Final image

On 12 May 2015 a US Marine Corps rescue helicopter disappeared soon after taking off from Singatari in Dolakha for Kathmandu. On board were six American Marines, two Nepal Army soldiers and five civilians injured in the 7.8M aftershock that struck the region.

Bishal Shivakoti had assisted his wounded son, Santari, and also helped get four others — whom he had rescued from the rubble of collapsed buildings — into the helicopter just before it flew out at 3pm. Later, Bishal heard on the radio that an American helicopter was missing, but there were several rescue flights that day, and he did not think it was the one with his son in it.

The wreckage of the helicopter was found three days later at 3.30am. It had struck the mountain in cloud five minutes after take-off. The 13 bodies had to be identified using DNA tissue samples.

Rescuers also found a camera at the crash site. It belonged to Marine photographer Sara A Medina, 23.

They downloaded the photographs Medina had shot of the rescue in Singatari. The final image is that of a group of people looking shocked and anxious, and among them standing at left, above is Bishal. He is wearing a ‘I Love Nepal’ t-shirt, hands and feet covered in dust from digging people out of buildings that had collapsed.

One year later in Singatari, when Bishal, was shown this picture he recognised himself, his neighbours and relatives. When told the photograph was the last one taken by a American who died in the crash, Bishal clutched his hair with both hands, took a deep breath with his head down, and said, “Oh my god.”

When he looked up, he had tears in his eyes.

By DIPENDRA BHANDARI

Read full story page 14-15

LONG WAY TO THE PROMISED LAND

An increasing number of Nepalis risk their lives and fortunes to sneak into the USA, flying to Brazil and making a long and treacherous land journey across Central America

By AYESHA SHAKYA

Page 8-9

Atlanta joins our U.S. network

Make new friends at one of the world’s largest aquariums, or travel back in time and immerse yourself in the city’s rich history.

For more information and to book your tickets please:

- Visit qatarairways.com/us
- Call us on +974 4444967
- Contact your preferred travel agent

Some are limited and subject to availability.

Terms and conditions apply.

qatarairways.com/gus
Prime Minister Oli is looking more and more like a man just trying to buy time for his political survival. He came to power with an ambitious game plan of reviving the economy, putting relations with neighbours on an even keel, and resolving the Madhes crisis. Eight months into his term, he seems to have settled for just one objective: not being overthrown.

After having stemmed a coup attempt last month by his own coalition comrade Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the opposition Nepali Congress, he is going all out to prolong his tenure in office so he can go down in history as being the leader who stood up to India. He is also mindful that he is living on borrowed time in terms of his personal health. With nothing left to lose, Oli is stoking New Delhi’s paranoia about China, knowing full well how Indians get rattled even as talking heads work themselves into a frenzy on television over ‘Chinese inroads’.

Leaders can fool some of the people some of the time, but they cannot fool all of them all the time. Oli is playing the nationalism card to the hilt, but that stratagem has a limited shelf life. The Chinese will go only go so far in provoking the Indians, as we saw during the Blockade. And for Nepal there is no option but to come to terms with our southern neighbour’s insecurities.

Oli is also walking a tight rope between rival power centres in New Delhi — balancing and taking advantage of conflicting signals coming from BJP-RSS politicians and the intelligence bureaucracy over Nepal policy. Even since Prithvi Narayan Shah compared Nepal to a yam between two boulders, the conventional wisdom has been that we are squeezed between the two giants, to the north and south. We may have to try and reverse this catastrophic phenomenon. Even so, there is a tendency in Kathmandu to read too much into Indian micromanagement of our polity. Certain things are for us to resolve, and in this we find the Oli administration deliberately lurching and uncertain when it comes to addressing Madhesi demands on amendments to the constitution and moving ahead. This obduracy is prolonging instability, escalating the Indo-Nepal Cold War with great opportunity cost to this stalemate.

Half the problem faced by the Madhesi is how they are perceived. That the people of the plains are treated as second-class citizens, locked down upon, discriminated against and called ‘Indians’ by the hill folk. Successive governments in Kathmandu have not done much to redress these notions, and the current rulers are no different. The Indian Blockade has, in fact, further embedded the mistrust.

The other half consists of demands for changes in the constitution so there is democratic proportionality in representation of Madhesis in the Upper House, for boundaries of future provinces, and for the removal of discriminatory provisions in citizenship. The clause about citizenship of children of Nepali mothers is directly related to Kathmandu’s irrational phobia of cross-border marriages and the spectre of ‘Indians’ occupying positions of political power.

Given the growing gap between hills and plains and the radicalisation of Madhesi youth, it is the responsibility of the national government in Kathmandu to be proactive in defusing the crisis — first with confidence-building measures and then subsequently engaging in meaningful talks. Certain attempts to address Madhesi demands while they are still do-able.

This is now a nation divided, and delay tactics can no longer work. The longer the stalemate drags on, the higher the chances of extremists and the religious right setting the agenda. Prime Minister Oli is draging his feet, using specious arguments about China to impose a condition so he does not have to take the bull by the horns. He would be well-advised not to tarry, lest he suddenly find that his time has run out.

Eight months into his term, Prime Minister Oli seems to have settled for just one objective: not being overthrown.
Special Student Offer

Luggage allowance upto 23 kg
3 PCS
for USA

Luggage allowance upto 40 kg
40 kg
for EUROPE

-starting from-
33,000 NPR

Ticketing Period:
11 May - Open

Travelling Period:
11 May - Open

Terms and conditions apply. Taxes are not included. Flights may vary depending on availability or departing/arriving destination. For further details please contact Turkish Airlines Inc. Eastern 1st Floor, Hiti Sadan, 495 Narayan Hiti Path, Kathmandu, Nepal | ph 977-1-4438365/4438435/4438856 e-mail: KTMSALES@TSH.COM

WIDEN YOUR WORLD
TURKISH AIRLINES
Spreading wings wider

The time is right for Nepal Airlines to increase capacity by adding bigger jets

There is a mood of cautious optimism at Nepal Airlines after Finance Minister Bhuban Pradhan announced in his budget speech on 28 May that the government is setting aside the money required for the purchase of two new wide-body aircraft.

If the state-owned airline goes ahead with the planned acquisition, possibly of Airbus A330-200 jets, the $460 million deal would be the largest ever in Nepal’s aviation history. The long-range version of the plane is capable of flying to Europe and Japan non-stop from Kathmandu with up to 250 passengers.

“We need the larger planes to remain competitive on our Asian routes, to restart direct flights to Europe, and to meet the growing volume of Nepalis and tourists flying to and from Kathmandu,” Nepal Airlines CEO Sugat Kansakar told us this week.

While the long-term prospects for Nepal Airlines look good, it needs urgently to upgrade a bloated management, streamline international operations, and decide on its domestic fleet. The airline also faces heavy criticism for its poor ground-handling services at Kathmandu airport, especially slow baggage delivery.

But the airline has seen a turnaround since adding two Airbus A320s to its fleet. Punctuality and reliability of flights improved and passenger volumes increased by 36 per cent this year. However, Nepal’s own national airline is still number 5 after Qatar Airways, Jet Airways, Air Asia and Fly Dubai in terms of on-time performance.

