



SARA A. MEDINA / USMC

# Final image

Bishal Shivakoti had assisted his wounded aunt, Sabitri, 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

They downloaded the photographs Medina had shot of the rescue in Singati. 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

BY **DIPENDRA BHANDARI**

**Read full story** **page 14-15**

# LONG WAY TO THE PROMISED LAND

BY **AYESHA SHAKYA**

PAGE 8-9



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

## GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# PLAYING FOR TIME

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

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 fully 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. Ever 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 modify the analogy: today Nepal is instead trapped between the interests of the Hindu-right and the rest in New Delhi.

There used to be a time when India had a 'twin pillar' strategy to simultaneously back the monarchy and democracy in Nepal. It would have worked to ensure stability, but somewhere along the way that policy lost currency. Republicanism, secularism and federalism were somehow slipped into the new constitution. After the rise of the BJP,



BHANU BHATTARAI

we detect moves to try to dismantle the three -isms: roll back secularism, rework federalism and possibly even restore the monarchy. The 'twin pillar' policy has been replaced with 'twin contradictions' being played out between proxies on the ground in Nepal.

One cannot analyse the Machiavellian manoeuvrings in Kathmandu without factoring in that gorilla in the room.

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 lethargic and uncaring 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 Madhesis is how they are perceived. That the people of the plains are treated as second-class citizens, looked 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 demographic 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 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 dragging his feet, using speculation about regime change as a distraction 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.

Times

THIS WEEK

PAWAN JOSHI

Most reached on Facebook

Shreejana's world of make-believe by *Smriti Basnet*  
Shreejana Shakya, the Nepali special effects makeup artist who took the internet by storm. (6,914 people reached)

Most shared on Facebook

Shreejana's world of make-believe by *Smriti Basnet* (59 likes)

Most visited online page

Three kings in four days by *Kunda Dixit* (2,100 views)

Most popular on Twitter

Climactic change, Editorial (65 retweets, 89 favourites)

Most commented

The game goes on by *Navin Jha*

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

WHEN MELTING MOUNTAINS SHAKE

Climate change is real, and it is happening ("When melting mountains shake", Kunda Dixit, #811). The sooner we realise it, the faster we can act on it. Organisations like ICIMOD have been conducting research. However, more community engagement is required. We have to start small — make the locals of the area aware of what they might be doing right or wrong. They should realise whether their actions help or harm the environment. Unless they are alerted and made aware, relying on big research projects or only funding is not going to help reverse this catastrophic phenomenon.

Maya

CATCHING UP

I would like to congratulate Sanjay Sada for becoming the first Musahar to pass the SLC exams from his village in Mahottari district ("Catching up", Santa Gaha Magar, #811). I come from the eastern Tarai region, and I know what it means to be a Musahar, to be from the most oppressed, excluded and voiceless community. Musahars die early, and their literacy rate is probably the lowest in the country. But they are not demanding a province like other oppressed communities.

Amar Pokhrel

Dipendra Sunuwar

any coalition. Irrespective of who is using whom, the political game that is going on in Nepal is not good for the country.

KK Sharma

MADHES AGITATION

Yes, the game goes on ("The game goes on", Navin Jha, #811). India is using the NC, which is using the Madhesi Front, and the Madhesi Front is using the Janajatis to overthrow the KP Oli government. If it were China that persuaded the Maoists to not pull the rug, the Oli government would survive longer. But if China were not behind the political drama that played out in May, then Oli would be ousted sooner than later. The Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal is the most unreliable partner in

THE ROYAL MASSACRE

When will we know the truth behind the mysterious massacre of the royal family ("Three kings in four days", Kunda Dixit, #811)? It is a real opportunity for anyone wanting to make a name in investigative journalism.

Anuroop Manandhar

Weekly Internet Poll #812

Q. Did you like the government's decision to double the allowance for the elderly?

Yes 83.44%

No 10.45%

Maybe 6.11%

Total votes: 290

Weekly Internet Poll #813

To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who is responsible for the lack of dialogue between the government and the Madhesi parties?



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# 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 Bishnu Poudel 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 330-200 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 to urgently 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 airlines has seen a turnaround since adding two Airbus 320s to its fleet. Punctuality and reliability of flights improved and passenger volume increased by 30 per cent this year. However, Nepal's own national airline is still number 5 after Qatar Airways, Jet Airways, Air Arabia and Fly Dubai in terms of passengers flown.

