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Remembering not to forget

The then underground Maoist party had just launched its armed struggle in February 1996, and Rukum-based primary school teacher Narjit Basnet was one of the first casualties. The rest of Nepal wasn't even aware a war had started.

Basnet was returning home one evening when he encountered a group of Maoists. They hacked him with khukuris, chopped off his left arm below the elbow and left him for dead by a river. He had been mistaken for his brother who was a Nepali Congress member. Luckily Narjit was rescued, and despite the heavy loss of blood, survived. While he was recuperating in a hospital, his brother was hunted down and killed anyway.

We tracked down Narjit Basnet last week. He is still teaching (above) at the same school where the famous photograph of him in class was taken 20 years ago (right). Balancing a text book on his left elbow while teaching a classroom, he is still waiting for government



compensation that hasn't reached this remote town. The attackers never had to answer for their crime, instead they walk around freely in Musikot. Narjit Basnet has not pursued them because he doesn't expect any justice from an uncaring state.

The Saraswati Primary School in Musikot has expanded and

HUNGRY GHOSTS EDITORIAL PAGE 2

will soon house 10+2. Twenty years ago, the classroom had a mud floor, dilapidated furniture and a boarded up window. Today, the students have uniforms with ties, the rooms are brighter and older students no longer have to go to Surkhet for higher education.

Rukum is no longer at war,

Nepal has transitioned from monarchy to republic, but Narjit Basnet is exactly where he was two decades ago.
Prabir Dadel in Rukum

Read full story pages 14-15

WITH A TUNNEL VISION



Nepalis working on subway tunnels in Hong Kong have just the experience needed to build hydropower projects in Nepal

BY SONIA AWALE
PAGE 8-9

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HUNGRY GHOSTS

With former enemies now in the governing coalition, it is up to civil society and the media to remember not to forget wartime atrocities

In a horrific preview of the terror to come, Maoist rebels chopped off the left hand of primary school teacher Narjit Basnet in Rukum in February 1996. *Nepali Times* tracked down Basnet, and found him exactly where he has been for the last 20 years: teaching Grade 3 of Saraswati School in Musikot, still cradling his text book in the stub of his arm. (See page 14-15)

Dekendra Thapa was a well regarded journalist in Dailekh working for Radio Nepal. When the Maoists stopped the water supply to the town in 2004 during a siege, he offered to mediate. But he was disappeared. In 2008, Dekendra Thapa's body was finally located, exhumed and forensic examination revealed that he had been buried alive after torture. (Story on page 14-15)

Krishna Prasad Adhikari was 17 when he went to visit his mother's family just after finishing his SLC exam in Gorkha. A group of Maoists caught and tortured and killed him by stuffing him inside a sack and dragging him behind a motorcycle. His parents Nanda Prasad and Ganga Maya came to Kathmandu to protest when Baburam Bhattarai was prime minister in 2012. Police got them certified as 'mad' and dumped them in Gorkha. The couple returned to start a hunger strike outside Bir Hospital. Doctors kept the couple alive through intravenous feeding, but Nanda Prasad died last year and his body is still in the hospital morgue. Ganga Maya is on the 52nd day of her fast-unto-death, and her health is deteriorating (pictured, above). In the past four years, she has seen five prime ministers come and go. None have helped her. The International community is complicit with its silence.

Many in Nepal want to forget the trauma of conflict. Some families of the victims and the survivors want to carry on with their lives even when they see perpetrators rewarded with high government office, or walking down village streets



BIKRAM RAI

every day. Partly it is because of a culture of fatalism and a desire to let bygones be bygones. But to a large extent this collective apathy is due to a lack of confidence that a government made up of former enemies will ever deliver justice.

The Maoists have shown that it is OK to kill people to get into government, and they never have to answer for the crimes they unleashed. State security, on the other hand, justifies structural violence because it had to counter Maoist brutality. One uses the doctrine of revolutionary violence, and the other says state response under the rules of war is legitimate. But the cases of Narjit Basnet, Dekendra Thapa, Krishna Prasad Adhikari, and many others including the Army's use of death squads in the Bhairabnath Barracks,

its massacre at Doramba and Kotbada, or the Maoists blowing up a passenger bus in Madi, all fall under war crimes.

The Maoists, NC and the UML have no desire to revisit conflict era atrocities, and are willing to let each other off the hook. Despite their vicious power struggle, they are all on one side when it comes to transitional justice. They will provide lip service for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Commission on Enforced Disappearances as a sop to the international community, and not really to bring perpetrators to justice.

Even though Nepal Army Col Kumar Lama was acquitted on charges of war-era torture by a UK court, it has established a precedence that perpetrators can run but they can't hide.

In the ten years after the conflict ended, there has been lawlessness and ad hocism in governance. The political transition has dragged on because Nepal is ruled by a political cartel made up of the once-warring parties. The immunity from prosecution that they have given themselves is the reason for the impunity in all spheres of national life today. It is the reason for the lack of accountability, for endemic corruption, the erosion of the rule of law and the sinister rise of a parallel state power. When rulers are walking proof that you can get away with murder, you cannot blame others down the line for trying to get away with stealing, cheating, extortion or intimidation.

The public's indifference helps the former enemies who now form the state to wash each other's bloodied hands. It is now up to civil society and the media to ensure that we remember not to forget, to chronicle the carnage and document the atrocities so that the survivors and the families of the murdered and disappeared get the truth and justice they seek.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

WOMEN TRAFFICKING

Thank you for highlighting the fact that the districts that are vulnerable to women trafficking are also the districts with most women migrant workers ('Epicentre of trafficking', Om Astha Rai, #824). But the author has failed to touch upon the issue through the cultural lens. To just say that most women migrate from the satellite districts of Kathmandu because this is from where most women were sold into Indian brothels in the past is not sufficient. The author should have looked at multiple layers of the issue.

Kirti Pradhan

Social workers and community educators must work directly to persuade, educate and convince villagers that they need to give the best education available to their children ('Hiding hidden wounds', Shreejana Shrestha, #824). And best education does not mean an expensive education. They must give their children agricultural or other occupational skills, and facilitate their intellectual, physical and emotional growth with play, conversation and interaction. Sending them away for survival is not good.

Leslie Brown

The fact that Nepal's President, Speaker of Parliament and Chief Justice are women is in itself a great leap forward ('Power to women', Bineeta Gurung, #824). But this is not sufficient. Even if our Parliament elects a woman as Prime Minister, it will not end the deep-rooted patriarchy. To change it, and to create an equal society, we need to educate girls and invest in their holistic growth. It takes time, but change is surely underway.

Radha Poudyal

Equality should mean equal opportunity, not equal equity. It is a competitive world out there and one cannot be chosen over the other solely based on gender. Qualification and capability should also come into play.

Sun G

One cannot achieve something just because s/he/it wields political power handed to them on a platter. The one who hands it wields the power. If a woman wields power through competition rather than for being a woman, she can inspire more women.

Mr Poudel

Krishna T@Thakurvetnep
As if Nepal is so homogeneous that demographic diversity doesn't exist.