Says Capt Surendra Rijal who flies the airline’s new Airbus, “After one year of successful operation of 320s we now have the experience to upgrade to widebodies.”

The biggest challenge now is a severe shortage of pilots. Twice in the past month, while both Airbus A320s sat on the tarmac at Kathmandu airport, fully-booked flights to Hong Kong and Bangkok were scrubbed because the crew had reached maximum flying hours per week.

Half of the Boeing 757 pilots who had gone to Toronto for conversion training to 737s failed simulator tests, so the airline has only 9 captains and 13 co-pilots for 320s even though it needs at least 30 pilots. Airbush is providing two instructors for three months to clear remaining pilots, but the shortage will remain if there is crew layover on Doha and Kuala Lumpur routes.

The other quick way to induct new crew would be to entice with salaries and perks Nepali pilots flying 320s abroad. Senior captains in Nepal Airlines are paid only $1,500 per month plus allowances, whereas pilots with similar hours can earn more than $16,000 a month in an international airline.

“The only reason I stay with Nepal Airlines is because I see great growth potential, and because there is nothing like flying your country’s flag,” says Capt Vijay Lama who heads international operations at Nepal Airlines.

Nepal Airlines can have a captive market of 4 million Nepalis now working in Malaysia, the Gulf, Korea and Japan if it can increase capacity. Inducting 320s would also make the state airline able to compete with carriers that use widebodies on lucrative high-volume routes like Bangkok, Hong Kong and Doha, and restart services to Narita and Cutmore.

The airline management wants to sell off one of its two ageing 757s even though it has very low resale value. The planes were bought in 1987 and consume 30 per cent more fuel per passenger mile than the 320s, and at present both Boeing is grounded for maintenance.

“Having Borings and Airbushes in the same company almost makes it look like we are running two airlines, the 757s are just too old and expensive to fly,” says Kansakar.

One proposal is to use the remaining 757, which is a Comb model with a forward hatch, for air cargo service since operating costs would be much lower than for passenger flights. Nepal Airlines has only six per cent market share of the $10 billion air cargo market, and keeping one 757 would also mean that senior Boeing captains would not lose their jobs.

Kumud Gaut

HELICOPTER SALES SOAR

As a result of the logistical bottleneck in relief efforts after last year’s earthquake, the Nepali Army is further upgrading its fleet with three new helicopters.

The Army added two Russian Mi-17 helicopters after the earthquake and now has three of this type, but its assortment of smaller helicopters comprises five different types and is difficult to maintain and operate.

Another issue from the earthquake was that because the Army did not have its own lift capacity, it had to depend on foreign military helicopters, raising geopolitical sensitiveness when Indian, Air Force and US Marines choppers strayed too close to the Chinese border.

“It became really difficult for us to keep all sides happy,” admits one Army official. “If we had enough helicopters of our own we wouldn’t have been as exposed to such pressure.”

Currently the Army has three Mi-17s, two Mi-20s, one Anouette, two AS350 Ecureuils and two Super Pumas. It also has Lances, Cheetahs, and AH-1Js acquired during the war, which are all grounded.

The Army is now looking at buying either the Bell 412 or AgustaWestland to replace the ageing VVIP Super Puma and two AS350 B3s. While the AS550s are proven in Nepal, especially for high-altitude rescue, the front runner is said to be the Bell 412 which conducted test flights at Mt Everest Base Camp and Jomsom last week.

“They were the most unique flights in my life, they were just wow!” said Bell test pilot Brent Berwick (photographed in Jomsom, above who flew the 412 with Nepal helicopter pilots up to an altitude of 6,400m in the Khumbu and Annapurna areas. “I was really impressed with the outstanding airmanship of the Nepali pilots.”

The 412 made landings and take-offs at Phortse and climbed above Mt Everest Base Camp, as well as carried out ridge landings in the Kali Gandaki Valley.

Berwick says the 412 has a niche because of its versatility, fuel economy and lift capacity.

“It is a helicopter that goes to work every day with minimum ground time, there is nothing fragile about it. It’s a workhorse,” says Shirish Garadpa, a former Indian Air Force pilot who now sells Bell in South Asia.

Nepal pilot Siddhartha Gurung of Simrik Air also got to test fly the 412 and said that although it lacked the high-altitude capability of the AS350 B3, it handled well, and could be useful in rescue and relief operations because it can carry three stretchers and 14 passengers.

Simrik has ordered one Bell 407, scheduled for delivery in July, and wants to use it for high-end tourist flights. Even though its list price is higher than for the 412, it has half the fuel burn.

Says Rajendra Baburaj Singh of Simrik, which now represents Bell in Nepal: “The 407 and 412 test flights proved that Nepal offers ideal terrain to showcase the ruggedness and performance of new aircraft. Nepal’s great asset is that it can be an aviation proving area.”

Reporting by Ramoren Bowata
What about whataboutery?
Identity politics is a divisive ideology that has outlived its usefulness.

The most significant and lasting impact of the Maoist war in Nepal is the politicisation of ethnicity. If you are a Madhesi, you are automatically expected to align with Madhesi leaders whether you agree with them or not. As a Janajati woman, I am frequently criticised for resisting identity politics.

Any discussion on the politics of identity must address its underlying assumptions. There is a tendency to generalise that Nepal’s ethnic groups are a single, homogenous mass faced with similar problems, needs and goals. This essentialism assumes an ahistorical, universal unity among members based on a generalised notion of ethnic subordination. The Madhesi identity, for instance, is projected as homogenous, and any attempt to highlight existing differences within the community is met with accusations of whataboutery.

Blinity is ascribed as the singular identity of Madhesi individuals over and above anything else, completely bypassing social class. In reality, Madhesi are themselves a socio-economically diverse community. It is only by understanding the diversity within various structures of inequality that effective political action can be devised. But identity politics thrives on a dichotomous and binary definition of power: either you have it or you don’t.

This creates stereotypes. Khas Pahades are oppressors, Madhesis are the oppressed. Even the meaning of the word ‘slite’ is distorted to exclusively and reductively apply to the Khas Pahade community. Are all Khas Pahades better off than Madhesis? Are all Madhesis removed from positions of power in Nepal?

Class hierarchy has now been subsumed by ethnicity, increasing the risk of class exclusion. It is not just the working class from the’oppressed’ Madhesi community but also from the ‘oppressive’ Khas Pahade community that are excluded in the process. This kind of exclusion, rather than building the basis for equality, only serves to reproduce existing relations of inequality. Who is more vulnerable: a middle-class person from an ethnic community or a Khas Pahade from the working class?

What started as the politics of inclusion has now been reduced to building an exclusionary culture. The fragmenting tendency of identity politics is both socially and politically dangerous — it is in virtual space or in real life. Rivalry and hostility, and racist abuse are the norm.

Proponents of identity politics say state-led discrimination against ethnic minorities makes it necessary to form a broad coalition based on ethnicity.