Says Capt Srawan 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 320s 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 Toulouse for conversion training to 320s failed simulator tests, so the airline has only 9 captains and 13 co-pilots for 320s even though it needs at least 30 pilots. Airbus

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 330s 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 Gatwick.

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 Boeings are grounded for maintenance.

"Having Boeings and Airbuses 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 Combi 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 Rs100 billion air cargo market, and keeping one 757 would also mean that senior Boeing captains would not lose their jobs.  Kunda Dixit

## HELICOPTER SALES SOAR

As a result of the logistical bottleneck in relief efforts after last year's earthquake, the Nepal 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 lesson 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 sensitivities 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,



KUNDA DIXIT

two Bell 202s, one Alouette, two AS350 Écureuils and two Super Pumas. It also has Lancers, Cheetahs, and ALHs 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 AS350s 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 (*pictured in Jomsom, above*) who flew the 412 with Nepali 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 Pheriche 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 Shriram Ghatpande, a former Indian Air Force pilot who now sells Bells in South Asia.

Nepali 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 Écureuil, the 407 has half the fuel burn.

Says Rajendra Bahadur 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 Rameswor Bohara



# 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.



GUEST COLUMN  
Bineeta Gurung

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 unified, coherent mass with similar problems, needs and goals. Such essentialism assumes an ahistorical, universal unity among members based on a generalised notion of their 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. Ethnicity is assigned as the singular identity of Madhesi individuals over and above anything else, completely bypassing social class. In reality, Madhesis 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 'elite' 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 'oppressor' 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 disruptive — be it 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 polity was a direct result of the state's neglect of marginalised 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 institutionalises 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 smug to think that inclusive policies alone are sufficient to advance equality — these 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 handmaidens 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. 🇳🇵

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### Soaltee goes green

Soaltee Crowne Plaza on World Environment Day led a cleanup and painting drive for Mahadev Temple in addition to planting trees at the temple's periphery. To increase awareness on preserving the environment, the hotel's Green Team organised a rally from the hotel premises to the temple in the morning.

### Somersby in Pokhara

After its successful launch in Kathmandu earlier this month, Somersby Apple Cider was recently introduced in Pokhara at an event in Hotel Barahi. Available in select outlets in Pokhara, the drink comes in 250 ml bottles priced at Rs 100, and in packs of twelve.

### Taste of Qatar

Qatar Airways organised a tasting event for business class meals at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kathmandu. Vice President (Indian Sub-continent) Vincent Coste hosted the event where dishes such as Broccoli and Almond Soup, and Stuffed Paneer with Pistachio and Coriander were offered.





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डिस्क्लेमर: \*S - ले भिन्न प्रविधि | \*\* - शीत: Nutrient requirements and Recommended Dietary allowances for Indians. National Institute of Nutrition, 2010 | \*\*\* - सफा तेलको प्रविधिमा आधारित | \* - तेलमा तारेको तेलमा Anti-Oxidant को सँगम आधारित: Oryzanol, Tocopherols, Tocotrienols, Squalene र Phytosterols | \*\* - तेल मिश्रणमा उच्चतम तारेको एउटा तेल प्रविधिको प्रविधिमा आधारित दुईथर तेलको प्रविधिको तुलनामा Oryzanol को मात्रा उच्च रहन मद्दत गर्छ | \*\*\* - प्रत्येक सफोला तेलमा चारवटा कुनैपनि प्रविधिको मिश्रण तेलको तेलमा



