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**BULLDOZING** 

DEMOCRACY

**EDITORIAL** 

PAGE 2

Tive months into his prime 🚽 ministership, K P Oli has notched a string of foreign policy successes: a state visit to India that Indian PM reciprocated to reset bilateral relations, a subsequent China trip from which he returned with promises of investment in infrastructure.

However, on the domestic front there is growing disquiet over decisions by the ruling Nepal Communist Party over what many say smack of deliberate moves to suppress dissent. Ironically, it is a government that commands more than two-thirds majority in Parliament and is the strongest since 1990, that is insecure about criticism.

Gangamaya Adhikari is in intensive care in Bir Hospital on the 38th day of her latest fast, demanding justice for her son who was murdered in 2004. In faraway Jumla, activist physician Govinda KC is on the sixth day of his latest fast-onto-death to pressure the government on a bill to reform medical education. He has been moved to a local hospital.

Prime Minister Oli's chief adviser Bishnu Rimal says PM Oli is apprised of the condition of Adhikari and KC and will put in genuine effort to save their lives.

"We must follow the law, and if it is a wartime case it should be resolved politically, and if it is criminal the courts should handle it," he told Nepali Times. "Although some of KC's demands are genuine, we think other parties are provoking him.'

On Wednesday, Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa took a harder line on the two hunger strikers, saying "there are 17,000 Gangamayas in Nepal" and calling Govinda KC an "authoritarian". On Thursday morning, several civil society activists were detained by police during a demonstration at the Mandala.

The protests come at a time when the ruling party's electoral promise of prosperity

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is being widely ridiculed on social media. Pictures of trucks negotiating flooded roads are being posted with the captions like: 'Inland Waterway' or 'Ferry to Kolkata'.

Rimal says the prime minister is fully committed to realising his dream of connectivity: "We are focused on achieving his goals, and we will not be deterred by criticism. We are not desperate, but we are determined."

Kedar Bhakta Mathema, who drafted a report for the Medical Education Bill that was ignored, says the government is openly disregarding previous agreements between KC and the government on medical education reform.

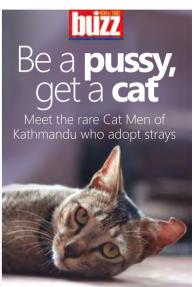
"Govinda KC may be too idealistic for our status-quoist bureaucracy, but his demands are genuine, a two-third majority

government should show some humility to negotiate with him and save his life," Mathema says.

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One of the activists detained by police, Charan Prasai, spoke

to us from police custody on Thursday: "The Home Minister is defying the Supreme Court order on the Gangamaya case. He is trying to say he is above the law. This government is not just undemocratic, it is autocratic.' Om Astha Rai



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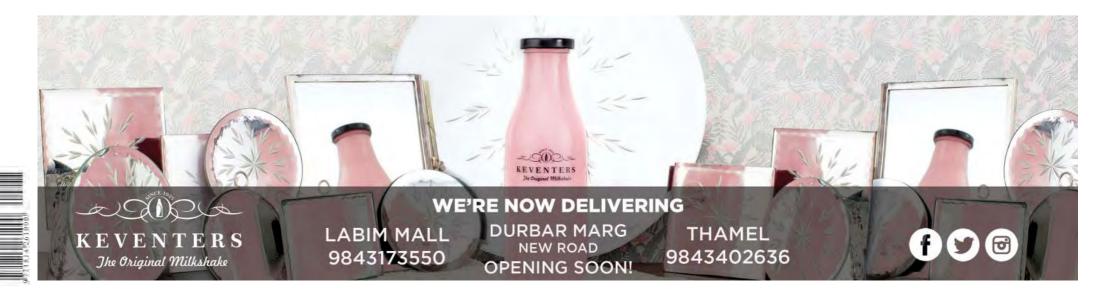
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## **BULLDOZING DEMOCRACY**

The mountains have

been ravaged by

rampant and random

roadbuilding

sanctioned by kickback-

driven planning.

**Federalism was** 

has made it worse.

uring most of the decade after the conflict Dended in 2006, Nepal was ruled by a three-party cartel which took turns running the country. It was euphemistically called the High-Level Political Mechanism, and its topdown structure ensured that the triad controlled all decision-making at the national, zonal, district, village and even ward level.

The composition and relative strength of each party in the Mechanism reflected the results of the CA elections of 2008 and 2013, and also depended on which coalition was in power in Kathmandu at the time. Nepal was a three-party dictatorship, and the rulers divided up the spoils.

The euphoria of peace soon evaporated, and with it the dream of the country reaping a development dividend. This perpetuated a leadership accountable to none, which squandered the opportunity provided by

the peace process.

With added distractions like the Madhes Movement, the earthquake and the Indian Blockade, the leaders had easy excuses about not focussing on the urgent problems of the Nepali people. Whatever progress was made in the reduction of poverty in that period was not due to any government action to create jobs, but because of remittances from hard-working Nepalis working abroad.

The lingering legacy of that lost decade was the sudden unleashing of 'development' on the land. The violence of the war was replaced by 'bulldozer terrorism'. Mountains were

ravaged by heavy earthmovers, carving out roads where no roads were needed, building tracks that led from nowhere to nowhere. Meanwhile, contracts for existing bridges and highways that needed urgent maintenance or upgrading were allowed to languish because of collusion between contractors and their political protectors.

The futile road-building was so rampant excavators were sometimes at work opening parallel tracks on the same slopes, to and from the same two villages. This absurdity was the result of a pandemic of nationwide corruption for which the almighty Mechanism was responsible, and could not be held to account.

Local officials were on the take from contractors and renters of heavy equipment to sanction pointless and wasteful roadbuilding. And because it was so pervasive, media exposes of the practice, while they raised eyebrows, did not lead to any action. Impunity emboldened the kleptocracy, and the contagion spread.

The Decade of Destruction left mountains scarred by landslides, rivers ravaged by sand and boulder mining, forests denuded by encroachment and illegal logging. Meanwhile, essential infrastructure like arterial highways and bridges languished, national pride projects were never completed because of

#### greedy plutocrats.

Despite a constant barrage of exposes in the media and public outrage, Nepalis pinned their hopes on long-awaited elections. For the first time in 20 years last year we elected mayors and village council heads hoping that local elections would usher in a new era of accountability and uprightness in public life. Finally, we would have elected local governments responsive to the real needs of the people. The 70-85% voter turnout proved that despite past corruption, there was optimism and confidence that devolution of power to local governments would improve delivery.

It has now been more than a year since those elections. Aside from a few notable exceptions, we have seen local governments have behaved in much the same irresponsible

and non-transparent manner as before. In some cases, honest and motivated leaders have been straitjacketed by the power elite in Kathmandu refusing to let go of power and purse-strings. Nepal is actually more centralised than ever before.

In many cities, towns and villages, newlyelected leaders have been busy feathering their own nests: selfsanctioning allowances and facilities, buying SUVs, requisitioning buildings, erecting useless gates and statues.

Worse, a recent investigation in this paper supposed to fix this, it showed that a third of the elected mayors and village heads were contractors the same ones who had been bulldozing the mountains.

Contractors found it to be a much sounder business proposition to invest money in getting themselves elected, rather than bribe officials to get road contracts. Instead of removing the malignant development of the past 11 years, elections made municipalities even less accountable.

An investigative report by Basanta Pratap Singh from Bajhang in this edition (page 14-15) shows how one district has been devastated by rampant and random roadbuilding sanctioned by kickbackdriven planning. Farmers have lost crops and terraces to landslides and rockfalls from poorly-designed roads. Rivers are in danger of being blocked, irrigation channels have been destroyed, water supply systems have gone dry. Haphazard feeder roads have triggered landslides that have blocked important inter-district highways. In Kathmandu, the federal budget set aside Rs6 billion for a Chure Highway we don't need because it duplicates other east-west roads.

This government came to power promising stability and prosperity. It has forgotten an important lesson that in a democracy legitimacy comes not just from winning a two-thirds majority in parliament, but in performance that fulfil promises.

#### Times.com

#### **ONLINE PACKAGES**



**DISASTER ON CANVAS** 

After the 2015 earthquake, a group of artists wanted to contribute to the reconstruction efforts uniquely through art, and they turned to painting survivors amidst the ruins. Watch this video to see the Paasapi group at work, documenting in paintings how the earthquake affected Nepal



Most Nepalis love gundruk, it is almost our national dish. But it's rare to find a foreigner enjoying its strong aroma. Meet New Zealand journalist Thomas Heaton, who doesn't just like to make gundruk sandheko from scratch, but also loves to eat il



In Nepal, where cats are not popular as pets, cat owners are considered unusual, even more so if they are men. Despite this, there are several Cat Daddies who have defied cultural norms to rescue strays and take them home. Watch video and meet some of the cat men of Kathmandu



Bhaktapur is leading the way in dealing with rabies and overpopulation of street dogs. Instead of poisoning the animals, the town is taking a more compassionate approach. Watch this short video to see how Bhaktapur's canine squad is controlling the population through sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccines

#### WHATS TRENDING



#### Nepal moves from aid to enterprise by Samuel John:

A growing group of business-minded, sociallyinterested stakeholders from within, and outside, Nepal are reframing the debate on aid and introducing social entrepreneurship as a better option. Visit our website to read about the changing perception of aid. Find the story on on page 4 of this print editon





#### Fat man trekking

by Thomas Heator Is trekking in the Himalaya only meant for physically fit and muscular people? Or can bigger fellows also handle the ABC and Mardi Himal Treks? Go online to read this fun, descriptive and light hearted piece that was a hit online last week



#### QUOTE 🎔 TWEETS







in good faith could work in Nepal if conflict victims were backed by leaders with political will, and a strong civil society. But they are all alone, and the state is indifferent to their pain. 17



pigreen @pigreen1 Whatever the experience of other countries, Nepal's politicans need to respond to the real needs and demands of its own citizens who have suffered from human rights abuses and war crimes - and act to ensure transitional justice - its alreay VERY LATE

#### **10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

The Nepali Times edition from ten years ago this week (#407, 4-13 July 2008) carried a picture of New Road gate with a pile of garbage. Inside, there is an interview with US Ambassador to Nepal, Nancy Powell. Among the questions we asked her was if she was concerned that democratic values and press freedom were threatened in Nepal with the elected Maoist government. Her answer:

'I am very concerned and have been meeting with representatives of the parties and the media to register that concern and discuss how the United States can assist in promoting a free press in Nepal. Reports of on-going threats and self-censorship as the result of political intimidation are very worrying and need to be addressed by all Nepalis who hope to see democracy sustained. We will continue to work with the media to strengthen its professionalism and to protect the freedom of the press."



