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Timeless country

Two decades after the Maoists launched their war by attacking a police station at Holeri of Rolpa district on the night of 13 February 1996, not much has changed in these rugged terraced hills (*pic, below*).

The police station has been rebuilt, more young men are leaving for work, and the busiest part of Libang bazar is the IME office where families come to receive cash from migrant workers in the Gulf.

Twenty years after the start of the war and ten years after it ended, the people of Rolpa feel their lives have not improved. Many here in the cradle of the

Maoist revolution still support the party's goals, but are disappointed that it has split and abandoned its egalitarian goals.

Most people interviewed by *Nepali Times* said the armed struggle was ideologically right but behaviourally wrong. Maoist cadres here think theirs is an unfinished revolution even though the party's main demands of abolition of the monarchy and writing a new constitution were met.

"The conflict made it possible to establish a federal democratic republic, and made Nepali

people aware of their rights," said Ganeshor KC, 50, a local health post worker. Throughout the conflict, KC fed and sheltered both the Maoists and the state security forces, like most people in his village.

"When I heard about the ceasefire in 2006, I was happy and thought with peace there would be development," he said. *Seulki Lee in Rolpa*

Full story page 14-15

nepalitimes.com
Watch video



FEBRUARY 14

On the Day of Love *Nepali Times* talks to Sanjib and Ramila, who were on the Dharara viewing platform on 25 April and miraculously survived the collapse of the tower in the earthquake.

PAGE 8-9



SEULKILEE

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AUTOPSY OF A BLOCKADE

The most important lesson for Nepal from this crisis is to massage Big Brother's ego and keep him happy.

After nearly five months of being blockaded informally, India's siege of Nepal was formally lifted this week by its proxies. Only the very naive or the extremely ill-informed still believe that the Nepal-India border was being blockaded by a bamboo pole guarded by a few men smoking in a tent.

Why New Delhi did it, and what India stood to gain strategically from throttling a smaller neighbour is a mystery. Students of international relations will be debating this long into the future, and no doubt someone will write yet another tell-all bestseller relying on Indian spooks spilling the beans. For now, we can merely attempt to connect the dots.

Whichever side of the debate you are on, whether or not you believe the blockade was the handiwork of the New Delhi establishment, there is one undeniable fact: the siege caused a humanitarian crisis among Nepal's 28 million people that compounded the suffering of more than 2 million earthquake survivors. After reporting in this paper from the field on the prolonged disaster caused by lack of medicines and the inability to deliver relief supplies due to the fuel shortage, we have gone so far as to call it a crime against humanity.

Short of declaring war on a neighbour and bombing it, a siege like this is the easiest and cheapest way for one country to wreck another. India has devastated Nepal's economy, investors have pulled out, energy and infrastructure projects are indefinitely delayed, and development has been pushed back by at least a decade. One of the poorest and most badly governed countries in Asia is even poorer. Its gains in health and education over the past two decades have been eroded.

One of the most sobering aspects of the blockade has been the utter disinterest of the international community. Except for a few development agencies, 'friendly countries' were conspicuous by their eerie silence and a notable reluctance to speak out in the might-is-right world of realpolitik.

Willingly or unwillingly, the internationals suspended their disbelief and bought New Delhi's line that this was all



JYALAL SAH

about the politics of the plains. That it wasn't the whole truth could not have been lost on them, yet they decided to be persuaded by the fiction and keep mum. To be sure, the Nepali government was also responsible for bringing this crisis upon its own people, and doing little to resolve it earlier. Kathmandu still hasn't learnt to negotiate in good faith with the Madhesi parties and proactively offer them respect and representation.

Except for smugglers and organised criminals on both sides of the border, as Om Astha Rai points out on page 4, no one gained from the blockade. Everyone lost. Bilateral relations between India and Nepal will be poisoned by distrust for a long time to come, as will the ties between mountains and plains dwellers in Nepal. Madhesi activists who believed in the cause have been humiliated by the climbdown of their leaders, while the people in the plains were forced to endure great hardships and immeasurable suffering. The blockade spanned two governments in Nepal which are to blame for not doing enough to ease the suffering of the people, and for profiting from it by protecting black-market dealers.

The TMLP's Mahanta Thakur admitted the other day that the blockade had to be called off without the main demands of the Madhesi Front being met. But he tried to put a brave face on it by adding that at least the people in the plains are now more aware of their rights and can't be pushed around anymore. He's probably right in that Madhesi leaders who lost in the 2013 elections will get more votes in the next election.

In Kathmandu, Prime Minister K P Oli held out for five months by playing the nationalism card even though public anger against his government was growing. The Indians must have thought that the blockade would bring Nepal's government to wave the white flag, but underestimated the capacity of ordinary Nepalis to endure adversity and the manner in which the black market kept the country going.

The blockade dragged on for far longer than it should have because the party most responsible for it wanted to save face and take credit for lifting it. New Delhi deftly pretended to twist the tails of Madhesi leaders to lift the blockade, while Madhesi leaders competed among themselves to be more radical.

It was also prolonged because the establishment in Kathmandu was profiteering so much from the smuggling, and could scapegoat India to divert attention from its own failure of governance. Even the Nepal Army tried to take credit for ending the blockade by saying it happened after Chief Rajendra Thapa's visit to India.

For Nepal, there are clear lessons from this crisis:

- When it comes to the crunch next time don't expect the international community to rescue us;
- There is no alternative to building self-reliance in energy and diversifying our trade;
- Perhaps most important: it pays to massage Big Brother's ego and keep him happy.

Times

THIS WEEK



GOPEN RAI (30 SHARES)



Most shared on Facebook

Devotees take a holy bath during the Swasthani Brata Katha festival at Pashupatinath Temple on Monday.



Most reached on Facebook

Working at home by Sahina Shrestha (7,961 people reached)



Most visited online page

Working at home by Sahina Shrestha (6,286 views)



Most popular on Twitter

Warriors in peacetime by Gopal Gartaula (102 retweets, 117 favourites)



Most commented

What was it all for? by Om Astha Rai (11 comments)

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

20 YEARS WASTED

The editorial, for some reason, is too kind on BRB and it also tries to lend respectability to the 40-point demand which was nothing but an excuse for the Maoists to wage a war in their quest for power ('20 years wasted', Editorial, #794). The Maoists only had nine MPs in parliament in those days. There was no way BRB and co. could have competed the two other major parties in the polls under the extant rule of the game. Hence the Pol Pot approach. And his mentors in India were always ready to help anybody with anything as long as it kept Nepal, as one Indian author put it, "in a state of intrinsic instability".

Bihari Shrestha

WARRIORS IN PEACETIME

The teal tragedy is that a few wo/men can brainwash so many, so easily to commit the most horrific acts including murder and torture ('Warriors in peacetime', Gopal Gartaula, #794). It makes me ask- what kind of social structures did we even have in place that so many turned against the mainstream?

Namah

They are as guilty as BRB and Prachanda. I don't feel sorry for them.

Anonymous

WHAT WAS IT ALL FOR?

So a spoilt brat did not get what he demanded and took up arms and went about killing 17,000 people. A cold blooded communist like BRB sees only violence as a means to power. Electoral system for him is hogwash. And there are still those who join this criminal in his new political adventure.

Hurray

Read the list once again. Those are genuine demands.

Sharp

WORKING AT HOME

I would like the author to research ('Working at home', Sahina Shrestha, #794):

1. How many actually return after graduating?
2. How many of the returnees are from the disenfranchised sections of Nepali society? Why is this important? We know that things 'happen' only for those who 'know' the right people. It would be interesting to know the differences in

demographics and returnees.

