooster Logic Pvt Ltd.  
Campus Marg, Chakupat,  
Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal

T : (+977 - 1) 526 1530  
M : (+977) 9851164335, (+977) 9860307694  
E : info@roosterlogic.com

"1<sup>st</sup> Nepali System to be deployed in all 75 districts; 200,000+ sample size"

+ Flooring/Furnishing  
 + Rugs  
 + Rods  
 + Wallpapers  
 + Bed Covers

*New Arrivals*

Enter the world of furnishing...

Banking Partner  
**N. BILINSTALLMENT** Available at 0% Interest to Nabil Credit Card Holder

**New Madan Furnishers Pvt. Ltd.**  
Kupondole, Lalitpur, Nepal  
Tel: 552 3236, 552 0318 Fax: 553 6927  
info@nmfurnishers.com | www.nmfurnishers.com

SEAGRAM'S

**ROYAL  
STAG**  
MEGA MUSIC

IT'S YOUR LIFE.  
**MAKE IT LARGE.**



# A traveller's tale

Upon entering the gallery space at Bikalpa Art Center & Cafe in Pulchok, you are greeted by three untitled photographs. The first is a group portrait of women, the second is an all-male group portrait, and the third shows damaged school buildings – all three images were captured during the April earthquake.

However as you walk through 'Yatri', a photo exhibit by freelance photographer Kaushal Sapkota, you realise that it is more than just about the earthquake – it's about life in Nepal in general.

In total, 35 photographs are displayed on three sides of the 16' by 34' gallery hall. Each side evokes a different emotive experience to the yatri (meaning traveller in Nepali).

The eleven photographs on the left convey the three major themes of life, solitude and peace, existence and non-existence. Here, you follow the photographer's



KAUSHAL RAJ SARKOTA

journey, in search of more questions and answers. As Sapkota asks you and other travellers of the unknown – 'where are we and what are we looking for?' – you are guided towards his answer as you move through the exhibit.

As you face forward, the images on the centre wall are less heavy and focus on the depiction

of contemporary life. Three images from the earthquake mark the central focus of this side. On either side from this centre point, two photos highlight the lives of women in Nepal and education being spurred on to improve their situations. The symmetry extends further from the centre extending to the left side and the

right, with contrasting images. The remaining photos on the left side are from Mustang, Mugu and Kathmandu, while those on the right depict New York City. The keywords describing the Nepal side are 'opportunity', 'migration' and 'spirituality' while the words 'makeover', 'Sisyphus', and '911' represent New York City.

## REVIEW

Each image of the final section, as you turn to your right hand, has its own theme. Eight of the images are breathtaking scenes from Upper Mustang, Rara National Park. The traveller, still searching for answers about himself and human nature becomes overwhelmed by the beauty of the natural landscape of the Himalayan range. One exemplary photograph entitled 'Heaven on Earth' captures the image of the holy site Muktinath with the expression: 'God's mystic creation'.

Signs denoting 'photos for sale' and the introduction letter at the entrance explain that this exhibition was initiated to collect donations for the earthquake-affected communities in Gorkha district. Each photo sells for Rs 3,500-5,000 and the proceeds will be donated to the Nyano Sansar project of local NGO Nepal Share.

Mixing the splendour of Nepali travel photography with an admirable fundraising project for earthquake victims, 'Yatri' is worth paying a visit. Moreover, the images masterfully taken by Sapkota over the span of four years are worth showcasing and collecting, as they provide lasting images and incite conversation of our past, present and future travels. 🇳🇵

Seulki Lee

8-17 January

2-8pm everyday

Bikalpa Art Center, Pulchok



PICS: SEULKI LEE

"Excuse me, the cold noodle dish is not available at the moment," interjected our waitress as we perused the menu at Korea Pyongyang Arirang Restaurant in Darbar Marg last Friday. "There is no gas to cook and boil the meat broth for soup."

