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PICS: CODY TUTTLE

## Blazing trails

Some mountaineers climbing Mt Everest and Annapurna when the earthquake struck on 25 April plunged right into collecting and taking emergency relief to remote mountain villages. For them, there was no question of abandoning Nepal, a country they have come to love through their climbing. In Kathmandu, the Hillary Relief Collective serves as a platform to coordinate activities on the ground so that relief goes where it is needed the most.

Three months on, the priority is still: food and medicines, shelter, education and health, and rebuilding trails so that access to relief supplies is kept open. And that is where the mountaineers come in. Says

Argentinean climber Damian Benegas: "Mountaineers are very good at getting material from Point A to Point B and that is why our experience has been useful."

However, instead of making things easier for earthquake survivors, the government machinery is structured to make it as hard as possible. The Rs 15,000 cash grant promised to every family has still not got to people in remote areas. The Reconstruction Authority has not been set up, and without elected local councils, the state mechanism is not geared for this work. The poor are often excluded because they are intimidated by the bureaucratic maze and paperwork. They just don't know how to work the system.

### NEGOTIATING WITH NATURE:

A mule train with earthquake relief passes a precarious landslide triggered by the 25 May quake, made worse by the monsoon in Gorkha (above). The same trail being repaired by climbers and guides. (right).

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
Watch video of relief delivery in Gorkha



KUNDA DIXIT

Interview with **Amelia Hillary** of the Hillary Relief Cooperative

**Blazing new trails in the monsoon**

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**GET OVER IT, ALREADY**

ONE TO MANY  
BY BIDUSHI DHUNGEL

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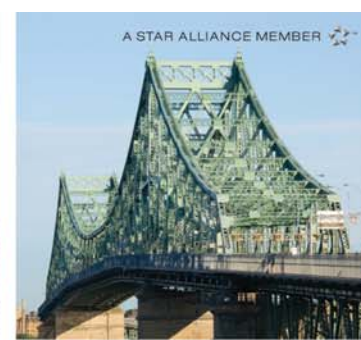
**LET'S MOVE ON**

THE DEADLINE  
BY DAMAKANT JAYSHI

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**Fly to Toronto this summer with Turkish Airlines.**



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WIDEN YOUR WORLD





# MADE TO JUMP THROUGH HOOPS

Instead of making things easier for earthquake survivors, the government machinery is structured to make it as hard as possible to get help.

This was never a government that could multi-task. Fixated on finishing the constitution, it couldn't even begin thinking about kick-starting rural development by organising local elections. The political leadership in the past eight years has been so preoccupied with getting to power and staying there, that it had no time to pay attention to the economy, investment and jobs. The most glaring examples of government neglect are in hydropower where the state has neither been able to add megawatts nor encourage others to do so. Ditto for agriculture which has been left to fend for itself with enormous long-term consequences for food security and the economy.

The constitution itself was delayed since 2008 because of endless power struggles in Kathmandu. Now, three months on after the earthquake and one month after the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction, attention has shifted to getting a constitution over and done with. The reason for the rush is that the top four parties are in a hurry to get into government so (we presume) they can have their hands in the honeypot of the reconstruction budget.

A glance at the four main Nepali language broadsheet dailies on Wednesday proves that earthquake relief has dropped off the radar: none of them had any reporting on the relief work even in the inside pages. The government's apathy is reflected in the mainstream press, and vice-versa.

Hundreds of thousands of people will require emergency food aid, medical attention and cash to rebuild in the coming months. All the government gives them now is assurances. The message seems to be: "Don't bother us, we have to get the constitution done."

To be sure, some of the problems with fair, equitable and timely delivery of earthquake aid stem from the lack of political accountability that can only be fixed with a constitution that guarantees an all-encompassing and compassionate state. There is a structural problem with



CODY TUTTLE

governance, as proven by the continued plight of the survivors of past floods on the Kosi and in Surkhet, and in the Jure landslide.

None of this is new, as we find out from Sharad Ghimire and Tom Robertson (*page 19*) the government's response to the disastrous floods in 1954 was so shockingly inadequate that an American assessment team reported that the Nepal government then was 'lost' and there was an 'almost total lack of local governmental mechanisms to administer relief'.

Those of us who had hoped against hope that the earthquake would bring about a new energy and speed to governance and force officials to be more responsible and responsive have been let down. Right across the 15 districts affected by the quake, there is a sense that it is getting back to business as usual.

Reports from the field suggest that three months after the government announced a meagre Rs 15,000 cash grant

for people to build shelters, more than half the affected families haven't even got that money. The politically connected, those living along highways or in the district capitals, the educated have got their money, but many of those traditionally excluded and living higher up have been left out as they have always been (*see page 16-17*). In the absence of elected local councils, the central state mechanism is just not geared to reach nooks and crannies, the poor are often excluded because they are intimidated by the bureaucratic maze and paperwork. They just don't know how to work the system.

A month after the aid conference concluded with much fanfare pledges worth \$4.4 billion, the Rehabilitation Authority has still not been set up. The National Planning Commission (NPC) finished its job of completing a needs assessment report and recommending the independent reconstruction agency in order to reassure donors, but things haven't moved after that. We hear from inside sources that everyone is waiting for the constitution to pave the way for a new government of national unity. By then it may be too late for many.

In its absence of a rehabilitation agency, there is much confusion about rebuilding grants. The Home Ministry, Ministry of Finance, the NPC and the Ministry of Local Development all have different takes on the proposed Rs 200,000. Will the Rs 15,000 emergency help be deducted from it? What if families have already rebuilt their homes? Will they still get the grant? How is it going to be disbursed and what documentation is required? Some district administrators have been warning volunteer groups not to rebuild any homes without their permission, otherwise, the families will not get their reconstruction grants.

A government is supposed to be there to help, not hinder. The state is supposed to protect, not torment. The administrative machinery should be geared to make things easier for earthquake survivors, not force an already beleaguered people to jump through hoops.

## YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

### 15 YEARS

What did the Magars, Rais, Limbus and Gurungs get from the horrible People's War? Nothing ('15 year timeline', #767). There is not a single trustworthy leader in Nepal. We are foolish to let these people remain in power.

Geeta Rai



■ May there be many more moments like Sagar Thapa's goal on 5 December 2011.

Mike Elliott

■ Congratulations to Nepali Times... loved when you first published in 2000 and still a fan!

Cathy Grogan

■ Congratulations to the entire Nepali Times team and editor Kunda

Dixit, and also for the useful interactive timeline of 15 years of Nepali history. You have displayed independence, courage and done with a light touch.

JG

### INTERESTING TIMES

All Nepalis are aware that our leaders are the most corrupt segments of the society. It's foolish to continue with the same losers who have been running the government for the last 25 years ('Interesting times', Editorial, #767). The NC is one of the worst. When BP Koirala died, half of the ethics and morals of the party died. When Ganesh Man Singh and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai died, it lost what remained of its ethics. Do not expect the NC leaders to serve the poor. Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai keeps talking about a New Force. Dr Bhattarai, the time for talking is gone, it's the time to do something.

Pramod Thapa

### COVERING THE MAOISTS

The Maoist downfall started because of themselves. ('Covering the Maoists, Deepak Thapa, #767). Mohan Baidya and CP Gajurel left Puspa Kamal Dahal because he betrayed them and the Maoist ideology. Netra Bikram Chand then

split from the Baidya group. Dahal also betrayed the Madhesi leaders, prompting them to split from the UCPN (M)-led alliance. Now Baburam Bhattarai is likely to quit the party, and he should as soon as possible. There will be no more Maoists left and that is best news the Nepalis will ever get to hear.

Jagat BK

■ My grand-parents fought the Ranas. My parents fought the Shah Kings. Today, I am fighting the NC and the UML (The Maoists are so disgraced that they will destroy themselves). To those in charge, we will not tolerate your abuse any more ('The constitution as if the people mattered', Anurag Acharya, #767). We will not let you steal our wealth anymore. Be warned, leaders of today, you cannot spill the blood of innocent Nepalis and not face consequences. You are nothing but cowards to attack unarmed women and men.

Rishi Pandey

### PARASITIC PARASTATALS

It's not a loss, it's a loot (Parasitic parastatals, Om Astha Rai, #767). Politicians have stolen billions. How do you think beggars became billionaires? We should force these evil netas to pay back every single rupee that they stole. Until they are there, the Nepalis

will continue to live in abject poverty and misery.

Hem Bahadur Thapa

### THE WOMAN IN GOLD

I loved Woman in Gold. Helen Mirren played Maria Altmann so beautifully. And what an important historical tale, as the excellent film critic from the Nepali Times points out ('The woman in gold, Sophia Pande, #767'). It is interesting to compare the characters and history as portrayed in Woman in Gold with the real characters and the real history, as shown in the Stealing Klimt documentary on which Woman in Gold was based.

Hugo Aspinall

### LOSING OUR YOUTH

Education is hopelessly old fashioned in Nepal ('Losing our youth', Tsering Dolker Gurung, #767). There is no creativity or love for study. So all they get is a military drill and medieval black pedagogies. Just going abroad is no solution at all. I was surprised to see the entire country in stress and nervous breakdown with higher rate of suicide and more depression. There is no faith in the self and this can only be restored by a Maoist government.

Marjolijn

Times

## THIS WEEK

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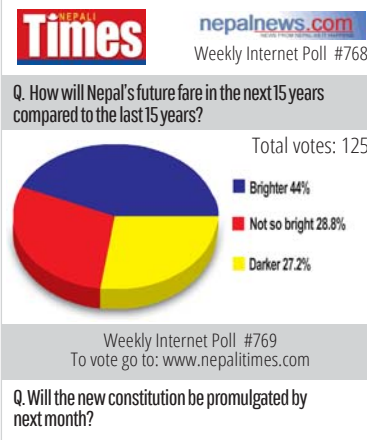


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Mystical Monsoon in the monsoon by Stéphane Huët (22 shares)

**Most popular on Twitter**  
15 year timeline by Om Astha Rai and Ayesha Shakyia (39 retweets, 33 favourites)

**Most visited online page**  
Losing our young by Tsering Dolker Gurung (929 views)

**Most commented**  
The constitution as if the people mattered by Anurag Acharya (16 comments)



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# Get over it, already

Bureaucratic failure has nothing to do with nationalism or the level of loyalty individuals have to their country

The latest amendment to the Civil Service Act has made a national hero of the Minister for General Administration Lal Babu Pandit. The media and citizenry are vigorously applauding the amendment, which seeks to

