





# FEAR OF LETTING GO

Less than a year into federalism, and Nepalis already seem fed up. There is utter confusion from the ward level to Baluwatar about how this is supposed to work. The constitution guarantees 35 areas of exclusive jurisdiction to the federal government in Kathmandu (like foreign affairs and defence). Provincial governments have 21 exclusive rights and local governments exercise their rights over 22 items. There are many other matters on which all three tiers of government share mandates.

The constitution also provides for local and provincial laws to be scrapped if they contradict federal laws. All this to-and-fro is delaying the passing of requisite laws in provincial assemblies and local councils, affecting development projects, and even the supply of essential medicines to government hospitals and rural health posts.

Out in Pokhara, the representatives of Province 4 assembly are not waiting for things to be cleared up, they are passing all 22 necessary laws by June so village and town councils can start functioning as they should.

At the heart of this unnecessary delay is the reluctance of central ministries, politicians and their parties in Kathmandu to devolve decision-making and the right to raise revenue to local governments. For example, property taxes are supposed to be the authority of local government, but it is still being raised by district units of the central Land Revenue Department.

Pokhara Municipality used to receive from the centre its share of land revenue worth Rs500 million before federalism went into effect. Ironically, today it receives: zero. District Education Offices were supposed to be transferred to local government, they are still controlled by the Ministry of Education in Kathmandu.

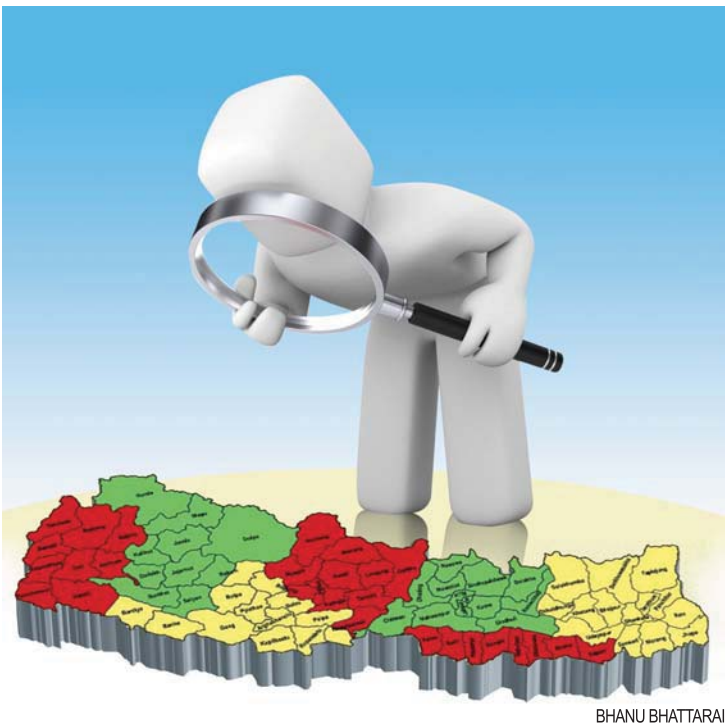
As Province 4 Chief Minister argues in our Guest Editorial (*below*) what is the point of decentralisation if the central or provincial governments do not devolve their decision-making and revenue-

raising powers to elected village and town councils?

Even after two months, provincial governments still do not have administrative facilities and infrastructure in place. In the capital of Province 5 in Butwal, civil servants have to take turns sitting because there are not enough chairs in the office. The Ministry of Social Welfare is housed in Butwal's bus park terminal building. Only half the posts for provincial government have been filled so far. Province 5 has plans to make a 'mini-Singha Darbar' secretariat in Butwal, but that will take at least four years.

The 2015 earthquake provided Nepal with an opportunity to slow or even reverse the flow of construction workers to the Gulf. However, as our report on page 11 shows, the opposite happened: even more Nepalis than before migrated to earn money to rebuild, and reconstruction in many districts is in the hands of masons from Bihar.

The disaster is an opportunity for the overly-politicised National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to hand over its functions to local governments, and eventually put itself out of business. After all, we need to make disaster preparedness and management a nationwide affair, since the whole country is exposed to seismic risk.



BHANU BHATTARAI

## GUEST EDITORIAL PRITHVI SUBBA GURUNG

# Starting from zero

We have created a vision for prosperity in Province 4, considering not just our potential but also limitations. But federalism is still a work in progress, several laws are yet to be drafted. We are still trying to determine the exact roles and responsibilities of Federal, Provincial and Local governments. There is still a lot of confusion and uncertainty about the mandates of each, the terms of reference for all three tiers of government and how deep devolution will actually go.

But while we wait for these laws to be formulated, we cannot just sit and twiddle our thumbs. Here in Province 4, we have already unveiled the provincial government's first budget, programs, and policies. Then we need to pass at least 22 laws at the provincial level to govern our administrative procedures.

We are starting from zero to draw a five-year roadmap for prosperity. We cannot afford to lose any more time. We are now identifying our resources and priorities, and realistically our focus will be on tourism, hydropower, agriculture, industry, and human resources.

The tourism potential of Province 4 is not limited to its capital in Pokhara. We are designing a policy to make tourists go beyond the town, and into the far-flung villages below the Annapurnas. We will designate at least 300 villages for home-stay tourism in the next five years, which will inject tourism income directly into the village economy.

For us, each program or policy has to meet three

objectives: it has to increase productivity, generate employment opportunities and reduce poverty. And all these outcomes of a successful program must benefit the larger section of the society, especially the under-served groups.

We have a plan to establish a world-class technical university in Pokhara, and its graduates will not just help the province but the entire country. Apart from an international-level sports stadium in Pokhara, we will also build infrastructure in every village council to promote multi-culturalism and sports.

Today, more than nine months after local elections, progress on getting these plans off the ground has been slow. We lack both the resources and the legal clarity of where to raise the revenue from. We do not even have legal and administrative structures to collect taxes.

Even so, we will firm up our plans so that we can hit the ground running when there is more clarity about the mandate and revenue source of local governments. Prosperity through federalism is not just possible, it is necessary.



**Prithvi Subba Gurung**  
*is Chief Minister of Province 4*

## ONLINE PACKAGES



### JOHN WOODS ON STUDIO

John Woods speaks to Kunda Dixit on *Nepali Times Studio*. Woods was in Nepal this week to open another library on World Book Day -- 20 years after he first came to Nepal on a trek, saw the state of a school in Lamjung, quit his Microsoft job and set up Room to Read. Go online to watch Woods explain how important it is to give children the chance to read books.

### LANGTANG

Clarification to the report on Langtang ('Reincarnation of a holy valley, Clara Bullock, #906). The Swiss Embassy and the Dairy Development Corporation (DDC) is rebuilding the Langtang Cheese factory in Kyanjing. This CHF 200,000 symbolic support will help restore yak herders' livelihoods that they lost after the 2015 earthquake. Switzerland also helps the DDC to waive the advance herders took before the earthquake with a promise to supply yak cheese worth of that value. After losing their family members, yaks and property, the remaining herders were neither able to supply the cheese nor pay back the advance money. In early 2016 herders built a makeshift factory by recovering salvaged material to start producing small quantity of cheese. The reconstruction will be completed by December 2018.

**Embassy of Switzerland**

■ Wishing a great future for this area.  
**Joyce Slater**

■ All the best for those in Langtang!  
**Dean Richards Reardon**

### INSIGHTFUL

A very clear, balanced and eventually forward looking opinion ('National interest or nationalism', Editorial, #904). Hope it will positively influence leaders who are involved in mutually-beneficial diplomacy.

**Jens**

### BE PREPARED

Earthquake preparedness is something we should routinely practice, but to scare people about impending earthquakes should also be avoided ('Past disasters foretold', Om Astha Rai, #906). We want to be ready, not traumatised!

**Bharat Koirala**

### POWER HUNGRY

Pushpa Kamal Dahal surrendered his communism way back in 2006 when he signed a peace agreement and followed the course taken by UML ('PK and KP', Om Astha Rai, #906). He is power-hungry, will do anything to get back in power.

**Prakash C Joshi**

### BYPASS KTM

It will be nice someday to bypass Kathmandu and land in Pokhara ('Kathmandu Airport reopened', nepalitimes.com).

**Sigmund Stengel**

### EDUCATING MIRACLE BOY

Proud that survivor baby Sonish Awal will be looked after by the Nepal Army ('Bhaktapur's Miracle boy at 3, Monika Deupala, #906')!

**Deep Rana**

### IMPORTANT WARNING

The 2015 quake was a warning to be better prepared for the really big one. But how prepared are we, what have we learned in three years? ('Mind the gap', Editorial, #906) Important Nepali Times editorial.

**Bibek Bhandari**

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### The reincarnation of a holy valley

by Clara Bullock

Three years after the devastating earthquake that triggered a massive avalanche, people of Langtang are ready to move on and build a new future. The trail has now been repaired and the tea houses along the trail are up and running, but tourism has yet to pick up. Go online to watch this most-widely shared video from last week issue commemorating the third anniversary of the earthquake.

**Most reached and shared on Facebook**

**Most commented**



### Mind the gap

Editorial

The Gorkha Earthquake three years ago was just a forewarning of an even bigger disaster to come. It is now time to think beyond reconstruction in the 14 districts affected in 2015 to upgrading preparedness and disaster response in central and western Nepal. This editorial garnered much attention and was the most popular item from last week's issue. Visit nepalitimes.com to read the editorial and feedback.

