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CASHMERE REDEFINED

Vox Madhes

When parliament in Kathmandu passed an amendment to the constitution granting better representation and adjusting electoral constituencies to reflect population, many here thought the blockade at the Indian border would finally be lifted after five months.

But Madhesi leaders say the amendments do not go far enough, and they have continued their sit-in at no-man's land. However, cold and fatigue have taken their toll and the presence of the protesters is visibly reduced.

Madhesi leaders also seem to be divided over whether to continue with the border obstruction, or to change their tactics. Mahendra Raya Yadav of the Madhesi Front appeared to sense that the public mood in the plains is changing and people are fed up with the disruptions. But hardline Madhesi leaders feel the blockade is working and it should continue until the Big Three in Kathmandu agree to re-demarcate provincial borders.

The gulf between Madhesi leaders and the Madhesi public about the border obstruction seems to be widening. Till a month ago, most people on the streets of this border town that depends on trade with India would not speak out for fear of repercussion, particularly from Madhesi parties. But they are now so fed up, they are more than willing to speak on camera.

Suresh Bidari in Birganj



PICS: SURESH BIDARI

Amar Kishor Yadav, sidewalk vendor

Everything has its limit, but this protest has no limit at all. It has dragged on for too long, and I will not survive if this goes on. Madhesi leaders do not care about people like me. And is there even a government here?

BORDER CONTROL
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

Ajaj Dewan, driver

Do our leaders care if we live or die? Ordinary people like us are made to suffer every time there is a strike. I sometimes feel like defying the strike and chasing away the protesters, but I can't risk my family's wellbeing.



Bindeshwor Das, cart puller

These protesters say they are fighting for our rights. Are they? Why are they preventing me from pulling a cart? How will I survive? Political leaders only use us to get to power, then they forget us.

Hemanta Patel, trader

This is the third time the Madhesi people have risen up against Kathmandu. But what did ordinary Madhesis like me get? Nothing. I wonder if we made a mistake by getting rid of the monarchy. Instead of one king, we now have many kings fighting each other.



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

BORDER CONTROL

What is blocking the blockade from being lifted in Birganj?

Tired of pundits pontificating from the pulpit here in Kathmandu, we tried to find out the real ground situation at the Birganj-Raxaul border this week. Why is this checkpoint still closed, and how is the blockade affecting people in the plains five months on?

Despite assurances that Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa got in New Delhi last month that the siege would be lifted once the amendment to the constitution was passed, the Raxaul border is still sealed even though traffic is almost back to normal at other border crossings. Madhesi leaders walked out of the parliament on Saturday during the vote on the amendment, and have since said that it does not satisfy their demands.

The amendment addresses the Madhesi demand for proportional representation in all sectors of government as well as demarcating electoral constituencies on the basis of population as the first criteria. Some Madhesi parties say there is no guarantee that the provisions in the amendment will be implemented. They point out that their other two demands on citizenship and marking out the boundaries of the two proposed Tarai provinces have not yet been addressed.

There is obviously a wide trust deficit here. Just as the government, and especially Prime Minister K P Oli are being obdurate and disparaging about Madhesi demands, the Madhesi Front is disunited and keeps shifting the goalposts. Lately, it is becoming apparent that the tail is wagging the dog and the most radical faction is setting the agenda. And, there is the belief in Kathmandu that the blockade has nothing to do with Madhesi demands at all, it was concocted by New Delhi and as long as the bureaucrats there don't get whatever geo-political concessions they want from Kathmandu, the blockade will not be lifted.

Down at the Miteri Pul on the Indo-Nepal border there is a surreal air as a transboundary fog envelops everything. The sun hasn't shone properly here for days. The air is choking with dust, and the smell of horse manure, smoke from smouldering cowdung fires mingling with a fog. The thin bamboo road barrier is a symbolic rather than a real



PICS: SURESH BIDARI

obstruction representing the Indian blockade. Porters and pedestrians carrying luggage walk across no man's land from Raxaul, emerging from the mist to negotiate with rickshaws and horse-drawn tangas to get to their destinations.

Some Madhesi leaders do stop by later in the day. Shiv Patel of the Sadbhavana Party says: "The amendments do not meet our demands. We will lift the blockade only after they are met."

We asked Bachan Pandit, a sole blockade enforcer in

one of the tents, why he was there. "To demand Madhesi rights," he answered, but was unclear about what exactly those demands were. Pandit is quite lonely here these days because his comrades have been beaten and periodically chased away by Indian traders who have suffered a huge loss of business.

In Birganj, we found a chasm between what the Madhesi leaders say and what the Madhesi people want. In the bazar, people were more than willing to talk and vent their frustration. Here is a representative sample of what they had to say:

"No one cares about us."

"If the Madhesi leaders get to be ministers, the blockade will be immediately lifted."

"We are blockaded, but they (the leaders) are moving back and forth freely."

"The banks are asking for loan repayment. Will the Madhesi leader pay that for us?"

"We trust neither the government nor the Madhesi leaders."

This week it will be 130 days since the border was blockaded. Not a single cargo truck has entered Birganj from Raxaul in that period. Eighty per cent of Nepal's trade, including petroleum imports, come through this border and although the whole country is under siege it is the traders and ordinary people of Birganj who are hurt the most. No one here understands why India is even doing this, or how it would benefit from "strangling Nepalis".

Bystander Sanjay Mahaseth doesn't even have to be asked a question, he launches into a long tirade against the government in Kathmandu and against Madhesi leaders. "Most of us do not grasp what the Madhesi leaders want to achieve by punishing their own people for so long. What is the inside political game? And what is the government doing?" he asks.

Sam Alam is a trader, and says he hasn't sold anything for months. "First, they have to lift the blockade, how long can we go on like this?"

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

Times THIS WEEK



BIKRAM RAI (9,841 PEOPLE REACHED)



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Big delays in big projects by *Sahina Shrestha*
Foreign investment and aid projects in Nepal are facing costly delay due to disruptions caused by the earthquake followed by the blockade that has now lasted nearly six months.



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Big delays in big projects by *Sahina Shrestha* (10 comments)

THE NEW FARCE

Baburam will be remembered as the perpetual revolutionary who waged a needless war and did everything to foil Nepal's democratic gains since 1990 ('The New Farce', Foreign Hand, #792). Briefly in power in 2011-12, he presided over the most corrupt cabinet in Nepal's history, nepotism in government appointments and made a mockery of human rights by granting pardon to war criminals from his own party viz. Bal Krishna Dhungel. What is even more ludicrous and worrisome is that professionals from various walks of public life - former secretary Rameshore Khanal, Bollywood actors Saroj Khanal and Karishma Manadhar, as well as Bibeksheel Nepali - have made common cause with him, thus tarnishing and undermining their own image and reputation. Reincarnating in the form of a 'new force' does not wash the blood off Baburam's hands.

Ram Chaudhary

■ The fact of the matter is that BRB has managed to get together a group of people to form an interim council for his Naya Shakti party which includes individuals like ex-finance secretary Rameswor Khanal, who had only few

years ago joined the NC based on his stated conviction that the party's values and principles correspond to his own. He went on to lead the President's Churia project. What do all these say about such a "Shakti"?

Bihari Shrestha

■ Baburam's history does not support him. The next generation of Nepalis will reject BRB.

Bhairab Prasad Khanal

■ The last time he was the premier he did nothing good for Nepal. All his government's efforts were spent trying to set his comrades free from judicial cases.

Whatever

BIG DELAY IN BIG PROJECTS

The current group of Nepali leaders seems to be doing everything they can to keep investment out of the country ('Big delay in big projects', Sahina Shrestha, #792). How do they envision economic development without foreign investment?

VK Kunwor

■ The blockade might have made the situation worse, but it's always been bad

here due to the Nepal government.

Scott MacLennan

■ All our politicians are the same. They get richer by the day and people get poorer.