Namah

Good article, but couldn't we find more young folks outside of Dayitvaa foundation? I am sure there are more young men and women who have returned from overseas and doing good work.

WTF

CHINA DAILY

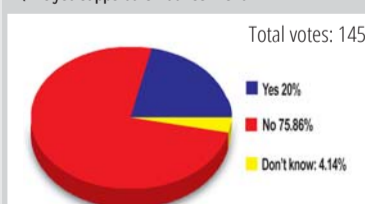
Because of the Chinese New Year there will be no editions of *China Daily* with this issue and the Feb 19 edition of *Nepali Times*.



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #795

Q. Do you support the Madhesi Front?



Weekly Internet Poll #796
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think the black market is being supported by the State?



Out with the old

Nepal's civil society is now more of a hurdle than a contributor to creating an accountable and just society

We are witnessing the death throes of civil society in Nepal. The days of the old wardens of democracy have now come to an end. The numerous groups and individuals who rallied in favour of democracy, freedom, progress and an open society over the past decades are now either too old or have been tainted.



ONE TO MANY
Bidushi Dhungel

In their heyday, these stalwarts spearheaded movements against oppression and tyranny, took unimaginable risks, and sided with revolutionaries of the time. For this, they will forever be remembered and appreciated as change-makers during a time when change seemed impossible. But over the years those very 'revolutionaries' have morphed into the tyrants they once fought against, and with them, civil society is no more 'civil'.

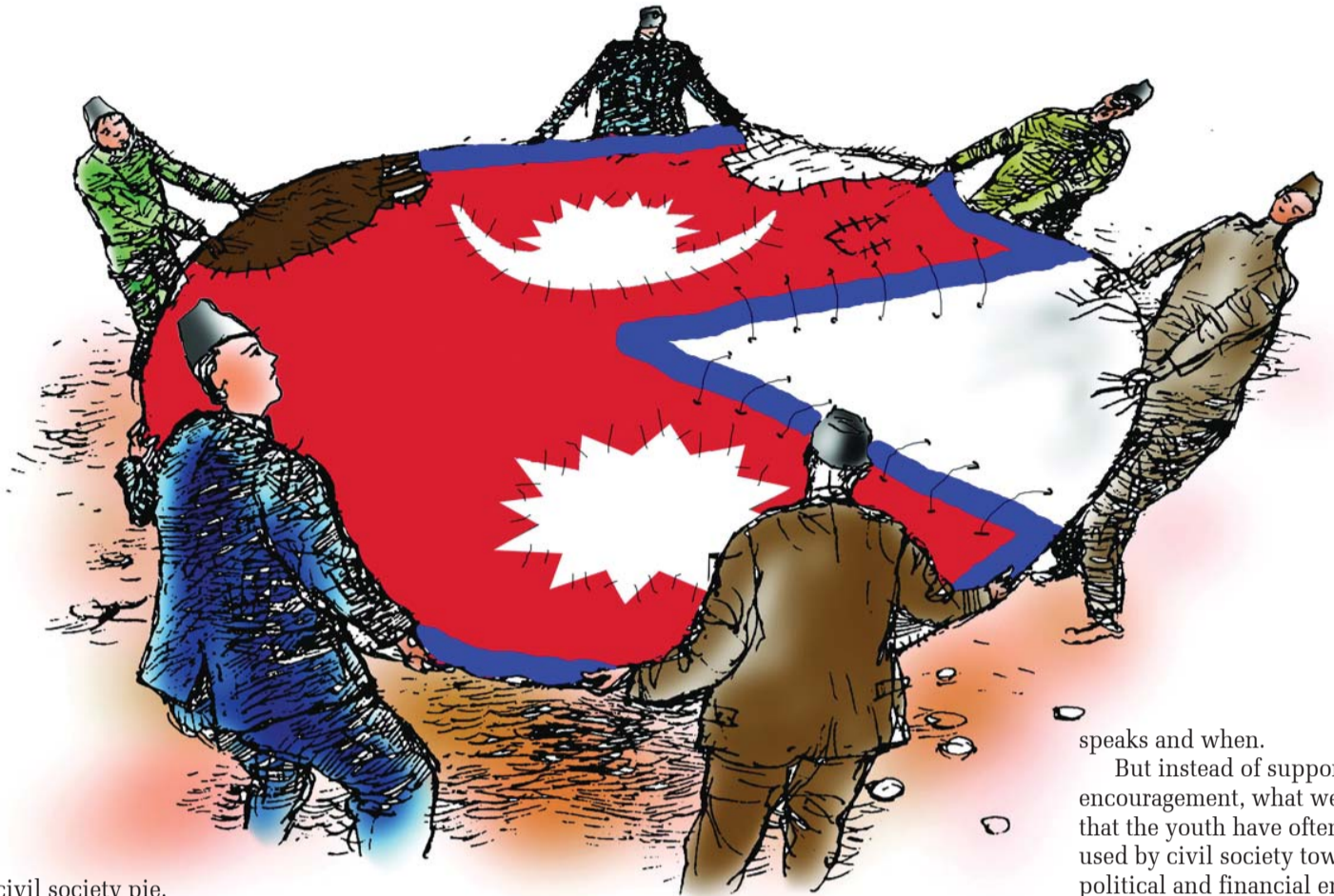
The political neo-elite are embedded in a web of corruption, deceit, crime and injustice that is far more complex than it has ever been. The connections run deep and no one is untouched — not even civil society. Civil society, almost entirely comprised of the donor-driven NGO sector, has taken sides, sworn political allegiance and become trapped within the confines of the 'paid activist' role. It has dug a ditch for itself so deep that the leaders have become compelled to turn to their 'activism' for their daily dal bhat and the luxuries of modern day life. As a result, civil society is now more of a hurdle than a contribution to creating an accountable and just society.

Even 'new' civil society, if not already enmeshed with the politics of the post-2006 mandate, has turned the country's sorrows into a profitable enterprise — whether they are selling poor governance, lack of accountability, inclusion or rape. All groups are in competition with each other for a limited pool of resources, scrambling for a

piece of the civil society pie.

What this means is that the idea of coming together to push a common cause, a political or social goal, becomes impossible. With both party allegiance and resource competition to factor in, no civil society leader could possibly work towards a common goal with his or her peers on the same platform. Instead, there is tussle and wrangling and one 'side' is never seen where the other 'side' is.

In the past months we have seen multiple attempts on part of various youth groups and loose alliances to make something happen, to create a spark and try to change the status quo. They have rallied on the issues of the protests in the Madhes, the blockade, the corrupt state's antics, or the human rights violations. Even political groups have been formed to change the way politics and society function. Yet, we have not seen a sustained and united front to champion any one of these causes, and little to no impact. With no guidance or support from the older generation of so-called activists, it has been an uphill struggle.



speaks and when.

But instead of support and encouragement, what we see is that the youth have often been used by civil society towards political and financial ends — when their favoured parties have not been in power, when their political agendas have taken a dip, when they have wanted to pose a threat to the opposition or when they have seen a 'project' that could be developed through the hard work of the youngsters on the ground. 🇳🇵

There is an infuriating silence on the part of the old bastions of rights and democracy. Among them, those who speak now do so on very selective issues. They were silent some years ago and those speaking up recently have now turned silent. But whether in 2006 or today, the

issues remain unchanged and there is much work to be done.