**Most popular on Twitter**

**Most visited online page**

## QUOTE TWEETS



**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
Even the 2015 disaster will pale in comparison to a much bigger earthquake which scientists say threatens western Nepal, reports @omastharai #NepalQuake #WesternNepal



**Avash Piya @AvashPiya**  
Disaster waiting to happen.



**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
Sonish Awale was just 5 months old when he was buried under the rubble for 22 hours. Today at 3, he is a playful and inquisitive boy, and is excited to have visitors. #NepalQuake



**L Devaney @pglen68**  
A true miracle!!



**Kunda Dixit @kundadixit**  
Mind the Gap @nepalitimes marks three years of #NepalQuake with a Special Edition. Go online for full coverage. Editorial: <https://www.nepalitimes.com/editorial/mind-the-gap/> ... 'Go beyond reconstruction in districts affected in 2015 to retrofitting schools and homes all over Nepal for the Really Big One.'



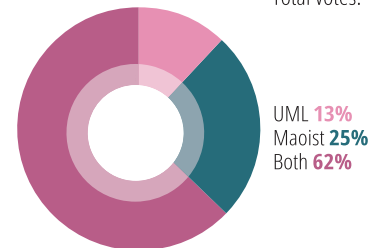
**Robert Piper @UN\_Piper**  
Wish it wasn't so, but this @nepalitimes editorial is spot-on: #Nepal is not out of the earthquake danger zone. Pressure has been building on a fault line in far-western Nepal since 1505. Nepal's newly-minted mayors should make building code compliance a top priority #dutyofcare



Weekly Internet Poll #907

Q. Who is responsible for the delay in UML-Maoist unification?

Total votes: 112



Weekly Internet Poll #908  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. A recent economic survey shows Nepalis are getting richer. Do you feel richer, poorer or the same?



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# Marketing the intangible

Patan's ongoing chariot festival is as dramatic as bull-running in Pamplona

The great chariot festival of Karunamaya has begun, bringing with it the mandatory, and much anticipated, summer rain. The festival is celebrated by Valley residents and the people of Yala (Patan) with such enthusiasm that one cannot help but want to make sure the whole world knows about it, and bring them to Patan to join the festivities.



**½ FULL**  
Anil Chitrakar

While mountaineers head for the peaks this pre-monsoon season, the rest of the country and Kathmandu sees a decrease in tourist arrivals after the spring peak. The month-long festival of Karunamaya (Bunga Dyo, Rato Machindranath, Adi Lokeswara, or whatever other names you want to call it) should be marketed to the rest of Nepal and the world. Patan could probably make a whole year's worth of income in a month if this was properly done.

Nepal often makes international headlines for the wrong reasons: natural disasters or political upheavals. We need to get out some good news as well. The Chariot festival is one of the most dramatic and Instagrammable festivals in the world, comparable to bull-running in Pamplona.

Patan has a lot more to offer. Jitendra Shrestha and Prakash



GOPEN RAI

Dhakhwa have spent a good part of their creative efforts and resources to convert their own houses into high end home-stays and helped neighbors to do the same. Check out Cosy Nepal to see the wonderful spaces that the visitor can call their home away from home, in Patan. Newa Chen has rooms, gallery and performing spaces. The visitor can also see how the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, Rohit Ranjitkar and their team of artists are restoring the monuments like Bhai Dega at the Patan Durbar Square

after earthquakes of the past.

Patan today has eating places, there are enough hotels in the outskirts of the historical core area, the city has trained young people who can help guide the visitors, and has even launched an app so you can walk about Patan with the help of your phone. Patan, with the help of Lok Chitrakar, has just freshly painted the gate at Patan Dhoka with the iconic depiction of the eight Asta-matrika mother goddesses who protect the city against anything bad that could

befall this ancient settlement.

At Pim Baha, Shailendra Shrestha, who operates Taaaja Pha bed and breakfast, is there to take you through at least 2,300 years of history of the neighbourhood, the Ashok Stupa and the ancient pond. Please take time out to go to the neighbourhood in the evening when the illuminated temple is reflected in the waters.

The chariot festival of Karunamaya is made of numerous facets that could be of interest to the world travelers. The open spaces,

historical ponds, the families and guilds that make the chariot, the various species of timber and plants/flowers involved and offered, the musical instruments, rituals and feasts.

The great festival keeps Patan a united community, and this is probably the biggest value created. It is not a small task to pull the great chariot through the lanes of Patan despite all odds. People's participation is a term much used in development literature, but if you want to see what it really means, you have to come and see for yourself. The energy, the care, respect and sense of purpose of the faithful illustrate what people working together can achieve.

The legends, folklores, history and anecdotes associated with the chariot festival are also of great interest. It consists of kings, naga mythical snakes, farmers, and of course, hidden treasures. There is deceit and integrity and suspense which ensure that each year there is a really good reason to come together and rebuild the chariot and have the festival again and again.

So much has changed over the last 15 centuries in Nepal, the Kathmandu Valley and Patan, but the chariot festival of Karunamaya or Bunga Dyo goes on. No disaster like the earthquake of 2015, no political changes like the end of monarchy in 2006, have disrupted the festival that is an integral part of one of Nepal's (and world's) truly intangible heritages. 🇳🇵

**Anil Chitrakar** is President of Siddharthinc

## Chill out at the new Keventers in Thamel



SIKUMA RAI

The famous Indian dairy parlour popular for its milkshakes has added another outlet in Thamel, as part of its expansion across the subcontinent.

The brand is building on the success of its milkshake shops in Labim Mall and Civil Mall. Originally conceptualised as a working station, the Thamel branch has become a go-to place for people of all ages to take a break and relish fresh dairy beverages.

The shop is situated in a busy parallel street in Thamel and offers its popular menu of milkshakes with a new addition of South Indian blend coffee varieties.

"Opening a shop in Thamel for us meant making it more than a kiosk," says Bhaskar Koirala (pictured) who owns the franchise for Nepal with his brother. "Keventers is known for its quality and wholesomeness. We are also focused on the aesthetics and ambience of the outlets, and like to make it a place for customers to relax and chill out."

Koirala, himself a fluent Mandarin speaker, has taken note of the new demographics of tourists in Thamel by promoting the various flavours of milkshakes on sale in signs outside the parlour in Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Russian.

Ever since it became popular with Nepali boarding school students in Darjeeling, Keventers has had a loyal following even when the boys returned to Nepal and grew up to be men. Keventers uses local fresh organic milk from a dairy in Suryabinayak, with mandatory 3% fat concentration in the milk.

What makes the new Keventers in Thamel stand out is not just the shakes, but also the interior. A vintage brass letter box on the door, black and white mural on the wall tile of the old Connaught Place in Delhi, and classic framed photos of Keventers products hark back at the

brand's colonial history.

The furniture is done in Ikea-esque minimalism and the ambience is kept refrigerator-cool so that customers immediately feel like they are insulated from the hustle, bustle and dust of the city outside. There is free wifi, and with the warm glow enticing post-dinner crowds for dairy desserts.

Keventers was founded by Danish dairy entrepreneur Edward Keventers in 1925 with outlets in Darjeeling, Delhi, Calcutta and Aligarh. After Indian independence, ownership was transferred to Ram Krishna Dalmia, whose grandson Agastya Dalmia revived and recreated the brand in 2015. The Koiralas approached Dalmia to start with Keventers' first franchise abroad in Nepal.

Today, Keventers has more than 250 outlets and is undergoing rapid expansion in India. The Koiralas are hoping to start a new outlet in Darbar Marg soon.

The newest flavor is Salted Caramel Thick Shake which is served in Keventers' trademark bottle illustrated with a rhododendron blossom to give the product a Nepali touch. 🇳🇵

**Sikuma Rai**

### prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

#### Wealthier Nepal

Nepal's economy is expected to grow by 5.89% in the ongoing fiscal year 2017-2018, according to the Central Bureau of



Government of Nepal  
**Central Bureau of Statistics**

Statistics, driven mainly by remittances and a good monsoon. This means the annual average income of each Nepali is projected to reach \$1,004.

#### Himalaya for kids

As a part of its CSR initiative, Himalaya Airlines has contributed kitchen utensils and a yearlong supply of notebooks to



Prayas Nepal, an orphanage that looks after abandoned, abused and physically challenged children from different parts of the country.

#### Tee off with Turkish

Turkish Airlines has launched the 6th Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup where more than 8,000 participants will compete in 100 tournaments around the world

for the grand finale which will be held in Antalya in November. The tournament is



scheduled to take place in venues such as the Royal Birkdale in England, Gleneagles in Scotland, The K Club in Ireland and Le Golf National in France.

#### Qatar at Airshow

Qatar Airways is showcasing its two Airbus A350-1000 and Business Class seat, Qsuite



during Eurasia Airshow in Antalya, Turkey from 25-29 April. The recently delivered Gulfstream G650ER executive aircraft and the ultra-long-range business jet will also be on display.

#### Golf at Gokarna

Laxmi Intercontinental, the authorised distributor of Hyundai cars, has organised an annual HYUNDAI Open Golf Tournament from 27-28 April, at Gokarna Golf Resort. A total of



130 golfers will compete in the tournament played in an 18 hole, stable fold and ¾ handicap formats.

prabhu BANK



Recent rapes of minors and allegations of long-term child abuse in Nepal by, among others, a high-profile international civil servant, have once more forced us to ask the question: are our children really safe? How can we ensure their safety?



## TO THE POINT

Sumana Shrestha

Added to the dangers faced by Nepali children from domestic and foreign predators, the 2015 earthquake has put more children in the vulnerable category. Thousands of families have been pushed below the poverty line, and three years on there are people still in flimsy shelters. A quest for better future drives many parents to believe in any one who offers help.

