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PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL

KP OLI

BIDYA DEVI BHANDARI

SHER BAHADUR DEUBA

The fact that someone whose position fell to #3 in the 2013 polls is set to become prime minister for the second time is Nepali politics in a nutshell. The CPN (Maoist-Centre) Chair has played deft kingmaker, carving out a political space for himself between the NC and the UML, and mending bridges with New Delhi. But Dahal's time is limited, as he must step down in nine months to make way for the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba.

In a party meeting on Wednesday, he said: "This is my last chance." Dahal has his eye on the three elections next year, and he wants to tinker with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act.

PAGE 6

When KP Oli became PM last August, Nepal had just been ravaged by an earthquake and the Tarai was starting to burn. Then the economy took a direct hit from the Indian Blockade. He tried to fix relations with India, but spooked New Delhi by signing the Trade and Transit Treaty with Beijing. He played the nationalist card to the hilt to hide failures in governance and post-earthquake recovery. Oli is down but not out. The fact that New Delhi described his ouster as a victory has actually made Oli stronger. Now he can play the patriot to stage a comeback.

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

She may be a ceremonial President, but Bidya Devi Bhandari has a significant role during this uncertain political transition. Acting on a decision by the Cabinet of outgoing PM Oli, with whom she is close, she issued a presidential order to remove constitutional hurdles that would have prevented Parliament from electing a new PM. Using residual powers, she has given the political parties one week for a consensus government. Dahal is meeting UML leaders, but knows this is a formality. Bhandari will then give the parties three days to form a majority government headed by Dahal.

The NC President is not becoming PM just yet, but his party will get at least 13 cabinet berths, including the Home Ministry, in the new government. After nine months, Dahal will resign and support Deuba for PM until provincial and parliamentary elections. Deuba may have irked the Tharus by refusing to give them a province in the far western Tarai, but Madhesis now support him because he unseated the unpopular Oli. If Deuba gets the Madhesis on board, his party will do well in the Tarai in the next elections. After being out of power for over a decade, Deuba is all set to become PM for the fourth time next year.

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

SECOND COMING

Pushpa Kamal Dahal will have to outperform KP Oli in all departments if he wants to resurrect his country and party.

A day after Nepal’s new Constitution had been promulgated last year, Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal thundered at a mass meeting in Tundikhel: “India wants me to be a yes-man, but I refuse to be one.”

The saga of Comrade Prachanda’s rocky relations with New Delhi goes back to the war years. In 2008 when his party had a landslide win in elections, the Indians could not hide their shock. A guerrilla supremo had gone on to become an elected Prime Minister, and emboldened by his mandate he went on to try to sack Army Chief Rookmangud Katawal. Although President Ram Baran Yadav reinstated Katawal, many saw India’s hand behind the move. Dahal resigned, and spent the next few years licking his wounds and muttering darkly about India.

He often referred to New Delhi as ‘The Master’, and UML leader Madhav Nepal, who succeeded him, as its ‘Servant’. He even hinted that the Indians were out to terminate him. Then he tried to unseat Prime Minister Nepal by amassing hundreds of thousands of cadre on the streets of Kathmandu to ignite an urban uprising. When that protest fizzled out in six days, the Maoists cadre were utterly demoralised and disenchanted with the leadership.

Dahal was once more seen as a miserable failure, having damaged his party’s morale and organisational strength beyond repair. The consequences were serious: the Maoist party ultimately fragmented into at least six pieces, the Constitution-drafting process was delayed, and by the time the 2013 elections came around the Maoists were only the third-largest in Parliament.

Between 2009 and 2013, Dahal made efforts to regain New Delhi’s trust by promising to not repeat his mistakes. But New Delhi remained suspicious. Last year, when New Delhi ‘advised’ Kathmandu to postpone the promulgation of the Constitution, Dahal found another opportunity to get even. He revealed how Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar had tried to arm-twist him and other leaders to postpone the promulgation of the constitution.

The Nepali Congress, the UML and the Maoists pushed the Constitution through, which New Delhi tersely just ‘took note of’. Dahal milked this for all the nationalist advantage



he could get, an exercise in which he faced stiff competition from Prime Minister KP Oli. For the Indians, Oli was just a bit too cosy with China.

But nine months later, Dahal and New Delhi seem to have patched up partially. Dahal abandoned his partnership with Oli and the UML to switch his allegiance to the Nepali

Congress, a move behind which most commentators in New Delhi and Kathmandu see an Indian hand — whether or not it is the full truth. Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba apparently played a crucial role in convincing top Indian leaders that dangling the PM’s post in front of Dahal was the only way to oust Oli.

Although Dahal is more acceptable than Oli, many in New Delhi still do not trust Dahal completely, because of his reputation for being fickle with his loyalties. Those with long-term memories have still not forgotten or forgiven Dahal for visiting Beijing before New Delhi when he was Prime Minister in 2008 — a cardinal sin in the eyes of Indian officialdom.

This week, Indian newspapers celebrated Oli’s removal and gloated over what they saw as a ‘victory’ for Indian diplomacy, little realising that by doing this they made Oli an even bigger nationalist hero in Nepal. True, Nepali politicians are in the habit of using India to get to power, and then blame India when they lose it. Indian officials do not do much to dispel this notion. Nepali political middlemen often boast about their Indian connections. It is time bilateral relations shed this undignified and mutually harmful way of conducting diplomacy.

Oli always had the gift of the gab, and as Prime Minister entertained us all with witty repartees and wild promises. But he did precious little to alleviate the plight of earthquake survivors and the whole country as it reeled under the aftershocks of the blockade.

In his valedictory speech to Parliament on Sunday, he cited the trade and transit pact with China as “historic”: a treaty, if implemented by future governments, could reduce Nepal’s dependence on India, and thereby New Delhi’s political leverage in Kathmandu.

As the new Prime Minister, Dahal will have to outperform Oli in all departments if he wants to resurrect his country and party. And he will have to find solutions to Nepal’s economic and development crises within the country, not look for outsiders to blame.

