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**GOING PLACES TOGETHER**



# H<sub>2</sub>O

## How to rehydrate Nepal’s thirsty villages

Sixty years ago, when Swiss geologist Toni Hagen walked across the length and breadth of Nepal he used to ask villagers what they wanted most. The reply was almost always: a footbridge. Rivers divided Nepal into an archipelago of isolated valleys, especially in the monsoon. Nepal’s trail bridge-building campaign is a success story which we will talk about some other time. But when Hagen returned to Nepal in the 1980s and again asked mountain dwellers what they wanted, the demand was for motorable roads.

Today there is scarcely a part of Nepal where an excavator isn’t in action digging a road. More roads have been built in the past ten years than in the last 60. Humla is the only district that is still not connected to the national highway network, and even that not for much longer.

If Toni Hagen were alive and once



KUMAR ACHARYA

more asked villagers in the mid-hills of Nepal what is their most pressing need, it would most certainly be: water. The more arid western districts of Achham, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Pyuthan were always synonymous with water shortages. But in the past two decades areas never before associated with the lack of water like Ramechhap, Kavre and Dolakha are reeling under acute water scarcity.

As our reporter found out in a recent visit (*page 14-15*) water shortage continues to be the biggest worry in Nepal’s mountain villages. While erratic rainfall and drying up of perennial springs have had a severe impact on agriculture, water scarcity has also spurred out-migration from the mid-hills.

Entire villages are emptying as farmers sell their homesteads and move to Kathmandu, while city folk are migrating in the opposite direction buying up viewpoint property as investment. Many

terraces are barren not just because there is no one to till them, but also due to the water shortage.

Most villages located along ridges have always suffered from lack of water as soon as the rainy season drew close to. This year, despite a healthy monsoon that ended late, even water sources located next to community forests have dried up. Desperate villagers (mostly women because the men have left) have to walk hours to fetch water. Vegetable patches have wilted. Children are dropping out of school to help carry water. Districts may have been declared open-defecation free, but there is no water in the latrines.

Many reasons have been put forward for this Great Desiccation. Across most of the 12 districts affected the 2015 earthquakes disrupted aquifers, drying perennial springs especially along the higher slopes. The haphazard construction of roads, and urban sprawl have also diverted natural recharge points for ground water.

It is tempting to blame it all on climate change because that lets the government and local officials off the hook. It was the state’s responsibility to provide alternative sources of water even before global warming made the problem worse. This was not a new problem: Nepal’s mid-hills have always suffered prolonged drought, flash floods and water shortages. Despite irregular monsoons and extreme weather patterns, the monthly rainfall graph across Nepal hasn’t changed much in the past 20 years. If the total precipitation is the same, why are springs going dry?

### Gigantic sponge

Global warming is melting the Himalaya, and glaciers are receding at an alarming rate. Water stored as ice along the Himalayan arc and on the Tibetan plateau is the fountainhead for 1.2 billion people from China, Southeast Asia and South Asia. But snow melt provides less than 20 per cent of the net flow of rivers that originate in the Himalaya, the rest are fed by springs. In fact, the Himalaya is not so much the water tower of Asia as a gigantic sponge that stores water under its mountains. That sponge seems to be going dry.

Whatever the cause, there are certain things that can be done immediately to reduce the water stress of Nepal’s villages. Some of these are featured in our reportage: farmers in Kavre are already harvesting rain from rooftops in underground tanks to tide over the family’s water needs till the next rainy season, collecting monsoon runoff in ponds so they recharge the aquifers. Besides making it mandatory for new buildings to be earthquake resistant, the government should also require them to have rainwater harvesting.

But, as we see in Kavre, much of this already is happening out of necessity. It is too late to blame climate change, we need to catch rain wherever it falls.

### YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

#### KATHAMNDU GROOVE

Some came to Nepal in order to study and practice traditional music, art, language, religion and culture (‘Feeling groovy’, Lucia De Vries, #839) . Getting stoned was not my aim. I studied *sarod* and *shastriya sangit* with court musicians Mohan Sundar Shrestha, Shambhu Prasad Mishra and Ganesh Bahadur Bhandari. I studied Nepali and Sanskrit at Bishwa Bhasa Campus. I learned yoga. Drugs were not the attraction for me.

Danny Birch

■ Yes and a few of us wanted to live the life of troubadours walking from village to village in 16th century style clothing making music, magic and comedy. Drugs was never my thing, had enough of that back in California! *Himal Chu Chu Re Ho!*

Dr Penguin

#### BODYBUILDING HOMEMAKER

Living in Kirtipur, such a conservative society, makes you think support of the family is so much more(‘Homemaker and bodybuilder’, Shreejana Shrestha, #839). With the dedication that you have, to achieve something great makes us wonder how we people lack behind due to lack of support. Well I cannot imagine how much demotivating talks that you faced in this journey, but you showed us all that there is a greatness in you.

Niben Mali

■ The case of Nanita Maharjan proves that family support can make anything possible for women in a patriarchal society. Usually it is very difficult for women to focus on their career because of the hurdles created by their in-laws.

Sarin Tuladhar

■ A strong support system can work wonders in any person’s life especially a woman’s. Kudos to the mother-in-law and husband for allowing Nanita to take the front seat and hats off to Nanita for having the courage to take a different road. We need more like them.

Ashreeya

#### BEST THINGS

I am going to put it this way, in particular, don’t waste your time too much in physical comforts or with materialistic objects around you that can only bring more obstacles than happiness in life (‘Miss Moti-vation’, Kripa Joshi, #838) . Don’t get confined by the walls you build for yourself. Instead, If you are looking for true enduring happiness, then you must limit yourself from materialistic things, and start practicing to look inside, that is the place where you can experience the ‘beauty of life’ and can live a meaningful life. Always remember, Time is running out, so better get started now.

GN



■ There are so many instances in life when we forget what is truly important for us because we are too busy running after material goods. Time and again we need to remind ourselves to just breathe in the air, relax our minds and bodies, and rethink our priorities.

Jaffna

### Times

#### THIS WEEK



BIKRAM RAI

**Most reached on Facebook**  
Homemaker and bodybuilder by *Shreejana Shrestha*  
Nanita Maharjan has learnt an important lesson: being a champion wouldn’t have been possible without support from her family (14,970 people reached)

**Most shared on Facebook**  
Homemaker and bodybuilder by *Shreejana Shrestha* (24 shares)  
A homemaker from Kirtipur, Nanita Maharjan never imagined that she would win a medal in an international bodybuilding championship, but she did

**Most visited online page**  
A Himalayan mess by *Om Astha Rai* (1,612 views)  
Turbulent times for Nepal-China joint venture airline

**Most popular on Twitter**  
Homemaker and bodybuilder by *Shreejana Shrestha* (53 retweets, 161 likes)  
Nanita Maharjan has now set her sights to win the gold medal in next year’s bodybuilding championship in Mongolia

**Most commented**  
Feeling groovy by *Lucia De Vries*  
Finding rare images of Kathmandu’s colourful hippie era

**viplob pratik**@viplobpratik  
his #writings, #literature are one of the precious work which will be treasured forever and his writing style will be remembered with fond.

**Nepali Times**@nepalitimes  
Senior litterateur Kamal Mani Dixit has passed away at the age of 87. He was cremated at the electric crematorium in Pashupati on Thursday

**Amulya R Tuladhar**@AmulyaSir  
If u look at nepali political leaders there wont be optimism for the next 100 years! But Nepal is more than that!