There is no question that ethnic minorities and Dalits were disadvantaged by the imposition of Hindu nation-state ideology during the Panchayat era. Post-1990, the state’s identity-blind approach failed to accommodate the concerns of the socially marginalised. Additionally, the disproportionate representation of Bahuns and Chhetris in top positions in the bureaucracy, judiciary and politics was a direct result of the state’s neglect of marginalized communities. The state operated on the assumption that all citizens — irrespective of their social location — had equal access to state resources. Despite introducing progressive laws, enforcement was seriously lacking and there were plenty of loopholes, allowing continued marginalisation.

After a prolonged political stalemate, the new constitution of Nepal has emerged as a progressive document that institutionalised republicanism and federalism while arranging fundamental rights for those left out. It has its flaws. The citizenship law is a disgraceful blot but even here it can be amended, with persistent pressure, to have equal gender rights.

There are now two important questions. When identity is used as a political claim, what is the change desired? Is it the ‘condition’ of ethnic groups we want to improve or the ‘structural barriers’ stacked against them that we want overthrown? This can be addressed either by inclusive or transformative strategies, though they may not be mutually exclusive.

An inclusive strategy would aim to improve the ‘condition’ of ethnic communities by bringing them into existing structures of governance. Nepal’s new constitution is categorically for inclusion of the marginalised. It would, however, be foolish to think that inclusive policies alone are sufficient to advance equality — those need structural changes for egalitarianism.

Transformative strategies are needed to remove the structural barriers arising from social norms, cultural stereotypes, and power and privilege in state structures that foster inequality. Redistributive policies in education, health, and employment are necessary to dismantle structural inequality. Interaction between class, ethnicity and gender in determining individuals’ lives should remain central to our understanding of the kind of change we want.

But it is meaningless to latch on to a divisive ideology that has outlived its usefulness. Instead of being bandhanimadanta to communal politicians for whom the national interest is secondary, Nepali intellectuals should gather the courage to condemn the politicisation of ethnicity. If we desire a truly just society, emphasis on ethnic identity alone is likely to be ineffective unless it is accompanied by economic change.
Fear and loathing

A parallel power centre is pushing the country towards a finish line that will finish us

Last week, the physician-crusader Govinda KC wrote an op-ed in Kantipur, later translated into English and published in the online edition of this newspaper (shorter version on page 3) and also in Saptapadi, on corruption in Nepal’s medical sector.

The good doctor discussed how the health ‘industry’ and the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) work hand in glove. The country’s governance structure and institutions are in a downward spiral due to corruption, but centralised parallel power in the unelected and unaccountable body to curb corruption has weakened our scope for growth and progress.

When the CIAA was established by the 1990 constitution, there was public enthusiasm that it might provide the extra check and balance needed to force leaders and civil servants to be accountable. Under the leadership of Suranash Upreti, the CIAA seemed to be living up to its promise. But by the time his stint came to a close, the public was already awash with scepticism.

When it started investigating and implicating only Nepali Congress leaders, it became glaringly obvious that leaders of the other political parties, the UML in particular, were being spared. It was evident that the CIAA was not going to be able to distance itself from the graft it was set up to curb. Its ability to work independently, and more importantly in the interest of the people, was thwarted from the early days of its establishment because political parties were never able to agree on its membership.

But the real danger the CIAA posed to Nepal’s democracy emerged in 2013 with the appointment of its new head. There was a small group of protestors, and for too much apathy from most else. It was no longer about party vendetta, and the scope for hunting narrowed to the individual and his posse. The menace arose suddenly and has since worked relentlessly to shatter the principles of a free and democratic society.

Since the CIAA’s chief took the throne, the country’s downward spiral that Govinda KC so aptly described has dangerously shifted gears and we are now collectively racing towards a finish line that may finish us.

People do realise what is happening, but there is fear everywhere. Bureaucrats are so afraid of the CIAA that they do not even perform wedding ceremonies for their sons and daughters. In January when the CIAA took over the Tribhuvan International Airport, bureaucrats were so fearful of being targeted that they took months off. The word in the street was that the corruption watchdog’s interest in the airport had more to do with personal imports... I mean interests.

As the rule of law is overtly undermined, few lawyers dare speak out. Journalists know, perhaps more than most, and yet remain quiet. How can they write and speak of what they know? tomorrow, their family members may be investigated for amassing disproportionate assets. And if they can’t find proof, they’ll cite a shoe purchase 10 years ago that doesn’t have a VAT bill.

The nexus between the political, bureaucratic and business elite has never been so unbridled. When the three pillars of society work hand in glove in a wicked cult, and the kingmaker of them all holds the only body that could potentially hold them to account, the damage is near irreparable.

That is what hampers development and progress in real, implicit and tangible terms. The nexus even breeds a dangerous mentality among young professionals. Forget about being a doctor, engineer or entrepreneur, the only way to get ahead in this country is by membership in this greedy cult of power brokers where there is only one rule: profit, by any means necessary.
NARRATING NEPAL

Rendezvous with director of critically acclaimed movie Kalo Potti

SMRITI BASNET

M
to Bahadar Bham remembers refusing, as a school student in Myagdi district, to join the Maoist army but recalls most of his classmates abandoning their homes to enlist. With many youths leaving, shops forced to shut down and police patrolling the area every night, life in the village got increasingly dangerous. Twenty years later, having found refuge in the realm of cinema Bham (above) revisits the past and gives the world a rare glimpse into his life’s journey. “That was the reality of our society then. This movie is my way of releasing all those pent-up emotions,” said Bham, whose directorial debut Kalo Potti has gained wide acclaim in Nepal since its release last week.

Set in 2001 in a war-torn village in Rara, the story is about two friends, Prakash and Kiran. The plot unfolds as they embark on a quest to find Karishma, the love gifted by Prakash’s sister who later joins the Maoist army. The movie skillfully explores the intricate relationship between two boys from contrasting social backgrounds, which Bham contextualises within a narrative of the political situation in the country. It makes for a compelling and heart-breaking story of camaraderie and loss.

The story is one close to Bham’s heart. The characters, with their vivid and memorable characters, has been sketched from his personal experiences. Recollecting his childhood days, he revealed how—like in the movie—his friendship with another boy in his village, which played a pivotal part in his life, was despised because of their differing cultures. “His father always pushed us both to excel in our studies because he felt guilty for not completing his,” said Bham, who in the movie also tackles themes such as caste, religion and education.

While unique, the story has a distinctly local appeal. Although set in a far-away village in Nepal, everyone can relate to it because the tale itself, of friendship and tragedy, is universal,” said the film’s German producer Anna Kekcho, who also produced award-winning movies like Harmony Lessons (2011) and Zabazhirsikh Myung Bala (2012). Leveraging on natural sounds and utilising amateur actors, Bham succeeds in infusing the production with the real look and feel of his native region. It is this authenticity and realism that strikes a chord with the audience.

Kalo Potti won the Best Film (International Film Critics Week) award at the Venice Film Festival, and was nominated for Best Asian Feature Film at the Singapore International Film Festival and for the Grand Prix award at the Fribourg International Film Festival. Bham’s short film Bannal (2012) had been nominated for the Venice Horizons Youtube Award at the Venice Film Festival, but did not attract the same measure of popularity.