Simon Lawton

■ This is an absolute travesty. I am not sure what will it take for the government and the parties to get their act together. And as usual the suffering of the already traumatised common people continues.

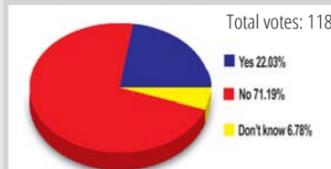
Amit Dhoj Khadka



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #793

Q. Do you accept the Madhesi Front's demand for two federal provinces encompassing the entire Tarai?



Weekly Internet Poll #794
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Q. Should India lift the blockade now?



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Unsafe workplaces

The lifeline of Nepal's economy is threatened by conflict in West Asia and weak currencies

OM ASTHA RAI

As Saudi Arabia began bombing Yemen last year, tension rose not only in the Gulf but also in the Nepal Embassy in Riyadh. Reports started pouring in that Nepali migrant workers were trapped in the deadly conflict.

The embassy cautioned Nepali workers against visiting the Najran region of the Kingdom where Yemeni forces had launched a counter-offensive. As it turned out, the Saudi military forced the Yemenis back, and an evacuation of migrant workers was not required.

"Nepali workers are safe so far in Saudi Arabia, and there is absolutely no need to worry," Labour Secretary Ram Kumar Acharya told *Nepali Times*. However, the war in Yemen is not over. In fact it is getting more brutal with daily air strikes by the Saudi Air Force.

Indeed, the situation in West Asia with multiple conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, and terrorist attacks in Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have raised fears about not just the safety of migrant workers, but also about what would happen to a major job market for Nepalis if conflict in

the region spread.

Saudi Arabia is not just involved in Yemen, but is fighting several proxy wars across the Middle East – from Iraq to Syria. There is simmering tension with Iran, which has more or less annexed Iraq. The falling price of crude oil, as well as the cost of waging conflict has meant that in 2015, Saudi Arabia recorded its largest budget deficit since the Gulf War.

Udaya Raj Pandey, Nepal's former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, rules out the possibility of a full-blown war in West Asia involving Saudi Arabia, but says the threats to the kingdom's economy from falling crude oil prices are real.

"If oil prices continue to slide like this, the Saudi economy could suffer badly and that in turn could affect Nepali workers there," he says. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the two main destinations for Nepali workers in the Gulf, and together have more than 1 million Nepali contract workers. The remittances from them and another 750,000 Nepali workers in Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and the UAE prop up Nepal's economy.

The other big destination for Nepalis, Malaysia, is also facing political and economic crises. Being a major exporter of crude oil, the Malaysian economy has



taken a hard knock with the Ringgit having tumbled 30 per cent in a year.

Bimal Dhakal of the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies says Nepali workers are not willing to go to Malaysia anymore because of the weak Ringgit. Only 30,414 Nepalis left for Malaysia between August 2015-January 2016, whereas more than 152,453 left during the same period the previous year, according to figures from the Department of Foreign Employment.

Ram Koirala, a 32-year-old security guard in Malaysia, used to earn Rs 60,000 in 2013. He is now earning less than Rs 40,000. "My salary has not decreased, but I am earning less because of the weak Ringgit. My family believes I should be earning more because I am more experienced now, and it is really difficult to explain it to them."

Overseas remittances pumped in nearly \$6 billion into Nepal last year, and this inflow of cash is what is propping up the economy by helping us pay for imports. Remittances make up more than a quarter of Nepal's GDP.

The nightmare scenario is if the Syrian war spreads to the rest of West Asia, pitting Shia against Sunni Muslim states and dragging Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain into the conflict. When asked about whether Nepal has at the very least a contingency plan for evacuation if not for alternative destinations for migrant workers, government officials tried to play down the threat.

"I don't think we will have to face this situation in near future – our workers are not in Syria or Iraq," Labour Minister Deepak Bohara told us. He admitted that it would be better for Nepal to minimise the push factor of migration by creating more jobs at home.

"To begin with, I am introducing some schemes to

encourage the youth to stay back," he said. "Post-earthquake reconstruction could be another area where more jobs can be created."

However, a work-plan unveiled by Bohara last month contains programs aimed more at promoting out-migration than encouraging the youth to work within the country. He is exploring new labour destinations, but instead of choosing safer destinations he is looking at Lebanon and Jordan which are also in the throes of simmering conflict.

Nepali migrant workers have had to flee wars several times since 1990 during the first and second Gulf wars. More recently in 2011, hundreds had to be evacuated. A future war in the Gulf, however, could be much more violent and disruptive, experts say.

Nepal's economy has survived the Maoist insurgency, a decade-long protracted political transition, the recent earthquakes and the Indian blockade solely because of remittance. In fact, soaring inflation back home means that overseas workers now have to send more money to their families. A Nepal Rastra Bank report shows the flow of remittance in the first five months of this fiscal year is 20 per cent higher than in the corresponding period last year. "The blockade could have

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caused much more trouble if it was not for remittances," says Dipendra Bahadur Chhetri, former Vice-chair of the National Planning Commission. "But this is only a temporary solution. It is going to go down if there is instability in the destination countries. We must be prepared to act immediately."

Labour migration expert Ganesh Guring criticises the government for not trying to minimise out-migration of able-bodied men. He says: "We have a foreign employment promotion board, not a board that aims to create employment opportunities within the country. It seems the government believes that the youth will always keep migrating, earning and sending money."

Guring is convinced that it won't even take a full scale war in the Gulf to bring the Nepali economy to its knees. A prolonged economic downturn in the Gulf or Malaysia would have the same effect.

As Nepal lacks capacity to airlift hundreds of thousands of migrant workers in case of an emergency in the Gulf or provide employment for them within the country, it would be wise to identify safe destinations and avoid unsafe ones, according to experts.

Says Bhaskar Koirala of the Nepal Institute for International and Strategic Studies: "It is not that the whole Middle East region is volatile and unsafe, there are still pockets in the region that are safe. We need to assess which countries are more suitable and secure to send our work force." 🇳🇵

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Global beverage maker Coca Cola has partnered with leading restaurants and eating joints to launch the Coca Cola Mo:Mostav campaign. Models



Priyanka Karki and Shristi Shrestha will be visiting different outlets to sample a combination of momos and Coca Cola till the end of February in Kathmandu.

Fare sale

Etihaad Airways is offering a six-day sale on business and economy airfares for guests travelling from



Kathmandu to destinations across Europe, Middle East, Africa and North America. The sale is until 31 January for travel dates between 1 February to 31 December 2016.

Winter relief

Everest Bank has distributed warm clothes and food to six schools in the earthquake affected areas of Nuwakot and Gorkha. This initiative



is a continuation of the relief package announced by the Bank after the April 2015 earthquake.

Clean energy loans

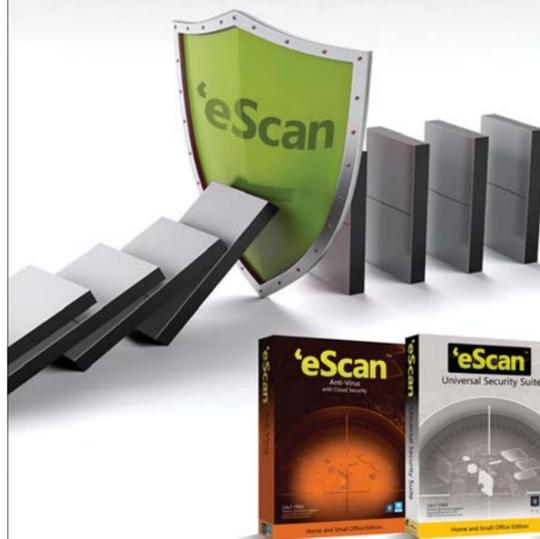
The Alternate Energy Promotion Center, the Government of Nepal and



Himalayan Bank recently partnered to avail loans for solar power plants used in homes and offices in urban areas. The bank will be giving a maximum Rs 700,000 per household, and will be charging households an interest rate of 2.25% and offices 4.50% for power plants holding a capacity of 500MW to 1500MW.