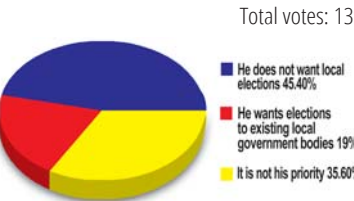
**Nepali Times**@nepalitimes  
Many people around the world are saying ‘good riddance’ to 2016 but there isn’t much optimist about 2017 either.  
bit.ly/2hza3vZ

### Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #839

Q. Why is the Prime Minister reluctant to accept the report of the Local Government Body Restructuring Commission?



Weekly Internet Poll #840  
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you agree with the government’s decision to sack National Reconstruction Authority CEO Sushil Gyawali?



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# Trending: Australian education

A record number of Nepali students are heading to university Down Under

JESSICA CORTIS

With the 2017 academic year commencing at Australian universities this month, a record number of Nepalis are heading there for higher studies, making Nepal Australia's eighth largest source of international students.

Lured by relatively lower fees, easier process for student visa and more attainable job prospects, there have been 20,463 Nepali enrolments in Australian educational institutions as of September 2016, twice as many as last year. However, many students interviewed said privately they intended to stay on and work in Australia.

"I'd like to think educational reputation is the reason people come to Australia and not for the sole purpose of Permanent Residency," Australian ambassador Glenn White told *Nepali Times*. He admitted he is often asked why Australia attracts so many Nepali students, and said he hopes more students will return and contribute to Nepal's economy.

Manata Upadhyaya of the Nepal International Education Consultancy (NIEC) says it is much harder to stay illegally in Australia than it is in the United States. But she believes more than 70 percent of Nepali students who go to Australia to study will settle down there.

Post-graduate student Shelina Amatya, 24, says she will apply for Permanent Residency when her visa expires in 2018 as she tries to get her foot in Australia's



**BEFORE LEAVING:** Manata Upadhyaya of NIEC counseling Rachit Baudhacharya, who is flying to Australia soon for studies.

GOPEN RAI

corporate world. Amatya believes the working conditions are the main reason students are breaching their visa agreements.

"The limit of 20 hours work a week for students hardly covers rent and food when you have the added burden of tuition fees," she said.

With a history of Nepali students breaching visa conditions, Australia stresses the importance of sticking to the set working hours. "20 hours might not be enough but students come here to study, not to work," said Ambassador White. "Australia needs to provide jobs for its

own people. There is no point in advertising jobs that aren't available."

He added that recent changes to the Skills Occupation List (SOL), which is part of Australia's immigration points system, have made it harder and costlier for students to meet the requirements of the SOL that they are applying to.

Students like Amatya, however, admitted that it is struggle: "We are paying thousands of dollars for a degree, and on top of that, to get Permanent Residency we have to do additional courses which will cost another \$10,000."

Nepali student Keshav Khatri, 18,

will be headed to Australia for an undergraduate nursing studies next year, and says he has chosen Australia because "not all degrees in Nepal are recognised globally".

Nepalis are migrating for studies abroad because of falling quality of education back home. Sagar Raj Sharma, a professor at Kathmandu University, says Nepali universities have to be restructured to retain Nepali students.

"The curriculum has become outdated and we place too much emphasis on theory," says student Rachit Baudhacharya who will begin his masters in information

technology in Sydney in 2017 but believes his degree will be useless if he cannot put it into practice back home in Nepal.

Australian and Nepali institutions are also cooperating in introducing a new model in which students get instruction in Nepal but get Australian certification. Last year, Northern Rivers TAFE Australia offered vocational training in hospitality institutions in Kathmandu Valley and got Commercial Cookery Certificates are accredited to Australian standards.

Adopting this education model would not only provide Nepali students with a degree that is internationally recognised, but would also potentially save them thousands in tuition, not to mention bring down the visa breach rates.

Noticing the startling numbers of Nepalis applying for student visas, Western Sydney University (WSU) recently signed a 'mobility agreement' with Kathmandu University. Nepal has now become WSU's second biggest market for international students.

Abhinaya Ghimire, studying a masters in convergent media at WSU confesses his decision to leave Nepal was not just driven by the need for a higher education: "I have a lot of family over there and Australia has a large Nepali diaspora."

However, NIEC's Manata Upadhyaya says the main reason students would be overstaying their visa and applying for Permanent Residency is because of the government. "No one would want to leave their own country if there were jobs here. The number of Nepalis applying for PR status in Australia is a big reflection of the Nepali government and our economy."

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# Learning to reconstruct

Volunteers from around the world are filling the gap left by the government in helping rebuild quake-damaged schools



SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

BIDUR — Brought up in a family where education was an utmost priority, Carlota Padeira needed little convincing to fly to Nepal when she learnt about how All Hands Volunteers was helping rebuild schools destroyed in the 2015 earthquakes. The 22-year-old Portuguese who is

doing her masters in clinical psychology in London made personal appeals and raised funds through Facebook and Instagram to help rebuild some of the schools destroyed by the earthquakes before she came to Nepal. “Every child should have an

opportunity to learn inside strong buildings where they can dream of a wonderful future,” says Padeira.

She is currently working to reconstruct classrooms at the Prithvi Secondary School in Bidur municipality of Nuwakot district. The buildings were damaged on 25 April 2015 and nearly two years later children are still studying in makeshift sheds.

Godfrey Atienza from the Philippines is in Nepal the second time to help in reconstruction, and says he was inspired and motivated by the work All Hands Volunteers did in his hometown. “We don’t really need a reason to help others. I feel that people who have time and money should help,” says the 30-year-old.

All Hands Volunteers is partnering with Nepal Rises which has already rebuilt and retrofitted five schools in Nuwakot and Sindhupalchok. Out of 528 government and private schools in the district, only 150 classrooms were deemed safe after the earthquakes.

More than 3,000 volunteers from different parts of the world have been in Nepal over the past two years through All Hands Volunteers, says project manager Saskia Hesselink. Another group is

working on retrofitting Kalyanidevi Higher Secondary School in Jilling.

Eric Beitia from the US is leading the two-month project in Jilling and works with 10 other volunteers from different countries and with the local community. “We are not just trying to provide new buildings to the school but also structurally safer buildings from which students can escape quickly in future earthquakes,” he says.

All Hands Volunteers has teamed up with local masons and pays for the building materials and resources required from money it raises from private donors and volunteers.

Volunteer groups like All Hands have stepped in to fill the gap left by slow government response. The National Reconstruction Authority says it will start rebuilding 2,000 schools this year. More than 8,200 private and public schools were destroyed or damaged by the 2015 earthquakes.

However, even the District Education Officer of Nuwakot Chandra Bahadur Khadka admits it will take two more years to complete rebuilding all schools. 🇳🇵

*Shreejana Shrestha in Nuwakot*



Watch as international volunteers build safer schools in earthquake-affected districts.

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

**BIZ BRIEFS**

### Customer first

Dragonair, which was recently rebranded as Cathay Dragon, has retained its ‘Life Well Travelled’ branding and aims to provide



seamless service to its customers. Keeping this in mind, the airlines’ G16 lounge in Hong Kong is going under extensive renovation and will reopen as a group lounge this year.

### Expansion drive

NIC Asia inaugurated its Phidim branch as part of the company’s aim to reach every possible



market. The company is currently operating 79 branches, 3 extension counters and 69 ATMs across the country and is planning to add more in the coming future.

