A culture of silence

Hundreds of young protesters marched along rain-soaked streets outside Parliament in Banepa on Thursday, their mouths gagged with black face masks. They carried signs such as: ‘I am a Member of Parliament, and my silence protects the greedy.’

Inside Parliament, MPs were actually silent, largely waiting for the top leaders of the Big Three parties to decide whether to bring up in the House a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister KP Oli, or the three bills required to implement the new budget. The top leaders failed to reach an agreement, and the House was adjourned until Friday.

Regime change seemed inevitable after the CPN (Maoist Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, backed by NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba, registered a no-confidence motion against the Oli government last week. But Oli is clinging on to power, trying to foil the Dahal-Deuba alliance.

However, with only the RPP-N and other fringe parties by his side, and Madhesi parties on Dahal’s side, Oli is unlikely to be able to save his government.

Oli seems determined to prevent Speaker Upendra Ghati Magar from bringing the no-confidence motion up for discussion, at least until the three budget bills are passed. Dahal aims to revive his party by winning more seats in the upcoming elections, and wants Oli out before the budget bills are passed.

NC leader Ram Gauchan Poudel on Thursday proposed a package deal: the NC-Maoists will allow the budget bills, and even withdraw the no-confidence motion, but Oli will have to pave the way for an all-party government by resigning. Oli is positive, but Dahal and Deuba are not.

Meanwhile, across town, Govinda KC continues his hunger strike for reforms in the lucrative medical education sector. But the silence is being broken — NC MP Gagan Thapa on Thursday registered a motion of urgent public importance in Parliament to hear KC’s demands.

KILAGAL

How to re-create historic buildings in Kathmandu after the earthquake
By ASTHA JOSHI

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/ntp
- Call us on +974 4444457
- Contact your preferred travel agent

Terms apply.
KLEPTOCRACY KILLS
The lethal politics of an ailing nation.

The health of a nation is often judged by the quality and reach of its health service. Healthcare in Nepal has become a political hot potato because, as with every arena of public life, the fox is guarding the chicken coop. Health is such a lucrative business that businessmen and their political patrons in government and the legislature have investments in private hospitals and the profitable medical education sector. Naturally, they are against any attempt to regulate private healthcare.

The rot is so ingrained that the Minister of Health and the State Minister of Health and Population — who are both from Tarai districts with abysmal statistics for the physical wellbeing of citizens — have been blatantly demanding kickbacks from the poor. With the clock ticking on their time in office, last week they openly asked for kickbacks of up to 50 per cent in return for approval of annual government grants that 23 community hospitals across rural Nepal are entitled to (see page 18).

Corruption has corroded every facet of governance, but it is when it afflicts healthcare that kleptocracy kills. Stealing money from hospitals is akin to murder. It is time the top political leaders who have visited the frail KC of medical attention. It is best to discredit him and obstruct his fast at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, and have even gone as far as to try to deprive the frail KC of medical attention. It is ironical that top political leaders who have visited the Federal Alliance ‘hunger’ strikers at Tundikhel do not have the intestinal fortitude to call on KC, to show concern for a doctor who is risking his life for the people.

Unfortunately, this time KC’s fast coincides with a power struggle that threatens to bring down the coalition of Prime Minister KP Oli of the UML. And since UML politicians and cronies have the biggest investments in the private medical industry, Oli has an excuse not to do anything, because he is ostensibly a lame duck. Even without KC’s hunger strike, the ongoing regime change drama has serious consequences for the budget, the constitution and the inclusion of Madhesi and Janajati concerns, as well as for Nepal’s geopolitical equilibrium. Our only hope now is in the legislature, but parliamentarians are behaving like flailing tentacles of the political cartel sucking the blood of Nepal’s citizens.

It is clear that the deadly silence of the politicians is due not just to their business interests in the medical sector, but also the fear of reprisals from Lokman Singh Karki, the dreaded head of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), which has itself become the biggest abuser of authority in the land. Even during his fifth fast two years ago, KC had demanded that Karki and another Commissioner be removed for obstructing reforms in the medical sector because of their vested interests.

The CIAA is still at it: it has overstepped its mandate in order to protect the family-business ties of its commissioners in the medical sector, it brazenly interfered with the Kathmandu University School of Medicine, and it has tried to influence the licensing of new medical colleges, forcing out functionaries of the Institute of Medicine who stood in their way.

Nepal is run by a syndicate of tainted politicians who are in cahoots with cartels in health, education, transportation, food supply, tourism — you name it. They are not here to serve the people but to steal from them. The tragedy is that they have infiltrated Parliament through nominees in the proportional representation quota, perpetuating their profiteering by passing laws that benefit them.

The Health Bill passed last week does not even begin to address the demands of Govinda KC and other advocates of a right-based approach to health care over the past years. Members of the Social Justice and Human Rights Committee of parliament finally visited KC in hospital on Tuesday, but UML members were conspicuous by their absence.

THE ASS
Dear Ass, I read your mouth-watering advertisement for the new Prime Minister (“Wanted, dead or alive: A new Prime Minister’, The Ass, #817). We are a headhunting corporation, and we can supply anything, anybody, anywhere under the table, as you wish. However, your required qualifications are daunting, and the task is absolutely monumental, to say the least. After doing high and deep soul-searching, we have found several candidates who are willing to ‘bid’ for this position. However, to save your precious ill-time, we can ‘produce’ a candidate, who will be a near-perfect one. There is no dearth of them with us, but this last is really unique. All we seek is a golden opportunity to legally and publicly rob without any consequences.

Suman

THE ASS
A perpetual struggle in Nepal politics: the ‘inny-go-round’ or ‘musical chairs’ while the state goes ‘hungry’. It is sad that the government has to go so soon after it has been assigned. There is always a time bomb ticking under its chair. This very political culture is the menace that has bogged down a nation of sad achievers.

Steve Sada
Health should not be for wealth

Parliament needs to take a new look at the Health Bill and form a committee to investigate the abuse of authority

The putative push by the Nepali Congress this week to get the Maniasters to abandon their alliance with the UML is in keeping with a contention of insufficient legitimacy. The opposition parties are moving the bill from the new government, final date of the Constitution revision. The opposition parties are also demanding that services be delivered to the sick, especially in rural areas. The bill will be considered by the Standing Committee of the House of Representatives, which is due to debate the bill on June 27. The bill has been passed by the Standing Committee of the House of Representatives and is due to be debated by the Standing Committee of the House of Representatives on July 18.

Binita Dahal

LEGALESE

Binita Dahal

politics, endorsement of budgetary, and delayed approval of Supreme Court rulings have been the beginning of a cloud of uncertainty about the new government. The new government has taken up the challenge of setting aside the previous government’s policies, but has not been exempt from criticism. The new government has taken up the challenge of setting aside the previous government’s policies, but has not been exempt from criticism. The new government has taken up the challenge of setting aside the previous government’s policies, but has not been exempt from criticism.