It's high time both sides got off their high horses, pushed their egos aside, and supported the younger generation that must take over the reins. They must prove they can rise above the politicians at the helm who are dictating the



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The blockade that benefitted no one

... but the damage it caused will stay on

In September Madhesi parties left out of the constitution writing process decided to stage sit-ins at Nepal-India border checkpoints two days after New Delhi hinted that there could be obstructions.

In February, Madhesi parties reluctantly called off their border sit-ins three days after India started issuing customs clearance to cargo trucks stranded in Raxaul for the last five months.



AS IT HAPPENS
Om Astha Rai

There is ample proof that the blockade was not enforced by the Madhesi parties alone, their agitation was used by New Delhi in its bigger strategic goal of reining in Kathmandu. The blockade was followed – not preceded – by the decision by the Madhesi parties to block and reopen the border. Indian police who had earlier allowed protesters to cross into India and hurl stones at Nepali riot police, last week helped burn down the bamboo barricades set up at the Birganj-Raxaul border bridge.

The Madhesi Front had no option but to call off its border sit-ins after it lost India's backing. Even so, Front leader Mahendra Raya Yadav put on a brave face. He told me on Wednesday: "Do not assume that we are dead, we will strike back with even more force."

Now that the blockade has been lifted, it is important to ask who benefitted from this five-

month siege of a landlocked nation still recovering from a devastating earthquake. The answer: no one but smugglers.

I put this to Surendra Labh, a Janakpur-based economic professor, who recently travelled across the Tarai to study the economic impact of the blockade. He confirmed what we all suspect: "If anyone has benefitted from the blockade, it is undoubtedly smugglers."

Labh says most unemployed youth who were riding bicycles till recently are now on brand new motorcycles purchased with income from black market fuel and Indian currency.

Smuggling became such a part of life, that Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa told a gathering of businessmen in January that if it was not for the smugglers, "the shortage of fuel could have been much worse."

Nepal's ruling parties, against whom the blockade was imposed, survived the five months of siege by playing the nationalist card, engaging Madhesi dissenters in inconclusive talks, while negotiating directly with New Delhi. But they did not gain anything out of this crisis, either.

Nepal lost over 200,000 jobs, inflation hit double-digits, post-earthquake reconstruction was delayed and the economy was devastated to such an extent that it may take a decade to recover.

Even India, the real enforcer of this blockade, failed to gain anything. Bhekh



Bahadur Thapa, Nepal's former ambassador to India, says that New Delhi squandered the goodwill it had earned after Prime Minister Modi's visit last year. "If Kathmandu suffered damage in terms of economy, New Delhi suffered damage in terms of goodwill," he said.

The Madhesi Front was the pawn in this Great Game of the

blockade, and is probably the biggest loser. It consistently claimed to be the force behind the siege, but had to reluctantly relent when New Delhi put pressure to open the border. Manish Suman, General Secretary of Sadbhavana Party and MP, admits rather belatedly: "No one benefitted from the blockade, not even us."

Madhesi parties had calculated that Kathmandu's rulers would be down on their knees within weeks of the border being blocked. "Little did we know that smugglers would rescue the government," Suman said.

One thing the Madhesi agitation has done is made ordinary people there

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except smugglers



JYALAL SAH

angry with Kathmandu, and raised awareness among them about demanding equal rights in the new constitution. But India is unlikely to back them as strongly as it did this time.

India seems to have realised it went too far, and is on damage control mode. India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held a meeting with Prime Minister Oli on Tuesday in Kathmandu. She was accompanied by India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, widely believed to be Modi's eyes and ears on Nepal and chief architect of the blockade. Oli is visiting India in the third week of this month.

But Madhesi parties want to keep up the pressure on Kathmandu and benefit from the momentum generated by the blockade despite the public mood in the Tarai being against another blockade or strikes.

As Labh sums it up: "The common people in the Madhes will never want another blockade." 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS



8848 in town

A new brand of vodka, 8848 Vodka, was recently launched in Nepal. Distilled from soft French winter wheat, the vodka is priced at Rs 1,275 and is available in most supermarkets and liquor stores in Kathmandu.

with one year warranty, runs on fire wood, saw dust, rice husk, pellet, coal, charcoal, briquette etc.



Power phone

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Safe drive

GO Ford launched All-New Ford, a seven seater SUV, in Nepal recently. It boasts of being technologically advanced and comes with two engines claimed to be fuel efficient.



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Super saver

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What's next in the Madhes?

Unrest will grow again in the plains unless Kathmandu initiates confidence building measures

Finally this week, the Madhesi Front backed down from its five month-long border-centric protests, and the country breathed a sigh of relief. But the question on everyone's mind is: how permanent is this?



PUBLIC PULSE
Navin Jha

Madhesi leaders were quick to point out that they had just 'changed the modality' of the ongoing movement, since a substantial portion of their demands on constitutional amendments have not yet been met.

The main leaders of the Madhesi Front say most of their original 11 demands have been ignored by rulers in Kathmandu, but they are mindful of the effect that the prolonged strikes and blockade were having on the general population. Which is why they will now put pressure on the government through other tactics.

The unspoken aspect of the change this week is, of course, the pressure that was brought to bear on the Madhesi parties from New Delhi. It is hard to fathom why India egged on the border blockade in the beginning, and then got the



BIKRAM RAI

Tarai-based parties to open the border.

There is speculation that Nepal's Madhesi movement could just be a pawn in the power play between rival factions within the Indian establishment, while others say that the architects of the blockade found out that it wasn't really working.

Whatever the reason, both India and the Madhesi parties needed a face-saving way out of a protest that looked like it was

becoming counterproductive. A senior Madhesi leader confirmed to me this week that of late there was indeed pressure from India to lift the blockade.

There had been hints of a change in Indian policy ever since parliament passed two amendments to the constitution to address the Madhesi demands for proportional representation and altering electoral constituencies based on population. New Delhi said it was a positive step, and

there were indications that they were softening their stance.

The Front said the amendments addressed some of their demands, but not others like the ones on the boundaries of the two Tarai provinces, as well as citizenship criteria. Madhesi parties were also getting worried that the longer the stalemate dragged on, the more it would benefit radical, criminal and openly separatist forces in the Tarai.

With the danger of the rug being pulled from under them, they were looking for an exit strategy that would not look like capitulation. Which is why the announcement about the change in tactics was made. It is conceivable that the agitation will pick up again in

spring when the three-month deadline for provincial border demarcations comes closer.

Kathmandu needs to address its trust deficit with the Tarai parties — the leaders just don't believe their assurances. "We are watching closely how they will implement the constitution, our feeling is that they are not serious about the promises they have made," one leader said.

The long and short of it is that the border blockade will change into more traditional forms of protest: torch rallies, demonstrations and gheraos. In this interim period, the Madhesi parties also need to patch up differences between them and create a broader alliance. The differences are mainly personality-driven, and lately the disagreements between Upendra Yadav and Rajendra Mahato have boiled over.

The present mood in the plains is of blockade fatigue and economic discontentment. What the past five months has done is raised the awareness among the public about their rights, and there is anger against Kathmandu for the excessive use of force to put down demonstrations.

In the next few months, the wise thing for the Oli administration to do is to start confidence building measures with the Madhesi leaders and the public, and be proactive in meeting the rest of their demands. Otherwise there is a real danger that as this bitter winter ends, temperatures will rise again in the Tarai and tempers will fray.