There have been many wake up calls to the Nepal government and public to be more wary of the helping hands being extended, especially in times of emergencies. The abuse cases of the Bal Mandir and Happy Home are still raw, yet policy-level interventions have been massively inadequate or missing. Perhaps it is poverty, desperation and lack of information that has forced Nepali families time and again, to extend open invitation to what looks like local and foreign do-gooders without any scrutiny of their past.

Some have criminal records, others may be alimony refugees, still others could actually be working for child welfare organisations, but we trust them implicitly for their philanthropy or charity work.

Perhaps it has become a norm for us to ignore street children who seem too cosy with a tourist in Thamel, or who all of a sudden have brand new clothes or a bicycle after a trek. Dig deeper, and there are dark secrets of exploitation and abuse.

In light of the recent arrest of Peter Dalglish, who served with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Nepal office and other UN offices around the world, we must really ask ourselves what can be done to ensure the safety of our children.

Dalglish's Wikipedia profile is everything a parent or a child can hope for in an angel that 'saves children'. He has projected himself as a formidable friend of children: the founder of Street Kids International, someone who has been working to improve the lives of children since 1987, chief technical adviser for the UN's anti-child labour program, Unicef, senior adviser to UN-Habitat Afghanistan. He was decorated with the Order of Canada, the second highest honor of merit accorded to Canadians for their community service or service to Canada.

The 60-year-old Canadian was arrested last week in Nagarkot in the company of two children by the Central Investigation Bureau after a tip-off from Interpol. He is to be arraigned on Wednesday. But what lurks behind these accolades are three things: is his reputation and circle of friends going to create pressure on the investigating team, if yes, how do we prevent such pressures?

Then is a serious OMG moment: how much unparalleled access to vulnerable children and

# Keeping our children safe


Rapes of minors and the arrest of a high-profile paedophile highlight the urgent need to protect Nepal's young

parents Dalglish's child protection platforms must have given. There is also a cold sensation of the loss of comfort: who else could be in the paedophile ring, if indeed he is convicted? How many knew and did nothing? How many will continue to access children through those platforms?

This is not the first arrest in Nepal related to paedophilia. In 2016, an American Kenneth Joseph Coombs was caught: he had a history of sexual misconduct and assault in the US. Yet, he made it inside Nepal because of lax immigration laws. In 2015, Ernest Fenwich MacIntosh was found

guilty and is serving a seven year sentence.

It may be time to warn street children about foreign and Nepali paedophiles, take better care of them in shelters with vetted child protection policies and actions, where they will be safe from such predators. Last time

I checked, the Nepal government has a ministry specifically called Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, but it remains to be seen what it has done to reduce the number of street children and child survivors of the earthquake, and implement policies against exploitation by aid workers. 



SAHINA SHRESTHA

The advertisement features a dark blue background. At the top center is the "MASTER SELECTION PREMIUM" logo, which includes a crest and decorative flourishes. Below the logo, the text "NEPAL'S FIRST BLENDED MALT SCOTCH WHISKY" is written in white serif font. The central focus is a product shot showing a bottle of whisky next to its box. The box is blue and white, with gold lettering that reads "NON CHILLED FILTERED WHITE OAK CASK". Both the bottle and the box feature the "MASTER SELECTION PREMIUM" label. In front of the bottle is a glass filled with whisky and ice cubes. The entire scene is reflected on a glossy black surface at the bottom.

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# Survival survivors

Götz Dieter Plage (*right*) drove into our lives in one of those iconic early Range Rovers, a red one if I remember right, bristling with all the latest gadgets. His arrival in Nepal heralded a decade-long partnership with our Tiger Tops team and UK's Survival Anglia television, making a series of wildlife documentaries throughout South Asia.

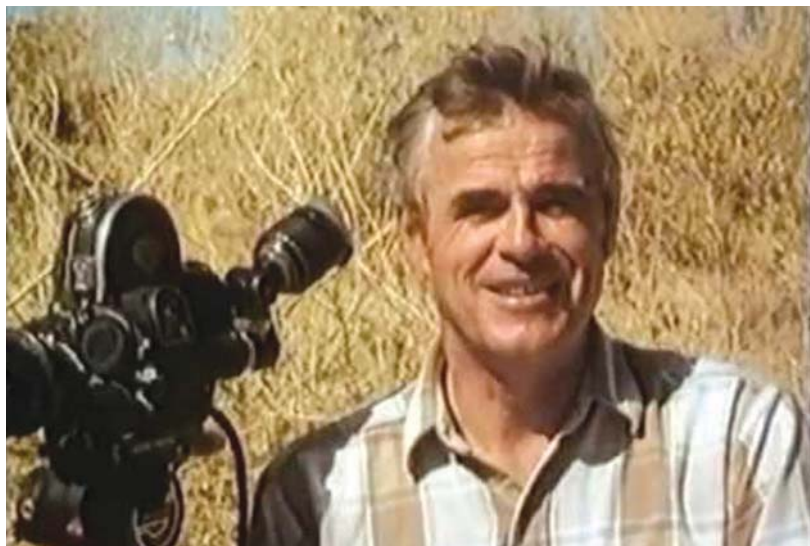


SO FAR SO GOOD  
Lisa Choegyal

With lush brown hair and a brow wrinkled with seriousness, Dieter was an earnest German wildlife cameraman, much respected by his peers. Based in Chitwan in a synergistic deal brokered by Jim Edwards, Dieter experimented with the latest 1970s technology for innovative filmmaking in the wild –night scopes, image intensifiers, motor drives, steady cams, and even a single-engine aircraft.

Fresh from filming in Africa, he regaled us with hair-raising stories about close encounters with endangered animals, charging gorillas and marauding hippos. Around the circular river-stone fireplace of a Lodge evening, he laughed loudly at his own jokes before retiring early to tinker with his equipment. In 1977 this pedantic loner surprised us by turning up with a wife (Mary from Norwich always known as “Sweetie Pie”) who faithfully followed Dieter’s peripatetic and obsessive shooting schedule with doe-eyed

Through their enthusiastic lenses, nature film-makers introduced Nepal to a global audience



devotion.

The facilities at Tiger Tops were the perfect base for Survival’s team which typically took over two years to complete their carefully crafted one-hour documentaries. Dieter’s long-term camera assistants came in different shapes and sizes, becoming an integral part of our Chitwan routine – a short stocky one was a special friend of mine and a tall bearded one married my sister.

All displayed an infectious commitment to the natural world and went to great lengths to capture rare and authentic footage, sitting for days in canvas hides, hours on elephant back, or perched all night on a tree branch. Through their enthusiastic lenses, the secret splendours of the forest and wilderness were exquisitely revealed to a television audience of millions. Conservation concerns were a recurrent theme - tigers and rhinos in Chitwan, leopards in Dudhwa and elephants in Sri Lanka.

Mike Price was a balding and bouncy Brit, diminutive and dedicated. Night after night he sat in the camouflaged machan set high on the ridge beside a tiger-likely trail, waiting with his camera ready. Each morning he would return for breakfast, weary and despondent - until the day when he appeared, still gasping and hopping with excitement. It was May, and his bare legs were caked in sweat and dust, the heavy camera case slung across his khaki shoulders.

When he had calmed down enough for us to understand him, Mike described the thrill of a tiger appearing silently out of the grass on the path below him - “stripes that moved” in the dawn light. At last, patience rewarded. It was a young male, and with the camera running he realised with some alarm that the purring sound was making it curious – the striped ears flickered with interest as it advanced up the bank. Mike had to remove the camera from the tripod as the tiger came closer and closer, until its face was peering through the slit window of the hide, separated only by a flimsy wall of canvas.

Even though primeval instinctual terror made his heart race, Mike had the presence of mind to keep the camera going, his hands shaking. “I was deafened by my own heartbeats,” he said later. In a career of close shaves in the jungle, this unsteady sequence became the centrepiece of *Tiger Tiger*, one of the first films to document the behaviour of these noble and elusive nocturnal cats.

As Mike recounted the story to us from the safety of the Tiger Tops breakfast table, luckily for him the young tiger decided discretion was the better part of curiosity, and moved on.

In return for logistic support and movies to share with our guests and staff, the partnership with Survival Anglia gave Nepal conservation credibility and accessed global groups such as the Audubon Society, Frankfurt Zoo and Zoological Society of London. David Attenborough came, the BBC Natural History Unit and National Geographic. The integrity and

international standing of Nepal’s wildlife conservation programme was secured.

The Smithsonian Institution’s long-term tiger monitoring project used Chuck McDougal and Tiger Tops’ trackers to pioneer camera trapping and radio collaring techniques, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands brought members of his 1001 Club of WWF donors as the guests of then-Prince Gyanendra, and Sir Peter Scott “launched” the first gharial back into the Narayani River, reared by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation to reinstate this threatened fish-eating crocodile. The first batch of gharial eggs was hatched in my bedroom, the white translucent orbs packed into a warm wet sandbox, before the crocodile breeding centre was set up at Kasara park headquarters.

In a poignant footnote, exactly 25 years ago this month Dieter Plage was killed in a horrific accident, plunging 50m through the canopy of a remote Sumatran rainforest. Hovering above the trees, he was suspended below a small airship in an adapted camera platform when his safety harness failed -- a victim of his own inventive commitment to share the glories of Asia’s natural world. 🇳🇵



Go online to watch Survival's *Tiger, Tiger* one of the very early documentaries to record the behaviour of the tigers of Chitwan, and put Nepal on the international nature safari list of must-visit places.

nepalitimes.com

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## NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.





After a hazy, clear and hot week, we are going into a fairly cloudy and perhaps thundery weekend. The filtering effect of the Indo-Gangetic haze as well as cloud cover will depress the maximum temperature to the mid-twenties in Kathmandu after it hit a high of 30 last week. So it will be less warm than usual this time of year, and the localised showers will cool the air even more. In the high valleys expect gale-force up-valley winds in the afternoons, as the isobars constrict across northern India.