### Likes for a cause

Sykar Trading Company started its social media based CSR campaign “I DIO’d IT.” Participating NGOs will need to upload



catchy videos based on a social cause and will be judged on the basis of likes and shares. The highest liked video will win Rs 100,000 cash prize. For more information: [dio.hscampaigns.com](http://dio.hscampaigns.com)

### Spreading wings

Qatar Airways celebrated a successful 2016. Having inaugurated 14 new destinations,



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# Who will bell the cat?

Lokman Singh Karki's future hangs in the balance between Parliament and the Supreme Court

Nepal's deadlocked politics appears to have left many things in limbo: the Constitution, elections, important bills in parliament, and last but not least, the impeachment of the suspended head of the Commission of the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) Lokman Singh Karki.

Parliament and the Supreme Court are playing cat and mouse over Karki: parliament on its



**LEGALESE**  
Binita Dahal

impeachment motion, and the Supreme Court in a case questioning his qualification. Parliament would like the apex court to bell the cat, while the Court seems to be buying time so Parliament can settle the political package deal that involves his impeachment.

In October, 157 members of parliament from the CPN-UML and Maoist Centre dramatically filed an impeachment motion against Karki after a secret political pact. At that time it was believed that the first-of-its-kind impeachment motion would be discussed in Parliament soon enough.

There were some perfunctory sessions in the House, but they fizzled out as the politics got ensnared in a dispute over the Constitution amendment. Proceedings have been stalled for a month with the UML disruption.

But even if Karki has only been suspended, and even if he continues to occupy his official residence and appears to still enjoy the benefits of his position, the politicians did overcome the dread with which they regarded him to file for impeachment. It was to save their own political skin because the man was getting too powerful and was directly challenging their authority.

Still, Karki has been defanged and he cannot file or investigate any corruption case. So they feel safe enough, but they do not want to go all the way by pursuing the impeachment motion. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has started its hearings of the case questioning his qualification for the post of CIAA Chief.

The Supreme Court's justices intentionally or unintentionally try to halt hearings on the most contentious issues as happened with the former Army Chief Gen Rookmangud Katuwal and the former Prime Minister Khilraj Regmi. The Supreme Court scrapped both writs, saying the issues raised were of no consequence anymore, giving a verdict only when Katawal retired and Regmi handed over prime ministership to Sushil Koirala.

By nature, Supreme Court justices are required to be neutral and give their opinion only through verdicts. But in some politically motivated case,

justices have preferred to keep mum. Karki's case has grabbed the attention of not only politicians and bureaucrats, but the whole spectrum of Nepali society. The justices are fully aware of Karki's reputation for using fear, intimidation, threats and money to silence opponents.

There was speculation that the Supreme Court would defer the case, or take its own sweet time. On the contrary, it started and continued the hearings even though Karki's lawyers tried to prolong it constantly. The justices have now said they will not tolerate any more delays. Both sides have brought in the big guns, phalanxes of lawyers with formidable reputations. The justices have warned them not to duplicate or prolong their depositions.

Chief Justice Sushila Karki seems determined to get this case over and done with against a man who had repeatedly tried to influence the court, and despite more attempts to delay it, had resumed the hearings till press time on Thursday.



Karki has been issuing veiled threats through statements trying to influence the case through his personal website and Facebook. Just before the hearing of the supplementary writ petition challenging his qualification started last week, he made an appeal through his personal website (*see page 13*) saying all allegations against him were baseless and motivated.

Even though the impeachment motion and the case against him are underway in parliament and Supreme Court, Karki could get a clean chit or be convicted. It is the same politicians who brought him in three years ago who now want him out. His actions during his tenure show that he has no regard for the essence of the rule of law. His statement is already a blatant violation of the principle of sub judice and an insult to the dignity of Court.

Karki's lawyers should now focus on defending their client's case than try to influence or postpone the hearing. And with parliament showing signs of cold feet, it is now up to the Supreme Court to finally rule on a case that has badly bruised and weakened the Nepali state. ■

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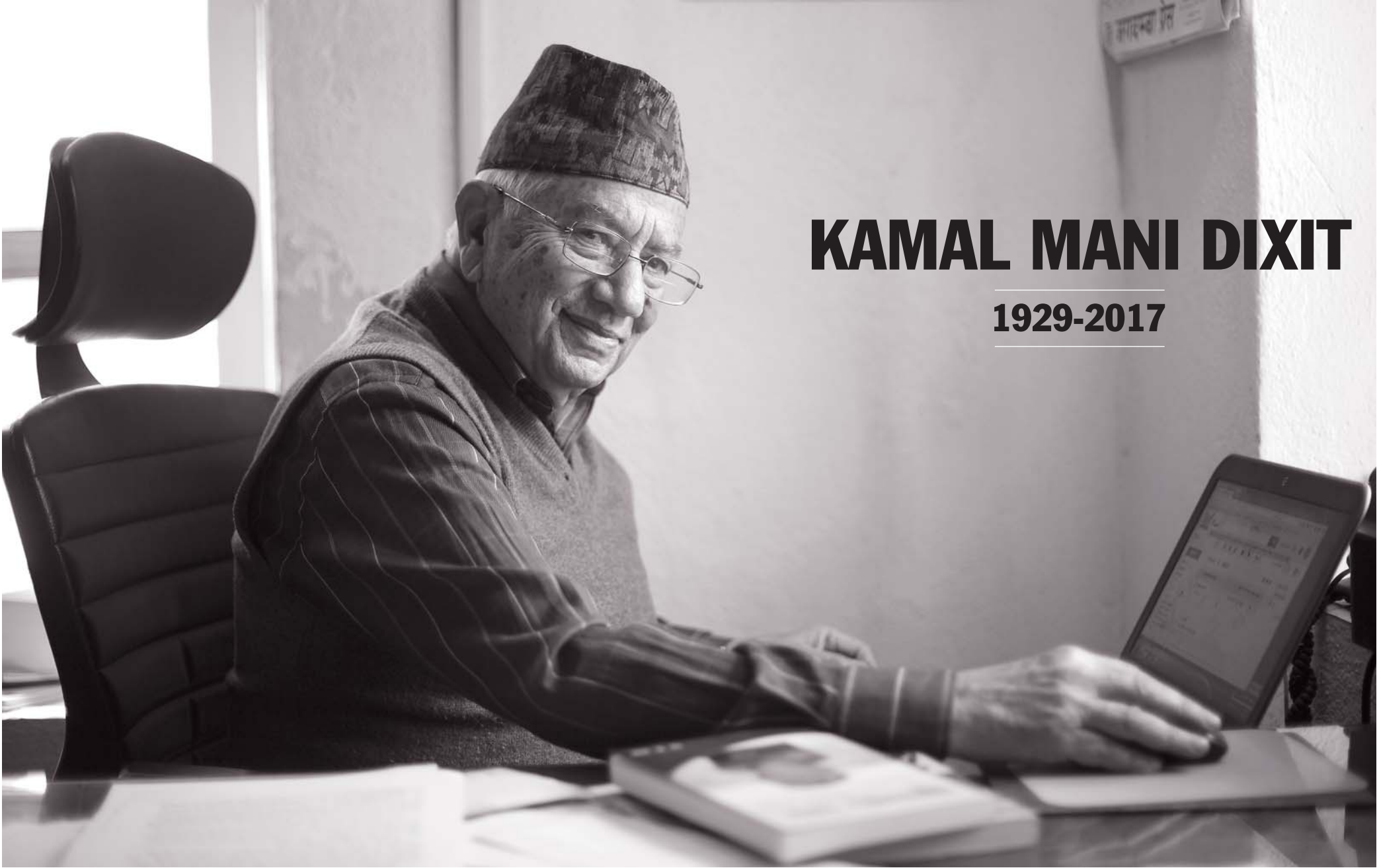