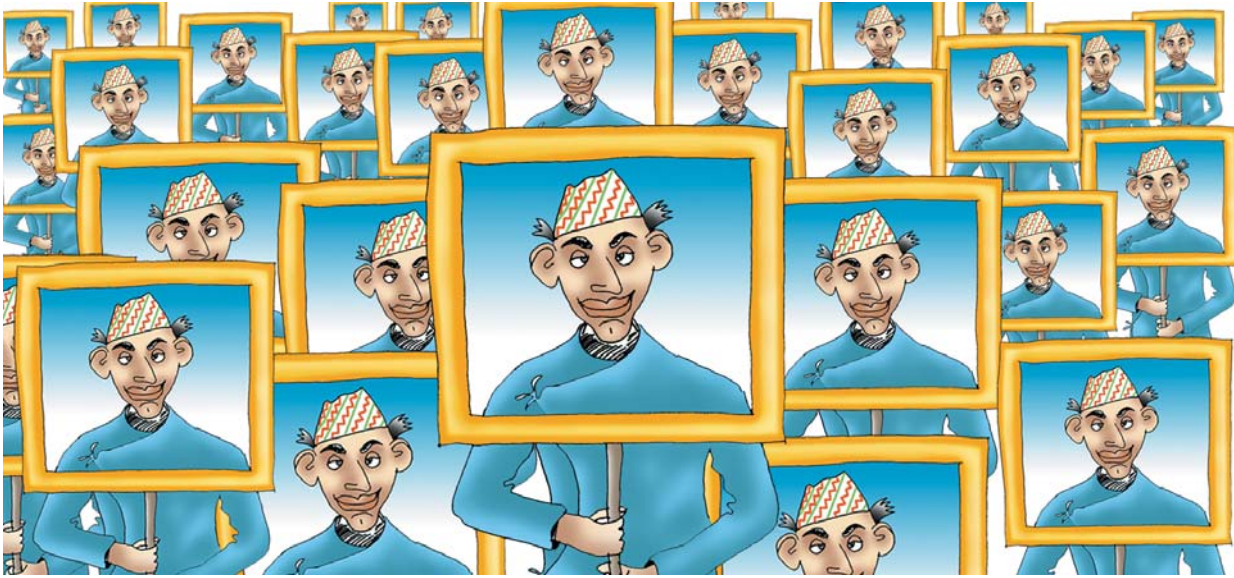


**ONE TO MANY**  
Bidushi Dhungel

ostracise, shame and cut off civil servants who hold permanent ties to a state other than Nepal. It may be 'anti-national' to think so, but Minister Pandit clearly has his urgencies in a jumble in a bid for cheap popularity.

Then again, considering the twisted priorities of this government, it is no wonder that the Ministry of General Administration, the state machinery and media have identified 1,100 or so civil servants who have US Green Cards and Permanent Residency status in other Western countries as the greatest enemies of the state. Even more so than the patriotic political leaders each taking turns for a quick visit to Delhi to, well, clear their minds, I suppose?

Clearly, the "traitors" (Pandit's



KUNDA DIXIT

words) with Green Cards and PR must be duly punished. Even those who are retired, have already paid their dues to the state, must not be spared the luxury of spending old age with their children in the US or Australia. No, they must, as good Nepalis, stay 'true' to the country that gave them their *dal* and *bhat* for so many years, even if it means living alone with nothing but the Rs 20,000 per month pension they receive. Evidently, where they live is more important than how much tax they have paid or how much corruption they have engaged in.

In reality, at the root of this new Civil Service Act amendment are the monolithic experiences

and aspirations of a small section of Nepalis, and the Act amendment is just an example of the jingoism which drives such outdated legal provisions. The problem with Nepal's civil service is not that civil servants hold Green Cards and ergo aren't loyal to the country, but rather that work time efficiency is lacking due to the utter absence of accountability.

In fact, if it weren't already glaringly obvious, bureaucratic failure has nothing to do with nationalism or the level of loyalty individuals have to their country. Civil servants in any nation have job descriptions according to the rank and institution they are associated with. The 'what

success in the job looks like' is defined, dare I say it, not by their internal allegiances to the Nepali state, its culture and beauty, but by their abilities to get what is in their job description done in a timely and efficient manner.

Minister Pandit must be wondering why the majority of prosperous countries don't have the same kinds of ludicrous provisions as he has brought into effect. Oh, but then again, they are 'Western', so what do they know? Surely, the UK's tolerance of multiple citizenships and freedom for even commonwealth citizens to hold some UK civil service positions, for example, are preposterous ideas borne of utter stupidity, sure to compromise the

country's sovereignty?

Why would one want to broaden the state's pool of knowledge, experience and expertise when one could continue to narrow it by the day? The custodians of Nepaliness would, it seems, rather lose out on tangible gains (both economic and social) than broaden the (intangible) definition of what it means to be Nepali.

In fact, if we are all to be good Nepalis, going by this state's idealisms, we should all be men who practice Hinduism, never leave the country (unless on state expense for training programs, because that is patriotic), and viciously criticise all things 'Western'. After all, that is the narrow vision of the nationalism of this government: a blanket, yet persistently contradictory nationalism that doesn't consider the nuances and multiple truths of Nepali society. We see it being practiced from the Civil Service Amendment Bill to the citizenship provisions in the draft constitution and the reluctance to make provisions for a more culturally and ethnically inclusive Nepal.

Nepal desperately needs to move on beyond the obsession with nationalism and the tendency to associate every issue, every person and event with their implications for sovereignty and loyalty to the country. It's doing us absolutely no good. ❏

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# The high life

The earthquake hasn't deterred families living in tall apartments from living there

**SAHINA SHRESTHA**

Seismologists had predicted that the first structures to collapse in a big earthquake in Kathmandu would be the new highrise apartments. They would not be able to withstand the shaking and the danger of liquefaction, was the general refrain.

As it turned out, while temples and ancient monuments crumbled and brick clay mortar homes collapsed, none of the new highrises came down. A few were badly damaged, others developed cracks, but most of Kathmandu's tall apartments were intact and some of its residents are not moving out.

Some, like retired Brigadier General Keshar B Bhandari (*pic, right*) has decided to stay put in his eighth floor apartment at Ambe Residency in Chabahil. Every room in the flat offers a glorious view of Pashupatinath temple, and on a clear day one see right across the Valley and the snow peaks beyond from the balcony.

"Very few families in the building moved out after the earthquake, and even those who did, returned," says Bhandari. Families in the first three floors are waiting for maintenance to be completed before they come back.

For the Bhandari family, the view is not the only attraction. Apartments offer better facilities, security and privacy. The buildings are also better engineered than some of the shoddy blocks that flout the building codes. Which is why he decided to rent out his house and move into his high rise apartment.

When the earthquake struck

on 25 April, the first three floors of the two towers sustained moderate cracks on the walls but Bhandari's apartment was unscathed. After an assessment confirmed the structure, columns and beams looked fine, most of the families in the two towers moved to the lobby for a few days and then back up to their flats despite the aftershocks.

The Bhandaris have no intention of moving out of their top floor apartment any time soon, "We feel safe here, and there is hardly anything to worry about," says the retired army officer.

Nita Karki, 49, has been living on the seventh floor at Sunrise Apartment in Dhobighat for the past five years. She returned to her apartment a week after the earthquake because she felt safer there. "When I came back there was no one else in the building but now up to 40 families have returned," she says.

After the earthquake the 12-storey building was given a yellow sticker by the government's assessment team, but Karki who lives with her husband, son and daughter-in-law, says the cracks were not structural.

"A few cracks here and there is normal when an earthquake happens," says a sanguine Karki. "The main thing is that the building did not collapse and no one was hurt." Now, there are other families who have never lived in high rises before who want to rent and buy flats in the apartment building. That is why Abiral Pant, 24 isn't too worried about finding tenants for his family's apartment at Imperial Court in Sanepa.

The family bought the apartment on the fifth floor of the 17-storey building two years ago



and was setting it up when the earthquake struck. Now even his parents want to move in.

At Sterling Apartment in Jhamsikhel where most owners had rented out flats to expats, the tenants have moved out. But there is such a shortage of housing in Kathmandu now that there are plenty of others who want to take their place.

To be sure, there are apartments with red stickers where residents are still not allowed to return. Few are being repaired and still wear a deserted look. And some families are still spooked.

Anjela Baidya's family moved

out of their sixth floor apartment in Metro Apartments in Kuleswor after the earthquake. They are now living in their house in Jawalakhel. The Baidyas had been away at Hetauda when the earthquake happened. They returned to their flat to find the floor covered in shattered glass and the dog cowering under a table. Their fifth floor flat in Oriental Apartment Phase II suffered more damages.

Bishwadeep Aryal of Roadshow Real Estate says there is no reason for the people to be deterred from living in the high rises provided the builders pay special attention to safety. "Given

the rapid population growth in the Valley, going vertical is the only way to accommodate more people in less space," he says.

Roadshow's Bhatbhateni Apartment was one of the six high rises to be given a green sticker, but he says its understandable that people are a little hesitant to invest in apartments right now. But he expects demand to pick up.

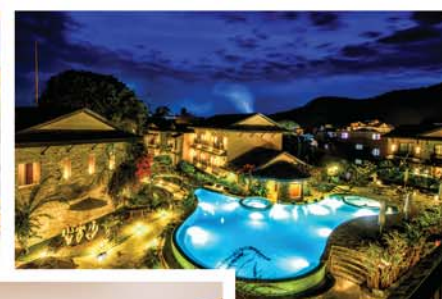
He adds: "Although we haven't officially opened bookings for the second phase of Bhatbhateni Apartments, none of the people who had expressed their interest before the earthquake have backed down." 🇳🇵



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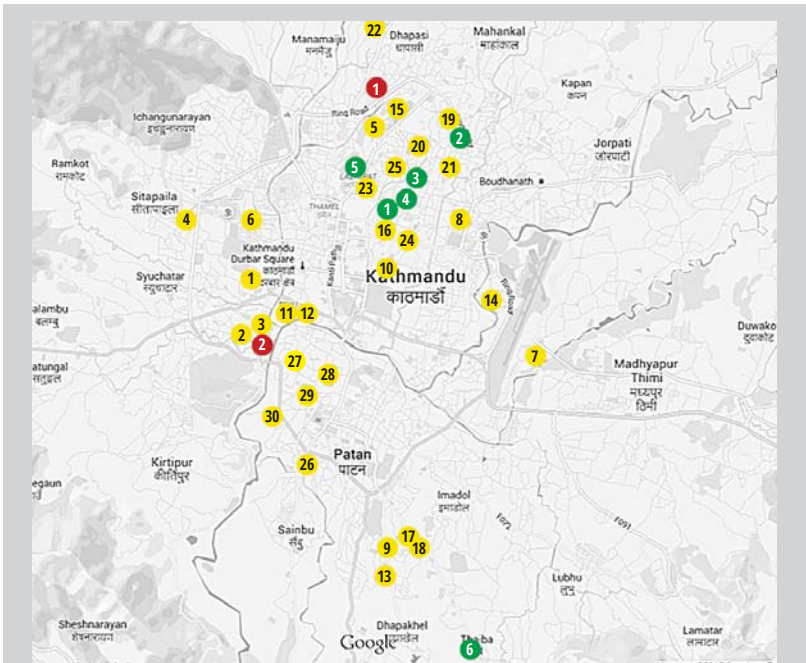
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## GREEN FOR GO

### RED

- 1 Park View Horizon Apartment, Dhapasi
- 2 Kuleswor Apartment, Oriental phase II, Kuleswor