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Not their battle

Cadre, voters and supporters of the Big Three are turning against them in the Tarai



When I travelled to the Tarai recently, I met many people who had been spearheading what has now become the longest political strike in Nepal's history. One of them was Binod Sah. An influential political activist based in the eastern Tarai town of Lahan,



COMMENT
Navin Jha

he has been at the forefront of protests since the Madhes unrest began nearly six months ago.

While it is common to find a Madhesi party supporter

protesting on the streets these days, what is surprising is that Sah belongs to the leading party of the ruling coalition. "My political affiliation aside, I am a Madhesi first and I cannot stand aside when people from my community are fighting for a cause," he said, exuding confidence that victory for the Madhes movement was only a matter of time.

The Madhesi Front is believed to be at the helm of the Madhes movement. But in reality, the Front is just a brittle collation of four fringe parties that faced a humiliating defeat at the hands of the ruling UML and the main opposition NC in the 2013 elections. The Madhes

movement that began in August last year has been sustained so far only because the cadre of the Big Three parties have also thrown their weight behind it.

As I travelled across the eight districts from Saptari to Parsa, the proposed area carved out for the Madhes province in the new Constitution, I met many local leaders and activists of the NC, the UML and the UCPN (M). Not only did they vote for the Big Three parties in the last election, but also expended all measures to ensure the rout of Madhesi parties. Three years later, the tide is turning, and those who previously sought the demise of Madhesi parties are now turning their backs on the Big Three.

Arbind Singh is a UML supporter, but he is now agitating against his own party. He blames the UML leader and PM KP Oli for fuelling the fire in the Tarai. "Every time he speaks about us, it seems he is just spewing venom," he says.

The Big Three, particularly the ruling UML, seem to be living in their own make-believe world. They think the Madhesi parties have manipulated their people in the Tarai regarding the content of the constitution. This led the UML to carry out a campaign to raise awareness about the constitution in the Madhes, which manifested into confrontations with Madhesi cadre that only further fuelled

tension. The deadly clash in which three Madhesi people, including an elderly woman, were shot dead in Rangeli of Morang last week took place during one of the UML's 'awareness' campaigns.

Contrary to what the UML and other major parties claim, their own local leaders, cadres, and supporters are now hand-in-hand with their erstwhile political rivals. And they say that the Big Three will pay an even bigger price for their mishandling of the Tarai unrest in the next elections. No wonder the NC is pleading with Madhesi parties not to disrupt its district conventions in the Tarai.

In Janakpur, lecturer Badri Narayan Yadav told me the Big Three were never serious about addressing the sentiments of the Madhesi people and their hardline approach does not bode well for upholding the integrity of the country. He feared that the mishandling of the Tarai crisis would radicalise the youth and bolster a separatist movement.

This is turning out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy — negotiations have stalled, the Big Three have pushed through an amendment bill that the Front has rejected, and protests that had started to subside are now flaring up again. ■

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काठमाडौं: ९८५१०३६५४९, ९८५१०४९२८८, ४२६८६५६/४२६५१००, ext. २१०/२११, पोखरा: ९८४५११०७३४, चितवन: ९८४५१५१७३७, बुटवल: ९८४७४२६३८८, नेपालगञ्ज: ९८५८०२९९००, विराटनगर: ९८४२१६३३६, वीरगञ्ज: ९८१६२९७१०



The current no-sun, no-snow scenario is expected to change but not till Sunday. Moisture from this diffused westerly disturbance has affected the region, with overcast afternoons and snow flurries in the upper Himalayan valleys. However, the precipitation has been negligible, disproportionate to the cloud cover. This doesn't bode well for farmers and also to raise the levels of rivers for electricity generation since most of the snow in the mountains is locked in as snow and ice. Things will change slightly for the better next week, but there will no respite from the pollution haze.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
17° 4°	19° 5°	21° 5°

THE NEW NORMAL

With the use of satire and powerful imagery, two artists turn ordinary scenes of contemporary society into extraordinary art

SEULKI LEE

The only clue given about the curatorial theme of the on-going art exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery was an image of an empty petrol pump printed on the invitation. Curious to see what this unnamed exhibition had to offer, I paid it a visit.

On the first floor, five works by Nepali visual artist Laxman Bazra Lama depict the reality of Nepali society in a satirical way. An oil painting of seven nude figures wearing Topi on their heads (*pic, above*), entitled 'World of Pregnant Men', uses rough red brush strokes to portray the dominance of male wealth in Nepal. Lama says in his note that "the nude



WORLD OF PREGNANT MEN BY LAXMAN BAZRA LAMA

figure represents the shameless character of person and big belly represents the wealth." For the artist, this type of inequality is both "a fact we hide within and live by."

His next piece 'Installation' captures 33 images of how ordinary citizens are suffering from the fuel crisis and is inspired from his own struggles with commuting across the city. The series shows the artist carrying boards reading: "Petrol is easily available", "I don't need cooking gas/I don't get hungry", or "The journey is really easy" as he commutes on the crowded rooftop of a city bus. He then catalogued fellow commuters, who agreed to pose for a photo with one of those boards - creating a powerful juxtaposition of words and feeling. In good company with



OPENING DAY: (left to right) Artists Yuan Robin and Laxman Bazra Lama with Manish Lal Shrestha and Sangeeta Thapa at the opening of AIR_MCUBE artists-in-residence exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery.

Lama's earnest and poignant observations of contemporary Nepali society, Belgian artist Yuan Robin, 34, shares his reverence and engagement with Nepali

craftsmanship through his work. Surrounded by the sights and sounds of wool weaving and statue engraving while living in Patan, Robin observed the daily process

of the craftsmen's creations.

Robin's three month engagement in Patan is visualised in drawings, videos, and the animation of a woman sweeping. 'Sweeping Waltz' captures the daily ritual every morning and evening of women sweeping the dust out from courtyards, stairs and roads - a never-ending dance. "I shot her for the first time before the earthquake, before the cloudy dusts. She is an icon of the Nepali situation," Robin commented on the piece.

Robin's works are focused on capturing complex ideas and concepts. A grouping of sketches, 'Concepts' represents nebulous subjects like anxiousness, mindful, instability, goal, science, movement, and obsession through abstract images. 'Trying to make simple things' and 'Collaboration with Narayan' depict the process of creation in the relationship between the artist and the craftsmen, which evokes the question, 'What is the process of creation and production?'

Lama and Robin are the fifth group of artists in residence since the MCUBE program began in 2014. The exhibition is their final culmination of three months of work in the MCUBE studio. The works succeed in provoking meaningful questions, from both Nepali and foreign perspectives, to all the interplaying parts that make contemporary Nepal tick. 🇳🇵

AIR_MCUBE artists in residence fifth season
Until 30 January
Siddhartha Art Gallery