The Supreme Court will be a critical area for the new government, as the court’s decisions have been the basis for much of the government’s work. The court has been a major player in the democratic process, and its decisions have been a major factor in the government’s work. The court has been a major player in the democratic process, and its decisions have been a major factor in the government’s work. The court has been a major player in the democratic process, and its decisions have been a major factor in the government’s work.

This delay also impacts on one of Govinda KC’s demands, which calls for the impeachment of Lokman Singh Karki, Chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). Another contempt of court case against Karki is also sub judice in the Supreme Court, which has summoned him. If found guilty in the contempt case, Karki could even be suspended from his CIAA post.

Although ascented politicians, Speaker Debasish Gharti Magar and some members of Parliament’s Social Justice and Human Rights Committee visited the fasting doctor this week, the government has not bothered. Some of KC’s current demands persist from past hunger strikes, and include those that had been either ignored or only partially implemented. On this eighth fast, some of KC’s demands are more serious and zero in on the source of interference and corruption in the medical education sector. KC has long known that Karki has a conflict of interest in medical education because of the involvement of his immediate family members in this lucrative sector. KC also knows full well that top politicians own or benefit monetarily from medical colleges, and they are beholden to Karki.

Hence, among his demands for health sector reform, KC is also asking for Karki’s impeachment. It is probably for this reason that parliament members and the government are not responding, because conceding to the impeachment process would invite Karki’s wrath. They also probably feel – rightly so – that cobbling together a two-thirds majority for impeachment is impossible in the current frustrous climate.

Which is why the government finally formed a dialogue committee to mediate with KC on the eleventh day of his hunger strike. Headed by a bureaucrat, however, the committee has no power to address KC’s demands. The popular young NC leader Gagan Thapa on Thursday flung a motion of urgent public importance to discuss KC’s demands in parliament. Nevertheless, his party has already decided to abstain from debating KC’s grievances. This is an indication of just how long a shadow Karki casts in the party.

Speaker Magar assured KC on Wednesday that she would take the initiative in parliament to address his demands. It is interesting that she had stopped by to meet Maniaster Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and President Bidhya Bhandari before seeing KC.

Govinda KC commands tremendous public respect and support for his selfless and lifelong devotion to healthcare for Nepal’s poor. The CIAA has used a plant section of the media to publicize a counter-campaign by private hospital owners against KC’s demands, but the attempt to discredit him has come to naught.

As KC’s health deteriorates, a Health Bill that does not address any of his demands is awaiting ratification by parliament after the Cabinet passed it last week. Parliament needs to take a new look at the Bill and form a committee to investigate the abuse of authority by the CIAA.

The new Constitution has a provision that one-fourth of the House of Representatives may table a motion to impeach the head of the CIAA for a serious violation of the Constitution, incompetence, misbehaviour or failure to discharge duties. According to provisions 101(1), a committee of 11 members can be formed in the House of Representatives to recommend charges of impeachment. For now, such a committee could easily be established.

KC’s past fasts have put pressure on stakeholders, but this time the government is wholly preoccupied with the formulation of a new government. Public pressure on parliament is therefore important. We cannot afford to lose someone like Govinda KC, who has devoted his life to the health of the nation with no regard for his own.

Government officials and parliamentarians blame KC for getting the timing of his hunger strike wrong.

What is the right time to make healthcare affordable and accessible to all Nepalis, or to clean up the medical education sector?
Foreign parents take their embryos to Cambodia or elsewhere after Nepal banned surrogacy last year

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

There was some unusual hand-carried cabin luggage on a recent flight from Kathmandu to Phnom Penh with a stopover in Bangkok: refrigerated human embryos. After India partially banned surrogacy Parenthood in 2013 the fertility clinics operating there moved to Kathmandu’s private hospitals. But then Nepal also prohibited surrogacy last September because of legal complications, and since then Cambodia has emerged as a new destination for commercial surrogacy.

Some of the embryos stored in Kathmandu hospitals and host mothers have also moved with their Indian fertility centres to Phnom Penh, a Nepal Times investigation has revealed. The Grand City Clinic (GCC) in Kathmandu alone had more than 200 embryos waiting to be implanted when the Nepalese ban went into effect.

Many intended parents — mainly from Israel, Australia and the US — took back their embryos from hospitals in Kathmandu, to keep in storage in their home countries. But some have couriered them on from Kathmandu to Phnom Penh.

A gay Australian couple who had 10 embryos stored at the GCC since last year and wished to ship them to a fertility centre in Australia decided to divert them to Cambodia instead.

“I collected my biological materials from Kathmandu and sent them to Cambodia because I wanted to use the same embryos to have babies there,” one of them told us on condition his identity is not revealed.

InP Courier, a worldwide logistics service for frozen gampplasm, has been used to ship the embryos out of Kathmandu to the waiting centers in Cambodia. The cost of keeping the embryos frozen is so high, surrogacy companies prefer to move them if the procedure is outlawed, and take them to a country where it is still allowed. Indian fertility centres also prefer Cambodia because host mothers can obtain visas on arrival at Phnom Penh airport.

“Parents are taking back the embryos as they want to use them to have babies in Cambodia or somewhere else,” explained Nepali national Preeti Bista of My Fertility Angel, Cambodia. She says that following the ban some of her clients who already had surrogate babies in Nepal last year donated their remaining embryos to other parents.

Intended parents have multiple embryos stored in Nepal, in case a pregnancy fails, so they can use the extra embryos, thus saving time and cost involved in fertilisation.

After surrogacy was forbidden in Nepal, Bista has been providing fertility-related medical tourism services to foreigners in Cambodia.

Nepal emerged as a hub for

---

Embryos

Cranes for transport of frozen embryos (right)
on the move

- Mexico and US: Only three cases of commercial surrogacy for same-sex couples.
- Italy and Portugal: Commercial surrogacy banned.
- Israel: Surrogacy banned for same-sex couples.
- Ukraine: Surrogacy for heterosexual couples only.
- Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, and UK: Only altruistic surrogacy allowed.
- Nepal: Surrogacy for same-sex couples and couples married for less than 2 years banned in 2013.
- Cambodia: New law replacing Nepal as the new destination for commercial surrogacy.Embryo from Nepalese surrogates is kept

A baby born in Nepal to an Indian

Ab indicator in the surrogacy services is lower for

Get closer on a

Kathmandu Valley: Bagmati 4301766 * Bhaktapur 6301668 * Bandipur 6301651 * Bhaktapur 6301630 * SouthWest 4301600 * Khumjung 4301650 * Guttupening 4301766 * Kathmandu 4301556 * Dharan 6301677 * Paro 6301502 * Tingri 6301689 * Chitwan 6301689 * Everest 4301797 * Nepal 6301677 * Gyantse 4302876

www.custmec.care @timesglobalwithyou 18004038018

30% on select articles on select issues


\[ \text{nepalitimes.com} \]
Hungry for reform

Nearly two weeks into Govinda KC’s hunger strike, political parties are still unwilling to listen to his demands

TUFAN NEUPANE and RAMU SAPKOTA

It took the government 11 days to set up a committee to initiate dialogue with Govinda KC, a Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) doctor who has been on an indefinite hunger strike since 10 July, demanding reforms in the medical education sector.