The first westerly front this week brought more than expected precipitation, lifting farmers' spirits right across the mid hills. The mountains got snowfall down till 2,500m. The air was cleared of dust and PM2.5 levels dropped in Kathmandu. We have another front approaching and this will manifest itself over central Nepal by Saturday evening. There is a strong chance of rain and snow in the higher elevations on Sunday. Mornings will be foggy in the Trisuli and Kosi Valleys, but Kathmandu will remain without characteristic winter mist.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
15° 3°	16° 5°	14° 5°

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GOPEN RAI

### ASHUTOSH TIWARI

Kamal Mani Dixit, who passed away in Kathmandu on 29 December at the age of 87 was the closest Nepal came to having a Renaissance man. He was also one of those rare Nepalis who was a front-row witness of Nepal's tumultuous modern history as it unfolded in his life time -- from the absolute rule of the Ranas in the 1940s to the overthrow of the oligarchy in 1951, from King Mahendra's dissolution of a popularly elected government in 1960 to the set-up of a constitutional monarchy in 1991, from the Jana-Andolan III in 2006 which turned Nepal into a secular republic in 2008 to the promulgation of the seventh Constitution in 2015.

Dixit was comfortable being himself in times both good and bad, taking all these changes in his stride, and lived a life filled with literary joys, and devoted to public service, philanthropy and to the causes of free speech and democracy.

Born in Gairidhara in Kathmandu in 1929, Dixit grew up in a family that had modest financial means but prized, as

was common then among Kathmandu's upwardly mobile Brahmins, religion and education. Dixit had earned his Bachelor's from Banaras Hindu University and had started working in Kathmandu when his family came upon wealth, mostly in the form of land near Patan Dhoka, through the bequest of Rani Jagadamba Rana, whose wish was that the wealth be put to use in perpetuity to serve the public, and for the public good.

Rani Jagdamba could not have found a more scrupulous and creative steward of her trust, for Dixit spent the next six decades putting the inheritance to benefit the public starting with the fields of education and Nepali literature.

Dixit managed Madan Memorial Girls' School in Lalitpur, and started and ran Madan Puraskar Guthi, which not only oversees the go-to archive for Nepal's literatures, but also awards the prestigious Madan Puraskar to writers annually. A man whose devotion to Nepali language and literature knew no bounds, Dixit started and edited Nepali, a literary quarterly, and authored 75 books that ranged in subjects from contemporary essays to historical narratives to commentaries to

memoirs to criticisms and mordant social observations. His writing style bore the hallmarks of clarity, simplicity, wit and self-effacement -- all of which he used to great effect to let ideas, observations and memories play out in the public sphere.

Moreover, working closely with a wide cast of writers, linguists, poets, playwrights and historians, he edited and published 22 books on poetry, religious epics, dramas, songs and stories. Through his lifelong literary pursuit, he helped bring many obscure and neglected but immensely talented Nepali authors and their creations to light. By doing so, he cemented his reputation as the trusted custodian of Nepal's literary outputs, so much so that he even found time to translate and write children's books, regularly teaching, as he did in his 80s, a much-loved course on metrical lines (*chhanda*) of classic Nepali poems to students at Rato Bangala School.

Literature and commerce often do not go together, but by dint of his personality, wide-ranging interest and influence, Dixit served ably for many years as a member, respected manager, board member and owner of enterprises as diverse as, but not

limited to, Sajha Yatayat, Nepal Bank, Salt Trading Limited, National Finance and the Rotary Club. Everywhere he served, he could be relied on to provide shrewd observations, wise counsel and lively meetings that quickly got to the heart of the matter.

What I remember most about Dixit was his child-like curiosity. He took genuine interest in people and ideas, and gently asked questions after questions until he understood whatever there was to learn. He started using email in his 60s, and Facebook in his '80s. On learning that there was no universal platform for Nepali script on computer, he oversaw an effort to promote the Nepali Unicode script, which has made it easy for all Nepalis to communicate electronically in Nepali with one another.

Many years ago, Aristotle wrote about the kind of eudaimonic or engaged life one should consciously strive to live, the kind of life which is 'lived the way you would like to have lived till the moment you die'.

Dixit, who was affectionately known as Dadaji, was revising and fussing over the content of a book just two days before he departed -- leaving a richly public-spirited legacy that is at once quietly inspirational and hard to emulate. 🇳🇵

## NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.



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# CHINA-NEPAL bilateral relations

After reports of abuse on social media, fewer Nepali women are getting married to Chinese men

**PICTURE PERFECT:** Wu Si, a Chinese hotel manager in Thamel, poses for a honeymoon photo with his Nepali wife, Samita, at Kathmandu Darbar Square (*right*). Wu says he fell in love with her because 'she was simple and innocent'.

Xu Kai, who teaches Chinese language in Pokhara, says he did 'a lot of research' about Nepali customs before marrying a Nepali girl. He is with his Nepali wife at the Garden of Dreams in Kathmandu. (*far, right*).

“It is definitely very difficult to tell whether it is a fake marriage or not, the actual process is decided on a case-by-case basis,” explained Krishna Acharya, Chief District Officer of Lalitpur. “If applicants are a real couple, they can marry here there are no restrictions.”

However, Acharya confirmed that the scrutiny procedure is more complicated and stricter compared to the past, mainly because of reports of fake marriages and human trafficking.

These days, besides the standard process the District Administration in Nepal investigates the economic and social status of the Chinese and Nepali marriage applicants, require police reports, letters from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Chinese Embassy. They also interview witnesses who can confirm that the marriage is real.

The WeChat post based on what a Chinese woman identified only as ‘Chen’ heard from a District Administration Office in Pokhara that there was a moratorium on Nepali women getting married to Chinese men because of reports of rampant abuse.

Even within Nepal, media reports of fake

marriages and the abuse of Nepali women in China and Korea have given local people a negative impression of mean from the two countries. Chinese and Korean men who want to marry Nepali women are all bracketed as people with bad character who cannot find wives back home, or are regarded as traffickers.

Such negative publicity both in China and Nepal appear to be the reason for the drop in Chinese men getting married to Nepali women. The Lalitpur District Administration Office has record of 21 Nepali-Chinese couples from 2013 to 2015. But there are no records of marriage licenses for Nepali-Chinese couples since the office reported after the earthquake in April 2015.

An official at the Kathmandu District Administration Office said there were even fewer marriage registrations there, and that the drop could be because of media reports exposing the inhumane treatment of Nepali girls by alcoholic or drug-addict Chinese husbands.

Miao Maccsim, a 30-year-old Chinese man who owns a jewelry shop in Thamel, says he has detected a change in the perception of Nepali women towards him in recent months.

“I tried really hard to convince my Nepali female friends that I am not here to buy a wife, and that such persons are rare in China and most of Chinese men are kind and well-behaved, but I failed,” Miao admitted. “I guess it is because the only way of locals to know about the outside world is through news media and then they assume that all Chinese men are the same.”