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WALKING THE HOLY RIVER

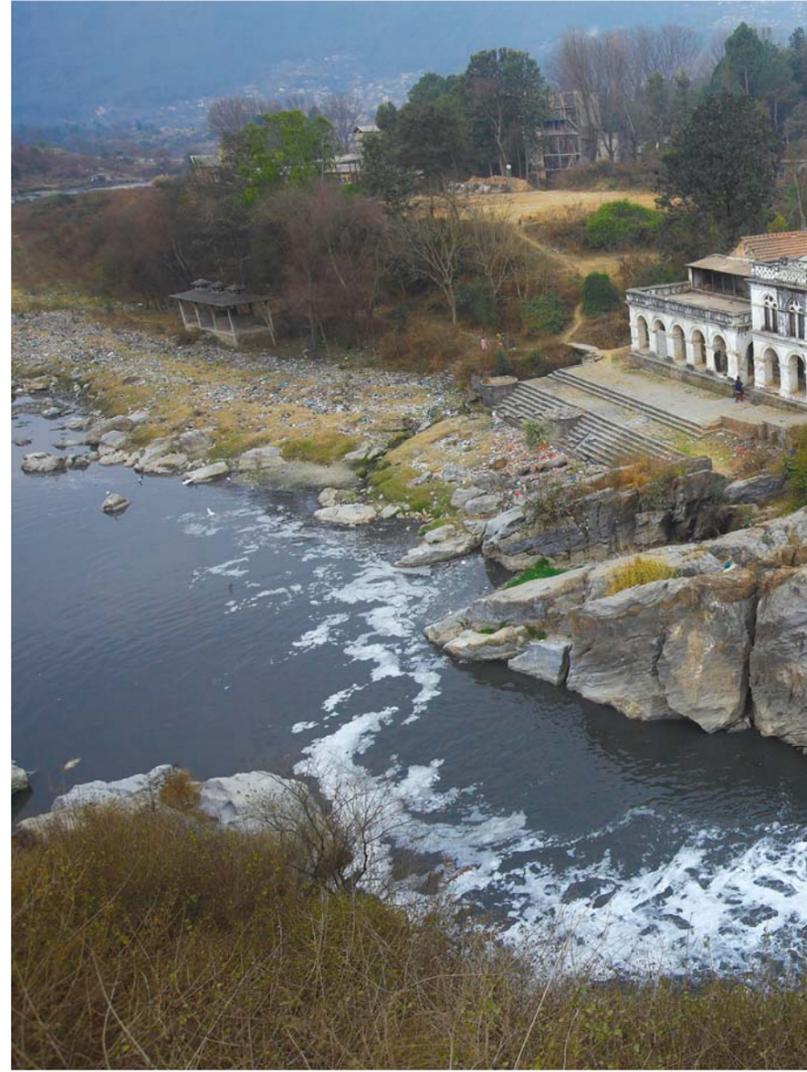
LUCIA DE VRIES

When American researcher William Forbes recently surveyed some of the temples and ghats along the Bagmati River to see if they survived the earthquake, he was greeted with much enthusiasm at a small tirtha just north of Pashupatinath called Hatyamochan.

The smiling face was of social worker Rohit Limbu, who has made it his personal mission to preserve the temple. Limbu led restoration of an old well which is now being used as a sacred bathing spot for women during Rishi Panchami. "I dreamt about you the other night," Limbu told Forbes. "You were one of the few people who believed in my dream, and look what happened."

Like Limbu, Forbes' relationship with the Bagmati is one of preservation and appreciation. In 2013, when various social organisations launched the Bagmati Clean Up Campaign, Forbes embarked on a challenging mission of his own: to trace the 160 or so traditional bathing places along the now-polluted river.

Better known as 'Swayambhu Billy', the longtime Kathmandu resident till then had been translating ninth-century Sanskrit



8 KAL MOCHAN

The Bagmati's floodplain here below the bridge used to be wide and the waters clear. Today the smelly black water flows through a canyon. Still, bathing here is believed to bless one with virtues.



7 SANKHAMUL

Once known to elevate pilgrims bathing here into a state of nirvana, the place has now become home to scavenging animals and birds.



6 PASHUPATINATH

This is the holiest of holies, and used to be much dirtier and smellier until the Pashupati Development Trust started managing the temple premises.



9 PACHALI BHAIRAV

Plastic bags, bottles, shoes and clothes floating in the polluted waters of the Bagmati are a common sight along what used to be a holy ghat.



10 TEKU DOBAN

The Vishnumati merges with Bagmati at this point. Still regarded as a holy bathing place, only the most faithful pilgrims approach the fetid water here.



11 JAL VINAYAK

This Ganesh temple located just below the Chobar gorge is where the Bagmati exits the Valley carrying with it the capital's waste.

PACHALI BHAIRAV

9

TEKU

10

CHOBAR

11

PAS

KAL MOO

8



8



GOPEN RAI

texts called *Nepala-Mahatmya* and *Himavatkhanda* into English. Forbes' first translation, published as *The Glory of Nepal* in 2000, focused on the mythology of the Kathmandu Valley that retraced an ancient pilgrimage route.

For his second book, Forbes sought to translate Sanskrit and Nepali sources describing Nepal's holiest river. The translations include the geo-mythological origins of the Bagmati traced to Shiva's laughter. "That booming laughter rolled out of his mouth took the forms of an unsullied river, swirling with sacred water, and whitened by foamy waves," the text reads, clarifying the meaning of Bagmati: 'Replete with the Voice'. Forbes also painstakingly noted the 1,000 names of the goddess Bagmati, chanted during special worships.

The text goes on to translate an account of the annual nine-day Bagmati pilgrimage conducted in Baishak (April-May), written by Damodara Paikurel from Naxal in the 1950s. "It describes a verdant valley, much of it forested, with arteries of crystal clear water flowing through it," says Forbes.

However, since the passing of Tirtha Guru of Pashupatinath, who used to guide devotees, the

Bagmati pilgrimage seems to have become a thing of the past. "Before he passed away in 1999, the guru told me no one came to him for guidance on the Kathmandu pilgrimage, but he still instructed five to six people on the Bagmati Yatra each year. After his death no



GUARDIANS OF GHATS: Rohit Limbu (left) and William Forbes are among few working to preserve the Bagmati ghats.

one has taken over his role and I am under the impression no one walked the Bagmati since," says Forbes.

Without a guide, finding the holy places along the river proved a challenge for the American translator. The starting point at Katuval Daha, below Chobar, proved inaccessible. "The river there is very polluted and full of industrial foam. During the annual festival, people no longer bathe in

the river. From here till Chobar I was unable to find any temples or lingams," recounts Forbes.

Between Guheshwori and Khokana again it was difficult to walk along the river. However, from Khokana till Bagdwar inside the Shivapuri National Park, conditions were much better as the source appeared as clean as it was during the times when Shiva laughed.

As the river has become a symbol for everything that went wrong in modern Nepal, it is the work of such activists and that of social workers like Limbu that give hope for Bagmati. Last August during Rishi Panchami, Limbu counted over 7,000 women bathing at Hatyamochan. Although few people still bathe in the river and many temples were badly damaged by the earthquake, the religious and cultural significance of the Bagmati River is being kept alive.

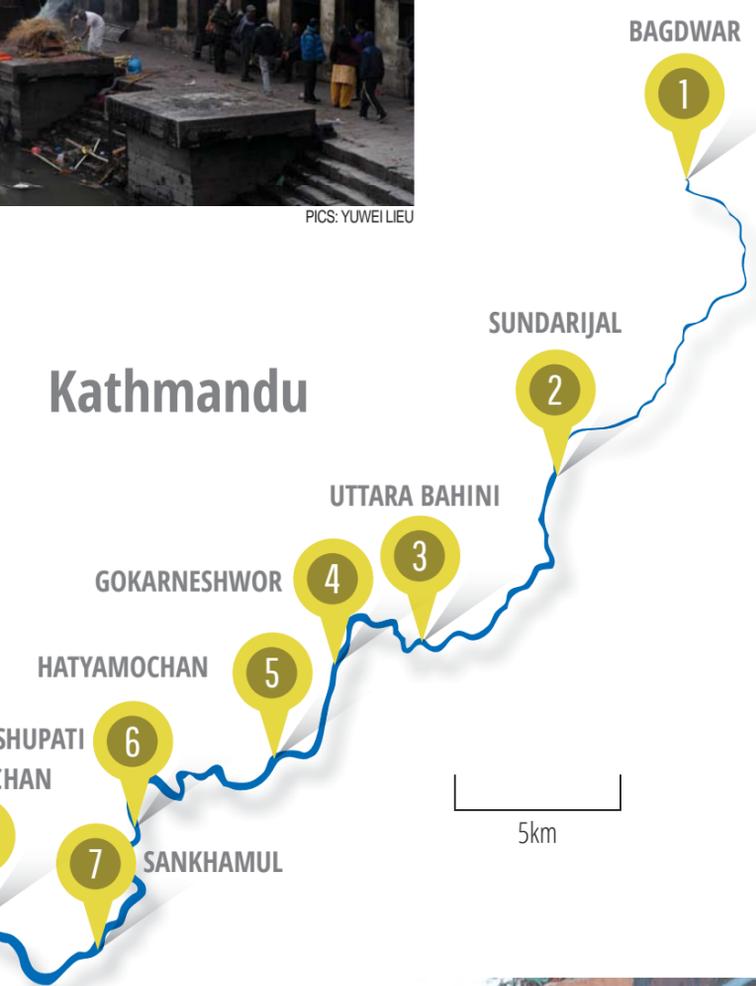
Forbes' book, *The Holy Bagmati River*, might play an important role in the preservation of its spiritual heritage.

nepalitimes.com

■ Watch interview with Rohit Limbu



PICS: YUWEILIEU



1 BAGDWAR

Located inside Shivapuri National Park, this brass tiger spout is the pristine source of the Bagmati river.