#### **BRILLIANT READ**

What a great article ('Fat man trekking', Thomas Heaton, #916). I am as skinny as a walking stick but I would suffer as you did with legs burning. Honestly, I am impressed that you kept going. You set a standard for sluggards like me who would want to ride something up. Congratulations.

#### **Paulette Talley**

Congratulations on your trek to ABC. I have travelled many times to Nepal in the last 33 years, but did my first trek last October- 4 days - from Nayapul to Ghorepani and back through Ghandruk. At 68 years old it was hard going for me but an absolutely amazing experience. I'm planning to return again next year. Bruce Lea



Kunda Dixit @kundadixit Are You a Gymini? Kathmandu's gyms have graduated from body-building for males to overall physical wellbeing for everyone @duksangh reports in this @nepalitimes overview and video: https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/be-fit/

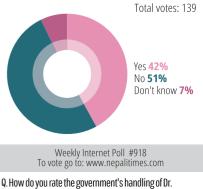


Saniaa Shah @SaniaaSan I like this story. I'm a Gemini looking for a new gym! KTM is "raising the bar" for sure.



Weekly Internet Poll #917

Q. Do you agree with the government's decision to prohibit protests in some locations?



Govinda KC and Gangamaya Adhikari, who have begun fast-unto-death protests?



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## Nepal moves from aid to enterprise

Across Nepal social entrepreneurs combine business with welfare to lift living standards and foster self-reliance

#### **Samuel Johns**

A shuman beings, we are creatures who measure. We count. We quantify. We love numbers even more with every passing year with the 'Decade of Data' now well underway.

Money is no different. We count and calculate it. We measure and monitor. We consider our spending and contemplate new income streams. But money doesn't grow on trees. So where does it come from?

Nepal has been the rich beneficiary of strong governmental relations with Western countries like the US, UK and Germany, for over seven decades since joining the Colombo Plan in 1952. Today, foreign aid to Nepal accounts for around \$350 million per year, making up a sizeable chunk of Nepal's total GDP.

But in his book *Kathmandu*, Thomas Bell warns: 'The agents of development, rather than the targets, have benefitted financially ... thousands of man-hours of expert advice have failed to upskill or incentivise the indigenous workforce significantly.'

Aid often fails to breed a sense of dignity, responsibility and ownership. Social entrepreneurship is a better option. A growing group of business-minded, sociallyinterested stakeholders from both within and outside Nepal are now reframing the debate on aid. What if enterprise took the place of aid? What if micro-loans and microfinancing replaced the 'gigantism'



of macro-projects in Nepal?

The ultimate, good and true purpose of business is to increase human wellbeing. When people create wealth themselves, however, they are empowered, and benefit from a sense of dignity, ownership, and responsibility. The imbalance in relations between the 'West' and the 'Rest' too often results in positions of power and paternal stances of support.

The wealthy then typically see their responsibility towards the poor in terms of charity. Not only can this breed dependency and irresponsibility, but it is also liable to corruption and misuse. Further, such aid rarely pays respect to local norms, indigenous cultures and practices. Enterprise, or more specifically social enterprise, focuses on enabling, creating, and facilitating long-term indigenous enterprises. These foster 'independence, dignity, and ownership... rather than breed dependency, these approaches encourage responsibility', notes the British thinker on business, Peter Heslam.

Social enterprises are popping up all over Nepal. Visit the Village Cafe in Pulchok and taste the fantastic Newari *yomari*. This is an initiative of the SAARC Business Association of Home Based Workers (SABAH).Operating on a model of dispersed ownership, SABAH runs as a social enterprise with a flat hierarchy.

Not only does this mean every

voice is listened to (helpful in cottage industries and with home based workers in particular) but, more importantly, responsibility & ownership is divided amongst all members.

A trip to Baglung district, west of Pokhara, will show you social enterprise in action with educational institutions. Bhimsen Higher Secondary School (HSS) based in Bihun of Baglung runs a social enterprise arm in partnership with PSD Nepal where initiative is fostered. Local staff, students, and teachers pitch for ideas of extra-curricular support, whether sporting events, musical instruments, new ICT equipment or smart-screens, and the like. PSD Nepal helps partner with funders to make these initiatives happen. All the responsibility is at the local, grassroots level, and initiatives for new ideas stems from the school itself too.

Himalayan Plastic in Pokhara, featured in this newspaper (18-24 June 2018, #910), works to get street children into employment. Training and apprenticeships from carpentry to mechanics, metalmaking, and plumbing serve not only to give valuable skills to exstreet children, but also lead into careers and jobs with Himalayan Plastic recycling based in Pokhara Industrial Park -- another brilliant example of social enterprise fostering local, applicable, practical skills.

Interestingly, Hidden Journeys Nepal works to connect these dots. Show-casing meaningful projects with meaningful impact across Nepal, they share success-models and inspire future entrepreneurs. As they put it: there are 'intelligent solutions that improve people's lives' all across Nepal.

From SABAH to Himalayan Plastic in Pokhara, to Baglung, and many more initiatives across Nepal, social enterprises are promoting grassroots leadership, local solutions, circular economies, and resourcefulness. A move from aid to enterprise would foster responsibility in Nepal. Enterprise demands ownership, a trainingground for integrity, trust and honesty. Enterprise lasts.

*Samuel Johns* studied geography at the University of Oxford and UBC in Canada and writes about the Himalaya in the anthropocene.

## Autograph, please

In his third year of participating in the Turkish Airlines ENGAGE Empowering League, something unusual happened in Beg Tamang's wheelchair basketball journey. A group of students from Adhyayan School in Tokha asked him for an autograph, inspiring Tamang to play not just for himself and his team but also for his young fans. basketball tournament for people in wheelchairs, hosted by a non-profit organisation ENGAGE. The players are trained by the organisation's 12 coaches for a month-long period.

With 134 players and more than 600 spectators, the third edition of ENGAGE's Empowering League felt more exciting and empowering than before. For the first time, three male All: Make Disability Rights Real' encapsulates its mission.

"Our concept is partnership, because nothing works without it," says Simone Galimberti, Co-Founder of ENGAGE.

One such partner is Turkish Airlines, its title sponsor since the beginning.

"This tournament is a socialising platform in the form of a competition. Through our campaign 'Widen Your Heart' we want to create space for people of all kinds" savs Abdullah Tuncer Kececi, General Manager of Turkish Airlines Kathmandu. In 2017 Parliament adopted a new Human Rights for Persons with **Disabilities** Act. Its Article 34 ensures inclusion of people with disability in sports, and requires support for disabilityfriendly sports.

#### 

**Global deal** Turkish Airlines signed an agreement with American Express Global Business Travel,



travellers worldwide. Both companies will collaborate on common strategies for management, expansion, product development and sales on a global level.

#### Qatar to Malaga



Bira91 Blonde and Bira91 Strong. Tying up with Nepal's Global Trading Concern for distribution, the beers are available in 330ml bottles at the price of Rs300.

#### Alumni assemble

The British College launched its first alumni network, British College Alumni Network with Aahwan Shrestha as the Chairman,



## 4



"I was completely taken aback by their gesture," says Tamang, who plays for Jawalakhel Wheelchair Sports Club. "They have encouraged me to do better, and I feel like I can achieve anything now."

Tamang was the first wheelchair basketball player who was asked for an autograph, even though his team was defeated by Tribhuvan Army Club in the Tournament's finale on June 30.

The League is an annual

teams from Nepalganj, Pokhara and Chitwan joined five teams from Kathmandu Valley.

In the female category, new entrants Women Wheelchair Basketball Association, put up a fight to the final winner, Wheelchair Sports Association.

The foundation connects people with disabilities, supports employment, and provides leadership, skill development programs, and English language classes. Its slogan 'Fair Game for Coinciding with the summer holiday season, Qatar Airways has launched a



Ambica Shrestha and Country Manager Jayaprakash Nair announced the launch in Kathmandu this week . The airline will fly a 787 Dreamliner on the flight four times per week flight, beginning 16 September.

#### Bira91 in Nepal

India's much loved craft beer brand Bira91 is being launched in Nepal with three

Alina Prajapati as Vice-Chairman. the network will focus on four platforms: mentorship, career, events and community service.

#### Monsoon works

Nepal's farmers have so far completed planting paddy on 22% of land out of 1.55 million hectares of arable land across the country. The figures released by Ministry of Agriculture show the far-western mountains have completed the most transplantation with half the transplanting done, thanks to early rainfall.