Times

THIS WEEK

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

Most reached on Facebook
Embryos on the move by *Shreejana Shrestha*
Foreign parents take their embryos to Cambodia or elsewhere after Nepal banned surrogacy last year

Most shared on Facebook
Uprooted lives by *Smriti Basnet*

Most popular on Twitter
#solidaritymarch by *Bikram Rai*

Most commented
Counting proverbial chickens before they hatch by *The Ass*

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

BAN ON SURGACY
Banning is easy, managing is not ('Embryos on the move', Shreejana Shrestha, #818). We tend to ban anything that appears harmful, though it might not be. We banned Nepali women's entry into the Gulf without lobbying for their safety. We banned entry of Nepali guards into war-affected countries without realising the consequences that it might have on them. We have now banned surrogacy without assessing its pros and cons.
S Rijal

CULTURE OF SILENCE
When those who matter remain silent even when the country needs them to speak up, democracy is under threat ('A culture of silence', #818). Legislator Gagan Thapa had to struggle to find even two supporters to register a motion of urgent public importance to debate the demands raised by Govinda KC. Civil society leaders were a failure, neither approving nor rejecting KC's demands. Speaking against KC's grievances was something, but remaining silent endlessly is dangerous.
Sarita Pradhan

GOVERNMENT CHANGE
Oli paid the price for playing divisive politics ('PM Oli resigns', eSpecial, 24 July). A PM referring to its own citizens from Madhes as foreigners is not what we want. I hope Nepal has seen the worst in the last 9 months, and now will only move upwards.
Alex

CORRECTION
Due to an editing error, only the photograph on the left was of Anjana Pun ('Lives cut short', #818). We apologise for the oversight.
Artisjokk

Anup Kaple @AnupKaple
Great piece — and one of his biggest tests will be whether he will work to implement agreements Oli made w/ China.

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
As prime minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal may have to prove that he is not Delhi's yes-man <http://bit.ly/2aFrLcf>

Akhilesh Upadhyay @akhileshU
Beautiful piece, a very personal obituary by editor @kundadixit on the one and only Dubby Bhagat. RIP dear Dubby

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
In memoriam: Dubby Bhagat, 73 <http://bit.ly/29ZMd6H> @kundadixit

nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #819

Q. Should PM KP Oli cling on to power after the withdrawal of support by his major coalition partner?

Total votes: 87
■ Yes 43.68%
■ No 43.68%
■ Maybe 12.64%

Weekly Internet Poll #820
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will the new government be better than the KP Oli government?

Times

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22 governments in 26 years

The economic cost to Nepal of decades of political disarray

By staying in a country we accept the policies of its government and the system of the state. Our national identity means that this state system has also accepted us as citizens of the country.



ECONOMIC CLASS
Manish Jha

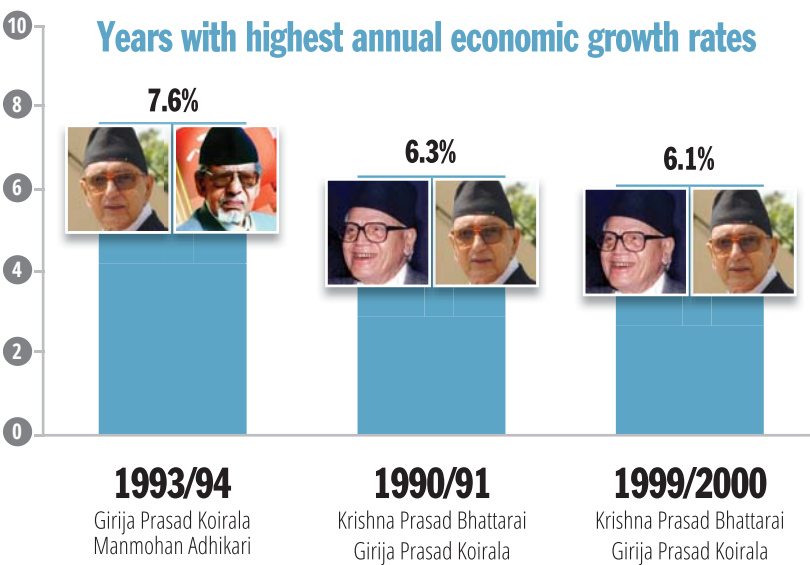
A government is a system by which a state or community is controlled, but a citizen of a country may sometimes be uncertain about what to expect from the state when its government, policy and logic of existence are not clear.

In 1990, the Nepali people hoped that, with democracy, the country was headed towards socio-economic development. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai became prime minister of a transitional government to draft a new constitution and organise elections. The GDP growth rate of Nepal was 6.3 per cent. A new political system and the hope of rule of law meant that investments flowed in and the market and state processes functioned smoothly.

Under Bhattarai's leadership we got Nepal's fifth constitution, and the 1992 elections were clean, with a high turnout. By the time Girija Prasad Koirala became prime minister, Nepal's economic growth rate was 4.6 per cent, and when he stepped down two years later, it was down to 2.9 per cent.

He introduced new economic and investment policies that started showing positive results, but infighting within the Nepali Congress forced him out. Midterm elections and political confusion created disturbances in economic growth.

It was not easy for UML Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari to carry on with the same pace of economic growth. But Koirala's investment policies and



Highest and lowest economic growth rates have been recorded under the Congress governments. This means that growth rates have gone up and down in Nepal not because of policies or the leadership, but because of the political situation.

Adhikari's socialist principles created a good balance, and economic growth spurred to 7.6 per cent. Today, lots of Nepalis still believe that 1992 to 1994 was the golden era of Nepal's economic development. Media liberalisation, easing foreign employment, and social benefits for senior citizens marked a major turning point in Nepal's economy.

Then it was the turn of the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba, but soon the country was mired in the Maoist conflict. The GDP growth rate plummeted to 2.7 per cent, a big loss for a developing nation.

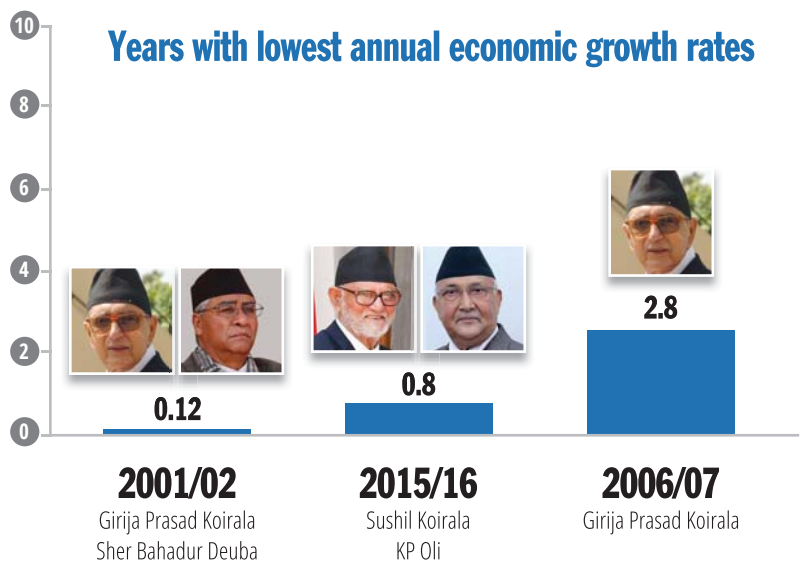
After Deuba, the prime ministers were akin to a game

of musical chairs: Lokendra Bahadur Chanda, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Girija Prasad Koirala, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, and back again to Deuba. The conflict ended, and so did the monarchy.