# Fear and loathing

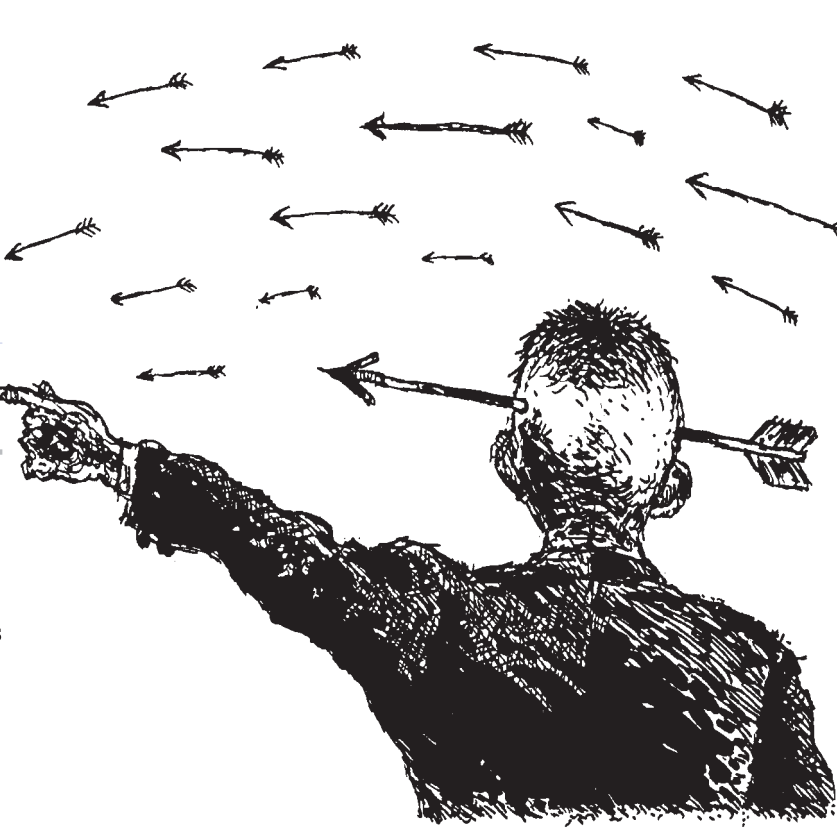
A parallel power centre is pushing the country towards a finish line that will finish us

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 13) and also in *Setopati*, on corruption in Nepal's medical sector.



ONE TO MANY  
Bidushi Dhungel

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 Suryanath Upadhyay, 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 protesters, and far 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 emboldened. When the three pillars of society work hand in glove in a wicked cult, and the kingmaker of them all heads 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. ■

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As we get closer and closer to the due date of the arrival of the monsoon in eastern Nepal, we will notice that the showers get more frequent as the moisture turns into storm clouds along the mountains. The key thing to watch out for is wind direction. As long as the winds are from the west, it means that the southwest monsoon has not yet arrived. It is called southwest because it originates in the Arabian Sea, even though it bends over northeast India and approaches us from the east. It may be a week or so late this year, so check your drains, repair the roof and get the gumboots out.

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**FINDING KARISHMA:** Prakash (Khadka Raj Nepali) holding the white hen gifted by his sister (Hansha Khadka)

SHOONEY FILMS

# NARRATING NEPAL

Rendezvous with director of critically acclaimed movie *Kalo Pothi*

SMRITI BASNET

**M**in Bahadur Bham remembers refusing, as a school student in Mugu 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 Pothi* 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 hen gifted by Prakash's sister who later joins the Maoist army. The movie skilfully 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 chronicle, with its 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 young boy in

his village, which played a pivotal part in his life, was despised because of their differing castes. "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 Kachko, who also produced award-winning movies like *Harmony Lessons* (2013) and *Zhauzhürek Myng 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 strike a chord with the audience.

*Kalo Pothi* 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 *Bansulli* (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." 📺



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# LONG WAY TO THE PROMISE

**AYESHA SHAKYA**  
IN SAN FRANCISCO

Sitting in a café near San Francisco’s bustling financial district, dressed casually and sporting shades, 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 off as one of the many Latin American migrant workers in California, the type that Donald Trump wants to deport if he wins the USA 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 Maoists 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 journey 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.

Like many other Nepalis, Indians and Bangladeshis, 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



smugglers from Brazil to Mexico who are part of an international trafficking network,” explains Anuj, 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

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 tricked 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. Anuj 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 Nepalis because this was 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 to Mexico in cramped 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 USA 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



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# ED LAND

An increasing number of Nepalis risk their lives and fortunes to sneak into the USA via Central America



CHIAPAS STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

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

**ON THE RUN:** An X-ray photo showing migrants inside a truck heading towards the US near a checkpoint in the state of Chiapas in Mexico.