Miao said he is fond of his Nepali female

## PAN LAN

A few years ago, it had become trendy for Nepali women to get married to Chinese or Korean men, but the number of such marriages has decreased drastically after reports of abuse of Nepali women.

The number of Nepali-Chinese marriages,

especially, has dropped after an online report about the difficulties of getting a marriage license in Nepal went viral on the Chinese social network WeChat in February.

Chinese online sites have since last year published several reports of Nepali women being trafficked to China through fake marriages with Chinese men, and the scrutiny of Chinese male applicants for marriage certificates has become much stricter in Nepal.



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PAN LAN

friends, and prefers them to Chinese women because they are “more conservative, reticent and family-oriented”. But he is still disappointed that some Nepali women have a preconceived notion that all Chinese men are out to trap them into fake marriages.

Because of the large number of Nepali students now in universities in China, there are growing numbers of young Nepali men also getting married to Chinese women. And they have a different sort of problem: getting a resident visa in China.

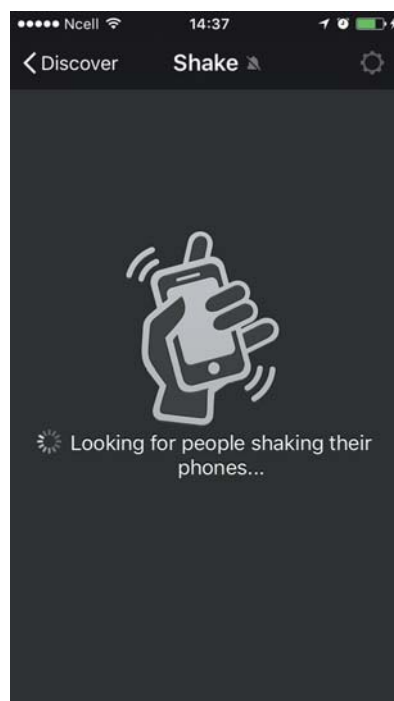
“I didn’t expect that getting a visa would be the biggest obstacle in our marriage,” said 29-year-old Mia Liu, who got married to 24-year-old Sanju BK. The couple moved to Shenzhen but Sanju will have to wait five years to get a Chinese Green Card during which time he will have to commute between

Kathmandu and Shenzhen.

“Every time Sanju goes back to Nepal, I’m worried that I can never see him again,” Liu said, “sometimes I feel like whether our marriage can go on. It all depends on the visa.”

There are also cultural differences that strain marriages between Nepali men who tend to be patriarchal and Chinese women who are more independent. Yan Yan Jun, 23, is in a relationship with a young man whom she met in Thamel and resents the expectation that she has to do all the housework even though she earns more than him.

But, Yan says: “I’m quite lucky that my boyfriend is not like other Nepali guys who think they are superior to women and unwilling to listen to their partners.” 🇳🇵



# WE CHAT TOO

Nepali businessmen using the Chinese social network WeChat to contact Chinese customers, are increasingly drawn to the dating function of the site to find Chinese friends.

WeChat is a cross between WhatsApp and Facebook and has a ‘People Nearby’ function through which users can find people in the vicinity. If the greeting request is accepted, the two can chat and be friends.

When *Nepali Times* experimented with the ‘People Nearby’ function one afternoon last week, we got 96 Kathmandu men in a radius of 300m to 3km from Patan. Only one of them was a female user.

Another WeChat feature called ‘Shake’ matches users who simultaneously shake the phone and can exchange greetings. But Shake doesn’t appear to be as popular among Nepali men.

Nepalis are using the Chinese dating app ‘Momo’, a location-based social networking app popular among the young in China. After registering a Momo account using Nepali phone number, *Nepali Times* found at least 10 male Nepali users within 4km.

A 30-year-old Nepali man from Kathmandu said he was looking for ‘sexy and open-minded Chinese girls’, but was disappointed that he hadn’t found a single female friend after using the app for month.



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EVENTS



**Ride to Chitlang,**  
Gear up for a ride to Chitlang in Makwanpur with fellow bike enthusiasts. 7 January, Starting point: Cycle Restro, Jamal, Tickets: <http://pancbike.com/register/>, (01) 4225404

**Start-up talk,**  
A day dedicated to talks about start up with Jeremy Corman from Belgium and guest speaker Kushal Gurung. 25 January, 2 to 5 pm, Kathmandu College of Management, Gwarko, (01) 5201434

**Karnali Dialogue,**  
Attend Karnali Dialogue's 17<sup>th</sup> series to get to know more about the art of storytelling in Mugu. 24 January, 3 to 4.30 pm, Martin Chautari, Thapathali, (01) 4102027

**Jhamsikhel fair,**  
A fun-filled day of party games, magic show, food, beverages, music, horse riding and more. 7 January, 10 am to 5 pm, Jhamsikhel Marg, 9803868994



**Mastering maps,**  
Hands-on workshop on digital mapping by StoryCycle and Google Map Maker Community. 9 & 10 February, Mahabir's Center for Nepal Connection, Application: <http://bit.ly/2iVVUhb>, 9845218281, Rs 1000

**Champadevi hike,**  
Escape the hustle of the city and enjoy a day hike to Champadevi hill via Pharping. The event is a fundraising event to support Asia Pacific Veg Congress – 2017 to be held in Kathmandu. 21 January, Meeting point: Bhrikuti Mandap ground, 7 to 7.15 am, Registration deadline: 19 January, 9851149579/ 9856060734, Rs 1000

**Self defence,**  
Participate in the self defence classes for women with Romee Giri, fourth dan and young national referee of taekwondo. 28 January, 10 am to 1 pm, RSTCA, Lajimpat, Tickets: <https://form.jotform.me/60151655603449>, (01) 4426258

**Birds of Nepal,**  
Attend an exhibition of artworks on Nepal's birds by artist Hira Lal Dangol. Until 12 January, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, (01) 4220735



**Morning coffee queries,**  
For interesting business ideas and experiences for entrepreneurs, students and start-ups. 9 January, 9 to 11 am, Bodhi Books and Bakes, Tickets: <http://www.clockb.com/events/51>, 9851193603

**Spiritual learnings,**  
Spend a day learning about the practice of the Medicine Buddha, and take part in guided meditations, group discussions and philosophical teachings with Australian monk Venerable Lobsang Namgyel. 6 January, 10 am to 4 pm, Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Center, 9808296590, [www.fpmt-hbmc.org](http://www.fpmt-hbmc.org), Rs 1500 (Registration recommended)



**MISS MOTI-VATION** **KRIPA JOSHI**

MUSIC



**Friday jam,**  
Spend a musical evening listening to Eunoia Soul Trio with Jonan Diengdoh and Mebarisha Rynjah on vocals and Steven Tamang on guitar. 6 January, 8 pm onwards, Base Camp: Outdoor Lifestyle, Jhamsikhel, 9841226397, Cover: Rs 300

**Nepathya live,**  
Mark your calendars for a live performance by Nepathya on the occasion of the season finale of Pulsar Dare Venture Season 2. Visit any Bajaj showroom in Kathmandu for free passes. 7 January, Tudikhel Ground, 3.30 pm onwards

**Wave in concert,**  
A rock tour featuring famous bands 1974 AD, Sabin Rai & The Pharaoh and other Nepali artists. 14 January, 3 pm onwards, Jawalakhel Youth Club Football Ground, (01) 5538321