Nonetheless, getting to where he is today has been a struggle for the director, who ran away from home after completing his tenth grade. “I was scared my parents would force me to join their business or enter politics,” said the 32-year-old who put himself through film school and theatre after coming to Kathmandu. “The struggle as an artist continues throughout life, first you fight with the family, then with society and then sometimes even with yourself.”

While shooting the movie, Bham faced difficulties relating to accessibility of the location, obtaining permits, and also the sceptical and wary attitude of Rara’s local political leaders. “They were worried about what we were really trying to show,” he said.

Despite all the challenges, the positive response the movie has been getting is inspiring and motivating Bham to venture into new projects, particularly to share untold stories of Nepal. He hopes that the younger generation of film-makers will also reap the benefits of the movie’s triumph.

He explained: “If such movies are successful in attracting an audience and generating a profit, our pool of talented film-makers might be encouraged to pursue bold and innovative ideas.”

nepalitimes.com

in your lap or palm.

www.nepalitimes.com
LONG WAY TO THE PROMISES

AVESHA SHAKYA
IN SAN FRANCISCO

Sitting in a café near San Francisco’s bustling financial district, Kiran could easily be mistaken for a tourist enjoying a midday break from sightseeing. Instead, he had just clocked out from his day shift and is catching his breath before starting his next.

Kiran could also pass for one of the many Latin American migrant workers in California, the type that Donald Trump wants to deport if he wins the US presidential elections this autumn. And if Trump had his way, he would also build a wall along the Mexican border, sealing off America’s backdoor for undocumented migrants like Kiran.

“I was being constantly harassed by the Muslims for criticising them, and I felt there was no sense of freedom living in Nepal,” says Kiran, who also made the perilous journey through Central America to cross the border into the USA last year. “I used to fantasise about the American dream. I have now realised it is a struggle to survive here.”

Unlike other Nepalis who plan their journeys months in advance, mostly to gather the money needed to pay human traffickers, Kiran met a broker and decided to leave Nepal within two days, without informing his family. He had enough savings to pay the broker and fly out.

He boarded a flight to Bolivia which does not require visas from Nepalis, and then got off between flights while in transit in São Paulo.

“There are Nepali people smuggling from Brazil to Mexico who are part of an international trafficking network,” explains Aziz, another migrant who entered the USA illegally.

Traffickers tell migrants the journey can take up to two months and demand fees of Rs 2-4 million. The migrants have to cross 11 countries, working their way from São Paulo, Brazil, via Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico to the USA border (see map), which takes some of them six months to more than a year. The unlucky ones are trapped, driven by their own agents and left waiting in transit in Malaysia, Singapore, Qatar or Brazil.

“Between Colombia and Panama, we had to walk through thick jungle for 2-3 days without food, water or shelter,” recounts Kiran. “There was a Bangladeshi with us who nearly died. The smugglers never tell you how difficult it is.”

Apart from the difficulty in traversing tropical jungles to cross from one country to another, or taking flimsy boats at night in crocodile-infested waters, the migrants also have to negotiate criminal gangs. Aziz recalls how in Colombia a drug mafia gang tried to rob them. He says: “They wanted money, and were beating the Indians very badly. Surprisingly, they didn’t hurt us as we were right after the earthquake and they felt bad for us.”

With increasing numbers of South Asians joining Central Americans and Mexicans trying to enter the USA illegally, kidnapping for ransom has become a lucrative alternative for the drug mafia. Migrants are brought into Mexico in trucks which they are not allowed to leave for up to 30 hours. When they arrive in Mexico, they walk towards the various entry points along Mexico’s border with Texas, Arizona or California.

According to figures from the US Department of Homeland Security, Nepal is among the top 10 countries with pending immigration cases, and is trailing only behind China and India within Asia. The number of

Imitating nature

Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jaspandha Press, now makes nature’s colas come alive with its state-of-the-art equipment.
immigration arrests itself has more than tripled over the past decade, from 315 arrests in 2006 to 1,022 arrests in 2015. “The number of Nepalis entering the USA through Central America has been growing recently,” says Gopal Shah, an immigration attorney here who represents Nepalis. “If they are able to pass the immigration interview they are released on parole and can apply for asylum.”

Most of migrants claim to be from Rukum and Rolpa, and say their fear of persecution from the rebels back home is the main reason for applying for political asylum. Migrants are eligible for work permits after 150 days, and if their asylum cases are approved, they can apply for green cards after one year. However, with loans to repay and without sufficient skills and education, most migrants are left working in menial jobs with meagre salaries and share overcrowded one-bedroom apartments.

“I could not even cook when I was in Nepal but now I am a tandoori chef in an Indian restaurant here. Sometimes I think I could have stayed back in Nepal if I were to just become a chef,” says Hari, who met Anuj while in a detention facility and now call each other bhanja and mama.

After Donald Trump clinched the Republican nomination for the elections in November, Nepalis are anxious about his plans to get strict on migrants. “Most Nepalis, whose immigration cases and asylum appeal are still pending, are scared that stricter immigration laws will make it more difficult for them,” says Kiran.

While most of them agree they are happy with their decision to leave Nepal, the pain in leaving their loved ones behind is clearly evident on their faces. Anuj Skypes with his family back home in Nepal and says, “Nepal is actually heaven. No one knows us here, and we have no family. The most we have are our brothers who understand what we have gone through to reach this country.”

Names have been changed

This reporting was supported by a program with International Center for Journalists.
Bicycle talk
Talk about all things bicycle with enthusiasts from all over the Valley. Also, attend the screening of Klondike, a film tracing the history of mountain biking in the world. 10 June, 7.30pm, Gate City Network Nepal's Stonebridge. 9880525389 (regrets only). sj@bicyclenepal.org

Girls in technology.
Shre stories and get a chance to meet students, professionals and beginners in an event jointly organised by Girls in Technology and Humante Kathmandu. 12 June, 10.30am onwards. Malak, johnson@gmail.com 9849490000 Rs. 500 (including a Girls in Technology shirt)

Outer space.
Explore different aspects of outer space in a two-day photo exhibition with the support of theЌrugad dru. 10 and 11 June, 7.30am to 7.30pm, Mangalbaru, info@4kugaddruplus.org, rahostar@gmail.com

BAC Mela.
Local products, food items and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family in BAC’s monthly mela. 25 June, 1 to 10pm, BAC Art Cafe, Pulchowk, www.bacphotofestival.org

Basketball in wheelchairs.
Cheat six males and three female teams on as they participate in a wheelchair basketball league championship organized by ENCAGE, with the support of the Swiss Embassy and Turkish Airlines. 19 June, 8.30 to 10.30am, Compass School, Mahabharat Sarani, 9851277171, info@encagekathmandu@gmail.com or engenepro@gmail.com

The Little Prince.
The musical on Studio 7’s musical based on A. Esforz’s favourite novel The Little Prince. 27 May to 12 June, every Friday to Sunday, 7pm onwards, Thamel, 9841975194, Rs. 1000/500 (for students)

Heritage walk.
Follow the alleyways of Patan in a heritage walk organized by the Rustic Club of Kupondole and Know Your Heritage. 11 June, 9 am onwards, Mangalbaru, 9849593787, http://www.kowyhnepal.org