But the three-member committee, led by Health Secretary Senendra Rai Uperti, does not have the mandate to address KC’s major demands: impeachment of the Commission for the investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) Chief Lokman Singh Karki, and cancellation of a bill that would allow Manipur Hospital to open a new medical college in Kathmandu.

On Tuesday, the main opposition NC — which is gearing up to form a new government with the Mallas — came up with an official stand on KC’s grievances: these are political issues, and it does not want to dwell on them. On the same day, after a meeting to discuss a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister KP Oli, the ruling UML issued a press statement that was silent on KC’s demands.

The bureaucrats-led government panel failed to reach a deal with KC on Thursday evening, and it is unlikely to address his demands regardless of the number of attempts at negotiation.

Former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai’s Naya Shakti Party has joined an alliance to express solidarity with KC, but unless the major parties wake up, it appears difficult to save KC’s life; his health is deteriorating rapidly. Except President Bidya Bhandari, Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar and a few legislators, the leaders who could actually make a difference have remained quiet. Education expert Kedar Bhakta Mathema — whose panel submitted a report that KC seeks to have as the blueprint for the proposed Medical Education Bill — says the ‘culture of silence’ seen in the face of the fasting doctor’s ‘satyagraha’ has once again exposed the shakily founded democracy in Nepal.

The demand to impeach CIAA Chief Karki aside, most of the points KC has raised this time are not new. Addressing them would not be as difficult as the top leaders think. The impeachment process has to go through parliament and the goal may thus be difficult for the government to achieve immediately, but it can at least conduct a parliamentary investigation into the accusations.

KC’s basis for demanding Karki’s impeachment is the latter’s blatant interference in the postgraduate medical science exams of Kathmandu University (KCU), for personal gain. A day before the exams, the CIAA dispatched a ‘panel of experts’ who cancelled the question paper, saying that it had been leaked, and prepared a new one. KU Associate Dean Bhagwat Nepali helped prepare the new questions, and his son scored top marks in the exams. CCTV cameras in the exam hall had been disabled to erase evidence of the incident.

But this is not the first time the CIAA has interfered in KU. The role played by Karki when KU granted affiliation to Birat Medical College also seems suspicious. The university’s 60th senate had decided not to grant affiliation to new medical colleges, saying it was difficult to handle and regulate new private medical colleges.

KC launched his crusade for reforms of the medical education sector at that time. The government even agreed to his demands and stopped KU from granting affiliations to newer colleges. But the pressure to grant affiliation to Bhat Medical College, run by Karki’s nephew Gyansendra Man Singh Karki, and Dwaraha Medical College, run by Vyankatha Kafle and Himlal Gyawali, both of whom are close to then-Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, were such that Vice Chancellor Surendra Raj Sharma resigned.

Likewise, KIST Medical College, owned by Karki’s brother Balman Singh Karki, had permission to enroll 75 students in the 2013/14 academic session. On 12 September 2014, the Nepal Medical Council increased the seats to 135 under instructions from the CIAA Secretariat, which, Baniya, who was then a member of the Council and had raised concerns over the decision, was subsequently hounded by the CIAA.

KC’s other demands include the cancellation of the Manipur Memorial Institute of Health Sciences bill tabled in parliament, and implementation of the Mathema Report for Reform in the Medical Education Act. Addressing them is doable, if the Big Three parties muster the courage to do so. But the UML leaders have invested their money in the Manipur hospital, and are trying their best to foil KC’s strike. The government decided early this week to forward the Medical Education Bill to parliament without incorporating the suggestions of the Mathema Report, signalling that it is still not ready to listen to KC. By turning a deaf ear to what KC is saying from inside a narrow room in the TUTH, the political parties are now pushing the crusader-doctor, admired for his simplicity and selflessness, to the brink of death.
OUR OWN LIVES

Manjushree Thapa's new novel delves into how a country's politics has a profound impact on individual citizens

RAISA PANDEY

Chandra is all set to leave. She is heading to Charibad in India to follow the footsteps of her older sister Suree, who serves as a housemaid to rich Indians. The evening before her departure, Chandra, in all her anxiety and despair of having to leave behind her community, family, and her dear friend Sapana, quotes a poet, a national award winner:

What grows in these still villages but death. To stay is to die too. To leave is to die too. Mother, save me. I'm fading!

In a country that has suffered outmigration throughout its history, these words would have deep meaning at any time, but standing across it in Manjushree Thapa's *All of Us in Our Own Lives*, after the 20 June bomb attack in Kabul that killed 13 Nepali guards, made them that much more poignant. It is a tragic reflection of the fate of the millions of Nepalis forced to leave their homeland, and those they leave behind.

Right from her first novel, *The Tutor of History*, set at election time in Tarahun, to *Seasons of Flight*, the story of a young woman who moves away from her current life in search of stability, Thapa draws for her readers a chronological picture of happenings in Nepal and how years of turmoil have shaped the lives of Nepalis, both within and outside the country. Her latest books also follow the trajectory of how a country's politics, governance, and quality of leadership have a profound impact on the lives of individual citizens.

*All of Us in Our Own Lives* is a book of journeys — physical, emotional, professional, and personal. Its fluid narrative courses through the lives of four characters, who at the start of the novel live in different time zones, social structures and spaces. But as we turn the pages, they become increasingly interconnected and are powerfully influential by the end.

Ava, a Canadian lawyer, quits her job and moves to her country of origin: as an international aid worker to get away from her estranged husband, and in search of familiarity. Indra Sharma, a working woman in a metropolis, is seen struggling to find her footing in largely patriarchal personal and professional spaces. Sapana, an innocent village teen, now an orphan, is witness to unforeseen changes that come with the death of her father, her brief interaction with her brother and her bitter parting with her friend, Chandra. And Gyana, a chef in Dubai, is an only son.

While all four characters — and their journeys, struggles, conflicts and resolutions — grow on the reader, it is Sapana who draws us in to dwell on the novel well past its final page. Ava comes from a place of privilege, a refuge to turn to when things get rough, Chandra is 'not unhappy' in India, Indra finds her niche both personally and professionally, and Gyana is moving towards stability. With all of them absorbed in their own lives, the only one 'left behind' is the youngest of the four, Sapana, whose dreams of making it big are clouded by abandonment, loss, and memories of those who have moved on without her.

*All of Us* builds on the familiar, with something for each of us to relate to, reflect on and take with us right through the book. It is a novel where each flash- back, conversation, and person mentioned in passing, adds depth and character, making it in many ways a personal saga for readers.

While themes of struggle, change, emancipation, growth and movement against political backdrops are present in all of her novels, in recent interviews Thapa has denied that the book is overtly political. "It is a philosophical exploration of the Buddhist concept of interdependence and interconnectedness," she explained to one newspaper recently. That may be true, but the inherent politics that shape the plotline cannot be ignored. For, as Thomas Mann would say: "Everything is politics."
Photo project depicts costs and benefits of migration for Nepali workers and families

SMRITI BASNET

In 2000, a transit in Delhi transformed Belgian-born photographer Frédéric Lecoeur’s perspective towards migrant issues in Nepal. It was then that he understood the seriousness of the matter, whom he saw the airport bustling with Nepali migrants hard at work: sweeping floors, cleaning toilets, minding lines.