**Gypsy jazz,**  
Tap to the beats of gypsy jazz this Saturday with Nomads Transition. 7 January, 6.30 to 10 pm, BAC Art Café, Pulchok, 9851147776



**Tribute to Coldplay,**  
Get to hear covers of famous British rock band Coldplay's tracks as part of Phase 10 of Tribute Series Nepal event. 21 January, 3 pm (Gates open), Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, Rs 500 (Advance sales), Rs 700 (Door sales)

DINING



**Koto,**  
Japanese cuisine of the highest quality, served with meticulous attention; food fanatics will find themselves in a haven for sashimi and tempura. Lakeside or (01) 5542936, Pulchowk or (01) 4220346, Darbar Marg

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



**Manny's,**  
Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunchy Potatoes and don't forget their signature Manny's Spicy Wings all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. Jawalakhel, (01) 5536919

**Embers,**  
A large and cosy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali favourites. (01) 5555306, Krishna Gali, Pulchok



**Fire and Ice,**  
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**Neydo Monastery,**  
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# Owning up to our past

Bureaucratic insensitivities  
worry local communities  
working to rebuild heritage sites



PICS: GOPEN RA

**SAHINA SHRESTHA**

When the April 2015 earthquake destroyed Kathmandu Valley's centuries-old monuments in a matter of seconds, it was the community that responded first to the disaster.

Neighbourhood groups were first on the scene, and after rescuing those trapped under the rubble they started the painstaking work of rescuing heritage items from the ruins.

This spontaneous reaction was possible because of the activism of the ancient *guthi* community trust system. Despite many areas in the Kathmandu Valley losing their homogeneity, the aftermath of the earthquake was proof that a sense of



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responsibility and ownership has survived.

But with the government's decision to rebuild heritage sites through a laborious tender process, local community members worry whether that reconstruction will adhere to traditional architectural norms, and erode the sense of community.

“By calling out tenders for heritage reconstruction, the government is driving a wedge between the physical heritage and the people,” says conservation activist Sumana Shrestha. “Will future generations still feel the same level of love and ownership towards our heritage if the approach is not participatory?”

Many of the monuments that were damaged during the earthquake were intricately decorated

brick and timber structures built in traditional Newari style that developed in the Kathmandu Valley over the past millennium.

Descendents of the original artisans who worked on the monuments can still be found continuing traditional crafts like woodcarving, stone sculpturing

and metal works, and many say that not including them in the reconstruction process will be a blunder.

Observers say that proper detailed research on collapsed and damaged heritage sites is necessary before rebuilding and retrofitting. Recent excavations at the site of Kasthamandap showed that the foundation of the collapsed rest-house was intact, confirming that it was the structure above the ground that caused it to collapse.

“The lack of understanding of traditional structures is alarming. We don’t have structural engineers with proper knowledge of traditional structures,” says conservation architect Kai Weise.

Last year, the DoA came up with guidelines for the conservation and reconstruction of heritage damaged by the earthquake which ensures the local community's participation when dealing with heritage. But so far that is just a good thought.

On the other hand, the DoA's rebuilding efforts are being delayed by an ongoing debate between purists who attempt to adhere to traditional building techniques and others who say concealed structural elements embedded with sensitivity in reconstruction would be the way to go.

“We are working according to the Public Procurement

Act and the conservation guideline ensuring that there is a participation of locals in the reconstruction process,” says Ram Bahadur Kunwar of the DoA.

However, there is justified concern that as with some temple reconstruction after the 1934 earthquake, the government will mess things up as it did by using concrete to rebuild the 17th century Rani Pokhari temple.

“Look at what happened to Rani Pokhari,” says Birendra Bhakta Shrestha of Campaign to rebuild Kasthamandap, “who is to say the same thing will not be repeated in other heritage sites if contractors are allowed to rebuild.”

The contractor selected by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) claimed that it used concrete because cement had been used in previous reconstruction. However, conservationists insist that reconstruction should be done using traditional materials.

A public outcry forced the KMC to backtrack and the Department of Archaeology (DoA) directed the demolition of the cement pillars of the Balgopaleswor temple, and has taken over restoration.

“Reconstruction should be done by people who know the monuments best. Private contractors do not understand the historical and cultural value of the temples,” says heritage expert Saphalya Amatya. 🇳🇵



**CONSERVING CULTURE:** The tender for Kasthamandap reconstruction is in pre-qualification stage. Although locals are against the tender process, the KMC is going ahead with the plan.

# Tendering reconstruction

The Department of Archaeology (DoA) has so far awarded more than 50 reconstruction tenders and reconstruction and renovation work has started in 42 heritages including Pratappur and Anantapur in Swayambhu, Taleju, Radha Krishna temple and parts of Hanumandhoka palace in Kathmandu Darbar Square, Bijeshwori, Indrayani, Jaisidawal, Manimandap, and Fasidaga in Bhaktapur.

"The tenders indicate how much money needs to be spent on each monument and not how much is needed to ensure that the reconstruction is done the right way. The reconstruction process should be artisan driven. Getting them to lead the work and training more of them is important," says conservation architect Kai Weise.

"Right now there is a total disconnect between the people preparing the tender documents and the ground reality. Drawings for the monuments are being prepared without proper knowledge of the traditional structure and the level of damage the monuments have suffered," he adds.

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# PASSENGERS

**I**t is fairly apparent that there are very few people left in Hollywood who are really willing to take a risk. Even with the stunning, gob smacking really, beauty of *Passengers*'s special effects, the crux of the story is so unstable and so unfortunately



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

mundane for a film that takes place on a starship that the viewer is left feeling slightly bewildered, as if a romantic dramedy somehow genre warped into a really banal *Star Trek* sequel. Starring two very versatile actors, Chris Pratt and Jennifer Lawrence, the film follows the deeply disturbing premise

regarding the loneliness of space travel. Pratt plays Jim Preston, a mechanical engineer (a very conveniently plotted aspect that manifests in almost ever action point in the script) who is traveling on the Avalon - a starship that is carrying 5,000 passengers on an intergalactic immigration trip to Homestead II, a planet that offers new opportunities outside of an over crowded Earth, but requires a 120 year trip that must undertaken in a hibernation pod. When Jim is very rudely awakened from his cryogenic sleep he finds himself the sole person conscious. Supposed to wake up four months before arrival along with all the other immigrants, in the slow, bleary moments after cryo-sleep, Jim begins to realise that something is terribly wrong. After some awkward grappling with the ubiquitous Artificial

Intelligence, or A.I., that runs the enormous state-of-the-art ship, Jim realises, to his horror, that he has awakened 90 years before Avalon will reach Homestead II. As with Andrei Tarkovsky's gloriously sublime *Solaris* - this could have been an opportunity for the screenwriter Jon Spaihts to explore the existential crisis of what it means to be in space; truly alone, surrounded by 5000 sleeping souls. Unfortunately, plot twists, however apparently ill advised, are necessary in mainstream cinema. And so another passenger, you guessed it, a blonde, charismatic beauty, Aurora Lane, played by Jennifer Lawrence, wakes up one year after Jim's tortured stint on a spaceship that boasts French fine dining and an Art Deco bar completed with an android bartender Arthur (played by Martin Sheen) just in time to save him from going mad. How and why Jim and Aurora are woken up, their fate, along with a very unorthodox love story laced by a smattering of action movie sequencing towards the end makes for a strange film, and while swimming in a transparent swimming pool that juts out of the side of a starship which is hurtling through space could make your breath stop for a few moments, the film itself is a gorgeous, empty projection, not unlike the huge space windows that adorn the gold class passenger suites, onto which you can wish any kind of view, just as long as it is beautiful. 🇳🇵

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

## HAPPENINGS



GOPAL GARTAULA

**GIDDY-UP:** Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal rides a transplanter at the launch of Paddy Super Zone program in Jhapa on Tuesday.