Hidden treasures.
An exhibition of photographs and portraits of the Kukus from the private collection of Kumala Lama. 11 June, 10am to 7pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Bisket Mahal, 9841806480/9445306

Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen.
A charming, rustic eatery, presenting the unique flavours of distinctive Bahini Muslim Food. Jhamarkot, 9841267272, 9841239522

Tara.
An excellent new Middle Eastern restaurant with a Syrian chef. Offers free draughts with every order. Don’t forget their shawarma! Pulchowk, 98451339, 9860863177

Voodoo.
The new home of Newari cuisine that also has a familiar continental menu for those who are not yet ready to experiment with Newari delicacies. 12 June, 8.30pm onwards, Jauhar Park, 984125222

Dechening.
The place to head to for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine. The pleasant and spacious garden is also ideal for big gatherings. Thamel, 9841279584

Phat Kath.
Offering Turkish food, a aperitive for takeaways, live tables and booths for tipples, tables and chairs, and a formidable hoo hoo soundtrack for everyone. Thamel, 984150497

Reggae sundown.
Tap to the beat of some reggae music with Nepali bands Cultivation and The mission as they bell out tunes of Cultivation’s upcoming debut album Playing, Hills and Mountains. 17 June, 6.30pm onwards, Jom条e, Jomthamel, 9841320007

The Mix Tapes Live.
Treat a musical evening with beer and wine and the The Mix Tapes band as it performs its members’ bucket list songs. 17 June, 8.30pm onwards, Sports High Bar & Lounge, Jomthamel, 9841230007

Gokarna Forest Resort.
A luxurious paradise that raises your breathing and encourages meditation, just a 20-minute drive away from Kathmandu. Gokarna, 984142712. info@gokarna.net

Club Himalaya.
With amusing views and refreshing weekend escapades, there is something here to suit everyone’s tastes. Rupandehi, 9841410452

Watch UEFA European Championships, 2016 matches live, with friends and food.
Kasumari Bar, Bhaktapur Cafe, Patan Bhikhu, 984123113, Sports High Bar & Lounge, Jomthamel, 9841230007
Irish Pub, Lajpat Nagar, 9841476742, Makar Bar, Jomthamel, 9851236362 (only opening match and quarter-final onwards)
Ratn Bar Stadium, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Baudhia, 9841495334

MISS MOTIVATION
KIRPA JOSHI
Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says...
A Palel concert in Nepalgunj in 2009 was readied. Ambar Gurung already looked frail, his voice fraying at the edges. At 73, he needed help to walk; there was still a distinct twinkle in his eyes. I remember he ended the concert with Naublakha Tara and it moved the audience into singing along for the famous line: ‘...Naublakha Tara hamal iti bhujdo chhatina parelo. (Look closely at us, we don’t have a dry eye).’ Indeed, in that packed hall, our eyes glistened with a strange mixture of sadness and pride.

Amber Gurung was brought to Nepal from Darjeeling in 1969 under King Mahendra’s campaign to support a vision of Nepali nationhood that transcended the boundaries of Nepal. Till the end — in a hospital bed in Kathmandu on Tuesday morning — Amber Gurung’s heart still beat with the same deep love for the Nepali nation that had stirred us with Naublakha Tara, and with the anthem of the new republic, Swayan Thangt.

The haunting words take us all back to an era of innocent national pride, of diasporic longing for the motherland. A time when life was simpler, and violence and discord had not torn apart the fabric of the country.

In Nepalgunj that night seven years ago, tears welled up when he spoke from the stage of youth and friends gone. He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief when young musicians broke into Shanti That’s ‘Samalera Rakha’ and other songs by Aruna Lama, the lyrics of which he had written 50 years prior to that.

Earlier that day, Amber Gurung had visited the People After War photo exhibition held by nepa-laya in Nepalgunj. Lingering near the photograph of a father being embraced by his daughter and son who had fought on opposite sides during the war, he said: ‘This was a war between siblings,’ and expressed the hope that he would one day work on a song dedicated to the reconciliation between Nepalis. But he had already done so: our new national anthem, in which he admired Byakul Mall’s lyrics with a folkish beat and a melody that evoked a strange sense of Nepali-ness.

Amber Gurung’s Ma Amber Han and Udali Lagda Patsa Puchhime... are about longing, forbidden and unrequited love. His voice broke when he sang them, and he stopped to let his student, Avas, sing the remaining stanzas.

As Avas sang Jaisi Kesh Timaile Pusakya, Amber Gurung closed his eyes and smiled at words written long ago — about the simple sight of a woman’s hair flying in the breeze — that had made him marvel at the joy of life: ‘Jindagi hema muskaraye...’ (‘Life is smiling’).

Kunda Dutta

At a Palel concert in
Nepalgunj in 2009

"...Naublakha Tara hamal iti bhujdo chhatina parelo. (Look closely at us, we don’t have a dry eye)."

Indeed, in that packed hall, our eyes glistened with a strange mixture of sadness and pride.

Amber Gurung was brought to Nepal from Darjeeling in 1969 under King Mahendra’s campaign to support a vision of Nepali nationhood that transcended the boundaries of Nepal. Till the end — in a hospital bed in Kathmandu on Tuesday morning — Amber Gurung’s heart still beat with the same deep love for the Nepali nation that had stirred us with Naublakha Tara, and with the anthem of the new republic, Swayan Thangt.

The haunting words take us all back to an era of innocent national pride, of diasporic longing for the motherland. A time when life was simpler, and violence and discord had not torn apart the fabric of the country.

In Nepalgunj that night seven years ago, tears welled up when he spoke from the stage of youth and friends gone. He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief when young musicians broke into Shanti That’s ‘Samalera Rakha’ and other songs by Aruna Lama, the lyrics of which he had written 50 years prior to that.

Earlier that day, Amber Gurung had visited the People After War photo exhibition held by nepa-laya in Nepalgunj. Lingering near the photograph of a father being embraced by his daughter and son who had fought on opposite sides during the war, he said: ‘This was a war between siblings,’ and expressed the hope that he would one day work on a song dedicated to the reconciliation between Nepalis. But he had already done so: our new national anthem, in which he admired Byakul Mall’s lyrics with a folkish beat and a melody that evoked a strange sense of Nepali-ness.

Amber Gurung’s Ma Amber Han and Udali Lagda Patsa Puchhime... are about longing, forbidden and unrequited love. His voice broke when he sang them, and he stopped to let his student, Avas, sing the remaining stanzas.

As Avas sang Jaisi Kesh Timaile Pusakya, Amber Gurung closed his eyes and smiled at words written long ago — about the simple sight of a woman’s hair flying in the breeze — that had made him marvel at the joy of life: ‘Jindagi hema muskaraye...’ (‘Life is smiling’).

Kunda Dutta

At a Palel concert in
Nepalgunj in 2009

"...Naublakha Tara hamal iti bhujdo chhatina parelo. (Look closely at us, we don’t have a dry eye)."

Indeed, in that packed hall, our eyes glistened with a strange mixture of sadness and pride.

Amber Gurung was brought to Nepal from Darjeeling in 1969 under King Mahendra’s campaign to support a vision of Nepali nationhood that transcended the boundaries of Nepal. Till the end — in a hospital bed in Kathmandu on Tuesday morning — Amber Gurung’s heart still beat with the same deep love for the Nepali nation that had stirred us with Naublakha Tara, and with the anthem of the new republic, Swayan Thangt.

