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**POLICE**



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# NONE OF THE ABOVE

The trust of average Nepalis in the political leadership keeps sinking. Except one, every active politician today scored in the single digit in a recent public opinion poll in which respondents were asked who they would like to see as Nepal’s next prime minister.

This is a damning indictment of chronic political failure and the public’s disenchantment with elected figures across the political spectrum including those who have led governments multiple times in the past decades. However, it also shows that the field is wide open for fresh new faces with proven performance, integrity and ability to work for the public good.

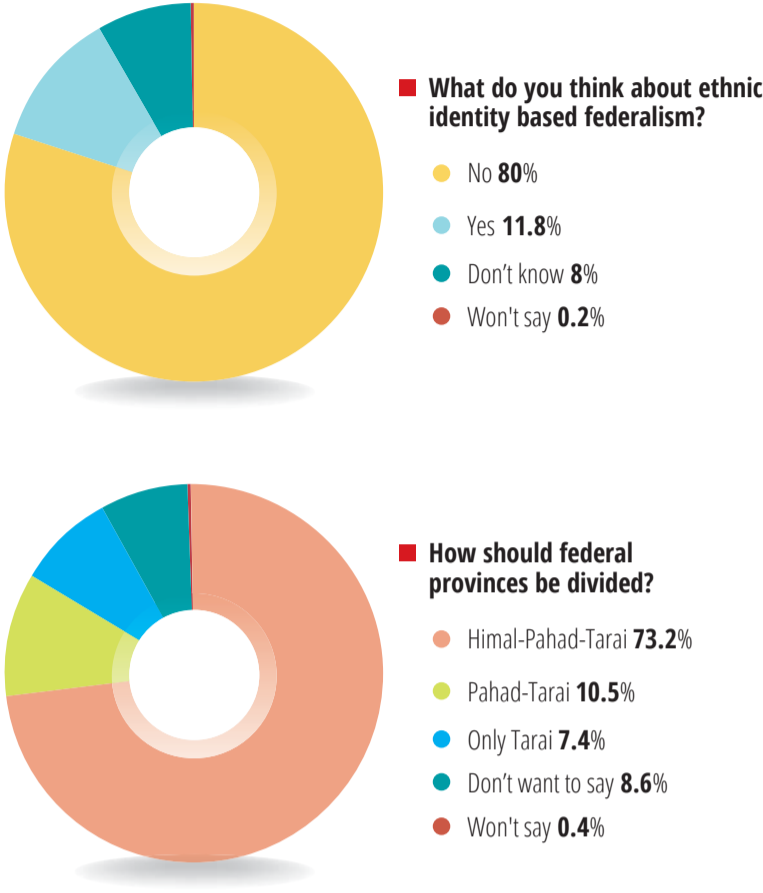
More than 3,500 respondents in 35 districts were interviewed 3-7 August in the Himalmedia Nationwide Public Opinion Survey 2015. We have been tracking public disillusionment with politicians for the past 12 years in these annual polls, and expected it to be quite high. This year, an inadequate political response to the earthquake, delays in the constitution and persistent political infighting seem to have heightened public disenchantment.

In response to the question ‘Who should be Nepal’s new Prime Minister after the new constitution is promulgated?’ nearly 55% of the respondents rejected the names of all top politicians, 10.1% said they wanted some new independent figure, 24.3% didn’t want to say or didn’t know. Baburam Bhattarai (10.4%) appears to be ahead only because the others are even less popular, and because of the public perception that he gets things done. Bhattarai has performed consistently well in past polls as well, coming second after Sushil Koirala in 2013 and scoring 13.5% last year. But even in those previous polls, more than half the respondents ticked ‘Undecided’, ‘None of the above’ or ‘Don’t know’.

Among all the party leaders it is Pushpa Kamal Dahal whose fall from public grace has been the most dramatic. After scoring 38.7% in the 2010 Himalmedia survey since 2008, he had sunk to 3.4% in 2013, and is now down to 1.8%. But after hitting rock bottom Dahal has nowhere to go but up. He has been remaking himself as a flexible and pragmatic leader capable of springing back to wrest leadership. His critical behind-the-scene role in allying with the UML’s KP Oli to push through the draft constitution, and his rallying speech in the Constituent Assembly last week in which he exhibited his legendary oratorical skills to restore some of his charisma may be indications of a ‘new’ Dahal.

The lack of public trust in politicians is also reflected in

Nepalis don’t trust the present crop of leaders, but this is an opportunity for fresh new faces to win public support through performance



responses to the question: ‘Which political party would you select to deliver a peaceful and prosperous Nepal?’. Once more, the proportion of respondents who said ‘Don’t know’, ‘Won’t say’, or ‘None of the above’ totaled 42%. The NC was on top as in previous two years with 25.4%, the UML used to be neck-to-neck with the NC but is now trailing at 13.5% and the fragmented Maoists have gone down to 9.3% from highs above 20% in polls after the 2008 CA elections.

Aside from popularity, an even more striking aspect of this year’s Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey compared to previous years is that despite political and societal polarisation, the respondents have shown even more maturity, moderation and a rejection of identity politics.

For example, 48.6% may have voted for Nepal to be

declared a Hindu state, but taken together support for the constitution to ensure ‘Religious freedom’, ‘Secularism’, or ‘No mention of religion’ total a significant 46%. Our suggestion would be to take a middle path in such a divisive issue (especially because ‘Secularism’ has only 20% adherents) by opting for the ‘Freedom of religion’ formulation.

There is also a surprising consistency and consensus on answers across ethnic, geographic, age, literacy, and gender lines. For instance, one may expect far fewer men to be against citizenship on the basis of mothers in the draft constitution, but male and female respondents were at par with 55% and 56.3% respectively rejecting the discriminatory clause. The percentage of those who think federalism based on ethnicity is a bad idea has gone up from 70-75% in previous polls this year. As in previous years, the opposition to carving up the country along ethnic lines is not popular even in the Tarai or enclaves asking for ethnic homelands. Even so, there has been widespread dissatisfaction with the current boundaries of the six provinces spearheaded by Madhesi, Tharu and Karnali activists. Large parts of the country have now been shut down for nearly two weeks, and the situation is getting untenable.

Among those who didn’t like ethnic provinces, more than half said their boundaries should be North-South incorporating mountains, hills and plains for economic viability. Even in the Madhes, there was an overwhelming rejection of ethnicity-based provinces, and more than half preferred North-South states that incorporated the highlands. This is reflected in the belated realisation even among Madhesi politicians that Province 2 may not be viable.

As in previous years, we are struck by how much the political slogans of the political parties, especially the smaller ones, are so divergent from public opinion even in the areas they represent. This leads us to ask: what use are elections and public opinion surveys like this if politicians keep ignoring the people’s voices? Politicians probably want to keep the option open for religious or regional rabble-rousing, not having learnt the lesson that identity politics always backfires in the end. There could also be a cynical belief that money and muscle matter more at election time than public opinion.

The Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey 2015 feels the public pulse two years after the last election. It is encouraging that collectively we are still a progressive people who haven’t given up on democracy, even though we don’t seem to think much about the leaders we elected.

## YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

### STATE DILEANATION

Some short-sighted analysts predicted the proposed Province #2 would suffer from resource deficit (‘Bound by boundaries’, Om Astha Rai, #771) without taking into consideration the potential it has to become the urban and industrial hub of the country. The future will depend on provinces working together.

DG

Both Nawalparasi and Baglung should be included entirely in Province #4. #5 should have Kailali, Surkhet, Salyan, Rukum and Dolpa. Pradesh #1, Pradesh #2 and Pradesh #3 are OK as proposed. This will be advantageous to all.

Daniel

Besides Tharus, there's also a sizeable Muslim population in the Tarai (‘It ain’t over yet’, Anurag Acharya, #771). Which part of Tarai do you think will need a Muslim Province?

K.K. Sharma

United we stand, divided we fall.  
**Somesh Lal Joshi**

Why not just turn the development regions or the zones into states?

Nischal

### QUAKE WIDOWS

We were in Sankhu three weeks after the earthquake (‘2,000 widows’, Rojita Adhikary, #771). This community touched my heart deeply. Our prayers are with you.

Aberle Kesterke

Blessings to all who lost all.  
**Finnen Morris**

### BUILDING BACK

Useful summary and a sharp analysis of the reasons behind the government’s slow response to the earthquake (‘Better build back’, Sonia Awale, #771). Hopefully now that the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority has been appointed the tempo will pick up. Giving credit where it’s due, Govinda Raj Pokhrel

of the Planning Commission is an excellent choice and he has been involved with the quake aftermath. I would say that we are in good hands, provided the next government shows the political will to address the needs of millions of victims.

Jaya

The National Planning Commission’s draft of Reconstruction Policy seems to have lofty initiatives but if the government lets the NPC and Reconstruction Authority to do their jobs, there is no reason why they can’t achieve what they have outlined.

Puru Shah

### HERITAGE

As a frequent visitor, I would rather Nepal focus on developing its natural beauty and people than rebuilding old temples (‘Remembering the future’, Stéphane Huët, #771).

Sigmund Stengel

As another frequent visitor, I would oppose and say, Nepal

should be both preserving its natural beauty and rebuilding its equally unparalleled architectural grandeur, which was unfortunately damaged in past year not only due to the earthquake.

Michel Thomas

This is sad, selling part of the patrimony to save another part.

Konchog Dorje

### BABY MAYBE

Not just women, even men and couples have the right to decide (and others have NO right to question) when or if they want to have children (‘Baby Maybe’, Anjana Rajbhandary, #771).

Namah

### BLACK AND WHITE

Our leaders especially Prachanda should watch this program (‘Life in Black and White’, Sonia Awale, #770). Vijay Lama is contributing a lot to the society. When are you going to do the same?

Anonymous

Times

## THIS WEEK



ROJITA ADHIKARI



**Most reached and shared on Facebook**

2,000 widows by Rojita Adhikari



**Most popular on Twitter**

The authority to rebuild, Editorial (39 retweets, 40 favourites)



**Most visited online page**

Himalmedia Poll Outcome (1,236 views)



**Most commented**

2,000 widows by Rojita Adhikari

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #772

Q. Has the six-province model addressed the grievances of the Tharu community?

Total votes: 106



Weekly Internet Poll #773  
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Which option is likely to help resolve the current crisis over the constitution?

# Over-fermented federalism

Crafting a federal state is a lot like baking the perfect croissant



No one does fine cooking like the French. By 'fine' I mean delicate, balanced, and aesthetically unparalleled. Take the croissant, for example -- 27 layers of fermented yeast dough, each separated by a sheet of butter and rolled like a honeycomb, which is raised or



**ONE TO MANY**  
Bidushi Dhungel

'proofed' until the size doubles and it jiggles perfectly, before it is baked in the oven to a perfect golden brown colour.

To the average mind, the croissant is just dough shaped into a crescent moon with lots of butter. But anyone with a penchant for baked goods can tell from a glance and the first bite of a croissant how experienced and/or well-trained the baker who made it is and how incredibly difficult it is to get the darned

thing right. The dough cannot be over-kneaded, cannot be too moist, the butter must stay unmelted throughout the rolling and preparation process and leaving them out to proof for slightly too long will cause them to completely deflate and collapse when baking in the oven.