### YELLOW

- 1 Kalash Apartment, Tahachal
- 2 Metro Apartment, Kuleswor
- 3 Kuleswor Apartment, Oriental Phase I, Kuleswor
- 4 TCH Tower 4, Sitapaila
- 5 TCH Tower 3, Panipokhari
- 6 Retreat Apartment, Bijeswori
- 7 Suncity Apartment, Gothatar
- 8 Ambe residence, Chabahil
- 9 Downtown Apartment, Dhapasi
- 10 Silvercity Apartment, Kalikasthan
- 11 Signature Apartment-I, Teku
- 12 Signature Apartment-II, Teku
- 13 Civil Apartment, Dhapakhel
- 14 Guna Colony Apartment, Sinamangal
- 15 LLP Apartment, Panipokhari
- 16 Vibor Apartment, Kamalpokhari

- 17 Cityscape Apartment "Club House", Hattiban
- 18 Cityscape Apartment "Block B", Hattiban
- 19 Prestige Apartment, Chandole
- 20 Central Park Apartment, Bishalnagar
- 21 Grande Apartment, Dhumbarahi
- 22 Grande Tower, Tokha, Greenland
- 23 L.P. Apartment (Guna), Lazimpat
- 24 K.L Apartment, Sano Gaucharan
- 25 Binayak Apartments, Baluwatar
- 26 Sunrise Apartment, Nakhu
- 27 Imperial Court Apartment, Sanepa
- 28 City View Apartment, Bakhundole
- 29 Mercury/Sterling Apartments, Tadodhunga
- 30 Sunrise Tower 1,2,3,4, Dhobighat

### GREEN

- 1 Egrace Apartment, Naxal
- 2 Dhumbarahi Apartment (Oriental), Bishalnagar
- 3 Bhatbhateni Apartment, Bhatbhateni
- 4 Indreni Apartment, Bhatbhateni
- 5 Comfort Housing (TCH Tower), Lazimpat
- 6 Southern Height Apartment, Thaiba

(SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING CONSTRUCTION)

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### Into the finals

Lemon Pvt Ltd's ad campaign Dabur Nepal's Real School of Nepal has made it to the final round of Adstars Korea. The finals are scheduled for 20-22 August in Busan, Korea.

### It's in the budget

Gionee is all set to introduce a new budget smartphone, the Gionee Pioneer P2M in Nepal. The Pioneer P2M is a dual-SIM model with 4 inch WVGA display, 3000 mAh battery, 5MP rear camera and 16 GB internal storage. It is powered by a quad-core 1.3GHz CPU and operates on Amigo 3.0 OS. The price is set at Rs 9,999.



### New GM

Dr Sandip Shah has been appointed the new General Manager of Himal Power as of 17 July. Shah is also the Country Director of Statkraft Nepal.



### For women

Himalayan Bank has launched HBL-Nari Bachat account. The product aimed at women provides attractive interest rates and rebate on various banking service charges. The account holders also receive free privilege card and special discounts at Saleways Supermarket.



### Blood donation

The Birganj chapter of Roundtable Nepal organised a blood donation program on 21 July at Tewadewal Dharamshala. The campaign was organised in association with Blood Bank, Birgnj.



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# Disaster geopolitics

The devastating flood of 1954 first exposed Nepal to the geopolitics of natural disasters

SHARAD GHIMIRE and  
TOM ROBERTSON

Sixty monsoons ago, in late July and August 1954, devastating floods swept through central and eastern Nepal. The disaster did not just leave a trail of death and destruction, but also reconfigured Nepal’s political terrain.

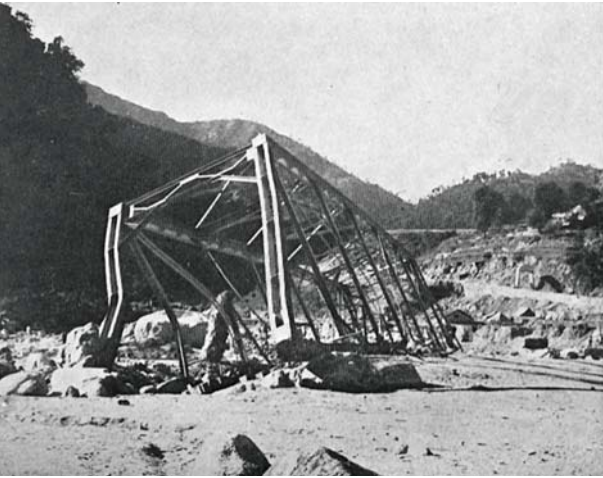
Undermining the legitimacy of the coalition government then in power, the floods aided King Mahendra’s rise to power. They also ushered in an era of politically-driven Cold War foreign aid.

Environmental history and political history in Nepal often go hand in hand.

The floods arrived in two waves, first in the last week of July and then a month later, wreaking havoc in the Gandaki, Bagmati, and Kosi watersheds. Hundreds of villages were swept away and inundated. Over 1,000 people perished and 25,000 families lost their homes. Fields were washed away, trails, wells, and bridges destroyed. A US report spoke of ‘destruction of disaster proportions’.

At the time, the Himalayan political landscape was also being remade. India had cast off British rule in 1947, and in 1950 Mao Zedong moved into Tibet. Nepal was in a state of flux: the 1951 revolution removed the Ranas and politics was shaky as the new parties, the monarchy and Rana figures wrestled for influence. Six months before the floods, an ailing King Tribhuvan dissolved MP Koirala’s government, leading to a precarious all-party ruling coalition.

In stark contrast to the



1934 earthquake that flattened Kathmandu, Nepal’s government sent out a worldwide appeal for help in 1954. A new player in the region, the United States, answered the call. Because of events in Tibet, Korea, and Vietnam, the US was concerned about spreading communist influence, including in Nepal.

US Ambassador to India and Nepal Chester Bowles wrote in 1952: ‘The invasion of Tibet by Chinese Communists and the activities of the Government of India in maintaining neutrality in the world conflict with Communism, have catapulted Nepal into the frontline of the cold war.’ A 1954 US document described Nepal as ‘the most vulnerable of the South Asian countries’.

Despite this, American development programs, having started only in 1952, were very modest agriculture, community development, public health, and mineral surveying projects. The emphasis, according to one US document, was ‘to spend little at this stage on equipment or in financing large projects’. State Department higher ups worried

about provoking Chinese involvement and annoying India, which wished to oversee Nepal’s external relations.

“Great care,” a US official explained, “is always necessary in order not to generate friction with India.” Such a limited effort displeased Paul Rose, the director of US programs in Nepal. Rose’s multiple requests to Washington for more dollars and technicians were repeatedly turned down.

The 1954 floods changed all that, as humanitarian assistance provided political cover with both India and China. At the same time, Rose knew how to convince Washington, stressing in internal documents how flood relief programs would create ‘significant favorable political impact’. In late 1954, the US announced a \$2 million relief package. A new era -- with some parallels to today’s post-quake situation -- had begun.

Early relief efforts exposed the Nepali government’s failings. An American disaster expert complained that Nepal’s cabinet seemed ‘lost’ and had ‘no idea as to what actions to



**60 YEARS AGO:** A bridge destroyed in the 1954 floods (/left) Dil Bahadur Chhetri and his family in Rodi Gaon were resettled in Chitwan after their holdings in Tanahu were destroyed in a landslide.

take’. Perhaps this was imperial condescension, or perhaps justified frustration.

The visiting official also lamented a problem that seems all too familiar today: ‘The almost total lack of local governmental mechanisms to administer relief’. Kathmandu lacked not only the capacity to help ordinary people, but also the very idea of helping. The US observer decried the ‘utter inexperience of government officials in the concept that effective action can be taken by government to meet an emergency’. Sadly, similar critiques are still common 60 years later.

It was not just outsiders who criticised the government’s flood response. So did opposition leader BP Koirala and powerful figures within the ruling coalition such as Tanka Acharya and Balchandra Sharma. An already unstable coalition slide


closer to collapse.

One beneficiary was King Mahendra. A few months later, in March 1955, as his father lay on his deathbed in a Swiss hospital, Mahendra terminated the national assembly and dissolved the cabinet, seizing direct control. He would give up power in 1956, only to seize it permanently in 1960.

Meanwhile, the US relief program developed into what another observer called ‘America’s prestige effort in Nepal’: a malaria eradication, road-building, and resettlement program in Chitwan’s Rapti Valley that set off three decades of often flawed aid from competing Cold War powers. Although the Rapti project was successful in some ways (many landless farmers received land, the road to Bharatpur was built, and malaria eradicated) it also suffered from deep problems: elite capture, environmental degradation, and the dispossession of many indigenous Tharu.


These problems arose, it’s worth stressing, not because of lack of effort to distribute benefits equitably but because even though outside planners and government officials thought they understood Nepal’s complex social and environmental context, they actually didn’t. Delivering relief and development fairly turned out to be far more difficult and complicated than anyone envisioned. 🇳🇵

*Sharad Ghimire is a graduate student of global environmental policy at American University, Washington, DC and Tom Robertson teaches environmental history at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts.*




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# AIR TIME IN THE THIN AIR

The most beautiful radio station in the world needs help

STÉPHANE HUËT  
in MUSTANG

In 2010 Kul Bahadur Thakali, an engineer from Jomsom, suddenly came up with the idea of setting up a community radio in his hometown in the trans-Himalayan district of Mustang. Every district in Nepal had one, but not up there.

With Kedar Singh Thapa he founded the rather grandiosely named Rural Information and Technology Development Centre with the intention of broadcasting local content to the people of Mustang.

“We noticed that there was no news going out of Mustang, and little going in,” says Thakali. “We wanted to provide local information focusing on agriculture and health and also tell people about what was going on in the rest of Nepal and the world.”

The two invested their own money and started transmitting from a tiny room in Jomsom, and soon had a loyal listenership. It proved that there was hunger for information about local affairs and the station needed to upgrade its content and transmission capacity.

That was when the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Kathmandu got interested and provided assistance through the Seoul-based radio station, Munhwa Broadcasting Cooperative.



PICS: OPHELIE BELIN



It took nearly two years to set up the Mustang Broadcasting Community (MBC) with a modern new building designed by the South Korean agency Archium. Made of locally available material, the building is well integrated with Jomsom town and landscape, (pictured, above) and has been dubbed ‘the most beautiful radio station in the world’.

Inside, the radio station is even more

striking, with its high quality material, state-of-the-art studio and a conference hall. The double-glazed glass keeps out the sound and insulates the interior, while giving a panoramic view of the scenery outside.

Thakali, who isn’t a media professional wasn’t expecting such a high-tech station. “I didn’t think of it even in my craziest dreams,” he laughs. “We just wanted a radio that could cover all of Mustang.”

Thakali feels his challenge now is to put the equipment and facilities to good use. MBC broadcasts in Nepali only from 6am to 11am and from 3pm to 10pm. “We have a beautiful building and great material but we would like to have more staff,” Thakali told us recently. “But we need money to hire them.”