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## Kathmandu's magnetic tug on Maura Moynihan

Duksangh Sherpa

Maura Moynihan first visited Kathmandu in 1973 when her father, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, was US Ambassador to India. “I was just 15 when I visited Kathmandu for the first time. It struck me like a thunderbolt.”

It was love at first sight, and her affinity for Kathmandu’s unique artistic and cultural heritage endured.

“There is no place like it in the world,” she says. “Kathmandu is indescribably and blindingly beautiful. Every day I discover a new temple, a secret stupa, another jatra.”

Moynihan’s exhibition *Who Loves Kathmandu More Than Me?* is on at Kathmandu Art in Lazimpat till 5 May with over 40 paintings, 10 of which are already sold. One is a mixed medium series on King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya that infuses ink, collage and watercolor. There are also depictions of Tara.

In 1999 Moynihan held her first exhibition at Sangeeta Thapa’s Siddhartha Art Gallery, and says she is thrilled to be working now with her daughter, Seetashma at Kathmandu Art Gallery.

In the 1970s Maura Moynihan attended the American School in New Delhi, and spent many years in Asia as a journalist, published two best-selling works of fiction,

*Yoga Hotel* and *Covergirl* (most of which she wrote while in Nepal). She is also a singer and song writer, poet, model, actress, designer, and has exhibited in India, Nepal, Thailand and the US.

At 23, Moynihan appeared on the cover of Andy Warhol’s *Interview* magazine, and for five years Moynihan and Warhol worked together at *Interview* and co-hosted Andy Warhol’s tv.

“Andy encouraged me to develop all my talents and creativity. He was a kind and generous man, the most amazing person one could have as a mentor and a friend,” recalls Moynihan.

Each time she visits Kathmandu, the one thing which Moynihan religiously does is visit Bouddha, Pashupatinath and Swyambhunath. The history,

mythology, art, culture and traditions associated to these ancient holy sites never fail to spiritually uplift her, she says.

Kathmandu has indeed always nurtured the artist in her. She explains: “Art in Nepal is not just decorative, it is integral to Nepali culture and way of life. Every painting is a *tapasya*.”

A student of comparative religion and literature, Moynihan spent many years studying Hindu and Buddhist iconography and was a consultant to the Rubin Museum of Art in New York.

“The new generation of Nepalis, especially women, inspire me greatly. They are sophisticated and educated,” says Moynihan. “Many people used to be pessimistic about the future of Nepal. But look at Nepal now, it has preserved its

culture, traditions and beauty. Nepalis are resilient despite the many hardships, the conflict and earthquake.”

Moynihan always carried paint, brushes, pencil and paper in her travels across Asia over the past three decades, painting in water colour because “it dries faster”.

She adds: “But I always return to Nepal, where seeds of Hindu myths and Buddhist philosophy mingle in Kathmandu’s rich and varied culture, it is a feast, a challenge and a quest for an artist. No matter where I go, I keep coming back to Nepal. There is a magnet in my heart that always pulls me back to this Valley.”

*Who Loves Kathmandu More Than Me?*  
*Kathmandu Art, Lazimpat*  
*Till 5 May*



DUKSANGH SHERPA

# Under Kathmandu’s spell



Follow artist Maura Moynihan as she shows us her exhibition 'Who Loves Kathmandu More than Me?' and explains why she is drawn to the medium of water colour to depict Nepal and the Valley where she has been living off and on for the past 35 years.

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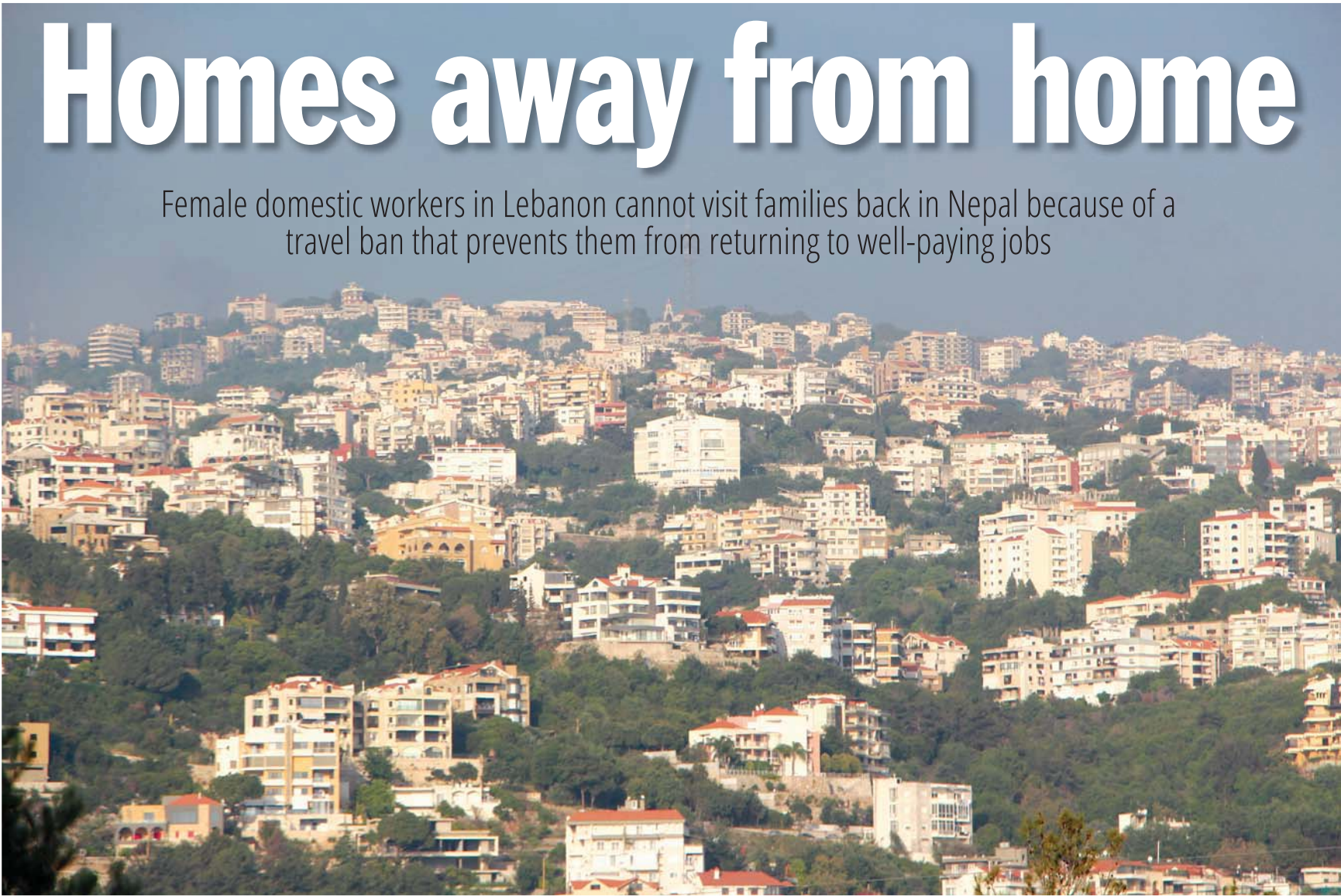
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Upasana Khadka  
in Beirut

Along with horror stories of abuse of female domestic workers, housemaids from Nepal here have a different worry – they cannot go back home for holidays because a Nepal government ban on female migrant workers would prevent them from returning to Lebanon to their jobs. Many women who travelled to West Asia before the ban went into effect in early 2017 have not been able to travel home to visit children and families even though their employers are willing to pay for roundtrip travel to Kathmandu. Niru has been a housemaid for the same family in Lebanon for ten years. She has developed a daily rhythm that she is comfortable with, and spends Sundays with other Nepali friends. Niru had gone back to Nepal hoping to migrate to Europe, but when that didn't work out her Lebanese employers asked her to return. "It was quite a scene when I landed in Beirut airport. My employer came to receive me with flowers and hugged me, and when I got to my old room it felt like home," Niru recalls. Since then, her only worry has been not being able to go back to Nepal on paid leave every two years. Her employer compensates her financially in lieu of the air ticket, but Niru misses not being able to see her aging parents in Taplejung. Dipa has been working for a family in Lebanon for the past decade, making about \$600 a month, most of which she saves. Her siblings back home in Nepal



barely make Rs15,000 a month and don't save much of it. "I am very happy here and so are many other Nepali domestic workers. Why is the government punishing us by not letting us go home?" asks Dipa, who could not even visit when her father passed away recently. Unlike other migrant workers, domestic help is an intimate and complex partnership where both the employers and employees are inside the home. There are cases of abuse and exploitation, but there are also many Nepalis who

are treated well and are happy in well-paid jobs. Employers here said they prefer Nepali housemaids, citing trust, cooking skills, relationship with their children, and the bonds they have developed. Niru's employer told us: "She takes care of me like my daughter. I don't have to tell her what to do, and have told her the house is yours. My children adore her. She is really one of us." Krishna's Lebanese employer says she wants her to go back to Nepal every year to spend time

with her son, Ajay. But Krishna doesn't want to take the risk of not being allowed to return. "I feel guilty because I cannot do anything about it," says Krishna's employer. Dhana has been working in the same household in Beirut for ten years. Her employer has in the past arranged paperwork through the Nepal Embassy in Cairo for her to go back to Nepal on leave. But Dhana doesn't want to be stuck in Nepal and lose her job. Says her employer: "Dhana has a right to go home and come back."