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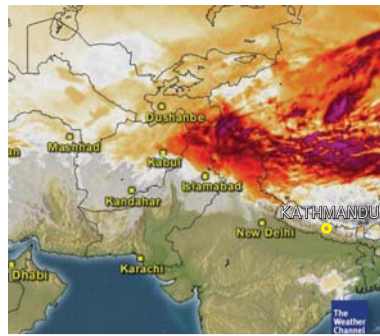
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Time to sound the all clear. There are no westerly disturbances as far as the eye can see on the western horizon. Which means that after that brief spell of long overdue winter rain earlier this week, the mercury will start picking up. Indeed, the maximum temperature in Kathmandu went above 20 most days this week, as the rain had cleared the atmospheric haze. However, the pollution trapped under the inversion layer will return going up to 3,200m from the Tarai right up to the Himalayan foothills, filtering the sunlight and reducing the maxima again slightly. Enjoy the early spring.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
22° 6°	22° 6°	22° 7°



YUWEI LIEW

POKHARA'S HIDDEN SECRETS

There is much more to Pokhara than just Pokhara

SMRITI BASNET
IN KASKI

Nestled in the verdant hills overlooking the Begnas and Rupa Lake, away from the bustle of Pokhara city, is Rupakot Resort. The tranquility and panoramic view of the Annapurna sets the hotel apart from the other tourist places here.

Executive Director Sudhan Adhikari says the fuel crisis led to the fall in numbers - number of visitors is down by 70 per cent. But, the blockade might have just exposed an existing problem that had been lying dormant for some time.

With the exception of Pokhara, the Kaski region has failed to grow as a popular tourist destination despite its vast potential. Home to The Royal Trek - named after Prince

Charles for his 1983 hike - the region offers bird watching, cultural walks and just last week, nine more lakes in the region were promoted on the illustrious Ramsar list.

"We have potential, but not much effort has been made by the government to make people aware of this place," says Arjun Parajuli, General Manager of the Begnas Lake Resort and Villas.

Ironically, the official neglect and isolation has protected the pristine beauty of Pokhara's periphery.

Biplab Paudel, proprietor of Barahi Hotel in Pokhara, agrees that better infrastructure would help boost tourism here.

"What is the government's responsibility? To make roads. But look at Phulbari Resort, Rupakot Resort and the road access. Why would others invest in places with no infrastructure?" laments Paudel.

Chief District Officer of Kaski, Hari

Prasad Parajuli says efforts are being made: "There is road access to Rupakot. It has just not been asphalted yet."

In 2014, the town of Lekhnath in Kaski introduced tax incentives to attract hotel investors. "If we had invested the same amount of money in building a hotel in the city, it would have been a 5-star property," says Parajuli.

Now that the blockade is over, there is hope that visitor numbers will pick up. Shangri-La Resort had signed on to bring its business to the area, but plans came to a halt due to the fuel crisis. The project is slated to commence soon.

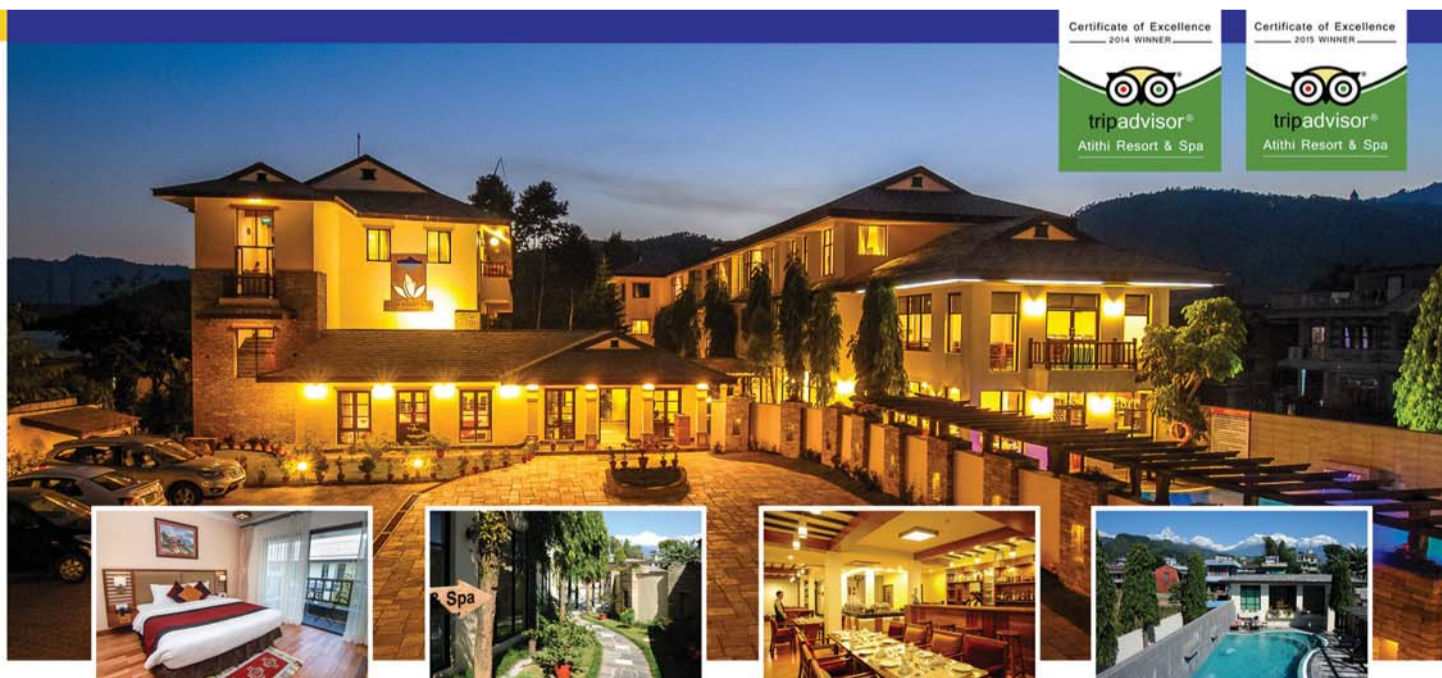
Tripathi is hopeful that the region will become more investor friendly in the future. He says with the end of the blockade and improving road conditions, the region can still make up for its losses. "If more hotels are to come up, the future looks bright for

the region," he says.

Tripathi has also been working to improve the conditions of home stays in the region under his firm's 'Ek Jilla, Ek Utpadan' initiative. It hopes to rehabilitate ten houses this year in Sundari Dada and Pachbhaiya, on top of the seven from last year, to attract tourists.

Still, the region needs a bigger push to make it more tourist-friendly, and is looking for help from state funds. "For any place to come up as a tourist destination it should be attractive, have amenities and be accessible," says Paudel. "The government should take responsibility for it and allocate accordingly."

Paudel knows that the development of Kaski will take time, but he is patient. "It took almost 60 years for us to get this far," says Paudel. "Pokhara was not built in a day." 🇳🇵



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SURVIVING THE FALL

SMRITI BASNET



GOPEN RAI

When Kathmandu's iconic tower, Dharara, fell during last April's earthquake, dozens who were on the stairwell or in the viewing balcony perished.

But a young couple out on a secret date lived to tell the tale. Sanjib Shrestha and Ramila Shrestha were on a Saturday outing and decided to go up to see the city from above. They had just got to the balcony when they felt the 62m tall tower shaking, a loud explosion from below and a sense of falling.

"I don't remember feeling anything while it was happening," recalls Sanjib. "The next thing I remember we were on the ground and people were rushing to help us. I asked them what had happened. They told me there was an earthquake and Dharara had fallen down. I then lost consciousness."

When Sanjib regained his consciousness he was on the cement pavement outside Bir Hospital, surrounded by wounded patients. Bleeding from a cut on his forehead and unable to open his eyes, his first thoughts were of Ramila. Inside the National Trauma Center in Bir Hospital, injured but in good condition, Ramila was also looking for Sanjib.