Radio journalists from Pokhara come to work for short periods at MBC but never stay long as the radio cannot pay high salaries. Station manager Sabita Pun (pictured, top) is the only full-time staff, with an anchor and two technicians working part-time. One of the problems has been power supply for the transmission mast located in Dhakarjung. Thapa says the station is trying to hook up the 1kW transmitter to solar or wind power since the grid is so erratic.

Sustaining the station and making it economically viable is the biggest challenge for Thakali and Thapa. KOICA did think of this and set up a restaurant and trek camping site sponsored by the outdoor company, Lafuma. But neither are operational yet. The hall is also available for rent, but there have been no takers so far.

MBC has a great potential and its two founders know it, and they haven’t given up. Thakali plans to visit other community radio stations to see how they manage. He says: “I’m sure we will find a working model that we can adopt.” 🇳🇵

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HONDA



EVENTS



**Nakhipot Urban XC,**  
A 4.35km trail race in Nakhipot, open to all.  
*Registration deadline: 1 August, 8 August, 7am, Nakhipot basketball court, 98020915 95, 9803661496*

**Zumba Marathon,**  
Jasmine Fitness Club & Spa celebrates its 7th anniversary organising the Monsoon Zumba Marathon. Members as well as non-members are welcome.  
*24 July, 5pm to 8pm, UWTC, 4th Floor, Tripureswor, (01)4117115, (01)4117120, info@jasminefitnessclub.com*

**Hugs as relief,**  
Resuming the coffee, café & wine sessions, Kar.Ma Coffee invites Tania Alice, performance artist to spread positive energy with hugs that she personally collected in Rio as a form of relief.  
*24 July, 3.30pm to 7pm, Kar.Ma Coffee, Gyan Mandala, 9843767232, birgit@madeinnepal.com*

**Critical mass,**  
A monthly meet up of cyclists who go on a ride. Their purpose: reclaim the streets.  
*31 July, 5.30PM, Basantapur Darbar Square*



**Run Nagarkot,**  
A fun 18k charity run to raise funds for rebuilding of quake-damaged Baluwapati Secondary School in Kavre. Route will go from Nagarkot to Dhulikhel.  
*Rs 600 for Nepalis and Rs 800 for foreigners, 1 August, 7am to 11am, Nagarkot, 9851192617, for registration www.ultratrailkathmandu.com*

**Lato Mato,**  
Set in eastern Nepal, Lato Mato is a tale of four porters and their struggle to make ends meet. Directed by Kiran Chamling Rai and adapted by Yuvraj Ghimire.  
*Till 3 August, 5.15pm, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, (01)4469621, shilpeetheatre@gmail.com. www.shilpee.org*

**Think and talk,**  
Suresh Poudel, a doctoral student in Comparative Genomics at the University of Tennessee will talk on Proteomics Data Analysis.  
*24 July, 3pm to 5pm, Kantipur Valley College, Kumaripati, info@talkbiotech.org, www.talkbiotech.org*

**Bring back the jazz,**  
Experience the energy of the jazz ballroom of the 40s and 50s with live music, food and beverages.  
*24 July, 7pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, (01)5528362, mokshlive@hotmail.com*

DINING



**Chopstix,**  
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**Magic Beans,**  
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*Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, (01)4230914*



**Aalishan,**  
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*Jhamsikhel, (01)5542032*

**Valentine night,**  
A free rose and a free glass of hot mulled wine followed by a free Irish coffee on Valentine's Day in a balloon-filled dining room.  
*14 February, K-too Beer and Steakhouse, Thamel, (01)4700043.*

**Chez Caroline,**  
Authentic ambience, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more.  
*Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070*



**Alice Restaurant,**  
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*Gairidhara, (01)4429207*

MUSIC



**Acoustic duet,**  
Axata Singh and Mahesh join for a special acoustic evening of music.  
*24 July, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172*

**Plebeian live,**  
Feel the groove with the Nep-Indie band Plebeian.  
*24 July, 7.30pm, Irish Pub, Lajimpat, (01)4416027*

**What The Funk,**  
Kathmandu's funk band is back for another groovy night.  
*25 July, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172*

**Back to the future,**  
Brace yourself for a futuristic night and dance to the top hits till the year 2000.  
*Rs500, 25 July, 9pm, Club 25 Hours, Tangal, (01)4437486*

**Himalayan glory,**  
Ready to bang some heads? UgraKarma, Plague Throat, Binaash, Kaal and Vomiting Snake live under one roof.  
*25 July, 12pm to 6pm, Purple Haze, Thamel*



**Metal for Nepal,**  
A fund raiser concert with metals bands for the beneficiary of the earthquake victims.  
*Rs300, 15 August, 2pm, Club 25 Hours, Tangal, (01)4437486*

**Jazz Day,**  
KJC in association with the US Embassy and UNESCO Nepal celebrates International Jazz Day 2015 with a series of free concerts.  
*30 July, 6pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, sunita@katjazz.com.np, www.katjazz.com.np*

GETAWAYS

**Fulbari Resort,**  
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**Monsoon Madness,**  
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*Rs 5555 per person, Pokhara, (61)462222*

**Himalayan Wellness Centre,**  
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**Grand Norling Hotel,**  
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*Gokarna, (01)4910193*



**Mum's Garden Resort,**  
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DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

# Versatile versifier

Just before the earthquake struck on 25 April, Kathmandu's pre-eminent diplomat poet, Abhay Kumar, had launched his collection of Nepali poems, *Jatra*.

After the earthquake, like hundreds of thousands of other Nepalis, Kumar also became a kind of victim of the disaster. He was about to leave Kathmandu after a three-year posting at the Indian Embassy for the High Commission in London, but was told to stay on to handle the massive Indian relief campaign and media presence.

Kumar's earlier collection of poems, *Seduction of Delhi* is in English and has short verses that evoke the unique ambience of the vast and historic capital of India. Ever since that book came out, Kumar's many fans in Nepal had prodded him to public a similar collection of his Nepali poetry. Kumar not only did that with *Jatra*, but also got it translated into Nepali. Being from Bihar himself,

Kumar says he has an affinity for the culture and languages of Nepal which has allowed him to observe and versify about what he has seen and experienced in Nepal. One would think that his creativity is now turning to how Nepal and the Nepali people have coped with the earthquake and he is penning those lines even as we speak.

*Jatra* has 69 poems about

Kathmandu's unique architectural heritage sites which were badly damaged in the earthquake, vignettes of various parts of Nepal and poetry profiles of noted personalities. The observations are sharp, the words bring

out the sounds and images of a Nepal in the throes of social and political churning. These translated lines from the poem 'Bagmati' are an example:

*I am lost in the dirty detritus of civilization  
In its darkness  
Who will clean the waters  
And pull me out of the piled up*



*sins of the past  
And free me?*

The poem titled 'B P Koirala' is an example of the versatility of Kumar's verse:

*Socialism hasn't yet inspired the world*

*Multi-party democracy hasn't yet struck roots*

*My mission isn't done, it isn't finished*

*The war of independence and the struggle for democracy*

These words were translated from English into Nepali by journalist Kishore Nepal, and have been converted back into English here. While a lot of the depth may have been lost in the double translation, Kumar's words are incisive, sometimes even satirical, and give us a perspective that is different, yet one we can see from up close.

Kumar has said he became a poet and diplomat somewhat simultaneously while posted in Moscow. "Poetry needs the mind to be pure and unburdened and creativity thrives when there is a coming together of different cultures. Russia with its rich literary tradition was an ideal setting to hone my poetry," he says. 🇳🇵

# The Ship

The Ship Restaauraant and Bar in Thamel has the potential to become the next Nanglo. Operative word: 'potential'. While Thamel conjures up trendy and hip places, The Ship is a neat little house tucked away in the northern most outposts of the tourist area and has quite the Jhamel vibe to it.

After hearing much about it and seeing its place at #2 on Trip Advisors 'Best Restaurants' of Kathmandu list, we headed out to explore and have a quiet dinner. We were curious to find out if it lived up to its reputation.

The menu did not quite reflect the promise shown by the tastefully-decorated interior, and had your average Continental, Indian and Chinese cuisines. But we quickly dove in and ordered Mushroom Bruschetta (Rs 280), Sausage Wrapped in Bacon (Rs 330),and Cheese Balls (Rs 260) for appetisers. Out of these, the cheese was fluffy and light and melted readily in the mouth at first bite. The Bruschetta on the other hand had the perfect toppings, but was



PICS: KARMA GURUNG

placed on top of regular bread which didn't quite work.

To take some heat off a stuffy monsoon evening, all of us decided to have fruit smoothies (Rs 190), which had only a hint of fruit and tasted much like your average Lassi.

Because we were so full with the appetisers, all of us decided to share our mains between Grilled Chicken (Rs 550) and Pork Chops (Rs 550). Between the two, the chicken was cost-effective and fulfilled its promise. With large proportions, the dish also had sides of sautéed veggies that were cooked to perfection and fries that could have been a tad slimmer but were a mouthful. The chicken was tender, crisp on the outside, and was juicy enough to go along with the pepper sauce.

Even though we were getting stuffed, we decided to go for the Apple Crumble (Rs 290) for desert, and immediately discovered it wasn't such a good idea. The crumble was deconstructed and finely presented, but the use of packaged yellow custard was a bit of a letdown.

What The Ship lacks in culinary excellence, it more than makes



up for with its personal service and modern décor. Each table is equipped with a bell to call for a waiter just like in a government office. One can imagine why, given the vast seating arrangement right up from its rooftop, down to the

second floor where there are personal cabins for bigger dining groups, and the ground floor with its bar.

If you are looking for a cosy place to conduct your next business meeting or just hang out, without very high gastronomic expectations, we recommend you try out this place. 🇳🇵

Karma Gurung

*How to get there: The Ship is located on the left side of the galli leading to Thamel from Lainchaur (the back of Hotel Malla).*

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# PROTECTING THE RUINS

The earthquake has raised fresh fears of a surge in theft of Kathmandu's religious objects





PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

## SARTHAK MANI SHARMA

Looters prowl as Nepal's treasures spill into view' reads the headline of a recent wire service dispatch from Kathmandu. Photographs accompanying other stories in the international press show stone sculptures and carved wooden beams scattered amidst the ruins of temples.

Nepal's religious objects started disappearing decades ago, with the peak of thefts happening in the 1980s. However, the April

earthquake which brought down many temples in the historical towns of Kathmandu Valley has raised fresh fears of theft.

Some experts have estimated that up to 90 per cent of the antiquities from Kathmandu Valley may have been stolen over the past 50 years. The only reason there were fewer reports of thefts, they said, was that there was very little left to steal.

Yet, just weeks before the earthquake a New York art dealer sold three ancient sculptures stolen from temples in India and Nepal to a dealer in Beijing.

One of the sculptures was a 13th century gilt bronze sculpture of a Buddhist deity Samvara stolen from a temple in Itumbaha in 1983. The image was sold for \$370,000.

"Although there hasn't been any major theft or disappearance of our artifacts, the situation is serious," said Shriju Pradhan who is Chief of Heritage Conservation of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC). "We are facing difficulties in salvaging and storing artifacts from the ruins of temples."