Nepali migrants here say home leave every two years paid by the employer are a strategic time to renegotiate salaries and benefits as employers are more open to having these discussions since there is an incentive to bring back the workers. There are also many Nepali domestic workers in Lebanon in part-time jobs, living in apartments with fellow migrants. Not all employers, especially those without elderly or small children in the household, require full time live-in support. Many workers also

# Alliance with airlines can make

Operators who have so much business from overseas workers could do more for their welfare

The Kotaraya quarter of the Malaysian capital comes alive on Sundays when Nepali migrant workers gather here to celebrate their hard-earned day off. The neighbourhood has over 65 Nepali restaurants, shops, remittance and travel agencies selling airline tickets catering to the Nepali diaspora population.



COMMENT  
Upasana Khadka

A lot has been said about Nepali migrant workers propping up the home economy, but Kotaraya on Sundays also shows how workers from Nepal support the Malaysian economy, its airlines and commercial activity in its cities as the 600,000 Nepalis there eat, shop, use phone cards and buy tickets back and forth from home. Three Malaysia-based airlines and two Nepali airlines link Kathmandu to Kuala Lumpur. At one of the restaurants, a group walks around seeking donations (*pictured, above*) for a



Nepali worker Ram Tamang, who had been injured in an accident on his way back from work, and did not have support from his employer for medical expenses. "We have been able to reach other Malaysian cities through social media and Nepalis are donating through their bank accounts," says Yam Magar who

adds that the 'Drive To Save Ram' has raised \$2,000 so far. The Non-Resident Nepali local chapter has covered his flight home. Stories of migrants who are injured, ill, jailed, duped or stranded are common, and many seek protection at Nepal Embassy shelters. In response, family, friends, the embassy, NGOs,

NRNA or activists often step in to help with compensation and repatriation. However, given that there are so many Nepalis in Malaysia, the sheer volume of vulnerable cases is overwhelming. The flight back can be a costly part of the expenditure for wounded workers like Ram Tamang, and that is where

Check-in Gate Display				20:14
SCHED	AIRLINES	FLIGHT NO.	CHECK IN GATE	STATUS
19:55	TIBET AIRLINES	TV9900	A	BOARDING
20:30	OMAN AIR	WY336	A	SECURITY CHECK
20:30	KOREAN AIR	KE696	B	BOARDING
20:40	AIR ARABIA	QR638	A	SECURITY CHECK
20:50	QATAR AIRWAYS	QR651	B	SECURITY CHECK
21:05	ETIHAD	EY293	A	SECURITY CHECK
21:25	HALIMAYA AIR	OD181	A	SECURITY CHECK
22:00	HIMALAYA AIRLINES	H9559	B	SECURITY CHECK

**SOS:** A group of Nepalis in a restaurant in Kotaraya of Kuala Lumpur raising money for a fellow-worker wounded in an accident at a Malaysian factory last month. If airlines could assist in emergency cases like these, it would be a big help to Nepali workers during emergencies.

airlines which get a bulk of their business from the travel to and from Kathmandu could do more. In 2016, 3.5 million passengers used Kathmandu airport – at least 70% of them were overseas contract workers. Many of them come home multiple times during their stay abroad, adding further business for airlines. "The size of the aircraft used or the frequency of flights to and from Kathmandu are often dictated by migrant volume," explains a travel agent here, who wanted to be identified only as Rita. Airlines serving the Gulf region and Malaysia operate up to 183 flights a week to and from





ALL PHOTOS: UPASANA KHADKA

prefer to live independently.

“My Madam refers me to her friends and colleagues so I have enough work every week,” says a part-time Nepali domestic. This shadow gig-economy has evolved over time in Lebanon, and sometimes involves undocumented workers some of whom get up to \$7 per hour, better than what live-in workers earn. But they have to pay living costs with that, and live in fear of detention by authorities.

It is difficult to quantify what proportion of Nepali domestic workers have positive

relationships with employers. Confined within households, many domestics silently endure abuse. Unlike other overseas contract work, the demand for domestic help in West Asia is expected to grow due to an ageing population, and as more families become double-income households.

Despite the ban on female Nepali domestic workers going to West Asia, many Nepali women are still travelling after paying off airport officials in Kathmandu or flying out from Delhi or Mumbai – making them more vulnerable

**BALCONY WITH A VIEW:** A Nepali housemaid in Beirut looks out to a view of the city. Workers here are mostly happy with their jobs, but say a travel ban on Nepali female workers prevents them from visiting families back home.



to exploitation by traffickers and recruiters.

Women who went away before the ban are also affected because they have husbands, children and families back in Nepal whom they have not been able to see for years. Many are unable to let go of good employers and return, or to take the risk of returning through expensive, unauthorised channels.

To be sure, not all employers are sympathetic to concerns of their housemaids, and see them as property bought from an agent. Domestic work must therefore come under labour laws of host countries, which can be implemented and monitored via government-to-government agreements so that Nepal embassies have up-to-date records of each migrant and household. However, while women from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Philippines can ask their embassies here for help, Nepal does not even have an honorary consul general in Beirut.

Bilateral labour agreements must be responsive to market needs like the trend towards part time household help that current arrangements do not address. This has created a parallel underground market that exposes workers to disproportionate risk.

Nepal’s ban on female domestic workers was a temporary solution while abuse and exploitation were addressed. It is time to reconsider it. Or at least make special arrangements for domestic workers already abroad so they can make time off visits to meet families back in Nepal. 🇳🇵

# The Risk Appetite

Overseas contract workers from Nepal tend to have a high threshold for risk because of the relatively better earning prospects and lack of alternatives back home.

Aspirants are often aware of the common risks to be wary of in overseas employment because of the networks of former or present migrant workers, the social web, and reports in the press.

Despite this, many continue to make risky decisions not always because of lack of information, but in spite of it. Mahesh, a seasoned diaspora leader in Qatar who has watched migrants flourish and has himself rescued many from inhumane conditions that bore resemblance to modern-day slavery, attributes this to the culturally fatalistic view that migration is a lottery.

Sharmila agreed with her agent to go to Kuwait via India despite a Nepal government ban on female workers (*story, left*) going to the Gulf. “How else would I travel?” she asked, admitting that she knew her journey was full of pitfalls.

Her agent ensured that Sharmila was well-versed on the do’s and don’ts while crossing borders to avoid getting caught: “Only carry a handbag.” “Don’t make eye contact with anyone.” “If stopped, say you are visiting family.”

If she only made it to Kuwait, she would be able to provide for her children. Sharmila’s journey took 24 days from Nepal to New Delhi to Sri Lanka to Dubai, and she got an abusive employer in Kuwait. She had no option but to escape and return to Nepal, distraught and without savings.

When Ramesh agreed to go on a visit visa to UAE, he knew he was taking a chance by paying Rs250,000 to his agent and knew he was being overcharged, but there was that slim chance he could get a well-paying job.

However, not only did his agent fail to find him a job but was verbally and physically abusive. Ramesh’s only memory of Dubai is the nearly three months he spent crammed inside an apartment with 22 other migrants.

Shama is 24 and looks 16. She covers her face and laughs, showing the first page of her passport with a falsified legal age of 32. She couldn’t make it past immigration in Dubai and was sent back to Kathmandu which she initially avoided by travelling through India due to the ban. Shama believed her agent who lived above her room in her village because she had already successfully sent two others to Kuwait.

Nepali workers are taking risks even when they get to the destination country. Ram’s job in Malaysia had no overtime, so he switched to undocumented status to earn more money – knowing fully well he would be deported if caught. He was caught, spent six months in detention and was sent back.

He was among a group of other deported Nepalis at Kathmandu airport recently (*pictured below*), all were empty handed, clad in t-shirts and flipflops, walking out with other Nepalis who were pushing baggage carts with tv monitors.

What makes workers like Ram, Shama, Sharmila and Ramesh take risks is the positive outcome for others. Unlike Ram, Kul earned \$300 a month as a security guard, double of what he earned in his legal job at a furniture shop. Yet, he

made it back safely with a temporary pass.

The two women sent by Shama’s agents made it to Kuwait and have good employers who pay them well. Housemaids in Lebanon seem to fare well generally.

Current migration policies which fail to respond to migrants’ aspirations and ground realities, such as blanket bans on domestic workers, free visa free ticket policy, or the inability to legally switch jobs at the destination, all help make foreign employment more like a lottery than a

pathway out of poverty.

In such a policy environment, general awareness and orientation programs can therefore be rendered inadequate because many Nepalis are also knowingly taking ill advised steps. And when there are first-hand failed migration attempts of members of a community, other aspirants attribute it to ill luck or fate. Unperturbed, they repeat the same steps in the hope that in their case the odds will be in their favour. 🇳🇵

*Names have been changed*



# migration safer

Kathmandu. Nepali, Indian and Bangladeshi airlines offer about 104 flights via Dhaka, Mumbai or Delhi to the Gulf and Malaysia which Nepali migrant workers also use because they are cheaper.

Migrants also form an important employee base of the airlines. Many of the baggage handlers, cleaners, food packers, apron and terminal staff at Dubai, Doha or Abu Dhabi are Nepali.

Airlines could therefore be doing more for the welfare of Nepali migrant workers, as part of their corporate social responsibility. Overseas migrant workers spend a bulk of their advance on recruiters, and much of their savings after working abroad on airline tickets.

There are many cases of migrants who have been cheated by middlemen and sent back because of improper documentation, who could benefit from return support.

Airlines could set aside some tickets every week for stranded migrants, provide last minute unsold tickets or issue discounted tickets for those who are in dire need of help. These could be based on referrals from embassies and rescue organisations like Pravasi Nepal Coordination Committee.