In other words, croissant-making is like federalism-making.

The delicate nature of both, the visibility and impact of every tiny error in the final product, the triumph of getting it right and the lack of any acceptable substitute make the analogy surprisingly apt. In Nepal's case regarding federalism, what we see is a serious case of over-proofing. Ideas and personal thoughts regarding the federal agenda have been fermenting and developing for far too long. It has got to a point of no return, with no one willing to back down now that the time has finally come to reveal the end result.

The desire to carve out states according to identity, capability, or not to carve them at all is felt so strongly by so many people that the debate is now deadlocked. The issue of identity in particular is something which everyone seems to now have a very strong opinion about. People with no interest in politics or the constitution are becoming vocal on federalism and the constitution. The entire process has taken so long and people have been held hostage to this unending debacle such that it has forced them to develop extreme feelings regarding what should happen. In theory, that more people are getting 'involved' in the process is wonderful. Unfortunately, involvement is not creating a debate, but rather a conflict, one which it seems is increasingly without solutions.

In turn, these very well-developed opinions, which were unnecessarily allowed to ferment

over the past eight years, seem set to create an intractable situation often leading to violence. If one thinks back to 2009-10, the public mood was based on the idea that the Constituent Assembly (CA) would decide on a suitable federal structure, and that would be that. If any structure was agreed on then, there would have undoubtedly been some opposition and dissent, but nothing close to the scale we are seeing today. In essence, at the time, the spirit, hope and togetherness of the Jana Andolan was yet to wear off and that was perhaps the only genuine window of opportunity to push through something as fragile as federalism. As the years passed, so did the belief in many of the promises of the agenda for 'change', including federalism.

Bahun and Chetris in western Nepal had a penny-dropping moment and realised they too wanted a stake in the pie, causing a widespread north-south federal agenda to develop. In fact, in the aftermath of the Jana Andolan, for a few years, many people (mostly Bahun and Chhetris) were apprehensive about publicly disowning or disagreeing with the 14-state model which came out of CA-1's State Restructuring Committee. They didn't want to be seen as 'anti-federalist', 'regressive', 'status-quoist' and

as a voice of 'the oppressor.' But over-time that fear wore off and as people began to become more vocal, the polarisation became more evident. As governments changed and they heeded the demands of the majority, the promises which were made to minorities were going to be broken. Promises for self-rule, entire states and rights that are barely enjoyed in even the most developed democracies were handed out to groups as though the government was King throwing gifts at the subjects. The agreements of the past were obviously going to come back to haunt the leadership.

The question now is how to get through this federalism debacle without more death and violence, and without allowing the entire agenda and process to collapse entirely. The incidents of police firing at protesters are a worrying sign. Instead of brushing off protesters as being politically motivated, the state and citizenry would do well to acknowledge that the grievances are genuine and while political motivations are a reality, the emotional and irrational are also dangerously real.

It's like we're waiting while the croissants are in the oven to see if they can still be salvaged, despite having sat out in the open for far too long. One can only hope they won't end up bitter, flat, burnt *rotis*. 🇳🇵 @bidush

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# TRUST NO ONE

What do Nepalis think about parties, leaders, federalism and secularism?

OM ASTHA RAI

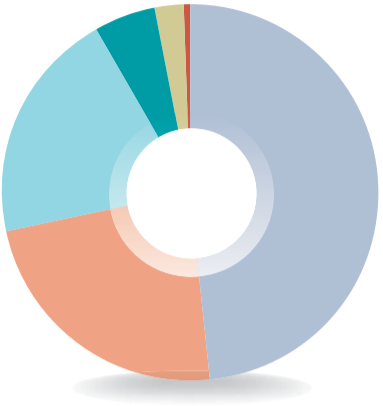
At a time when the four major parties are shaping Nepal's fate and future by scripting a new constitution, more than half of the population seems to think there is no political leader who is fit to be prime minister.

Nearly half the respondents in the Himalmedia National Public Opinion Survey 2015 that polled over 3,500 respondents across 35 districts from 3-10 August said none of the political parties can be relied on to build a peaceful and prosperous democratic country.

The astonishing survey results come at a time when the top leaders of the four parties are busy in closed-door negotiations to modify the boundaries of the six federal provinces that they had previously agreed to add to the draft constitution. Those boundaries are being hotly contested by indigenous groups and groups in western Nepal who want a Karnali province.

The Hindu royalist RPP-N has been criticising what it terms as a syndicate of the NC, the UML, the UCPN(M) and the MJF(D). But even this party is trusted by very few Nepalis. More than half the population has rejected its political agenda of a Hindu nation.

Compared to previous Himalmedia polls, the number of people against federalism based on ethnicity has grown to 80%,



and most of them think a North-South model incorporating the mountains, hills and plains is the best guarantee of prosperity in future.

The proportion of respondents who do not trust any political party has remained more or less constant at 40-44% in the past four annual Himalmedia surveys.

Although the major parties have hammered out most of the thorny issues impeding the constitution writing process in the aftermath of the April earthquake, their failure to control rising inflation, unemployment and corruption appears to be the primary reason why they are still not trusted.

Of the 58% of respondents supporting existing parties, 25.4% trust the NC while the UML has 13.4% people. In 2011, these two parties had support from 20% and 10.2% of respondents respectively. In 2013, the NC's popularity dipped to 13.4% while the UML's rose to 13.4%. The

## How should the constitution address the issue of religion?

- Hindu state **48.6%**
- Religious freedom **23.2%**
- Secularism **20.2%**
- Don't know **5.2%**
- No mention of religion **2.6%**
- Won't say **0.3%**

UCPN(M) continues to lose its pulling power, dipping to only 9.3% this year. In 2011, it had received an approval rating of 20.1%, even higher than the NC. But by 2013, its popularity ranking had slipped to 9.7% -- a figure that was corroborated by its defeat in elections that year.

The RPP-N, the fourth largest party in the Constituent Assembly (CA), ranks fourth as well in the Himalmedia Survey 2015. Despite spearheading a movement for a Hindu nation, it was supported by only just over 4% of respondents. Even the MJF(D) of Bijay Gachhadar, one of the signatories to the 8 August deal on the six-province federalism, received approval from only 1.1% respondents.

Disaggregated data from the survey responses show that younger Nepalis tend to tilt towards the UCPN(M) and Madhes-based parties, which are relatively new and still claim to be revolutionaries. The

older generation is with old and conventional parties. The NC is the favourite in the age group 40-59. Most Nepalis above 60 are with the pro-Hindu RPP-N. The UML is favoured by the age group 25-59.

The most surprising has been the disenchantment of Nepalis of the existing crop of leaders. Of those who agreed to choose a leader from the current breed, 10.4% said they wanted to see UCPN(M) leader Baburam Bhattarai as the next prime minister. Just over 7% wanted Sushil Koirala as PM even though he is due to step down. PM-in-waiting KP Oli got just under 6% approval. Although Bhattarai scored higher than most leaders, probably because of the public perception that he is a "do-er", his 10.4% is still much lower than the 54% of respondents who didn't think there was anyone good enough.

The other surprising trend is the continued fall of Pushpa Kamal Dahal in the popularity ratings. After topping the Himalmedia Survey for the first few years of the peace process, Dahal has been sliding continuously. Only 1.8% of respondents said they wanted to see Dahal as the next PM, which is less than percentages of approval received by the RPP-N Chair Kamal Thapa (3.1) and the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (FSFN) Chair Upendra Yadav (2%). Even Chitra Bahadur KC, who leads a fringe anti-federalism

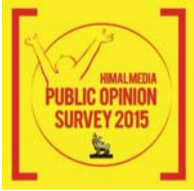
communist party, comes close to Dahal with approval from 1.2% respondents. NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba (4.8%) and UML leader Madhav Nepal (3%) have left him far behind.

Dahal's leadership role and new political astuteness in showing flexibility and pushing through two important deals on constitution and federalism in the past months doesn't seem to have helped him much.

NC youth leader Gagan Thapa is junior to all the prominent leaders and has never become a minister. However, he comes closer to Nepal and Deuba with approval of nearly 4% of respondents. Thapa's rising popularity is yet another sign that the people are frustrated with the current breed of leaders and are looking for younger faces.

Secularism doesn't seem to be very popular as a defining principle in the new constitution, with only about one in every five Nepalis supporting it. Nearly half of the respondents wanted Nepal to be a Hindu state. However, those who supported religious freedom, no mention of religion in the constitution or unwilling to comment adds up to 51.4% of the people opposed to Nepal being declared a Hindu nation. Interestingly, those against a Hindu state are evenly spread out across caste groups, ethnicities, literacy level and geographic regions.

The Himalmedia survey 2015 has once again reaffirmed the results of the past polls on federalism. As in the past, 80% respondents rejected ethnicity-based federalism with less than 12% supporting it. More than 83% respondents opposed to ethnicity-based federalism wanted North-South provinces. 🇳🇵



# It's governance, stupid

The parties are obsessed with politics, but people care more about inflation, joblessness and corruption

The sinking trust of average Nepalis in the political leadership, as shown by the Himalmedia Public Opinion Poll 2015, is neither a surprise nor a mystery. It is just yet another manifestation of the serious mismatch between the obsession of politicians and the people's priorities.

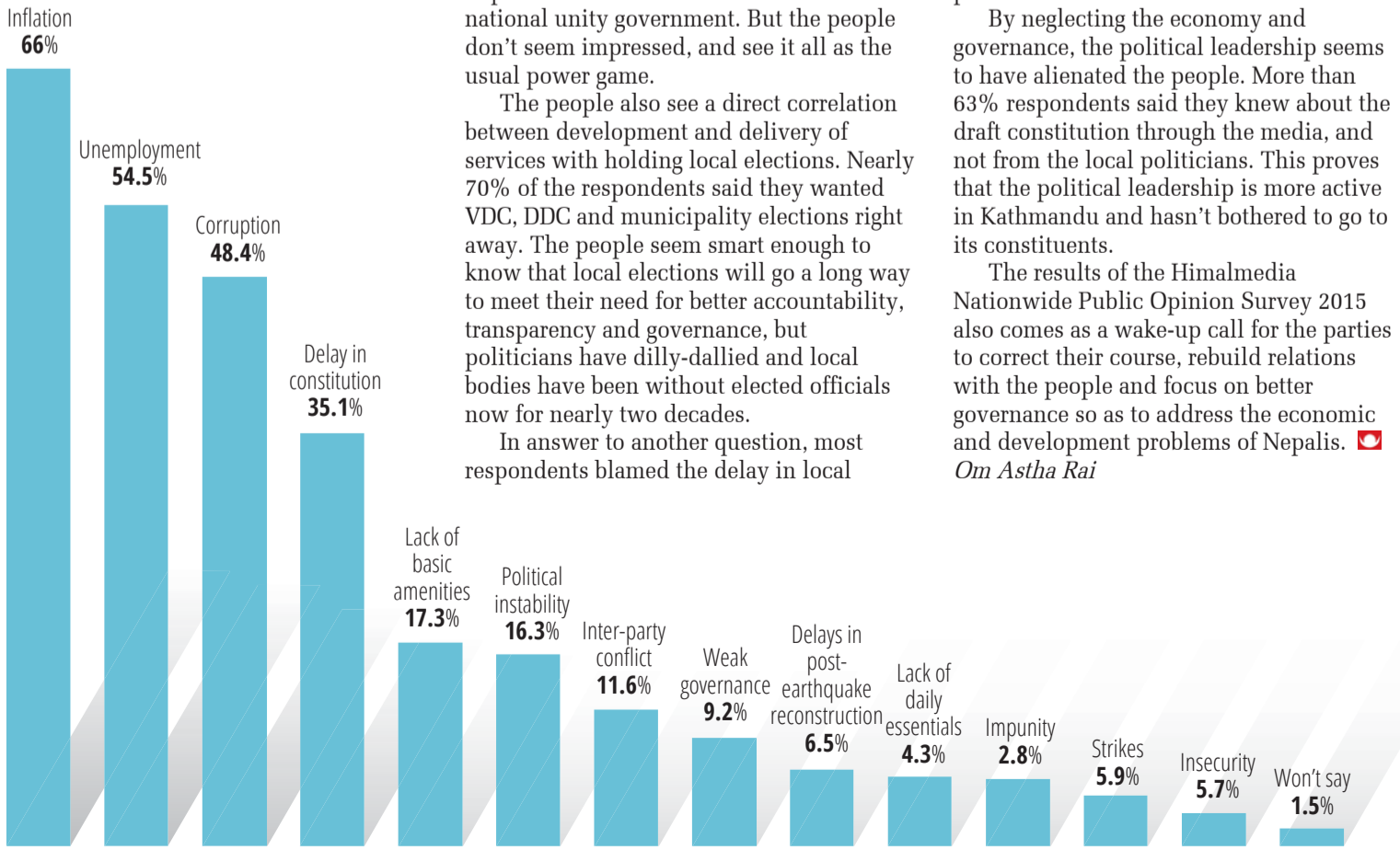
The political parties have spent the decade after the 2006 Democracy Movement that brought an end to the war wrangling over the new constitution. The main disagreements were over federalism, governance, secularism, elections and the judiciary. But the people don't seem to care much about the constitution, they are more concerned about inflation, unemployment and corruption.