This news struck with great disappointment, as the Pyongyang cold noodle is an authentic delicacy that only a North Korean restaurant can offer in Kathmandu.

North Korean cold noodle, or raengmyeon, is a dish made with long, thin

## Korea Pyongyang Arirang Restaurant

handmade buckwheat, kudzu or potato noodles in a tangy iced broth. The dish became popular throughout the Korean peninsula after the 1950-1953 Korean War, as refugees from the North brought their tradition southward.

Ironically, the cold noodle is a specialty dish for the winter season in Korea, as per the Korean saying "fight fire with fire; fight ice with ice."

Luckily another Korean specialty, kimchi, chilli-spiced pickled cabbage and radish, was available as it is made to keep for at least a year, in all seasons and conditions. The difference in kimchi between North and South is the taste. The northern variety is characteristic for its clean taste; it retains the original flavour of the ingredients akin to many other dishes in North Korea, while its Southern counterpart uses rich sauces with seafood. The kimchi at Pyongyang Arirang Restaurant, the Kathmandu franchise of the worldwide chain, was as clean as I tasted in other branches in Jakarta and Vientiane.

However, the similarities with those previous experiences ended with the dull ambience and the churlish service. The first greeting in the darkness of the restaurant's hall was the question: "Are you from Chosun?" meaning 'are you from Korea?' After I answered affirmatively, the restaurant's rules and restrictions followed: no photo taking of the menu, food and the interior of the restaurant. Additionally, due to fuel shortages, only basic items were available out of the eight-page menu.

Despite the unpleasant restrictions, dim lighting and the brusque service, the food was delicious. The bibimbap and Pyongyang kimchi made up for the strange dining experience my Australian colleague and I had at the restaurant.

If asked whether I'd go back there again, I'd answer: "Yes, but I just need to first ready my heart to face a bit of wariness." 🇳🇵

Seulki Lee

How to get there: Korea Pyongyang Arirang Restaurant is located in Darbar Marg on the lane leading towards Hotel Yak and Yeti.

**"Try Indigenous Cocktails @ Rukhmuni Bar, Yalamaya Dhokaima Cafe."**

Opening hours: 8am to 9pm  
Ph: 5522113 / 5553767 | Fax: 977-1- 5536390

Authorised Partner  
**NEXUS SOLUTIONS**

The Global Leader in open, standards-based Unified Communications and Collaboration

Collaborate with anyone, anytime, anywhere regardless of the networks, applications, protocols and device types you are using

Enterprise room-based Group Video Conferencing  
**RealPresence Group Series**

High-Definition Analog & IP Audio Conferencing  
**SoundStation IP & Analog Series**

For Demo, please call 5555659 or email at info@nexussolutions.com.np





**S***cario* means ‘hitman’ in Colombia, a grim name for a grim film that deals with all the shades of grey that seem to be the default setting of trickier political issues in life, be they immigration, gender politics, and in this case, the condoning of extreme violence within the morally murky world of drug smuggling in the Americas.



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

*Sicario* detaches from the usual male oriented antics that are usually associated with films about busting shadowy druglords by casting the wonderful Emily Blunt as Kate Macer, an FBI agent

working in Arizona. Focused, and thoroughly competent as the leader of her unit, Blunt as Macer is a captivating, fully dimensional human being who refuses to engage in the high strung antics of her other male peers. Her partnership with the stoic, humorous Reggie Wayne (played with wry wit by Daniel Kaluuya), is the only balanced human relationship in the topsy-turvy world of law enforcement portrayed in the film.

Josh Brolin plays shady CIA agent Matt Graver, a man with nebulous morals which are compounded by his partnership with Alejandro Gillick (Benicio de Toro), an enigmatic Colombian whose intentions are unclear even while his actions induce chills along the spine.

As Graver and Gillick

endeavour to pin down a nefarious Mexican drug lord, Macer is drawn into this world as a pawn of sorts, as she is swept into both witnessing and inadvertently partaking in acts of extreme violence (as a self-defence mechanism) – making *Sicario* an uncomfortable film to watch.