Ramesh Niroula recently returned to Jhapa after spending 11 months unemployed in Dubai fighting a case at the labour court. He was not paid for six months

at a restaurant that went out of business. When he realised that the court was a dead end, he borrowed money for the return ticket and headed home. An airline sponsor would have been exactly what he needed.

Himalayan Airlines, for example, has direct flights to UAE, Qatar, Malaysia and is popular among migrants headed to Saudi Arabia with its Dammam connection. Helping stranded migrants could do its goodwill and branding. Airlines can be important allies in making migration safer, plus it would be good for business.

The planes themselves could be points for distribution of relevant information about the destination country through literature and in-flight video. There are pre-departure classes aimed at orienting migrants to life and work overseas which are monitored better now thanks to an online system that requires biometric authentication.

However, pre-departure classes are often generic, do not address country specific issues, and are provided at a time when migrants are anxious, both because they are leaving their families behind and want the paperwork to go smoothly.

On the other hand, problems with access at destination countries, scattered nature of work arrangements by individual agents, and post-arrival training is

not seen as a feasible option except in cases like the Korea Employment Permit System which is a government-to-government initiative. Nepalis going to Korea have a weeklong pre-departure training and a three day orientation on arrival.

There are also initiatives such as Dubai’s Know Your Rights campaign with information kiosks and multilingual brochures at the airport aimed at orienting migrants about their rights after arrival. If those working on migration issues collaborated with airlines, country specific brochures relevant for that destination including rules, contact information of support services, embassy details, and testimonials of migrants from that country could be provided in-flight.

Airlines can be an important and a natural partner in efforts to promote safe migration by moving from a transactional relationship towards social responsibility.

It would also involve the private sector in a field so vital for Nepal’s economy. 🇳🇵



EVENTS



Paint day

The U.S. Embassy’s Rainbow City: Community Murals arrives in Kathmandu. Spend some time painting a mural designed by students from Birgunj. Aprons, paints, brushes, lots of fun and adventure offered. 27-28 April, 11am-4pm, Nandi Secondary School, Naxal, (01) 5536974

Katjazz festival

Three days of workshops and concerts for aspiring musicians where they get to learn from international artists about their life and performance. 27-30 April, 1-7:30pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5543554

Ages of Paintings

Ages of Painting: Mini-Large, a group exhibition featuring the artwork of 15 veteran and young artists, reflecting the growth and advancement of Nepali art. 27 April-1 May, Music Art Gallery Café, Jhamsikhel, 9818873384

Moonshine workshop

With a focus on visual and audio elements, anyone interested to experiment with videography, sound and their different possibilities of combination will be guided by Marta del Grandi and Christoph Dahlberg. 30 April, 11am-6pm, Kaalo.101, Nagbahal, Patan, Register at: 9803553123



Kusadevi XCM

A 27.7km cross country cycle marathon organised by Byabhar Festival and Nepal Cycling Association at Kavre. 30 April, Kusadevi, Kavre, Rs1,500 (package), Rs500 (registration fee only), (01) 4101053

Pharping ride

A 52km long challenging ride to Pharping. The route covers areas like Khokana, Pharping Power Plant, Maatatirtha and Kirtipur, reaching a final elevation of 1900m. 28 April, 6:30am, The Bike Farm Nepal, Jhamsikhel, 9803888151

Avengers screening

The proceeds of the fund-raising dinner movie premiere of Avengers-Infinity War will be used to organize a national movie making competition. 27 April, 5-9pm, Cine De’ Chef, Civil Trade Center, Sundhara, Rs2,999, 9813599600/ 9849155567

Prayers to Buddha

On the occasion of 2562th Buddha Jayanti, an event is scheduled for meditation and prayers in the name of Lord Buddha. 30 April, 7:30am onwards, Yeshe Dharma Center, Balaju, 9860614436



Zakir Khan in Nepal

Winner of India’s Best Stand-Up Comedian competition, Zakir Khan will be performing along with Seema Golchha and Shailee Basnet from Nepal. 28 April, 5:30-8:30pm, Army Officers’ Club, Bhadrakali, Rs2,500 (front), Rs2,000(middle), Rs1,500(back), 9801071666

Urban jungle market

Visit the ‘Urban Jungle’ themed monthly market. Stalls feature fresh herbs, produce, house plants, flowers, food and drinks, Nepali art and craft, and second-hand items. There will be live music, face paintings, and a ‘Paint & Drink’ workshop for entertainment. 28 April, 1-7pm, Bikalpa Art Café & Bar, Pulchowk, 9851147776

Marwari Mahotsav

A festival showcasing tradition, culture and history of the Marwaris. 28 April, 10am-8pm, Bhrikutimandap, 9851012895

MUSIC



Abhi Pokharel

Singer and song-writer Abhi Pokharel playing his indie originals and covers 27 April, 7-9pm, Pauline’s Garden, AaneK Marg, Baluwatar, (01) 4221537

Maura Moynihan

Maura Moynihan will be performing songs from her Nepal inspired album ‘Yoga Hotel’ after a short tour of her painting exhibition ‘Who Loves Kathmandu More Than Me?’ at Kathmandu Art. 27 April, 6-9pm, Le Sherpa

The Midnight Riders

The Midnight Riders will be playing classic rock, blues, ballads and originals from their album Yatra. 27 April, 7-10pm, Places Restaurant and Bar, Saat Ghumti Marg, Thamel, (01) 4700413



Jazz jam

A jazz party with Daahoud Salim and Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory musicians. 3 May, 7-10 April, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5528362

Screaming Marionette

The winner of 13th KCM ICMC, Screaming Marionette will release their EP ‘Corrupted society’ with a thrilling performance in the company of guest band Binaash. 28 April, Purple Haze, Thamel, Rs250 (pre sale), Rs500 (door), 9841350536

OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu on 27 April

Avengers: Infinity War is the sequel to 2012’s The Avengers and 2015’s Avengers: Age of Ultron. In the movie, Thanos arrives on Earth to collect Infinity Stones with a plan to destroy the universe. The Avengers must join forces with the Guardians of the Galaxy before Thanos achieves what he desires. But defeating the powerful, which requires sacrifices, is not an easy task. Directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, Marvel’s one of the deadliest showdown of all time features all the superheroes including the Black Panther team.

DINING



Daawat Restaurant

Savor sea food BBQ with unlimited buffet dinner at the restaurant which serves one of the best Indian dishes in town. A group of 5 can get special discount. Rs1,500 (single), Rs2,500 (couple), Rs7,999 (special package for couple), (01) 4416081/ 4423847

Chez Caroline

Tucked away from the street noise and fumes, this is the place to visit for authentic French and continental cuisine in Nepal. The restaurant now offers catering and takeaway services too. Try their Profiteroles au Chocolat and Choux pastry filled with vanilla ice cream and hot chocolate sauce. Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4263070/ 4264187



Terrace Garden

Enjoy BBQ dishes along with spectacular views, sip a glass of wine or a beer in the partly shaded open-air garden area. 10am-10pm, Terrace Garden, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, (01) 4411818

Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen

Visit this place for unlimited authentic Indian food. Call and book before you go. 28 April, 12-4pm, Pulchok, Rs499 (single), 9803299610

1905 Restaurant

Enjoy live music with grilled food items and a fine selection of craft beers and wine. The newly renovated restaurant is perfect for an undisturbed dining experience. 20 April, Narayan Chaur, Naxal, (01) 4411348

Kava Restaurant

Sit back and relax with the hotel’s selection of cocktails, mocktails, wine and premium beverages. Ladies can enjoy a 50% discount on any beverage ordered. 2 May, 4-7pm, Fairfield by Marriott, Tridevi Sadak, Thamel, (01) 4217999

GETAWAY

Borderlands Eco Resort

Peaceful moments with monks ringing holy bells, slowly transforms into a soft music party at night—celebrate the birthday of Lord Buddha at the eco-adventure resort. 30 April-1 May, Borderlands Eco Adventure Resort, Sindhpulchok, (01) 4381425, 9801025111



Namo Buddha Resort

Constructed in traditional Newari style and surrounded by lush greenery, the resort is an oasis of peace and tranquility, offering spectacular views of the Himalayas on clear days. On Buddha Jayanti, a short trek to Namu Buddha and Thrangu Tashi Yangtze Monastery is sure to provide refreshment and relief from the city stress. Namu Buddha, Phulbari, 9851106802

Mystic Mountain

Situated amid the forest of Nagarkot, the resort is exquisitely built using ultra modern designs and world-class comfort. Nagarkot, (01) 6200646

Tiger Palace Resort

Near the birth place of Lord Buddha, the newly built resort provides a great escape. A huge swimming pool, attentive service, grand casino—your weekend plan will be a sure hit. Bhairahawa, (071) 512000



Dwarika’s Resort

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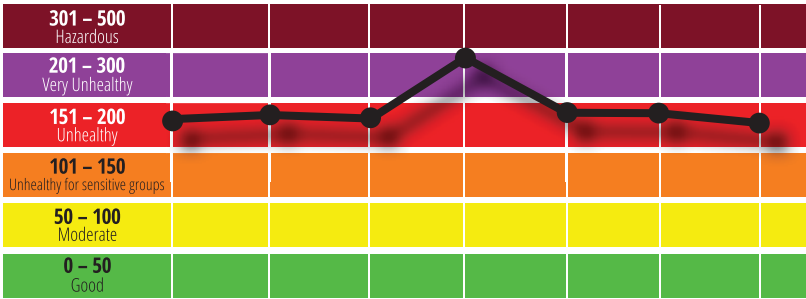
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AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 20 - 26 April



FRIDAY Apr 20 SATURDAY Apr 21 SUNDAY Apr 22 MONDAY Apr 23 TUESDAY Apr 24 WEDNESDAY Apr 25 THURSDAY Apr 26

Air quality in Kathmandu this week has been dangerously high. Daily averages of the the concentration of harmful pollutants below 2.5 microns in diameter as measured at a U S Embassy monitoring station in Phora Darbar were all in the 'Unhealthy' band, but on Monday it jumped up to 'Very Unhealthy' which means remain indoors. AQI level in Kathmandu that day was nearly double that in Beijing (153) and New Delhi (167) measured at that exact time. <https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>



Hope that newly-elected local governments would speed up delayed post-quake reconstruction is fading

Rameshwar Bohara

After local elections last year put mayors, village heads and ward committees in office, there was widespread expectation that much-delayed earthquake relief and reconstruction would gather pace.