## \* prabba bank

Kalpana Gurung, the Founding Director of ENGAGE, believes the law is progressive and comprehensive, but worries about its implementation.

"The involvement of National Youth Council in the tournament is a positive first step," says Gurung, "there is hope that our society may move towards more inclusion, if the law is implemented sincerely."

# No one to care for doctor who cared for everyone

A Bhutanese doctor who voluntarily treated refugees is himself dying in penury

#### **Om Astha Rai**

In the early 1990s, Bhutan's royal regime forced out more than 75,000 of its Nepali-speaking Lhotshampa people, and with the help of the Indian authorities dumped them in Nepal's Jhapa district.

The refugees were housed in seven camps in Jhapa and Morang districts and spent the next two decades there until they were repatriated to third countries after Bhutan refused to take them back.

Bhutan evicted one-sixth of its population, and this is regarded as the largest expulsion in recent history of a people by any country in terms of the size of the original population.

Bhampa Rai's family formed part of that massive exodus. However, unlike other refugees, he was not hounded out of Bhutan. He joined the others because he could not bear to see the pain inflicted upon his people by the Bhutanese government. Rai was the royal family physician in Thimphu, and the Bhutan government asked him not to leave. But he refused to stay back, saying he was needed more by the refugees in the camps than by the royal family.

After spending a few months in West Bengal, Bhutanese refugees were chased away by India as well. They first lived in makeshift camps along the Mechi River where they battled with hunger, wildlife attacks and disease outbreaks. Rai did all he could to save ailing refugees, providing free treatment and medicines for them.

Later, when they were shifted to the seven camps supported by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Rai set up a clinic in Damak and continued to provide free health care not just for Bhutanese refugees but also for poor Nepalis. He turned down all lucrative job offers, dedicating his life to the people his country had made stateless.

Most of the refugees for whom Rai sacrificed his life have now been resettled in the United States, Europe and Australia. Some 6,000 older refugees remain, hoping some day to be allowed back to their homeland. The UNHCR is closing down its last remaining camp. But Rai, now 68, is penniless and battling cancer. His wife Urmila Rai's kidneys have failed, and she



needs dialysis twice a week. The couple is destitute and abandoned (*pictured above in Damak on Thursday*).

In 2004, Rai told this reporter he would not opt for third-country resettlement, and he has remained true to his word. His dying wish is to be able to return to Bhutan, but Thimphu has refused repeated requests from the international community. On Tuesday, members of civil society held a function in Kathmandu to raise money for the treatment of the Rai couple. He sent a message to the meeting that he GOPAL GARTAULA

was more concerned about return to Bhutan of remaining refugees rather than his own life.

Prakash Angdembe, a filmmaker, says the central character of his award-winning movie *Desh Khojdai Jada* (In Search of a Nation) was inspired by the life of Bampha Rai. "I have never met a more self-less and iron-willed person than him," Angdembe said. "It is heart-breaking to see such a great soul in misery."

great soul in misery." Rai never asked for anything for himself, but sent a letter to the Nepal government requesting for free dialysis for his wife — a facility that poor Nepalis can get. However, she is not Nepali, and is not entitled to free treatment.

Prime Minister KP Oli is from the same town in Jhapa where the Rais served their compatriots and Nepalis for nearly three decades.

Says journalist Devendra Bhattarai, also from Jhapa: "PM Oli knows who Bhampa Rai is and what he has done, I wonder why he is not coming forward to help the couple."

Ironically, Prime Minister Oli has himself had a kidney transplant and needs constant medical attention.

Donors who want to contribute to the Rai couple can contact editors@nepalitimes.com



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6 - 12 JULY 2018 **#917** 

## A miracle in Manhattan

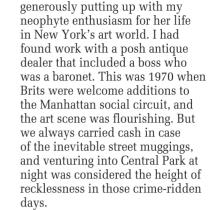
The sickening realisation hit as the door slammed behind me and I froze on the polished wooden floor of our fourth floor 81st Street apartment in Manhattan. Damn! The watercolours!



I had just paid for the yellow cab on the corner at the end of a long week at the office, and lying carelessly abandoned on the back seat was the navy canvas portfolio that contained every single painstakingly created botanical watercolour that my English roommate Jessica had ever painted. Her entire life's work -- exquisitely wrought flowers and plants on thick creamy paper, each one the fruit of hours of meticulous dedication and diligence. Lost. Left behind.

Jessica had entrusted me with her precious cargo only because I had persuaded her that they should be shown to a gallery-owning acquaintance, with a view to an exhibition. She managed a major art auctioneering business, but was far too modest to seek fame or fortune from her secret life as a self-taught botanical artist. Besides, each creation took so many months to craft she was the very opposite of prolific. With no pets, kids or lovers for distraction, these watercolours were her total passion and purpose.

Older than me, and a bit pedantic for my personal taste, I was trying to thank Jessica for welcoming me into her carefully furnished apartment and for



My route to this charmed life in the USA had been circuitous and opportunistic. I started with a rather oblique job cooking for a former senator on a picture-perfect bird-hunting plantation near Thomasville on the Georgia-Florida border. Grey-green Spanish moss decorated the trees and alligators lurked amongst the bulrushes, but the family stood to attention when the President appeared on television, and even now I prefer to forget their explanation of the mental capacity of their army of faithful black servants.

Friends fixed me up with a role in the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, and another chance meeting at an antiques' fair had landed me my current life at Mallets in Bergdorf Goodman, an elegant outlet selling vintage English furniture on the second floor of the revered retail institution, strategically located to entice wealthy New Yorkers between Lingerie, the Givenchy Boutique and the Fur Department.

Anyway, good intentions aside, Jessica had to be told about this appalling catastrophe. I spent a miserable July 4 weekend calling every cab company to see if anything had been handed into lost and found, hanging around the hot summer sidewalk in case my driver felt moved to return, reporting it to the police (as if they cared) and generally praying that some miracle would restore them or that the ground would swallow me up before she returned from some Long Island beach house.

I had no real excuse, just pure negligence, and abject apologies that felt dry on my tongue as I saw the light fade in her eyes. She was admirably calm and British about it. But the already stuffy air in the apartment was heavy with grief and resentment that only thickened as the weeks wore on, and hope receded. Her painting gear lay untouched on the lowest shelf of the bookcase.

Life had settled into an uneasy



truce and the trees outside 151 East 81st Street were fading to gold. The call came one sleepy Saturday morning as shafts of sunlight penetrated the traffic sounds and smudged window panes. Jessica was again away for the weekend, avoiding me. Although she had many friends, the voice on the phone did not sound like one of them. In those nervous New York days one did not take kindly to cold callers with a Brooklyn accent who asked if Jessica lived there. "Who wants to know?" I

countered unhelpfully.

"My Dad brought home some flower pictures that look like someone took a long time to paint them, signed with a name that I can't really make out. I'm calling everyone in the phone book that has a similar name from around the area where they were left in his taxi. It's taken me a long time, I've hit lots of dead ends, it's become a sort of obsession with me 'cos I reckon someone must be really sorry to have lost these paintings. I think they are really lovely but my family think I'm nuts to go to so much trouble. But, sorry to bother you ...".

The world stood still, time suspended. "Wait, wait, wait ..." I yelled into the phone. My breath returned, and so did all of Jessica's paintings.

A series of fateful twists and turns would deliver me to Nepal several years later, but my flatmate's destiny was sealed by the miracle of this man's perseverance. Marrying late, she stayed in America, and with restored confidence found time to pursue her plant painting. Today, as Jessica Tcherepnine, she is an acclaimed artist with solo exhibitions and two gold medals from the Royal Horticultural Society, and is represented in major botanical art collections all over the world.

I'm still not sure that she has forgiven me.





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## Mapping earthquake with art

#### Sewa Bhattarai

Crabin Shrestha as he paints the post-earthquake reconstruction of the imposing neo-classical façade of the rear of the Gaddi Baithak complex (*right*).

The canvas picks up the small details of the ongoing restoration: the green net, the scaffolding, danger signs warning people of falling debris. Onlookers at the Hanuman Dhoka Museum Square are impressed with the near-photographic realism.

"Wow, *thyakkai* ('so exact!')," is the common refrain. Some ask if they can take pictures, and others want the artist to explain why he paints ruins and not the beauty of the monument before it was damaged in the earthquake.

Shrestha is busy with his brush-strokes, but answers patiently: "Painting this palace as beautiful will not make it beautiful, the unfinished construction shows much work still needs to be done."

Shrestha is a member of the young artists' group Paasapi ('a group of friends' in Newari) which has been busy painting what the 2015 earthquake did to Nepalis. The four art students had been mural painters, but after the disaster, they turned instead to record the aftermath of the disaster through art.

The four first started by painting the damaged Darbar High School, Lalitkala Campus, and other monuments around Kathmandu, and even sold a painting. But that soon changed.

Paasapi member Pradip Pal Saud explains: "We realised that we were actually documenting history, and that had more than aesthetic value. So, we decided not to sell what we painted." Instead, they went around earthquake-ravaged neighbourhoods conducting art workshops for children, and painted damaged homes, people trying to rebuild their lives.

Their paintings did not just depict the desolation, but also heart-warming stories of people helping each other and their inner strength in overcoming the crisis. Sometimes, the artists were mistaken for relief workers, and survivors came with their citizenship cards to ask for help. Others would say: "My house is much more damaged, you have to come and paint it too."

Up in the mountains, they would come across shepherds living in wooden huts who were completely unaffected, and even blissfully unaware of the earthquake. Survivors amidst the ruins of their homes, who were themselves short of food, would offer to share meals.