The two had met at a mutual



BETWEEN SYRIA AND NEPAL

Bassel Shreiqi and Sangita Lama find that love is more powerful than war

MICHAEL NISHIMURA

Kathmandu native Sangita Lama fell in love with Syrian Bassel Shreiqi while working at the clothing store H&M in Dubai five years ago. He was an administrative manager and she was a sales associate.

They had been dating only a few months before they decided to get married and move to Nepal.

"I just teased him and said 'Let's get married'. So, I was actually the one that proposed to him," Lama recalls. After a week mulling over the decision, Shreiqi replied with a resounding "yes".

Lama was raised in a children's home in Old Baneswor because her parents (father a Thangka painter and mother a factory worker) did not have the means to look after her. She couldn't find a job in



MICHAEL NISHIMURA

Nepal, heard about work prospects in Dubai, and decided to take a gamble.

"Sometimes you have to take a risk - only then you can know a better life," she says.

Shreiqi similarly went to Dubai

in the hope of a better future after graduating from the Commercial Institute in now embattled Aleppo. The couple married in 2010 in Dubai, with a state officiant and two friends as witnesses because they couldn't afford a wedding

ceremony, or to fly relatives in.

The initial disapproval of their families did not stop the young couple from being together. When she told her family she was marrying a Muslim man, Lama said they were not ready to accept it.

"Although I am Muslim and she is Buddhist, we decided that we can form our own religion," adds Shreiqi.

In 2013, Lama gave birth to their daughter, Naya. But because of the strict citizenship laws in Syria and Nepal, the three-year-old is stateless.

A mother or father in Dubai can apply for a passport through their embassies, but by law a Syrian national cannot marry a foreigner abroad without the permission of the Minister of the Interior himself.

"I was not able to register my marriage there. So in Syria, I'm still officially single," says Shreiqi who has been in the painstaking and costly process of applying for his daughter's naturalisation since she was born, but approval has not come yet.

Lama is doing the same for Naya here in Nepal, but Nepali law also makes it difficult for women married to foreigners from getting citizenship for their offspring. According to Article 11.7 in Nepal's new constitution, naturalisation is approved by the discretion of the state rather than given as an inherent right.

"It's not so clear in the new constitution, I don't know how to get a passport for her," says Lama. The couple was incurring fines




SMRITI BASNET

friend's wedding in Ramechap two years ago and immediately hit it off. They tried to see each other as much as possible since then, but the distance made it tricky. "Her house is 4-5 hours away from where I live. It was difficult to meet back home," says Sanjib.

On the evening of April 25, when Ramila and Sanjib's families were contacted about what had happened, their secret was finally out. "We had no idea about their relationship until the earthquake. But, both survived the fall, it seems they are destined to stay together," says Ramila's brother-in-law, Rajan Shrestha.

Although the two feel they have been blessed with a new life, they are still recovering from the injuries they sustained during the fall. Ramila is still in crutches and unable to walk for long, she stopped attending school.

"My wish is to recover from this as soon as possible. Only then will I start thinking about what I want to do in life," says Ramila. Sanjib had a fractured left hand, and cannot lift heavy objects so he has lost his job as a waiter.

Despite all this, the two find comfort in each other and still cannot believe the miracle that saved both their lives. "We often talk about that day, and it helps that we have each other," says Sanjib, "earthquake or no earthquake, we will always love each other." 

 nepalitimes.com
Watch video 


for overstaying in the UAE while waiting for Naya's passport. They could not go to war-torn Syria so they came to Nepal with Naya travelling on a document provided by the Nepal Embassy in Dubai.

Once here, they decided to open a Middle Eastern restaurant and were all set to inaugurate it officially on 26 April 2015 when the earthquake struck the day before. Undeterred, they repaired the damage and two months later reopened Taza in Pulchok, which means 'fresh' in both Nepali and Arabic. They had to shut down temporarily because of the gas shortage caused by the Indian blockade, but now it is doing well.

The future is uncertain for Shreiqi and Lama, but their plans are focused on providing opportunities for their daughter. And as long as they have each other, they're optimistic.

"I'm thinking of living here forever," says Shreiqi. "But if my daughter cannot get a Nepali citizenship, then I don't know."

Through their perseverance, Lama and Shreiqi are doing more than just serving delicious Syrian delicacies - they are also breaking down stereotypes. Lama still hopes that one day she and Shreiqi will have the big wedding celebration they never had, perhaps wearing a white wedding gown as they do in Syria.

She says: "There are lots of possibilities not only in business, but with anything you love." 

Taza is located at Pulchok next to Himalayan Bank.

A flower-less Valentine's

Think twice before you buy those "freshly-picked" assortment of flowers for your loved ones. That 'freshness' is a hoax; Nepal is a heavy importer of cut flowers during the winter season. Moreover, consider the carbon footprint of those perennials that have journeyed from far away. And let's face it, after a maximum of, say, three days, that lovely bouquet of flowers wrapped in plastic is going to be hurled into the 'holy' river anyways.

In all seriousness, the runoff from agrochemicals used for floriculture is a deadly contaminant to water resources, air and soil. Last year's Montreal Protocol has



codified a deadline to phase out Methyl Bromide, a chemical widely used in agriculture,

due to its deadly effects on the ozone layer, especially in developing countries. Additionally, the excessive use of water to sustain the industry is running our fresh water tables dry.

So instead of spending on a hackneyed last minute gift, show your loved ones they're special with these alternatives:

- Spread the love further by donating to reputable organisations assisting Earthquake survivors
- Invest in a child's future and support youth earning their education
- Give to those who cannot ask: feed the local dogs in your neighborhood
- Show your gratitude and originality with a handmade card made from locally-sourced Lokta paper
- Better yet, gift a half gas cylinder; that'll be sure to score some brownie points






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DAY OF LOVE

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Enjoy a special Valentine's evening with music from Ciney Gurung and Tatwa Band, performances by various international artists and a lavish candle light dinner.

6.30 pm onwards, 14 February, Shangri-La Hotel, Lajimpat, for tickets: (01)4412999, www.hotelshangrila.com



New Orleans,

If an Asian themed Valentine's party is what you are looking for.

14 February, Thamel, for reservations: (01)4700736

Vesper Cafe,

Enjoy a romantic dinner and special cocktails with your loved one. Book in advance and get 50% off on special drinks.

14 February, The Vesper Cafe and Restaurant, for reservations: 9809499103, online@vespercafe.com

Hotel Yak & Yeti,

Celebrate Valentine's Day with a romantic candle lit dinner for two at the Sunrise Restaurant.

14 February, 6.30 pm onwards, for reservations: (01)4248999, Rs 2500 ++ per person



Mezze by Roadhouse,

A special Valentine's Day menu along with music from Mezze's in-house DJ.

14 February, Mezze by Roadhouse, Darbar Marg, (01)4223087

Balthali Eco Hill Resort,

A romantic break for two, away from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu.

Balthali-5, Kavre, (01)6923728, Rs 4999 per couple.



V'Day at Hyatt

The Hyatt Regency Kathmandu is rolling out a special menu to celebrate the day of love. On 13 February, diners can relish a five-course meal, specially prepared by the Executive Chef. Couples and families can enjoy the same five-course meal, as well as order a-la-carte at the Rox Restaurant and Bar on 14 February.

13-14 February, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Baudha, (01)4491234

EVENTS

Word Warriors,

Learn about the art of slam poetry from this prominent spoken word group.