2 SUNDARI MAI

The temple is located in the middle of the Sundarijal forest with the crystal clear waters of Bagmati as they tumble over boulders. A dip here is supposed to wash away sins committed by devotees in seven previous lives.



3 UTTARA BAHINI

The clear water flowing down from Sundari Mai turns into a murkier brown as it flows past this temple.

Patan

5 HATYAMOCHAN

A few kilometers downstream from Gokarneshwor is Hatyamochan. Bathing here can cleanse the sin of even killing a Brahmin, it is believed.



4 GOKARNESHWOR

Situated at the confluence of the Bagmati and the Chandrabhaga rivulet, the river now functions more as a dumping site than a pilgrimage site. Wastes from rituals are mindlessly thrown into the river.

EVENTS



Lit at the Lake city

Head down to Pokhara for the 5th edition of Nepal Literature Festival organised by Bookworm Foundation. The four-day festival has lots of interesting interactive sessions lined up for its audience with some of India and Nepal's finest journalists and writers. Be on the lookout for an interaction between *Nepali Times* Editor Kunda Dixit and Indian journalist Barkha Dutt on Day Three. Don't miss out on sessions with authors Thomas Bell, Pranaya Rana, Prawin Adhikari, Rabi Thapa, Shiwani Neupane and Ira Trivedi.
11am to 5pm, 29 January to 1 February
Nepal Tourism Board, Pokhara
www.nepalliteraturefestival.com

Debate Championship,

Nepal's largest debate tournament for high school students.
9 to 13 February, Kathmandu
debate.dnn@gmail.com



Art exhibition,

Exhibition of works by Belgian artist Yoan Robin and Nepali artist Bajra Lama for the fifth season of AIR_MCUBE artist in residence program.
Until 30 January, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, Kathmandu

BAC Mela,

Local products, foodstuff and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family in BAC'S first monthly mela.
30 January, 2 to 7pm, BAC Art Café, Pulchok,
www.bikaplaartcenter.org



Digital mapping,

A workshop on digital mapping by Storycycle.
31 January, 1pm onwards,
www.storycycle.com

Book talk,

A lecture by writer Thomas Bell on his book, *Kathmandu*.
29 January, 9.30am onwards, Shanker Hotel, Lajimpat

CAN Info-tech,

Mark your calendars for the year's most exciting info-tech and entertainment conference.
29 January to 3 February, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Road

ComCraft,

Learn how to create your own comics.
29 January, 4pm onwards, Quixote's Cove, Ekantakuna, (01)5536974



Himalayan Rush,

Gear up for the fifth edition of Himalayan Rush triathlon series and experience the thrill of trail running, cycling and fresh water swimming.
26 March, Begnas, Pokhara,
(01)5550758/ (01)5550759

Meet with Dr Mahabir Pun,

Interact with and learn more about social entrepreneurship from Magsaysay winner Mahabir Pun.
6 February, 11am to 3 pm, Kathmandu,
For booking: 9803572752, 9849769675, 9840058871

DINING



Embassy Restaurant and Bar,

Enjoy a hearty meal in this centrally located restaurant known for its lively ambience and assorted menu.
Lajimpat, (01)4424040

El Mediterraneo,

Visit not only for the full fledged Mediterranean experience but also for the authentic Spanish and Nepali fusion dishes it has to offer.
Jhamsikhel, (01)5527059

Cafe Nina,

Go for the delectable burgers and the company of a friendly patron.
Maharajgunj, 9851130043

Dechenling,

The place to head to for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, pleasant and spacious garden is also ideal for big gatherings.
Thamel, (01)4412158



A Fishy February

The Olive Garden at Radisson Hotel has rolled out a special-fish menu for the months of January and February. Local as well as international fish like the Arabian Bekt, Norwegian Salmon, cold water Tuna, Himalayan trout, Vietnamese Basa will feature in the menu. Along with the fish dishes, the restaurant will have a wide variety of international wines and a well rounded Mediterranean styled menu comprising of soup, starters and main course.

Everyday from 6 to 10pm,
Olive Garden Restaurant, Radisson Hotel, Lajimpat, (01)4411818,
outlets@radkat.com.np

MUSIC



Sabin Rai and The Electrix,

Enjoy a musical evening with Sabin Rai and The Electrix.
6 February, 5.45pm onwards, Patio 747, Boudha



All about Jazz,

Acclaimed singer, songwriter and jazz pianist Tina deVaron performs for the first time in Nepal. Tickets for the show will be available at Dhokaima café and Manny Tapas and Eatery Bar.

4-5 February, 6pm to 7.30 pm,
Kamalmani Theatre, Rato Bangala School, Patan Dhoka, Ticket price: Rs 500



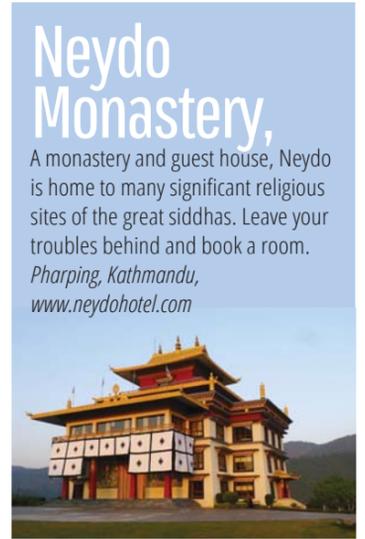
Rock night,

A 2-in-1 tribute show to Foo Fighters and RHCP by Electric Air and Monkey Temple.
6 February, 1 to 6pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, 9849332059

GETAWAY

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 home stay experience.
Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, Jhule,
(01)6212399, www.jhuleresort.com.np



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

Himalayan Wellness Centre,

A one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel. Budhanilkantha, open all week, 9801066661,
www.himalayanwellness.com.np



Mango Tree Lodge,

Culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park.
Bhetani, Bardia, (84)402008,
info@mangotree lodge.com



Gokarna Forest Resort,

A numinous paradise that relaxes you and encourages meditation, just a 20-minute drive away from Kathmandu.
Gokarna, (01)4451212, info@gokarna.net

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Losing paradise

The Maldives, and the world, need more leaders like Mohamed Nasheed

KUNDA DIXIT

Passing through Sri Lanka in 1993, I arranged to meet an exiled Maldivian pro-democracy activist at the KFC in Colombo. We talked about the torture he endured while being imprisoned by South Asia's longest serving leader, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Over drumsticks and hot sauce, we planned coverage of his home country for the news agency I worked for then, Inter Press Service.

His name was Mohamed Nasheed, Anni to friends. Twenty years later, author J J Robinson of the recent book *Maldives: Islamic Republic, Tropical Autocracy*, is also at KFC Colombo to meet the Maldivian Election Commissioner Fuad Thoufeeq for an interview. Thoufeeq is also in exile after defying a Supreme Court decision ordering him to reject an election that Nasheed had won fair and square in 2013.

