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BIKRAM RAI

Sweeping it away

Parliament is preparing its first post-constitution session for Friday even as Nepal is hit hard by an Indian blockade that has now lasted ten days. The good news is that talks between the top three parties and Madhesi dissenters have gathered pace in Kathmandu.

A three-member negotiation team of the NC-UML-UCPN(M) held talks with Madhesi leader Mahanta Thakur, indicating that both sides feel the impasse has dragged on too long and want a settlement. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala is expected to step down on Friday, paving the way for UML Chair KP Oli to lead a new all-party government that will include the UCPN(M). Sources said some of the negotiations this week were also centred around Madhesi and Tharu leaders joining that government.

On Thursday, the three parties agreed to readjust federal boundaries by forging an all-party consensus and implement past

agreements. They also created a conducive environment for talks by withdrawing the Nepal Army from violence-hit areas, providing medical treatment for injured protesters, and Rs 1 million for families of the estimated 40 people killed by police in the past month.

Thakur is expected to take the proposals from the three parties to other Madhesi leaders like Upendra Yadav and Rajendra Mahato in Gaur. Early this week, Thakur had met the three party leaders and returned to Rautahat to discuss whether to sit for talks. But Madhesi parties, emboldened by India's backing, refused talks and instead denounced the ban on Hindi television channels and announced that they would stop paying government taxes.

"We just want it down in writing from the three parties," Mahendra Ray Yadav of the Tarai Madhes Sadbhavana Party told us. The ball is now in the

BORDERLINE: A woman with broom cleans the pavement near the nearly deserted checkpoint on the India-Nepal border in Birganj early morning on Tuesday.

court of the Madhesi leaders, and India will have to play a crucial role.

The Madhesi parties and New Delhi are not said to be not happy about Oli being the next prime minister, since he is considered a hill hardliner.

BLOCKADE BLUES
One would have expected a far less obvious move on India's part at such a crucial time

ONE TO MANY
BY BIDUSHI DHUNGEL **PAGE 3**

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION
The current standoff is more about the feeling of being left out

AS IT HAPPENS
BY OM ASTHA RAI **PAGE 6**

SHOWING WHO'S BOSS

EDITORIAL

PAGE 2

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SHOWING WHO'S BOSS



It is in India's strategic interest to ensure equilibrium and stability in Nepal, but the blockade has undermined that.

Nepal's constitution was finally promulgated on 20 September by an overwhelming majority in a freely elected Constituent Assembly with a fair and proportionate representation of most ethnic, caste and gender groups. Less than 10 per cent voted against or boycotted the promulgation. Even rejectionists and die-hard critics of the constitution will admit that it was the product of a fully free and fair democratic exercise.

Which is why it is surprising that the world's largest democracy and the United Nations have been so grudging in accepting this as a document that, while flawed, ended years of deadlock and can be the basis of an inclusive and durable constitution.

To express its misgivings about the constitution, India has obstructed the flow of food, fuel and goods entering Nepal, hoping that the hardships the Nepali people are forced to suffer will compel Nepal's rulers to buckle.

What is hard to understand is why all the needless lies and deception? How does a thinly veiled border blockade help India's national interest anyway? The move is foolish

on so many levels that even sections of the international community, which had in recent years sub-contracted their Nepal policy to New Delhi, are aghast.

From what we can piece together, the Indian foreign policy establishment was understandably unhappy with the post-earthquake 16-point agreement between the four parties on 8 June to fast track the constitution. They made these misgivings clear to Nepali leaders visiting New Delhi, including Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Sher Bahadur Deuba who had assured them that Madhesi concerns would be taken into account. After all, Bijay Gachhadar's MJF-D was on board at the time.

But when it became apparent that the federal delineation was not to his liking, Gachhadar was leaned upon to quit the alliance, and violent protests rocked the western and the eastern Tarai. The Indian Ambassador did some frantic lobbying to try to convince the NC, UML and UCPN(M) to postpone the constitution by four days to bring the Madhesi parties on board. The government waited out the weekend but went ahead with the process. Less than 48 hours before

the promulgation, Foreign Secretary S Jaishanker was dispatched to Kathmandu for some blunt talk. The Big Three didn't like the body language, and bulldozed the constitution through. That is where they made a serious miscalculation: they never thought India would go so far as to seal the border in retaliation.