Comrade Prachanda came down from the mountains to be sworn in as elected Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal in 2008. It took a while for him to understand how a government functioned. Unable to give up his militant ways, he failed miserably and the economy suffered even more than before.

After he resigned in 2009, it was the turn of the UML's Madhav Kumar Nepal. One might say that Nepal tried to reform the bureaucracy, but he was in office for too short a time to complete it. Jhala Nath Khanal then had a brief stint, before being replaced by Baburam Bhattarai, who made a lot of populist moves, but the country suffered the consequences of making too many compromises in the distribution of ministry portfolios to smaller parties. The only thing people today remember about Baburam Bhattarai's tenure is that he started widening Kathmandu's roads.

Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi was appointed prime minister



just to conduct elections. He streamlined the administration and the 2013 elections went well. Sushil Koirala of the Nepali Congress replaced Regmi, and he pushed through with the Constitution, but that was about all he did. Koirala may have been honest, but the economy stagnated and took a direct hit from the earthquake of April 2015.

Koirala stepped down, as agreed, to make way for KP Oli, and the country was immediately embroiled in bloody protests in the Madhes followed by a debilitating blockade which had a

dramatic impact on the economy.

That, in a nutshell, is the story of Nepal from 1990 to 2016. Politics has been the biggest hindrance to Nepal's economic growth. We have been through several coalition governments, which have proven to be an inefficient model. Our political leaders are incapable of teamwork in the national interest — the most important ingredient required for the economic growth and development of a nation.

Manish Jha is co-founder and general manager of FACTS Nepal. @manishjhanepal

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Prabhu Bank recently inaugurated its branch in Rasuwa district's Syabrubesi, with the aim of making it convenient for residents of one of the earthquake-affected districts to receive money. Additionally, the bank also hopes to support and boost business activities in the area, the busiest transit port with China.

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Justice in transition

War victims lose hope as two former enemies accused of war atrocities are in power together

OM ASTHA RAI

Two leaders who will rule Nepal together for the next two years have something in common: they both face charges of wartime atrocities, from opposing sides.

Backed by Nepali Congress (NC) President Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN (Maoist-Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal is set to become Prime Minister for the second time. Parliament will likely elect him next week as Nepal's 23rd prime minister in 26 years. Under the Maoist-NC deal, Dahal will have to step down and back Deuba as the new Prime Minister next year.

Dahal was the supreme commander of a guerrilla army that fought a decade-long war in which 17,000 people were killed. In April, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began registering complaints, many families of war victims lodged complaints against Dahal. He then expedited efforts to unify all breakaway Maoist factions under his leadership.

In May, when Deuba tried to unseat Prime Minister KP Oli, Dahal used the opportunity to sign a deal with the UML to amend several laws within two weeks, in order to withdraw legal cases against Maoist leaders. Dahal was desperate to get this done, but Oli tarried.

Then, two weeks ago Dahal ditched Oli to forge a new alliance with Deuba. In Parliament this week, he accused Oli's party of trying to incarcerate him and other Maoist leaders. In June, Dahal had cancelled a visit to Australia at the last moment, thinking he might be arrested there and suffer the same fate as Col Lama in the UK.

Deuba is also charged with human rights abuses. During his second tenure as Prime Minister from July 2001 to October 2002, he had deployed the army against

the insurgents by declaring a state of emergency – a period of many human rights violations by the security forces.

In most of the 50,000 complaints received by the TRC, families of war victims have demanded answers from both Dahal and Deuba for the innumerable incidents of summary execution, extrajudicial killing, forced disappearance, rape and torture.

Gyanendra Aran, 40, has been fighting for justice ever since his father, Tika Raj, was kidnapped, tortured and shot dead by the Maoists in Ramechhap in 2001. He had to wait for years to file a case with the TRC against Dahal. "But the man who ordered my father's killing now holds power," he told us this week. "I am not hopeful that I will get justice

soon."

Dhak Bahadur Basnet, a Maoist sympathiser, had been detained by the army in 2002 in Baglung. He has neither been found alive nor declared dead. His wife, 44-year-old Chham Kumari, has lodged a complaint with the TRC against Deuba. "He was the leader when my husband was detained, and he is becoming a leader again just when I am hoping to get justice," she told us.

It will not come as a surprise if Dahal, and later Deuba, use their time in office to tinker with the TRC law to exonerate themselves. Deuba and Dahal will probably scratch each other's backs.

Suman Adhikari of the Conflict Victims' Common Platform hopes that the Dahal-Deuba partnership will not be able to dodge international pressure. "We do not

have faith in the TRC, which we believe was set up by the leaders to protect themselves and their cadre, and not to deliver justice for us," he said.

Adhikari was one of the 234 conflict victims who moved the Supreme Court, challenging the provisions in the TRC Act that allowed the transitional justice body to grant amnesty on behalf of the victims. The Apex Court ruled in their favour, but Adhikari says much more needs to be done to harmonise the Act with international laws.

Former enemies in the Maoists and NC warn that strict adherence to international law will jeopardise the peace process, and Nepal's truth and reconciliation process should abide by the Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006.

After the nine-point agreement in May, efforts were underway to limit grave violations of human rights to include only the murder of hostages, torture, enforced disappearances, rape and sexual violence. Previously, murder, illegal property seizure and displacement had also been deemed grave violations of human rights, which meant all Maoist leaders could have been jailed for wartime atrocities. Dahal was positive about the efforts, but he faced pressure from his comrades accused of murdering and torturing prisoners. He finally backed off.

With Dahal now allied with Deuba, and the UML – the party that was not involved in the war as much as the Maoists and the NC – out of power, there are fears that transitional justice will be delayed further, if not denied completely. 🇳🇵



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WIDE OPEN SPACES

Kathmandu desperately needs more breathing space amidst urban congestion

SMRITI BASNET

After last year's earthquake, Tundikhel was the only open area Kathmandu's residents could flock to. For months, the military parade ground was turned into a huge open-air shelter, just like after the 1934 earthquake.

The makeshift tents are now gone, and Tundikhel is once more the city's green lung. But it is shrinking, as most of it has been fenced off by the Nepal Army. The

Open Air Theatre is being turned into an underground parking lot.

Over the years, Kathmandu's dwindling open spaces are being increasingly encroached upon.

"Post-earthquake was the right time to plan and make people understand the value of public spaces, but unfortunately it is not going in that direction," lamented Padma Sundar Joshi of UN-Habitat.

The International Organisation for Migration has identified 83 open spaces within the valley as refuges in case of future earthquakes. But Kathmandu needs more than just open areas,

it needs public parks. Says Joshi: "Public parks are important from the social interaction aspect. A city without open spaces becomes more individualistic because there is no community interaction."