This week, Nasheed was freed from prison for medical treatment in the UK after another year in jail. He has spoken out for targeted sanctions against Maldivian officials, and says he will return to serve out the rest of his 13 year jail term.

Slim and athletic, brash and peripatetic, Nasheed had the air of a man in a hurry. Indeed, he was racing against time to institutionalise democracy in his country, while saving it from being wiped off the map by sea level rise. However, this conservative Muslim nation of 350,000 people living on an atoll archipelago was not quite ready for



KUNDA DIXIT

HAPPIER TIMES: President Mohamed Nasheed (right) at a climate change conference just before he was ousted in the 2012 coup and replaced by Mohammed Waheed Hassan (left). Nasheed restored democracy in the Maldives and lobbied internationally to save his archipelago nation from sea level rise.

a man such as Nasheed, who was probably more admired abroad than in his own country.

At an international climate change conference near Malé in 2011 Nasheed delivered an impassioned keynote speech, and during the break lined up with other participants for coffee. What a refreshing sight for us from the South Asian mainland where we are used to rulers being fawned over by flunkies and ushered by kowtowing sycophants to the head of the line.

Back in Malé, he waved off his limousine and walked us to his house. He had converted the official residence into the Supreme

Court, ironically the same body that cancelled his election win in 2013. He spoke fervently and knowledgeably about turning the Maldives carbon neutral so he had the moral authority to speak out on climate change at international fora. I remember thinking, "When are we ever going to have a leader in Nepal who can speak with such passion and conviction?"

J J Robinson doesn't hide his admiration for Nasheed, but being a journalist he takes a step back to give us a factual, blow-by-blow account of how an activist came to lead a pro-democracy movement, unseat a dictator, rise to national and

global leadership, get overthrown in a coup, still manage to win an election only to be thrown back into prison.

The reader is struck by how a country with the highest per capita GDP in South Asia squandered its future by rejecting a leader who promised a more open society. It wasn't just the Maldivians who were cheated, the world lost a charismatic environmental campaigner.

Every page in this book reminds us of a familiar malaise: elected demagogues rigging the system to put themselves in power, then dismantling the very institutions that got them there. The judiciary, legislature, anti-corruption watchdogs are just tools for intimidation and to pursue political vendettas. They stoke religious extremism to make themselves politically invincible.

Nepali readers of *The Maldives* get a chance to trace the trajectories of our two countries. They had Gayoom, we had Gyanendra. Nasheed held an underwater cabinet meeting to highlight global warming, we had one at Kala Pathar. India's GMR Group bid to upgrade and manage Malé and Kathmandu airports, but were thwarted in both places. Mohammed Waheed Hassan who replaced Nasheed after the coup was stationed in Nepal with UNICEF in 2001.

We share the same Big Brother, and the Maldives coup predates the Nepal blockade as an example of New Delhi's diplomatic bungling. But just as the Indian Air Force airlifted relief after our earthquake last year, it flew in water to Malé after its desalination plant broke down. Robinson reports on how Indian High Commissioner Dnyaneshwar Manohar Mulay was meeting Gayoom's half-brother Abdulla Yameen (now president) even as the coup was unfolding on 7 February 2012. Robinson remembers Mulay being condescending and

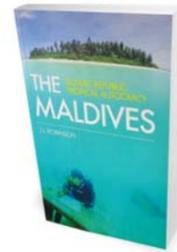
viceregal in a meeting with fellow Maldivian journalists.

As in Nepal, Western powers have outsourced their foreign policy in the Maldives to India. Represented by Colombo-based western diplomats, they seem clueless and unable to decode the impenetrable politics in Malé, but share suspicions of radical Islam and the need to keep a wary eye on China.

In 2012, Nasheed was putting into place a plan to make the Maldives energy self-reliant by harnessing wind, solar and wave. That plan was being launched on the morning of 7 February, but Nasheed was forced to resign after a mutiny by security forces. As a journalist with Minivan News in Malé, Robinson had a ringside seat to interesting times. Events continue to unfold as Maldivian youth join ISIS, journalists are hounded and an increasingly paranoid Yameen turns against his own allies.

Robinson gives us a vivid account of the recent history of a small country with a big leader who was changing the course of his country's history, and helping avert a global climate calamity.

Nasheed had told me in 2010: "What we in the Maldives do is not going to save the planet. But it will save us. And we can tell the world -- Look it works." Reading Robinson's book, I am even more convinced that the Maldives, and the world, need more leaders like Mohamed Nasheed. 🇨🇪



The Maldives: Islamic Republic, Tropical Autocracy
by J J Robinson
Hurst, 2015
336 pages

HONEY - ONE TEASPOON DAILY FOR A FITTER YOU.

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Goodness of Honey

Deemed as a top health food across the globe, honey is a wonderful creation. The health properties of this thick golden liquid have been valued since ages. For anyone who wishes to lead a healthy lifestyle, honey must become an important component of their diet. The most convenient way to do that is starting your day with a warm glass of water and mixing Dabur Honey in it. As per Ayurveda, honey is known to increase metabolism and if consumed with lemon in the morning before breakfast it helps to manage weight. Honey is also known to be a natural healer, as it fights infection and aids tissue healing. It is also known

for their day breaks. It will enable them to stay energetic and active throughout the day.

So, honey has all the goodness in the world: from being a healthy addition to your diet, to providing energy to the body, to increasing your metabolic system, and even working as an antioxidant. Love honey in all its glory and imbibe it as a part of your daily lifestyle for a healthy life. If old is gold, then honey is the treasure we've been handed over for generations. For anyone who wishes to lead a healthy lifestyle, honey must become an important component of their diet. There's really more to it than just a diet-friendly ingredient.

What people are not aware of is that it is an important ingredient for preventing illnesses and remedial for other health/medical conditions. Honey is a natural ingredient that possesses anti-bodies properties unlike sugar. While it has been recommended to stay away from sugar for patients, one must not stay sugar free. Hence, a honey diet is recommended. There are studies that suggest regarding the treatment of various organs honey is a good agent that aids patient's

non-cytotoxic to normal cells. Honey aids in

combating common ailments like headaches, cuts and bruises, burns, acne and pimples, dry skin, nausea, dizziness and more. For instance, one must chew honeycomb to calm down a severe hay fever. The Chinese believe that consuming honey drink helps reduce

the heat in the body. Honey and lemon juice is considered beneficial to battle obesity. It is so, because honey mobilises extra deposited fat, and the body utilizes it as energy. Honey is your best friend, especially if you are a foodie! A spoonful of this tasty golden liquid after a heavy and oily meal will do wonders for your digestive system. It also works as a great detox tonic. Honey does not go bad. Yes, it's true! Honey is probably the only food that does not get spoilt over time.

The unique chemical composition of low water content and relatively high acid level in honey creates an environment unfavourable for



bacteria or other micro-organisms to grow. Elixir of life Honey is the only food that includes all the substances necessary to sustain life. These includes enzymes, vitamins, minerals and even water. No wonder, it's called a superfood. Honey is also the only food eaten by humans that is produced by insects. Natural food supplement: Honey contains vitamins and antioxidants which are vital for a healthy body.

to reduce inflammation and scarring. If you're feeling sleeplessness, then mix honey with warm milk and have it before sleeping. It is known to make you feel relaxed and rested, and get you a good night's sleep. It's not just the adults who benefit from these golden drops. If your kids seem to feel lethargic throughout the day, or lack energy, then give them toasts with honey

recovery. It appears that honey is an intelligent food item that is selectively toxic to weak or harmful cells and





SPOTLIGHT

As usual, the Academy, in an extension of last year's egregious lapses, has nominated yet another round of completely homogenous films for the Oscars. The main complaint is that these films are peopled only by white stars and that the

about a certain white, majority Catholic population in Boston, that fact ought not to negate its very important story - namely the massive, landmark exposé of the extent of paedophilia that was (and is) rampant within the Catholic Church, the hundreds of priests who are guilty of these transgressions, and most importantly, the Church's active cover up of these crimes that has affected thousands of people.