Whatever reservations India had about the constitution, however much the new constitution had failed to address the concerns of Nepal's excluded, it was a start. Critics have latched on to deficiencies that can be corrected in the future through future amendments, and have ignored many of the positive points in the document. The constitution thus became a lightning rod for everyone with a grievance, including politicians who lost the 2013 elections and needed constitutional guarantees of representation so they'd never again suffer such defeat.

It is difficult to understand how India stands to benefit from such a crude attempt to be mean and show who's boss. Even critics within India have ridiculed it as a major mishandling of foreign policy, and there are indications in New Delhi of rifts within the establishment, the Hindu right, among intelligence agencies, and the bureaucracy, about the blockade.

In Nepal, it has undone the dramatic breakthrough in bilateral relations achieved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit here last year. Most Nepalis had forgotten two previous Indian blockades, but this past week has spawned a whole new generation of anti-Indian Nepalis. This cannot benefit India, or Nepal, in the long-term.

Nepalis from the plains have always suffered discrimination from the hill establishment, they have not been treated with respect, and their loyalty to the Nepali state is questioned every step of the way (*see pages 16-17*). This Indian intervention, however camouflaged, will now make it even more difficult for them.

New Delhi and Kathmandu both need to de-escalate. In the first sitting of parliament on Friday, Tarai MPs from the Big Three could push amendments to the constitution to address some of the concerns of the Madhesi parties and India, including the delineation of constituencies based on population broadly based on districts, re-insert 'proportion' and 'Tarai Madhes' in the wording, etc.

The new Prime Minister and his government have their work cut out for them. They have to rush earthquake relief delayed by politics and the blockade, they have to heal the serious rifts that have emerged between the hills and the plains, and they have to steer the country on a path to rapid economic growth.

This is still possible to do, and it would be in India's own strategic interest to help Nepal attain equilibrium and stability.

YOUR SAY

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VICIOUS CYCLE

India has lost all sense of diplomatic decorum ('Vicious cycle', Editorial, #777). As a believer of realpolitik, I am unable to comprehend their win-loss strategy. To win Bihar elections, they are willing to lose Nepal. Bring back Sushma Swaraj. Let her handle foreign policy and get rid of the ignorant hawks in Delhi. The current impasse must be addressed and resolved with finesse and alacrity, any delay is going to hanker us for many years, like a deeply ingrained splint.

Nam

■ India is NOT a friend of Nepal. Never was, never will be. What more proof do you need? Wake up Nepalis, and smell the roses.

Sridhar KC

■ Good editorial, well balanced, to the point and free of irrational jingoism that the Nepali press is full of nowadays.

Krishna S

HASHTAG REVOLUTIONS

It's actually our fault. We should have built two super highways -- one to Khasa and one to Kerung -- long time ago ('Hashtag revolutions', Tsering

Dolker Gurung, #777). We shouldn't be India-locked, we need to open up our northern routes too, only then will our southern neighbour behave. Look at how India marginalises ethnic Nepalis in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Assam. Look at how they conspired with the Bhutanese regime to drive out ethnic Nepalis. We need to be strong and take care of ourselves and our own.

KiratRed

■ Online Keyboard Fighters. I almost LOL when I saw people signing petitions to request the US to stop India from interfering in Nepal. What are we even doing guys? Keep in mind, India couldn't afford to lose Nepal because it is a potential market. We will always win.

Tamang

COSTLY CONSTITUTION

Amend the Constitution. Let everybody be included (Costly constitution, #777). Stop the killings. Leaders of Nepal, do not take precious and innocent lives for granted.

Bikas Gurung

GNU

People may soon start longing for the Panchayat days once it all sinks in that

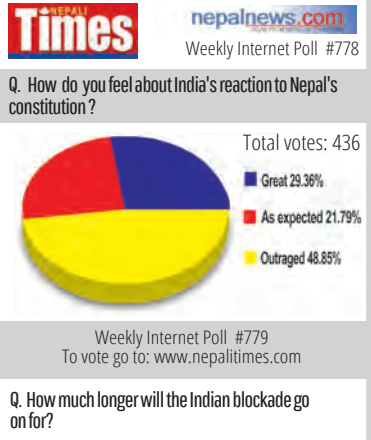
all of us were taken for a costly ride by PKD, BRB and their M chamchas. ('The Great National Unraveling', Foreign Hand, #777).