In the immediate aftermath of



**IN RUINS:** Carved wooden columns from the destroyed temples of Patan Darbar Square after they were salvaged and stored for safekeeping at Patan Museum two weeks after the earthquake.

the earthquake, local volunteers, *guthis* and youth groups salvaged what they could of the fallen carved beams, bronze figures of kings that had toppled off pedestals, and stone deities and stored them for safe-keeping. However, some of the objects were either stolen or destroyed during salvage operations.

"The best way to ensure that our sacred idols are safe is to instill a sense of awareness and belonging in local people," said Pradhan who hopes that as people recover from the aftermath of the earthquake, their attention will turn to heritage conservation.

Donna Yates of the University of Glasgow who was in Kathmandu to discuss the smuggling of antiquities offers examples of how the media tends to distort the plunder of historical objects. From the coverage of the destruction of ancient sites in Iraq and Syria by ISIS, Yates said, it would seem that the loot of antiquities occurs only in times of upheaval.

"But it is a long-standing problem everywhere, and it is crucial that everybody understands that sacred art needs to be seen as 'sacred' or 'ancient' rather than just 'art'," she said at a recent talk co-organised by KMC.

Countries from which antiquities are trafficked, or 'source countries' as they are known, are often developing nations like Nepal. Heavy paperwork is needed for rare antiquities to pass legally through international borders, and this is possible because of corrupt officials as well as collusion of international art dealers and museums abroad. Bishnu Raj Karki, former Director General of the Department of Archaeology, said even members of the diplomatic community have been known to be involved.

Unique to Nepal probably is the problem of documentation. The Department of Archaeology does not have a reliable inventory of religious artifacts which means repatriation of stolen idols is difficult because there is often no proof of where the objects used to be.

Except for books by Jurgen Schick, a researcher of stolen Nepali idols and Lain Singh Bangdel, an art historian, there is very little documentation of our artifacts. Photography is banned inside many temples in Nepal, which makes documentation even more difficult.

"One click of a smartphone's camera can go a long way in ensuring that an idol is repatriated should it be stolen," said Alok Tuladhar, a heritage documentarian. "Smartphones also come with a geo-location system which can tell where the photograph was taken."



**REBUILDING OURSELVES**

Saving our cultural and religious treasures will be most challenging in the historical towns on the city's outskirts like Sankhu and Bungamati that

were heavily damaged. But it doesn't have to be an impossible task, as the salvage work at Patan Durbar Square showed.

Rohit Ranjitkar of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust along with local volunteers helped rescue many of the fallen items from the ruins after the earthquake. He said: "Because all of us in the community sprang to action we've been able to salvage and store all the important artifacts." 📸

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

■ Monumental loss #756  
■ In the land of gods, thieves have a field day #63





# BELLE

At first I was a bit hesitant to write about Belle a period drama from 2013 that is gorgeous and entrancing in its attention to period details, with



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

an ensemble cast to match, but strays quite liberally from the life of the main character whom it is trying to depict.

Dido Elizabeth Belle (played by the very beautiful Gugu Mbatha-Raw) was born illegitimately from a black West Indian mother and Captain Sir

John Lindsay (Matthew Goode), the nephew of William Murray (Tom Wilkinson), the Lord Chief Justice of England in the late 18th century and the 1st Earl of Mansfield. Very little is known about her real life – aside from the extraordinary fact that her father, once he located her after her mother’s death, placed her in the hands of his uncle, who brought her up side by side with his other legitimate niece, Lady Elizabeth Murray (Sarah Gadon). The film itself is inspired by a portrait of the two young women side by side, commissioned by their grand uncle William.

As Dido grows and blossoms, her family are confronted with the almost ubiquitous prejudices that she will face from “genteel” society, who cannot even look at her, refined and charming as she is, without sneering. Meanwhile, in this mostly fictionalised account of her life, her cousin Elizabeth is seen as the epitome of an English rose, even while

Dido is as beautiful and clearly the brainier of the two. Things start to become slightly more complicated between the two girls, who are very close, when Dido inherits a very significant annual income from her late father while Elizabeth remains penniless, disinherited by a disinterested father who has left her for his new wife and younger son. It is with the news of this inheritance that Dido finally begins to gain notice in society, a development that quickly exposes the venality of upper-crust English society at the time.

Dido struggles through humiliations and quickly become caught up in the politics of slavery, reading her grand uncle’s law briefs and extrapolating essential information that helps to swing a crucial case against those who would ship in slaves in the worst conditions.

This is one of those films that is made with great care and even while it may err towards simplicity to make the viewer feel good, it still addresses, with subtlety, the egregious racial prejudices in the history of the human race. “Belle” may not be accurate, but it is worthy film: enjoyable, romantic, horrifying, and uplifting all the same time, made so by Mbatha-Raw’s nuanced portrayal of an intrepid woman who would not allow the circumstances of her birth and her skin colour stop her from trying to make a difference.

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

## HAPPENINGS



BIKRA RAI

**FOR A HINDU STATE:** Supporters of the Hindu Royalist RPP-N burn copies of the draft constitution in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



BIKRA RAI

**FROM THE NORTH:** Assistant Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China Zhang Xiangchen visits earthquake-damaged temples of the Kathmandu Durbar Square complex on Wednesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

**ATONEMENT WORSHIP:** Ex-king Gyanendra performs a puja at a temple in Kathmandu Durbar Square on Wednesday.



GOPEN RAI

**APPRECIATION:** *Nepali Times* designer Kiran Maharjan receives a token of appreciation from Himalmedia Chair Ambica Shrestha on the occasion of the newspaper's 15th anniversary on Saturday for his outstanding work with the paper.



GOPEN RAI

**THE ORIGINAL TEAM:** Some of the contributors and staff of *Nepali Times* from the past 15 years at a reunion during the paper's 15th anniversary celebration on Saturday.

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# Female refugees of Nepal's earthquake

A new wave of outmigration of Nepali women desperate to earn cash to rebuild family homes

**KARMA GURUNG**

**D**hanmaya Tamang, a mother of two, lived the perfect Nepali migrant dream in Oman.

She worked as a janitor in a hospital, and her husband was a waiter in a restaurant in Muscat. Their two children studied in a private English school in Kathmandu.

From the savings of their two years of hard work the family had built a house in Kavre. When neighbours sent her pictures of their collapsed house, Tamang fainted with shock. She couldn't sleep or eat for two days, and was admitted into the emergency ward of her hospital.

Finally, her employers were convinced about the seriousness of her loss and allowed her a month's leave. To save unnecessary expenses, Tamang left her husband in Oman and travelled alone to Kathmandu.

"By the time I reached my house, everything was gone. I couldn't even find a tea cup left. Whatever was left the villagers had already taken it," she said.

It has been a month since she came to Nepal, and Tamang says she can't stay in Nepal anymore. "I need to go back and earn more money to rebuild our house. My husband has no education, so I have to also work to support him," she added, as she prepared



KARMA DOLMA GURUNG

to board her flight at Kathmandu Airport last week.

Migration experts say that there is a surge in outmigration for work after every major disaster like the Asian tsunami of 2004 or the Kashmir earthquake 2005, and the same seems to be happening

in Nepal. However, even at the best of times female migrant workers are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

"There is a global trend in the aftermath of disasters amongst women for unsafe overseas migration as well as internal

**TAKING LEAVE:** Dhanmaya Tamang at Kathmandu Airport before boarding a flight for Muscat last week. She had planned to quit her job and return to Nepal to be with her children, but with her house in Kavre destroyed by the earthquake, she is going back to Oman.

displacement," said Saru Joshi of UN Women in Kathmandu. Few women have official labour permits since female migration is still banned to some Gulf countries, and there isn't reliable data about how many women are abroad.

The earthquake has increased the push factor because of the need to earn money for reconstruction, as well as the loss of jobs due to the decline in tourism. Many women who worked at dance bars in Thamel, for instance, don't have jobs and are seeking illegal channels to work as domestics in the Gulf.

"We were training a lot of girls from dance bars and restaurants about safe migration but after the earthquake, I received messages from many of our trainees who have already reached the Gulf through illegal channels," said Manju Gurung of Pourakhi, a group which helps female migrant workers.

Sheela Kulung's story is emblematic of the vulnerability of Nepali women post-quake. A fake recruiter promised her and a

friend a well-paying household job with a family in Uzbekistan. Both lost their jobs after the earthquake and had families to support, and had already paid the broker a hefty fee, but he absconded after giving them fake air tickets.

The government had banned domestic workers going to the Gulf due to increasing cases of abuse. A new set of recent guidelines has relaxed these rules to allow them to work in countries with Nepali embassies and reduced the age threshold from 30 to 25. However, there are doubts about whether the rules will be enforced.

"There will be a big problem with implementation of the policies because at the local level, the girls are not aware of the rules and recruiters will continue trying to smuggle them out via India," said Paurakhi's Gurung.

While Dhanmaya Tamang's story has a silver lining, ruthless recruiters are cashing in on the desperation of women like Sheela Kulung.

Tamang waited in the queue at the departure gate last week clutching her ticket and passport in one hand. In the other hand, she held a bag with photographs of her children, 11 and 9 years old. She also had an Earthquake Victim ID card.

*Some names have been changed.* 🇳🇵

## Caring in Kavre

Earthquake-related injuries have been replaced by pre-existing ailments

**PEREGRINE FRISSELL**  
IN KAVRE

**J**ust on the other side of the eastern edge of Kathmandu Valley lies the town of Kushadevi. It is a two-hour drive from the capital, yet this district is an example that proximity to a hospital is not all that is required for many Nepalis to receive adequate medical care in the aftermath of the earthquake.

While a lot of attention went to districts like Sindhupalchok and Gorkha, Kavre got left in the shadows even though the damage here was extensive. Of Kushadevi's 1,900 homes, 1,700 were damaged or destroyed. Fortunately, because of the timing of the quake on 25 April, there were only five fatalities.

Sarmila Sapkota (*pictured*) lives with her family in a house overlooking Kushadevi which was damaged in the quake. They live on the ground floor where the livestock used to be. The buffalos and goats have been moved to a temporary shed. Sapkota's bedroom was on the second floor, and the walls have caved in.

Just down the road from Sarmila's house are piles of bricks where family homes used to be. Next to them are temporary structures covered in tin or plastic sheets. Uma Sapkota's home is in ruins and she is trying to rebuild it, but isn't getting much help from anyone.

Aside from shelter, one urgent need is medical care. Even though Kushadevi



PEREGRINE FRISSELL

is only a 45 minute drive from Dhulikhel Hospital, villagers don't want to leave family alone at home. Which is why the role of mobile clinics like the one provided by volunteer doctors from Kathmandu's B&B Hospital and the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC) in Banepa is so important.

The group has set up over 60 mobile clinics where people can be examined, have their tests done and get free medicines. They even get psychosocial counseling and transport to nearby hospitals to receive surgeries free of charge if they need them.