'Spotlight' is the name of the deep investigative arm of the Boston Globe - a department that I am happy to report still exists. The film is set in 2001 when the Globe was in transition; lay-offs seemed imminent as the new editor Marty Baron, played by the wonderful Liev Schreiber, both a non-Bostonian and a Jew, is assessing the Globe's efficiency. Astonishingly, it is this

taciturn outsider who suggests that 'Spotlight' should start looking into the Church's alleged cover ups, sparking consternation even within 'Spotlight's hard core four person team - most of whom grew up Catholic, and some of whom still harbour much affection for the church.

This is a profound, methodical, procedural about investigative journalism that outlines every rigorous step that the team takes as they struggle with the terrible fallout of child molestation, perpetrated by individuals with seeming impunity, and understand with growing horror the extent of real life abuse over decades.

The ensemble cast consisting of Michael Keaton, Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo, Stanley Tucci, and John Slattery play their characters without histrionics, holding to the ethos of a film that is made to serve the story and not the drama, a discipline often lacking in Hollywood films.

'Spotlight' is riveting, important, extremely relevant and it will make you gasp. This is a film about the story that finally got told, and now thanks to the writer and director, Tom McCarthy, it is getting the continuing attention it deserves. If only all mainstream films vying for awards could be as rigorous as *Spotlight*, without the self-righteousness that sometimes comes from trying to be "profound".

nepalitimes.com

Trailer

HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

HAPPILY INDEPENDENT: Indian Ambassador Ranjit Rae at his country's Republic Day celebrations at the Indian Embassy in Lajimpat on Tuesday.



EMBASSY OF ISRAEL

IN MEMORY: Representatives from the United Nations and the National Human Rights Commission, and the ambassadors of Israel and Germany observe a minute of silence to mark International Holocaust Day on Wednesday at Rato Bangala School.

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Academy's main voter base, which consists also of mostly 60-year-old white males, is completely tone deaf about diversity, leaving out important films and performances by non-white actors year after year.

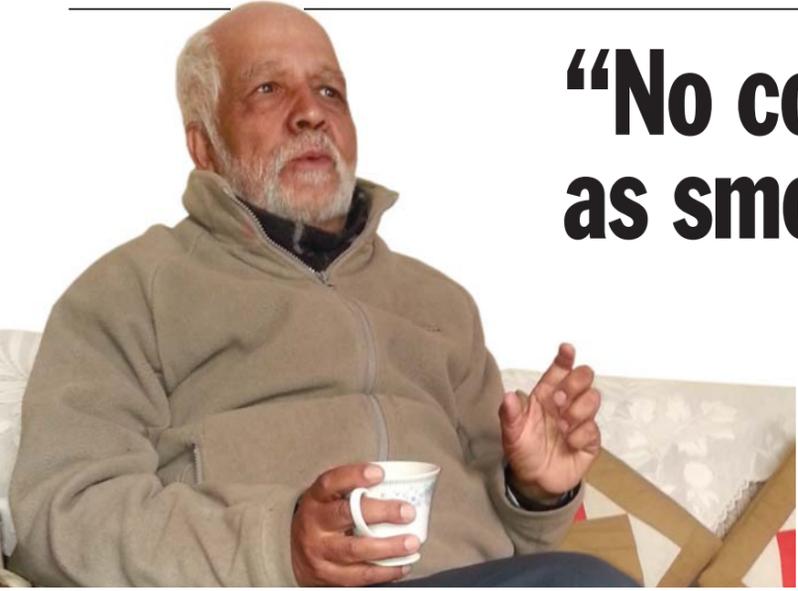
Spotlight is one of those all white films that has been nominated this year. While I acknowledge that this is a film



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KIRAN NEPAL

“No country moves forward as smoothly as it wants.”

Political analyst Nilambar Acharya in an interview with *Himal Khabarpatrika* (17-23 January)



Himal: After struggling to pass a new constitution through an elected assembly, declaring Nepal a republic, have we, as a country, really moved forward?

Nilambar Acharya: No country moves forward as smoothly as it wants. The way forward is always punctuated with difficulties and challenges, which are magnified by the lack of a far-sighted leadership. India, South Africa and Eastern Europe, which are now stable and prosperous, all faced obstacles. But they had capable statesmen able to overcome the challenges. Countries that lack strong leadership during transition periods are still unstable.

So, we lack a strong leadership?

Yes. We launched several people's movements, but a leader who could end the prolonged transition and take us on the path of prosperity was never born. The political transition that began in 2006 is a case in point. After the monarchy was overthrown, the parties that led the Jana Andolan II and the rebels who fought a war tried to outsmart each other to take the credit of the new political achievements. They ended up agreeing on a dual leadership of transition, which has not ended yet.

Why haven't we seen a strong leader yet?

When we fall sick, we go to India. When our children cannot go to schools, we send them to India. If we fail to find jobs, we go to India. We are heavily dependent on India because we have never tried to solve our problems within. India, for its part, seems to care for Nepal, but is always looking to micromanage us. As a result, our

political leadership has never been strong and mature.

Are we still struggling to abolish feudalism?

Yes. We abolished the political institution representing feudalism, but not feudalism per se. Instead of abolishing feudalism completely, we have now begun lobbying for the guaranteed seats for certain castes and ethnic groups. We introduced the Proportional Representation (PR) system, but did not impose a threshold.

Nepalis were hoping that the new constitution would take them to prosperity...

The crisis is not about the constitution. It is about leadership. Our leaders have failed to manage the political change. The problem lies in their attitude but we are blaming the system.

Our economy is collapsing, but our political parties look indifferent. Why?

Again, the absence of strong leadership. Nine months since the earthquake, the homeless are still in temporary shelters. Did our leaders not anticipate a harsh winter? If they did, why did they not act more swiftly? We do not have a leader who thinks for the country and the people. Those who are ruling us are not even party leaders. They are just leaders of their own cliques. We are facing a huge shortage of cooking gas. But our Prime Minister says: "Wait, I will fit gas pipes in all homes". How can a PM who has failed to give us even a half cylinder of gas deliver hollow promises like this?

India's blockade has prompted people to give the benefit of the doubt to the government. How long will that support last?

The government can blame the Indian

blockade for our suffering, but only to a certain point. People will start asking: what exactly did you do to alleviate our pain? Did you control the black-market? Did you supply essential commodities? Did you even try to airlift medicines? The government cannot say its hands are tied because of the blockade. It should have worked harder to ease people's suffering. People do not want

to hear just vague promises. They want the results.

What should be our future roadmap?

Nothing can happen overnight. But one month is enough for a government to at least start doing things that will offer people hope for the future. It has been three months since this government came to power, but

the PM is still speaking like an opposition leader. The government claims to have given priority to earthquake survivors, but that is just a vague promise. How can the government reach out to them when the blockade is on and the supply of essentials has not been eased? The government must stop delivering hollow promises, and start real work.