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.*



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EVENTS



Bicycle talk,

Talk about all things bicycle with enthusiasts from all over the Valley. Also, attend the screening of *Klunkerz*, a film tracing the history of mountain biking in the world. 10 June, 3 to 6pm, Cycle City Network Nepal's Secretariat, 9849832509 (regrets only), info@cyclecity.org.np

Girls in technology,

Share stories and get a chance to meet students, professionals and beginners in an event jointly organised by Girls in Technology and Namaste Kathmandu. 12 June, 10.30am onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 9849056900, Rs 500 (including a Girls in Technology t-shirt)

Outer space,

Explore different aspects of outer space in a two-day photo exhibition with the Rotaract Club of Kupondole. 10 and 11 June, 11am to 5pm, Mangalazar, info@rckopundol.org.np, rotaractkopundol@gmail.com



Yoga sessions,

Rejuvenate and unwind in a week-long Isha Yoga program with trained instructors and varied discussions, meditations and yoga practices. 28 June to 4 July, 6 to 9am or 2 to 5pm, Lakshmi Narayan Sewa Samiti Ashram, Tangal, 9803867394/9841586573

Facing the camera,

A photography exhibition that traces the history of studio photography in Nepal. Until 12 August, 10am to 5pm, Inner Courtyard, Patan Museum, (01) 5521492

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 Café, Pulchok, www.bikaplaartcenter.org

Basketball in wheelchairs,

Cheer six male and three female teams on as they participate in a wheelchair basketball league championship organised by ENGAGE, with the support of the Swiss Embassy and Turkish Airlines. 11 June, 8.30 to 10.30am, Campion School, Mahalaxmasthan, 9813053115, info.engagenepal@gmail.com or engagenepal@gmail.com

The Little Prince,

Don't miss out on Studio 7's musical based on A.S. Exupery's famed novel *The Little Prince*. 27 May to 12 June, every Friday to Sunday, 7pm onwards, Hotel Vajra, (01) 4271545, Rs 1000 & Rs 500 (for students)

Heritage walk,

Explore the alleyways of Patan in a heritage walk organised by the Rotaract Club of Kupondole and Know Your Heritage. 11 June, 8am onwards, Mangalazar, 9849592287, http://www.rckopundol.org.np

Hidden treasures,

An exhibition of photographs and portraits of the Ranas from the private collection of Kamala Lama. Till 13 June, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4218048/4433930

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says

"I'll try again tomorrow".

-Mary Anne Radmacher

#MissMoti-vation Kripa Kreation

DINING

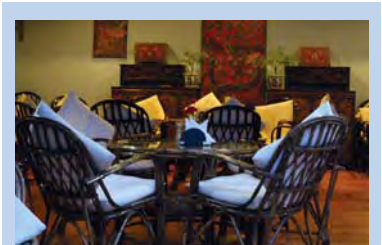


Taza,

An excellent new Middle Eastern restaurant with a Syrian chef. Offers free deliveries within Patan. Don't forget their shawarmas! Pulchowk, (01) 5541592, 9860960177

Vootoo,

The new home of Newari cuisine that also has a familiar continental menu for those who are not yet ready to experiment with new dishes. Lajimpat, (01) 4005222



Dechenling,

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

Phat Kath,

Offering French-ish food, a crêperie for takeaways, low tables and hookahs for hippies, tables and chairs, and a formidable hip hop soundtrack for everyone. Thamel, (01) 4258491



Tasneem's Kings Kitchen,

A charming restaurant proposing the unique flavours of distinctive Bohra Muslim Food. Jhamsikhel, 9801282727, (01) 2239532

MUSIC

Tribute to Slayer

Vomiting Snakes gets together with some of the big names in the Nepali music scene to pay tribute to the late Jeff Hanemman, Slayer's guitarist. 18 June, 2pm, Purple Haze, Thamel, Rs 300 (advance sale), Rs 500 (door sale)



Reggae slowdown,

Tap to the beat of some reggae music with Nepali bands Cultivation and The Himalion as they belt out tunes of Cultivation's upcoming debut album *Plains, Hills and Mountains*. 11 June, 6.30pm onwards, Basecamp, Jhamsikhel, Rs 300