GOPEN RAI

**APPY NEW YEAR:** Foreign Affairs Minister Prakash Saran Mahat launches the Nepal Passport App in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

**FAST AND FAVOURED:** Minister for Information and Communications Surendra Kumar Karki during the launch of Nepal Telecom's 4G service in Kathmandu on Sunday.



GOPEN RAI

**STRIKE A POSE:** Police personnel detain a strike enforcer in Kalimati on Wednesday. The strike was called by a struggle committee of people opposed to the road expansion drive in the Kathmandu Valley.



MARTYN ANDREWS

**GRANNY GREETINGS:** Two women at Pashupatinath Temple greet each other on 1 January.



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# What’s wrong with nationalism?

UML Chair KP Oli in a candid conversation with journalist Kishore Nepal in [www.pahilopost.com](#), 3 January



**Kishore Nepal: You have chosen a difficult path isn’t it?**  
**KP Oli:** Yes. But it is necessary because our sovereignty is at risk. Five years after India’s independence in 1947, Kashmir became an Indian state. Bangladesh emerged as a new nation in 1971. And Sikkim was annexed into India in 1974.

**But Nepal is a UN member. So why are you so paranoid?**  
UN membership gives Nepal a degree of legal status. But that does not mean that our sovereignty is completely protected.

**What didn’t you raise this with the Indian Prime Minister?**  
Wanting to annex another country is one thing, but it is quite a different thing to actually do it. But the Tarai is now being turned into a buffer zone. We have already made a mistake by creating Province 2, a Tarai-only state.

**Why did the major parties hastily promulgate the constitution?**  
Hastily? Where were you when we were negotiating for eight long years?



RSS

**Why are the parties polarised then?**  
This is a battle for nationalism. Have we ever begged for anything from India? Have we have done any injustice to India? We have always expressed our commitment to protect India’s genuine and justified concerns. But why did India just take note of our constitution?

**All of you top leaders stood up to Indian foreign secretary S Jaishankar. Why are you divided now?**  
India made the wrong move at the wrong time. The special envoy’s advice was also wrong. I told Jaishankar Nepal should not feel bullied by India. But whenever I talk of Nepal’s national interest I am accused of being a hollow nationalist, or a disciple of Mahendra.

**Why did the Nepali Congress breach the agreement with the UML when you were set to become Prime Minister?**  
You know why – to stop me from being Prime Minister. It is a power game, but it is also about nationalism. I fought against Mahendra’s authoritarianism, but I appreciate his nationalist stand to an extent. But when I talk of nationalism, you people make fun of me.



**‘Elections first’ ‘No, amendment first’**  
**Signpost:** Parliament  
**File:** The second amendment to the Constitution

कान्तिपुर  
Batsayan in *Kantipur*  
31 December

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) CEO Sushil Gyewali was sacked because he did not bribe the Congress-Maoist leaders ”  
  
UML Chair KP Oli in [www.onlinekhabar.com](#)  
5 January

# Karki statement Exposés

Posted by Lokman Singh Karki on his Facebook page on 22 December

facebook

The day I took over the anti-corruption agency, I made a resolution to eradicate corruption in Nepal. My focus was to develop the CIAA as an active, powerful, fair and transparent anti-government body. Corruption was so rampant that no sector was unaffected by it. When I began to clean up the mess, certain political parties and their MPs targeted me with an impeachment motion.

At that time, I was investigating irregularities by opaque I/NGOs, unscrupulous cooperatives, politically-protected trade unions, tax evaders, business syndicates and cartels, media outlets interested in misguiding the nation, corrupt businessmen in the guise of media entrepreneurs, power brokers involved in parliament horse trading, hunger strikers sponsored by I/NGOs and individuals amassing disproportionate wealth. When I was about to file cases against corrupt leaders, they ganged on me and pushed for my impeachment. I have left it up to the people to decide whether I need to be removed.

I have thoroughly studied every act of conspiracy against me, and I have reached the conclusion that the corrupt want to remove me at any cost. Whether I stay or go is not important, but I have a few questions: was it my fault to investigate those who fraudulently received billions of rupees through NGOs to weaken national unity? Was it my fault to take action against those who illegally stashed away money and invested in overseas businesses in violation of Nepali laws? Was it my fault to clean up the mess at the top?

I was accused of trying to act like the Chief Executive. Did I

ever interfere in the appointments of ministers? Did I ever recommend anyone close to me as justice, secretary or manager of a public enterprise? Did I really create a parallel administration? I challenge my detractors to prove when and how I overstepped my jurisdiction.

I am confident that I will get out of this. Once I resume my job, I will start fulfilling my promise to rid the country of corruption. Even if I am impeached, I will continue to expose the corrupt with the support from the people.

The people are the defenders of democracy, and they want a country free of corruption. Although I was a retired bureaucrat, I knew the extent and dimensions of corruption only when I became the CIAA Chief. To eliminate corruption, we kept all state mechanisms under surveillance. The CIAA has increased surveillance on many individuals, and cases have been filed against some of them.

I do not want to publicise everything at this stage. But I will not hesitate to do so when the people want me to. If the person committed to eradicating corruption and promoting good governance is humiliated it is too much to bear. If there is any obstruction I will have to spearhead an anti-corruption campaign as an aware Nepali citizen. Only time will tell how many of them will be caught with their pants down.



Krishna Gyawali in *Kantipur*, 23 December

कान्तिपुर

New evidence of the suspended CIAA Chief Lokman Singh Karki overstepping his jurisdiction.

## CASE 1

On 7 February 2015, a day after a meeting between Karki and the Office of the Nepal Trust secretary Sridhar Gautam, the CIAA ordered the Trust to approve the ownership transfer of Gokarna Resort.

In 1995, the Royal Palace had leased Gokarna Resort to L M Suvir Brothers of Singapore for 30 years. A provision of the agreement between the Palace and the leaseholder prohibited L M Suvir Brothers from transfer its majority share to any other entity. The Trust, which was formed to manage royal property nationalised after the abolition of the monarchy, did not allow LM Suvir Brothers to transfer its ownership to Yeti Holdings Pvt Ltd.

However, the Trust swiftly facilitated the transfer of ownership of Gokarna Resort to Yeti Holdings. Karki is suspected to have had a personal interest in the deal between the two companies.

## CASE 2

An investigation by the Ministry of Health exposed anomalies in the allocation of MBBS seats by the Nepal Medical Council. The probe team also recommended actions against the Council’s registrar Nilmani Upadhyia in its report. But the CIAA raided the Ministry, seized this report and appointed Upadhyia

as its ‘Health Expert’. Sources say Upadhyia showed Karki how to interfere in the medical sector.

## CASE 3

When the CIAA filed cases against the Nepal Tourism Board in April 2015, it implicated Forest Secretary Sharad Chandra Poudel, who was known among his peers as an honest bureaucrat and against whom Karki nursed a grudge.