"We have seen a trend in the past two months from acute earthquake-related

trauma to chronic ailments," explained Bibek Banskota, a volunteer doctor. The earthquake-related injuries are now giving way to preexisting ailments and those made worse by the quake. For example, there is a long line of women in the room where pregnant women are being examined. Many have not been able to see a doctor three times during their pregnancy as recommended.

On one recent Saturday, the volunteer doctors examined over 1,500 patients. Most chronic injuries are treated with a prescription from the group's traveling pharmacy. The doctors and nurses are all volunteers from B&B and HRDC, and each clinic costs Rs 500,000 for the medicine, food and a transport allowance to patients who have to walk a long way.

Nearby is another camp run by the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Center (KIRDARC) which provides psychological counseling for children. A tent outside is full of tots playing while waiting for parents to be treated. Trained counselors observe the children and provide help if they notice abnormal behavior.

Says counselor Deepa Gurung: "There are fewer children who are disturbed now, and the reopening of schools was a big step in returning them to normal. Time is the best healer." 🇳🇵





GOPEN RAI

# LEAVING SHELTER

**L**ila KC sheltered in Tundikhel’s tented camp in the centre of Kathmandu after the house in which he had rented a flat for his family tilted precariously following the 25 April earthquake.

The 56-old-year father of two children could not even take out all his belongings from the rented flat in Asan. He spent

nearly three months with his family in a tent set up by Chinese Red Cross in Tundikhel.

“It was like our home,” he said, while packing his stuff and loading it in a jeep before leaving Tundikhel on Friday. “But we now have to move.”

Like KC, around 850 people who had been living in Tundikhel after the

earthquake are now moving out of the military parade ground (*pictured*). After consultation with the Kathmandu District Administration Office, the Nepal Army had asked them to leave Tundikhel by 17 July. But some are still there not finding anywhere to go.

Kathmandu CDO Ek Narayan Aryal says they decided to evacuate Tundikhel

after finding out that most of the people living there are not real earthquake survivors. Aryal says they were mostly squatters, vendors and earthquake survivors from outside Kathmandu.

But people like Aryal who were genuinely displaced by the earthquake are once more without shelter.

“We are moving to my wife’s house for a few days,” says KC. “But I will have to find a rented house as soon as possible.” As the earthquake had damaged more than 100,000 houses in Kathmandu where finding rooms on rent was already difficult, KC is afraid it might take him months to find a safe place for his family.

Sarswoti Thapa, a 40-year-old street vendor, also left Tundikhel on Friday. For the first few weeks after the earthquake, she slept on the premises of Sankata temple but was forced out of there after the 12 May aftershock. She had been living in Tundikhel since then.

“I knew I would not be allowed to live here forever,” she said, packing her clothes and kitchen utensils. “But I could not find other safer place.”

Left with no option, Thapa decided to go back to her own rented room in the earthquake-damaged house. Although Friday is the deadline to leave Tundikhel, some will remain here for a few more days. But they now have to move wherever they find a safe place. 🇳🇵

## GIZMO by YANTRICK

# Livin’ the Elife 7

**O**ne of the newer phones out from Chinese-based phone manufacturer Gionee is the Elife 7. The only thing holding this gadget back is its blindingly frustrating willingness to be what it is in its essence: a phone.

Almost everything about it is exceptional, beginning with the

camera. At 13 megapixels with a well-tuned autofocus, this is a member of the generation of smartphones that can make scenes look almost more beautiful than they do to the naked eye.

The appreciation for this appendage goes hand-in-hand with the exquisite screen. At a

whopping 5.2 inches of high-quality AMOLED technology, you can do a lot more than appreciate your generous allotment of megapixels. This phone allows you to really welcome some of the functions that are so great about a smart phone, such as watching TV, devouring multimedia content, and even reading novels. The Internet processing is lightning fast and the speakers are loud to aid in those tasks.

Its battery life keeps track with those ambitions as well. On one full charge I was able to go two full days of hooking up to various Wi-Fi networks to watch videos, read news, download apps, and take and send pictures. The only things I didn’t do was any long phone calls or gaming, which are known to drain the battery more quickly.

Users get the chance to customise their phone to the extent of choosing among six different themes. Unfortunately, four of them are an impressive combination of basic and ugly, and the other two are both beautiful and extremely difficult to use because of bad organisation of apps and other



wear loose trousers. The first is so you aren’t driven to jump into the Bagmati every time you miss a call or can’t read a message. The second because this would never fit into a pocket of any reasonable pair of pants below 6 ft.

Lastly, the phone really failed me at a fundamental level. Even after I put in my contacts, I could not for the life of me figure out how to access my calling and messaging records. I would receive alerts when messages were sent to me but found no intuitive

functions. After a while you’ll get used to it, or just replace their ugly wallpaper options of Chinese megacities with ones of your dog, or maybe even your mother. That would be an improvement.

This really is a beautiful piece of hardware, and my conclusion is to recommend it to those who are already familiar with the Android operating system and like to

way to access them, no matter what theme I was using (and some are worse than others). It’s quite possible that a more tech-savvy individual wouldn’t have the same difficulties. Even when receiving calls it would take me several tries to figure out how to answer without hanging up.

That was egregious, but you know what? I really did enjoy the phone anyway. 🇳🇵

*Peregrine Frissell*

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# Let's move on

Chance to finally have a constitution for the people, by the people, of the people

Just when it looked like that the feedback process on the new constitution would be nothing more than a show, the Nepali people have once again proven naysayers wrong by their massive participation in which they displayed political astuteness and alertness.



**THE DEADLINE**  
Damakant Jayshi

After all, they have waited over eight years in the current run and over six decades if you consider King Tribhuvan's promise of a constitution through a Constituent Assembly, long before the Maoists launched their revolution in 1996.

The challenge and responsibility of the political leadership now is to respect this and accept suggestions from the people to the extent possible. True, it will not be practical to accommodate everyone's views since many are diametrically opposite. But wide acceptability should be the guiding principle to improve the draft.

Most of the political parties, including the Madhes-based and Janajati ones, have agreed that Nepal would be a democratic republic which should be inclusive, federal and secular. Keeping these as unchangeable principles, the political parties should now bow down to the wishes of the people in democracy.

There is a real danger, though, that the political parties may interpret this participation as endorsement of their roadmap and ignore suggestions that came out of the consultations. This would be a big letdown. The road ahead should not be mapped by the pre-agreed script of a few top politicians nor by a handful of loud commentators who have opposed this exercise all along on one pretext or the other.

There are two main historically oppressed communities in Nepal: women and Dalits. When it comes to the rights of women, this draft is shameful and the UML would do well to read the writing on the wall on citizenship through mothers. In the case of Dalits, too, the draft is woefully short of addressing their genuine grievances.

Citizenship through mother is a legitimate and natural right. When the UML or others try to deny this, they are forced to come up with multiple sub-clauses in the draft. These xenophobic leaders infest most parties, including Madhes-based ones, and justify their stance on citizenship because of fears of Indian inundation.

This whole exercise of public consultation on the draft of the constitution would have been far more fruitful had the parties demarcated the boundaries of the new states by rightly leaving the names of new provinces to elected state legislatures.

Now, with the Indian

establishment reportedly signalling its displeasure, the parties are singing a different tune. They might now attempt to demarcate the boundaries, and at this point it is difficult to say how successful they would be. After all, the subject of federalism has led to failure of many political agreements between political parties in the past. Moreover, the UML has already termed such an exercise a ploy to delay its party chairman's ascension to power. Even if the parties do attempt a demarcation of boundaries, it means people would not have a say.

In the name of inclusion and identity, there was reckless adventurism on state

restructuring. The original plan, inspired reportedly by outside intelligence agencies was to have one, or at the most two, state(s) along the Tarai from east to west bordering India and call it Madhes. This was presented before us as panacea to address the historic wrongs in the Tarai. Whereas, in the hills and mountains with nearly an equal population, there would be no less than 10 provinces based on ethnicity. All this in the name of protecting and preserving the identity of the marginalised communities.

The UCPN (M) with its close connection with India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) before, during and after the



BIKRAM RAI

conflict believed that such state-restructuring would increase its presence and influence and help it reap electoral dividends. The Madhesi and Janajati parties saw in the plan their own advantage. But all these forces were routed in the second Constituent Assembly election in 2013 when they asked for votes specifically for this idea. Some supporters of this line are still in absolute denial and

haven't been able to come to terms with the defeat of identity politics.

The political parties have another great opportunity to make this a people-owned constitution. But for that they would first have to look beyond their partisan interests to what would ultimately benefit the nation and address the more pressing needs of the Nepali people. @damakant

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# Blazing new trails in

Some international mountaineers stayed on in Nepal after their expeditions were cancelled to help with quake relief

When mountaineers get into trouble during climbing expeditions they need to be rescued. But after the earthquake in Nepal, it is mountaineers who have come to the rescue of survivors living in remote mountain villages where access is difficult during the monsoon.

As the rains block roads and ground helicopters, thousands of porters and mountaineers, including noted international climbers, are helping carry food and other relief to high mountain villages in Gorkha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dolakha and Dhading. They are repairing trails as they go, to improve access and also contributing to a revival of trekking when the rains end.

Helping with this and other efforts is the Hillary Relief Collective named after Edmund Hillary, who with Tenzing Norgay was the first to step on the summit of Mt Everest in 1953. Amelia Hillary, Edmund Hillary's granddaughter who was living in Nepal, is coordinating the Collective's activities.

"I am now the third generation of Hillarys working in Nepal. When the earthquake hit, we all knew we would

need to work together with mountain rural communities to handle the crisis to make sure aid would get to those who truly need it," she told *Nepali Times*. (See interview)

Besides its work with education and health, the Hillary Relief Collective provides management support for the World Food Programme (WFP) in its Remote Access Operations with the involvement of noted mountaineers like Damian and Willie Benegas from Argentina who were on Camp I of Mt Everest on 25 April, and Canadian climber Don Bowie who was climbing Annapurna during the earthquake. All stayed on to work with Nepali high altitude guides to help open up damaged trails so supplies can get to remote villages.

Damian Benegas is working in Dolakha and Sindhupalchok to repair trails from Simigaon to Beding so supplies keep moving during the monsoon, while Bowie works out of the WFP forward base in Gorkha to literally blaze new trails to parts of lower Gorkha cut off by the damaged Budi Gandaki route, as well as via the 5,200m Larkya Pass to Manaslu and Tsum Valleys.

"Mountaineers are very good at getting



material from Point A to Point B and that is why our experience has been useful," Benegas said. "The rains keep washing the trails off, but we keep repairing them. Some of these will be useful

alternative trekking routes in the autumn."

Indeed, Benegas says that the Upper Rolwaling and the Manaslu Circuit can be opened for trekkers by October through alternative

trails that have been made for relief delivery. The challenge for now is to reach villages that are not even in the map, and which have been cut off.