“A whole generation in Nepal has only one goal in mind when growing up: going abroad,” said Lecoeur. Hoping to gain insights into the migration phenomenon, Lecoeur set out a year ago to trace the lives of migrant workers in Qatar, their daily realities in a foreign land and those of their families back in Nepal.

Nini Maya’s youngest son, Ujjwal, 19, works in Qatar. His two brothers also work abroad: the elder one, a father of two, has been working in India for the last ten years, and the other sibling recently went to Saudi Arabia.

Ujjwal is a cleaner, working seven days a week from 7 am to 6 pm, with an hour-long break for lunch. The family currently lives on government-owned land, and depends on the income of their sons.

Ram, a former migrant worker in Saudi Arabia, and his brothers are each building a house with the money their sons sent from working abroad. For this, Ram’s son Raghu toils in Qatar and lives in a camp with 5,200 others, sharing his room with seven Nepalis. During his off-days Raghu mostly spends time in his room, taking the opportunity to connect with his family and friends through Facebook and WhatsApp.

Apart from cooking, washing clothes and using the Internet, there is nothing much else for them to do on such days, he told Lecoeur. Lecoeur brought back many personal stories of migrant workers — like Ujjwal and Raghu — and their families from the most affected districts in Nepal, for his ongoing photo project ‘Nepal and Qatar: The Void and the Fullness’, supported by the Paris Center of Fine Arts. “I wanted to highlight the cost of migration, the supposed 35% GDP of the country that comes from these remittances. What is the human cost and the social cost of that money?”

As young men leave Nepal in horde every day to work in foreign destinations like Qatar, the country is being emptied of its able-bodied labour force. Marital relations become strained, and

SEENING HOPE: Saravan’s husband works in Qatar and hopes that his remittances can fund their children’s education.

Imitating nature

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

Jaspandebha is new Mitsubishi Diamond 3008
3 Qatar — Colding Unit

City Office
Seetinda, Lalitpur
Tel. 977-01-53607/17

Printing Plant
Bhrikutimandap, Nepal
Tel. 977-01-53607/17
sale@jpi.com.np
Web: www.jasperpah.com
family members are scattered. Despite being aware of the unfavourable working conditions, families send their sons off in the hope they will earn well and contribute to a better present-day life for those at home. "Most migrant workers told me they don’t have a choice," said Lecloux at a talk program organised by photo.circle in Yala Maya Kendra last week, adding that most mothers hope their sons can work abroad.

Recording intimate and up-close details, Lecloux’s photographs portray little details such as the cellophane tape used to kill bed bugs in apartments, self-made toothbrush holders taped on camp walls, and clothes and personal belongings spilling over in cramped spaces — all pointing towards the sparse and difficult living conditions.

In stark contrast are photographs set in Nepal, of houses being built and new material possessions such as televisions — now affordable with the money received from abroad. Only a few migrants told Lecloux spoke to, such as Sarawati’s husband, want to use the money to fund their children’s education.

Extending beyond these portraits, Lecloux also skillfully uses landscapes of Nepal and Qatar to bring out the contradictions in the two divergent worlds. He juxtaposes dilapidated and empty unfinished structures back home against towering skyscrapers and perfectly sculpted gardens in Qatar, providing viewers with a visual depiction of the world that the migrants abandoned, in order to go to the world that they helped build but will never be able to reap the benefits of.

With the migration issue garnering international attention, especially after an investigative piece in "The Guardian" about the exploitation of workers in Qatar, Lecloux believes that the time is right to put pressure on the relevant agencies to act. "Photography serves as documentation of my experience with reality. It allows me to produce the vision of the world that I see," said Lecloux, who is determined to raise awareness about Nepal and its people.

He hopes to extend his work beyond Qatar, to additional places like Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, and reaching out to female workers as well. In October he will spend the Diwali festival with migrants in Qatar, in pursuit of answers to the question, "How do you create a part of Nepal in Qatar?"
Coffee, cake and wine,
Good conversations coupled with food, wine and music at Kun Ma Coffee, featuring a live performance by Simma Rai. 
22 July, 4 to 7.30 pm, Kun Ma Coffee, Jomolstok, (984) 4033232

Otaku next,
Dine up on your favourite anime characters in the third edition of the Otaku Next Nepal Comic and Cosplay Convention. 
30 July, 9.30 am to 5.30 pm, Alliance Franspais, Tejpr, www.otakuunest.com. Tickets: Rs 300 (entrance fee for cosplayers), Rs 350 (on the day of the event)

Embers,
A unique, cozy place serving a blend of continental and Nepali Newwave Asian Gali, Patan (01) 4543534

Haty Regency,
Mouthwatering kebabs and curry at The Cafe, prepared by Chef Shishu Aryal and his team of Indian chefs. 
21 to 31 July, 6.30 to 10.30 pm, The Cafe, Hyaty Regency Kathmandu, Rs 2,000 plus taxes per person, (01) 4471234

Sound of Music
Mark your calendars for the re-enactment of the classic Broadway musical Sound of Music by the students of Shukla Sishu School. 
5 August, Nepal Academy, Kirtipur, Price: Rs 225 for 12 pm (students shows), Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 for 5 pm (general admission)

Embassy,
Away from the hustle and bustle, enjoy themed cuisines at a place ideal for business meets and casual rendezvous. Embassy Restaurant and Bar, Pasupathinath, Kathmandu, (01) 4451440

Wunjala Moskva,
Treat your palate to Kohorli and Russian dishes in a lush garden with ancient trees and trickling streams. Nauni, (01) 4451236

Ciney Gurung live,
Ground floor screening of ‘Apaan’ and enjoy a live performance by Ciney Gurung every Friday. 
7 pm onwards, Nauni Shingri-Lo, Lobangara, (01) 4412577 or 984190583, Rs 500 per person

Enjoy the city’s finest
with Ruslan

Nepal’s No.1 Vodka

Miss Motivation

Kripa Joshi

Kripa Joshi

Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,
Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at possibly the best hotel in the area. Lumbini, (01) 442202, 9801297309, info@kmgh.com

Getaway

Famous Farm,
Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a ladybird morning walkling in through the assured paddy. Nawalparasi, (01) 478460, info@famous-heritage.com

Temple Tree Resort and Spa,
A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna – hand to lave show you arrive. Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (01) 4415519

Balthali Village Resort,
A small, cozy retreat with a birds-eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre-painted houses. Balthali, Nuwakot, (01) 4415678

Shangri-La Village Resort,
Set amidst peaceful surroundings with a breathtaking mountain view, landscaped gardens, bodies of water and a relaxing ambiance. GALAR, Pokhara, (01) 452222, (01) 4410851