19 February, 3pm, Chamber of Commerce, Narayanghat, Chitwan

Run to Unite,

Join the fun and participate in the Kantipur Hero Half Marathon.

19 February, 7am onwards, Kantipur Publication Premises, Tinkune

BAC Mela,

Local products, foodstuff and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family in BAC'S second monthly mela.

27 February, 2pm, BAC Art Café, Pulchok, www.bikaplaartcenter.org

Cosplay contest,

Compete at Otaku Next's cosplay competition.

5 March, 10.30 am to 4.30 pm, Chhahari Services, Baluwatar, (01)4424692, rhea.chhahari@gmail.com



Himalayan Rush,

Gear up for the fifth edition of the Himalayan Rush triathlon series and experience the thrill of trail running, cycling and fresh water swimming.

26 March, Begnas, Pokhara, (01)5550758/ (01)5550759

Miniature Composite,

Learn how to plan, shoot and edit miniature composites with Sattya Media Arts Collective.

27 February to 29 February, 11am to 3pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, Course Fee: Rs 1700

The Vagina Monologues 2016,

Hear out a collection of experiences and female voices on sex, relationships and violence against women.

12 to 14 February, 5 to 7pm, Tickets: Rs 200 (Valid student ID), Rs 300 and Rs 500 (phone booking preferred), Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar

MUSIC

Joss Stone in Nepal,

English soul star Joss Stone performs for the first time in Kathmandu. Tickets available at House of Music, Moksh, Sound Factory and Jazz Upstairs.

18 February, 6pm onwards, Hyatt Regency Ball Room, Kathmandu, Rs 4990 (including dinner), for bookings: (01)2299759, 9843600948 or 9851075172.



Valentine's with KJC,

Learn Valentine's themed songs at KJC and serenade your loved ones. If not, hire musicians to make the day special. Register now and get gift vouchers on music lessons.

27 January to 14 February, KJC, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, info@katjazz.com.np



Diwas Gurung Live,

Acclaimed song writer and guitarist Diwas Gurung is back in K-town.

19 February, 6pm onwards, Moksh, Rs 300

GETAWAY



Famous Farm,

Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the aankhijhyal.

Nuwakot, (01)4700426, info@rural-heritage.com

Haatiban Resort,

Climb up to Chandragiri in the morning for a royal view of Kathmandu Valley and jog down to the hotel for a relaxed evening.

Pharping, Kathmandu, (01)4371537/56



Shivapuri Village,

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Patiswara, Shivapuri National Park, (01)4017725, 9851034141, info@shivapuri.com

Grand Norling Hotel,

Countryside weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities.

Gokarna, (01)4910193



Temple Tree Resort and Spa,

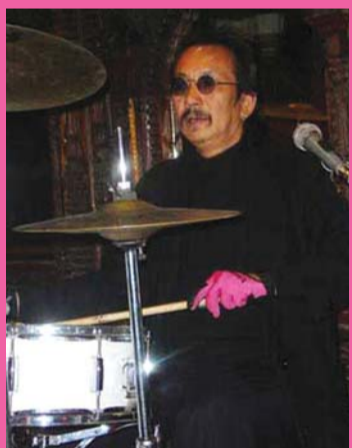
A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna, it'll be hard to leave once you go in.

Gaurighat, Lakeside, (61)465819

A musical Valentine

Walk down memory lane with renowned seventies rock and roll Nepali band, Prism. Musicians Dev Rana, Subarna Limbo, Deepak Thapa and Jyoti Ghimire will be performing 70s love songs, Nepali pop songs, R&B, and rock and roll numbers.

14 February, 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, (01)5522113, Tickets: Rs 500 for singles and Rs 800 for couples.



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



Kripa Joshi is a Nepali artist and creator of Miss Moti - an ordinary woman with an extraordinary imagination. She studied at School of Visual Arts in New York with a Fulbright scholarship. She currently lives near London. Miss Moti-variation is a weekly series.

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MICHAEL NISHIMURA

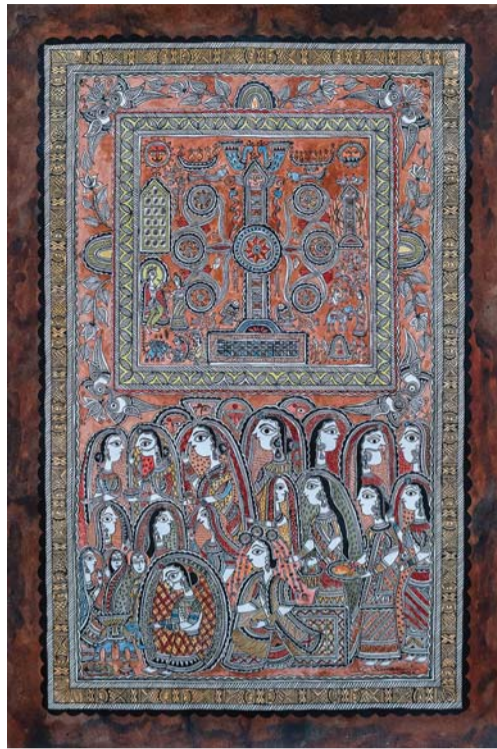
The mysteries of the universe may never be understood scientifically, but that doesn't stop artist S C Suman from exploring the brilliance of our boundless cosmos through his Mithila-styled works. The fourth installment of his art series 'Kalpavriksha' is an ode to discovery through community-inspired storytelling.

As a follow-up to his previous exhibits at Siddhartha Art Gallery, 'Kalpavriksha' pays homage to the iconic wish-fulfilling tree revered in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain mythology. When asked why Suman has been invited time and again, Siddhartha's curator Sangeeta Thapa said: "It's his eye for detail, the subtlety of his colours and the beauty of his composition. He's outdone himself this time."

Suman works in the tradition of Mithila or Madhubani painting, born out of the rich history of the Maithili speaking regions of Nepal and India. The art form's signature style is exemplified by the spellbinding intricacies of geometric patterns, leaving little space untouched. The paintings are organic, using twigs, brushes and fingers with natural dyes.

Originally, Mithila painting was solely done by women who would bestow their skills to their daughters. Nowadays it is a popularised form, celebrated for its synthesis of religious motif, folk tradition and human story.

In each of the 32 works on display Suman's scrupulous attention to detail is evident. The first floor of the exhibit provides an introduction to the breadth of the artist's deft hand at various mediums including acrylic, natural pigment and mixed media. With mandalas nestled among the leaves of tree branches, tessellated fish swimming in celestial ponds and the use of short brush strokes to



The Mithila avatar

In 'Kalpavriksha', S C Suman implores us to imagine a more harmonious future for Nepal

create variegated constellations, there is no limit to Suman's imaginative spirit.

Unquestionably, the famed wish-granting tree is the star of the gallery. Works like 'Kalpavriksha IV' display the complementary triad of roots, trunk and branches that mirror the three realms of the underworld, human consciousness and the heavens. The people communing on the ground are in harmony both with the fish beneath them and the peacocks perched above - evoking a sense of ecological symbiosis. Through his depiction

of indigenous communities in Southern Nepal, Suman pays reverence to a way of life that doesn't simply value an elementary respect for nature, but seeks pure cohabitation with it.

The second floor offers more explicitly religious themes, with works of Shakti slaying a demon, and Krishna riding a serpent naag and playing his seductive flute. Still, these are melded with depictions of mortal life, as pieces like 'Village Story' highlight the human experience of giving and receiving nature's bounty. In his other work, Suman

bemoans the exploitation of nature in order to accommodate the trappings of the modern world, and instead encourages us to opt for a relationship of unconditional love.