For Benegas and other



ALL PICS: RINZIN NORBU LAMA

## Even more secluded

The earthquake and monsoon have made Tsum Valley more difficult to reach

**RINZIN NORBU LAMA**  
in GORKHA

Tsum Valley. Just the name evokes a sense of mystery and isolation. The sacred region in Upper Gorkha lies along a finger of Nepal that sticks out into Tibet and is renowned for a pilgrimage route that circumambulates the mountains.

Tsum used to be remote even at the best of times: a week's walk from the nearest road in Arughat. Today it is accessible only by helicopter or through a circuitous trek from the Manang Valley and over the 5,200m Larkya Pass. The Budi Gandaki Trail has been wiped off the map in many places



by the earthquake.

Its remoteness saved Tsum Valley from the government's attention, although a controversial road linking it to the lower valley was being built before the earthquake. Tsum Valley was seeing a rise in trekking, and new rest houses were coming up. Most of these are now in ruins.

"I invested all my income

from harvesting yarsagumba in building my lodge, now it's all gone," said 27-year-old Nyudup Lama, a trekking guide.

There is a local belief that the gods of Ganesh Himal (known locally as Yangra) were angry, which is why the mountain shook and destroyed so much. Locals living below Shringi Himal recall the terrifying shaking and farmers



# the monsoon



DAMIAN BENEGAS / BENEGAS BROTHERS EXPEDITION


mountaineers, there was no question of abandoning Nepal, a country they have come to love through their climbing. The Everest team ploughed its climbing budget into earthquake

relief after the expedition had to be abandoned, and then other mountaineers and their families started donating money. Besides the work with mountaineers and porters

**RELIEF EXPEDITION:** Argentinean climber Willie Benegas and Nepali Everest summiteer Pasang Lhamu Sherpa (*left*) help with logistics at Laprak recently. Mountaineers and guides are helping with trail repairs to get relief to remote mountain villages even during the monsoon.

the Hillary Relief Collective has served as a platform to partner with volunteer groups to coordinate activities on the ground so that relief goes where it is needed the most. For the first month after the quake they had to help with paperwork and clearing urgent relief supplies through customs. Now the priorities are: food and medicines, shelter, education and health, and rebuilding trails.

The WFP has also mobilised 10,000 porters who lost their livelihoods because the earthquake hit during the peak trekking season. Through the Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) and the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) they have been repairing trails blocked by the quake and for bringing essential supplies to communities that have been cut off.

Says Benegas: “Paying porters is a great way to revive the rural economy because it injects cash directly to the village. And many of these people had no other source of income besides portering.”  *Kunda Dixit*

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

- Operation Mountain Express, #763
- Watch video of mule train crossing Larkya Pass with relief 

# guided sanctuary



digging their potato chanting prayers and looking to the heavens for protection.


Ten days after the quake, I flew to my home village of Chumchet with relief material. The ruins reduced me to tears. I was the first person from the village to be sent to Kathmandu to study and get a degree. My neighbours were glad that I hadn’t abandoned them in

their time of need.

Through the Tsum Society Youth Club we collected and distributed relief materials and provided information to donor and logistical agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) about the specific needs of each village. The club worked closely with People-In-Need (PIN) which helps in many countries around

the world to source emergency supplies.

The people of the Tsum and Manaslu still need food aid, but for the longer term they need the trekking trails to be repaired so that tourism can once more sustain their livelihoods. At some point, they will also have to decide whether the road construction should resume, and the impact it will have on the economic rebuilding of the Valley.

Tsum folk have seen how trekking tourism has gone down after highways have been built in the Kali Gandaki and Marsyangdi Valleys. The best way to give something back to locals is for the visitors who have travelled before to Tsum Valley to return and experience its natural and cultural splendour. 

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

- In the mountain of the soul #644
- One day in the life of Mingmar #672



DAMIAN BENEGAS

## Third generation Hillary

Amelia Hillary, grand-daughter of Edmund Hillary, who with Tenzing Norgay were first on top of Mt Everest in 1953, speaks with *Nepali Times* about her family’s three-generation attachment to Nepal and how the Hillary Relief Collective is mobilising assistance and getting it to earthquake survivors through a network of mountaineers.

**Nepali Times: You have been living in Nepal, how did you get involved in earthquake relief work?**

**Amelia Hillary:** Nepal has become second home to our family, it is a country where my grandfather had the most famous success of climbing Everest but actually the one that put me here is the work he did through the Himalayan trails, building the school and hospital. This is the worst disaster to hit our country in over eight decades, and we just had to help. It has never really been a choice for us. I have all this family connection, great friendships and the climbing community but also big personal losses. I lost my grandmother and aunt in this country, my father lost countless friends. The high points and low points of the Hillary family has been in Nepal. But that is life and that’s why we have such a connection to the country.

**How did the Hillary Relief Collective come about?**

We were already working on schools and medical clinics in Solu Khumbu, and when the earthquake happened it had us thinking we have to do something. We started working with the adventure and climbing community, and set up a fundraising page and that is how the Collective came about. Initially there were also people who needed help with customs, and we found that we could inform people about areas that still needed emergency assistance and of what kind.

**So you adapted in trial and error fashion?**

Completely. I grew up in a humanitarian family. We had charities and fundraising, but we were not geared for emergency operations. We had to learn as we went along. Couple of days ago when we were in Lidhi it was actually management on ground and physically distributing relief to people, we also worked in medical camps taking first aid and emergency response trainings.

**How did the mountaineering community come into the picture?**

Damian Benegas, an Argentinean who handles operation in mountains with his twin were on Everest and on Camp I when earthquake hit. They ended up going to Gorkha once they got down and set up a porter operation just among themselves in Laprak and Barpark right after the earthquake. We have Richard Ragan of the WFP who knew all the climbers. Then we got Don Bowie, the Canadian-American who was on Annapurna at the time. He had the mountaineering skills to negotiate high passes and go around the landslides, and got to northern Gorkha to distribute aid. We have Nepali trail builders, and guides who are the best in the world. They go out in teams of two along the trails with GPS and see if the trail can be fixed or we need to make another one. Some have to fixed over and over as landslides keep coming down.

**So, the trails provide access for relief and can also help trekking when the season starts in autumn.**

Yes, exactly. These trails are life line of people. They use them for daily supplies, the children walk along them to school, so they need to be safe. It’s very important for day to day life.

**What next for you?**

I’m looking at doing Everest next year with Damian Benegas and Don Bowie as a fundraising climb to help rebuild Nepal. It will take couple of years for Nepal to recover. For the world at large, what happens on Everest represents what is happening in Nepal.

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- Watch excerpt of the interview 

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**PEOPLE'S VERDICT:** Residents of Madanpokhara, Palpa brave rains to register their views on the draft constitution on 20 July

DEV PACHIBHAIYA

# Honour people's verdict

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 23 July

Initially, the Constituent Assembly (CA) and political parties did not seem serious about collecting public feedback on the draft constitution. They probably saw it just as a formality. That was why only two days were allotted for this enormous task. But the enthusiasm with which people turned out to register their views on the draft was beyond political parties' expectations. Now, the onus lies on the CA and the political parties to honour views expressed by the majority of the people by including them in the new constitution.

Due to obstacles created by some parties dissatisfied with the constitution writing process, collecting public feedback was not satisfactory in some parts of the Madhes. But where there were no obstacles people turned out in huge numbers, giving credence to the process and raising hope for the new constitution. People also expressed views against some of the points of the 16-point deal, which is the blueprint of the draft constitution. For example, the signatories to the 16-point deal rejected the idea of directly-elected President or

Prime Minister. But a majority of people supported it.

The people defied threats of violence to exercise their franchise and elect a new CA two years ago. The political alertness which they showed this week by expressing their views on the draft is a message: they are not tired of the process and are desperate to see the new constitution.

Each and everyone's view cannot be incorporated into the new constitution. But the CA must try to include the most persistent ones so that people will own the constitution. Suggestions collected by the previous CA were abandoned. The current CA should not repeat that mistake. Ignoring or undervaluing public feedback will be a blunder. The CA's Public Consultation Committee should incorporate all suggestions in its report to be submitted to the CA's Constitutional, Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee (CPDCC) which should include all valid suggestions. Incorporating public feedback in the draft will also be an opportunity to win the trust of disgruntled parties and involving them in this historic process. The more political parties endorse the constitution, the longer it will last.



To pilgrimage this month

नेपाल

Rabindra Manandhar in *Nepal*, 19-25 July

## Grassroot advice

Milijuli Nepali Episode 64, BBC Media Action, July 16



*People in the earthquake-affected zones are busy these days with rice planting, household work and rebuilding homes. That doesn't mean they should be careless about their health though. The people who suffered injuries during the earthquake are now gradually healing and getting back to their lives. Presenter Sabita Bismokarma and psychologist Jivan Kumari Bhattarai talk with Hari Maya Maharjan of Harisiddhi, Lalitpur. Maharjan was buried along with her other family members in the ruins of her house for more than four hours before being rescued. She stayed in hospital for a few days for treatment and is now living in a temporary tent set up near her maternal home. Maharjan's sprained hand still hasn't healed, but she hopes to start working as it recovers.*

sleep either. I keep worrying about how to take care of my family, how we will survive this, raise children and where to get money to pay their school fees at the end of the month. I keep fretting about such things. I want to work to look after the household.

**What have you decided to do?**  
After harvesting the paddy if there is enough straw, I'll make straw slippers to sell. I can make 5-6 pairs per day. If my hands heal, I will find other work and if there isn't enough straw to make slippers. If you stay and do nothing your mind will be only focus on pain.

*We now turn to psychologist Jivan Kumari Bhattarai for advice in the case of Hari Maya's Maharjan. She has tried to change and adjusted quickly. Some people need a little more time to adjust.*



**BBC Nepali: You were buried for four hours in the rubble after the earthquake and then rescued. Your son and a grandson were also rescued. How are you now?**  
**Maharjan:** My hand hurt a lot, but is a lot better now. I want to get back to work, but I can't. I have to work to feed myself. These days I don't have any appetite. I can't

**What kind of a role should family members, neighbours and specialists like you play so that it will be easier to the survivors?**  
**Jivan Kumari Bhattarai:** We should see what can be done, what specific things are necessary in a particular locality, or the kind of skills that they would need. It could even be skills they had learnt in the past, and engage them in farm work.

We have to communicate, talk to them about their economic conditions what is required to be done and how to do it. If we talk with them to come up with solutions, they'll adjust sooner.

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

■ Listen to Milijuli Nepali on SoundCloud



## Solu's Pemba

Jangbu Sherpa in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 19-25 July

Pemba Chiri Sherpa felt the shocks of the 25 April earthquake that rattled Nepal on the other side of the world in the United States. Since the earthquake, Sherpa, an entrepreneur from Denver has been busy collecting funds for survivors back in his home district of Solukhumbu.

The 42-year old is not just another Nepali living in the US, he is a businessman who has done well for himself while maintaining contact with his homeland.

Born in the village of Syangma, Sherpa spent his childhood herding yaks. At age 16, he started working as a professional mountain guide and two years later he moved to the US, where he completed his

secondary education in 1991.