There are only a handful of public parks at present. Some communities have taken matters into their own hands and started building their own, like Nandi Keshwor Garden in Naxal and Bankali Garden in Pashupati.

Shriju Pradhan, Chief of Heritage Conservation of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) says: "If we had local elections, representatives would be forced to be accountable and meet the public's demand for open spaces."

KMC recently announced a plan to construct at least one park in each ward, and has set aside money for this. Environment Division Chief Rabin Man Shrestha says that the city can be made greener. "Ideally more than 10% of the city should be green, which is not the case right now." 🇳🇵



1 Balaju Park

The park is managed by KMC, and sees up to 500 visitors in a day. "We understood the need for open space during the earthquake, as many people had shelter because of this park," said park official Damodar Lama. Visitors are charged on entry.



2 Ratna Park

A spick and span park under the KMC, in the heart of the city. With lush greenery, colourful flowers, a duck pond and ample space for strolling, it is one of the few well-kept ones in the city. Visitors are charged on entry.



3 UN Park

This park, aimed at adding to the green space along the Bagmati Promenade, has become neglected and overgrown, but at least it has not been built up. A garbage dump site has overtaken part of the park.



4 Bhandarkhal Garden

Formerly a Malla-era garden, this is one of the few remaining green areas in Patan. "We want to give easy access to the locals. There is hardly any green space left in Kathmandu, so why should we close it?" asks Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust's Rohit Ranjitkar.





ALL PICS: GOPEN RAI

9 Bankali Garden

The Radha Madhav Samiti plans to build a park on the land owned by Pashupati Area Development Trust. "The world over, there are parks that are doing so well. So we thought, why can't we make something similar on land that was not being used for anything?", says engineer Khagendra Chaulagain.

8 Tundikhel

Tundikhel, which once used to stretch from Rani Pokhari to Dasarath Stadium, has been reduced to a fraction of its original size. The Nepal Army controls the entire tract, and there is little left for public use. Part of the Open Air Theatre is currently a temporary bus park, and the Army is adding buildings in the open area right next to the Army Officer's Club. "It is a public space. The Army does not have the right to construct anything, or stop movement of the people, in the area," said Padma Sundar Joshi of UN-Habitat.



7 Tinkune

A gateway for tourists entering Kathmandu from the airport, this triangular piece of land has received overnight makeovers during SAARC Summits. Plans to turn it into a park were announced in 1974 and several designs have been made, one of which includes underground parking, a meditation hall, souvenir shops, a tall Buddha statue in the middle, and handicraft stalls targeting tourists. But nothing has happened.



6 Godavari Botanical Garden

Located at the base of Phulchoki, the highest point in Kathmandu Valley, the garden provides a lush and welcome respite for residents. It also aims to raise awareness regarding plant resources. Visitors are charged on entry.

10 A community effort

Hari Prasad Malla got a call from Carol Malla, his four-year-old daughter, to check if they were going to Nandi Keshwor Park as he had promised.

"In Kathmandu, staying indoors feels like living in a jail cell. Children get fresh air when they come here," said the father of two, a resident of Gairidhara. His children's other favourites are Bhrikuti Mandap and the Central Zoo in Jawalakhel.

Like Malla, many other area residents visit Nandi Keshwor Park in the early mornings and late afternoons as a way of spending some time out in the open. It took the vision of a committed community member, Narendra Shrestha, to realise everyone's dream of an outdoor space for recreation.

"As soon as people see open spaces, they think of building malls and making money out of that," said Shrestha, who started designing the park in 2012. Shrestha says at that time the area had become a dumping ground for fallen structures and garbage.

Today, the ground has become a model park for many other communities. Carpeted with green grass, one corner of the ground is dedicated for children, with swings and slides. The pavement around the inner circle of the area is designated for strolling, and the park aims to build an acupuncture path soon, which will cater particularly for visitors with high blood pressure. The area has six water recharge wells, dustbins sponsored by Hilltake, and benches and solar lights sponsored by Nepal Telecom.

To get things going, Shrestha raised Rs 360,000 from local institutions. The Community Police patrols the area and helps in weekly clean-up activities, and the area remains well-maintained and tidy. Modelled after Hyde Park in London, it has become the ideal destination for the community and a safe space in case of emergencies.



SMRITI BASNET



SMRITI BASNET

5 Central Zoo

The Jawalakhel zoo makes for a prime location as an open space and public park. Situated at the centre of congested Patan, the area has a large pond and abundant greenery. Visitors are charged on entry. There are plans to shift the zoo to Surya Binayak.

EVENTS



Bhoto Jatra,
Gather along with thousands in Jawalakhel to mark the end of the Rato Machindranath festival with the showing of the bejewelled vest. 29 July

Origami fun,
Master the Japanese art of paper folding at an origami workshop for teachers and parents, taught by Hiroko Oyawa. 31 July, 11 am to 2 pm, Nepal Japan Children Library, Lajimpat, 9841322524/9841322524, Fee: Rs 500 (limited to 15 places)

Otaku next,
Dress up as 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 Française, Teku, www.otakunext.com, Tickets: Rs 300 (entrance free for cosplayers), Rs 350 (on the day of the event)



Street art,
Don't miss out on the International Street Art Festival organised by ArtLab Life, featuring a host of art events: mural making, art talk shows, documentaries, exhibitions, street art jams and more. 1 August to 23 September, Multiple venues, 9813462106 / 9841807005, artlab.ktm@gmail.com, artlablife.com

Sound of Music,
Re-enactment of the musical *Sound of Music*, by Shuvata School students. 5 August, Nepal Academy, Kamaladi, Price: Rs 200 for 12 pm (students show), Rs 500 and 1,000 for 5 pm (general admission)

Inspiring minds,
Learn, share and network with fellow women entrepreneurs at the Young Entrepreneurs' Summit Women. 29 and 30 July, 9 am to 5 pm, Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, Register: bit.ly/yesw2016, Fee: Rs 2,500 per person (Rs 2,000 for students)



Write a play,
Participate in the National Play Writing Competition judged by Anup Baral, Upendra Subba and Anbika Giri, and get a chance to stage your play in a theatre. The top ten applicants can also attend a workshop facilitated by Mahesh Dattani. 28 July to 28 August, ngsamuha@gmail.com, 9849024252/9823691301

Slam poetry,
Watch Interstate's poet and performer Deborah Emmanuel perform live, along with Nepali slam-poetry group Word Warriors. 30 July, 2 to 4 pm, Swarnam Theatre, Kalikasthan, www.sarwanam.org.np

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Having someone to love is family.
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Miss Moti-variation
Kripa Kreations

DINING



Dan Ran,
One of the best venues for Japanese food in this part of town. Jhamsikhel, (01) 5521027

Little Italy,
Go vegetarian at this new Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special, the chocolate bomb. Kamaladi, (01) 4233577

Hyatt Regency,
Mouthwatering kebabs and curries at The Café, prepared by Chef Bhanu Aryal and his team of Indian chefs. 22 to 31 July, 6.30 to 10.30 pm, The Café, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Rs 2,000 plus taxes per person, (01) 4491234



Bajeko Sekuwa,
This monsoon splurge on jhol momo at Labim Mall's Bajeko Sekuwa and also relish a wide variety of other meat delicacies.