The filmmaker, the Canadian Denis Villeneuve – who often indulges in making films about extreme situations without ever quite justifying his motivations – is saved by the casting of Emily Blunt. Blunt is increasingly impressive in her non-histrionic ability to deal with extreme material, both violent and not, with humanity and grace. Her performance is the saving grace of what would have otherwise been an unbearably pointless film about jaded people trying to set the world right by arguing for a skewed kind of justice by way of the gun.

*Sicario* is being hailed as a kind of neo-realistic take on what it might be like to be an everywoman trying to work in impossible situations. Personally, I cringe at this explanation, particularly when the ending leaves you with a poetic sense of absolutely nothing – a classic Villeneuve indulgence that doesn’t seem to have evolved since his interminable, yet lauded previous films such as *Incendies* (2011), another excruciating work that leaves you utterly cold.

 [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
■ Trailer 

**HAPPENINGS**



GOPEN RAI

**MISSION REBUILDING:** Prime Minsiter KP Oli chairs the first meeting of the newly set up National Reconstruction Authority in Singha Darbar on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

**CHIEF GUEST:** Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel (*centre*) attends the 23rd annual function of Nepal Stock Exchange at its premises on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

**SPLITISTS:** As a result of the cabinet expansion to accommodate more ministers, one building in Singha Darbar now houses three new ministries.



GOPEN RAI

**FEST PREP:** A sweet maker in Lalitpur prepares molasses or Chaku as is called in Nepali for the upcoming Maghe Sankranti Festival on Thursday.



**SPOTLIGHT:** Actors Priyanka Karki, Saugat Malla and Keki Adhikari at the premiere of *Funko*, a new Nepali movie at QFX Kumari on Wednesday.

M-Series Printers

**EPSON**  
EXCEED YOUR VISION

Get the most  
**ECONOMICAL**  
**B/W PRINTERS** ever

Best for Office and  
Commercial purpose



M200- PRINT / SCAN / COPY



M100- PRINT

Just **25 PAISA** per print

Print upto **8000 PAGES** with initial starter ink kit

34 PPM HIGH SPEED PRINTING

JUST 12 WATTS POWER CONSUMPTION

WARRANTY UPTO 1 YEAR OR 50,000 PRINTS

**MERCANTILE**  
OFFICE SYSTEMS PVT. LTD.  
Authorized Distributor  
Hiti Pokhari, Durbar Marg  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: 1-4440773/4445920

**Kathmandu Valley Dealers:**  
Lazimpat : 4410423, New Road : 4220058  
New Road : 4227854, New Road : 4260173  
New Road : 4222384, Patan : 5538849  
Putalisadak : 4266820, Putalisadak : 4415786  
Putalisadak : 4227474, Putalisadak : 4436307  
Putalisadak : 4417050

**Outside Valley Dealers:**  
Bareilly : 011-860888, Biratnagar : 021-538729, Biratnagar : 021-532000  
Biratnagar : 023-540150, Butwal : 071-545399, Chitwan : 056-571784  
Dang : 082-561022, Dhangadhi : 091-523601, Dhangadhi : 091-521392  
Jorakpur : 041-525565, Lahan : 033-561205, Mahendranagar : 099-523872  
Nepalgunj : 081-527092, Pokhara : 061-525300, Surkhet : 083-522488  
Tulsipur : 082-562575



# Rivalry in Madhes

Roshan Kumar Jha in  
www.ratopati.com, 13 January

रातोपाटी

When the Madhesi Morcha launched an agitation against Nepal's new constitution five months ago, no one anticipated that the crisis would last so long. But even after the death of 50 people and 20 rounds of talks, the unrest in the country's southern plains continues.

There are multiple factors behind the delay in crisis resolution, but division among the top Morcha leaders is the biggest one. Had they been able to overcome their rivalry, they could have forced the ruling parties to address Madhesi demands much earlier.