Asked what the country's three top problems were, inflation (66%), unemployment (54.5) and corruption (48.4%) ranked on top. Only a third of the over 3500 respondents in 35 districts polled earlier this month considered the delay in passing a new constitution as a pressing problem.

There is disinterest bordering on apathy about the constitution whatever the age group, gender, domicile, or literacy level of the respondents. This is backed up by the answer to another question in which 76.8% said they hadn't bothered to give feedback to the draft constitution during the public consultation process.

Most Nepalis seem convinced that inflation and corruption is worse than before, and that the government is not capable of tackling them. An overwhelming majority of 92% people feel inflation is rising and 76.6% respondents say corruption is now worse than before. But 64% people say the Sushil Koirala government is either as bad as the

## What are the top three pressing problems facing the country?



previous government or even worse.

Before he became Prime Minister, Koirala struck a deal to step down in favour of the UML's KP Oli immediately after the new constitution was passed. This is why the political parties struck a deal on 8 June to pass the constitution and form a new national unity government. But the people don't seem impressed, and see it all as the usual power game.

The people also see a direct correlation between development and delivery of services with holding local elections. Nearly 70% of the respondents said they wanted VDC, DDC and municipality elections right away. The people seem smart enough to know that local elections will go a long way to meet their need for better accountability, transparency and governance, but politicians have dilly-dallied and local bodies have been without elected officials now for nearly two decades.

In answer to another question, most respondents blamed the delay in local

elections on the petty interests of political parties and not on the delays in the constitution. More than 41% of respondents said the parties were afraid of losing control over the all-party mechanisms that have become cartels for wholesale loot and plunder of local resources.

By neglecting the economy and governance, the political leadership seems to have alienated the people. More than 63% respondents said they knew about the draft constitution through the media, and not from the local politicians. This proves that the political leadership is more active in Kathmandu and hasn't bothered to go to its constituents.

The results of the Himalmedia Nationwide Public Opinion Survey 2015 also comes as a wake-up call for the parties to correct their course, rebuild relations with the people and focus on better governance so as to address the economic and development problems of Nepalis. 🇳🇵

Om Astha Rai

# Mother's name

Widespread coverage of protests in favour of citizenship in the name of mothers seems to have had an impact on public opinion. More than half of all respondents (55.7%) in the nationwide Himalmedia Poll considered the clause in the draft discriminatory. Equal numbers of men and women said citizenship should be issued either through father or mother's name. Percentage of respondents supporting this clause is higher in the mountains than in the hills and the Terai. Only 27.1% respondents said both father and mother should be Nepali citizens for their children to get Nepali citizenship. When the Himalmedia survey was underway, citizenship provisions in the draft that activists labeled 'regressive' had not yet been revised.

On 8 August, the four political parties inked a fresh deal to revise citizenship provisions. The provisions say either father or mother should be Nepali citizen for their children to get Nepali citizenship. But rights groups are still not satisfied and say the revised version has many loopholes.

A child born to a Nepali mother and a foreigner father can get Nepali citizenship by descent but their father should have acquired naturalised citizenship. If a foreigner father married to a Nepali mother does not forego his original citizenship and does not possess Nepali naturalised citizenship, their children can claim just naturalised citizenship. But even for that, he has to produce evidence that he has not acquired citizenship of the country where his father is from.

# Have faith

The results of Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey 2015 that polled over 3,500 people across the country earlier this month are consistent with the past surveys in reiterating that among existing institutions Nepalis tend to trust the media the most, but have the least faith in their own government.

Respondents from 35 districts were representative of the demographic diversity of caste, ethnicity, gender, age groups, literacy levels and geographic regions.

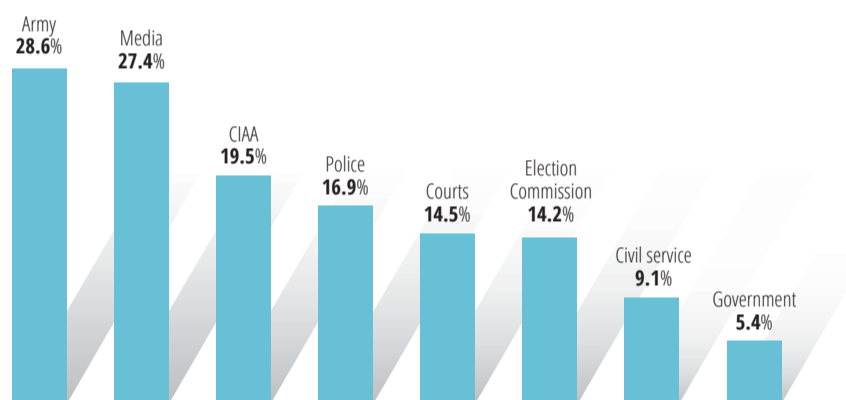
Nearly 90 per cent said they have 'great trust' or 'just enough' trust in the media which is slightly higher than the 2012 Survey where it was 87%. But there is a subtle warning in the disaggregated data: if journalists do not behave more responsibly the high level of trust in journalists could slip. The percentage of people having 'great trust' in the media went down from 31% to 27.4% in three years.

On the contrary, as in previous annual surveys just 56.4% people trust their own government. Of them, only 5.4% have 'great trust' and 51% have 'just enough trust'. When it comes to the least trusted institutions, civil servants are second only to the government with approval from just 63.3% respondents.

The army was one of the least trusted institutions in Himalmedia Surveys conducted after the 2006 People's Movement. But it has regained its reputation steadily, and could surpass media in future. This year, 88.8% respondents trusted the army (up from 80% in 2012) and one reason could be wide media coverage of the Nepal Army's role in post-earthquake rescue and relief.

The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (73%), Elections Commission (86.1%), courts (78.2%) and police (76.4%) have been, by and large, able to retain the trust which people had in them during the past Himalmedia surveys.

■ Which institutions do you trust the most?



## Royale Aspira

Asian Paints has launched a new premium crack-proof interior paint, Royale Aspira. The product comes with a five-year warranty. SMS "ASPIRA" to 6677 or log on to [www.asianpaintsnepal.com](http://www.asianpaintsnepal.com) for more information.

## New partners

LOT Polish Airlines and Turkish Airlines have announced an expansion of commercial ties and strategic partnership. Passenger benefits include travelling only on one ticket on some routes.



# Happy 30

Dragon Air celebrated its 30th anniversary and held its annual Agency Awards Function in Kathmandu. Awards including for its top Passenger and Cargo Agents in Nepal were handed out.

## Branching out

Prabhu Bank recently opened a new branch in Sandhikharka, Arghakhanchi district. The branch replaces the one in Dang which was closed earlier this year.



## Samsung goodies

Samsung has announced the launch of two new smartphones, Galaxy J5 and J7. Its features include 13 MP camera and 1.5 GB of RAM among others. J5 is priced at Rs 21,900 and J7 at Rs 25,900.



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BIKRAM RAI

# Surveying survivors

Those hit by the earthquake have been living in temporary shelters for four months now, and waiting for help to rebuild

OM ASTHA RAI

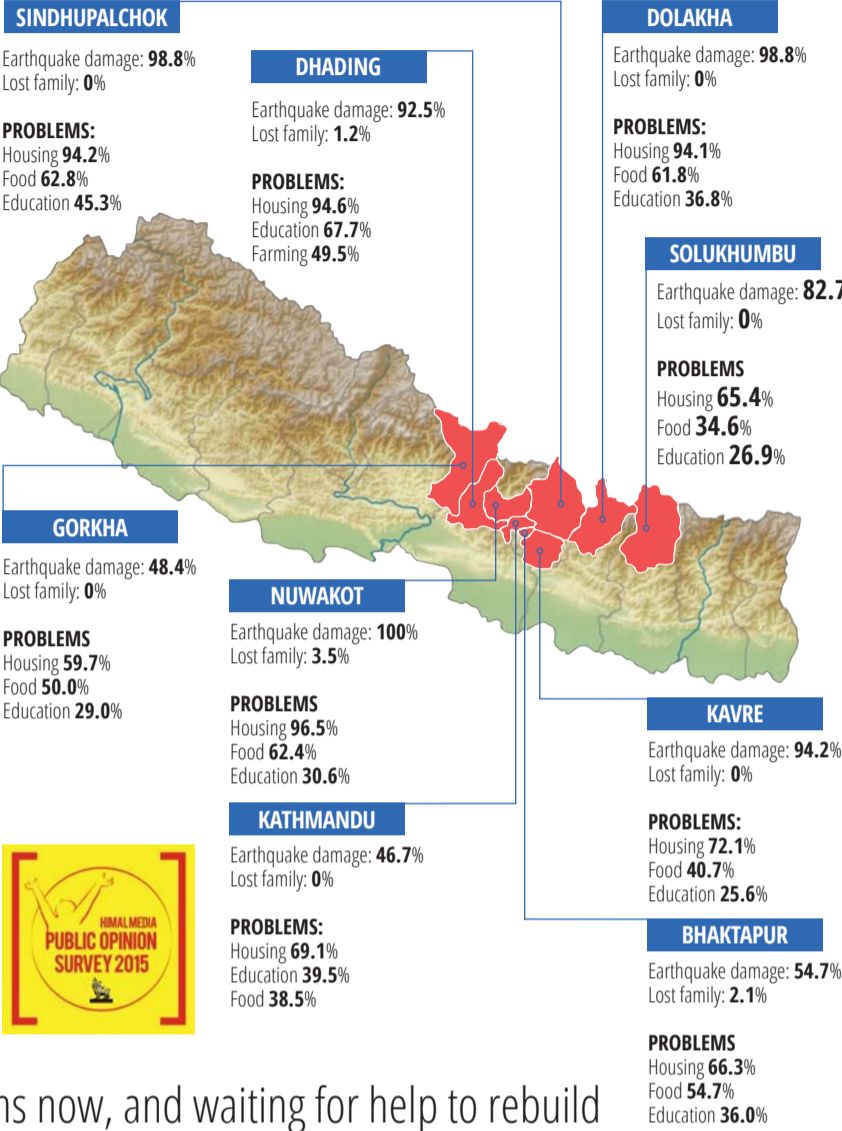
The annual Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey this year also carried out a special poll in 14 districts to gauge the impact of the earthquake and relief work. The results have reinforced the perception that the state's response to the April-May earthquakes has been slow and inadequate. Nearly four months on most earthquake survivors are still in temporary shelters and have not started rebuilding their damaged houses because of the delay in formation of the National Reconstruction Authority. Most of them also still need emergency food and relief for another year. Only 2.8% of the earthquake