"A woman in Sindhupalchok offered us a jumbo bottle of Coke after we said we had to finish the painting and had no time for food," recalls another Paasapi member, Akash Buda Magar.

For the artists, the work is not just about portraying structures but also capturing human emotions. "We found that people engage more with painters than with journalists," says Shrestha. "A photographer takes a snapshot and is off, but we are at one place for days. People want to strike up conversations, and we communicate their feelings through our paintings."

Even the name of the project, Naksha ('map'), was given by onlookers, who used it most often to refer to their paintings, and not using the prevalent Nepali words for 'image' (*chitra*) or 'picture' (*tasbir*). The earthquake survivors therefore own the work as much as the artists themselves.

Now, after more than 200 paintings of the earthquake damage, the group is moving on to capture the reconstruction. Explains Shrestha: "The paintings also reflect the slow reconstruction process, and one of our objectives is to use art for political satire."

Paasapi has already held five public exhibitions in Gorkha and Kathmandu, and has turned exclusively to acrylic on canvas after they found watercolours on paper were damaged by exposure to sunlight.

For now, the group depends on independent art commissions to fund its work, and ultimately wants the paintings to be exhibited together.

#### DISASTER ON CANVAS

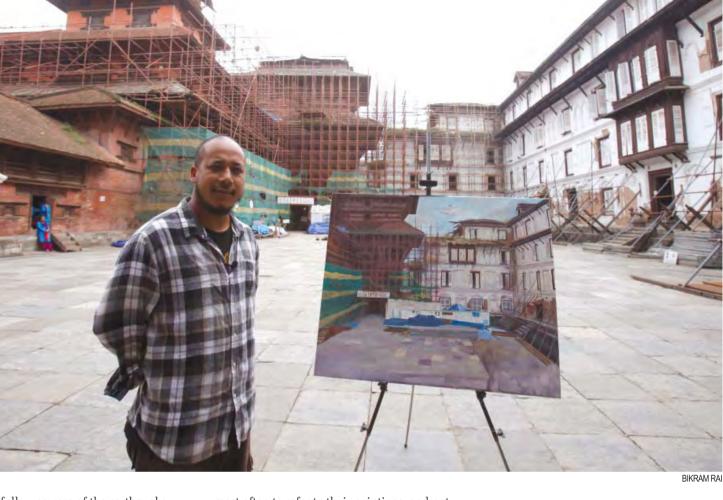
**VERBATIM:** Prabin Shrestha, a member of Paasapi, with his painting of

the reconstruction of

Hanuman Dhoka Palace



Watch video of the Paasapi group in action as the artists depict the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake on canvas. They paint not just the devastation, but the resilience of survivors and reconstruction of homes and monuments.





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#### Meet the rare Cat Men of Kathn



#### Monica Deupala

ajan Gurung loved his first cat, Lucy, a gentle, loving, stray, when he was living males evoke a negative, outdated and geeky stereotype, but I see these cat men as kind, deep, smart and hip," she says.

Such a view is a change from the norm, but there is more to owning a cat than the associated labels. Gurung believes cats are intelligent, albeit sometimes messy. Having Mimi has taught him some things, namely responsibility and patience. Gurung is not the only smart and hip chap in the valley however, as *Nepali Times* found two other cat-loving men who were defying the norms. In fact it was the portrayal of a chiseled bad boy with a soft spot for cats in a Bollywood film that converted Shrijendra Amatya to adopting felines. The 28-year-old says the portrayal of Inder Parihaar in Bollywood film *Sanam Teri Kasam*  gave him the idea of adopting his own cats. Amatya calls himself a 'Cat Man'. Just as the tattooed protagonist adores his cat, Amatya does too.

"It's like raising two babies, I have to take care of their food, litter and face their tantrums when they are not happy," says Amatya, who runs a coffee shop. He says despite the trials of raising cats, they also provide the joy that babies bring. Anjan Tamang is head chef at Sapporo Japanese restaurant, and has adopted the Japanese culture's appreciation of cats. In Japan cats are considered godlike. Having grown up with a pet cat, 49-yearold Tamang now has cats Leila and Luna. He loves to cook food for

In Singapore. But the 30-yearold interior designer had to say goodbye to his darling Lucy at a shelter when he decided to move back to Kathmandu. So he set about finding another furry friend.

"When I first came to Nepal, I was shocked by the Nepali culture that regarded cats as evil minded animals with witchcraft tricks," Gurung recalls.

Dogs are regarded as man's best friends and worshipped, but cats have long been associated with the fairer sex. The older generation relegates cats to Kathmandu's alleys, as dogs control the streets. But there seems to be a manpowered feline uprising in our midst, signalling a possible shift from misguided stereotypes.

Not dissuaded by Nepal's anti-cat sentiment, Gurung's new kitten Mimi came from Catmandu Lovers who take in and care for the capital's alley cats. They also find them new homes.

Shelter founder Norfaizah Ramli has looked after strays for about three years now, and believes male cat owners are not as odd as many might think.

"For some people, cat-loving

them – perhaps as much as he does for customers.

Along with his two adopted dogs, he has created a happy





#### nandu who adopt strays



ALL PHOTOS: MONICA DEUPALA

animal-friendly and miceunfriendly environment at his restaurant.

"The two dogs are outside guarding my restaurant, and cats guard my kitchen," he says. These fur babies are the lucky

few to have cat daddies doting on them. But the reality is that cats do not get love, and are left to search for food and shelter around the city. Owning pets, not just dogs, teaches us how to be better people. Like the Cat Men of Kathmandu, we learn compassion, patience and true unconditional love. Cats are not haughty or aloof, they are just as affable and affectionate as dogs. They love you, and not just because you're their bread winner. While packs of street dogs howling at night are annoying for those of us trying to sleep, there are more serious issues about their presence that need addressing: overpopulation and rabies.

Neither are a new phenomenon, but Bhaktapur Municipality's approach to the problem is Instead of poisoning them, it is taking a more humane approach to eradicate rabies and control the dog population. The canine squad wakes up early in Gahiti of Bhaktapur, as they lure female dogs into the truck with biscuits. They also keep their eyes peeled for unvaccinated males. The team is a mix of uniformed officials, volunteers, and vets, who are combing the streets as part of the Sanitation Department's Street Dog Sterilisation and Anti-Rabies Vaccination Campaign.



Bhaktapur's dog catchers

municipality has taken responsibility for controlling the dog population. Previously animal rights groups were the only ones to do anything about the problem. The street dog program began in March and has spayed 137 females and vaccinated 311 thus far. The festivals and feasts, and this leaves a lot of edible garbage lying around, leading to chronic diseases," Joshi explains. As a veterinarian, Joshi does not want to see the streets clear of dogs, but wants to see them being adopted and loved as part of people's families. Clinic promoter Sandeep Joshi says this means distinguishing between household

#### CAT MAN DO



Go online to meet Kathmandu's Cat Daddies and learn how they decided to go against cultural misconceptions about felines by adopting stray cats. And meet the cats who got loving homes, and even one where felines and canines get along just fine. Complaints of locals and tourists being bitten or attacked by strays are serious. Two-hundred deaths per year are attributed to rabies, and the number is rising. There are about 35,000 courses of shots distributed each year. The treatment for rabies comes at a serious cost too: Rs2,000 per course of four injections.

This takes some explaining to the locals, but there is nothing sinister going on. Most respond positively as the team tells them what they are doing, and that it is not an act against nature and The dogs are not being

or god. The dogs are not being culled, rather spayed, given an orange collar or notched ear for identification, and released.

Sanitisation Department chief Dilip Kumar Suwal believes this is going to benefit the city's overall canine health. It should also help eradicate rabies, which was the reason for several complaints of stray dog attacks.

It's a far more humane alternative to the previous quarterly poisonings, the city had a record of killing up to 500 dogs a year. The new technique could replace the culling, Suwal says.

This is the first time the



goal is simple and obvious:

reduce the dog population and make urban living healthier. But the issue is not confined to the city. Outlying villages in the district also face the dog menace. Farmers are losing cattle, infected dogs put the elderly at risk of skin diseases, and the dogs cause traffic incidents.

Pranav Joshi of Vet for Your Pet clinic believes dog population management is pertinent. But it is not limited to the dogs themselves, city residents should also clean up their neighbourhoods and not leave garbage lying around.

"Dogs roam places where there is food. Bhaktapur has many

**Dog Needs** 

**H**ome

This abandoned puppy, found

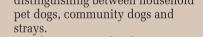
in Bakhundole, is now in

temporary care, putting on

weight and being playful again.

Looking for a loving family.

Text: 9818414269



The campaign has been put on hold for now and will resume after the rains. But given Bhaktapur's positive results thus far, the only question is whether, and when, the rest of Nepal's municipalities will follow suit, given the ever-present danger of rabies. Monika Deupala in Bhaktapur

#### **SNIP AND JAB**



After a public outcry over the poisoning of street dogs, Bhaktapur has decided to control the dog population and rabies. Join the Canine Squad as it lures female dogs to be spayed in sidewalk surgeries and given rabies injections.