Sadbhavana Party's Chair Rajendra Mahato has always tried to be seen as the messiah of the Madhesi people. This is why he sometimes ends up making silly decisions. He recently announced separate protests but returned to the Front after Madhesi people refused to rally behind a single party.

Mahato is still boycotting talks with



the government, demanding an apology from Prime Minister KP Oli for the police attack on him in December. His impulsive behaviour and frequent attempts to outsmart other Madhesi leaders do not bode well for their collective movement.

However, other Madhesi leaders also need to be criticised for their lack of zeal to fight on the streets. While Mahato has hardly left Madhes after announcing an indefinite strike in August, other leaders are mostly busy in Kathmandu for futile talks with the ruling parties.

When Mahato was hospitalised after being thrashed by police, other Madhesi leaders did not even bother to visit him. Worse, Upendra Yadav accused him of trying to gain cheap popularity.

Acrimony between Mahato and Yadav

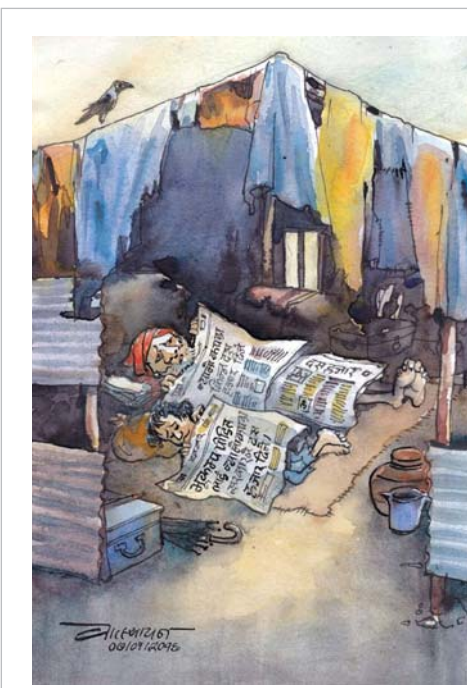
is not new. They have always tried to belittle one another. While Mahato claims to be the only scion of the late Madhesi leader Gajendra Narayan Singh, Yadav believes he deserves full credit for leading the first successful Madhes uprising in 2007. After being left out of the constitution writing process, they have joined hands but their rivalry is still alive.

Yadav is a mature and intellectual leader. He has a better understanding of social dynamics of the Madhesis than any other leader. But he is a lone wolf. He does not believe in walking hand-in-hand with other leaders. He has thwarted efforts to unite all Madhesi parties in the past.

Mahant Thakur is the most seasoned of the top four Morcha leaders. But he is still seen by many in Madhes as a Nepali Congress agent. He is old, slow and still living in the hangover of Congress politics. He hardly leads street protests, and his party looks like a club of retired intellectuals.

Mahendra Ray Yadav, the fourth Madhesi leader, was also in Thakur's party. But he formed his own party as Thakur favoured only Madhesi Brahmin and other high-caste leaders.

Madhesi people believe that their leaders need to be united if their voices are to be heard.



**Newspaper:** Earthquake victims to receive Rs 10,000 from the government to buy warm clothes.

कान्तिपुर

Batsayan in Kantipur, 8 January

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“I only vacated the palace, not my home.”

Former king Gyanendra Shah in a press statement issued on 10 January

# A hill settler finds a home in the plains

Shrawan Kumar Deo in  
Himal Khabarpatrika, 10-16 January

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

Born into a hill Chhetri family on the outskirts of Lalitpur district, Subodh Khadka, 36, never imagined he would settle down in Madhes. As a carefree youth, Khadka decided to move there on a whim, partly due to his love of mangoes.