In Colorado, he saw the same beauty in the Rockies as the Himalaya back home and decided to make it his home. His experience in the tourism industry helped him establish the Sherpa Ascent International travel company and for many years he led trekkers across the Himalaya and brought over 100 tourists to Nepal every year. The ten-year conflict in Nepal, however, took a toll on the tourism industry.

To compensate for lost business, he opened Sherpa Adventurer's Restaurant and Bar in Boulder, Colorado serving up Nepali, Indian and Tibetan food. He then tried his hand in the real estate business and immediately struck gold. He also established Sherpa Chai, a company that sells tea harvested in Nepal and he hopes to plough the profit from this business for social

work back home.

Sherpa also has a passion for flying and has flown his private Piper plane to Guatemala, Tanzania and Mexico. One day, he wants to fly in Nepal too, and once even considered getting into the airline business in Nepal. But the unstable political situation dissuaded him.

Married to architect Moriko Tumhara, Sherpa is now planning a motivational autobiography to inspire others like him to work hard to attain one's goal in life. "You cannot reap the fruit in the present without sowing the seeds in the past," says Sherpa.

After the earthquake Sherpa flew to Nepal and visited nine villages in Solukhumbu. When the relief materials he brought were stuck at customs, he rushed cash to survivors with cash. Even before the earthquake, Sherpa made regular donations to build schools. Sherpa still sees possibilities in tourism as the country recovers. He says: "The rivers, hills and mountains are still intact. And so is the Nepali heart."



# Who will be a Nepali



Bhim Rawal in *Kantipur*, 11 July

कान्तिपुर

The draft constitution does not prevent children of Nepali citizens from acquiring Nepali citizenship. The only question is whether they are entitled to citizenship by descent or by naturalised citizenship. If the father or mother is a foreigner, children can acquire citizenship by descent but a foreigner father/mother has to have naturalised citizenship.

Despite such liberal provisions in the draft, there are misleading arguments that Nepalis have been denied the right to acquire citizenship through mothers' names. If you argue that the children of a Nepali married to a foreigner and living in the country of their spouse should also be entitled to citizenship by descent, your logic cannot be valid.

If you argue that foreigners married to a Nepali man or a woman should be treated equally, will you accept a provision that requires female foreigners married to Nepali men to wait for a certain period (seven years for example) to be able to apply for naturalised citizenship? To those who invoke international laws and practices to demand Nepali citizenship to foreigners, are you also ready to follow the same rules to manage our border and migration? Can international law practiced in one area not be applicable to another? If countries like India and the US consider barring those born elsewhere from reaching top executive posts, is it logical for Nepal to accept foreigners as heads of constitutional bodies



DEVAKI BISTA

and security forces? It is unfortunate to see some people demanding the shortest possible way to grant citizenship to foreigners, by descent at that.

It would be wiser for Nepalis to discuss the citizenship issue as true nationalists. Vested interests and emotions do not bode well for Nepal's sovereign existence. We need a constitution to protect our sovereignty, independence, unity, prosperity and welfare. We cannot allow a constitutional provision that jeopardises our national interest.

Many countries do not easily grant citizenship to foreigners. They just give Permanent Resident (PR) cards to immigrants. And when they apply for citizenship, they are required to take an oath and attend an orientation about the importance of citizenship. But Nepal does not have any of these provisions despite having to deal with some sensitive issues of population management. We share a long porous border with India, allowing the unbridled inflow of migrants not only from India but from the whole South Asia region. Bhutanese refugees were in Nepal. We still have Tibetan refugees, even refugees from Africa. The citizenship debate should keep the rights and welfare of genuine Nepalis at centre-stage.



Sapana Pradhan Malla and Aruna Uprety in *Kantipur*, 17 July

कान्तिपुर

Thank you, Bhim Rawalji. Your article on citizenship has prompted us to engage in this debate. Nepali male citizens, even if their wives are foreigners, can easily give their children citizenship by descent. But the new constitution requires both father 'and' mother to be Nepali citizens for their children to acquire citizenship by descent. However, the article 13 (2) of the draft constitution slyly enables foreigner wives of Nepali men to get naturalised citizenship immediately after their marriage. Children of Nepalis married to foreigners (male or female) should be born in Nepal to acquire Nepali citizenship by descent. And Nepali women will have rights to give their children citizenship by descent only if their husbands' identity cannot be ascertained.

Foreigners married to Nepali men can apply for naturalised citizenship immediately after their marriage. But foreigners married to Nepali women should live in Nepal for 15 years to enjoy this right. If foreigners married to Nepalis do not want or do not get Nepal's naturalised

citizenship, their children will only get naturalised citizenship. But even for naturalised citizenship, they should be born in Nepal. On the one hand, the proposed clause looks equal in conferring citizenship to the children even if their 'father or mother' is married to foreigner. But on the other hand, a female foreigner married to a Nepali man can get citizenship immediately after marriage, whereas a male foreigner married to a Nepali woman has to wait for 15 years. So there is discrimination against Nepali daughters. Why are we so paranoid about the inflow of illegal immigrants? People migrate to countries where there are opportunities, don't they? Do foreigners need Nepali citizenship to commit crimes here? If we allow Nepalis to choose their spouses from any country, why would we restrict their right to domicile in whichever country they want? How can we infringe on her right to family?

Yes, we have a long porous border with India. But Indians cannot get Nepali citizenship just by crossing the border. They have to follow certain Nepali laws to be entitled to Nepali citizenship. Our sovereignty will be at risk only if we promote politics of discrimination. Is our national sovereignty really so fragile that it gets lost even if we safeguard human rights?

Some 119 democratic constitutions of the world require just father or mother to be their

citizens for their children to acquire citizenship by descent. You also gave the example of the USA, saying one has to be born there to become the country's president. But do we have any legitimacy to raise this question when we require children of Nepalis married to foreigners be born in Nepal to get citizenship by descent? And any Nepali national born in US can become US President if s/he acquires citizenship.

Why does the draft constitution want Nepalis married to foreigners to deliver children in Nepal? If this constitution gets promulgated, what happens if Nepali (men and women) get married to foreigners and become parents abroad? What happens to those Nepali women who deliver children while working in the Gulf?

Did your UML party not promise to give citizenship through mothers' names during the Constituent Assembly elections? Has the Interim Constitution-2007 not allowed Nepali women to give their children citizenship by descent through their names alone?

You argue that the draft constitution allows Nepalis to get citizenship through their father or mother's name. Yes, Article 12 (2) of the draft constitution allows Nepalis to acquire citizenship either through their father's or mother's name. But Article 12 (2) can be applicable only if a person's father and mother are both Nepali citizens. This is misleading.

You asked if people are ready to accept a provision requiring foreigners married to Nepali men to wait at least seven years to get naturalised citizenship. What if they reject this provision? Will foreigners married to Nepali women be forced to wait 15 years for naturalised citizenship? What about granting them Permanent Resident (PR) cards to foreigners married to Nepal women until they get naturalised citizenship?

You blame us for demanding citizenship by descent to foreigners. We are demanding citizenship by descent to our children, not to foreigners. How can the children born from the wombs of Nepali women be foreigners just because their fathers are foreigners? By this same logic, how can the children born from the wombs of foreign women be Nepalis just because their fathers hold Nepali citizenship? We are concerned about Nepal's sovereignty as much as you are.

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# Ass for National Animal

Good thing the gubbermint declared a two-day holiday to submit our feedback on the draft constitution, because what I had to say about it could not be said in one day. There were cynics among you (yes, you near the door with the silly grin) who said the super duper fast-track public consultations were just a formality. No, they were not. They were a great opportunity to petrol bomb school buses, hurl missiles at ex-PMs, and burn tyres just like the good old days. When do we get an opportunity like that to hone our skills at creating mayhem?

So the **Patriarchal Demographic Federer Republic of Nepal** is finally getting a constitution fur the people, bye the people and off the people. And luckily, I have it on good authoritarians that all my suggestions have been taken extremely seriously and will be included in an appendix of the final text of the new constipation. I would now like to formally put my suggestions in the public domain through this column so that the unconcerned authorities do not perform an appendectomy and consign it to the friendly neighbourhood garbage pile. Here they are:

**1. National Animal.**  
It is absolutely speciest to retain the **Cow** as our national animule. This privileged higher mammal was self-appointed to its pedestal when we were still an animal kingdom. Keeping the **Cow** is



regressive and perpetuates the status quo, not to mention the quo vadis and the quid pro quo. Besides, having the **Cow** as a national animal also reeks of gender bias – what of the **Bull**? Aren't our **Oxen** good enough for us? They both chew the cud, and yet just because he doesn't have udders does that automatically disqualify him? If you don't want the **Bull** you can't have the **Cow** either. There.

It is time to rid this country of all signs of feudalism and make up for past injustices by handing over the honour to ungulates like yours truly. As a **Donkey**, I know we face stiff competition for the position of



National Animule from **Sheep**, since they are known to be mindless followers. But on the plus side, ruminants ruminate a lot. It has to be said, on the other hand, that Rodents have been downtrodden, so **Rats** also have a strong case. Some of you have even proposed the Yeti as national animal, hoping that it will boost Nepal's sagging tourism. Unfortunately, Yetis are abominable and don't even exist so can't qualify which leaves us with no other option but to agree on the **Ass** as National Animal.



**2. National Bird**  
The question now arises, if we are going to change the National Animal why not also have a more politically correct National Bird? How can an impeyan pheasant named "**Daphne**" that lives only above 4,000m be considered a national bird in the Newly Inclusive Nepal? This is an affront to the identity of plain dwellers and once more demonstrates the colonial mentality of the hillbillies in the boondocks who rule over Nepal. Since birds of a feather in the hand flock together early to catch the worm so that they will be

worth two in the bush, we have to think of a more universally acceptable birdie with a range that spans Tarai, Hill and Himal to be our National Feathered Friend. But since there are so many contenders, we have to put the shortlist to a vote. Please tick one.

I would like one of the following to be declared a national bird to replace **Daphne**:



Crow ☐



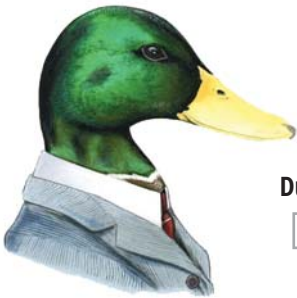
Owl ☐



Vulture ☐



Rooster ☐



Duck ☐

**3.** The other part of the draft constitution that has divided the nation is the question of whether Nepal should be a Secular Republic or a Hindu Kingdom. Since all constitutions are about compromise, let's meet midpoint and declare Nepal a Secular Kingdom and get it over with. The other idea is to remove religion altogether from the constitution and affirm that we are henceforth the Federal Democratic Atheist Republic of Nepal with the proviso that every citizen has the God-given right to renounce atheism if he/she/it so chooses and convert to animism.

**4.** One last point before I take your leave for today: we must have a provision in our constitution to prevent NASA or any other space cadets from naming random mountains in the Kuiper Belt after our national heroes. This is to prevent a future all-out war between Nepal and India over ownership of the China-born Tenzing Norgay.



The Ass

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