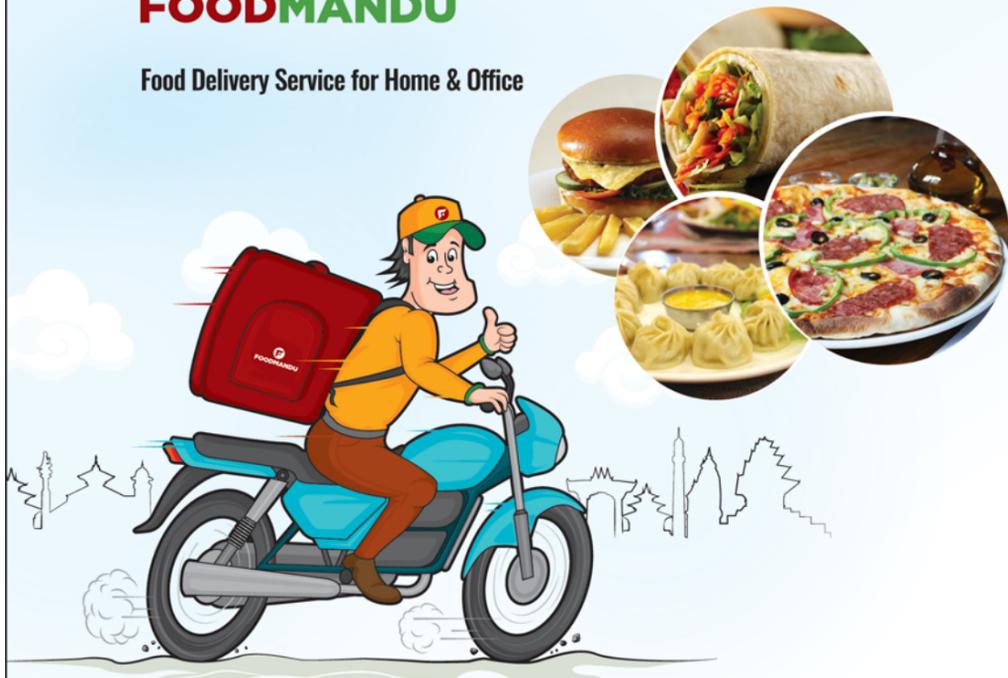


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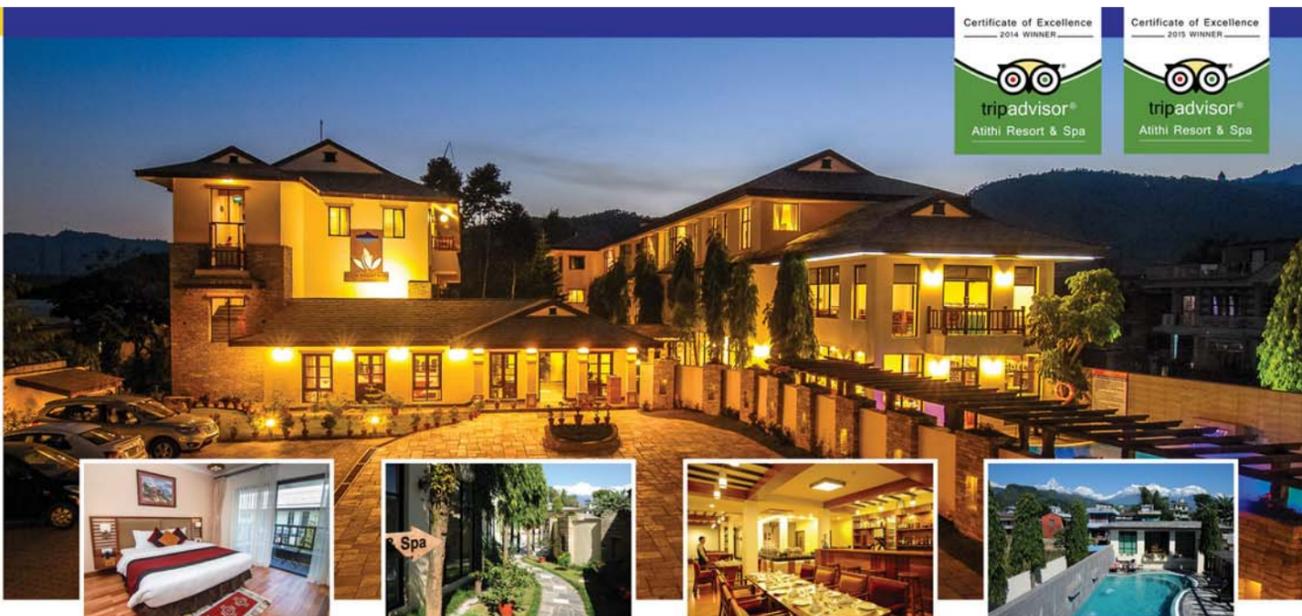


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Sister and brother look out of their tent.



Raute women pound maize early one misty morning.



A family at home in their tent. Kapil (lying down) received serious burns in a recent accident, and is recovering slowly.

Last but not least

Nepal's remaining Raute nomads are in a race against time to keep their old ways



A Raute woman walks from her home to fetch water.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JAN MØLLER HANSEN

When this generation passes on, the way of life of one of the last nomadic hunter-gatherers of the Himalayan foothills will disappear forever. And with them will go a distinct language, culture and a system of beliefs.

There are only 156 Rautes still carrying on their nomadic lifestyle in the remote mountains

of western Nepal, and they are under increasing pressure to assimilate with settled villagers at the edge of the forest.

They call themselves the 'Kings of Forests' and eat langur and macaque monkeys, wild yam and forest fruits. They carve wooden bowls out of tree trunks and trade them for cloth and rice. They are constantly on the move through the forested mountains of Achham, and live in temporary settlements hidden away from habitation.

Rautes belong to nowhere and everywhere, and minimise

their interaction with the outside world. They are a proud and dignified lot, with a slapstick sense of humour, and although they shun what goes for modern civilisation, their way of life is now threatened by it. 

Jan Møller Hansen is a senior development specialist and former diplomat.
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 nepalitimes.com

More pictures 



The Chief Headman of the Rautes, Maihin Bahadur Shahi (fourth from left) with his friends.



A Raute cutting trees near their forest shelter in Accham in Western Nepal.



The Rautes around one of the many fire places in their camp.

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WANTED: Prime Minister (1)

The Landlocked Federal Kleptocratic Oli-garchy of Nepal recently hit by an unnatural disaster and on the verge of being declared a flailing state has urgent vacancy for a tall, pot-bellied, homely, convent-educated teetotaler, fair-skinned vegetarian DV-eligible upper caste Prime Minister to replace incumbent who is getting a bit long in the tooth, and to prevent another dude in a desperate hurry to get the job, from pulling a fast one.

Age, disabilities, gender if any, marital status, eating habits, incontinence and incompetence no bar. The post-holder ideally should be octogenarian or above, and have served multiple previous tenures as prime minister wherein he/she/it should have paid ample lip-service to "people's democracy", exercised the freedom to execute class enemies following torture, indulged in bombing passenger buses, wanton vandalism and arson. Candidate should have a demonstrated talent for coercive fund-raising (known in some dialects as 'extortion'), shown a can-do attitude towards backsheesh, and exhibited decisiveness when it comes to bandfand and bhagbanda.

The prospective prime minister must have a proven ability to obstruct parliamentary proceedings for up to, but not exceeding, three months at a stretch. Should have blocked off the entire country and parts thereof for a cumulative period of at least 36 days in any given year. Candidate should also submit signed affidavits from international contractors to attest for experience in delaying projects of national prestige through wheeling and dealing. Must have recommendations in writing from at least three referees from the country's leading business houses to guarantee the capacity to amass ill-gotten wealth.

Candidate should be of sound mind and body, and be in possession of at least one kidney and/or a functioning heart. Should have wife to assist with creative account-keeping. Should have wide, but expandable, girth.

DUTIES INCLUDE:

- Dozing through Cabinet meetings and taking cat-naps in parliament.
- Build personal rapport with leaders of a certain neighbouring country to the south whose capital is made of two words that begin with 'N' and 'D' so that no decision, however small, is taken without their nod.
- Wear oversized badges, cut ribbons, and blabber inanities from the podium for live nationwide broadcasts on state tv after awarding plaques and shields to victors in inter-services taekwondo tournaments.
- Keep a collection of well-preserved skeletons in the Cabinet.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED:

- Should have stamina and endurance to wear 25-kg marigold garlands, have at least 20-year experience in lamp lighting, khada wearing and bouquet accepting with flair and aplomb befitting of the prime minister of a Least Developed Country.
- Must have obstructed constitution-writing, refused to extend the tenure of local bodies, and sent goons to beat up journalists during past tenures.
- Must have a Masters in Horse-trading and a PhD in Sycophancy from an unrecognised university.
- Must have made an Ass of himself/herself at least once in career.

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The Ass

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