When Khadka was still living in Lalitpur, his father's best friend, Ram Narayan Yadav, visited them one day from Nargho village in the Saptari district. In conversation Khadka professed his love for mangoes, and Yadav offered to feed him as many as he could eat on the condition that he visited Saptari. It was 2003, when relations between Madhesi and Pahadi people were not as tense as they are now in the Tarai.

Khadka instantly agreed to visit Saptari, where he then tutored local children for a few days. The students were so receptive to his teaching methods and their parents were not ready to let him leave. Khadka eventually grew so attached to the local people and culture that he decided to settle down there.

He worked as a teacher for two years before founding a primary-level English school that now has over 650 students. “I now love Madhes more than Pahad,” he says.

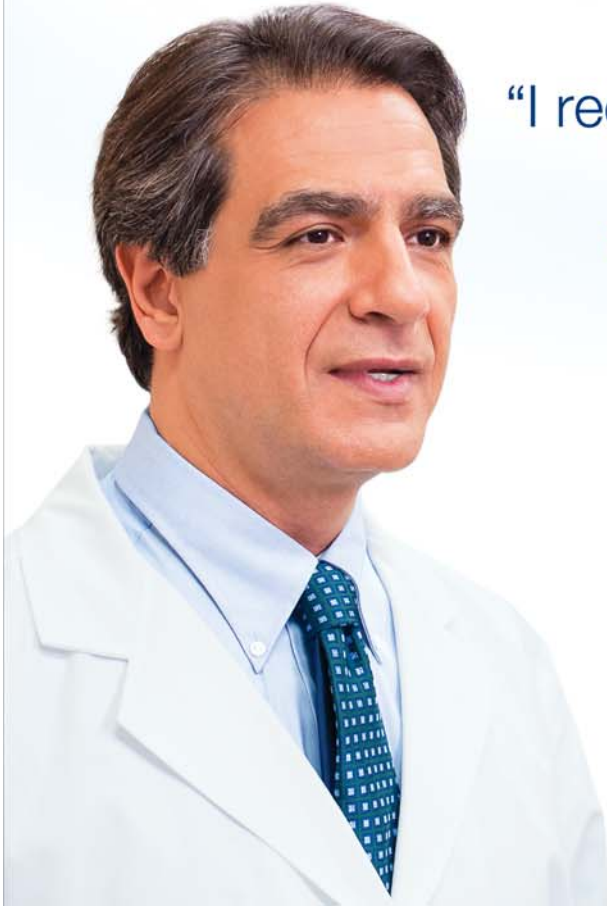
Two years ago, he brought his new wife, Ramila Basnet to Saptari. Raised in Kathmandu, she was not accustomed to the life in Madhes. “I didn't like the food,” she says. “I didn't understand the local Maithili language. I cried and longed to return to Kathmandu. But as time passed by, I fell in love with the wonderful people around.”



Khadka and his wife now speak Maithili fluently. They are the only Pahadi family in a Madhesi village exclusively inhabited by Yadavs, Mandals, Thakurs and Guptas. “I hear a lot about the strained Madhesi-Pahadi relations these days,” he says. “But I don't feel anything like this here. Everyone treats me like one of them.”


Shambu Nanda Chaudhary, a human rights activist in Saptari, says the love that Khadka's family has received in a Madhesi village is exemplary, particularly at a time of prolonged political face-off between the major parties and the Madhesi Front.

Khadka says he feels indebted to Madhesi people for the love and respect they have shown to his family. In gratitude for what he has received, he says, “I am trying to educate their children in return.”




“I recommend Sensodyne for all day every day sensitivity protection.”

-Dr. Spiro Condos, dentist practicing in the US



24x7 SENSITIVITY PROTECTION



24x7 SENSITIVITY PROTECTION<sup>®</sup>

WITH FLUORIDE

**SENSODYNE**

CLINICALLY PROVEN RELIEF AND DAILY PROTECTION FOR SENSITIVE TEETH

Recommended by Dentists Worldwide

Fresh Gel

\*with twice daily brushing

Net wt. 150g

World's No.1 Sensitivity Toothpaste

\*Brush twice daily for continuous protection

gsk

© 2014, GlaxoSmithKline. Sensodyne is a trademark of GlaxoSmithKline group of companies.