The final floor parallels the others in its brilliance of colour, striking contrasts and stunning symmetries, but the exhibit reaches its apogee with the poignant series entitled 'Rebuilding Nepal'. The first account shows buildings and pagodas crumbling to the ground during the earthquake. In the

subsequent work, people of all creeds are helping however they can, as arms are stretched out of windows, looking for a hand to grab onto, and doves circle the scene from above. The last of the series depicts survivors amidst the rubble and people coming together with wheelbarrows and hammers to help in the reconstruction of the building, brick by brick.

The recent turmoil in Nepal is a focal point for Suman. "From 2013 until now, we've faced many problems. The constitution has come, but solutions have not," he explains. "Rebuilding Nepal does not seem very possible these days. But all over the nation we're trying to go forward the best we can."

'Kalpavriksha' urges viewers to get lost in the beauty of its meticulous simplicity, that when appreciated in its full form, reveals itself to be exceedingly complex. Suman's work demands the questioning of our existential journey, using the wish-granting tree as a metaphor for life, in exploring our roots and extending upwards to the branches of our possibility.

Suman says: "The wish-granting tree represents the wishes of all Nepali people. My wish is that my exhibition will help our country in a positive way."

Mithila Cosmos IV - Kalpavriksha
by S C Suman
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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

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 spoiled over time.

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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 include 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



CRIMSON PEAK

At the beginning of this millennium, three extraordinarily different, very talented film-makers from Mexico made quite an impact in Hollywood. Alejandro González Iñárritu blew everyone away with his visceral, brilliant, frankly

Today, these three directors are some of the biggest players in the mainstream film industry, with Iñárritu winning an Oscar for *Birdman* last year and up again this year with a nomination for the Leonardo DiCaprio vehicle *The Revenant*. Cuarón made an incredible impact with *Gravity*, for which he won the Best Director Oscar in 2013. But my favourite of the three is del Toro, whose critical best, in my humble opinion, has been *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) but who continues to make over-the-top films in the horror, fantasy, and sci-fi genres with a verve and glee that makes each film a brim-full of fun. A case in point being *Hellboy* (2004), and the most recent extravaganza *Pacific Rim* (2013) - which was patchy but jaw-droppingly riveting.

Crimson Peak, a gothic horror romance, is del Toro's latest endeavour. While it is entirely predictable, it is absolutely worth watching, mainly for the unbelievable sets, costumes, and the performances of Mia Wasikowska as the naïve but plucky Edith Cushing, supported by the wonderful Tom Hiddleston and Jessica Chastain as two scheming but charming English aristocrats, Sir Thomas and Lady Lucille Sharp.

Set in the 19th Century, *Crimson Peak* follows all of the tropes of the classic gothic horror film - a little bit too much by the book unfortunately to be truly interesting - in a script co-written by del Toro. Fortunately, the machinations by the Sharps are so deliciously devious: Edith is clever enough not to elicit disgust on the part of the viewer (a sentiment all too frequent in horror movies) and Hiddleston's charm, as the troubled handsome Sir Thomas, is such that one is compelled to keep watching.

By the time we shift locations from America (Edith is the daughter of a wealthy self-made business man there) to the remote Allerdale Hall in England, the setting of quite the scene of horrors, the atmosphere is thick with foreboding. There are secrets in every corner, and although we can guess most of them, some will still shock even the most sanguine of viewers. 📺

nepalitimes.com

Trailer

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

hard to watch *Amores Perros*, featuring dogfighting among other crazy things in 2000, followed by Alfonso Cuarón's raw, tender coming of age *Y Tu Mamá También* in 2001, and Guillermo del Toro's subtle, excellent horror flick, *The Devil's Backbone*, the same year.

HAPPENINGS



GOPEN RAI

STATE HONOURS: Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli drapes the national flag over the body of former Prime Minister Sushil Koirala at the Dashrath Stadium on Tuesday.



GOPEN RAI

FINAL GOODBYE: President Bidhya Bhandari pays her respect to former Prime Minister Sushil Koirala who passed away on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

LAST RESPECT: Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj pays final respect to former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala at the Dashrath Stadium in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

NEW YEAR: People from the Tamang community celebrate Sonam Losar on Tuesday. The Sherpa and Tibetan communities marked Gyalpo Losar on the same day.



GOPEN RAI

QUACK DOCS: Nepal Police reveal the twelve doctors arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation for possessing fake academic credentials at Maharajgunj on Saturday.

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अनलाईनबाट वार्षिक ग्राहक बन्नु भएमा रु. ८००-१,०००/- सम्म छुट



A golden girl

Binod Pandey in ekantipur.com, 9 February

Sixteen-year-old Nima Gharti Magar defeated Swechha Jatav of India and Mubashra Akthar of Pakistan in a women's wushu event to win the first – and so far only – gold medal for Nepal in the ongoing 12th South Asian Games (SAG).

After the win, Nima commented: "Girls are not weaker than boys."

Nima's father, Mansur Gharti Magar, was queuing up for petrol in Lalitpur when a friend called him up to break the good news. He rushed home to find that the neighbours had already gathered to celebrate Nima's success. "My daughter was different from other girls," said Mansur. "She always wanted to do something new, and I am very proud of her."

Currently a tenth grader at Nepal Don Bosco School of Siddhipur in Lalitpur, Nima started practicing wushu four years ago. She missed the recent SLC test because she was busy preparing for the SAG, but she is hopeful she will get to sit in the main exams.

Nima's family is originally from Rolpa and related to Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar and Maoist leader Barsha Man Pun. Their children lived in Mansur's house in Kotbada, Rolpa during the war. But now, Mansur does not need to boast about his familial ties to the noted Pun couple – his daughter has earned a name for him, too.





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What the people think about

Two decades on, there is mostly disappointment in the cradle of the Maoist revolution

SEULKI LEE
IN ROLPA

Grade 10 student Taman Khadka of Gauri Shankar Secondary School of Thulo Namja village was not even born when the Maoist war started near here in February 1996.

He only knows the date 13 February 1996 from memorising it for his school's general knowledge quiz.

"My parents sometimes talk about the battles, but I can't follow their conversation," Khadka, now 16, tells us. His classmate, Begum Gharti Magar, pipes in: "I don't want to know about the war, I am afraid of death."

Both are now preparing for their SLC exams, which were delayed due to the earthquake. The students don't seem to be very curious about the conflict, and know about the Maoists from their history books only



as a political party, and not their violent past.

Rolpa was the cradle of the Maoist revolution in the mid-1990s, and became their 'base area' for the next decade where they experimented with setting up communes, farming cooperatives and revolutionary education in some schools.

The barbed wires have long been removed from the district capital of Libang, and the bazaar is bustling with activity, especially around the IME office where families come to receive cash from migrant workers in the Gulf. Remittances have now replaced agriculture as the mainstay of the economy here.

Shiva Prasad KC was a student of Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara, who introduced him to the books of Nepali communist founder Mohan Bikram Singh in school in Libang. He was arrested and tortured by the police several times.

"They abolished the monarchy, but they failed to deliver



development," Shiva Prasad said, "ten years of armed struggle was not enough to bring about real change in society."

The victims of Maoist violence, however, say that the use of violence was wrong and counter-productive. Gaumati Gharti Magar's husband was a construction worker who was

shot and killed a few months after the start of the conflict in August 1996. Her daughter Sarita was also injured in the incident and hasn't been able to complete her education.