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#### **ABOUT TOWN**

6 - 12 IULY 2018 **#917** 

## **EVENTS**



#### Heritage walk

10

An exploration around the historical sites and streets of Bungamati, a classical medieval village across Bagamati River from Chobar. Tag along for breathtaking views and interesting facts about the village

7 July, 7am-4pm, Pulchok Campus Department of Architecture, Rs200/300/1,000, 9843210468

#### Arna beer fest

Beers, beer games, jugglers, music and magic show to go along with live World Cup screening at the grand beer festival. 7 July, 11am onwards, Hotel Annapurna, Durbar Marg, Rs700 (pre-sale), Rs1,000 (door sale), (01) 4221711

#### **Dil Bhusan Pathak**

Leading journalist and film maker Dil Bhusan Pathak will be speaking about his experiences in media and the possibilities of development and opportunities for youth at the Skilled Voice Series forum. 20 seats only 12 July, 3pm onwards, Glocal After School, The Creative Square, Thapagaon, Register at: glocalafterschool.com



#### Chhava screens World Cup

The newly opened centre with a QFX now provides free screenings of the World Cup in its 10,000 sq.ft courtyard, every day or night. Get the theatre experience while watching the matches

#### **TEDxYouth**

Priya Sigdel, Aayushi Kc, Ashim Pandey, Ashish Thakur, Nawaraj Parajuli, Ranju Darshana and Sneha Shrestha take the stage of TEDxYouthKamalPokhari. 7 July, 11am onwards, Nepal Tourism Board, Pradarshani Marg, Rs750/1,000, 9840717819

#### Chitrakala release

A book release of Chitrakala The Art of Painting for all art lovers and artists, hosted by Srijana College of Fine Arts. 6 July, 2:30-5pm, Patan Museum, Patan Durbar Square

#### Sonam Gyalmo

Playing around the myth of the death of Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana, Sonam Gyalmo, a play, depicts an unusual and unheard of story. Playwright, Phulman Bal and director, Sonam Moktan. 6-9 July, 5:30pm (extra show on Saturday at 1pm), Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, (01) 4469621



#### **EU film fest**

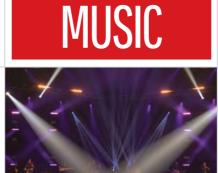
Celebrating the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the 7th European Union Film Festival screens over a dozen of documentaries on European art, heritage and culture. and fiction films with engaging and thought-provoking narratives. 7-8 July, 11am onwards, Pokhara Chamber of Commerce, (01) 4429445-6

#### Rajendralaxmi

A historical dance-drama telling real-life events of Rajendra Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah, directed and conceptualised by Namrata KC. 6-8 July, 5:30pm (extra show on Saturday at 1pm), Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar, (01) 4249761

#### World Cup screening

Catch all the special games for the FIFA World Cup 2018 live at Outdoor Adventure Center Nepal. Join in the fun, cheering on your favorite team with a giant screen and an energising atmosphere. 6-14 July, 6pm onwards, Outdoor Adventure



#### Melody for Remedy

A fundraising event by Aama Buwa Trust featuring the famous fusion Nepali band Kutumba and Indian sufi singer Pushpan Pradhan. Musical ambience, splendid food and exciting door prizes, join in to support individuals with disabilities. 7 July, 2-6pm, 2-6pm, Trisara, Lazimpat, (01) 4410200

#### Unplugged Aawaj

An acoustic band gracing the stage of the bar with their harmonious cover songs of various artists

6 July, 7:30pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel, 9849772200



#### Super Rocker week

Two bands performing every night at the rock bar. Watch Nepali bands light 7pm onwards, Purple Haze, Thamel, . 9849276214

#### Suman Jones Giri

Suman with his take on Nepali classic hits will be making your Friday evening melodious. After the musical show waits football matches. 6 July, 5pm onwards, Layaku Café Lounge and Bar, Basantapur, (01) 4238310



## DINING

Soaltee Crowne Plaza

Shake up the summer with fresh and

tropical flavour of mangoes at the Rodi

Patio Bar or delight your taste buds with

authentic and exotic Chinese noodles

at Bao Xuan. The hotel is full of food

20 July/14 July, 12:30-10:30pm/ 12:30-

Kathmandu, Tahachal, (01) 4273999

The Café's international cuisine has earned

a reputation for having variety and tasteful

recipes. Visit the place for a musical dinner

and special offers on Friday. Try Chicken

Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays (for July), till

Catch all the live action of football while

enjoying chilled glasses of beer and delicious

delights at the hotel's restaurant. Get 3 beers

6-14 July, Alfresco, Fairfield by Marriott, Thamel,

9pm, Jawalakhel, 9813493902

Fairfield by Marriott

2:45pm and 7-10:45pm, Soaltee Crown Plaza

festivals this season.

Kairos Café

Parmesan.

## GETAWAY



#### **Hotel Yukhang**

A new hotel built with Dachi bricks from Malla era and Bhaktapur's wooden crafts provides a royal and medieval touch to your stay. The unlimited buffet dinner at the hotel also screens world cup games. Thamel, Rs2,500/3,500 (rooms), (01) 4267358

#### **Tiger Palace Resort**

Create memories in the lap of luxury with your friends and family at the new resort. The two nights and three days summer offer is not to be missed. Till 31 August, Bhairahawa, Lumbini, (071) 512000



#### Dwarika's Resort

A holistic retreat, drawing on ancient Himalayan knowledge and philosophy of care for nature and for oneself, set in magnificent natural surroundings. *Dhulikhel, (11) 490612* 

#### Peacock Guest House

Housed in a World Heritage Site, the 3-storied Newari-style building provides splendid views of the Dattatreya Square and the Bhimsenthan temple. Bhaktapur, (01) 6611829



Le Sherpa With a focus on seasonal and local vegetables and fruits, Chef Ram Hari, under the guidance of Canadian Chef Emily, has created a new menu for the season. Maharajgunj, (01) 4428604

at the price of 2.

9801227613



#### Annamaya

A rooftop cafe promoting vegetarianism and conscious eating. Visit the place for nourishing foods like Tofu salad and drinks like almond milk smoothie, gluten-free almond meal cookies and sweets all originals.

Gyan Mandala, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5548419

#### 6-15 July, Chhaya Centre, Thamel, 9841876696

Center Nepal, Thamel, (01) 4433515



Health at home is an organization which facilitates home based health care services. Health at home service promotes health care i.e., out of hospital setting to the clients. Being the first of its kind in the whole South Asia. Health at Home is here to cater to the needs of those who desire health care facilities to be delivered at their doorsteps

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Visit by qualified and well experienced doctor	24 hours nursing care at home by qualified and
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Lab on Call	Physiotherapy on Call
All kinds of lab related work by professional lab	Physio/Electro/Acupuncture therapy by
technician.	qualified and experienced physiotherapist.
Elderly Care Assistant	Travel Support for Sick Clients
Fine and professional care by our qualified and	Travel support for sick clients are provided by
experienced care giver.	professional.
Appointment Management	Equipment Rental & Drug Supply
Apointment management with required doctors	Drug supply at your doorstep and best quality
in different hospitals.	medical equipments in rent.



#### Opens in Kathmandu on 6 July

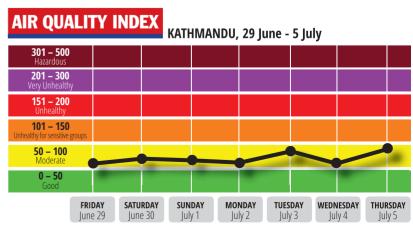
The American action thriller film, a sequel to the 2015's Sicario, Sicario: Day of the Soldado begins with a new chapter of a drug war. US federal agent Matt Graver (Josh Brolin) is on a mission to capture drug cartels who are trafficking terrorists across the border. He calls on a hitman Alejandro (Benicio Del Toro) to kidnap a drug kingpin's daughter and inflame the war. Alejandro's line "luck doesn't live on this side of the border" sums up all the rage happening on the US-Mexico border.

#### The Lazy Gringo

The menu here offers typical New Mexican fare served on flour tortillas including tacos, enchiladas, quesadillas and even gorditas (stuffed tacos). Order the chicken taco salad and you are done for the day. Jawalakhel, (01) 2210527

#### Hotel Annapurna View

The new boutique hotel situated at 1,600m in Sarangkot offers everything: the sunrise, the Annapurnas, a view of Phewa Lake, serenity, and luxurious accommodation. Sarangkot, Pokhara, (01) 443566



Despite steady rains for most of the week, the average AQI was never in the Green range for good air quality, but hovered in the Moderate band with occasional dips into both Good and shifts into Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups. the rains scrub the city air, but soon the traffic is up again and there is a fog of fine dust particles along roads when they dry out. Although we can breathe a little easier during the rainy season, Kathmandu's air quality is still not what it should be, and is above the WHO threshold for breathable air. Go online for hour-by-bour measurements at the city centre. https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-guality-monitor/

# A Kiwi takes to gundruk

Nepal's popular fermented dish is an acquired taste, and a visiting New Zealand journalist acquires it



#### **Thomas Heaton**

T's a great shame that most tourists come to Nepal, trek up and down mountains on a diet of pizza and pasta, then fly out without so much as a whiff of gundruk.

Like many great tastes, like stilton or stinky tofu, that come with cadaver-like smells, gundruk is an acquired taste. It is almost Nepal's national dish, but visitors usually find the smell of the fermented greens repulsive.

If spinach and raisins had a rotten lovechild, and the looks of tobacco leaves, gundruk is it. Raw, it has the texture of waxy cardboard and forces the mouth to flood with saliva because of its bitterness. My own taste buds are free-loving hippies in terms of the conservative Western palate, and I'm open to trying anything. The main ingredients of

The main ingredients of gundruk are various vegetable leaves, which are pounded, fermented in jars or amphora-style pots, then chopped and sundried for later consumption. Gundruk is simply a means of preserving excess of radish, kohlrabi or cauliflower leaves, mustard greens, when they are prolific, so they can be eaten with rice in winter. Each leaf lends the final product a different flavour, and it is usually made around October.