Acoustic evening,
Listen and sway along to tunes of cover songs of bands like The Reviled Man on Earth, The National, Arctic Monkeys, FAME impala, Abhyuday Mishaal, Cheet Taker and more this Friday. 
27 July, 6.30 to 10 pm, Asia Mission Organic BBQ and Bistro, Lobangara, (01) 4418149

Reggae sundown,
Tap in to the beat of music with the Nepali bands Cultivation and The Himalans as they belt out tunes of Cultivation’s debut album, Rituals, Hills and Mountains. 
23 July, 10 pm onwards, Club 25 Hours, Kathmandu, (01) 4453868, Tickets: Rs 500 (dance floor) or Rs 1,000 (bar area)

Music mania,
Hear the Chatara Lami mari pop sensation Naresh Limbu live, as part of the Live Musical Era 2016 hosted by Fern Nepal. 
30 July, 7 am to 7 pm, The Victory Lounge, Dharahara, (01) 3032779/9841906170, Tickets: Rs 1,000

Shangri-la Resort and Spa,
A gift amidst peaceful surroundings with a breathtaking mountain view, landscaped gardens, bodies of water and a relaxing ambiance.
Galar, Pokhara, (01) 452222, (01) 4410851

Food and music,
Enjoy live music accompanied by a sumptuous spread of Indian food at Beautiful Coffee Nepal. For those interested there is also a coffee workshop. 4 August, 5 to 7 pm, Beautiful Coffee Nepal, Sompalunk, (01) 5259380

Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,
Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at possibly the best hotel in the area. Lumbini, (01) 442202, 9801297309, info@kmgh.com

Dining

Miss Motivation

Kripa Joshi

‘You don’t get older, you get better!’ — Shirley Bassey

Immersive Bootcamp,
Sing up for this short course organised by Queen’s Camp and taught by Nimitra Kumwia, to learn about various pedagogical ideas, theories and methodologies to help facilitate literacy and arts workshops. 
10 August onwards, 11.30 am to 1 pm (Saturday) 1 to 5 pm (Thursday), Quater’s Over, Jewellians, Fare, Rs 1,500 (26 July (orientation session), 6 to 7 pm

KJC for kids,
Choir group, movie time, wall climbing, music, games, dance and more for kids at the KJC Summer Camp for Kids. 
25 July to 12 August, 10 am to 7 pm, Monday through Friday. Ages: 5 to 7 years, Kathmandu, info@kjc-kirtipur, (01) 4513554

Teddy Thamel,
Get a chance to hear from eminent personalities like Bandana Rana, Bhumi Shrestha, Shahi and Joseph Sabhak at the independently organized ted event, ‘Teddy Thamel’. 
23 July, 17 am to 7 pm, Hotel Tikal & Mali, Dharahara, Tickets: Rs 500 (early bird), Rs 750 (regular)

Chez Caroline,
Authentic ambiente, exquisite French food, gorgeous Satellite and more. 8 am to 10 pm, Heber Motel Restarant, (01) 4456370

Smriti Joshi
Footsteps of our past
How to reconstruct historic buildings in Kathmandu after the earthquake

ASTHA JOSHI

Kilgal was one of the neighbourhoods in the historic core of Kathmandu. It was knocked down in last year’s earthquake but, in rebuilding, the municipality may be destroying the community once again—this time its priceless cultural heritage.

Many of the ancient houses and courtyards of Kilgal (or Kilgai) suffered serious damage and were declared unfit to live in. The brick buildings with carved wooden windows—set in a warden of narrow alleys—were home to Juyap and Valisa families, who had been living here for generations.

One such neighbourhood, Dambo Chok, has now been singled out by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) for house pooling: rebuilding safer houses while concurrently addressing the problem of high urban density. KMC has approved a Rs 50 million plan, and 54 houses in Dambo Chok have presented a joint application for land acquisition to the Kathmandu Valley Development Project (KVDP) for approval.

After last year’s earthquake there was a call to “build back better,” and the KMC proposed an urban rejuvenation initiative for inner-city Kathmandu, with residential blocks, wider roads and open spaces. The idea was that areas such as Kilgal would be better prepared for future earthquakes, and the plan would solve the problem of property fragmentation due to inheritance.

In Kathmandu Valley’s old towns, historic homes are often torn down, to be divided up among brothers and then re-divided among their children and grandchildren. The average land area of a home in Kilgal is now only 9 sq m, tiny rooms in thin concrete towers that rise 13 stories high. KMC— in collaboration with the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET)—therefore planned to redesign entire neighbourhoods, not just one house at a time.

“Given the fragmentation of property and cramped living conditions, especially after the earthquake, house pooling was the best solution,” explained Bai Raja Maharjan of a committee overseeing reconstruction at Dambo Chok. He denies the plan would degrade the physical and cultural heritage, since the temples and the daalas would be integrated in the plan.

While most Kilgal families are happy that their homes will be made of stronger concrete structures, some say the KMC’s house pooling plan will destroy the original architecture of the neighbourhood as well as its fragile culture and heritage.

“We tried to explain to the residents why it is important to use traditional building techniques and materials like brick and mud mortar, but they failed.” Kilgal resident Claudira Magajjan told us. “These neighbourhoods have immense heritage value but when you build the houses with concrete, it will all be worthless.”

The debate goes to the heart of how preservation of the heritage of cultural towers must go hand in hand with their modernisation and commercial usage, says Padma Sundar Joshi of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat).

He says: “A past might have traditional value but if you look at it commercially, it might just be a waste of space. It’s important to understand the links between tangible space and intangible space in traditional architecture. If you cannot protect space, traditional footprints are destroyed.”

Kathmandu’s breakneck urbanisation is already eroding the substrate of the Kathmandu Valley’s civilisation, and public pressure for modern concrete housing, especially after the earthquake, has made it more difficult to argue for heritage preservation.

“For an outsider, a courtyard is just another courtyard but to those living there, each nook and cranny has an important meaning,” Joshi explains, “a part of it could be the space for Mahadev, or might have a specific function during festivals like Gaijatra. Even the lanes carry significance: the wider ones were for auspicious ceremonies, while narrower alleys were used for death rituals.”

House pooling would alter not just the design of buildings but also how these traditional practices and rituals are carried out, and questions their continuity. Joshi says house pooling need not be as bad as the buildings are designed “horizontally” and respect traditional spaces.

There are also legal issues. Nepal’s property law states that a landlord is entitled to the plot on which the house stands. Since there are no laws that prohibit vertical property division, there may be a problem if people who have their houses pooled do not want to live in them anymore.

KMC says the Dambo Chok plan is a “pilot project” and, depending on how it goes, the formula will be replicated in other courtyards in Kathmandu Valley. Preliminary plans for Vaiody Chok have already been drafted and eight families have handed over their land ownership certificates as approval for the project. The challenge will be to simultaneously balance the needs of residents, the necessity for the structures to be seismic resistant, and to address urban density and property fragmentation.
HAIL, CAESAR!