But nine months after local elections were held, there has been no perceptible difference in delivery. Only 15% of families displaced by the 2015 earthquakes have rebuilt their homes, and 85% are still living in temporary shelters, damaged buildings or in rented rooms.

Krishna Prasad Sapkota, former Chair of the Kavre district development committee, says bluntly: "We squandered the opportunity to expedite reconstruction after local elections."

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) claims that no earthquake-displaced family will have to live in temporary shelter by the monsoon in July. But that is hard to believe because more than 200,000 families have not even started rebuilding homes. Only 142,337 houses have been rebuilt so far, and 439,683 are under construction.

Just about every candidate contesting local elections in the 14 earthquake-affected districts had promised to speed up reconstruction if elected. But there isn't much evidence that elections have improved accountability.

To be sure, some municipalities and village councils have set up reconstruction funds from which families whose reconstruction grants have been delayed can borrow. Some municipal and village councils are paying for



BISWAS NEPALI

masons and carpenters. People can also complain to their mayors of village councils if NRA engineers delay approvals, or are not responsive.

However, in general the role of local governments in post-earthquake reconstruction has been reduced to that of a sidekick to the NRA and the national administration. As a result, people have lost hope that elections would make up for lost time in relief work.

"People had pinned their hopes on us, but we have not been given the power to decide," admits Dhulikhel mayor Ashok Kumar Byanju. "If local governments are not allowed to take charge, reconstruction won't happen even in the next 10 years."

Byanju is also the coordinator of the Municipalities Association of Nepal (MuAN), and says the guidelines governing the NRA have prevented local governments from playing a part in post-earthquake reconstruction.

After the three tiers of elections last year, Nepal may have become a federal country with executive, legislative and judicial powers devolved to local governments,

but the NRA has not undergone a similar restructuring. Its district-level structures continue to exist, but they report directly to Kathmandu, not to the new village councils or municipalities.

NRA spokesperson Bishma Bhushal says restructuring the existing set-up and revising guidelines would create even more confusion about reconstruction, slowing it down further. He adds: "Local governments do not have the human resources and institutional capacity to lead reconstruction. They are not even able to spend their own budgets."

Byanju of the MuAN

strongly disagrees, saying that local governments are already distributing social security allowances and distributing reconstruction grants will not be difficult. Municipalities and village councils are demanding that they be given the authority to at least deploy engineers and distribute housing grants.

Former NRA CEO Govind Raj Pokharel is not hopeful that will happen. "It's not just the NRA, even line ministries do not want to decentralise their power, and donors also doubt that local governments will distribute reconstruction grants impartially

and transparently."

In off the record interviews, NRA and donor officials say they do not trust newly-elected mayors and village council chiefs who they say just want their hands on the money and are not really interested in speeding up reconstruction.

However, Min Bahadur Shahi of the group Humanitarian Accountability Monitoring Initiative (HAMI) says that is the wrong approach: "We should not exclude local governments from post-earthquake reconstruction, we should let them show that they are accountable and build their capacity."

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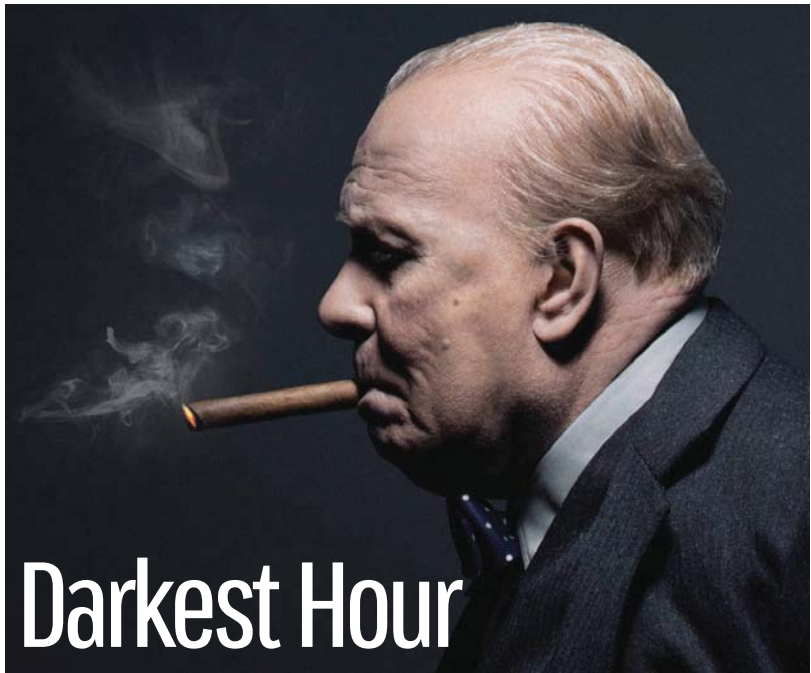
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If ever there was a feel good movie about Winston Churchill, the Oscar nominated film *Darkest Hour* would be it. A story about Churchill's travails during arguably the lowest point in the war, the film lifts up the viewer



MUST SEE  
Sophia Pande

giving us an intimate, moving, intense, sometimes somewhat historically inaccurate story about Churchill's rise to fame that made him a household name, even today. Directed by Joe Wright and starring Gary Oldman, in the performance of his career as Churchill, which won him the Best Actor award this year, *Darkest Hour* will hold you rapt (even if you know the outcome of events), riveted by Oldman whose every

moment on screen is as precious as gold. Wright's direction has always had style, he is the director of *Atonement* (2007) among others, and his sure sense of visuals brings this film out of what could have been the boring confines of a biopic. As a result, we have a carefully put together film that tells the story of the crisis that Britain is plunged into when the entire British infantry was cornered by the Germans, their only refuge being the beach at Dunkirk. As hinted by the title, the situation is dire: three hundred thousand men, and with them Britain's only real hope of defense against the Germans, are left stranded at Dunkirk, the then Conservative Party Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain is forced to step down for being too soft on the Nazis, and the Conservative Party's only viable candidate turns out be Winston Churchill, a man who, at

the time, did not command the respect he does now due to his track record of errors at Gallipoli, and his stance on India. The film portrays Churchill's struggle through a nightmarish moment in Britain's history at a time when defeat and massive loss of life seemed imminent, and even while we know they come out of it, it is still nerve-racking to watch these events unfold, almost felling the new Prime Minister with each new development. How Churchill perseveres, aided by those closest to him including his wife Clementine (Kristen Scott Thomas), and his secretary Elizabeth Layton, played by the lovely Lily James, who takes dictation and transcribes his now famous speeches, gives us the effect of seeing into his innermost life, even while it is mostly fictionalised, bringing us to a greater understanding of this character who clearly had his flaws but was perhaps the only person who could have helmed Britain through World War II, with his particular pugnacity, perseverance, thick-skinned carelessness, and extreme loyalty to king and country. Do not expect a bore of a film just because you think you know the story. Once you start, you are in the hands of a master, one that will make you feel you know this famous man, and want to become friends with him, indulging his voracious appetite, and even his little fibs because to be great means to have flaws and to overcome them.

Watch trailer online  
nepalitimes.com



**BANNER HEADLINES:** Prime Minister KP Oli and Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Lenin's birthday on 22 April when the expected party unification did not happen.



**DISASTER MONUMENT:** Prime Minister KP Oli pays tribute to the victims of the 2015 earthquake on its third anniversary, at the ruins of Dharara where 60 people were killed.



**SAARC SPIRIT:** SAARC General Secretary Amjad Hussian calls on Foreign Affairs Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali in Kathmandu on Monday.



**HEALTHY TIES:** Korean Ambassador to Nepal Young-Sik Park and State Minister of Health and Population Padma Kumari Aryal break ground on Tuesday for a 50-bed Trisuli Hospital in Nuwakot.



**HALF CENTURY:** Syakar Trading Company, which sells Honda vehicles in Nepal, and Jyoti Group celebrate 50 years of Honda in Nepal on 20 April in Kathmandu.

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Himal Khabarpatrika 22-28 April

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

**Himal Khabarpatrika: This week marks the triumph of the 2006 Democratic Movement. How do you recall those heady days?**  
**Devendra Raj Pandey:** After 1990, people were growing frustrated with political parties and the Maoist insurgency was escalating. Yet, civil society was passive. The royal coup in 2005 gave us new energy, and we announced a civil movement for peace and democracy.

**Why was civil society passive?**  
This is what happens when you have the desired political system, but the leaders do not deliver. Democracy was already restored in 1990, so we did not have to fight for it. We were disillusioned with elected leaders, but we could not ask them to step aside and let us govern the country.

**Why has civil society failed to create the kind of political order it envisioned?**  
You can change the regime, but not the attitude of political leaders. After 1990 and 2006, our leaders considered money instead of people as their source of power. The general people or civil society were responsible because they stand united to overthrow authoritarian regimes, but are divided when political parties come to power. They never question the party they belong to.