survivors polled earlier this month said they did not wait for the government's support and have rebuilt houses on their own. An additional 33.2 % said they repaired their damaged houses and are now living there. But 54.4 % survivors said they are still in temporary shelters and waiting for the government's support. Some survivors are in tents (2.6%), relatives' houses (2.4%) and rented rooms (3.5%). The government finally appointed the National Planning Commission's Govinda Raj Pokhrel as the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority. He will need time to prepare a framework and guidelines for the distribution of the reconstruction grant. That may take till October at least.

The Survey showed that housing (69%), food (43%) and children's education (36.2%) are the top three problems facing the earthquake survivors. Shelter is an even more pressing problem in worst-hit districts like Sindhupalchok (94.2%), Dhading (94.6%) and Nuwakot (96.5%) with less of an issue in Solukhumbu (65.4%) and Khotang (60%). Only 9.3% respondents in this sub-survey of the Himalmedia Opinion Poll said they received relief within the first week. Nearly half the respondents (49.2%) said they received relief much later. And 34.9% respondents complained that they had got nothing at all. Nearly one in every two survivors (45.2%) felt

## What are the three major problems you are facing after the earthquake?

(Survey conducted in 14 districts, 21 Municipalities, 15 VDCs and 81 wards with 1,060 individuals.)



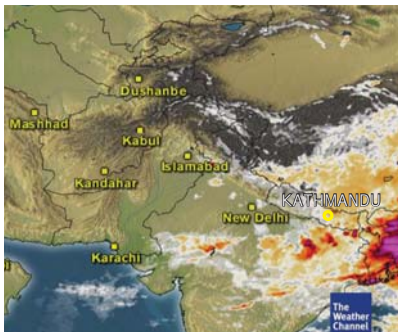
discriminated against in distribution of relief supplies. Affiliation with political parties (54.5%), connection with parties, leaders or government offices (50.9%) and economic status (46.1%) were perceived as the top three reasons for discrimination. Caste or ethnicity ranked fourth at 15.9%. Despite this, most survivors say they will need relief aid into the future, with a third or more saying they will need help for another year. Survivors wanting relief for three months and six months were 16.9% and 26% respectively, while only 14.2% said they no longer need help. The NPC's Reconstruction Policy emphasises rehabilitation of the earthquake survivors in their own villages. But more

than half the survivors say they want to be relocated in safer areas. Only 38% said they want to remain where they are. The survey has also unearthed an interesting aspect of social harmony. After the earthquake, the government was flayed for its painfully inadequate response but security forces were hailed for their prompt rescue operations. But the survey shows it was the neighbours who played the most important role in rescue. Of the all respondents who were rescued alive, 53.7% said they would have died had it not been for their neighbours digging them out. Similarly, 35.2% said they were rescued by their own family members. Only 11.1% said they were rescued by the security forces. 🇳🇵

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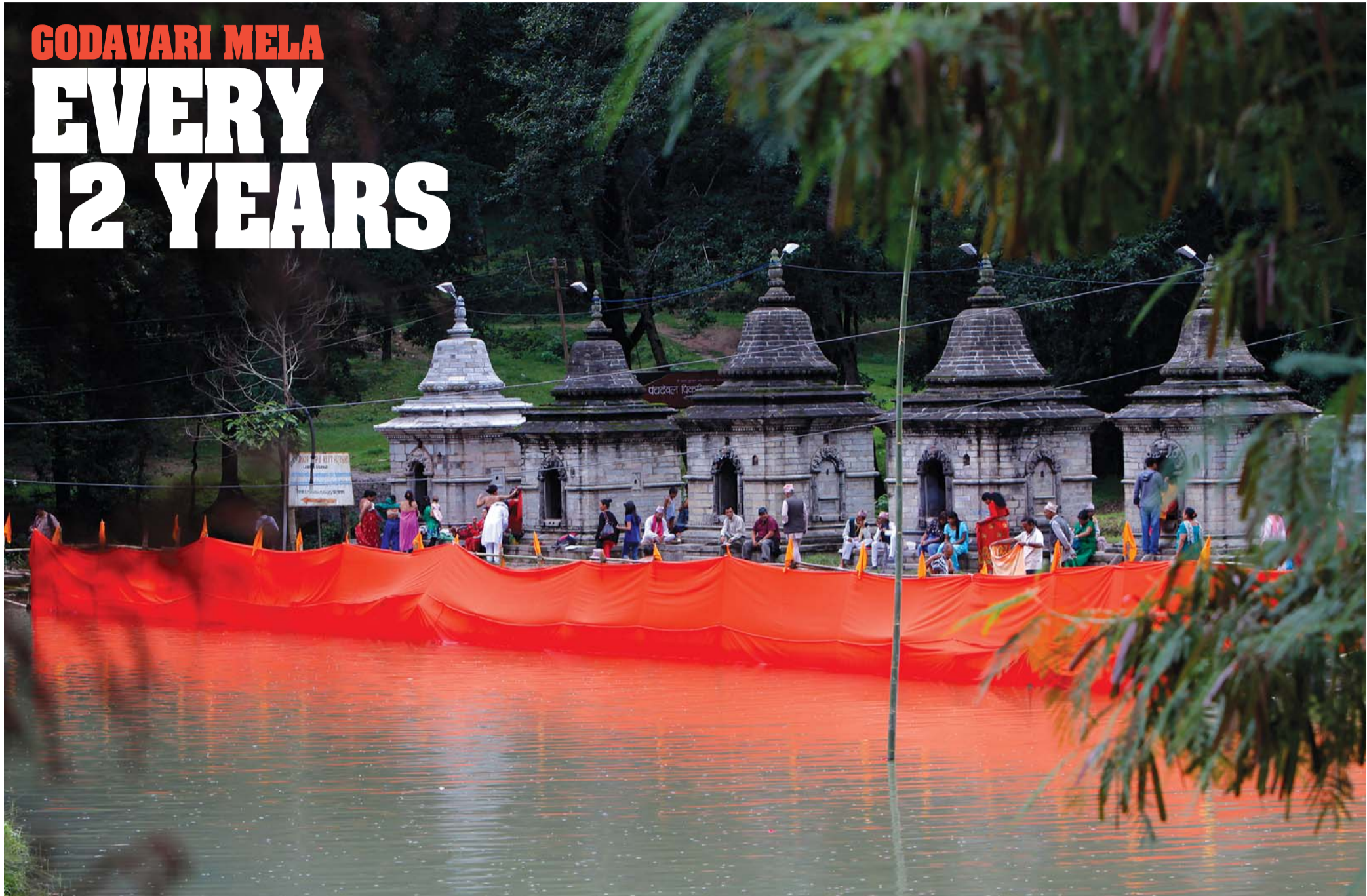


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PICS: BIKRAM RAI

When people talk about the festivals of Kathmandu Valley, they mention Shivaratri, Dasain or Tihar. But there is one festival that happens every 12 years that in terms of number of pilgrims is larger than all others put together: the Godavari Mela.

The month-long festival saw 2 million visitors in 2003, but this year organisers estimate there will be at least double as many pilgrims from all parts of Nepal and India. Already the road from Patan to Godavari on the lush and forested southeastern edge of the Valley is crowded with buses, people and shops.

The festival officially started on Tuesday when about 400 priests and devotees left a temple in Harisiddhi at 2am towards Godavari escorted by 15 musical bands. Among the pilgrims was the main priest of the village, Shiva Ram who formally opened the event.

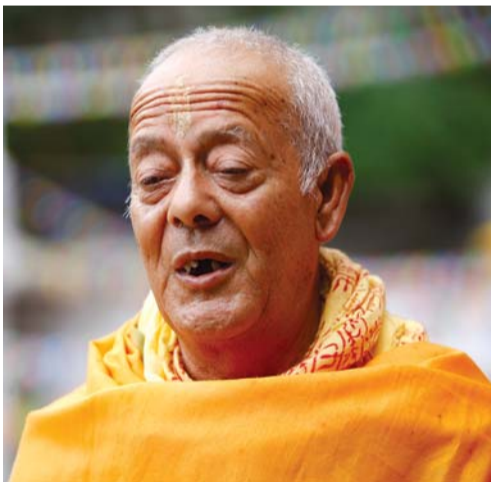
Ajay Maharjan is in the organising committee of the festival and explains that the Godavari Mela officially began when Shiva Ram reached the holy pond and poured milk

into it, took his holy dip, and was followed by 28 other priests who entered the pond one by one, the older ones first.

The festival is said to date back at least 1,000 years to the Lichhavi period, and was later adopted by the Malla kings of the Valley. The crystal clear waters of the springs of Godavari below Phulchoki, the highest mountain on the Valley rim, are said to be linked to a river of the same name in southern India.

Godavari's holy pond with five *dhunge dhara* (stone spouts) is believed to have been formed when the oceans were churned and one drop of *amrit* (nectar) that came out fell on Godavari and the other in Nasik in India.

Bahadev Baral, 75, (right) from Godavari has written a book on the Godavari Mela and quotes the legend that one of the seven saints of Hinduism, Gautam Rishi, was once grazing his cattle when one of his cows fell off a cliff and died. He asked Lord Shiva to help, and was told to pray to Ganga. That night the river goddess appeared in a dream and the next day the waters of the Ganga



somehow came to Godavari, at a time of the auspicious conjunction of Jupiter with the Sun - which happens every 12 years. The saint is then supposed to have built the Siddheshwar Temple beside the pond at Godavari Kunda.

"From that day, the Godavari Mela occurs on this same day Ganga appeared to Rishi, every 12 years," Baral explained.

In the coming weeks, hundreds of thousands of devotees will take a holy dip in the two ponds of Godavari to receive redemption and to worship Lord Shiva.

Sumbu Puri, a fifth generation priest of Godavari says the Mela is attracting more pilgrims this year, compared to 2003. "Twelve years ago we had mainly people coming from the Kathmandu Valley," Puri said. "This year we see people from all over Nepal and India."