The haunting words take us all back to an era of innocent national pride, of diasporic longing for the motherland. A time when life was simpler, and violence and discord had not torn apart the fabric of the country.

In Nepalgunj that night seven years ago, tears welled up when he spoke from the stage of youth and friends gone. He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief when young musicians broke into Shanti That’s ‘Samalera Rakha’ and other songs by Aruna Lama, the lyrics of which he had written 50 years prior to that.

Earlier that day, Amber Gurung had visited the People After War photo exhibition held by nepa-laya in Nepalgunj. Lingering near the photograph of a father being embraced by his daughter and son who had fought on opposite sides during the war, he said: ‘This was a war between siblings,’ and expressed the hope that he would one day work on a song dedicated to the reconciliation between Nepalis. But he had already done so: our new national anthem, in which he admired Byakul Mall’s lyrics with a folkish beat and a melody that evoked a strange sense of Nepali-ness.

Amber Gurung’s Ma Amber Han and Udali Lagda Patsa Puchhime... are about longing, forbidden and unrequited love. His voice broke when he sang them, and he stopped to let his student, Avas, sing the remaining stanzas.

As Avas sang Jaisi Kesh Timaile Pusakya, Amber Gurung closed his eyes and smiled at words written long ago — about the simple sight of a woman’s hair flying in the breeze — that had made him marvel at the joy of life: ‘Jindagi hema muskaraye...’ (‘Life is smiling’).

Kunda Dutta

At a Palel concert in
Nepalgunj in 2009

"...Naublakha Tara hamal iti bhujdo chhatina parelo. (Look closely at us, we don’t have a dry eye)."

Indeed, in that packed hall, our eyes glistened with a strange mixture of sadness and pride.

Amber Gurung was brought to Nepal from Darjeeling in 1969 under King Mahendra’s campaign to support a vision of Nepali nationhood that transcended the boundaries of Nepal. Till the end — in a hospital bed in Kathmandu on Tuesday morning — Amber Gurung’s heart still beat with the same deep love for the Nepali nation that had stirred us with Naublakha Tara, and with the anthem of the new republic, Swayan Thangt.

The haunting words take us all back to an era of innocent national pride, of diasporic longing for the motherland. A time when life was simpler, and violence and discord had not torn apart the fabric of the country.

In Nepalgunj that night seven years ago, tears welled up when he spoke from the stage of youth and friends gone. He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief when young musicians broke into Shanti That’s ‘Samalera Rakha’ and other songs by Aruna Lama, the lyrics of which he had written 50 years prior to that.

Earlier that day, Amber Gurung had visited the People After War photo exhibition held by nepa-laya in Nepalgunj. Lingering near the photograph of a father being embraced by his daughter and son who had fought on opposite sides during the war, he said: ‘This was a war between siblings,’ and expressed the hope that he would one day work on a song dedicated to the reconciliation between Nepalis. But he had already done so: our new national anthem, in which he admired Byakul Mall’s lyrics with a folkish beat and a melody that evoked a strange sense of Nepali-ness.

Amber Gurung’s Ma Amber Han and Udali Lagda Patsa Puchhime... are about longing, forbidden and unrequited love. His voice broke when he sang them, and he stopped to let his student, Avas, sing the remaining stanzas.

As Avas sang Jaisi Kesh Timaile Pusakya, Amber Gurung closed his eyes and smiled at words written long ago — about the simple sight of a woman’s hair flying in the breeze — that had made him marvel at the joy of life: ‘Jindagi hema muskaraye...’ (‘Life is smiling’).

Kunda Dutta

At a Palel concert in
Nepalgunj in 2009

"...Naublakha Tara hamal iti bhujdo chhatina parelo. (Look closely at us, we don’t have a dry eye)."

Indeed, in that packed hall, our eyes glistened with a strange mixture of sadness and pride.

Amber Gurung was brought to Nepal from Darjeeling in 1969 under King Mahendra’s campaign to support a vision of Nepali nationhood that transcended the boundaries of Nepal. Till the end — in a hospital bed in Kathmandu on Tuesday morning — Amber Gurung’s heart still beat with the same deep love for the Nepali nation that had stirred us with Naublakha Tara, and with the anthem of the new republic, Swayan Thangt.

The haunting words take us all back to an era of innocent national pride, of diasporic longing for the motherland. A time when life was simpler, and violence and discord had not torn apart the fabric of the country.

In Nepalgunj that night seven years ago, tears welled up when he spoke from the stage of youth and friends gone. He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief when young musicians broke into Shanti That’s ‘Samalera Rakha’ and other songs by Aruna Lama, the lyrics of which he had written 50 years prior to that.

Earlier that day, Amber Gurung had visited the People After War photo exhibition held by nepa-laya in Nepalgunj. Lingering near the photograph of a father being embraced by his daughter and son who had fought on opposite sides during the war, he said: ‘This was a war between siblings,’ and expressed the hope that he would one day work on a song dedicated to the reconciliation between Nepalis. But he had already done so: our new national anthem, in which he admired Byakul Mall’s lyrics with a folkish beat and a melody that evoked a strange sense of Nepali-ness.

Amber Gurung’s Ma Amber Han and Udali Lagda Patsa Puchhime... are about longing, forbidden and unrequited love. His voice broke when he sang them, and he stopped to let his student, Avas, sing the remaining stanzas.

As Avas sang Jaisi Kesh Timaile Pusakya, Amber Gurung closed his eyes and smiled at words written long ago — about the simple sight of a woman’s hair flying in the breeze — that had made him marvel at the joy of life: ‘Jindagi hema muskaraye...’ (‘Life is smiling’).

Kunda Dutta
The Night Manager, the new six-part BBC adaptation of John le Carré’s novel from 1993 by the same name, is as good as it gets, with an unusually high production value, stunning settings across the globe, a dream cast, and a tightly wound story, dealing with the ugly business of illegally selling arms, that has been adapted to be wholly relevant to current-day politics.

The plot begins simply enough in Cairo with the introduction of the enigmatic, handsome Jonathan Pine (played by Tom Hiddleston), a night manager at the swanky Nefertiti Hotel. Things are set in motion when Jonathan becomes inadvertently involved with the ill-used, courageous Sophie Alekan (Auré Atika), mistress of Freddie Hamid (David Avery), scion of one of the most powerful, corrupt families in Cairo and very much in cahoots with Richard Roper (played brilliantly by the great Hugh Laurie), a ruthless, but charming and sophisticated villain who is involved in selling illegal arms across the troubled region.

Sophie, knowing that her days as Freddie’s mistress are numbered (she fears death, not replacement), asks Jonathan to hold some documents for her and release them to the authorities if she were to disappear.

When Jonathan discovers that the papers are inventories of smuggled arms he hands them over, sealing Sophie’s fate, and enacting that his own carefully built’s preserved equilibrium is upset—albeit in ways he never imagined.