Geug

LANGTANG RISING

This is a nice example of how resilient the Nepali people are (Langtang rising, Upasana Khadka, #777). After such a massive earthquake and so much loss, they are back on their feet. It would be so much more helpful if government backed them up.

Bipin Karki



GOPEN RAI (86,773 REACHED AND 178 SHARES)

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As India imposes an unofficial blockade against Nepal to put pressure on Nepali political parties to amend the new constitution, youth activists carry out a rally against Indian interference in Kathmandu on Saturday.

Most reached on Facebook
Gopen Rai photo, above. (86,773)

Most visited online page
Are you in a funk about Nepal? by Ass (1,247 views)

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8 international laws violated (80 retweets, 34 favourites)

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Hashtag revolutions by Tsering Dolker Gurung (44 comments)



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There are two striking features of the last couple of weeks: a surge in nationalist sentiment and the imposition of what looks and feels like an Indian blockade on Nepal. It may be undeclared indeed, but even if unofficial, one must call a spade a spade. There are so many said motivations and conspiracy theories doing the rounds regarding what is causing this



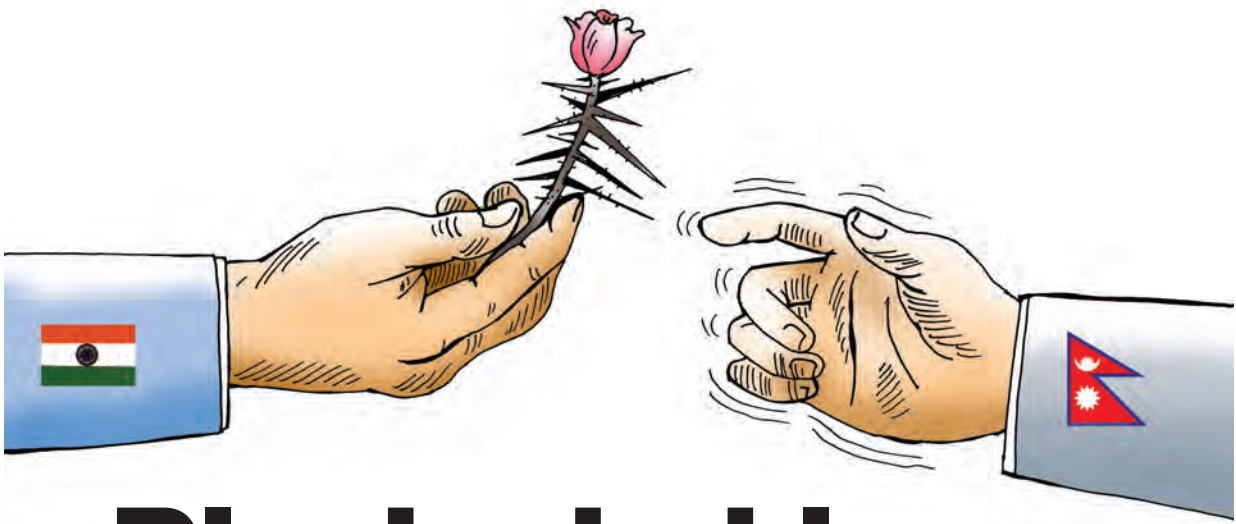
ONE TO MANY
Bidushi Dhungel

undeclared blockade. After talking to a fair number of people in and out of government, in embassies and newsrooms, here are some of the revelations shared.

There are those who are convinced that India's interest is a no-strings-attached inclusion of Madhes with the main issue being the naturalisation clause in the constitution which bars men of Indian origin from holding top positions in government. Then, there are those who say the blockade has nothing to do with the Madhes, but is instead about Nepal having been declared a secular state while the Indian establishment was pushing in the other direction.

There is also the argument that India is, in fact, not imposing a blockade at all and that it is the Madhesi protests on the Nepal side, and this is the official Indian position. The Indian Ambassador claims to "not understand at all" what has happened and where all of this anti-India sentiment is coming from. Apparently, the notion that India is "pro-Madhesi" couldn't be "further from the truth".