Dhunu Singh Takuri, 40, a devotee from Swayambhu says she has come to Godavari Mela to thank Lord Shiva for having survived the April earthquake. "The earthquake reinforced my belief that Gods exist," she added.

The Godavari Mela will see special days to mark Janai Purnima and Rishi Tarpani on 29 September, and Tij on 16 September. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

■ Photo gallery and video

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HONDA

EVENTS



## Nepal Cup 2015,

A charity football tournament to raise funds for quake-damaged schools and promote the country as a tourist attraction.  
2 to 4 October, Dasarath Rangasala Stadium, Tripureshwor, [info@nepalcup2015.com](mailto:info@nepalcup2015.com), [www.nepalcup2015.com](http://www.nepalcup2015.com)

## Homage,

A British artist explores the concepts of identity and self-empowerment through painting.  
Inauguration on 23 August, 5.30pm, till 6 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4218048



## E-Sports Carnival,

The biggest gaming calendar event.  
25 August, Civil Mall, for registration [www.ngamersclub.com](http://www.ngamersclub.com)

## Learn to animate,

A workshop on use of stop motion animation techniques for story telling.  
Rs 500, 26 to 28 August, 9.30am to 3pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)5523486, [collective@sattya.org](mailto:collective@sattya.org)

## Building better,

A workshop and discussion on the benefits of earthbag building and earthquake resistant design.  
4 September, 10am to 5pm, The Summit Hotel, Sanepa

## Wholeness,

Artist Puran Khadka, whose work is a meditative abstraction full of spiritual awakening exhibits his paintings.  
Till 30 October, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307, [contact@parkgallery.com.np](mailto:contact@parkgallery.com.np)



## The Yeti Run,

Test your strength, stamina and teamwork at Nepal's first obstacle race.  
26 September, St Xavier's School, Godavari, 9841226397,

## Think and Talk,

A talk by Dr. Ramesh Prasad Pandey, a Research Professor at Sun Moon University in South Korea, on Metabolic Engineering and Synthetic Biology.  
21 August, 3pm to 5pm, Kantipur Valley College, Kumaripati, [info@talkbiotech.org](mailto:info@talkbiotech.org), [www.talkbiotech.org](http://www.talkbiotech.org)

## Call for submission,

Photographers, curators, photo-based artists, historians, anthropologists are invited to submit works and ideas for digital projection, discussions, performances on the theme 'TIME'.  
Deadline 15 September, [www.photoktm.com](http://www.photoktm.com)



## Support,

A special fund-raising print sale to contribute towards the rebuilding of heritage sites in Patan by Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT)  
[www.photoktm.com](http://www.photoktm.com)  
[pareshkshrestha@gmail.com](mailto:pareshkshrestha@gmail.com)

## Run for Nepal,

A 5k virtual race to raise fund for Oxfam Intermón which is helping victims of Nepal earthquake.  
12 September, [www.irunfornepal.com](http://www.irunfornepal.com)

## Get inspired,

United States Education Fund Nepal hosts guest speaker Aakarshan Dhakal to tell his story of how he used simplicity and self-reflection to turn adversity into opportunities.  
1 September, 2.30pm to 3.30pm, USEF, Gyaneswor, Kathmandu, (01)4444779, (01)4444780, [fulbcomm@fulbrightnepal.org.np](mailto:fulbcomm@fulbrightnepal.org.np)

## How to rebuild?

A discussion on vernacular architecture and its scope, potential and challenges in post-earthquake reconstruction with Randolph Langenbach, Conservation Architect and Kishore Thapa, President of Society of Nepalese Architecture.  
24 August, 5pm to 6.30, Alliance Francaise, (01)4241163, (01)4242832, [general.afk@gmail.com](mailto:general.afk@gmail.com). [www.alliancefrancaise.org.np](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.np)



## Photo contest,

An open photography contest on the theme 'Women's Literacy' organised by the Non Formal Education Center and UNESCO.  
Deadline 25 August, [pe.wong@unesco.org](mailto:pe.wong@unesco.org).

## Quake photobook,

Nepal425 launches a crowd-sourcing drive for printing a coffee table book featuring 700 pictures of the earthquake. All proceeds from the sales will go to the quake-affected.  
[www.nepal425.com](http://www.nepal425.com)

DINING



## Manny's,

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Jawalakhel, (01)5536919

## Kaiser Cafe,

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Thamel, (01)4425341



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Kirtipur

## Friday BBQ,

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Rs2238 nett per person (including a can of beer or soft drink or 30ml local alcoholic beverage), every Friday 6.30pm, Fusion Bar & Pool side, The Dwarika's Hotel, (01)4479488, [sales@dwarikas.com](mailto:sales@dwarikas.com)



## Vootoo,

The new home of Newari cuisine and a continental menu for those who want to play it safe.  
Lajimpat, (01)4005222

MUSIC

## Open mic,

Calling all aspiring singers.  
Every Tuesday, 7pm, House of Music, Thamel, Thamel, 9851075172, [sanzey@hotmail.com](mailto:sanzey@hotmail.com)



## Bass Tunnel,

Ranzen Jha will deliver beats for the body, bass for the soul.  
22 August, 9pm, Club 25 Hours, Tangal, (01)4437486, [club25hours@gmail.com](mailto:club25hours@gmail.com)

GETAWAYS



## Atithi Resort & Spa,

A quiet sanctuary that fuses Nepali tradition with modern amenities, complete with a fancy pool and a cosy restaurant.  
Lakeside, Pokhara, (06)1466760, [info@atithiresort.com](mailto:info@atithiresort.com)

## Milla Guesthouse,

If you prefer the quiet, and admire a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far from the city, yet miles apart.  
Bhaktapur, 9851024137



## Park Village Resort,

Yoga, detox and ayurveda treatment in a quiet corner of Kathmandu.  
Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, 01-4370286, [peace@wellness.com.np](mailto:peace@wellness.com.np)

## Jhule Mountain Resort,

Resting 2050m above sea level, the eco-resort has a farmhouse that stretches across a hill covered in fresh pine. Enjoy an organic homestay experience.  
Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, Lapsipedi-3, Jhule, (01)6212399, info [at] [jhuleresort.com.np](http://jhuleresort.com.np), <http://jhuleresort.com/>



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# Reality show

After being featured at the Dhaka Art Summit in February 2014, Hitman Gurung is exhibiting his new creations at the 8<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT8) in Brisbane, Australia starting 21 November.

As with the event last year Gurung has made three huge paintings (2m x 1.5m) delving into the struggles of Nepali migrant workers, a subject that has consumed this sensitive artist since 2012.

Nepalis had a preview of the Brisbane exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery as well as some of the artwork from the Dhaka event last year, *I have to feed myself, my family and my country* this week.

The dyptic *Yellow Helmet* and *Gray House* tells the story of Taju Gurung, a 16-year-old from Lamjung who was crushed under falling debris at a factory in Saudi Arabia where he was working. Next to the picture of the yellow helmet painted over rows of skyscrapers in Saudi Arabia, is a



realistic painting representing Taju's parents holding his passport. The 'gray house' refers to the one they built with the life insurance they got after their son's death.

*9.11am* portrays a man sweating, wearing a yellow helmet and holding a football. A patchwork of photographs showing places


destroyed by the earthquake are in the background. It was 9.11am in Qatar when the earthquake hit Nepal on 25 April.

This canvas alludes to the situation of many Nepalis building stadiums in Qatar for the 2022 World Cup who weren't allowed to come back to their country to help the

reconstruction of their devastated homes.

The *Blank Frame* depicts a body on a wheelchair with an empty photo frame in place of the head. In the background are watermark prints of what look like holiday pictures. The empty frame suggests this could be anybody, or that frames are used only to hold photographs of joyful moments (like in the background), but not pain.

The triptych *Contemporary portrait of 75 districts* shows three world maps drawn in red on newspapers. Passport photographs with scratches on the faces are depicted on the maps. This series powerfully implies that Nepalis may lose their identity as migrant workers (their passport are often confiscated by employers). This batch is rough, in contrast to the other paintings which are sharp and precise.

Gurung researches his subject matter, meets relatives of dead migrant workers to come up with his stories. His message is then conveyed visually and accompanied by long descriptions. *I have to feed myself, my family and my country* acts more like a documentary. Even if it is art, these large paintings are based on real stories with explicit captions that bring us face-to-face with the unbearable truths of individual stories.  Stéphane Huët

# Piano B



'Keep calm and eat pasta,' is the motto of this Italian restaurant in Jawalakhel that calls itself the 'Pastapur' of Nepal. The radio, tuned to an Italian station, provides the perfect score to the setting largely dominated by wine bottles. So far, so good.

A look at Piano B's menu (written in Italian) and we were so pleased the restaurant didn't give into the lure of listing every cuisine under the sun. The menu offers limited but authentic fares, and we were informed is changed

weekly by the chef.

We started our meal with the Italian classic Bruschetta al Pomodoro (Rs 450) or Bruschetta with tomatoes, unsure if the food here was going to live upto its reputation. One bite and our doubts seemed totally unfounded. Simple in its making, the garlic rubbed bread topped with freshly sliced tomatoes, basil and a drizzle of olive oil tasted fresh and delicious.

For our main course we had Spaghetti Alla Puttanesca (Rs 750), also known as the Slut's Pasta in

English. While visually appealing, the pasta sauce, a reduction of chopped garlic and anchovies mixed with sundried tomatoes, black olives and capers tasted a bit insipid and we couldn't stop ourselves from reaching out for salt and pepper. The pasta however had a lovely, silky texture and the serving was generous.

To end our meal before stepping out in Kathmandu's heat, we decided to try the Sorbetto al Mango (Rs 300). While the dessert was dense and flavoursome, the

chocolate dripping on the top was a bit of an overkill. Unfortunately the Gelato which we had heard so much about was unavailable and the staff went to great lengths to explain how each dish is created from the freshest produce, the absence of which results in the dish not being available.

It is clear the restaurant pays a lot of attention to the produce it uses, importing a large number of ingredients from Italy and sourcing fresh produce from local market.

The menu also has a good

selection of Italian wine and fresh organic juices. The restaurant itself is very welcoming with both outdoor and indoor seating.

All in all if you are familiar with authentic Italian cuisine and understand its flavours, then Piano B is a must visit and even if not, it's a cozy new place to try and who knows, Italian food may just be Mama Mia to your palate.  Karma Gurung

*How to get there: Piano B is located in front of the DFID office near Alka Hospital in Bhanimandal.*



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STÉPHANE HUËT

Gundu in Bhaktapur is just a half-hour drive from Kathmandu, but it feels like one has travelled back in time. This is probably what Kathmandu Valley looked like in the last century: no cars, water buffaloes wallowing in muddy ponds, a clear brook gurgling down a forested hill. The only sign that we are in the year 2015 is a plane passing overhead.

At the edge of a slope women wearing rain-proof plastic sheets are weeding a dazzlingly emerald paddy field. There are pumpkins, capsicum, chillies and okra cultivated in patches. We are at the organic farm run by the Basnet sisters.

Gundu, a farming settlement is home to Kheti Bazaar started by Subechhya Basnet and her two sisters. Spread over five hectares the farm grows rice, wheat, corn, soybeans, potatoes, and pumpkins and also patches for capsicum, chilli, okras, oranges and lemons. Last month, the farm planted kiwi for the first time.