Lhakpa's Chulo,
Nepali dal-bhat, Newari khaja, Swiss Rösti, Italian risotto, and Thai green curry – take your pick. Jhamsikhel, (01) 5542986

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

MUSIC



Prayaas live,
Spend a musical evening with Nepali indie band Prayaas and celebrate the weekend. The Factory, Thamel, (01) 4701185/87

Food and music,
Enjoy live music accompanied by a sumptuous spread of Korean food at Beautiful Coffee Nepal. There is also a coffee workshop, for those interested. 4 August, 5 to 8 pm, Beautiful Coffee Nepal, Sanepa, (01) 5529308

Bold is beautiful,
A one-day event filled with performances by some of Nepal's well-known female artistes. 5 August, 5 to 10 pm, RS Moto, Naxal, rsmotonepal@gmail.com, Tickets: Rs 250 (advanced sales), Rs 350 (door sales)

Open mic night,
Grab the mic and sing your heart out at House of Music every Tuesday. House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172



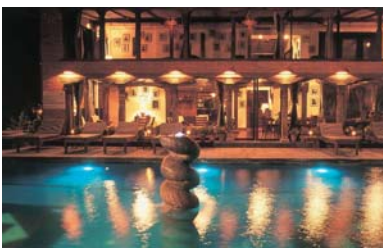
Naren Limbu live,
Hear the Chahana timi mero pop sensation Naren Limbu live, as part of the Live Musical Era 2016 hosted by Fem Nepal. 30 July, 7 pm to 4 am, The Victory Lounge, Darbar Marg, 9801031277/9802961570, Tickets: Rs 1,000

GETAWAY



Hotel Shambala,
Take the weekend off and lounge by the gorgeous infinity pool located on the hotel's rooftop. Bansbari, Kathmandu, (01) 4650251

Jungle Safari Lodge,
Escape from the hustle and bustle of the city and surround yourself with lush greenery in the middle of Chitwan National Park. Chitwan National Park, Sauraha, (01) 4444999



Dwarika's Hotel,
A little slice of paradise hidden in the middle of the city. Start the day off with complimentary yoga classes in this grand heritage hotel. Battisputali, Kathmandu, (01) 4470770

Mango Tree Lodge,
Delve into culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. Bhetani, Bardia, info@mangotreelodge.com

Raniban Retreat,
Wake up every morning to the clouds beneath your feet. The resort offers a quiet retreat and a beautiful view of the Annapurna range you won't find anywhere else. Pokhara, (01) 4411855

BAJEKO SEKUWA ३ दशकदेखि गुणस्तरीय सेवा, सर्वोत्कृष्ट स्वाद

काठमाण्डौको केन्द्रीय भागमा सेकुवाको मासु तयार पारी सबै शाखा र फ्रेन्चाइजमा पठाइने

बाबरी प्रजातिको स्वसी मात्र प्रयोग

घरेलु कोइलाको प्रयोग

स्वच्छ तरिकाले सेकुवा तयार पार्दिने

तयार सेकुवा प्रस्तुतिका साथ टर्नर्याउने

यसरी तयार पारिन्छ सेकुवा

१. बाबरी प्रजातिको स्वसी मात्र प्रयोग गरी सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

२. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

३. घरेलु सेकुवा उपत्यका काठमाडौंमा प्रयोग गरी सेकुवा तयार पारिन्छ ।

४. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

५. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

६. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

७. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

८. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

९. काठमाडौंको उपत्यका बाबरीको सजाय काठमाडौंमा सेकुवाको लागि मासु तयार पारिन्छ ।

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PICS: KATJAZZ PRODUCTIONS

Going underground

Nepal is known around the globe mainly as a land with the world's highest mountains, which adventurers flock here to scale. What is less well-known is that climbers can also literally go into the mountains.

Nepal is also a land of caves, and the most cavernous of them all is Siddha Gufa in Tanahu. In fact it is said to be South Asia's largest cave in terms of the subterranean area it covers. For cavers, this is a bonanza because much of its dark and forbidding innards have yet to be explored. Siddha Gufa was discovered a decade ago, but introduced to thrill seekers for adventure caving only in 2014.

For this second feature in the series, Suzana Shrestha — a famous stunt biker in the area and also Miss Tanahun for 2015 — agreed to show us around. Hiking from the highway with the afternoon sun blazing down on us was quite literally an uphill task. At the cave opening, refreshingly cool air gushed out.

"The air is chilled by the cold limestone inside the cave, we call it natural AC," grinned Suzana.

As with all adventure activities, the guide started with safety instructions. Being well-


acquainted with the gear, I did not pay much attention, little realising that it would eventually cost me a bruised palm. Lesson learnt: always be attentive to instructions.

There are two levels in Siddha Gufa from where to rappel. The first 6 m felt very much like a pre-adventure drill because of its short length. The second is the real deal: a 70 m vertical drop in pitch darkness.

Head-band torches are of little help, and the light attracted insects.

My second level started on shaky ground; in fact, there was no ground. I was used to rappelling with my two feet planted against a surface, but this one had me dangling in the air. After confirming — and

reconfirming — with the guide that there were absolutely no other options I, um, caved in. I had to keep abseiling in this manner until I came along a limestone surface on which to set my feet.

While rappelling is definitely a highlight, the end of it was only the beginning of the real caving experience. Suzana took us around a dark enclosure, and before us was an incredible indoor swimming pool, the surface dark, mysterious and mirror-still (see box). 



SAMRIDDHI RAI



Getting there

Kathmandu to Bimal Nagar: 133 km (along Prithvi Highway)
Drive time: 3 hr 30 min

CAVE RAVE

- Make sure you wear shoes with a strong grip, to prevent slipping.
- Always wear full-sleeved tops and full-length trousers to avoid injuries and insect bites.
- Always bring extra devices to shed light. Our phone lights came in quite handy.
- If you are claustrophobic, this may not be an adventure you would enjoy.

Caving partners

Helen and Rocky Land Lodge, Bimal Nagar
+977 9846028298
Initiative Outdoor
+977 (1) 2111505
Astrek Climbing
+977 (1) 4419265



Siddha Gufa

Like all caves, Siddha Gufa is full of stalactite and stalagmite sculptures formed over aeons from limestone deposits from dripping water.