## CASE 4

Tainted Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) General Manager Gopal Khadka was being investigated by the Ministry of Supply, but the CIAA spokesperson Krishna Hari Pushkar publicly defended him in a press meet. He said: “If action is taken against Khadka the accused will be cleared by the Supreme Court.” Then, the ministry promptly halted its investigation.

## CASE 5

In June 2016, a team of ‘experts’ sent by the CIAA prepared questions for medical entrance examinations replacing the ones drafted by Kathmandu University. Later, CIAA secretary Shanta Raj Subedi told a parliament committee that CIAA Commissioner Raj Narayan Pathak’s daughter Priya Pathak appeared in the entrance exams.

## CASE 6

On 16 September 2016, the Supreme Court decided to review a writ petition challenging Karki’s appointment. In a hastily summoned press conference, the CIAA announced that it had expedited investigation into embezzlement of allowances for ex-Maoist combatants. A commissioner later said: “There was no investigation underway, and no notice was ever served against any Maoist leader. Karki was just trying to bargain with Maoist leaders.”



# RECHARGING THE MOUNTAINS

As natural springs dry up, more families are selling their land and moving out of the mid-hills of Nepal

SONIA AWALE

in KAVRE

Nepal has always had too much rain or too little. But irregular monsoons and a worsening water shortage are emptying villages in the mountains of Nepal.

While scientists try to find proof that weather extremes in the Himalaya are a result of global climate change, here, in Phulbari village 40km east of Kathmandu the real concern is that there are few men left to till the dry red soil.

“At least 10 families have left our village in the last few years and migrated to the cities because of the lack of water,” said Nanu Ghatane, who leads a women’s group here.

Even as farmers sell their land

and move out to Kathmandu, people from the city have bought their homesteads as investment. The terraces lie dry and fallow amidst a stunning backdrop of snow mountains to the north.

Even among the families who have stayed, the menfolk have migrated to the Gulf or Malaysia in search of work. “Our men have left to earn Rs 10,000 a month, toiling in the desert heat, while we need to hire people paying them 30,000 a month to work on our fields,” added Ghatane.

Laxman Prasad Adhikari, 48, has stayed despite the shortage of water and workers because he earns a decent income from selling milk and vegetables.



## Making every drop count



KALCHHI, KAVRE – In all his 70 years, Gyan Prasad Dhungana has never seen the weather being so unpredictable. Storms are more violent and frequent, and the rain erratic.

“We used to have showers every other day in May and June and there used to be gentle weeklong rain during the monsoon,” Dhungana recalled. “Nowadays the monsoon is often delayed and they say it is because of

global warming.”

Bimala Bajgain, 35, who heads the Women Farmers’ Group here, says: “The monsoon does not follow any timetable anymore, and the late rains mean paddy planting is delayed and there is lower yield.”

Decades of sprinkling chemical fertilisers and pesticides have also ruined the soil, reducing harvests, causing ecological harm and making farmers poorer.

**WORTH OF WATER :** Nanimaya Dhungana (left), an avid advocate of organic fertiliser, utilises waste water from her kitchen.

Now, villagers in Kavre have found that switching to organic vegetable farming can earn more money, help revive the soil, and adapt better to unpredictable weather.

Centre for Environment and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED), which won this year’s the Adaptation at Scale award (*see box*) has been training farmers in Kavre in organic farming and water conservation so they can better adapt to water shortages.

One successful technique is drip irrigation to grow vegetables without wasting even a single drop of water. This protects the soil, boosts productivity, irrigates the fields with limited water supply and makes it much more cost-effective to farm.

“We collect rain water and water from the kitchen and washing in plastic ponds, and we don’t waste water at all,” said 54-year old Nanimaya Dhungana, carrying a heavy load of fodder on her back.

Dhungana is also an avid advocate of *jholmal*, an organic fertiliser and bio-pesticide prepared by mixing locally available cattle urine, dung, farm waste and water.

Bimala Bajgain also uses *jholmal*, and said: “We had no idea about organic farming but since using *jholmal* two years ago, our harvests have increased.

### Scaling Up

The Center for Environment and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED) recently won the Adaptation at Scale Prize for its successful implementation of ICIMOD’s Resilient Mountain Village (RMV) pilot project.

The £10,000 prize was given by the UK Department for International Development for successful climate change adaptation initiatives in Nepal with high potential for being replicated. The RMV approach is being tried out in eight villages in Kavre and works with 40 farmer’s groups made up of mainly women. One of the most successful components of the program is the fertiliser and bio-pesticide called *jholmal*.

We save money because we don’t need to buy expensive pesticides and fertilisers anymore.”

*Jholmal* doesn’t lower the fertility of soil, protects plants from harmful pests and improves productivity. Farmers are also managing locally available compost by covering it up rather than drying out in the sun for maximum benefit. Introduction of methods like mulching and drought resistant seeds have also helped boost productivity of cash crops like cucumber, pumpkin and bitter gourd.

“We need to have a different mentality and patience, but we now know the importance of organic methods,” said Bajgain. “I now want to share our experience with neighbouring villages.”

Sonia Awale in Kavre





PICS: KUMAR ACHARYA

**STAYING BACK:** The women's group led by Nanu Ghatane (*left*) is reviving water springs that had gone dry. After beginning rainwater harvesting, Laxmi Parajuli (*right*) has enough water for her cattle and the kitchen of the new home she has built after the earthquake near her tin hut.



And the reason he can do that is because he has water all year round from a rainwater harvesting system. He has also built a biogas plant to turn manure from his buffaloes into cooking gas.

"Many have left for Qatar and Malaysia but so far we are not doing badly with the farm and the livestock," Adhikari said, "of course it would have been better if the government had helped us with irrigation and we could grow off-season vegetables."

To be sure, droughts and water shortages are not new in the Himalaya. But farmers here who depend on rain-fed agriculture have had to walk further every day to fetch water. Only 15 of the 65 natural springs in the village still have water.

"Springs have been drying

up one after another in the last few years. We don't know if it's because of the earthquake or changing climate," said Ghatane, while waiting for a trickle to fill up her *gagro*. "It doesn't rain as much as it used to. When it does, it is not on time or regular anymore."

Here in Phulbari and surrounding villages of Kavre, women farmers do not allow a single drop of water go waste anymore. With help from ICIMOD's Himalayan Climate Change and Adaptation Programme, they are collecting monsoon water, using wastewater to irrigate vegetable fields, and digging ponds to recharge ground water and revive springs.

After technicians identify a spring, women build a recharge

basin up the hill to collect monsoon runoff and let it slowly seep into the soil. This prevents the spring from going dry, and water is collected in a tank that feeds a tap. Ghatane's group has revived several springs that had recently gone dry.

The happiest farmers these days in Phulbari are the ones who have installed rainwater harvesting systems. Laxmi Parajuli's 7,000 litre tank still has water she collected from her roof last monsoon.

"Even if the springs dry up, we still have enough rain for the kitchen and cattle," said Parajuli. Many homesteads here now have plastic-lined ponds to store wastewater. Some families have even built 27,000 litre tanks to store rainwater from one monsoon to the next.

The only drawback is the cost, but when there is no alternative and when water becomes so precious for irrigation and drinking Phulbari farmers have found that necessity is the mother of invention.

Being self-sufficient in water has empowered women like Ghatane. She says: "There are few men here, so we women are responsible for taking most household decisions. It makes sense that we are the ones with these new ideas, and when a woman learns the whole family learns, too." 🇳🇵



Watch women farmers talk about alternatives that has revived natural springs and farming

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