A senior NC leader said that actually this is all about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ego. "He's even following every tweet and the more #BackOffIndia he sees the less he is going to back off," he said. Then there is the "hill mentality" of UML leaders in particular blamed as the source



Blockade blues

One would have expected a far less obvious move on India's part at such a crucial time

of the current crisis. Delhi also felt "completely betrayed" by Nepali leaders who had gone to Delhi and made various promises.

So there you have it. These are the many reasons why Kathmandu has no petrol and why everything else is in short supply. But how did India-Nepal relations, in the words of a senior diplomat, go "from a-z in six months"? The leaders of the NC-UML-UCPN(M) were well aware of India's stance on the constitution months before its promulgation and were listening intently just weeks before, each obediently taking turns to go to Delhi and receive blessings. The all-out rejection of India's role in Nepal seems then to be a populist move to justify an otherwise sub-standard statute.

The visit just two days before the promulgation by S Jaishanker was not only ill-timed, but so blatant in his intent to intervene that it gave Nepal's political leadership the impetus to bring forward its nationalist agenda to cover up their own follies. For all the back-room deals made in this country, one would have expected a far less obvious move on India's part at such a crucial time.

The agitating Madhes-based parties are also not doing themselves, or anyone else, a favour by welcoming the current intervention and taking active part in the closing of the border. It is only working to prove the fears of Kathmandu that the

Madhes and India are indeed interchangeable. And given the highly nationalist mood, attitudes in Kathmandu towards Madhesis are hardening.

In reaction to the blockade, young protesters sat on the street outside the Indian Embassy. The song about always being

able to wake up to a view of the Himalaya was on full blast, followed by the other one about the son of Nepal who wouldn't bow down. There was a cycle rally with a large banner: 'No petrol, no problem'.

Our dear comrade Prachanda had also said something about

ditching his car for a bicycle, though he barely looks fit enough to pedal even 1km. All Indian tv channels have gone off air in protest. This is what we have reduced ourselves to: an array of meaningless actions that say very little about our sovereignty as a nation, our ability to self-rule or anything else positive about our national character.

It's a blockade, sure. And of course it is low, petty -- and illegal -- to resort to strangling an already-struggling neighbour because things didn't go one's way. But, the blockade is really just the icing on the cake. Even without it, we were in the gutter. The idea that the Madhes problem will go away as soon as the border opens up for supplies is naive.

The political leaders have no choice but to bring the agitators on board and amend the constitution. That would also go a long way in easing the situation that many Madhesi lawmakers in the NC, UML and UCPN(M) find themselves in. They may have signed on to the statute, but they did so with a heavy heart and in the words of one lawmaker, "we closed the door to our constituencies". @bidush



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A healthy free for all

The constitution’s lofty aim of upgrading health care can be achieved with a proven public-private partnership model

‘Every citizen shall have the right to primary health care and emergency services free of cost.’ That is Clause 1 of Article 35 of Nepal’s new constitution. While the bill’s emphasis on



GUEST COLUMN
Bikash Gauchan

equitable health care has brought hope especially among rural Nepalis who lack access to even basic health care, implementation is going to be tough given the state’s track record.

Despite the government’s earlier policies ensuring free services at district hospitals, patients still have to pay for consultation and medication. Another policy demands that 41 essential medications be made freely available at health posts and 71 at district hospitals. But that rarely happens.

Another problem in public health care is the lack of proper infrastructure and clinical capacity. Most well-equipped hospitals are concentrated in Kathmandu and this centralised health system is too expensive for most Nepalis.



KUNDA DIXIT

The implementation of the constitution’s commitment to provide free health care services will require an enormous on-the-ground effort, especially in the rural areas. The Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) first needs to ensure availability of all essential medications in health posts and district hospitals at all times. This will require improving the logistical aspects of the MOHP supply chain mechanisms throughout the country.

Secondly, the MOHP needs to upgrade the infrastructure of every health institution to ensure these institutions are capable of

providing the required services. This will require building new facilities, rehabilitating old ones, and adding or replacing medical equipment and supplies. Thirdly, the MOHP needs to ensure that there is adequate staffing within these health institutions.