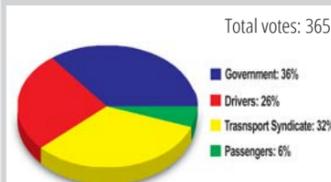
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Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #825

Q. Who is responsible for the frequent road accidents in Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll #826
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Did India ban the import of Nepali ginger due to political reasons?



BIKRAM RAI

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The Tij fast by Nepali women could also be considered a one-day hunger strike against male dominance in our politics and society

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Power to women by Bineeta Gurung



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Bringing the world to Nepal

Turkish Airlines marks three years connecting Kathmandu and Istanbul

The only country spanning two continents, Turkey has long served as a bridge for people travelling from East to West and vice-versa. And its national airlines – Turkish Airlines – with the most destinations of any airlines in the world, has made it easier to connect Nepal with the rest of the world.

From 800 – 500 BC, Byzantium (now Istanbul) was on the border separating the Greek and the Persian empires. During the days of the Silk Route, it was Constantinople where all roads led, not Rome.

Keeping up its reputation of being an important junction, Istanbul is still a melting pot for wanderers and travellers alike and with an increase in the mobility of people thanks to a boom in the airline industry it has once again become the hub for layovers, besides being a destination in its own right.

Istanbul's advantage is its location, which is ideal for layovers short and long. And in an age when direct flights take up to 15 hours, Istanbul's central location is a blessing. This makes destinations in South America, Australia, North America and the Far East just a one-stop hop away from anywhere else in the world.



PICS: SAHINA SHRESTHA

Turkish Airlines has been trying to cash in on its geographical location.

Post the construction of Istanbul's new airport, the airline aims to make travel and transit smoother and more reliable. Currently, Turkish already flies to 293 destinations in 119 countries covering more ground than any airline in the world.

Turkish is the only airline that links Nepal directly to Europe, and although its flights have been reduced to four days a week because of a fall in the number of travellers, a possible repercussion of the coup in Turkey this July and the socio-political upheaval that rocked Nepal this past year. The airlines, however, is hopeful that it will resume daily

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High fuel price a deterrent

Excerpts from the interview with Harun Bastürk, Vice President of Sales for Asia and Far East Turkish Airlines.

Nepali Times: What are the main issues confronting your Istanbul-Kathmandu connection?

Harun Bastürk : To be honest, the main issue is the aviation fuel price in Kathmandu. Fuel in Kathmandu is very expensive. This definitely affects the financial performance of this route. I don't remember the exact number we received from fuelling but I know that when you compare the prices to Turkey it's almost more than double. In all of Turkish Airlines' networks, the fuel cost is 20-23 per cent of the operations on an average, but for Kathmandu it is around 40 per cent.

Do you have plans to resume daily flights between Kathmandu and Istanbul?

The passenger load for Kathmandu is very seasonal. During winters, the passenger flow is higher than during summers. So, I don't think we will be able to have daily flights during the summers but are aiming to increase the number of flights in our winter schedule.

Any plans to promote Turkey as a destination, and not just as a transit point?

Turkish Airlines mainly carries tourists or expats from the US and Europe who mainly travel during winter. At present the relationship between Turkey and Nepal is limited and it is important to fill this gap. As the national carrier, we want to be in Nepal, we want to be in Kathmandu, to be the bridge.

operations soon.

According to Harun Bastürk, the airlines' Vice President of Sales for Asia and the Far East, nearly 95 per cent of passengers from Kathmandu are transiting Istanbul (see interview). He said the main deterrent in the flights to Nepal was the seasonality in traffic and the high cost of aviation fuel at the airport in Kathmandu. He told the Nepali Times: "Turkish Airlines mainly carries tourists or expats from the US and Europe, who usually travel during winter."

In 2015, Atatürk Airport in Istanbul, where Turkish Airlines is based, was named the 11th largest Airport in the world providing services to 61.8 million passengers, and was deemed the third busiest airport in Europe with 129 airlines using it for transit and travel facilities.

Despite these impressive statistics, the capacity of the airport is limited.

The airline is getting ready to extend its operations to the new airport, which when completed will have six runways, four terminals, and is expected to serve 150 million passengers a year.

Sahina Shrestha in Istanbul



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Added destination

National flag carrier Turkish Airlines has added Cluj-Napoca as its third destination in Romania from Istanbul after Bucharest and Constanta in



was recognised for its services and products.



Romania. Flights will operate on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in both directions.

Best for business

Qatar Airways was given the title of 'Best for Business' by Conde Nast Traveller Readers at an event held in London recently. The carrier, which flies to more than 150 destinations,

Drive for education

Sipradi Trading, authorised distributor of Tata Motors in Nepal, announced their 'Test-Drive Campaign for Education'. Tata Motors will display Tiago, Bolt and Zest at schools across the country. For each test drive, the company will donate Rs 500 to the school.



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How decentralised is federalism?

The current debate is between power centralised in federal capitals and at the local level

We have promulgated a new constitution, but the peace process is not complete until its main provisions are implemented. And a critical element of it is federalism.



GUEST COLUMN
Kiran Nepal

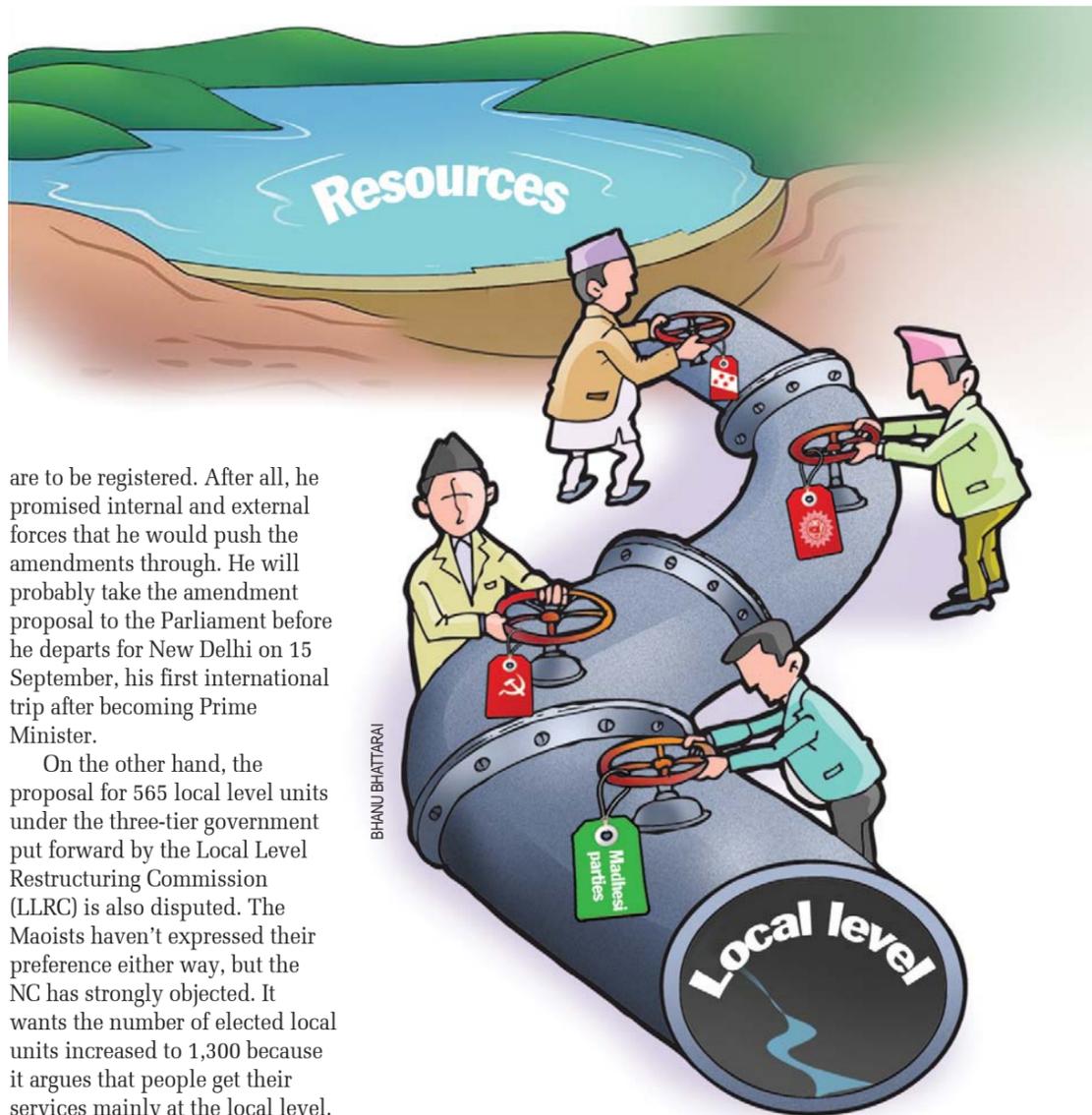
Politicians in Nepal tend to postpone intractable problems and that is what they have done with federalism, citizenship, delineation of constituencies, and other contentious issues in the constitution.