“The aim is to diversify our produce and customers,” says Subechhya who returned to Nepal after completing her MBA from Germany to expand the family’s small organic farm in Bansbari to supply produce to the family-owned Bhojan Griha and Kantipur Temple Hotel. Subechhya has involved her two sisters: Priyanka is helping out with marketing, and Prabighya looks at the day-to-day activities in the farm.

The desire to expand their supply chain gave birth to Kheti Bazaar which now sources products from other organic farmers in eastern Nepal. “They were looking for a market and we needed produce so it was a win-win for both,” says Subechhya.

The produce is sold in the premises of Bhojan Griha, a converted Rana-era building in Dilli Bazar and also at farmers’ markets around town. Initially the business was slow, the term ‘organic’ was still not a fad and

deliveries were irregular. But over the years the business picked up and the venture is now making money.

Unlike other organic markets in town which seem geared mostly to expats, a majority of Kheti Bazaar’s clientele are Nepali families, something the sisters are proud of. They encourage not just healthy eating but an environment conscious lifestyle too, discontinuing the use of plastics long before the government ban.

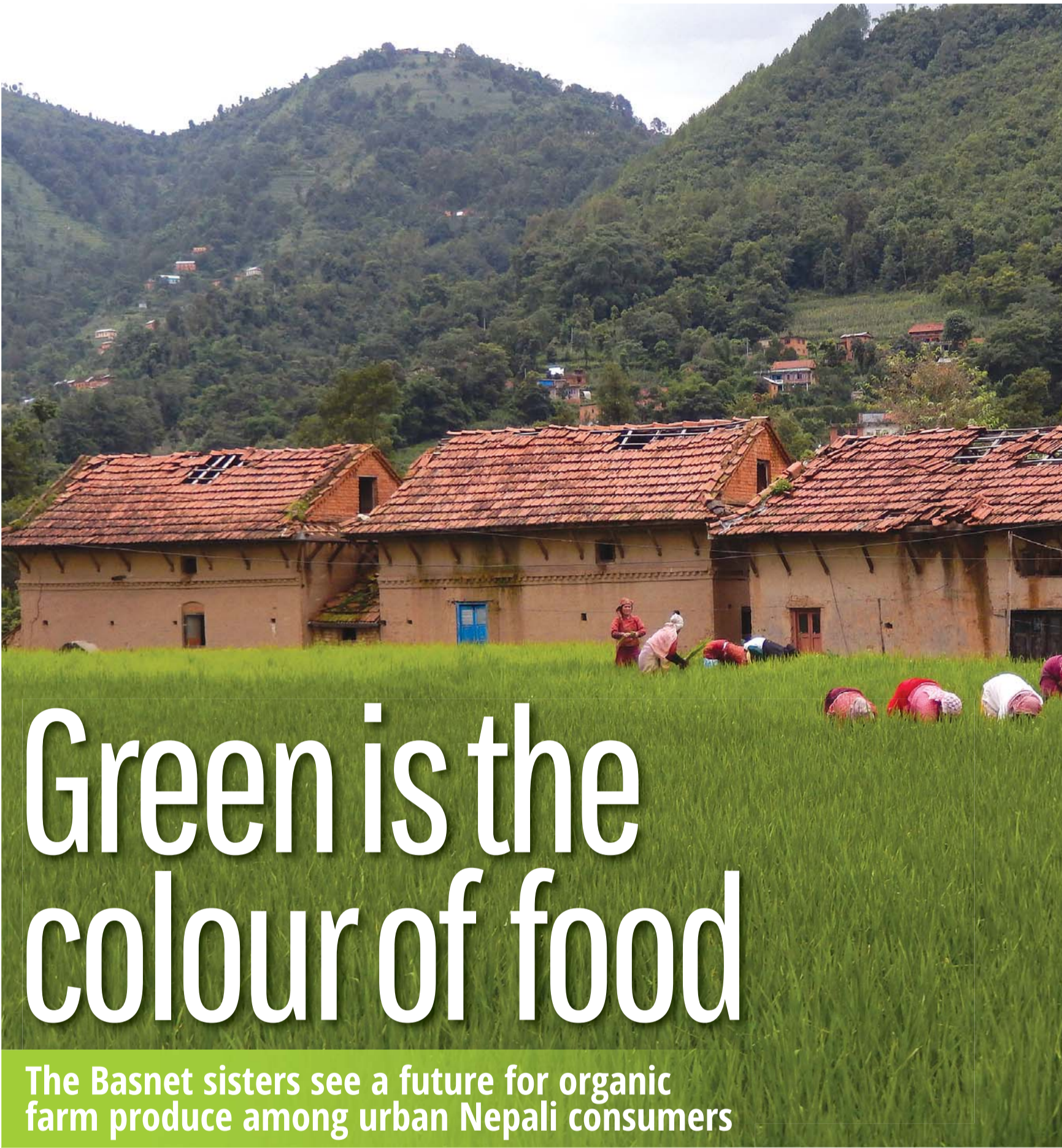
“Having a farmer mother and an environmentally conscious

father made us sensitive to environmental issues,” says Subechhya.

The sisters are currently looking to connect with more farmers and grow a niche market. Says Subechhya: “We cannot compete with countries which are into mass farming but we believe we can create a niche market that will benefit the country’s economy.”

[nepalitimes.com](#)

Watch video of Kheti Bazaar



# Green is the colour of food

## The Basnet sisters see a future for organic farm produce among urban Nepali consumers



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ALL PICS: GOPEN RAI

**SLOW FOOD:** (clockwise from left)

Women weed paddy fields in Gundu, where farm houses bear scars of the April earthquake.

Harvesting vegetables and chillies.

Subechhya Basnet returned to Nepal after her MBA in Germany to start the organic farm in Gundu.

An organic beans stall at the Kheti Bazaar daily market in Kathmandu.



Despite the absence of government monitoring in the organic farming sector, three private companies have been issuing certification to organic farms and products in nepal. But according to agronomist Madan Rai, certification should be the lowest of priorities in Nepal.

"The government should instead involve the farmers and give them incentives to develop the local organic sector," he says.

Besides the economic aspects, Rai points out the risk of depending on imported commercial agriculture. "We have the manpower and

all vegetables needed within the country, why should we increase dependency by importing?" he asks.

Rai says what is most needed is making the general public aware of the importance of consuming locally grown organic produce. He says: "Organic farming has always been a tradition in Nepal – long before it became a trend in the West."

Indeed, it is only commercialised farms supplying produce to the cities that use artificial fertilizers and agro-chemicals. Ninety per cent of Nepal's farmers still practice pure organic farming.



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When John Madden's *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* came out in 2012 nobody quite predicted what a hit it would be. But the film about a bunch of elderly Brits' on vacation in India



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

and their misadventures with hotel bookings struck a chord with viewers, all thanks to its stellar cast which included the likes of Maggi Smith, Judi Dench and Bill Nighy.


The same cast return, without quite as much success, to the unimaginatively named sequel. The dilapidated establishment

run by the disarmingly earnest Sonny Kapoor (Dev Patel) where the Brits stayed in the prequel is now thriving, with all the original inhabitants having decided to stay on. Run by an iron hand now with the help of the formerly extremely dour and still redoubtable Muriel Donnelly (the protean Maggie Smith) who co-manages the now homely hotel, Sonny and Muriel, newly triumphant with their successful venture, decide to expand.

The film begins with the two unlikely partners visiting California to pitch their idea to Ty Burley (the handsome silver haired David Strathairn) a hotel magnate who they hope will invest in their brainchild - an old people's hotel franchise. The two return to Jaipur and to their old and young friends filled with a kind of glee, having been

told that a hotel inspector will anonymously visit them, after which a decision will be made.

The inhabitants of the hotel, not a single one of them being under a certain age, are up to their own shenanigans, most of which are continuations of romances struck up in the first film. The most tender and charming of which involves the shy but determinedly independent Evelyn Greenslade (Judi Dench) and Douglas Ainslie (Bill Nighy) – a blundering, adorably reticent English gentlemen who worships Evelyn’s gentleness, particularly after having been so ill-treated by his battle-axe of a wife in the previous installment.

Sonny too is finally engaged to the lovely but slightly vacuous Sunaina (Tina Desai), a union which also clearly addles his own brains, for never has a character been written and brought to life with such little finesse. Patel's usual boyish charm flounders in his ill-wrought role as the neurotic Sonny who flaps about his precious hotel setting everyone on edge, including his bewildered, beautiful mother Mrs. Kapoor (the luminous Lillette Dubey), as he tries to suss out the anonymous hotel inspector. Viewers, fans, be warned, nothing can save this film except the talents of the likes of Dench, Smith, and Nighy - who do ultimately end up salvaging this just about bearable wreck of a film. 



■ Trailer 

## HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM R.

**DUNGA DIPLOMACY:** Political leaders, diplomats and lawmakers are welcomed to the Bagmati Festival on Saturday by organiser Megh Ale (*right*).



BIKRAM R

**UNDERWATER:** Sixty-year-old Shanti Lama of Shantinagar tries to salvage belongings from her house which got submerged after Sunday night's heavy rainfall.



BIKRAM R

**NO MORE:** A CPN-M cadre enforcing a shutdown in Kathmandu on Sunday is carried off by police.



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**STAR POWER:** Indian actor Kunal Kapoor with children in Duwachaur of Sindhupalchok on Saturday. Kapoor along with other Bollywood stars had helped raise funds for CARE Nepal.

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# Characters that stay on

The strength of *Unlikely Storytellers* is not so much the plot but the intriguing characters

We all have stories – stories of love and lust, sin and shenanigans or despair and death. Some stories are never meant to be known, and die with the protagonists. Some stories we would wish to tell the world, but maybe no one cares to listen.

*Unlikely Storytellers* by English language Nepali journalist Bikash Sangraula is a collection of compelling stories that leave the reader strangely hooked, and craving for more. Page after page, readers may feel they want to know more about the characters but the writer offers just enough of a tantalising glimpse and leaves the rest to our imagination. The characters stay with you long after you put the book down, and while walking the streets you wonder if the strangers you pass have similar life stories.

Deepak is a central character, but his story is not the soul of the novel. Instead, the characters he runs into share the more powerful stories, which make you feel sad. *Unlikely Storytellers* is not an out and out dark novel --there are lighter moments-- but one could say it isn't escapist literature.

Because Deepak is a journalist and edits the Saturday supplement of an English daily, one wonders if it is semi-autobiographical. He has a live-in girlfriend who later dumps him because of his lack of passion for life. He lives a routine life, afraid of trying anything new but is good at listening to people, writing their stories and protecting their secrets. This is why people, mostly strangers, end up sharing their stories with him.