Their shapes sometimes give them religious significance, and others seem to resemble individuals. A few look like Lord Buddha in a seated lotus position, another is reminiscent of the Nepali poet Lekhnath Poudel, who was from Tanahu, and one is even similar to the replica of the plumed crown of the Shah dynasty.

The stalagmites are regarded as symbols of Shiva, and pilgrims come to Siddha Gufa this month for a holy dip, particularly in the large pool formed in an enclosure during the monsoon.



STAR TREK BEYOND


For someone who grew up watching all of the *Star Trek* originals, spin-offs, and now the reboot with an origin story that started yet another lucrative franchise in 2009, this third instalment of the latest



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

cycle of films is perhaps the most disappointing so far, iterating as a stock sci-fi action film that blurs by, with hardly any of the usually memorable moments that make you grin even a few days later. *Star Trek* is beloved for the tightness of the characters and the very real camaraderie between the crew members of the starship “Enterprise”, who consist of Captain James T. Kirk

(Chris Pine); Commander Spock (Zachary Quinto); Leonard McCoy (Karl Urban) aka “Bones”, the ship’s doctor; Lieutenant Uhura (Zoe Saldana); Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott (Simon Pegg) or “Scottie”; Mr. Sulu (John Cho) the helmsman; and Chekov (Anton Yelchin) the ship’s navigator. Having set up the relationships and developed the characters over the previous two films – *Star Trek* (2009) and *Star Trek Into Darkness* (2013) – *Star Trek Beyond* bets on a classic separation story: the Enterprise is tricked into answering a distress call, attacked by a malevolent enemy, Krall (Idris Elba), and forced to crash-land on Altamid, a planet within the hard-to-reach nebula to which the starship had been falsely lured. Scattered over the surface of the planet after being forced to

eject from the plummeting ship, with their beloved Enterprise in pieces, the majority of the shaken crew are held hostage by the crazed Krall who wants to destroy the Federation, for reasons that I cannot disclose here. Of course our main characters fortuitously land out of Krall’s clutches, and set about trying to rescue everyone in what makes up the better chunk of the film. The banter between Spock and the doctor, and Kirk and Chekov, as they wander about on Altamid reigns as the funniest, most engrossing parts of the film. Scottie too does not disappoint as he sets out to try to find his friends, instead bumping into the fierce but lovely Jaylah (Sofia Boutella), an alien whose family has been killed by Krall. She takes him under her wing, adorably calling him Montgomery Scottie by a comedy of errors that illustrates what is largely missing in this overly action-packed film. This review is purposely fully vague on exact details, partly to stay away from spoilers, but mainly because the narrative is based on very classical tropes that are deathly boring to both viewer and reviewer. This film is for the fans, the ones who miss that universe where the bold break through the final frontier of space. It is a shame the makers are not as courageous when it comes to writing a truly exciting script worthy of these awesome adventurers. 

 nepalitimes.com
■ Trailer 

HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

OUTGOING: Prime Minister KP Oli walks out of Parliament after resigning ahead of a no-confidence motion on Sunday that he looked likely to lose.



BIKRAM RAI

BREAKING FAST: Govinda KC is still in hospital on Thursday, three days after ending his 16-day hunger strike following a deal with the government on medical reforms.



DIPAK KC

KARATE KID: Supporters of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority Chief Lokman Singh Karki deployed children at a rally on Wednesday.



NEPALARMY

CLINGING TO LIFE: The Nepal Army and local people rescue children trapped by the swollen Kamala River in the eastern Tarai on Wednesday.



GOPEN RAI

THE RAIN GOD: Traditional musicians cheering on those pulling the Rato Machindranath chariot to Jawalakhel for the Bhoto Jatra festival which falls on Friday.

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Geopolitics of regime change

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 28 July
कान्तिपुर

Government change is normal in parliamentary democracies. Nepalis have seen two dozen governments in 25 years, so they are used to it. This time, the UML's KP Oli is out and Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the CPN (Maoist-Centre) is back in. The Indian media and Indian diplomats have been portraying this regime change in Nepal as being in India's national interest. If true, this is unfortunate for Nepal's sovereignty and independence.

Nepal's leaders tend to blame India when they are brought down. Oli is no different. But it is also true that India has had a hand in just about every political change in Nepal. However, Nepalis expect politics to be free of outside interference. The fact that India suggested changes to the constitution last year which led to a blockade proves that the South Block wants a say in Nepal's politics. Indian leaders and diplomats drop such hints often. Indian diplomats have said that India was behind Oli's exit and it was India's wish.

To be sure, big countries always try to influence smaller neighbours, and it is up to the smaller country to be smart. It is an insult to citizens to allow a foreign country to have a say in whether their government stays or goes. A lot of the blame goes to Nepal's own politicians, who invite such interference. Nepal's relations with India are age-old; they should be in a state of equilibrium, and should not affect our relations with another neighbour.



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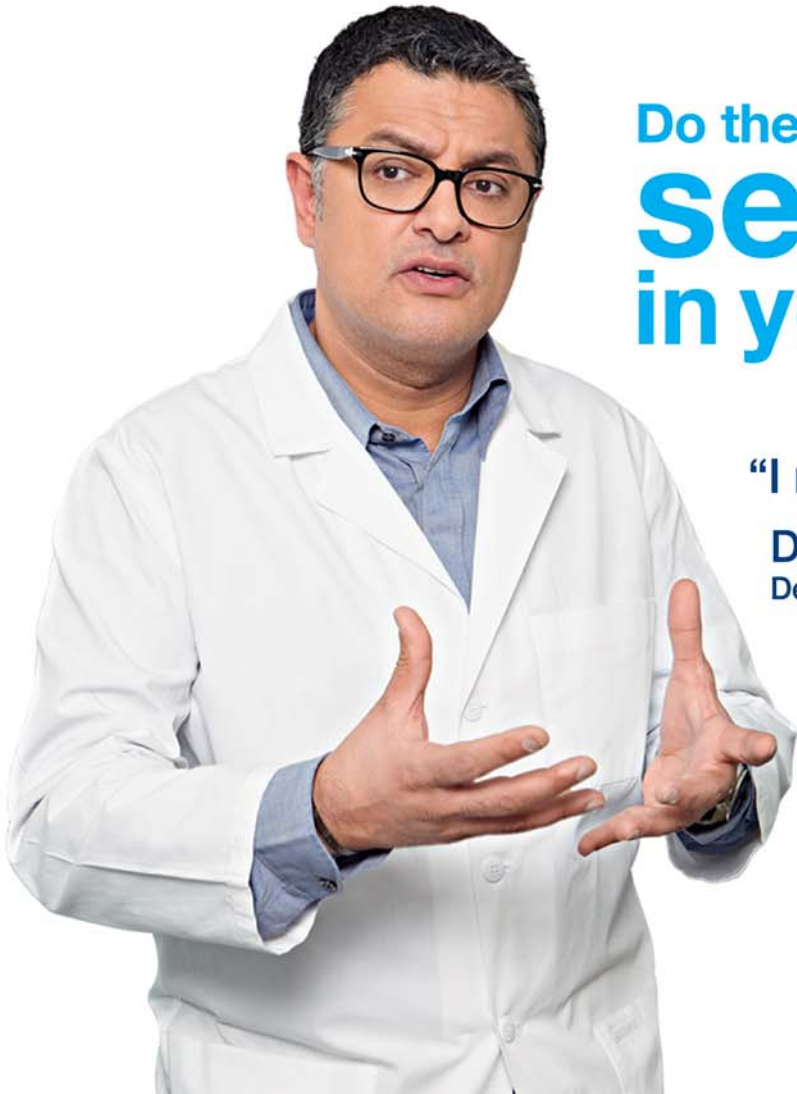
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EMPOWERING LIVES: Gopal Biswokarma (*above*) is the owner of a local metal welding workshop. Gami Ghale (*below*) runs a rice huller, a flour mill and an oil extractor from her shed, a temporary structure made of green corrugated tin sheets.