And even within disputes about federalism, the standoff concerns the demarcation of five disputed districts in the plains provinces and restructuring at the local level. Madhesi parties rejected the seven-province model, but supported the new coalition of Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN (Maoist - Centre) on a condition of amendments to the Constitution that addressed their demands.

However, even the new government hasn't registered the amendment proposal in the Parliament as yet.

Prime Minister and Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been blocked by the UML from pursuing the amendments because it is against Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari becoming a part of the eastern Tarai province.

The UML is exacting revenge on Dahal for abandoning the coalition it lead. He needs the UML's help if the amendments



are to be registered. After all, he promised internal and external forces that he would push the amendments through. He will probably take the amendment proposal to the Parliament before he departs for New Delhi on 15 September, his first international trip after becoming Prime Minister.

On the other hand, the proposal for 565 local level units under the three-tier government put forward by the Local Level Restructuring Commission (LLRC) is also disputed. The Maoists haven't expressed their preference either way, but the NC has strongly objected. It wants the number of elected local units increased to 1,300 because it argues that people get their services mainly at the local level.

The UML, which swept the last local elections 20 years ago, says the number of local level units proposed by the LLRC is high and should be lowered. The Madhes-based parties have emphasised more rights to provinces by curbing rights of local level units. The debate is now between whether

Nepal should have centralised governance within federal units, or decentralised local governments.

The new Constitution has proposed a three-tier federal government model. And the government, elected directly by the people, is the mechanism responsible for protecting the

country's sovereignty, maintaining effective internal regulation and serving its citizens. Going against this representation and restricting the rights of its citizens at the local level by giving more power to provinces means distorting the principle of decentralisation and federalism. This might be

convenient for short-term partisan interests, but does not meet expectations in the long run.

Nepal opted for federalism because it was accepted that power needed to be decentralised. We adopted a federal model because local people didn't have decision-making powers over resources due to centralised governance. Those who want more rights for federal provinces by cutting rights at the local levels, should do a rethink: will it be practical if rights of provinces are restrained and more rights are given to the centre?

Constricting the power at the local level and making provincial parliaments stronger means curtailing the rights of citizens. The latest demand of the Madhes-based parties is an obstacle to decentralisation and federalism and complicates the political transition.

The NC should also reconsider its strategy regarding the number of local level units. There is no alternative to accepting the decision of the LLRC and creating a favourable environment for holding local elections.

Dahal and the UML need to sit down and take the amendment proposal to Parliament at the earliest, and hold elections in the Upper House (the House of Representatives) by 21 January, 2018.

The election at the local level and provincial parliaments should be conducted before that. There needs to be representation from the local and provincial levels to form a national assembly, and select the president and the vice president soon after the Upper House elections.



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The monsoon is starting to backtrack from the northwestern subcontinent but a large depression holds sway over the Indo-Gangetic plains and this affects central and eastern Nepal. As the ambient temperature falls, the likelihood of updrafts along the mountains and condensation is higher, which is why we will get more of these evening squalls. Expect generally cloudy weekend in Kathmandu Valley with chances of rain.

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The hills are alive

From Western to Eastern classical and fusion, the second edition of Gharana Music Festival has it all

SMRITI BASNET

Over the years, the small room of the world renowned cellist Franck Bernede's house in Sitapaila has often come alive with the sound of music. Of late, the room has been hearing an ensemble of Cello, Madal and Esraj to recreate 16th century Spanish music in preparation for an encore of last year's popular Gharana Music Festival in Kathmandu.

Having founded Singhini in 2001, Bernede has been working to promote and preserve Nepali artists abroad. He has performed in international festivals over the years, the size of the ensemble



depending on the kind of music and venue. For this festival, the trio hopes to bridge the gap between Eastern musical instruments and its approach to music with that of 16th century Spanish and 17th century Italian music.

"There is a common root between the ragas that my fellow colleagues practise and renaissance music, and that is what I found interesting and wanted to introduce," said the Baroque music specialist who will be

performing with Santosh Prakash Shrestha and Bidur Rajkarnikar during the festival.

Returning for its second edition after a successful event last year, the Gharana Music Festival will spot many other acclaimed musicians. "What we are trying to do is give people a deeper access inside different musical traditions. We're in a place where music education is starting to grow significantly. Both music teachers and students want more genres available for

study," said David Linden of the Gharana Music Foundation that hopes to introduce musical traditions from all over the world including Nepal.

The four-day event, 14-18 September, is going to see a host of chamber concerts and some live performances in the open. Like last year, the festival will have a series of workshops and master-classes enabling students to learn from experienced musicians and perform for an enthusiastic audience.

The master classes will be hosted by international and local artists like Bernede, Rupert Boyd, Neecia Majolly, Paul Cesarczyk and Salil Subedi on different instruments like the viola, violin, piano, guitar and even the didgeridoo.

Linden hopes that the festival, like last year, is one-of-a-kind to not only entertain and educate but also to provide a platform to upcoming musicians. "Folk traditions, in a sense, are getting lost. Though there is education of Eastern classical here, the musicians do not get enough exposure," said Linden who sees hope in bands like Night that fuse modern and traditional instruments to revive such folk traditions.

The band which has experimented with sounds of instruments like the paluwa, tungna and piwancha has received accolades for its first album and recently concluded their trip to the Karnali region to research on the region's endangered traditional instruments, will be coming out with a second album.