One wonders if the stories Deepak hears are the ones Sangraula relates to. Right from the first few paragraphs, the characters

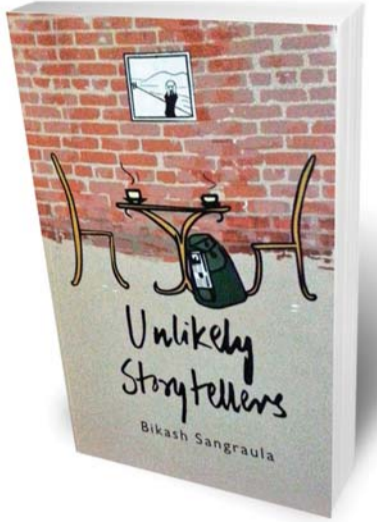


**THE UNVEILING:** British Council Country Director Brendan McSharry (left) and Regional Director Stephan Roman launched Bikash Sangraula's novel *Unlikely Storytellers* in Kathmandu last month.

pop up one after other and begin to tell their stories. There are many memorable characters, but the remorseful retired civil servant Ananta, the mysterious lady Megha, the embittered husband Kailash, the inconsolable friend Karuna and the guilt-ridden ex-guerrilla Tara are the central ones.


There are also the mentally unstable Maya and the drug addict Naren. Deepak does not meet them in person, but their stories are just as lively.

The writer's strength is not creating an intriguing or intricate plot, but building interesting characters around a simple



*Unlikely Storytellers*  
Bikash Sangraula  
nepa-laya  
Rs 375

storyline. Sangraula must have worked hard to develop even the minor characters. And you despise neither of them -- even the arrogant body-builder Pradeep who sleeps with someone else's wife or the unforgiving father who calls his own daughter a 'whore.' Instead, you end up pitying them.

If you have lived through the painful years between the Narayanhiti massacre and the April earthquake, you can relate to the stories of *Unlikely Storytellers*. They are stories of people we are all familiar with.   
*Om Astha Rai*

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# E-sports comes to town

Although Nepal still has a long way to go, online gaming is becoming the rage

**SAHINA SHRESTHA**

A well timed echo slam by the Earthshaker, a creature that resembles a cross between Chewbacca of Star Wars and The Beast from a Disney fantasy won a North American team \$6 million at this year's The International, DOTA 2's signature competition. An estimated 4.5 million fans streamed the match online and the play set the Internet buzzing.

Halfway around the world from Seattle, Civil Mall at Sundhara is gearing up for the fourth edition of Nepal's own competition, the Colors Mobile E-sports Carnival which hopes to emulate the success of the international event.

Starting 25 August, the first three floors of Civil Mall will be converted to an e-sports battle arena. The six day event will have more than 500 gamers competing in four games: DOTA 2, FIFA 15 One on One,



NGAMERS CLUB

FIFA 15 Two on Two, and Ashphalt 8 on PC, console and mobile gaming platforms. The gamers will compete for a total prize pot of Rs 200,000, a shiny trophy and the chance to be called national e-sports champions.

"Online gaming is a hidden market in

Nepal with a potential for growth," says Ayush Raj Tuladhar of NGamers Club, the organiser of the event. "The past three editions show this trend."

From 2012, when the NGamers club held the tournament for the first time to their fourth edition in 2015, the cash prize has increased three-fold and the number of participants has multiplied even more.

Finding a venue, sponsors as well as media attention for the event has become easier too. "Nowadays sponsors even have a separate budget for e-sports in their marketing budget," says Tuladhar. "E-sports tournaments attract huge crowd of fans and players which increases the footfall at the venue. This has led to malls approaching us to host the event." This year, organisers estimate at least 1,000 visitors daily.

Video games have been around for decades, but what is happening now in Nepal would have been unthinkable a few years ago. As broadband internet access spreads, gaming is no longer limited to LAN parties in cyber cafes but has emerged as a mass media platform with multiple forms of consumption.

But Nepal still has a long way to go to produce professional gamers who can compete internationally. And it is still very much male-dominated. 🇳🇵



GOPEN RAI

## FEMME FATALE

Trying to change the perception that serious gaming is only for boys is 19-year-old undergrad Samyo Hangma Rai. When she is not busy with assignments as a Social Work student, Rai spends hours in front of the screen honing her skills at DOTA 2.

"Growing up amongst five brothers I took up gaming to fit in. But now it has become my passion," says Rai, who is popularly known by her gaming nickname Twiix and Rukietsu.

In 2012, Rai co-founded Fatal Females, a group of five women gamers with Bhumika Rana. "Competitions were nerve wrecking at first, but the crowd as well as the community were supportive."

Rai admits there is a difference between how boys and girls play. "I know guys who can concentrate fully on playing but with girls you are expected to help out with household and other chores. It is harder if parents are not supportive," says Rai.

"When I started playing DOTA, I didn't even know what each hero did. But through practice I got better," says Rai, who dreams of playing for Ukrainian based team Na Vi. "If given an opportunity I would definitely like to play professionally and become a professional gamer."

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

■ Watch video of Samyo Hangma Rai



# Depressed damsels

**Hello everyone,**

Last week in my column 'Girl talk: Maybe baby', I wrote about how women are expected to fulfill a collection of roles and be good at all of them. Although we know we cannot be good at everything, we expect others to excel and if they don't, we attack their values



**ASK ANJANA ANYTHING**

Anjana Rajbhandary



and question their upbringing. Having high expectations puts a lot of pressure on people. Women in Nepal generally try to do everything without complaining as it shows so-called strength. But we all have a limit to how much we can tolerate without breaking and when life gets rough, it is more likely

for one to get depressed. There has not been a lot of research on depression among South Asian women as it is still considered taboo. I don't doubt that there are hundreds of women who keep it together for the outside world but

are completely broken on the inside. Depression can be caused by many factors: biological, cultural or social. Whatever the cause, you owe it to yourself to go see a professional because you need to take care of yourself.

Send me your questions to: [askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com](mailto:askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com) or @AnjyRajjy

**I am lazy, disorganized, sluggish and completely unmotivated. I am nearing thirty, and have no interest in anything except eating junk. I have an enviable job but I hate going to work each day, and my performance is a sham. I wake up wretched and go to bed restless. I feel resentful all the time thinking of my status as a 'daughter-in-law', which I find demeaning and humiliating. Perhaps this is nothing more than a quarter-life crisis, but everything is dull and dreary and pointless. Outwardly, I am pretty, agreeable, extremely happy, and my career growth is on a high. I am married to a loving man and his smile is the only thing that keeps me sane.- "S"**

**AR:** I am extremely sorry to hear this- you have absolutely no interest in anything, you

lack motivation, waking up in the morning and going to bed are a challenge: all these signs point to the fact that you are depressed despite having a loving husband and an amazing job. You mentioned feeling 'demeaning and humiliating' as a daughter-in-law and I am unsure if that is the only cause or if there are other factors. Are you experiencing any abuse (physical/ emotional/ mental) from your in-laws? Do things feel pointless because of hormonal imbalance? You are still able to fake 'happiness'. Reaching out for junk food is a very common coping mechanism but in the long term, it does more harm than good because it will affect your body image. I would suggest you to have an honest talk with your husband, go see a medical professional to get your hormones tested and/or talk to a mental health professional. It is great that you acknowledge the problem, and do make the effort to find a solution. Good luck. 🇳🇵

# Damn the people

Public opinion does not seem to matter to politicians in our dysfunctional democracy

The publication of this year's Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey last week coincided with a surge in political street action in the wake of the attempt by the Big Four to push through a draft constitution with a six-province model. Ironically, the Survey showed the people's strong dislike for political instability and frequent strikes at a time when the country was paralysed by an indefinite Tarai shutdown, unrest in Surkhet, Jumla and other towns



## AS IT HAPPENS Om Astha Rai

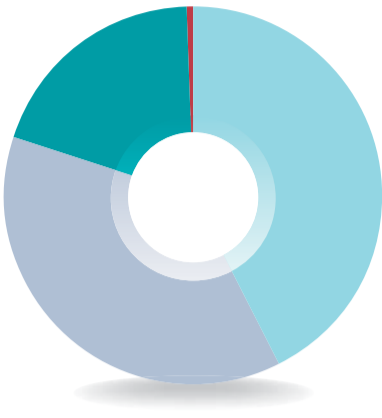
in the mid-west, and a series of strikes in Kathmandu by political entities angry over boundaries of federal provinces. Political parties from the left, right and centre are never tired of saying that they are for the people. But it is the people they punish to score political points against rivals. The Maoists killed people in the name of their 'people's war'. The NC and the UML spent a large part of the 1990s squandering the hard-won gains of the democracy movement by hitting back at each other by shutting the country down. When the Maoists ended the war, they started behaving in exactly the same way: leaving people stranded along highways, terrorising bus companies, burning taxis with drivers still inside. Businessmen lost business, daily-wage labourers lost their income, the country's economy took a direct hit. Actually we don't need to



BIKRAM RAI

periodically go to the people to feel their pulse through public opinion surveys. Just go out and talk to anyone on the streets, nine in every 10 people would probably tell you: they are sick of shutdowns and politicians. They want the parties to stop infighting. Polls like the Himalmedia Survey just quantify this overwhelming public mood. But it doesn't seem to matter to the political parties or leaders what the people think in this dysfunctional democracy. In the past political parties and leaders have welcomed results of opinion polls if they come out in good light, and reject them as biased if they don't. It's the same this time. What the politicians forget is that their popularity ratings are nearly all in the single digit, and more than half the respondents are fed up with the whole lot of them. Even when the public's feedback was collected on the draft constitution in June, political parties just cherry-picked the suggestions which suited them. They instantly agreed to bring down the number of federal provinces, but ignored people's concerns for a directly-elected executive and citizenship through the name of the mother.

People knew politicians would end up doing as they liked, so 80% of those we polled said they hadn't even bothered to give suggestions. The results of the Himalmedia survey have reinforced the fact that most Nepalis are not bothered too much about the constitution or form of federalism, they are more worried about day-to-day issues like the rise in prices, joblessness and corruption. Needless to say, they want the new constitution just because they hope that their living standards will be improved through political stability. Unfortunately, the economy is the last thing in the agenda of most politicians. More than half the 3,517 people in 35 districts who were interviewed in early August said they were 'just managing' two square meals a day. And 14% said it was difficult for them to make ends meet. Only 30% said their earnings were sufficient. Of the 70% respondents struggling to survive, 18% said they were planning to go abroad. And nearly 85% of them say they will not leave the country if they can earn up to Rs 30,000 in Nepal itself.



- What should be done if the new constitution fails to address demands and aspirations of everyone?
- Constitution must be amended **42.5%**
- Acts can be passed to address what constitution has not addressed **37.6%**
- Don't know **19.4%**
- Don't want to say **0.5%**

These may seem like trifling matters to politicians discussing grand themes such as federalism and forms of government. But they carry a vital message: most Nepalis are just surviving, they blame politicians for messing things up, and they are looking for a strong visionary leader. That message doesn't seem to have sunk into the heads of the politicians in government and opposition, and even if it has, they don't seem to care. Nepal's politicians of all hues would do well to study the disaggregated data from the Survey in order to begin to regain the people's trust. People tend to vote for the same parties just because there are not reliable alternative forces. In 2008, the Maoists were fresh,

untested and their slogans like 'Try us this time' really attracted the people. But the Maoists turned out to be no different. The result is: their leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal is now even more unpopular than Kamal Thapa and Upendra Yadav. In a functional democracy, the parties heed the people. That is exactly what is not happening in the heap of democratic decay that Nepal has become. Our parties and leaders distort public opinion as per their own convenience, hold the country and the people hostage for their own greed and selfishness, and openly show contempt for the people's need. That is just not done. @omastharai

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# The subscriber cannot be reached

Nepal’s mobile phone network survived the earthquake but is finding it difficult to survive the aftermath

SAHINA SHRESTHA

Everyone had predicted that Nepal’s mobile phone network would be destroyed during a catastrophic earthquake leaving survivors with no means of communication. The cellular network survived the 25 April quake, but it is now facing an enormous challenge convincing homeowners to allow transmission towers on their roofs.