The Coen Brothers, Joel and Ethan, have, for the last three decades, made numerous films — good ones, decent ones and brilliant ones — spanning a number of genres, but always excelling in the particularly tricky field that is black comedy.


The result is a pretty hilarious escapade involving a lost actor — the famous, recklessly Bard Whitlock (George Clooney) who is kidnapped by privileged communists (the film is set in 1951, during the Cold War, just as the studio system is about to end its monopoly in Hollywood. Tilda Swinton (Josh Brolin), the head of all productions at Capital Pictures, stars as the ultimate fixer as he tries to locate the whereabouts of Whitlock, who is famous for his simultaneous womanising and going on days-long benders. We witness first-hand, through a very comic lens, the struggles of Manichean hero in which the studio runs, as he finagles his recalcitrant stars, confesses his ethi

quandary to his priest as he lies to his wife about his smoking, spins juicy stories about the aforementioned stars to cover up their sordid messes, and does the maestroing required to keep famous people and multiple productions on track.

To add to the mostly mave fun, there are cameos by Tilda Swinton playing two identical twins, the bloodily minded tabloid journalists Thora and Thersally Thacker, Channing Tatum as Bert Gunty, a tap-dancing star with a nefarious agenda, and the likes of Jonah Hill, Ralph Fiennes, and Frances McDormand (the wife of Joel Coen) in roles that are as stylishly miscellaneous as it gets with the Coen at the helm.

Over the course of this funny, beautifully shot, often delightful film, there are often moments of puzzling loopholes — wild goose chases, even — that are characteristic of the Coens’ idiosyncrasies. There is an entire plot involving Scarlett Johansson as a flighty film star that really does not fit, but is remarkably entertaining nonetheless.

For the lovers of Miller’s Crossing, there is no better sweet potato love story for you here, but if you revelled in the goofiness of O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000), well, Hail, Caesar! will probably crack you up just as much, as you nostalgically remember Clooney’s more memorable turn as a convict-turned-blues star in that other Coen classic.

nepalitimes.com

M-Serie Printers

Get the most
ECONOMICAL
B/W PRINTERS ever

Best for Office and Commercial purpose

Just 25 PAISA per print

8000 PAGES
with initial shop
ink kit

EPSON
EXCEED YOUR VISION

MERCANTILE
OFFICE SYSTEMS

Kathmandu Valley Dealers:
1. A.R. Print Systems Pvt Ltd, Station Road, Patan, Bagmati,
Kathmandu. Tel: 01-4422929, 4422930, Fax: 01-4422299
2. Gyan Print Systems Pvt. Ltd, Dharan, Helambu, Tel: 01-4404499
3. Anand Print Systems, Bhaisepati, Lalitpur, Tel: 01-4422970
4. Nishita Print Systems Pvt Ltd, Dhapakhel, Kathmandu. Tel: 01-4404499
5. Nishita Print Systems Pvt Ltd, Bungamati, Lalitpur. Tel: 01-4422970
6. Marvel Print Systems Pvt Ltd, Bijepur, Kirtipur, Kathmandu. Tel: 01-4404499
7. Onward Print Systems Pvt Ltd, Bungamati, Kathmandu, Tel: 01-4404499

12 - 18 JULY 2016 #818

HAPPENINGS

SHOWING SOLIDARITY: House Speaker Om Prakash Mahato on Wednesday visits Gaurishankar BC on the seventh day of his hunger strike. BK is demanding reforms in the medical education sector and imprisonment of CMA Chief Lokman Singh Karki.

GOING STRONG: Foreign Affairs Minister Prakash Gyawali taking photographs during an event organised by the Russian Centre of Science and Culture on Wednesday to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Russia.

UP AND ABOUT: General Secretary of Nepal Congress Shashank Mani was discharged on Wednesday from Dhulikhel hospital where he had been admitted two weeks ago following complaints of ‘abdominal discomfort’ and ‘tough with shortness of breath’.

100 DAYS: President of SARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Suraj Karki addressing the audience on Thursday on developments and progress made in the 100 days since he assumed office.

REPORT LAUNCH: Nepal Economic Forum Chair Supex Shukla, head of EK0 Nepal Gail Maroti, Country Director of Millennium Challenge Corporation Himtech Dhungel, Farmer Member of National Planning Commission Swami Bahadur and Finance Professional Noyu Joshi on right launch a report on Nepal’s economy at an event in Kathmandu on Wednesday.
Kickbacks from the poor

Bhagwan Timilsina in Nepal Samacharpatra, 15 July

Even as a no-confidence motion was being registered against the government led by Prime Minister KP Oli, his Health Minister Ram Jamsen Chaudhary [picture] and State Minister of Health and Population (MoHP) Mohammed Mustak Alam [picture] have been trying to extract kickbacks from hospitals serving the rural poor.

Some 23 community hospitals are supposed to get government grants of up to Rs 506 million each after presenting proposals to the Planning Division of the MoHP. However, sources say Health Minister Chaudhary and State Minister Alam are demanding up to 30 per cent in personal kickbacks, in return for approving the grants.

One community hospital representative said: “How can we keep up the quality of health in our district if the ministers take nearly half the money away?”

The representatives of other hospitals, who reached the ministry on Wednesday to sign their agreements, requested Acting Secretary Padum Bahadur Chand and State Minister Alam to make the procedure clean and short.

Before the formulation of the directive to provide such grants to community hospitals, the ministry used to arbitrarily distribute grants to political cronies. However, the 23 hospitals outside Kathmandu were meant to receive their budgetary support after the provision was clearly stipulated in the Community Hospital Grants Directive 2016.

A high-level ministry official stated that Rs 10 million has already been released to Tikapur Hospital in Kailali and the hometown of Health Minister Chaudhary - a hospital now facing delays. Some of the hospitals that have received their grants are said to be close to the chief of the Planning Division, former secretary at the ministry Shanta Babdur Shrestha and incumbent ministers.

Hospital representatives have been given the runaround for an entire week, and their expenses are rising while they go to the Ministry every day to obtain the grants they are entitled to. Officials tell them the money has not been transferred, or to wait fruitlessly until 4 pm each day. The ministers could not be reached for comments.

Contrary to the directive

Laxmi Gautam in RN

Two blind and deaf brothers in their mid-70s, who have no family to look after them, have received citizenship certificates.

77-year-old Harka Sambahumpe had a citizenship certificate, but an inaccurate date of birth, which meant he was not entitled to social security allowances intended for elderly citizens. His 75-year-old brother Latte Sambahumpe had never obtained a citizenship certificate, and was thus also deprived of the benefit.

Harks is deaf and has poor eyesight, and Latte is both deaf and blind. Harks used to bring fuel wood from the forest to sell in the nearby market. Lattey used to make namlo (woven rope used to carry loads) and exchange it for food grants from neighbours. Although they have sufficient land, they are physically too weak and lack the necessary support to cultivate it.