"Our aim has always been to look for new sounds and explore the scope of any instrument that we use," said Jason Sunwar of Night who feels such festivals are a step towards making the public aware about the performance art culture and encourage music appreciation.

The new western style classical Duende String Quartet will also feature in the festival.

"The most important thing about Gharana is to be able to appreciate all forms of music through history from all over the world for their artistic worth and also their cultural worth," said Linden who is looking forward to an enriching and lively second edition. 🇳🇵

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JHAM BAHADUR GURUNG



Tunnel VISION

The experience Nepalis have amassed digging tunnels for Hong Kong's subway system could be harnessed for hydropower projects back home

SONIA AWALE
in HONG KONG

Thirty metres below Hong Kong Island, a gigantic drill burrows through the rocks to build an extension of the South Island Line of the territory's subway network. Controlling the Tunnel Boring Machine in the humid heat deep underground is a Nepali crew led by tunnel construction veteran Jham Bahadur Gurung.

Gurung is one of those Nepalis who decided to follow their British Gurkha descendant spouses to work in Hong Kong's booming construction industry. But with new hydropower projects in the pipeline

back home, many hope that Nepal can use their experience in the state-of-the-art drilling technology.

"I hear about new hydropower projects in Nepal and we talk about working back home. If not anything else, I can at least share my experience in tunnel construction," says Gurung, who is the pilot of the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) and is an expert in the precision techniques required.

Construction has long been a preferred occupation of most Nepalis living in Hong Kong, and thousands are working on tunnels, as engineers operating TBM, or as labourers in drilling and blasting. There are plenty of jobs because Hong Kong has

five major subway extensions and railway projects underway, simultaneously.

"Nepali workers are experts in the field of tunnel construction," explains Dambar KC, a researcher of the Nepali community in Hong Kong. "Tunnel Boring Machines are a new concept in Nepal and the best Nepali TBM pilots are here in Hong Kong."

Gurung has spent 16 years building tunnels and his expertise is much sought after in Hong Kong. He now has offers from Chinese-supported hydropower projects in Nepal that need people with his knowledge of the field.

"I think the main reason they have approached me is because of my skills, but also because I can communicate better between

contractors and locals as I speak both English and Nepali," said Gurung, a political science graduate.

Communication is often a big problem between engineers and labourers as well as between managers and locals in hydropower projects in Nepal, and Hong Kong-based tunnel engineers would be a perfect fit.

There are several big hydropower projects in Nepal in which Chinese investors are involved. In April, the Investment Board of Nepal cleared China Three Gorges Corporation (CTG) \$1.6 billion to develop the West Seti hydropower project, which is expected to generate 750MW when completed in 2022.

The Chinese are also involved

in the Bheri-Babai Diversion Multipurpose Project in Surkhet whose aim is to transfer trans-basin water through a 12 km long and 4.2 m wide tunnel from Bheri to Babai in western Nepal to irrigate 51,000 hectares of farms in Banke and Bardia while generating 48MW power. The project is expected to use the TBM.

The China Overseas Engineering Company (COVEC) had approached Hong Kong-based Nepali operators like Jham Bahadur Gurung.

All new hydropower projects need tunnel construction technology. Projects in Nepal have long employed the drill and blast method. The 26km Melamchi tunnel is using TBM for the first time.



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SHYAM INGNAM

MEN AT WORK: Jham Bahadur Gurung poses for a photograph this week in front of the Tunnel Boring Machine he pilots. (left)

Nepali workers pose in a tunnel they are working on in Hong Kong.

"I had been talking to the director of COVEC and it would have been great if I could have explored this opportunity," said Gurung, "but in the end they didn't hire me because they thought I was too expensive."

Shyam Ingnam, an engineer at the Vinci Construction Grants Project and previously a lecturer at Kathmandu Engineering College, says some Nepalis would be willing to work for slightly less in Nepal because of the fulfillment they get from contributing to the development of the home country.

A Nepali tunnel operator earns up to US\$ 8,000 in Hong Kong, and workers also enjoy generous insurance and injury compensation. Still, Ingnam said: "If I'm paid 60 per cent of what I earn here, I won't mind working on projects in Nepal. But less than that might not work."

Not everyone is as enthusiastic. Bhuwan Limbu, who comes from a family of British Gurkha soldiers, tried to work as a tunnel expert in Nepal, but he was so turned off by the politics and nepotism, he decided to leave.

"You can't do anything without political connections. If Melamchi was based on skill and hard work alone, people like us could have completed it in a year or two," said Limbu who works as a TBM operator on the Tuen Mun-Chep to Lak Kok sub-sea tunnel. "I'd have liked to use my skills in my own country, but for that there must first be political stability in Nepal." 🇳🇵

Since there are no trained TBM pilots and operators in Nepal, COVEC is looking at two options: either employ a team of Hong Kong-Nepali TBM experts or just hire Gurung in a higher position. "Skilled Nepali workers from the subway tunnels in Hong Kong would be of great advantage to us," said Sumit Shrestha of Hydro China Corporation, which is building the 102MW Upper Trisuli II.

However, there is the question of whether Nepalis with the same experience will be paid less than their international counterparts. In that case, Nepali technicians say, they'd rather work in Hong Kong where they can easily earn 10 times more than what they would in Nepal.



HEM LAWATI

SERVE MY COUNTRY

Hem Lawati (pictured, left) is originally from Jhapa and studied to be a lawyer at the Nepal Law Campus. However, after a short stint as an advocate, he left for South Korea to work in a textile company, where he worked for a year and nine months.

Soon after, he followed his spouse to Hong Kong and started working at the tunnel construction's drill and blast. Now, with 20 years of experience, Lawati is tunnel supervisor with Dragages Bouygues Joint Venture in Hong Kong.

Despite his position, expertise and earnings in Hong Kong, Lawati wants to go back to Nepal and serve his country.

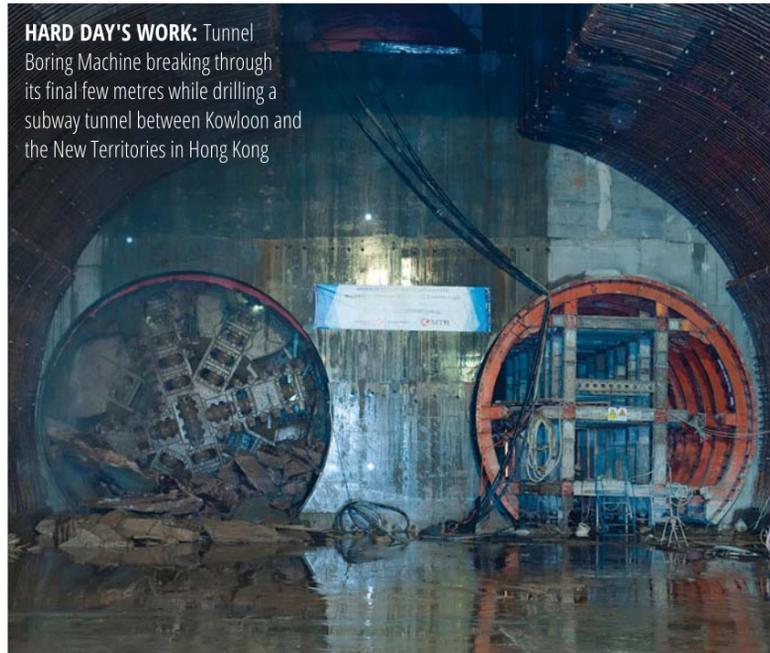
"If my skills are recognised and the work environment is favourable, I'll be the first one to sign up," said Lawati. "I'll leave my monthly US\$10,000 job and will be satisfied with Rs 100,000. If the offer is good I know many Nepalis here who would want to work in Nepal."

nepalitimes.com
Watch video



A NEW TECHNOLOGY

HARD DAY'S WORK: Tunnel Boring Machine breaking through its final few metres while drilling a subway tunnel between Kowloon and the New Territories in Hong Kong



SHYAM INGNAM

The Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) has been long used to excavate tunnels for railway and hydropower projects, and is being used to dig the 26km Melamchi tunnel.