"They killed a lot of people, but didn't change anything in Rolpa," Magar said in her rented room in Libang.

Some NC supporters who were targeted by the Maoists formed a resistance movement, and Srikumari Roka Magar was a member. Her father was killed by the Maoists when she was 15, and said: "The Maoist slogans for equality were good, but killing people was wrong. Their words and action didn't match." 🇳🇵

The spark that lit the

The Maoist raid on Holeri on 13 February 1996 marked the beginning of the decade-long war



It was a cold dark night in the forest on 13 February 1996, as 35 hand-picked guerrillas gathered their gear to climb down the hill and raid the police station at Holeri of Rolpa district — launching the Maoist insurgency that would last ten years and result in the death of 17,000 Nepalis.

In the attacking Maoist unit were four women, among them Onsari Gharti Magar, now Speaker of Parliament, and Jayapuri Gharti, former minister. Also in the group was Dipendra Pun (*pic, above*), who was 25 at the time.

"It was the first attack of our armed revolution, the party entrusted us with the responsibility and we were highly disciplined," Pun recounted, "but we were so nervous we initially lost our way in the forest."

Twenty years later, Pun is a central committee member of the UCPN-M and remembers

the idealism of young guerrillas like him who were proud to be selected for the mission. They had just one rifle, 15 home-made guns and some explosives.

The attackers had camped in the forest of Gadilekh for three days before D-Day. They had been trained and selected on the basis of physical fitness and courage by Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) who was then Maoist chief of western Nepal and went on to become Defence Minister in the first elected Maoist government in 2008.

Dipendra Pun and the 34 attackers encircled the police station just before midnight, and reminded themselves of Prachanda's instruction not to kill any police, just capture their weapons.

The Maoists first seized all the radios and then locked up the policemen. There was firefight, and the police soon ran out of bullets for their .303 rifles. But



contrary to reports at the time, no one was killed, and they could not capture any of the rifles.

By 4AM they had retreated back to their forest camp at Gadilekh, and from there to their bases in Rolpa, Dang, and Bardia. That night the Maoists made simultaneous raids on police stations in Gorkha, Kavre, Rukum and Sindhuli. Holeri had been chosen because of its strategic location connecting Dang to the Maoist base area of Rolpa.

"At that time we were not very sure we would win the war, and we didn't know how long would last, but we wanted to win," Pun told us in an interview this week.

School teacher Dirgha Bahadur Khadka, 64, has nothing but horrifying memories of that first attack. His house is just 100m away from the old Holeri police post, and remembers thinking neighbours were shooting to scare away wild animals.

When the gunfire stopped

after 20 minutes, he went out to see what was happening and saw the police station on fire. Hiding inside his house, he heard the guerrillas shouting victory slogans: "Long live the Maoist revolution."

Throughout the next 10 years of conflict, Khadka and his neighbours fed Maoist guerrillas and gave them shelter. "Today, there is peace but we are upset and disappointed about the Maoists," Khadka said.

the 'People's War'



ALL PICS: SEUKI LEE

LIFE IN LIBANG: (left to right) Grade 10 students of Gauri Shankar Secondary School of Thulo Namja Village in Rolpa know about the Maoists from their history books only as a political party, and not their violent past.

Shiva Prasad KC was a student of Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara. He was arrested and tortured by the police several times during the war.

Gaumati Gharti Magar's husband was killed by the Maoists few months after the start of the conflict. Her daughter also sustained injuries in the incident and couldn't complete her education.

nepalitimes.com
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Gallery



Turning 20

Ashish Mishra is 20, and was born on 11 February 1996, two days before the Maoists launched their war in Rolpa. Although he grew up in Kathmandu, Mishra (*pic, above*) witnessed the violence first hand during a trip to the Tarai. He was eight at the time and on a bus to Mahottari that came to a screeching halt on the highway. They heard a loud explosion, and the bus in front of them turned into a fireball.

"I knew the Maoists did bad things but seeing violence first hand was different," Mishra recalls, "after that I was suspicious of everyone."

Ten years since the end of the conflict, Mishra and his friends still talk about the war and remember it as a dark time in Nepal's history. Mishra empathises with the need for social justice, but strongly opposes the use of violence by the rebels.

Now that the party that championed the people's cause has split into five factions, led by discredited former revolutionaries, Mishra asks: "All those dead and for what?" A first-year student of Media Studies at Kathmandu University, Mishra wants to become a journalist and cover foreign affairs and diplomacy.

Management student Binod Dangi (*pic, top*) was born a month after the war began in Rolpa's Holeri. He remembers a different Libang while growing up: barbed wires, security checks and curfews at night.

His family warned him about playing with strange objects and staying out too late. "Back then, the atmosphere was different. No one came out of the house early in the morning and no one stayed out once it was dark," recalls Dangi, who wore his student ID all the time so he wouldn't be mistaken for a guerrilla.

Dangi's mother had to walk all the way to Sulichaur to buy salt and rice after the Maoists blockaded Libang. His father, a teacher, was abducted by the Maoists on suspicions of being a spy, and later freed.

One day, when Dangi was in Grade 1 and walking home from school, some of his classmates came across a metal object wrapped in white cloth. Dangi suspected it might be a booby trap bomb, and pulled his friend away. It went off a minute later. *Sahina Shrestha*

revolution



Maoist activist Shiva Prasad KC of Namja village in Rolpa was 18 when he joined the Maoist party one month before the Holeri attack. He remembers being proud and happy when he heard about the attack over the radio. But KC withdrew his party membership in 2008 after feeling let down by the leadership.

Karna Batha Magar of the RPP was the elected VDC chairman of Gairigaun of Rolpa in 1996. He had been working to develop his village for three years when the conflict started, and believes the revolution set the country back.

"They didn't allow us to go to office, they stopped all development activities and established their own government," recalls Magar, who won the 1994 local election in Libang.

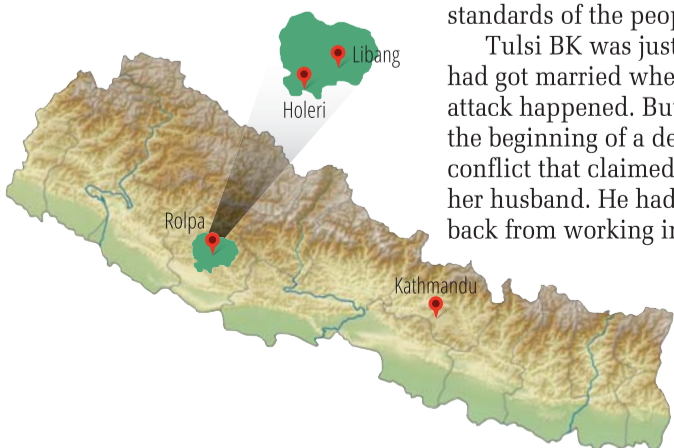
Magar now heads a community-based organisation and left politics for good, but says he is still working to lift the living standards of the people of Rolpa.

Tulsi BK was just 15 and had got married when the Holeri attack happened. But it marked the beginning of a decade-long conflict that claimed the life of her husband. He had just come back from working in India when

police shot him dead for shaking the hand of a local Maoist.

BK feels abandoned, and feels the sacrifice of people like her husband have been in vain. She says ruefully: "I don't believe anyone. All the parties are selfish and working for their own sake."

The Holeri police station has now been rebuilt, and inspector Ramesh Panthi, 50, says the Maoists had legitimate demands, and they could have achieved them peacefully. "There was no need to kill so many people," said Panthi, "the real reason for the revolution was the lack of education and jobs." *Seulki Lee*



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