If the MOHP is truly committed to its vision of providing health care services to all Nepali citizens, it must work hard to achieve these tasks. It will require great planning and cooperation at the inter-ministerial and National Planning Commission (NPC) levels. Additionally, work must

be coordinated with external development partners who will help finance our health sector. However, leadership must come first and foremost from the MOHP. In order for there to be any true chance of success, the MOHP must own the idea of free health care, and under its direction, provide these needed resources in the immediate short-term.

As we move forward to build a health care system that will provide free services for all Nepali citizens, the MOHP must identify mechanisms to optimise use of the limited resources it has available. One model for such a system is public-private partnerships – the government partnering with non-governmental organisations to provide health care services to the people of Nepal.

One model is the Bayalpata Hospital in Achham District, which has been providing free primary and comprehensive health care in a public-private partnership with the MOHP since 2008. More than 285,000 people have benefitted from the free services, including outpatient, inpatient, surgical, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy services.

Through the public-private partnership, the MOHP regulates and oversees health care services implemented by the Nepali NGO, Possible. This model ensures

accountability to the public while simultaneously leveraging the extra capacity for health care service implementation in the private sector.

The number of patients visiting Bayalpata Hospital keeps increasing day by day, as there remains limited access to quality services for those in rural areas. With our country’s new constitution, and the guaranteed right of free health care for all Nepali citizens, innovative public-private partnerships led by the MOHP, like Bayalpata Hospital, can act as a model for addressing Nepal’s health care needs.

Considering the constitution’s impressive aims with regards to health care services, the MOHP needs to work seriously and urgently with the National Planning Commission and other ministries to plan and coordinate its strategy to deliver on these promises.

We have the opportunity to learn from, and collaborate with, non-governmental organisations within Nepal, and from other governments and organisations around the world, but we must move promptly. The people of Nepal have waited a long time, this is the time for action.

Bikash Gauchan is the Medical Director of Bayalpata Hospital in Achham.
bikash@possiblehealth.org

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- Watch video of rural health care in Achham and Dolakha
- Impatient patients, #660
- Boy walked eight days to treat broken arm, #745

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Going Blue

Diageo PLC with its official distributor Global Trading Concern launched 210 limited edition one litre bottles of Johnnie Walker Blue Label. Inspired by Mount Everest, the design has been especially customised for Nepal and Nepali customers and celebrates those who have reached the ‘pinnacle of their careers’.

Bancassurance agreement

Himalayan Bank Limited (HBL) and Kathmandu Frontiers Associates (KFA) have entered an agreement as per which KFA will be managing HBL’s Bancassurance Department on direct sales agency model. The bank will provide various life and non-life insurance.

New Ford Figo

Ford India has launched the new Ford Figo in Nepal. The hatchback comes in six trims with three engine options. It has a host of segment best and first features and comes with an introductory price of Rs 2,199,000.

#GlobalGoals

Standard Chartered Bank has launched a campaign to promote Global Goals for Sustainable Development. The bank has utilised various channels to build awareness and sensitise the public as well as the government authorities on the subject.

Smart and lite

Colors Mobile has launched its new X Factor E-series smartphone- the Elite E 10. The dual sim phone comes with 5.1 lollipop Android OS. Powered by 1.3 GHz Quad Core processor coupled with a 2GB RAM, it has 16GB internal storage that can be expanded up to 32GB. It has a price tag of Rs 12,995.

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It's not about the constitution

The current standoff is more about the feeling of being left out

When I was a boy, light bulbs were like stars to me. They twinkled only in the houses of my well-off friends. The rundown house I grew up in did not have electricity, and I used to do my homework with the light of a kerosene lamp.



AS IT HAPPENS Om Astha Rai

One evening, my mother cooked dinner before sunset. We quickly ate and went to bed early. I could not do my homework because there was no kerosene. The next evening, my mother sent me to buy kerosene. I picked up a jerry can and wandered around, but the fuel, which I desperately needed, was not available anywhere. At dusk, I returned home. I could not sleep that night, and kept staring at the light bulbs twinkling in the houses of my friends.