"TBM is an extensive process, used especially in urban areas where you cannot use blasting techniques," says Nepali TBM engineer in Hong Kong, Shyam Ingnam. "In Nepal, it will undoubtedly be more efficient and safe."

Construction and transportation costs make Tunnel Boring Machines more expensive than the drill and blast method, but the minimal disturbance it causes to the rock strata and the tunnel wall, reduce tunnel-lining costs.

The machine can dig up to 60 m of tunnel space per day and can bore anything from hard rock to sand, making it a sound alternative to the traditional drill and blast method.

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EVENTS

Indra Jatra,

Revel in an exhilarating evening of traditional dances and music with thousands at Basantapur. 15 September



Art Market,

For all things Nepali, visit this weekend's art market '#Madelnepal special'. Also visit for the live music. 10 September, 12 to 4 pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01) 5553869

Urban pop wear,

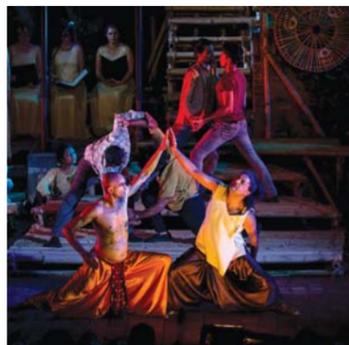
A unique runway show of urban pop art fashion wear by Bijay Gautam in collaboration with ArtLab. 9 September, 8 pm onwards, Attic Bar, Gahana Pokhari Marg, (01) 4442615

Street fun,

Stroll on the streets of Jhamiskhel for food, fun, and live music by some of your favourite bands as part of the Jhamsikhel Street Festival. 10 September, 12 to 8 pm

Fashion photography,

Learn the tricks and trade of fashion photography with Sanjog Rai in a three-day workshop. Profits will be given to charity. 16 to 18 September, Evoke Café & Bistro, Jhamsikhel, 9851111051, Registration: Rs 6500, On the spot registration: Rs 7000

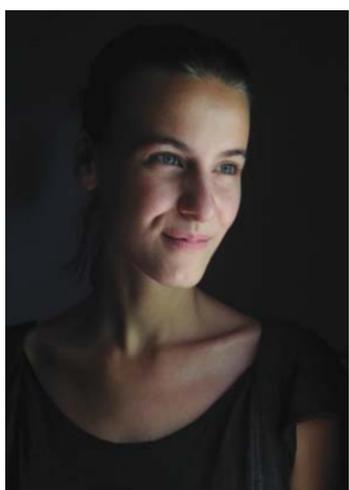


Arjuna's Dilemma,

Mark your calendars for the staging of the opera Arjuna's Dilemma, based on the Bhagavad Gita, by One World Theatre. 3 to 11 September, 7 pm onwards, Patan Museum, Patan Darbar Square, Tickets: Rs 750, 500 (adults), Rs 250 (students), For reservations: 9803047148

Digital design,

Participate in a three-day long digital art and design workshop led by UK's graphic designer Matthew Magnus. 14 to 16 September, 9 am to 12 pm, NexUs Culture Nepal, Fee: Rs 3000, Rs 500 (Students)



Art exhibition,

Attend the exhibition by German contemporary visual artist Lena Koester, organised by Artudio. All sale proceeds go to Subsashree orphanage. 9 to 13 September, Artudio, Swayambhu, Chhauni Hospital Road, 9851180088, artudio@hotmail.com

Ride to Khokana,

Contribute to restoring Nepal's cultural heritage by participating in a cycle ride program from Kathmandu to Khokana, organised by Khokana Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee. 20 September, 7 am onwards, Price: Rs 600

Monochrome mandalas,

Master mindfulness by learning the art of making monochrome mandalas with Sattya Media Arts Collective. 10 September, 11 am to 3 pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, Apply: <https://goo.gl/uzlawd>, Fee: Rs 500

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



DINING



Bajeko Sekuwa,

Enjoy jhaneko sekuwa served with a side of beaten rice, bhatmas sandheko, tareko aloo and newari achar. All outlets, 9801188421

Barista lavazza,

The newest addition to the Valley's Europe inspired coffee-culture cafes serves excellent mochas and lattes, don't forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich. Jawalakhel, Uttar Dhoka



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

Black Pepper Café & Pub,

Cosmopolitan dining and drinking in a traditional style courtyard. Koupondole Height, Lalitpur, 5521897, 5536926



Alfresco,

For homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999

MUSIC



Gharana Music Festival,

Mark your calendars for the second edition of the international classical music festival organised by the Gharana Music Foundation. Read more on Page 7. 14 to 18 September at Hotel Yak and Yeti, 17 September, 4 pm, at Tangalwood, Tangal, 9813284480 / 9851006246, www.gharanamusicfoundation.org, Tickets: Rs 700 (general admission), Rs 250 (students), Rs 2,000 (four-concert package)

Kutumba live,

Tap along the beat of soul-stirring music, as Kutumba performs live. 16 September, 6 pm onwards, Patan Museum

Acoustic night,

Enjoy Saturday with Stamba, Artha and Swoopna Suman as play some good acoustic numbers. 10 September, 5 pm onwards, Moonwalker Bar & Grill, (01) 5171679



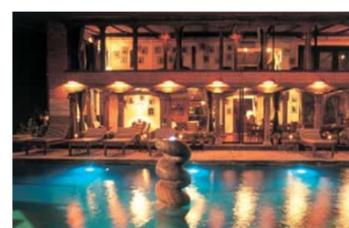
Ciney Gurung live,

Fine dining, with Ciney Gurung serenading for you. Rs 2,000 nett per person. Every Friday, 7pm onwards, Shambala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, (01) 4412999

Open mic night,

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

GETAWAY



Dwarika's Hotel,

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Hotel Barahi,

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Last Resort,

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Atithi Resort,

A perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food of your choice. Shantipatan, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760/400207, info@atithiresort.com