For most, Nepali momos are on top of the food chain because of their familiarity and omnipresence. Gundruk, however, is arguably far more uniquely Nepali. It's hard to find any link to another culture's cuisine. ALL PHOTOS: GOPEN RAI

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation says 2,000 tons of gundruk are made in Nepali households every year. How anyone can calculate the total gundruk output is anyone's guess, which must be why FAO has come up with a safe round figure.

Gundruk has kept generations of Nepalis healthy in the agricultural off-season, when all there is to eat is rice, tubers and maize. It is not the only fermented Nepali food, there is also the fermented bamboo shoot (*tama*), fermented radish roots (*sinki*) and fermented soybeans (*kinema*).

The fermentation process of gundruk is somewhat similar to German sauerkraut or Korean kimchi, and it has the same bacteria. Given the obsession with the benefits of those fermented foods it is fair to assume that gundruk probably boasts the same goodness. Unlike kraut and kimchi, however, gundruk is a little more versatile because it is available dried and can be used in hundreds of different ways.

One of the dishes is gundruk sandheko, a delicious tossed salad of sorts. The closest thing the taste of this tangy dish comes to would be Burmese tea leaf salad because the combination of fresh and fermented play against each other. The newly-plucked, crunchy cucumber and funky, almostchewy gundruk complement and contrast, while the sharp mustard oil, chili and citrus make for a unique taste like no other.

Gundruk sandheko is often used as a substitute for pickles, daubed on the side of dal bhat, in soups or even mixed with meat. Don't ask for this dish in Kathmandu's fancy restaurants, however, which have westernised menus.

It is also difficult to find it premade and bottled. Having sampled the gunpowder substance during a recent trek and at home meals, I have developed a taste for gundruk and the hidden dimension it provides my benign *dal bhat*.

Gundruk sandheko has a strong, wild taste. Plenty of firsttimers will spit it out for its sourfunk. Perhaps it is how Nepalis would find Marmite or Vegemite in Australia and New Zealand.

You have to grow up eating the stuff or simply be a masochist to enjoy it. But like Marmite, I have come to like gundruk and would recommend it to those of you out there excited by this culinary escapade.

#### MAKE YOUR OWN



Watch this Kiwi make gundruk sandheko with local ingredients, and share how to do it at home.

nepalitimes.com 🖤 🗌



Salt 2 small red chillies 2 tablespoons mustard oil Juice of half a lime

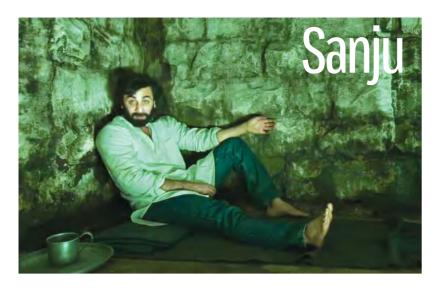
#### Method:

Combine diced tomatoes, cucumber, onion and garlic shoots. Pound chillies and salt in a mortar and pestle until combined, drain gundruk of excess liquor and add to salt mixture. Add gundruk mixture in a bowl with the vegetables, mix well. Add the lime juice and mustard oil, mix further, and serve.

Eat with chamre, alu tareko, fresh cucumber and pickle.



#### HAPPENINGS



A powerful, moving and compelling movie, it depicts the fascinating, controversial and dramatic of '80s superstar Sanjay Dutt.

Sanju begins with Sanjay Dutt (played by Bollywood heart-throb Ranbir Kapoor) looking for a writer to pen his biography, as he prepares to surrender following a Supreme Court' decision related to his possession of a firearm.

After one writer fails him, Dutt goes to an established biographer, Winnie (Anushka Sharma), with hopes of sharing his side of the story. It is during these meetings we get to visit Dutt's past and understand him beyond biased media coverage. We get deep insights and honest recollections from the man who lived life in all its highs and lows.

Director Rajkumar Hirani takes us on an emotional journey through various stages of Dutt's life. From the early days of his first movie *Rocky*, when a young and nervous Dutt was crushed by the pressures of his illustrious family, to getting into a vicious cycle of drug and alcohol addiction while dealing with the loss of his mother, it continues to his subsequent time in rehab. Followed by his notorious trials and tribulations in the Arms Act case, and his alleged involvement in the 1993 Mumbai blasts, the film takes you through Dutt's tumultous life. The deep emotions, which Hirani is an expert at bringing out, keep us drawn to the screen and leave us wanting more.

Rajkumar Hirani made it clear that although this is a biopic of sorts, he has taken creative liberty, with permission from Dutt himself, to portray specific chapters of Dutt's life the way he wanted. Those criticising the movie for leaving out key pieces of Dutt's life, like his previous marriages and the birth of his first child, must remember this is his version of the story.

The first half of the movie revolves around Dutt's struggle with drug addiction. The scenes where Dutt is completely out of his senses are cleverly executed: colorful, vivid, animated and loopy. Although dramatised, the scenes perfectly deliver the essence of how addiction takes control of one's mind, without overdoing it. The second half deals with Dutt's odyssey of court cases related to his alleged link with underworld dons.

Besides the drama and controversy, what holds the story together is the relationship between fathers, son and best friend. The father and friend are his moral anchors throughout.

Veteran actor Paresh Rawal plays Sunil Dutt (Sanjay's father) brilliantly. His role of a supportive and loving father, quietly suffering the responsibility of looking after a troubled son, is performed with intense earnestness. Some of the most heart-wrenching scenes are the ones between the two.

Following a solid performance as a Pakistani soldier in Meghna Gulzaar's 2018 spy thriller *Raazi*, Vicky Kaushal's stellar performance as Sanjay Dutt's friend Kamlesh keeps us transfixed. Playing a simple and stable New York-based Gujarati man, a rock-solid support to Dutt, the relative newcomer in the film industry has made it clear he has a future in the industry.

Ranbir Kapoor's portrayal of Dutt is completely convincing as he brilliantly embodies his character's persona.

His transformation to to fit the role of Bollywood's original 'bad boy' is commendable.

Depicting Dutt's life story -- complex, turbulent and full of extremes -- is not an easy task. Countless speculation, allegations, controversies and tragedies have been dealt with sensitively by Hirani, making this human story a skillfully crafted work of art.







**PSEUDO DEMOCRACY:** Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki (*centre*) slammed the government for demonstrating autocratic tendencies by restricting peaceful protests in public places at a press meet in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



**RAINY RESCUE:** Some of the 1,500 Indians stranded by bad weather on the Simikot-Hilsa route to the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage in Tibet have been evacuated by air.



**BRAVEHEARTS:** Nepali troops in South Sudan receive United Nations Medals from the Sudan head of peace keeping David Shearer. Deployed in July last year, 150 peacekeepers will return home this month.





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ALAINA B. TEPLITZ/TWITTER

**SCHOOL FOR POLICY:** Nepali officials, with US ambassador Alaina B Teplitz (*second from right*), attend the launch of the Institute for Integrated Development and Innovation Public Policy in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



**KUNG FU:** Chinese children from Nanjing showcase their martial art skills during a cultural program at Army Officers' Club in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

#### **FROM THE NEPALI PRESS**

## An intolerant state

#### Editorial in Kantipur, 1 July

#### कान्तिपुर

The government's move to curtail civil rights by banning protests in public places is condemnable. This is against our constitutional right to peaceful assembly and protest. It is unfortunate that this democratically-elected government is showing such an undemocratic character. It also indicates that the government is indeed morphing into a totalitarian regime.

In April, the government had declared some areas 'restricted zones' in Kathmandu. Now, it has declared such zones in all 77 districts. When a demonstration was held in Maitighar Mandala to oppose the government's move aimed at silencing civil society, police detained



protesters. In Jumla, police arrested crusader Govinda KC when he was preparing for a hunger strike against the Education Ministry's proposal to dilute the Medical Education Bill, which was drafted following past deals between the doctor and the government. KC was about to start his fast-onto-death at Jumla Hosptial, when the local government suddenly declared it a no-protest zone. This was a move to foil KC's protest.

The constitution, promulgated by an elected assembly, not only guarantees freedom of expression but also our right to peaceful assembly. To be sure, the constitution allows the government to ban activities against our sovereignty, territorial integrity, and malicious efforts to stoke ethno-religious strife or perpetuate caste-based discrimination. But this

government is being increasingly intolerant of dissenting views, and is crushing opposition voices. This is certainly not how a democratic government functions, or should function. Instead, it is a stark reminder of a familiar time in the past when people did not have freedom of expression. It is a flashback to the days of the absolute monarchy.

People participate in a democracy by communicating with elected rulers. The public's views, whether it is opposing, supporting or neutral, should be heard, and their demands taken into consideration. The government should be held accountable for all its actions, and that is the only way democracy is strengthened. This is what makes a genuine democracy possible. It was for these rights and an open society

> that the Nepali people united to overthrow the monarchy and establish democracy. Unfortunately, the democratic state which the people sacrificed a lot to establish is not following its core values.

In most cases, demonstrations are held not for any other reason but to expose neglect and indifference of the

UR government. It is frustrating

when a government elected by the people does not take into consideration the needs of those very people. It is therefore only natural that the people should take peacefully to the streets to express their grievances. The government is adding more fuel to the fire by its irrational prohibitory orders.

Last month, an NTV talk show was forced off the air after its host grilled the Information and Communications Minister, who happens to be the government's spokesperson. Such an undemocratic attitude by a supposedly democratic government has angered the people. The government needs to immediately stop cracking down on democratic freedoms, because these actions will weaken the system and limit people's hard-won freedoms.