BUILDERS OF BARPAK

With electrification, Barpak is back in business

MANISHA ARYAL
in GORKHA

Resh Bahadur Ghale’s saw mill has been running non-stop this rainy season, slicing large planks of wood since Barpak’s 133 kW micro-hydro plant started generating power again in April. It took a full year for electricity to be restored in Barpak, the town nearest to the epicentre of last year’s 7.8-magnitude earthquake. But the power is making rebuilding possible. “I have lost count of the number of doors and windows we made in the last three months,” said Resh Bahadur. “There are over a thousand houses to rebuild in this village.” Only a year ago, he was making beds, cupboards, dressers, chairs and benches for Barpak’s houses, now his workshop is adapting to the needs of reconstruction. “Earlier, people had homes

and wanted items to make their lives comfortable, but now the bulk of our work is for doors and windows. We are moving with the times,” he adds. Resh Bahadur started his Naradkunda Kashtha Udhyog some 20 years ago, when Barpak’s first 50 kW power plant was installed. His ancestors had

been grazing sheep on the slopes of Baudha Himal for centuries. Ghale remembers seeing good wood rotting in the forest as he herded his cattle to and from higher pastures in the summer. So he approached Bir Bahadur Ghale — who had built the Ghatte Khola micro-hydro plant — for advice and then set up his own

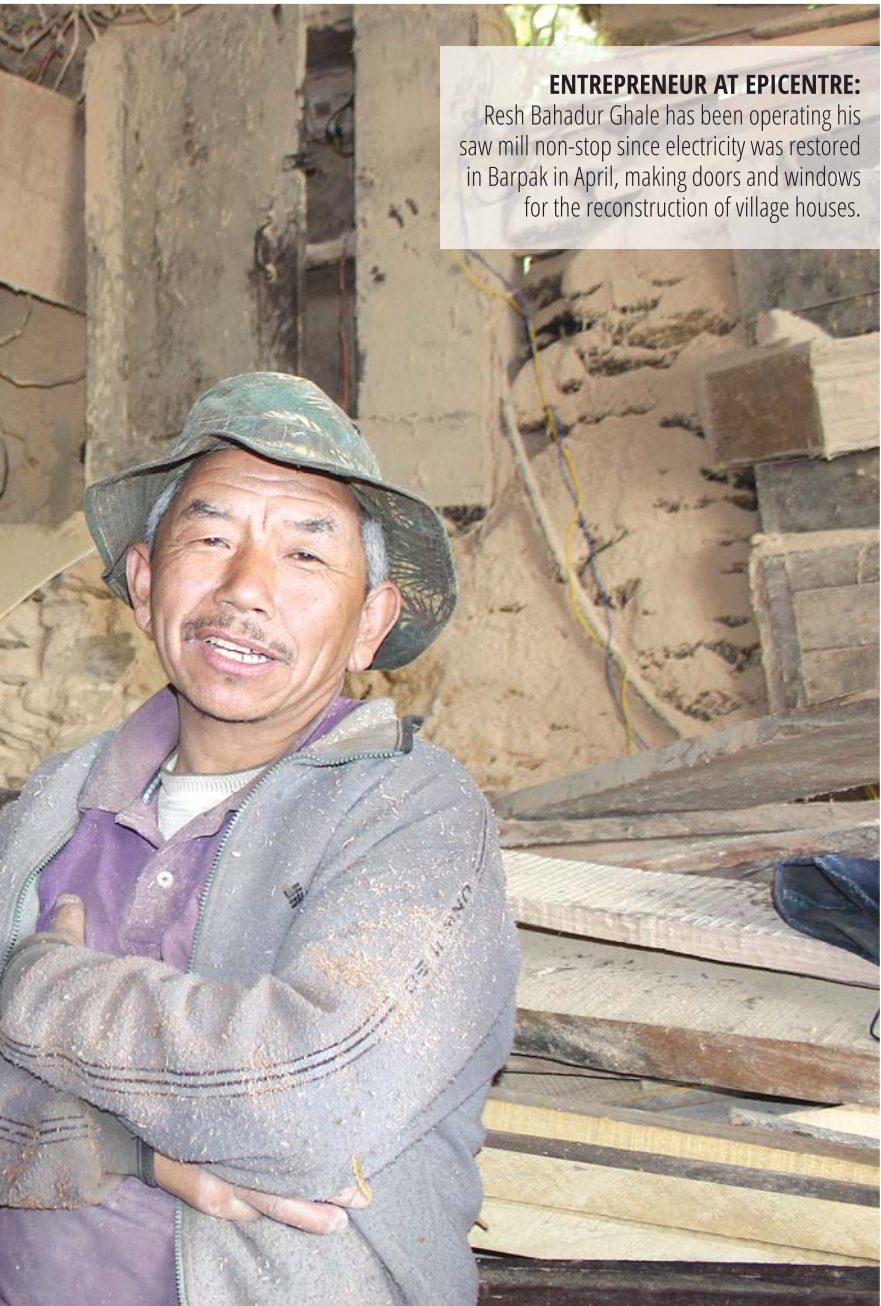
furniture business. The April and May 2015 quakes demolished Barpak’s schools, health posts, and local businesses, including Resh Bahadur’s workshop. Only four of Barpak’s 1,200 houses were left standing, and his own 99-year-old father died when his buffalo shed collapsed.