Jonathan and Richard meet again, a few years later, at another über-luxe hotel in the Swiss Alps. Richard is up to his usual wheeler-dealer antics and is accompanied by his beautiful girlfriend (the gorgeous Elizabeth Debicki). Jonathan finds himself in a quandary: will he accept the offer made to him by Angela Rarr (the wonderful Olivia Coleman), a dodged British agent who has been after Richard for years, or continue as a secretive British war veteran, who chooses to read quietly in his room when he is not on duty behind the reception desk?

I suspect, at least from the novel’s title, that The Night Manager was meant to be a character study. With the television adaptation, you have not only that intriguing aspect, but also the chance to unravel several other fascinating characters including, possibly most interestingly, that of Jed’s, an unusually complex woman who is much more than the beautiful, self-indulgent creature one first meets in Episode Two.

Le Carré is notoriously persnickety about handing his books over to be adapted; the fact that he appears in a few seconds-long cameos in this version is clearly a tip of his hat to the unfailing quality of this excellent, riveting piece of long-form television, helmed by the very talented Dutch director Susanne Bier. nepalitimes.com
A parallel government

Govinda KC in Kathmandu, 3 June

Having overcome many hurdles in our long-drawn-out crusade to rid Nepal of its health sector's ills, we are now confronting a new reality: the existence of a parallel government run by the corrupt head of a constitutional body.

The rise of Lekman Singh Karki, the Chair of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), is the direct result of our political failure. It is unacceptable for people living in any country that claims to have the rule of law.

Our demand for quality medical education, a just distribution of health facilities across the country, and access to affordable and accessible medical services remains unaddressed.

The CIAA should have stood by us in our campaign to bring about positive changes in Nepal's medical sector, but has instead worked against the national interest. Its failure to uphold the rule of law will worsen the state of impunity, endangering transparency and accountability.

What if the head of such a constitutional body abuses his power to get to power? What if he allows his family members and relatives to abuse the power he wields?

This is what is happening: the CIAA is actively overstepping its jurisdiction. It protects the corrupt. The innocent are being mentally and physically harassed. A constitutional body responsible for promoting transparency and accountability is itself opaque and abets impunity.

The CIAA boss is abusing his power to help medical colleges run by members of his family to obtain university affiliations and add more student seats. Officials who refuse to kowtow have been threatened, and even forced to resign. Those who abide by the rules are afraid of the CIAA, but not those who are themselves abusing their authority.

A medical college run by a family member of the CIAA Chair has been allowed to enroll students even when most of its departments—which are necessary for quality education—are out of operation. Authorities at the Nepal Medical Council and Tribhuvan University do not want to face the wrath of the CIAA Chair by ordering the closure of this college. On the other hand, some officials at the Institute of Medicine (IoM), known for their honesty, have been dragged to court by the CIAA for allowing another medical college to add more student seats.

Whether the CIAA’s arrest of the IoM officials is legal will be decided by the courts. But, by the time the verdict on this case is out, the damage will have been done. In the three years since Karki’s appointment as the CIAA Chair, the honest have been demonized, and the crooked empowered.

In the last three stages of our civil disobedience, we had held the conduct of the CIAA Chair responsible for irregularities in Nepal’s medical education sector. We had even demanded his resignation—but we did not because many of us argued that he is the head of a constitutional body, and it would be difficult to force him to resign.

But the CIAA Chair has now overstepped his bounds. He is not just forestalling new reforms in the medical sector, but is also trying to subvert past achievements. He is passive where his inactivity is needed, and he is overstepping his jurisdiction where his role is not needed.

Unless we rid the CIAA of its prejudices, and selective and arbitrary actions, we cannot rid the medical sector of its ills.

Nepal, cursed by sons-in-law?

Matrika Purdie in Alipar, Patan, 5 June

We are witnessing an easy way of becoming famous overnight. Superb paint on the walls of Singh Darbar, get arrested by the police and make it to the headlines. There’s always a group standing by on Twitter and Facebook to create a hashtag, as evidenced by “I am with Ashish [IoM]” on Twitter, whichsmartlyaudaciouslyoutnumbershereplain. Possibly, a certain organized, vested interest group will enjoy many battles of paint to correlate Singh Darbar everyday, get some attention.

It is shameful for a divided society to create a trend whereby anyone can commit unlawful activities in the bureaucratic centre of the Nepale state. Today they sprayed about, tomorrow they will walk on the walls; my answer to anyone asking, “Where is the notice that says it’s illegal to paint and take photos of Singh Darbar?” — Should we then stock notices up saying that Singh Darbar is an Open Defecation Free zone?

Some power elites are destroying public and government property on a whim and using it as a right for rights. After the constitution was passed, this powerful and dive group has been employing to prevent political stability and this constitution from being implemented.

There are some well-known Nepal writers, journalists and politicians in this group who have invested in various protests, including the Rampa resistance. The intellectual manner is run by this intelectual group uses the common keywords of “elite” and “diarchy” [sic] against anyone who does not toe his line. To understand how strong these power elites are trying to undermine the constitution and Nepal’s stability, one can look at how Kajree and The Hindu Times report on Nepal. I wish these elite journalists who lecture us about the media’s code of conduct and the ABCs of journalism would also undertake some self-reflection.

Our sons-in-law are the ones who play the biggest role in protesting against Nepal’s constitution and make up the largest power that are invested in the power elite. How could I possibly say that perhaps there are no suitable husbands for the daughters of our affluent families here in Nepal? How can the sons-in-law impeded by these daughters are the villains pushing the agenda to paint Singh Darbar red and sow the seeds of darkness in Nepal.

Analysts and intellectuals in Matichora are worried that foreign daughters-in-law are meant to stay in Nepal and punish them, Nepal will always be menaced by the sons-in-law. How many sons-in-law in disguise are here, and what kinds of activities are they involved in? The government should make these details public in a white paper.

Just because they write a book on Nepal or Kathmandu, does not mean that they are from Nepal.

The Nepale state cannot be the laboratory for experimentation for any interest group or international gangs. Only citizens of Nepal have the right to demand whether Nepal’s constitution is good.

If our constitution is not suitable for us, we will amend it. Or, we will start a revolution and write another constitution. That is our right. But, we cannot let any of our daughters-in-law act as agents of power and disregard the country by working in communion of political agendas by casting in on the flaws of the constitution and the dissolution of the Assembly. We cannot tolerate what is being done by capitalizing on weak laws and a delicate heart.

Poudel is communications advisor at the Ministry of Information and Communications.

Tranquility International Beauty & Spa Academy

START YOUR CAREER IN THE BEAUTY & SPA INDUSTRY NOW

ADMISSION OPEN

WORLD CLASS TRAINING

100% JOB PLACEMENT

VERY ATTRACTIVE SALARY

FASTEST GROWING

JOIN US Today
www.tifusa.com
info@tifusa.com
01-4993105, 980103647, 9802129257, 9849405167

Today

TIMES NATIONWIDE

OFFICIALS FROM THE NEPALI PRESS
Piecing together a tragedy within a tragedy of the US Marine Corps helicopter that crashed during a rescue mission after last year’s earthquake

DIPENDRA BHANDARI
IN DOLAKHA

On 12 May 2015, a US Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter on a rescue mission landed in Singati of Dolakha district three hours after a 7.3M aftershock shook the region. Singati was just 3km from the epicentre, and the shaking destroyed many buildings still standing after the 25 April earthquake. Landslides and rockfalls buried a distribution centre for relief supplies, and 50 people were killed that day in Singati alone.