# Alternative post-quake



Rebuilding homes that are safer, environmentally friendlier -- and cheaper

SAHINA SHRESTHA

**M**ore than 600,000 buildings were destroyed during the earthquake of April, 2015. Nine months later the biggest challenge is still to rebuild the houses.

As survivors brave the winter and snow, many worry they will end up with the same unsafe houses rebuilt from salvaged material that will once again put their lives at risk.

Nripal Adhikary (*above*) of the group, Abari which promotes safe and environmentally sustainable designs says safety doesn't have to be costly. Part of the solution is to rebuild low-cost earthquake-resilient homes using quality locally available materials like bamboo and rammed earth.

"The benefit of using bamboo is that once treated it is durable, as strong as steel, but flexible. Rammed earth walls are extremely strong and last a long time," said Adhikary, showing us an under-construction building for Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Patan.

Padma Sundar Joshi of UN-HABITAT agrees that locally available materials will be



# housing



cost-effective because of their durability and safety. Rammed earth is a soil-based wall system that is dense, solid and stone-like with environmental benefits and low maintenance characteristics. Moreover it uses materials found right under our feet as it is made of compacted gravel, sand and clay with little cement added to it.

“Concrete is not an option for hilly areas. Since they are not easily available transporting them can be expensive,” said Joshi.

Using cheap and environmentally friendly building materials like bamboo and rammed earth in post-earthquake reconstruction can solve the issues of safety, environmental protection and cost.

Hollow concrete blocks and compressed stabilised earth blocks also provide ideal alternatives to bricks. Hollow concrete blocks are highly durable, fire resistant, provide thermal and sound insulation, load bearing capacity, low maintenance, economical and sustainable.

Compressed earth blocks also use on-site clay or soil which reduces cost and increases efficiency all the while being environmentally friendly.

Joshi suggests using locally available materials like straw for construction. Straw bales can be used as basis for walls. It provides excellent insulation and is energy efficient. It is easy to make and is cheaper because it is available locally.

After the earthquake as many of the concrete houses in Kathmandu Valley survived and it was the old clay and mortar structures that went down, there is a misconception among people that concrete houses are stronger than the traditional houses.

“The only reason many of the

**REBUILDING BETTER:** Nripal Adhikary of the alternative housing group, Abari, (*above*) explaining the techniques used at the site of a bamboo and rammed-earth structure that is replacing the building of Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Patan (*left*) that was badly damaged in the earthquake.

houses in Kathmandu survived is because of low intensity of the earthquake here. Look at Chautara for example, a lot of concrete houses went down there,” said Joshi.

He adds that using alternative materials can last a long time provided the timber and bamboo are properly treated. Said Joshi: “It is not like concrete, which is a good thing because that way you can maintain and improve it over time.”

Prefab housing also has its downsides, since most of the material is imported and it doesn’t follow the concept of the 3 R’s: Reduce, reuse, recycle. Building materials like mud, clay and timber on the other hand can easily be reused and disposed of back to the earth.

The biggest challenge that remains for the alternative building materials despite having so many benefits is the mindset of people. Not many want to spend their money on a mud and clay house.

Said Adhikary: “The main challenge about alternative earthquake resistant housing is to change the mindset. We have been able to change the people’s mindset but we are still waiting on the policy makers.”

 [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

■ Watch video of Nripal Adhikary



## Rebuilding new structures using old traditions

### Two communities in Lalitpur lead the way in post-earthquake rehabilitation

After every big earthquake that tends to strike once in a century, Kathmandu Valley has rebuilt itself anew. This time around, the old settlements of Pilachhen and Bungamati are using last April’s earthquake as an opportunity to not just rebuild the physical structures but also to rediscover their crafts, heritage and festivals.