#### **RECONSTRUCTION ALREADY STALL AT SECOND INSTALLMENT**

Over three years past, very few of the quake victims have so far received all the installments for reconstruction. NRA has declared that among the devastated 767,239 houses around 25% are reconstructed. It is, however, visible that the number is actually well below than real figure. Most of the families who completed their reconstruction have not yet received the second and third installments.

The extensive donors' conference in 20th of Asar, 2072 concluded with commitments from all the sectors to continue the rescue and relief mission. The conference also declared that the earthquake might have come as opportunity rather than challenge for building back new, safe and resilient houses. The concept of integrated community with fully equipped with basic services development was also coined. However, putting the shiny words into action has been the first challenge in the reconstruction process. The policies introduced by the government are inadequate and not inclusive, whereas, the government officials at the Land revenue and Land mapping and registration offices act in unsporting, unsupportive and indifferent manners, completely ignoring the fact of vulnerability and turmoil the affected families went through. Thousands of families are waiting to start the rebuilding process and for those, who have completed reconstruction, they have not received a single dime from government support. Recently, several quake affected families in Chandragiri and Godawari municipalities adjacent to Kathmandu Metropolitan city were found to have reconstructed their houses from the scraps - selling out their lands, taking loans from different sources. They reported that they have been finding it really tough to obtain the NRs. 150,000 of the third installment supports that the government had promised. In Godawari 12, the families sought support from Lumanti Support group for shelter to construct their permanent shelter of which 60% houses were revealed of not possessing the land titles. As per the policy, the land title documents are mandatory. The families are having hard time to obtain drawings approval of the houses. The organization succeeded in lobbying and obtaining first installment money for the families who were able to produce alternative certificates with witnesses of the land they are living in. The second installment supports are however halted.

registration office and the actual measurements in the field. It is mandatory to re-measure and redraw the plotting maps to provide the proper documentation. The affected families are forced to take numerous visits to Land revenue offices and Land registration offices. A grim face of working with bureaucrats, they are usually asked extra charges uncharted for speedy work. "Land any legal processes from undertaking their tasks.

Sharma further shares, "Land is registered in the name of particular person, different family have constructed a house that land for many years. This is the case of several houses. Thus, based on the longevity of stay in the community and presence of genuine quake affected-family certificates, the local government



Reconstruction challenge in Chandragiri

Chandragiri municipality is facing a backlash. The ordinance is different and stricter than that of Godawari municipality.

The inner community consists of houses constructed on 1 aana land with the 3 feet alley. The municipality has ordered people to vacate 11 feet while constructing their houses. The quake affected families indicated that vacating 11 feet land will leave them with no space to construct any kind of structure. Almost all affected families at Machheygaun, Taukhel and Chundevi, contestingagainst the orders have not even acquired the first installment money. Adding woes to their discomfort, the strict order of municipality still stands. People are forced to follow through. Only the families having more than 2.5 aana lands will be given clean chit to construct houses.

In near future. Chandragiri municipality has planed

Areas of several lands as denoted in the title certificate do not match with the records in the Land revenue and registration offices do not response if we do not bribe money." Ramkrishna Mali of Godawari -12 Thechoshares his dismay, "They are asking 1 lakh for my 1 aana land. Where do I get such big amount of money that small piece of land?"

Yatra Sharma, project Coordinator at Lumanti highlighted that the traditional practice of oral agreement while carrying out sales/purchase of the land, transferring household titles in old communities around the capital city have hindered the progress. Lack of paper works and concrete contracts have prevented government offices or should provide the alternative title documents for quick responses.

Gajendra Maharjan, Mayor of Godawari municipality states that problems with registration of the land and difference in measurements are subjects that can be resolved. The office will provide recommendation letters for such cases. For this, the families must produce the evidence of heir. Basically the standard land size for the construction of a house is set to be more than 2.5 aana lands. This provision has been softened for the families residing in inner communities. to construct ring roads that run through the old ancient communities in Taukhel. There is growing fear among people that only those houses capable of abandoning 11 feetland will get the approval from the municipality leaving large portion of the population stranded from their deserved reconstruction support. Many people have raised questions over the local government's intentions.

Rajamati Manandhar of Chandragiri 8, under municipality's current policy faces problems despite producing every single document required. Her old house used to stand adjacent in a row of houses. She rebuilt her house in the old state, joining walls with the neighboring houses. It is impossible for Manadhar to leave any portion of land due to its structure. She could not obtain approval for the land and house, resulting in being deserted from support recipients' lists. She says, "This is an old settlement. All the houses are constructed in traditional ways. Despite our willingness, we cannot leave any part of the land. The remaining land is not adequate for house building." Manandharis bereaved from basic facilities like electricity, drinking water systems and from undertaking any transaction relating the house.

Radhakrishna Rana Magar of Chundevi, Chandragiri 9 willingly left 7 feet land including 3 feet for the pathway and constructed his house. However, the municipality has not given him any approval. Magar faces the same problems as Rajamati Manandhar.

(In partnership with Lumanti Support group for shelter)

**Times** 6 - 12 JULY 2018 **#917** 



#### Basanta Pratap Singh in Bajhang

Paramananda Joshi is 90, but in his long life he had never seen anything like it. The flash-flood swept though his village of Malumela here in the remote mountains of far-western Nepal, washing away farms and making 45 families landless in an instant.

In the village of Tollodhika, the Gole Khola flooded for the first time in living memory. The sudden flood swept away five people crossing the stream. That evening, a jeep carrying five people was washed away by the Chaitya River with a ferocity locals had never seen before.

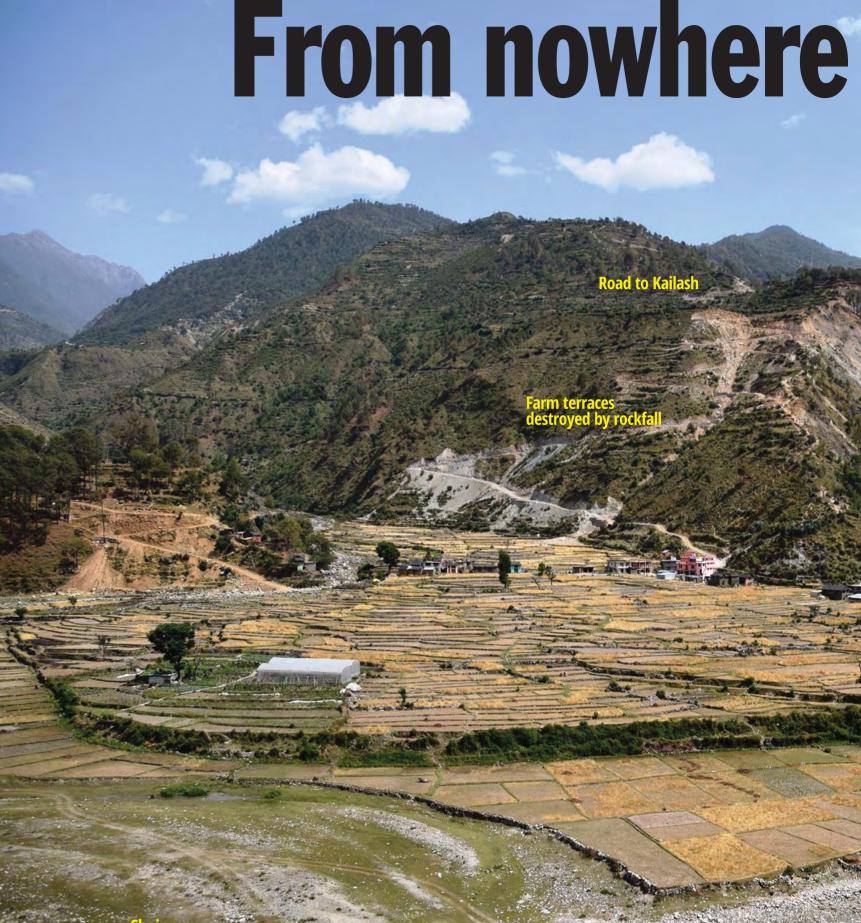
"It is just a brook, and it had been raining for less than an hour before the floods came down without warning, how did that happen?" asks Ramdal Mijar, 54.

Scientists blame extreme weather events caused by global warming, the impact of which has been exacerbated by a construction spree of unplanned and poorly built roads along fragile mountain slopes.

In all, 10 people have been killed by raging floods since April in this area of Bajhang that has seen much road-digging. The crop damage has been extensive, and pushed many farmers in this already food-deficit region to the brink of starvation.

The Himalayan mid-hills have always had floods and landslides, but how can barely one hour of rain cause such havoc? Why do normally calm streams suddenly turn into angry torrents of mud?

"Cloudbursts are becoming more frequent because of erratic weather caused by climate change. Badly constructed roads upstream that alter natural drainage patterns make the floods worse," explains the Bajhang soil conservation officer Sunil Kumar Gupta. Flooding has been prevalent and unpredictable throughout Nepal during unusually heavy pre-monsoon showers this year. But even normal precipitation can trigger landslides because haphazard road construction disturbs natural drainage, unleashing flash-floods downstream. Finding details about new roads nationwide is impossible. Even the Department of Roads doesn't have proper records. Bajhang district authorities have no idea where roads are being built, but unofficially we tallied at least 165 currently under construction. There are more than 75 heavy earthmovers in Bajhang alone. Évery infrastructure project must by law have an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). None of the new improvised roads here have done EIAs. Five years ago the Local



# Bajhang

#### **MOVING MOUNTAINS**

The remote district of Bajhang is a microcosm of what rampant, random roadbuilding fuelled by local corruption is doing to the environment across Nepal. Development Ministry (LDM) ordered all District Development Committees to notify them of the use of bulldozers and excavators. They were encouraged to minimise the use of diggers, and have an engineer present when using them. discussions were held. But that did not go anywhere.