Fearing the additional weight of the Base Transmitter Stations (BTS) will increase risk during future earthquakes, many want rooftop towers to be removed. And telecom companies are finding it difficult to find new sites for their towers.

“The number of base stations has come down by half after the earthquake, and this has affected services,” admits Achyutananda

Mishra of industry regulator Nepal Telecom Authority.

After the earthquake, private operator Ncell had immediately deployed vans with transmitters and temporary transmitters called ‘cell on leg’ providing services in areas where the towers went down. Nepal Telecom had put its contingency disaster recovery plan into action with minimum disruption.

A few buildings with towers collapsed and others were damaged, and the perception spread that they had gone down because of the towers. Both Ncell and NTC are now facing problems convincing homeowners who had rented their rooftops to let their base stations stay.

Thirty of Ncell’s towers, 37 of Nepal Telecom and seven of UTL in Kathmandu Valley have been dismantled since the quake because even owners whose buildings were not damaged

don’t want them there. This is happening more in Kathmandu Valley than in other districts.

Telecom companies are also finding it difficult to find houses that have a completion certificate that they followed the building code so new towers can be put up and replace damaged ones.

“Even in houses that are safe, people are scared to lease out the roof due to fear of the earthquake,” said Prativa Baidya at Nepal Telecom. Most tall buildings in Kathmandu have flouted rules to add floors or have violated constructions norms.

“It was really not a technological disaster,” said Andras Pali, Chief Technical Officer of Ncell. “We lost 20-25 sites as a direct impact of the earthquake. But these were where the house itself was damaged. There was not a single site where the tower fell off the roof. The newer towers weigh less and



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TOTAL NUMBER OF BST		
Kathmandu Valley		
	Total	Dismantled after earthquake
NTC	443	30
Ncell	352	37
UTL	45	7

don't add to the structure," he said.

The earthquake has also become an excuse for some house owners to jack up rentals for allowing base stations on their roofs. Some are said to be asking up to five times more rent from telecom companies. With 5,600 base stations all over the country, the costs will add up and telecom companies may pass that on to consumers.

To ease congestion and reduce the gap in services, operators have deployed dozens of mobile vans in parts of Kathmandu with high population density where buildings with towers either collapsed or had to be dismantled because owners didn't want them there anymore. But

these temporary measures are expensive and are not a long-term solution.

Nepal Telecom is reinstalling about ten towers that were dismantled after the earthquake and is also working on pole-mounted BTS where it can't find buildings to rent. Ncell on the other hand is concentrating on modernising and doubling the capacity of its network in Kathmandu Valley.

Both operators say it will take the cooperation of house owners for their services to return to normal. They also want the government and the NTA to be more proactive in enforcing the building code and raising awareness among house owners that telecom towers do not bring houses down in an earthquake but that shoddy construction does.

NTA is said to be refining the guidelines which includes one for getting approval for installation of BTS towers and standards of houses. Telecom companies say the NTA should also take into account the places where people may go to take shelter in the aftermath of disaster so that they can build robust networks there.

Said Ncell's Pali: "In earthquake-prone areas like Kathmandu, we have long been requesting the government to provide us sites where we can build towers that can withstand strong tremors. The government and regulator's approach should ensure that the country doesn't face communication problems in future emergencies."

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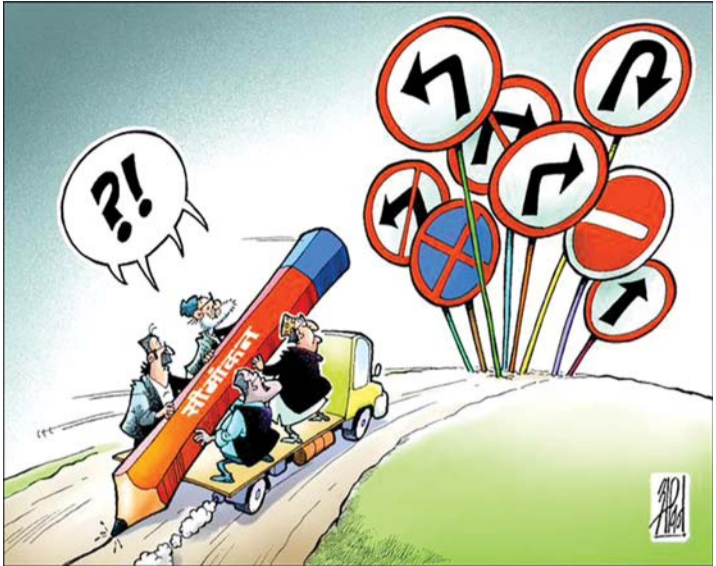
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Abin Shrestha in Kantipur, 16 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



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Sadbhavana Party leader Rajendra Mahato in himalkhabar.com, 19 August



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# Unholy politics

Sumitra Bhattarai in Dhangadi for Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ), 18 August

Villagers cutting grass near Dhangadi recently saw an injured cow fallen in a ditch. The villagers informed police and the cow was rescued but died the next day while undergoing treatment. In an indication of just how volatile things can get when one mixes politics with religion members of the Hindu Rastra Struggle Committee declared a shutdown throughout Far-Western region last week. One of the organisers of a protest rally told us: “We have heard that about ten cows have been slaughtered by people from other religions.” Soon later, Kamal Thapa-led Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal issued a press statement condemning ‘mass cow slaughter.’

Surya Bahadur Chand of Nepal Police, who has been investigating the case, told us: “There was no mass slaughtering. We found only one cow injured. It is common for locals to dump their old animals in the forest. It is worrying that media and locals have reacted to rumours and hearsay.”

Since then, the western Tarai has been shutdown over demarcation of the western province and the Tharu agitation. The last time such communal sentiments were deliberately stoked, there were riots between Hindus and Muslims in Nepalgunj. Said one local: “We don’t seem to have learned anything from it.”

# Yadav, Singh and Mahato

*www.pahilopost.com, 18 August*

Speeches by Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (FSFN) Chair Upendra Yadav, Nepali Congress (NC) lawmaker Amaresh Singh and Sadbhavana Party leader Rajendra Mahato during an assembly of the Tharus in Kailali early this week have caused a stir in the Constituent Assembly (CA) with some members accusing them of inciting violence forcing CA Chair Subhas Nembang to instruct the State Affairs Committee to probe the allegations. These are excerpts of what they actually said:

**Upendra Yadav**



"Kailali, Kanchanpur, Banke and Bardiya were never parts of the Gorkha empire. The British returned these districts to the Ranas. At that

time, Kamajya and Kamlari traditions did not exist. The Tharus were hardworking farmers with their own system of governance. But the Ranas distributed the lands of the Tharus among their relatives. Gradually, the outsiders grabbed the lands of the

Tharus and exploited the real sons of soil as Kamaiya and Kamlari. It was a crime against humanity."

## Amaresh Kumar Singh



"Madhesis and Tharus will choose their own leaders. Bahuns and Chhetris cannot be their leaders. I warn the state: don't open fire at us as you did in

Surkhet. If you kill Madhesi and Tharu sons, we will create a policeless province. We are

not terrorists. We are just fighting for our rights. If police come between us and the state, they will have to face action when our states are created. Police thrashed Dalits, but did not touch Hindu protesters in Kathmandu. You Tharus must fight to protect your land from the hill migrants and seize the Singha Darbar. Tharuhat belongs to you. If the state does not give you Tharuhat, let not a single vehicle pass through Lamahi."

## Rajendra Mahato

Those Bahuns and Chhetris demanding an undivided Far West province settled in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts just 40-50 years ago. The Tharus welcomed the outsiders, but were stabbed in the back. Bahuns and Chhetris grabbed their lands and made them Kamaiya and Kamhari. They have craftily created six federal provinces so as to subjugate Madhesis and Tharus.



Bahun and Chhetri are inherently dishonest, and have always conspired against us. Remember that Girija Prasad

Koirala, Madhav Nepal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal had deleted federalism from the interim constitution to suppress the demand for Madhes and Tharuhat provinces. We burnt that constitution, and they finally gave in. But they are again plotting against us now. So, it is time for you to fight for your rights. If you don't, your children will be enslaved. Don't give away even an inch of your Tharuhat. Be prepared to fight and die."

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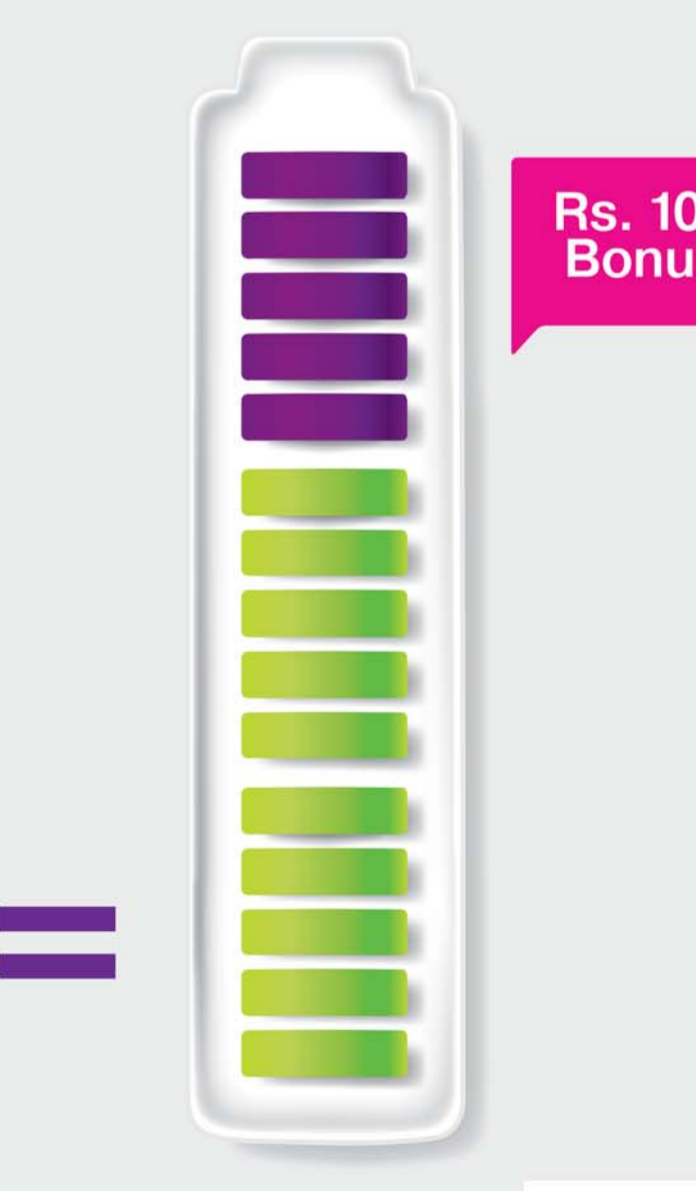
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