Ramesh Maharjan fondly remembers growing up in the narrow alleys of Pilachhen, an old Newar settlement in the ancient town of Yala (now Patan). When eighty-two houses were destroyed in his neighbourhood in April, he saw loss but also an opening.

“This has become a perfect opportunity for us to revive our forgotten socio-cultural heritage and festivals that were slowly disappearing,” he told us during a tour of the historic locality.

When he was a boy, Maharjan saw the old architecture give way to cement houses and wooden *khapas* replaced by ugly metal shutters. He also watched as the newer generation moved away in search of work and the farms overrun by urban sprawl.

Working with the Maya Foundation, Maharjan put forth a plan to rebuild Pilachhen to serve as a model of preserving the traditional architecture while also creating economic opportunity for its residents.

“We have a rich history, culture and architecture, and we want to use that for economic revival through tourism,” he says. The idea is for the community to reconstruct houses with traditional architectural facades without compromising on modern amenities so that tourists are attracted, and this creates jobs.

Govinda Raj Pokhrel, formerly of the National Planing Commission who briefly headed the Reconstruction Authority, encouraged Pilachhen’s revival. “Reconstruction after the earthquake is not just about restoring damaged buildings, but the cultural heritage, festivals, crafts, and livelihoods that they represent,” he says.

With volunteers from Global Shapers and architectural design (*pics, above*) provided by CE

Services, the project is estimated to cost Rs 470 million. The Tilganga Foundation has donated Rs 40 million and another Rs 10 million has come from individual donors.

Ten km away on the southern outskirts of Patan, the heavily damaged township of Bungamati is similarly trying to rebuild the temples, monuments and neighbourhoods. Of the 1,351 houses in Bungamati, 851 were completely destroyed including the temple of Machindranath. The community wants to revitalise the town while preserving the architectural heritage, woodcarving tradition and its famous chariot festival.



**COMMUNITY FIRST:** Volunteers clear rubble of destroyed houses in Pilachhen, an old Newar settlement in Patan.

The Bungamati Reconstruction Committee is getting help from UN HABITAT, KU Leuven University in Belgium and other groups to plan the socio-economic revival of the town through tourism. A vocational school is also being planned to ensure that handicrafts and hospitality will sustain a tourism-based economy.

Says the Committee’s Prem Bhakta Maharjan: “Rebuilding the town will not only preserve the cultural heritage but also ensure the livelihood and economic benefit for the community, but rebuilding using old architecture is expensive and without soft loans or subsidies, the locals cannot afford to do so.”

*Sahina Shrestha*





# Bar Be Que Brunch Bazaar

Quest for best charcoal grilled Unlimited BBQ ends in the wilderness far from the maddening crowd...

Make your gourmet journey memorable for lifetime with all live counters in one place serving

The Lebanese Shawarma, legend of Hyderabad Biryani, Mongolian or Japanese Teppanyaki, Tibetan Momos, Italian Pasta or Nepalese Thukpa, Exotic salad bar for perfect accompaniment, sweet dishes & many more...

Tempting Offer for every BBQ paying Guest:

- Enjoy free golf coaching to start golf and hit 10 golf balls at Gokarna Practice Range on Saturday.
- Take your kids out on every Saturday to enjoy fun activities like suspension bridge, swing, sand pit, monkey climbing and many more at our Kids Corner next to poolside garden.

Every Saturday from 12 Noon to 2:30 PM at Poolside Garden.