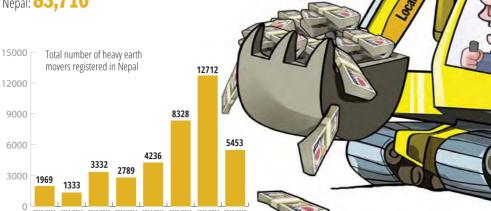
Besides floods, road-building has set off rockfalls that have ruined terrace farms. Madan Rokaya has a family of 13, and was once happy that a road was coming to his village. But his terraces were buried by landslides set off by road construction. "I am ruined, I have no land and am now begging for work," says Rokaya. Subeda village (*right*) once had the district's most fertile farms, and its 30 or so families were well off. But most of its farms have been destroyed by rocks and boulders tumbling down the mountains from a road alignment. The contractor, Lama Golden JV, shows no remorse. Singh Bir Rokaya says farmers like him are helpless: "We are just spectators, many of our farms are buried under rocks." The District Agriculture Office has collected complaints, and says 1,800 families in 40 villages in Bajhang have been affected by road building. Already destitute, many families here have become landless. It is not just farms that have been destroved, traditional irrigation systems that hugged the contours of mountains have been blocked or washed away by road construction up the slopes. Land is being covered and rendered useless, KC says. He questions the logic of such development, when it means people



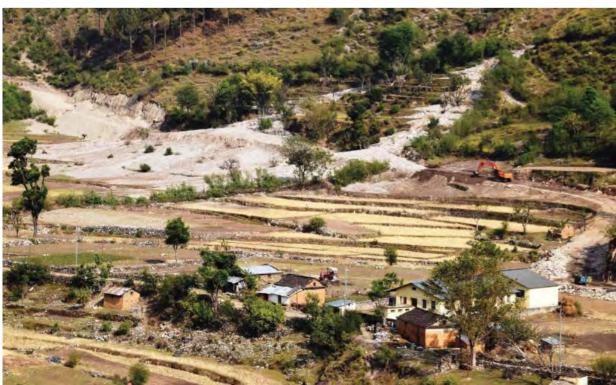
SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

#### Total heavy earth movers in:

Bajhang: **75** Bagmati Zone: **9,492** Nepal: **83,710**  everywhere, no one is enforcing them," admits Nripraj Joshi of the District Technical Committee. After an earlier expose by the Centre for Investigative Journalism and being questioned by the LDM, several







## **DEADLY TOLL**

- **May 8** Sub-engineer Narayan Dahal died in a landslide at the Chainpur-Taklakot road section in Ramaili.
- **May 6** Five people, including four of the same family, were killed by a flood in the Guhe River in Thalara village. Livestock was killed. Five houses were swept away and the Juilgad hydropower plant was put out of action.
- **May 2** Three people were killed when a flashflood swept away their jeep on the Chauthiya river. Over 152 hectares of farms were destroyed, more than 50 livestock were killed.
- **April 27** Floods caused by road building inundated 130 hectares of land and destroyed crops in Sabik village. Farmers lost Rs300 million worth of standing crops.



## **Duplication road**

It is not just local governments that are on a nationwide road construction spree. The NCP government announced it had set aside Rs 4.5 billion for the so-called Madan Bhandari Highway in its last budget. The new highway will span 1.200 km from Jhapa in the east to Dadeldhura in the west, cross 14 districts – most them in the ecologically fragile Chure Range and the Inner Tarai (*depicted on map, overleaf*).

The announcement caught many by surprise because it was made without conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment or a Detailed Project Report. Moreover, there has been no satisfactory explanation as to why there was a need for another east-west highway when there is already the Mahendra Highway, the Mid-hill Highway and the Tarai Feeder Road project.

When asked, spokesperson Rajendra Sharma of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Transportation said parts of the new highway were already in existence, and the Madan Bhandrai Highway would just connect the missing bits. He also said the region served by the road was rich in limestone deposits, and would serve existing and future cement factories.

"In fact, you could call this a cement highway," Sharma told us.

However, Dhananjaya Poudel of the Ministry of Environment expressed surprise that his ministry was never consulted about the highway, and that budget was allocated without studying its environmental impact and economic feasibility.

He added: "You have to take into account the geography, geology, vegetation, environment, and the impact on human settlements before undertaking a project like this. Only then can you minimise the damage."

Kalpana Bhattarai

politicians often try to shift the blame. One-third of the officials, elected village heads and mayors are contractors, or are from families that own construction companies.

They also own excavators and bulldozers and rent them to the

Province 7 Chief Minister Trilochan Bhatta was recently visited by a group of concerned residents of Thalara-9 which was threatened by the risk of flood and landslide. They told him: "It has been three years since we have slept soundly because of the danger from road construction." New road constructions even threaten existing highways. Bajhang's lifeline to the Tarai was recently black-topped, but rockfall debris from another road up the mountain obstructs it frequently. Last month the important artery was blocked by a landslide triggered by the construction of a feeder-road for two weeks. 'The road should never have been built without analysing the environmental impact, and close supervision of the construction methods," says Chief Engineer Lalijan Khanal of the Department of Roads in the neighbouring district of Baitadi. He said he wrote repeatedly to the district administration about the danger posed by excavators. "They didn't listen to me," he says. Such obstruction can mean life or death. Five patients died last year because they couldn't be taken to hospital when the road was blocked for more than a month. The landslide that blocked the highway was caused by excavator activity on the feeder road above it. 💟 Centre for Investigative Journalism

are being displaced. But there is more to the problem, because water supply is also disrupted. Several irrigation structures have fallen prey to the dozers, he says.

"Of the 440 irrigation schemes we had in Bajhang, more than 283 have been destroyed by the bulldozers," says Rajesh Kumar KC of the Agriculture Development Office here. "The excuse from local politicians is always the same," KC says, "they tell us that there is always destruction when there is development. They say destruction is temporary whereas development is permanent."

Water supply schemes are also affected. The Padamjelya Drinking Water Project in Sireta village that served 72 families and completed last year at a cost of Rs350,000 was damaged two months later by reckless road construction.

"We all volunteered to build this water supply, our dreams are ruined," says Bijay Joshi. Two other drinking water projects have also been ruined in the area, and locals are back to drinking contaminated water from rivers and springs.

When approached, local

municipalities. Many have been found to be awarding contracts to themselves. Devolution under federalism was supposed to stop such greed and lack of accountability, but it appears to have democratised corruption.

To be sure, there are examples of mountain roads that heed the environment and try to minimise the damage to the local economy. The green road concept tries to ensure minimum disruption to slopes, and plan roads to create farm jobs and market access for produce.

Unfortunately, the roads being built haphazardly by local governments lack many of these essential attributes. Seismologists warn that western Nepal could be hit by a long overdue megaearthquake, and mountains destabilised by poorly designed roads could trigger catastrophic slope failures.

Says Upama Ojha of Geohazards International: "Things are bad enough during normal times, but the haphazard use of bulldozers have increased landslide risk. It is unthinkable what will happen during an earthquake."

#### BACKSIDE



we are bringing important items of news that you may have missed: Messi Effigy Burnt BY OUR POLITICAL FOOTBALL REPORTER Argentina fans staged a demonstration outside BY OUR MATHEMATICAL CORRESPONDENT The NCP (NCP) grumblement has banned arithmetics in schools with immediate effect, since it was making children too calculating.

Zero-sum game

Arithmetic textbooks and classes will henceforth be replaced with much more useful vocational training on new subjects like: 'How To Cheat Without Being Caught' and 'Career Counselling for Future Kleptocrats'. The Ministry of Re-Education said in a

It is incumbent upon us mediapersons holding the fourth

an important component of the cheques and balances to hold power

to account. That is why this week,

pillar of democracy, who are

**Arithmetics Banned** 

statement: "We are a civilisation that invented the concept of zero, we don't need a western curriculum. Arithmetic is obsolete anyway in the age of Samsung i-Phones." However, students still need to grasp

their zeroes so they can accurately count kickbacks in future. Hazar: 000. Lack: 00,000. Corrode: 00,00,000. Arab: 000,000,000. Kharab: 000,000,000,000.

#### **Civil Servants Stage Holiday**

BY OUR BUREAUCRATIC REPORTER The All-Over-Nepal Civil Servants Confederation stayed away from work Friday to demand that Gai Jatra be declared a nationwide holiday, and not just for the Valley.

Said an irate resident of Province 41/2: "What do they think, only Kathmandu has the right to mess things up? Under Federalism, all Provinces have an equal responsibility to make asses of themselves."

Civil Servants also want forthcoming Tij festival to be a holiday also for men, and not just for women. "It is unconstitutional for holidays to have a gender bias," said an agitated agitator.

the Brazil Embassy in Maharajganj protesting their team's ouster from the World Cup. They shouted slogans, and burnt an effigy of Lionel Messi at the Brazil mission because it is the closest country to Argentina with an embassy in Kathmandu.

"He let Nepal down, we just can't tolerate it," said the fans who blocked traffic for hours. Police said the demonstration was allowed because it was not in a Restricted Zone.

#### Nepal Ferry Arrives in Kolkata

Prime Minister Oli flagging off the first ferry service between Birganj and Kolkata Thursday. The bus carrying 75 passengers was

ceremonially swept away by monsoon floods, drifting down the Bagmati to enter the Ganges and finally the Hoogly, to dock at Howrah. A cheering crown welcomed the historic arrival in India of the first maritime vessel flying the Nepal flag.



The Ass



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