The Mix Tapes live,

Enjoy a musical evening with beer and the The Mix Tapes band as it performs its members' bucket-list songs. 17 June, 8pm onwards, Sports Hive Bar & Lounge, Jhamsikhel, 9841320007

GETAWAY

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NEPALAYA

## LIFE IS SMILING

At a Paleti concert in Nepalganj in 2009 (pictured), Amber Gurung already looked frail, his voice fraying at the edges. At 73 then, he needed help to walk, but there was still a distinct twinkle in his eyes. I remember he ended the concert

with *Naulakha Tara* and it roused the audience into singing along for the famous line: '... *niyali hera hamilai bhijeko chhaina parela*' ('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 *Naulakha Tara*, and with the anthem of the new republic, *Sauyaun Thunga*.

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 Nepalganj 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 Thatal'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 Nepalganj. Lingered 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 it: our new national anthem, in which he adorned Byakul Maila's lyrics with a folksy beat and a melody that exuded a strong sense of Nepali-ness.

Amber Gurung's *Ma Amber Hun* and *Ukali Lagda Pasina Puchhne* ... are about longing, forbidden and unrequited love. His voice broke when he sang them, and he stopped to let his student, Aavas, sing the remaining stanzas.

As Aavas sang *Jasai Kesh Timile Phukayau*, 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 hera muskurayo* ...' ('Life is smiling').

Kunda Dixit

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# THE NIGHT MANAGER

**T**he *Night Manager*, the new six-part BBC1 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



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

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 (Aure 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

ensuring that his own carefully (self-) preserved equilibrium is upset — albeit in ways he never imagined.

Jonathan and Richard meet again, a few years later, at another uber-luxe hotel in the Swiss Alps. Richard is up to his usual wheeler-dealer antics and is accompanied by his beautiful girlfriend Jed (the gorgeous Elizabeth Debicki). Jonathan finds himself in a quandary: will he accept the offer made to him by Angela Burr (the wonderful Olivia Coleman), a dogged 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 cameo in this version is clearly a tip of his hat to the unflinching quality of this excellent, riveting piece of long-form television, helmed by the very talented Danish director Susanne Bier.

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

Trailer

## HAPPENINGS



RSS

**200 YEARS:** Permanent Under-Secretary (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) of the UK Sir Simon McDonald discusses bilateral issues with Prime Minister KP Oli at Singha Darbar on Thursday. Also in the picture are (/r) Gail Marzetti of DFID in Nepal and British Ambassador Richard Morris.



RSS

**HUNGRY LEADERS:** Madhesi and Janajati leaders begin a relay hunger strike in Kathmandu on Tuesday to exert pressure on the Big Three to rewrite the constitution.



RSS

**BILATERAL TOP BRASS:** Admiral Sun Jianguo of the People's Liberation Army of China (second, from left) calls on Defense Minister Bhim Rawal in Kathmandu on Tuesday. Chinese officials are visiting Nepal in quick succession ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's possible visit to Nepal later this year.



GOPEN RAI

**FOREVER AMBER:** The portrait of legendary music maestro Amber Gurung adorns a military hearse that carried his body to Pashupati for his funeral on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

**SPECIAL MEAL:** Vice President (Indian Sub-continent) of Qatar Airways Vincent Coste welcomes the guests at an event in Kathmandu on Tuesday to taste the business-class meal served on board.

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# A parallel government

Govinda KC in *Kantipur*, 3 June

क्रान्तिपुर

Having overcome many hurdles in our long drawn-out crusade to rid Nepal's health sector of its 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 Lokman Singh Karki, the Chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) is the direct result of our political failure. But it is not acceptable to people living in any country that claims to have the rule of law.



BHANU BHATTARAI

Our demand for quality medical education, a just distribution of health facilities around 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 Chief 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 Chief by ordering the closure of this college. On the other hand, some officials at the Institute of Medicine (IoM), known for 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 Chief, the honest have been demoralised, and the crooked empowered.

In the last three stages of our civil disobedience, we had held the conduct of the CIAA Chief responsible for irregularities in Nepal's medical education sector. We had even thought of demanding 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 Chief 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 intervention 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 Poudel in *Naya Patrika*, 5 June

नयाँ पत्रिका

We are witnessing an easy way of becoming famous overnight. Splash paint on the walls of Singha 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 Aashish [sic]" on Twitter, which valourises Adhikari's paint-splashing exploit. Possibly, a certain organised, vested interest group will empty many bottles of paint to vandalise Singha Darbar every day, to get some attention.