Villagers had just finished with the funerals of the 700 who were killed, when the monsoon season started. The roads to Barpak became impassable, and when the rains stopped there was the Indian blockade and then an unusually cold winter, which made rebuilding impossible. With the power plant destroyed, the



THE GODFATHER

On a rainy morning last week, 26 men and women from Barpak met at the Ruping La guesthouse in Barpak. Chaired by electricity pioneer Bir Bahadur Ghale (*pictured, seated at far left*), it was the first meeting of the Lhakpa Dorje Agricultural Cooperative, which was being set up to invest in increasing the efficiency of micro-enterprises using power. Ghatte Khola-3, upgraded from the earlier 50 kW plant, currently produces 130 kW. Ghale sees potential for a cold storage plant for vegetables, a milk-chilling unit, a nettle powder-processing plant, a Lokta paper factory, and other tourism-related services, including a water purification plant. Ghale and his company Barpak Rural Electrification won the National Geographic Society’s \$70,000 Great Energy Challenge 2015 to rehabilitate the Ghatte Khola-3 damaged by the earthquake. Part of the money has gone to set up the Lhakpa Dorje Agricultural Cooperative to incubate and accelerate micro-enterprises.



ENTREPRENEUR AT EPICENTRE:

Resh Bahadur Ghale has been operating his saw mill non-stop since electricity was restored in Barpak in April, making doors and windows for the reconstruction of village houses.

ALL PICS: MANISHA ARYAL

village was shrouded in darkness for a year.

Now that the electricity is back, Barpak's businesses have dug out their power tools from the rubble and are getting ready to rebuild. Hari Bahadur Ghale's stone masonry shop, Gopal Biswokarma's metal workshop, and Gami Ghale's agro-processing unit, are all also open for business.

"It was as if all of us were waiting for light," says Gami Ghale, who runs a rice huller, a flour mill and an oil extractor from her shed, a temporary structure made of green corrugated tin sheets. "The government said it would give us earthquake relief money to rebuild our lives, but we needed power before anything else."

Only a few houses in Barpak had held on to their traditional

round stone grinders for flour. Many had been forced to walk a couple of hours down to Baluwa Bazar, and then take the bus to Gorkha 50 km away to have their corn and millet ground and their rice hulled.

"It was as if we were back in the middle ages," Gami Ghale recalls.

Now that Barpak residents have power and can start to rebuild, trucks and tractors will be chugging up to Barpak from Baluwa as soon as the monsoon ends. Local leaders are lobbying to get the Manaslu Development Bank to open a branch in Barpak to distribute relief from the National Reconstruction Authority. At present they have to go to Gorkha.

"Four things are required for reconstruction: people, power, roads and bank," says Jit Bahadur

Sending books not enough



many of the books were locked up in sheds with other relief items. Most books were damaged by rain and rodents and had not reached the children they were intended for. A set of books was for schools higher up the mountains, and no one had people to spare to carry them up.

Sita, Sanju, Keyrani and I salvaged what we could, but several were destroyed. It was heartbreaking to see them go to waste, especially since many of the books were from Room to Read, whose books are no longer available in Kathmandu bookstores. I also saw many Rato Bangala Kitab book titles for the first time, as they were out of stock when I had tried to buy them in Kathmandu.

The schools had received the books and other items for children, but had nowhere to put them. With community infrastructure ruined and everyone in the village, including teachers, focused on rescue and recovery, books were not a priority.

Sending books to remote villages — especially to areas that have just suffered a devastating calamity — sounds like a kind, helpful thing to do, but it is not enough. Successful distribution is important, as are simple, clear-cut guidelines for teachers on how to encourage children to read. Teachers need help to create a conducive reading environment and to get children excited about books.

This need not be complicated, and can be as straightforward as sending up a small tent or a waterproof mobile bookrack along with the books, designating a teacher to make the books available to the children, or having older students take turns to read aloud to younger kids. When this happens, kids will actually use and enjoy reading the books that are sent up for them.

Maya Pandey

Ghale, owner of the village hardware store and local representative of the Nepali Congress Party, ticking each item off on his fingers.

Gopal Biswokarma — owner of a local metal welding workshop — is waiting for the monsoon to be over. His land was chosen as the site for President Bidya Devi Bhandari to lay the foundation stone to kick off national reconstruction activities. Biswokarma continues to live in his makeshift house, but his business is starting to pick up with the return of power to Barpak.

"Relief rice goes only so far," he says. "A village cannot live on handouts alone, and reconstruction needs both money as well as people who can do the work."



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The Vermicultural Revolution

Some random people have been stopping the Ass on the streets this week asking me – off the record – what I make of the ongoing regime change. My answer has been a categorical “WTF”. Others have asked how long it will take for the new government to be formed, and strictly on condition of anonymity, my take is: “Until the cows come home, or when the fat lady sings, or both.” And to those of you who want to know whether it is safe to eat momos, my answer is still: “Only if you boil the buffalo first.”

There are lots of rumours flying around about everything, and the Ass’ sage advice is to believe all gossip until it is proven that they are only half-true.

The big news this week is that Comrade Awesome is again going to be Prime Monster, and being once bitten and twice shy, he is determined not to make boo-boos like last time when he went North before heading South. On the happy occasion of the re-ascendence



of Comrade Supercalifragilistic to the Peacock Throne, we have dug into the donkey archive to find some important points in the Great Helmsperson’s illustrious political career.

- While he was still underground, Comrade Fearsome was the leader of Nepal’s Vermicultural Revolution, and the author of many memorable sound bites like: “Step on the shoulder to hit the head, but only after using Head & Shoulders anti-dandruff shampoo.” (That message was brought to you by P&G.)
- Commandante Awestruck often warned of a “tunnel war” with India, and proceeded to dig trenches along the entire Indo-Nepal border to thwart a possible invasion. And we have found an old interview in which he even threatened to declare war on India, and made this grand proclamation in an interview while living in Noida.
- After he was elected Sub-prime Minister in 2008, Comprador Dahal’s first order of business was to announce that, the invasion of India not having materialised, he was going to turn Nepal into a Switzerland. But the sound system was not working very well, and we couldn’t

quite make out whether he meant “Sewageland”.

- During his daring tenure, Comrade Terrifico tried out everything, including *anulom vilom prayanama* and then *kapalbhati prayanama* while listening to Ram Dev at Tundikhel. In a sermon to the congregation, El Capitan said, “Revolution is the fusion between spiritualism and dialectic materialism especially since it is also the opium of the masses”, and waxed lyrical on how yoga was an inherent part of Mao Thought. And while agreeing that animal sacrifice was barbaric, he said that – under certain objective conditions – human sacrifice was ok.
- Comrade Lotus Flower then turned his full attention to ping-pong diplomacy with the North and ding-dong diplomacy with the South. To cut a long story short, PKD soon became *persona-non-grateful* and the Chairman’s roar soon became a meow.



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