**How has Nepal's political course been after 2006?**  
Nepal was run by political cartels until recently, with a syndicate of top leaders taking all important decisions. And they were doing it not to serve the country but to cling on to power. The transition to federalism was long and bumpy, but we did not have the luxury to undo everything and start afresh. Even after three tiers of elections under the new Constitution, Madhesi, Janajati, women and Dalits have political grievances. But



GOPEN RAI

there is a sense of political stability, and I am hoping for new power dynamics within existing political parties and the emergence of a new political culture.

**Are you suspicious of the communist government?**  
There is speculation that the communist government will curtail civil rights and impose authoritarianism. I do not think so. We cannot regress. Democracies are under attack, and populist ultra-rightists are emerging around the globe. Our democracy is in much better shape. The only problem is that our leaders never seem to retire or improve. A politician returns to power after 12 years, but his style and attitude does not change. It looks like I am pointing to NC President Deuba, but this is true right across the political spectrum.

**Has civil society been donor-driven?**  
With financial assistance comes political agendas. Soon after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the Soviet Union collapsed and several new nations were born. The Western powers invested heavily in transforming these new nations into democracies. That was when they began funding Nepal's civil society movement. If

we allow them to decide our state structure, order and distribution of resources, it will be harmful to us.

**Why did civil society not intervene when the Maoists tried to push ethnic identity-based federalism?**  
Civil society was polarised, too. While some supported the Maoist agenda, others tried to foil them. There was no space for neutrals like us.

**But none of you came up with ideas to reconcile ethno-centrism and regionalism.**  
Who listens to ideas in Nepal? I personally believe that we must accept that the State has historically excluded Janajatis, Dalits and women. If we make this acceptance a point of departure, we can negotiate to mainstream these excluded communities. But how can we even start a negotiation when you end the debate with: 'This country was created by Prithvi Narayan Shah'. A radical idea was countered by another radical idea, and there was no middle ground.

**How can grievances of Madhesi, Janajatis and women be addressed?**  
They need a leadership that can articulate their voice and negotiate with the government.

They do not have a leader at the moment. For example, Madhesi are being led by dishonest and opportunist leaders. It is easy for the government to coopt them. But what if Madhes explodes against its own so-called messiah? It is a responsibility of the government to foresee future crises and avert them through negotiations.

**What's next after the Constitution, elections and federalism?**  
Creating three levels of government is real devolution, and the Centre should no longer try to retain the unitary system. Tax payers are concerned that the State will now have to pay for too many ministers and MPs. If our elected representatives want to address these concerns, they must renounce their sense of entitlement.

**The agenda of stability and prosperity seems to have struck a chord with the people?**  
I do not understand why we are suddenly after prosperity at a time when we have failed to deliver even development. The Prime Minister is making one grandiose promise after another. But where is the mechanism to realise these dreams? A few ministers have hit the ground running, but overall the system has not improved.







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Mukesh Pokhrel  
in Western Nepal

Prolonged drought, absence of irrigation and outmigration of young men have left many areas of Nepal’s mid-western hills suffering a food crisis in a vicious cycle that is forcing even more people to move out.

Terrace farms in mountainside after mountainside lie fallow, wrinkling the arid, dusty slopes. The villages are mostly populated by the elderly, overworked women who have to trudge longer and longer to fetch water, and emaciated children.

In Tajamaila village of remote Humla district, successive monsoons have failed, and the fields are overgrown with dry weeds. Amar Rokaya says he can feed his children only one meal a day. The family ate up their entire stocks of corn and millet last year, including seeds. There is nothing to plant this year even if the rains come.

Rokaya works breaking stones for a road, and does not earn enough to feed his family. Parts of other mid-western mountains in Mugu, Bajura and Bajhang have also been reeling under a four-year drought.

“This is the worst drought ever,” says Govinda Bahadur Malla, the newly-elected chair of the Himali village council. “People are fleeing the villages and moving to cities. Only those who have nowhere else to go are stuck here.”

Water sources have mostly dried up, forcing the women to walk for hours down to the river and climb back up to collect water. In Himali village, women from its 400 households have to walk one hour for water.

Last year, 6,500 tons of grain were transported to Bajura, which has been dependent on shipments for decades, but no one remembers it being this bad. Min Prasad Jaishi of the Bajura District Agriculture Office says there is a deficit of 13,000 tons of rice in his district alone. “It is now a battle to save at least the paddy seeds for the monsoon,” he says.

The food crisis in western Nepal predates climate change. The government in faraway Kathmandu never invested in boosting farm productivity by building irrigation



# THE WASTE LAND

Drought and migration are leaving barren vast areas of Nepal’s terrace farm



MUKESH POKHREL

canals. It was more lucrative to fly or truck in rice, and everyone along the way got their share.

Western Nepal has always had droughts, and the current extreme weather may have been exacerbated by climate change. With global warming, for instance, farmers have found that new harmful insects are moving up the mountains. Mealybugs were rare here, and farmers never considered them a problem. Now, the insects are devastating the few crops that are there.

*Fauji Kira* insects used to be a nuisance only in the Tarai, now they have moved up to the midhills. Tomato farmers are battling a new type of pest they didn't even have

a name for, and have called it *Tuta*. Ram Krishna Subedi of National Crop Directorate says: “Insects we never knew are marching up the slopes, damaging crops of the few farmers who do not depend on the rain.”

Scientists say that average temperatures in the Himalaya are rising twice as fast as the global average. The effect can be seen in shrinking glaciers and receding snowlines, but also in falling ground water and erratic weather.

And it is not just the mid-western hills where farmers have been dealing with drought and insects. The magnitude of the problem may vary, but it is widespread across the hills. Winter rains are becoming more sparse, and when it does rain there



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PRAKASH SINGH



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are unseasonal blizzards, farmers say.

Climate scientist Ngamindra Dahal confirms that winters have become drier in the central Himalaya every year, and wheat harvests are the first casualty. Nepal had been producing 1.5 million tons of wheat every year, but it is projected to go down by 20% in the coming years.

Nearly 80% of Nepali farmers still depend on rain-fed agriculture, which means they are at the mercy of the weather which is becoming more and more unpredictable. Only 20% arable land has irrigation, and most of that is in the Tarai, with few irrigation facilities in these hills.

Adding to the problem is outmigration of young men, leaving

fields fallow. And as soon as the man of the house migrates to India, Malaysia or the Gulf, his wife and children move to the towns. There, they buy food from the money he sends home, and pay for the children's education. Their farms up in the mountains are abandoned, and goes back to being jungle.

Ten mountain districts like Taplejung, Panchthar, Palpa and Parbat have witnessed negative population growth in the last decade. Some of them have lost up to a third of their population. Twenty-seven of Nepal's mountain districts showed a decline in total population between 2001 and 2011. Demographers say the hills and mountains will be nearly emptied



RADHA GAUTAM

by 2050, if this trend persists.

In contrast, Tarai districts like Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Rupandehi have seen population growth higher than the national average because of people moving down from the mountains.

**EMPTY MOUNTAINS:** Fallow fields at Himali village in Mugu (*big picture*) which has suffered a four-year drought.

Women harvest millet in Manang (*top*). Indigenous crops like these are also affected by erratic rainfall.

Women wait for one of the few springs still functioning at a village in Mugu (*above*).

A plough lies abandoned in a fallow field in Panchthar (*left*).

Jagdishwor Pandey, a subsistence farmer in Arghakhachi, points to his barren farm. (*far left*)

In 2001, more than 156,000 hectares of terrace farms in the mountains were under paddy cultivation. Last year the area was down to 137,000 hectares. Areas under other crops like wheat and barley are also shrinking.

Agriculture expert Shankar Sapkota summarises the crisis in simple terms: "Migration has become an easy means of livelihood, but its impact on our agriculture economy is huge." 

(With inputs from Prakash Singh in Bajura)



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# Unified Groucho-Lennonists

Many of you have been taking the Donkey aside this week at various party palaces around town this mating season to ask: "Will the UML and Maoists unite?" To which my reply has consistently been: "I am an Ass, not an anal-ist."

Indeed, one would have to be an astrologer to accurately predict if the planets are aligned properly for the Unified Marxist Leninists to conjugate with the Maobuddies. Like some traditional arranged marriages in this country, the betrothal looks jinxed. While one neighbour



is trying its best to tie the knots of holy matrimony by even paying for the dowry, the other neighbour is trying its level best to wreck the nuptials.

The crux of the biscuit, as Comrade Frank Zappa used to say, is the apostrophe. How many members from each party will be commissars in the Central Committee? Who will be Czar? Who will be the Great Helmsman? Will the united party's symbol be the hammer and sickle, or a tipper truck and bulldozer so as to move with the times?

Comrade Awesome knows that once Comrade Oily joins Karl, Valdimir Ilyich and

Mao in the great revolution in the sky, he is the only one with the stature to lead the unified party. But PKD is impatient to get there, and as a Dictator of the Proletariat he is sure Oli will stab him on the back when he (PKD) is not looking. He doesn't believe in verbal assurances, and given past experience won't even accept it in writing. El Commandante wants the entire Politburo to bear witness to Oli's promise to relinquish PMShip after three years and hand him party chairmanship.

Being communists, the boys are heavily into anniversaries. They had planned the party fornication on Lenin's 138<sup>th</sup> Happy Birthday on 22 April, but a dispute over which banner to put up during the ceremony nearly reignited the insurgency. Now, they are aiming for either International Day of Workers (also known as "Mayday! Mayday!"). But at the rate things are not going, they will likely miss that deadline too. The next suitable birthday on the calendar is Uncle Karl Marx's 200th on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Even that is too close, so the only hope is to aim for October 2<sup>nd</sup> which is Groucho Marx's birthday conveniently the same week as John Lennon's.

That way we can also change the united Party name to Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Groucho-Lennonists).



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