It is shameful for a civilised society to create a trend whereby anyone can commit unlawful activities in the bureaucratic centre of the Nepali state. Today they sprayed colour, tomorrow they will want to piss on the walls. My answer to anyone asking, "Where is the notice that says it's illegal to paint and take photos of Singha Darbar?" — Should we then stick notices up saying that Singha Darbar is an Open Defecation Free zone?

Some power elites are destroying public and government property on a whim and calling it a fight for rights. After the constitution was passed, this powerful and divisive group has been conspiring to prevent political stability and this constitution from being implemented.

There are some well-known Nepali writers, journalists and politicians in this group who have invested in various protests, including the Khampa resistance. The intellectual market is run by this syndicate. This dangerous group uses the common labels of "elite" and "oligarchy" [sic] against anyone who dares to criticise it. To understand how strongly these power elites are trying to undermine the constitution and Nepal's stability, one can look at how *Al Jazeera* and *The Hindustan 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? Now the sons-in-law imported by these daughters are the vehicles pushing the agenda to paint Singha Darbar red and sow the seeds of divisiveness in Nepal.

Analysts and intellectuals in Madhes are worried that foreign daughters-in-law

reasons for staying in Nepal and punish them, Nepal will always be victimised 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 love Nepal.

The Nepali state cannot be the laboratory for experimentation for any interest group or international gang. Only citizens of Nepal have the right to discuss whether Nepal's constitution is good.



GOPEN RAI

do not get equal rights to citizenship in the constitution. But, the concern here is not about daughters-in-law. It is about the sons-in-law, who are rising up against Nepal, using the daughters-in-law as a pretext. Whether it is the example of *Al Jazeera*, or Bhekh Bahadur Thapa's son-in-law, their audacity can be seen openly in the media outlets.

Some sons-in-law are suspiciously active. After security forces reported activities that vary from proselytising to burning the constitution, the government alerted the Immigration Department to crack down on this group. If the government fails to investigate their

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' husbands act as agents of power and destabilise the country by investing in communalisation of political agendas by cashing in on the flaws of the constitution and the dissatisfaction with it. We cannot tolerate what is being done by capitalising on weak laws and a divisive heart.

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

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# THE LAST PHOTOGRAPH

**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 5km 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 2:45pm, 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

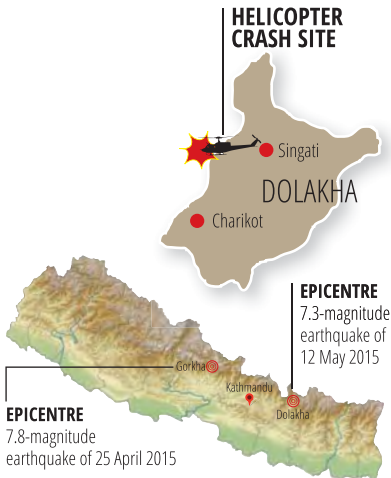
16 May, when it was spotted at 3,300m on a ridge north of Kalinchok.

Six American Marines, two Nepal Army soldiers and five wounded civilians from Singati were killed: Capt Dustin R Lukasiewicz and Capt Christopher L Norgren, Sgt 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 Titara. The wounded civilians were only identified a month later, after DNA analysis of their remains: Shiva Bahadur Khatri, Loka Bahadur Khatri, Yam Bahadur Katawal, Dhruba Katawal 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 met there was Bishal Shivakoti (*see his account overleaf*) 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 engines. 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 Maila ... 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

Piecing together a tragedy within a tragedy of the US Marine Corps helicopter that crashed during a rescue mission after last year's earthquake





Capt Dustin R Lukasiewicz (*left*) getting ready to take off from Singati at 3pm on 12 May 2015 after loading five wounded civilians. The helicopter crashed a few minutes after this picture was taken. Bishal Shivakoti's aunt, Sabitri (*back turned, in white sari*) is about to climb into the aircraft.



USMC

Sara A Medina, a photographer for the US Marine Corps, was among 13 people killed in the crash.