### BBQ BRUNCH RATE

Nrs. 1299 Nett for child of height below 1 meter  
(Inclusive of a glass of soft drink or juice)

Nrs. 1999 Nett for Adult  
(Inclusive of bottle of Carlsberg beer or glass of Invenio Wine)



facebook.com/gokarnaforestresort

## GOKARNA FOREST RESORT

Rajnikunj Gokarna, Thali, Kathmandu, Nepal  
T: +977 1 4451212, F: +977 1 445 0002  
E: info@gokarna.net www.gokarna.com





## स्वच्छ पानी सुरक्षित रुपमा तपाईंको घर घरमा

॥ ५० वर्ष भन्दा धेरै आरु भएको ॥ सर्वसुलभ र सुपथ मूल्य ॥  
॥ Food Grade Raw Material प्रयोग गरी उत्पादन गरिएको ॥  
॥ जडान गर्दा कुनैपनि हानिकारक रसायन प्रयोग गर्नु नपर्ने ॥

Nepatop® PPR pipes and fittings

www.nepatop.com

### Clean, Green & Safe

# NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.



**Times** in your **lap** or **palm**. [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

# PM's an Ass



NEPALMOUNTAINNEWS.COM

The Ass is soon going to be out of a job if PM KP Oli keeps up all this joking and clowning around. He's hilarious. Probably the funniest prime minister in our nation's history (and geography) and someone who makes our troubles seem so far away.

He is giving stiff competition to oxymorons like yours truly. You don't know how much I have to struggle with this stuff every week, while for PMji it all just comes very effortlessly as if he was a natural born comedian laureate of Nepal. A Court Jester. Comrade KP is a pro, his material is far more superior. He is able to make the whole country laugh at him.

We can see that Oily Uncle takes his job of tickling our funny bone seriously. This is no mean feat for someone who had the grim task of beheading zamindars during his childhood. And thank goodness for that because he provides us with comic relief in this time of national gloom and doom in order to brighten up our days and nights.

It has become de rigeur and rigor mortis for Nepalis to poke fun at the incumbent prime minister. That is every citizen's right in a democracy; every Nepali is entitled to call the prime minister an ass if he/she/it so wishes. But we must also bear in mind that the man is a true visionary. Some of KP's plans for the wellbeing of the Nepali people are truly groundbreaking, and would lead to a transformation of the country if we only allowed him.

For instance, the prime minister was not shooting the breeze when he said he wants to generate wind power to electrify every home in the country. To realise that dream, we could create a National Windbag Authority that will be responsible for harnessing our vast potential to generate electricity from the capacity of every Nepali to break wind. This would finally make us individually and as a nation truly self-sufficient as long as we keep eating broad beans.

The Prime Minister's other ingenious proposal, and one that confirms he is spending sleepless nights trying to find ways to reduce the hardships of the people, is to pipe natural gas to every home so that families

don't have to wait in line for two days for half a cylinder of LPG. It also shows that the prime minister is not obsessed about taking credit for such a project of national prestige even though he knows that we know that it will take at least till the second half of the century for piped gas to be a reality in Kathmandu.

Being a progressive politician, the prime minister is also extremely sensitive to gender issues. He has time and again proven that he regards the interest of Nepali womanhood in the highest esteem which is why he remarked on YouTube the other day that there is no reason why Nepali women should aim to become police officers when they can become president by being from the right party and having the right friends in high places.

And speaking of YouTube, if you didn't already know how passionately PM Oli feels about the One-horned Asiatic Rhinoceros, you should watch his take on it. Exact quote: "A life lived without seeing a rhino is not a life worth living."

Every decade or so a Nepali leader pops up to say that he will turn Nepal into Switzerland by such-and-such a date. What these leaders don't know is that Nepal is already Switzerland. Just look at all the similarities between our two countries:

1. We are both landlocked.
2. Neither was colonised.
3. Both will soon be ethnic confederations.
4. Our mercenaries guard the British Queen, theirs guard the Pope. Ours use khukuris, theirs use Swiss Army Knives.
5. Our leaders treat Swiss banks as their own.
6. If the RPP has its way we may have a referendum every month for everything.
7. They export Ferrero Rochers, we export Pustakaris.
8. They have cantons, we had cantonments.
9. They have mountains, ours are higher.
10. They have cuckoo clocks, we have cuckoo leaders.



The Ass