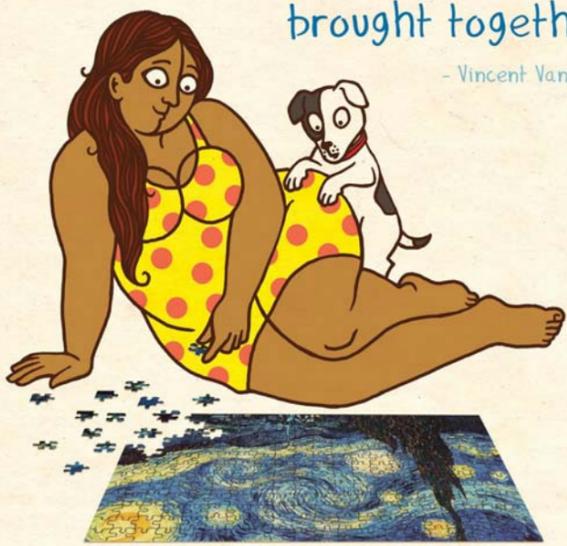


Hotel Shambala,

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

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

- Vincent Van Gogh



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YUWEI LIEW



PICS: SUBIGYA SUNDAR SHRSTHA

I remember the first time I tried some white-water action in 2009. A little scared, I chose to sit at the very end of the boat, which unfortunately, turned around when the ride started, putting me at the helm. Today, I can't think of choosing to sit anywhere but right in the midst of the sheer thrill of it and the responsibility of leadership that comes with the position. Braving the raging waters of Upper Bhotekosi, Sunkosi, Trisuli, and Marsyangdi, I have come a long way since my nervous rafting days.

The topographical extreme that gives Nepal the highest mountains in the world



SAMRIDDI RAI

and some of the most spectacular sceneries also endows the country with the wildest rivers for whitewater rafting.

Having experienced the thrill of rafting in Nepal only, I don't know what it is like elsewhere in the world. Which is why I asked the opinion of one of the world's best-known river conservationists, Megh Ale.

"We have the world's best white waters for rafting," Megh said with the air of finality, as if the debate was closed. "Did you know that Dubai just spent millions of dollars to build an artificial river to create whitewater-like rapids? But we got it all for free—a gift from nature."

I take Megh's word for it, and from what I have seen of Himalayan rivers I can vouch with some surety that white-water rafting here is truly an out-of-this-world experience.

So much more than just a sport

For the casual observer looking down at rafters on the Trisuli from the Pokhara highway, rafting may look like a bunch of hyperactive people clad in colourful gear screaming fun and fear down a fast-flowing river. While it is all that, rafting is so much more than just an adventure sport. Rafting is team-work that demands synchronicity by those on-board.

Technical finesse is the responsibility of the guide, but team members' assistance is equally important. There is bonding, both with those on the raft and with nature. And while the rapids keep the adrenaline high, it is the ice-cold snow-fed water waves, the scenic green ridges that run alongside and the gorges on either side that truly makes the river rendezvous an exciting and memorable experience.

Hydropower versus Tourism

There is an ongoing debate on whether Nepal's whitewater are best used for whitewater adventures to generate electricity for a country plagued by power cuts. Megh Ale, President of the Nepal River Conservation Trust, passionately believes that some rivers should be left pristine.

"Extracting electricity seems like a really important remedy right now, but in the long run, destroying the free flow of rivers with social, ecological, religious and aesthetic significance will only hurt the country," he argues.

"The Madi, Bhotekosi, Tamor and Karnali deserve to be left in their free-flowing natural state, that will likely bring river-based employments and higher economic return than a hydropower plant may rake in. Damming damages a river, and damages to nature are irreversible."



Know your rivers

My first rafting trip was in Trisuli closely followed by another on Lower Bhotekosi. Nothing was planned, but it turns out that was really the ideal way to go. If you're looking for either a scenic float or an adventurous ride, Nepal's whitewater has plenty to offer. Here's a quick guide.

For family rafting: The Seti River with its mild Class II and III rapids is perfect for families or groups looking for a scenic float on its blue water, passing through dense forests and sandy white beaches.

For beginners: If you've never tried white water rafting, and want to start slow, Trisuli is perfect for you. With its Class III and IV rapids (exciting in monsoons), Trisuli will give you enough time to take a breather in between your rendezvous with bouncy rapids.

For adventurers: If you think you're ready to take on more challenging whitewater expeditions go for Bhotekosi, Marsyangdi, Kali Gandaki, Tamor and Karnali that hits up to Class V rapids in high flow. Ranging from half a day to an extended 12-day adventure, choose your whitewater challenge as per your needs.

Packing up for a rafting spree



A wet suit (your own or provided by the company). You can choose to wear regular clothes too, but wearing a swimsuit underneath is a good choice since rafting adventures offer swimming and cliff diving options in the river during the ride. Water shoes, to walk on rocky/sandy shores. Ample amount of sunscreen. Water-resistant cameras. Most rafting companies provide helmets with go-pro mounts.



Be safe

No matter how many times you may have gone whitewater rafting, it is still always important to follow safety instructions.

Strike a friendly rapport with your river guide and he will be more open to share extra information and add fun twists to your ride — like overturning the raft or sneakily (but safely) throwing out some members into the river.

Make it known to all on board that rafting is safe and fun, because a nervous crew could ruin the experience.

Ask your guide to stop at interesting cliff jumping spots along the river.



nepalitimes.com
Watch video





NOW YOU SEE ME 2

Cinema is about sleight of hand. For those who've never been on a set, it's hard to imagine how much is manipulated, from perspectives and spaces, to the absolute lack of continuity as we imagine it, with

the added dimension to present viewers with illusions that induce shock and awe.

With such a success, a sequel was inevitable but unfortunately, also, a hard act to follow. Even with a cast like Mark Ruffalo, Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg, Morgan Freeman, and Michael Caine, the film falls flat, partly due to the fact that there is no real story here, just a confused re-hash of plot elements that made the first film memorable.

The essence of the story lies in the outrageous antics of the "Horsemen" who are a group of talented magicians bent on exposing the worst criminals around the world, corporate conspirators like Bernie Madoff who have lied and stolen from people without any qualms. In

their quest to bring these people down, they often break the law, stealing from banks and other institutions only to give away their booty - a la Robin Hood.

There are many twists in the first film that continue into the second one so I will not provide you with a detailed breakdown of who is who, nor a summary of bad-guys vs. good-guys for fear of giving away the many games at play even in this inferior sequel.

The plot is an utter jumble, and most of the time, you will find yourself rolling your eyes at the utterly inane dialogue. However, for the fans of the first film, and the people who understand the sweat behind the prestidigitation that cinema requires, there are a couple of absolutely fabulous, magical even, set-pieces that are worth watching.

Films are like dreams flattened onto a screen, with a hidden, furious mechanism of editors, cables, grips, electricians, camera people, costume-set designers, and directors that seek to make themselves invisible to serve the spectator. Making a film, even a mediocre one, is hard work, and while this does not excuse the hubris of a bad film-maker, sometimes, very rarely, it is enough that a few scenes can redeem a labour of loss. "Now You Seem Me 2" is a classic example, a film of folly that still succeeded in making \$324 million (to date) against a \$90 million budget because a few moments of it has the power to hold people rapt. 

nepalitimes.com

Trailer 



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

scenes shot in order of efficiency with no regard whatsoever to actual story lines.