ADVENTURE NEPAL PRODUCTION

The crash site at Hile Bhir on the high ridge that is the border between Dolakha and Sindhupalchok districts. Villagers who were the first to reach the mountain three days after the crash took this photo with their phone cameras. The first Nepal Army search and rescue helicopter could only reach the site the next day, due to bad weather.



SARA A. MEDINA / USMC

# Singati, 12 May 2015

BISHAL SHIVAKOTI

It was the morning of 12 May 2015 and I was rummaging through the ruins of my house in Singati that had been destroyed in the 25 April earthquake. I was salvaging what timber and bricks I could use for a temporary shelter. Suddenly the ground started shaking, and I leapt out into the garden.

Buildings were collapsing, the mountains were coming down all around us with a frightening roar, and clouds of brown dust billowed in the sky. Many of the buildings in the market by the road that had been damaged in the previous earthquake had all fallen down.

I helped dig out a neighbour's mother, and with the help of some policemen we pulled out alive two other people from the ruins of collapsed buildings in Chitre. Near the bridge over the Tama Kosi, a four-storey block had come down, trapping 20 people. I heard that up the road in Kattike a team that was distributing relief material to the survivors of the previous earthquake was itself hit by a huge rockfall, burying at least 40 people.

The ground still shook from time to time, sending more boulders the size of houses crashing down to the river below. I ran back to my house, where the chicken coop had been damaged. I gathered up all our chickens, and had just locked them up again when there was a deafening thud-thud of a helicopter overhead.

It was the biggest helicopter I'd ever seen, a huge grey-coloured thing that came down and landed on a corn terrace. It kicked up a whole lot of dust and the wind sent debris flying around, wounding a few people.

The helicopter kept its engines running, and two Nepal Army soldiers got off. One of them had a rifle and stood by, guarding the landing site. The other young soldier asked me to bring in the seriously wounded so they



Sara A Medina took this one last photograph (*top*) of the people in Singati with Bishal Shivakoti standing at left. Bishal today (*above*).

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 fatigues. “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 clutched his hair with both hands, and head down, he took a long 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 Bhandari is making a film on the earthquake and the helicopter tragedy.



nepalitimes.com

Watch video



could be airlifted out. The two people we had helped rescue from Chitre, one of them named Shiva, were nearest to me and we carried them into the helicopter. My aunt Sabitri Shivakoti had been hit by flying debris that the helicopter threw up when landing, and she was lying on the ground. I assisted her into the helicopter. There were other Nepal Army soldiers from the nearby Laduk unit who had come for the rescue, and they helped out. I could see the Americans in black helmets walking under the moving rotors, and one of them was talking into a microphone wired to the side of the helicopter. Padam Sherpa from Gyache arrived, carrying the wounded Airam Surel towards the helicopter, but the American signalled to him that the aircraft was already full, and he could be taken on the next trip. The helicopter took off again with a loud noise and wind like a hurricane, and I ran off to Katike where the rockfall had buried many people, to see if I could help.





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# Yeomen's service to the nation

Thanks to the service imparted by our country's yeomen and yeowomen in the past ☐ one year ☐ one decade ☐ one century (*tick one*), we can say with confidence that things in Nepal can't 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 jabberments, and with each of them we have seen a marked improvement in all walks of life — mainly because the chronic fuel shortage and frequent chukka jams mean we have had to walk everywhere. And it is in the past year after Comrade KP became the Dear Helmsman 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 gleaned from perusing *The Rising Damp* that we are all bubbling with optimism here in Nepal. We have bottomed out, and there is nowhere to go but up.

The reason 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 Cuckooland. And as we confidently skydive 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 kuires even though it meant they could turn anti-national, 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 increases for doing 25% less, and the journoes who are now eligible to 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 to starting right here by developing a positive mental attitude to stop being its asinine self, and desist 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 1.7cm due to recent rains, which means load-shedding 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 potholes were patched up in Krishna Galli this fiscal year, which is a 200% improvement on the situation in the 10th Five-Year Plan when no potholes were patched.
  - A new Bikram Calendar has been approved by the Department of Astrology and Palmistry that will eliminate the month of Bhadra in 2073 because that is when the agitated parties are threatening another agitation.
  - The Nepal Telepathy 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.





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