The helicopter landed in a cornfield at 2:47pm, picked up five wounded villagers and took off for the return trip to Kathmandu. It lost radio contact with air traffic control and could not be located until 16 May, when it was spotted at 3,300m on a ridge north of Kailashan.

Six American Marines, two Nepal Army soldiers and five wounded civilians from Singati were killed: Capt. Dustin R. Lukasiewicz and Capt. Christopher L. Negeen, Capt. Ward Johnson IV, Sgt. Eric M. Seaman, Cpl. Sara A. Medina and Lance Cpl. Jacob A. Hug. The Nepali soldiers were Tapendra Rawal and Basant Timira. The wounded civilians were only identified a month later, after DNA analysis of their remains: Sulav Bahadur Khatri, Loka Bahadur Khatri, Yamin Bahadur Katsawal, Dhruba Katsawal and Sabitri Shivakoti.

A USMC inquiry found that the Okinawa-based helicopter, part of a six-aircraft fleet belonging to Operation Sahayogi Haat, had taken a direct route back to Kathmandu from Singati and en route hit a mountain covered in cloud.

One year later, on 12 May 2016, I returned to Singati. Among the people I lost there was Bishal Shivakoti (see his account, above) and I showed him some photographs on my laptop. In one of them there is a tall young man in a ‘I Love Nepal’ T-shirt and flipflops, hands and feet covered in dust. He looks fatigued and is gazing intensely at the camera. Behind him is a crowd of people, some holding on to their caps to prevent them from flying off due to the helicopter’s rotor wash. One man was covering his ears to muffle the roar of the engine. The injured and their families look on anxiously.

I asked Bishal if he recognised the man standing. He brought the monitor closer and looked carefully, and his face lit up: ‘That’s me.’ He looked at the picture again, and recognised people in the crowd. ‘That is Bishnu, that is grandmother, this is Malla … so that is what I looked like that day.”

Bishal wanted to know when I had taken the photograph. ‘My mind was not working, I was in shock, I don’t remember you taking pictures that day,” he said. I told him it wasn’t me who had taken the photograph, but
a young woman named Sara A Medina. I showed him a photograph of Medina that I had downloaded from the Internet—friendly-looking, with short hair, wearing camouflage fatigue.

“She looks Japanese, very young,” Bishal said. “I didn’t notice her taking pictures. The helicopter didn’t stay long.”

I took Bishal aside and told him softly: “That photograph of you was the last one she took in her life. She was in the helicopter that crashed five minutes after it took off. Her camera was found in the burnt-out wreckage.”

Bishal clenched his hair with both hands, and bowed down, he took a deep breath. “Oh my god,” he said. “I am so unlucky. She died after snapping my photo. She was so young.

When Bishal looked up, he had tears in his eyes.

Documentary maker Dipendra Shrestha is making a film on the earthquake and the helicopter tragedy.
Yeomen’s service to the nation

Thanks to the service imparted by our country’s yeomen and yeowomen in the past, we can say with confidence that things in Nepal can not get any worse than they already have. Therefore, if my memory serves me right, things can only get better.

In the past 19 years we have had 19 jobseekers, and with each of them we have seen a marked improvement in all walks of life — mainly because the chronic fuel shortage and frequent chucks jams mean we have to wait everywhere. And it is in the past year after Comrade KP became the Daar Holman that we have been taking truly great leaps forward towards the edge of the cliff. Those of you who still read paper newspapers will have glanced from perusing The Rising Dump that we are all bubbling with optimism here in Nepal. We have bottomed out, and there is nowhere to go but up.

The season we have started seeing the glass as half-full is because we already drank the other half. (That last remark was brought to you by Vogue Gin.) And now, everything looks rosy on the sunny side of the street, where the grass is greener because we are wearing rose-tinted shades. We clearly detect a silver lining that wasn’t there before in Cloud Gucklooland. And as we confidently skive near Mt Everest we know all this has been made possible by 8848 Vodka.

So, allow me in my slightly tipsy state to now take this opportunity to also propose a toast to the large numbers of yeopersons who have left Nepal for good, thus providing more opportunities for all kinds of hanky-panky for those of us who stayed behind. Without your demonstrated sacrifice, courage, and patriotism this country would not be where it was day before yesterday. Stay away, don’t come back.

And finally with permission from the Chair, who is sitting in the sofa right here after arriving two hours late for this ceremony, allow me to propose the following richly deserving candidates for this year’s Republic Day medals and decorations: all Nepali women who took the huge risk of marrying kueus even though it meant they could turn antinational, the Government Spokesman who voiced his disgust at the performance of the government, the two not-so-gentlemen who made an agreement for regime change which both knew the other knew was a joke, the civil servants who got 25% wage increase for doing 25% less, and the journo who are now eligible for free health care and can sign up for complimentary lobotomies.

It is when we start recognising every Nepali who has tirelessly worked for the betterment of this country that we will set an example for others to follow. And the Ass is committed in starting right here by developing a positive mental attitude to stop being its own self, and destit from being cynical and poking any more fun at those on top of the food chain. Here is a rundown of all the upbeat things that have been happening lately in Nepal which may help us count our blessings:

- Kulekhani reservoir has risen by 1.7m due to recent rains, which means loudshouting will now be reduced from 11 hours a day to 9 hours a day, marking a 20% improvement in the NEA’s performance.
- A record 400 plus minus 15 mountaineers reached the top of Mt Everest this year, which is a 400% increase compared to 2013. This means revenue from royalty fees also went up by the same amount, to be squandered on highway bridge contracts that are never completed.
- Two pot holes were patched up in Krishna Galli this fiscal year, which is a 200% improvement on the situation in the 20th Five-Year Plan when no pot holes were patched.
- A new Bikram Calendar has been introduced by the Department of Astrology and Palmistry that will eliminate the month of Bhadra in 2074 because that is when the agitated parties are threatening another agitation.
- The Nepal Telepaphy Corporation has introduced a new service called Sixth Sense (Registered Trade Mark) for voice mail, in which subscribers will have to use their intuition and instinct to figure out ways to make calls on their mobile phones since the damn thing keeps cutting off.

Light up a wonderful life

88% Energy saving & FLICKER FREE

LED Tube  Wide Voltage  Bulb  Radiance  Downlight Square  Downlight Round  Panel Light  Spot Recessed  LED Flood Light  LED Spot Track  Retrofit

Authorized Distributor For Nepal:
G.P. Trading Concern
Visit Our Showroom:
OPPLE Lighting Store, Patan, Kathmandu
Phone: +977-1-4242317, 420456
Email: info@trividelectronics.com

Visit Our Showroom:
OPPLE Lighting Store, Patan, Kathmandu
Phone: +977-1-4242317, 420456
Email: opple.showroom@trividelectronics.com

For Trade Inquiry:
9801148744, 9801148758

COO Reg No. 1849975797 Lepbu Central Region Postal Reg. No. 093997