It is, therefore, always enjoyable to see cinema used to celebrate that inherent magic trick with films like "Now You See Me" (2013) - a delightful, totally tongue in cheek, romp that tips its hat to cinema's trickery and uses



RSS

PM's PROMISES: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal promises reforms, development and rapid reconstruction, in a speech in Parliament on Thursday.



GOPEN RAI

BACK FROM BANGKOK: UML Chair KP Oli returns to Kathmandu on Monday from a medical trip to Thailand.



GOPEN RAI

DR JHAMAK: President Bidya Bhandari confers honorary doctorate degree on litterateur Jhamak Ghimire in Kathmandu on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

THREE YEARS IN NEPAL: Vedattin Bilen, acting General Manager of Turkish Airlines Nepal, during an event to mark the third anniversary of the carrier's Kathmandu route on Friday.

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“We will address Govinda KC’s demands”



BIKRAM RAI

Excerpts of an interview with the newly-appointed Health Minister Gagan Kumar Thapa, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 4-10 September

हिमाल
Khabarpatrika

Himal: You are considered a beacon of hope in the new government. Are things different after becoming a minister?

Gagan Thapa: I was accused as someone who only talked, but as CA member my job was to talk as I didn't have any executive powers. Now I have responsibilities at the Ministry of Health and Population. In the beginning I was nervous, but I have overcome it after assuming office.

Dr. Govinda KC has gone on hunger strikes eight times demanding improvements in medical education and health sector. How are you going to address his demands?

The government will address

Govinda KC's demands. The remaining issues, which were not addressed will be included in the Medical Education Act which will soon be passed by the parliament. We will start discussions to open medical colleges in all provinces as demanded by KC.

One of the issues raised by KC is related to the conduct of the Commission on the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) chief. I was the one who registered the Proposal of Public Importance but as Minister I am not allowed to pursue the matter.

Dr. KC has demanded the impeachment of the CIAA chief for his corrupt practices. How will you address this demand?

The demands will automatically be included while discussing medical education and health in the parliament. But it is surprising that KC's demand is not being discussed.

If the Prime Minister's speech and the letter sent to India is discussed in parliament, there should be discussions on Govinda KC's demands too. It will be difficult to restore people's faith in the parliament if issues of public importance are not taken up. Opinions, both for and against an issue can be taken up but only if they are allowed to be raised in parliament.

There seems to be undue interference on the part of the CIAA in the Medical Council. What do you propose to do about that?

Implementing the Medical Education Act and appointing eligible officials following a proper criteria will be done immediately. This is necessary to stop irregularities and ill practices like illegally adding seats in medical colleges and admitting Nepali students as foreigners.

Can we say that the issues raised by Dr. KC will be the basis of your working plan?

I do not want to confine myself to that, but Govinda KC has demanded improvements in medical education. I hope to make broader changes. I plan to leave the ministry only after establishing proper norms.

How will you solve the problem of health care for the poor?

It will take some time to supply medicines regularly to health centers and health posts. Our ministry has already taken up the task to improve the supply of medicines by streamlining procurement and distribution.

Ginger politics

Sudeep Shrestha in *Setopati*, 5 September

सेतोपाटी

Citing the 'maximum use of pesticides' India has banned ginger export from Nepal just a week before Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is scheduled to visit New Delhi. This can't be a coincidence because India has repeatedly created trouble in bilateral trade in the past whenever a high-level visit is planned from Nepal to India.

A large amount of ginger is rotting in godowns and farmers in Illam, Panchthar, Taplejung including others in the eastern region are facing a financial crisis. Nepal is the third largest producer of ginger in the world after China and India. All ginger produced in Nepal are exported to India after meeting the domestic demand. 20.83 million kgs of ginger was exported into the Indian market in the last fiscal year.

Nepal's ginger is considered to be of higher quality and Indian agriculture experts have continuously lauded it. But what could be the reason behind the ban in ginger export few days prior to Prime Minister Dahal's visit to India?

India has been creating obstacles on the export of Nepali products whenever the volume shows an increase, and always before a high-level visit, possibly as a bargaining chip.

When Nepali Pashmina exports boomed in the Western and Indian markets in the 1990s, India increased 16 per cent additional charges just two weeks before the Nepal-India inter-governmental committee meeting was scheduled. The meeting is considered important to resolve bilateral economic disputes between the two countries even today. Nepal was planning to raise problems related to pharmaceutical exports at that time.

Petroleum is another product on which India has leverage. India imposed hefty taxes and went against the petroleum import agreement when former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was scheduled to visit India in 2004.

The review of the 1953 Extradition Treaty, Upper Karnali, and Budi Gandhi and Raxaul-Amalekhgunj pipeline agreements were conditions put forward by India while Nepal was planning to raise the issue of transit access to Bangladesh.

Dahal is leaving for India in a week and easy ginger export will be his top priority now, not the other issues that Nepal was planning to raise.

The government's silence on pesticide contamination has legitimised the Indian ban.

There is nothing new in the ginger ban, India is doing what it has always done: mix trade with politics.



SUBHAS RAI



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DHANBIR DAHAL



PRABIR DADEL

NARJIT SIR

A school teacher whose hand was cut off by Maoists 20 years ago has another generation of students as pupils

PRABIR DADEL

in RUKUM

In February 1996, one week after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba ignored an ultimatum by the Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, a group of insurgents led by Barsha Man Pun raided a police post in Holeri of Rolpa with a vintage rifle and knives.

The Maoist tactics in the first years of the conflict was

to terrorise the population into submission, attacking police posts and government offices to reduce the presence of the state. The Deuba government treated the violence as an ordinary law and order problem and underestimated the Maoists.

In the remote district of Rukum, which in those days was not connected by road,

the Maoists decided to execute Deuchan Basnet, a VDC leader from the Nepali Congress. However, they mistook Narjit Basnet for his older brother Deuchan, and attacked him instead.

Narjit Basnet was a primary school teacher in the Pokhara VDC of Rukum, one hour's walk from the district capital of Musikot. On 24 February 1996, he was returning home at dusk when Maoist guerrillas cornered him, and slashed him with khukuris. His left hand was chopped off at the wrist and he was dropped into the river and left to die.

An hour later, villagers found him and took him to a local health post. They were not equipped to treat him. The following day,



the Maoists stopped him and his rescuers, who were on their way to Musikot and fled when the police arrived. He was later airlifted to Kathmandu for months of treatment.

Meanwhile, back in Rukum, the Maoists did eventually get his brother Deuchan and hacked him to death. Narjit was uncomfortable to continue working in the same village, and was transferred to Sarswati Primary School in Musikot.

Twenty years after Basnet became one of the first victims of the conflict in Rukum, and 10 years since the ceasefire, Maoist Chair Prachanda who ordered the execution of political opponents is Prime Minister again. And ironically, the coalition is backed by his erstwhile mortal enemy Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Meanwhile, Bhattarai who drafted the manifesto of the uprising has quit the Maoists and his party's new manifesto doesn't even have the word 'communist' in it. Pun who commanded the first Maoist attack in Holeri is

A HELPING HAND: Narjit Basnet, 50 now, teaches at the same school where he was transferred to after his hand was chopped off by Maoists. (above, right)

Basnet in his classroom in a picture taken in 2006, the year conflict ended. (above, left)

a mainstream politician who masterminded the ouster of the former Prime Minister KP Oli two months ago.