In Ranjana village of Panchthar district in the far-eastern hills, the Sambahumpe brothers were struggling hard to make ends meet. After Harka Sambahumpe — Nepali Times’s sister publication — published a story about their everyday struggle in the 3-10 July issue, Panchthar’s Chief District Officer Kiran Thapa reached their village and gave them not only the citizenship certificates but also identity cards to receive the allowances.

The government had declared Ranjana as a drought-hit village a few years ago, but the Sambahumpe brothers had nowhere to go. Harks used to walk three hours to fetch a pot of water, while Latte used to stay at home and would ration for a whole week.

Siddhakali Bawa Suwara, a social organization in Panchthar, has also arranged a house for the Sambahumpe brothers. After receiving his citizenship certificate, Harka said: “I had heard that there was a government in Nepal, and now I understand what it means.”

Culprits free, innocents charged

Krishna Gyawali in Kantipur, 20 July

The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has been interfering incessantly in medical colleges for the past three years. It has filed cases even in trivial matters that should fall under the purview of departmental action, and overlocked gross violations of procedures. CIAA Chief Lokman Singh Karki has blatantly protected relations with involvement in medical education, while persecuting rivals.

CASE 1

The CIAA sent a letter to the Nepal Medical Council (NMC) on 26 July 2014. Shortly after, the medical education regulatory body hastily allotted the number of seats for each medical college. An investigation by the Health Ministry later found that the basis and procedure for determining the allocation were not in accordance with the rules, and recommended action against the regulator. It even pronounced that the NMC’s decision to set aside 135 seats for King Medical College in Gwarko — which is partly owned by Bimal Singh Karki, the CIAA’s Chief’s brother — was wrong. None of the NMC members involved in the decision has been prosecuted.

CASE 2

Jyoti Banjari, an NMC member who protested the seat allocation to medical colleges, had a corruption case filed against him by the CIAA. Banjari went on to monitor Dhriddha Medical College in Nawalparasi and suggested reforms. “The CIAA filed a corruption case against me because I protested the seat allocation,” Banjari said. The court later found the accused not guilty, as the CIAA could not furnish proof to back up its allegation.

CASE 3

A team of private medical colleges had a secret meeting in Dhulikhel three years ago after a panel of experts submitted a report to the government regarding irregularities in medical colleges. The owners of private medical colleges were in trouble after the formula of one student for six beds was introduced, including a ban on faculty members. Soon after, NMC proposed an amendment, through the Health Ministry, to its regulation, which was immediately passed by the cabinet. Six months later, a new provision was introduced that allowed one student for five beds, and even permitted teachers affiliated to one medical college to work in other medical colleges as well.

CASE 4

Former Dean of Tribhuvan University (TU)’s Institute of Medicine (IoM) Rakosh Shrestha resigned from his post earlier this year due to immense pressure from the CIAA not to implement the government’s decision regarding the tuition fee for admission to the IoM’s MBBS programme. Shrestha had been appointed Dean after Govinda KC’s hunger strike in 2014 demanding reforms.

The Tu has been unable to appoint a new Dean for months. A TU source said: “The vice chancellor couldn’t make up his mind about filling the post, after receiving phone calls from the CIAA and getting instructions not to do anything for now.” The CIAA had plans to punish some senior officials at the IOM before appointing a new dean, the source said.

The controversial Karulal Nath Yogi is likely to be in the Dean’s seat after receiving the green light from the CIAA.

Citizens in seventies

Laxmi Gautam in RN

Situated in Solukhumbu’s Everest region, the fast-growing LIma Te glacial lake is considered to be the second-largest in the country. To curb the possible threat of a glacial lake outburst flood, the Nepal Army has been implementing a project to reduce the lake’s water level.

Buried at a height of over 4,800 meters, the lake is spread over one kilometre, is 150 metres deep and carries over 76 million litres of water.

With the support of the Nepal Department of Hydrology and Meteorology and UNDP, the Army is building a canal to transport the lake water and reduce its level by three metres. Experts believe that the risk of the lake bursting will be minimised once the water is transferred.

Diverting danger

BBC Nepal Service, 28 July

The 50 m-long canal will divert the lake’s water to merge with the Dudh Koshi river through the Lima river. This risk-minimisation initiative — which is being carried out at an altitude surpassing all previous efforts — is estimated to cost up to $3 million.

The work to carve out the canal started in April this year and will soon be completed, with assistance from the Nepal Army and locals in the area.
POST-MORTEM OF A TRAGEDY

The confluence of offences and lapses that resulted in the death of two bright young students

OM ASTHA RAI

Grade 3 students of Pushpanjali School in Godavari, who survived a recent deadly wall collapse that crushed two classrooms to death, returned to school on Monday. It is an indication of how children can recover from traumatic events, that there is almost no hint of the calamity that befell them that rainy morning of 1 July.

The students, smiling and happy, gathered around to watch seven-year-old Rishik Kunwar enthrall everyone with a Nepali folk dance. He was joined by his friends Dhant Prasad and Nitesh Tamang, and when the two failed to synchronise their footwork, the whole classroom burst into laughter.

"This is how we are trying to move forward. We no longer talk about that day, we do not want them to dwell on it," said Principal Purnami Kanti Bajracharya.

The new classroom is in a rented house near the prefab structure that was smothered by the wall. The temporary classroom — where children's drawings are still littered among the debris of rock and mud — was being used after the main school building was itself destroyed in last year's earthquake.

Although the children seem to have moved on, the catastrophe still reverberates for the school and faculty, guardians, property developers who built an illegal retaining wall, municipality and police. The families of 10-year-old Anjana Pun and 8-year-old Kripa Rai, who died in the tragedy, have not received compensation. Some of the 48 students who were injured are still recovering.

Naresh Bajracharya, one of the developers (and owners) of the housing colony, is still at large, while his partner Karma Lama is in B&B Hospital suffering from hypertension and too ill to be taken into custody. On Tuesday, Pushpanjali School filed a written complaint against Lama and Bajracharya at the Sandabato
Lives cut short

A njana Pun (pictured, left), 10, lost her father when she was just five. Her mother found it difficult to raise her, so she sent Anjana to Amna Ghar, a children’s shelter in Lalitpur, last year.

At Grade 3 in Pushpaanjali School along with four other Amna Ghar children, Anjana was smart, friendly and popular. She was one of the children taken in by the shelter after the earthquake last year.

On the morning of 1 July, she left for school with her bag and umbrella. Her classes were being held in a temporary classroom after the school building collapsed last year in the earthquake. Suddenly, a retaining wall of an adjoining housing colony collapsed and buried part of the classroom. Of the 30 children inside, 26 were injured, while Anjana and her classmates, Krupa Rai (pictured, right) did not survive.

“These little children came to us after the earthquake, seeking a safe place to live in,” said Amna Ghar’s Bunnie Ellison. “I feel sorry that they were not safe in the school.”

Teachers remember Krupa Rai as a very polite girl who always greeted them with a smile. As always, she had been dropped off at the school that morning by her father, Rajeendra Rai, who still has not come to terms with the loss. “I sometimes feel my daughter is still alive,” he told us, eyes brimming with tears, “but she is gone. I urge the government to ensure that all school buildings are safe so no one else will have to lose their child like I did.”