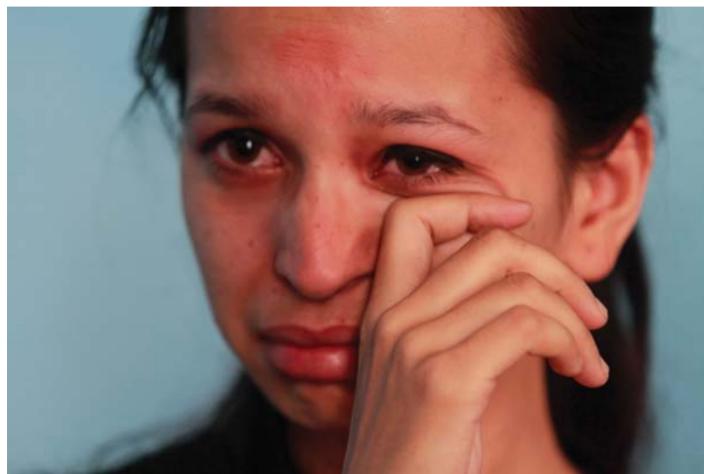
Back in Rukum, Narjit Basnet still works as a teacher at a school that runs classes up to Grade 10. He is 50, but the severe injuries inflicted on him during the Maoist attack have begun to take its toll on his health.

He rests a book on the stub of his left hand while teaching, but cannot stand for long because both of his legs were injured and still bear the scars of deep khukuri wounds.

"I don't want to dwell on what happened to me," says Basnet. "But the pain makes forgetting that terrifying night difficult."



BIKAS RAUNIYAR



GOPEN RAI

TIME DOESN'T HEAL: Bikash Rauniyar's photograph of Nutan Thapa weeping quietly at a press conference in 2005 about her father's disappearance by the Maoists became a powerful image depicting the human cost of the conflict. (far left)

Nutan Thapa is now 22, and an engineering student who wants to make her father proud by helping develop her family's home district of Dailekh. (left)

dreams," she said. "He is often being chased by dark shadows, but I cannot help him. I wake up crying in the middle of night."

Dekendra's body was finally located in 2008, and exhumed. A forensic examination revealed that he had been tortured and buried alive by the Maoists.

After the Maoists cut off water supply to the Dailekh district capital in June 2004, Dekendra was part of a group that tried to negotiate with the Maoists to end the siege. Nutan was away, but had a premonition and feared the worst. Two months later, the Maoists declared that they had executed him. Villagers told Laxmi they had seen him being hung upside down with his feet tied. After his body was found, Laxmi Thapa filed an FIR with the Dailekh Police.

Nothing happened for four years, but in 2012, inspector Binod Sharma showed courage and arrested five of Thapa's

The tears never stop

Nutan Thapa still cannot hold back her tears when she remembers her father

OM ASTHA RAI

In 2005, when Laxmi Thapa told a press conference at the Reporters' Club in Kathmandu how her Dailekh-based journalist husband Dekendra had been seized by the Maoists, camera flashes went off as reporters took pictures of her.

Photojournalist Bikas Rauniyar was among them, but unlike the

others he looked to the side and noticed Laxmi Thapa's 10-year-old daughter, Nutan. She was listening to her mother, tears streaming down her face.

Nutan wept as her mother told reporters how the Maoists had taken Dekendra Thapa away and told the family not to look for him. Rauniyar's photo of Nutan was published in *The Kathmandu Post* the next morning and shocked the nation, bringing home the human cost of the conflict.

Rauniyar remembers his photograph as one of the most impactful images that he has ever taken in his career. "That little girl's silent cry moved me deeply, and I think it brought home the message of the brutality of war to the Nepali public," he says.

Rauniyar's photo was included in *A People War*, a trilogy of photo books on the Maoist conflict. More than a decade later, Nutan is a grown up 22-year-old engineering

student. She wanted to study mass communications and follow the footsteps of her journalist father, who was a Radio Nepal correspondent in Dailekh.

But Nutan's career goal has changed. She now wants to become one of Nepal's finest engineers, contribute to developing her neglected home district, and make her father proud. But as she tells us this, she cannot hold back her tears.

"I still see my father in my



PRABIR DADEL

Sarswati School

After his left hand was hacked off by the Maoists at the start of the war in February 1996, Narjit Basnet was transferred to Saraswati Primary School in Musikot, the district capital of Rukum.

The students he was teaching when the now-famous photograph of him was taken 20 years ago may themselves be parents of the students he is teaching in the picture taken last week in the same classroom.

Sarswati School was upgraded from primary to lower secondary in 2001 and secondary in 2012. The school has since been renovated, the dilapidated furniture has been replaced and the students look smarter in skirts and ties. But the old classroom where Narjit Basnet was photographed twice in *A People War* trilogy has been replaced by a two-storey concrete building with another four-room structure completed last year. All together 339 students, including 189 girls, from Musikot and nearby villages study there.

The school has an energetic principal, Khamba Singh Thapa, 38, who aims to upgrade the school to 10+2. "If we improve our infrastructure, our students will not have to go elsewhere after the tenth grade," he says.

As for Narjit Basnet, he is happy enough to be able to teach new students in a new classroom, cradling his textbook on the stub of his left arm.

Basnet was a popular and smart teacher. Although a primary teacher, he used to take classes up to Grade 8, even after losing his left hand. But now, he only takes classes up to Grade 3. "The wounds have kept me from moving ahead," he says.

One of Basnet's two sons has migrated to Saudi Arabia for work, and his daughter passed SLC exams last year, and he is struggling to pay for her higher education. He has not received financial assistance promised to war victims because he can walk,

and is categorised as 'a partial victim'.

In Musikot, every now and then, Basnet bumps into local Maoist leaders who attacked him. He has never asked them why they tried to kill him. "But if I ever meet Prachanda, I will not let him go without an explanation," he says.

In faraway Kathmandu, the Maoists are back in power again, but Basnet says he has no hope from them: "They left me to die, how can they repay me for what they did to my life?"

alleged murderers, defying orders from Attorney General Mukti Pradhan who had been appointed by the Maoist Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai. Pradhan tried to pressure Sharma to call off the investigation, and he paid a price for refusing — he was denied a promotion by the Maoist government.

In December 2014, the Dailkeh Distirct Court convicted Nirak Bahadur Gharti, Harilal Pun, Jaya Bahadur Shahi, Lakshiram Gharti Magar and Bir Bahadur KC for Dekendra's murder. They were only sentenced up to two years in jail, even though the public prosecutors had demanded life imprisonment. Four other accused are still at large. "So far, just those who were carrying out the orders have been punished, and even that is not enough for what they did to my father," she says.

Nutan goes to a nearby shrine to light lamps every 11 August -- the day her father is thought to have been buried alive. She says: "I don't think my father's soul is at peace, he is still running away and that is why he often appears in my dreams. I pray that he finds peace."



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