The National Society for Earthquake Technology (NEST) estimates that about 20 per cent of the school buildings across the country need to be rebuilt or retrofitted to withstand earthquakes. More children did not die in last year’s earthquake only because it occurred on a Saturday, and although 33,000 classrooms were destroyed most of the students were safe. Next time we may not be so lucky.

In the wake of the 1 July tragedy, the Ministry of Education has formed a committee, led by Joint Secretary DEE Rimal, to assess the vulnerability of school buildings nationwide.

“This tragedy should be an eye-opener not just for the government but also for private school owners,” said ministry spokesperson Hari Lamal. “They must ensure that children are in safe buildings.”

Police Circle in Lalitpur, Amna Ghar, the shelter where Anjana Pun was staying, has also lodged a written grievance against them. Inspector Shyamal Subba, who is investigating this case, says Lamas are under police watch and a search for Bajracharya is ongoing. “He is not home, and his phone is off, but we will find him,” Subba said.

Lama and Bajracharya had bought the 3,000 sq m rice terrace above the school at a discount, levelled it using an excavator, and built a 2.5 m high rock and mud retaining wall right next to the pre-damaged classroom.

Principal Bajracharya says she repeatedly told Lama that the wall was dangerous, but Lama’s reply was that it was being designed by an engineer. However, Nepali Times has learnt that he had neither obtained permission from the Khatmandu Valley Development Authority (KVIDA) to level the land, nor from the Godawari municipality office to build the wall.

Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) guidelines state that the landscape of the three districts of the Valley cannot be altered without permission from KVIDA. From his hospital bed, Lama told us he did not get the permit because ownership of the land had not been fully transferred, as the partners had only paid Rs 5 million and were trying to secure loans. The Godawari Municipal office is barely 500 m from Pushpaanjali School, yet appears to have been clueless about the unauthorised wall coming up.

“It would be illegal to build any physical structure without design approval, but we cannot stop it just because it is illegal,” said Rom Bahadur Mahal, Chief Executive of the Godawari Municipality. “It is like asking the police to stop every single murder because killing someone is illegal.”

Property speculators often buy cheap land on the outskirts of the Valley and sell them at a profit, flouting housing colony guidelines and without KVIDA permission. Some alter their way through, particularly when they have to sell the plots.

Suresh Kumar Regmi of KVIDA Lalitpur slaps his shoulders as he says: “Even if they do not come to us to seek permission, we do not have a mechanism to go after them.”

With lax monitoring, it was easy for Lama and Bajracharya to get away with an unlawful and weak retaining wall that could not withstand the weight of materials accumulated on top of it. A committee formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) to investigate this case has held Lama and Bajracharya guilty for “not following engineering standards” and “not seeking permission”.

The committee also blames Pushpaanjali School for not having filed a written objection. Bunnie Ellison of Amna Ghar says all three parties are responsible for the tragedy. “The school failed to file a written complaint, and the municipality was ignorant of what was going on in its own neighbourhood, but the major shares of the blame falls on the developers because they intentionally built a retaining wall that was not sufficient by any engineering criteria.”

Following written complaints by Amna Ghar and Pushpaanjali School, police are preparing to take Lama and Bajracharya to court. Even if convicted, they will have to pay no more than Rs 500 fine or face a maximum of two years in jail, or both.
Counting proverbial chickens before they hatch

Of all the animals in our republic, the chicken gets the worst rap. We are rude to them in public, we defame them, and in the end, to rub salt into their wounds, we chop their heads off and eat them. Given all the bad press they get, domestic fowl should hire themselves a public relations consultant for a rebranding exercise.

We think chicken are cowards, not very strong in the brain department, have short attention spans, and are afflicted with a bad case of Attention Deficit Disorder. This is unfair. The Emperor penguin also has a fairly low IQ, and yet it has been declared our National Bird. Pencocks strut about as if they own the world, yet we bear nothing but praise for them. Ducks are dull too, but have a relatively better standing in the public arena.

To give chickens a complete makeover, we have to start with the negative proverbs about them that are derogatory and violent. From the proverbial Chicken Neck to calling the flight deck a coop, let’s face it: belittling Chicken Little comes naturally to us.

In the era of political correctness and now that we are Federal Secular Republicans, we must rewrite proverbs about chickens and other creatures great and small:

‘Chicken have come home to roost’
Ever since Geoffrey Chaucer invented this adage in 1390, we have lived with the typo and have taken the proverb to mean last bad deeds come back to haunt those who commit them. Actually, what Chaucer meant to convey in his bad handwriting was this proverb: ‘Every chicken at some point in its life comes home to roost.’

‘Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched’
This proverb was invented by Chairman Mao, who also concocted that other adage: “You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.” Our own Buddhas put those two adages together, and updated it to suit the objective conditions for revolution in Nepal with: ‘You cannot make an omelette without first decapitating the chicken’.

‘Which came first, the chicken or the egg?’
This is not exactly a proverb, but a scientific conundrum that has befuddled humankind ever since the Mini Ice Age. Finally, with advances in genetic engineering and with DNA analysis of fowl feathers preserved in amber in Siberia, the truth can finally be revealed: it was neither the chicken nor the egg that came first, it was a hen.

‘Finding oneself between Syllia and Charlydla’
I have done a Google search and can find no one named either Syllia or Charlydla. Who on earth are they, and why should anyone be enroached between these two ladies? If indeed they are ladies? Before it spreads any confusion, this proverb urgently needs to be altered to ‘Find oneself between India and China’ which means, basically, that we Nepalis of the male persuasion are having our gonads squeezed royally.

‘Beggars can’t be choosers’
Oh yeah! Since when? Ever since this country overthrew the Rana Yoke and replaced it with Lokanta Yick, we have been beggars and we never gave up our fundamental human right so that the Prime Minister’s Discretionary Fund can purloin 1.25 Crores of taxpayer’s mooslah and hand it over to a 6-year-old fortunate tailor from Jhapa. We could have chosen to make this country great, but being beggars, we chose to ride horses instead. This proverb should therefore be altered to read: ‘too many beggars spoil the broth’.

‘Barking dogs seldom bite’
I know from past experience when walking at night past the Great Krishna Galli Garbage Stockpiles, that this is 100% not true, and I have a gash in my shin to prove it. The really dangerous canines these days are in the Corruption Watchdogs. Therefore, unless I hear a voice of dissent, this proverb shall henceforth be amended to read: ‘Let sleeping dogs keep telling lies, and have their day continuing to pretend they are man’s best friends”.

‘Every man loves to hear himself brag’
I have met a lot of asses in my life, but present company excluded, not one has been what you might call garrulous. Nary a syllable escaped their lips. This proverb is completely erroneous, misleading, and an insult to ascetics. It should, without any hemming and hawing, be changed to: ‘An empty vessel is the devil’s workshop, and a Prime Minister can be led to the water but he can refuse to step down even if there is a No Confidence Vote in parliament’.

The Ass

Spread Happiness.