This was 1989, and India had imposed an economic blockade against Nepal. I was too young to figure out why no shopkeeper would sell kerosene to me. I later learnt that India had not supplied fuel to us, and I began hating every Indian except Amitabh Bachchan.

Twenty five years down the line, India has once again imposed an economic blockade,



BIKRAM RAI

though not officially declared as in 1989. Fuel has stopped, and traffic has thinned. A cab driver said: "I am in this long queue for nearly three days, but I am still not sure if I will get fuel."

The longer the blockade goes on, the stronger anti-India sentiments will grow in a new generation of Nepalis. This can't be what India wants. How does it help India to have enemies at its doorstep? But that is their problem. We are at the receiving end of the crisis, and we have to

resolve it. But Nepali leaders are just using the rhetoric of hollow nationalism, and others are not trying hard enough to tackle the roots of the problem.

Piecing together information gathered from sources privy to talks that Indian envoys held with Nepali leaders and interviews with Madhesi leaders, it looks like the current standoff is now not so much about the constitution. It is more about the feeling of being left out, treated badly and betrayed.

After brokering a 12-point deal that united the Maoist rebels with the parliamentary parties against the monarchy, India saw itself as a shareholder of Nepal's peace process. It later facilitated another key deal between the government and Madhesi parties.

But India felt left out when the top three Nepali leaders ignored New Delhi's message to halt the constitution process and bring on board the disgruntled Madhesi parties. UML Chair KP Oli was apparently in a hurry to get the job done so that he could be PM. UCPN (M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal was equally desperate to take credit for the constitution and revive his political career. To portray himself as a nationalist, he said Nepalis were not ready to be New Delhi's 'Yes Man'.

Madhesi leaders, too, feel left out. Most Madhesi protesters probably do not know how – or if – the constitution has discriminated against them. They are just angry about how Kathmandu has ignored them.

After key Madhesi leaders met Indian special envoy S. Jaishankar in Kathmandu, I asked one of them, Mahendra Ray Yadav, what their demands on the constitution were. He had no answer, and just said: "The Nepali state has always discriminated against us since the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah, and we want an end to it."

Rakesh Jha is a local Madhesi leader in the eastern Tarai district of Siraha. He had no qualms about claiming that the seven points of constitutional flaw, which New

Delhi reportedly told Kathmandu to correct, were indeed their demands. But when I asked him if he would like to see an Indian national becoming Chief Minister of the future Madhes province after marrying a Madhesi woman and acquiring Nepali naturalised citizenship, he said: "No, we never want that."

Many in the Madhes are relatively flexible about demarcation, but even Madhesi leaders of the NC, the UML and the UCPN (M) are not ready to give up on proportional representation and demarcating election constituencies in proportion to population.

But the good news is that the top three parties are ready to address these issues by amending the constitution. Even so, the Madhes is not ready to calm down because of trust deficit resulting from arrogance of some elite Bahun leaders in Kathmandu. It took 40 days and 40 deaths for Kathmandu to wake up. Jha says, "Policemen from the hills call us 'Dhoti' and use vulgar words against us."

If Kathmandu stops acting arrogant and shows a willingness to listen, the Madhes will come on board. But for that to happen, withdrawing the army, instructing police to exercise restraint, committing to provide medical treatment to all the injured protesters and ensuring maximum flexibility on the demands of the plains groups are necessary. And we need India on board.

The longer it takes, the more complicated things will get. [@omastharai](#)

History on canvas

If you have time to see very few art exhibitions in Kathmandu this week and you adore the traditional art forms of Nepal, then this selection of 70 paintings by artist Hari Prasad Sharma (*pic, left*) should be it.

Sharma is self-taught and was an apprentice with Chandra Man Maskey and Kalidas Shrestha. Now 78, his interest in depicting Nepali history, religion and culture on canvas has left an indelible mark on the country's art scene.

"The most appealing aspect about this exhibition is the artist's commitment and hard work in bringing historical events of Nepali history into life size paintings with great detail and precision," says Salim Shakya, a businessman with an interest in Newari art.

The exhibition visualises events from Nepal's past like the wedding ceremony of Bhrikuti to the Tibetan king Srong Tsen Gampo. The ceremony is carefully detailed, the temples are accurately rendered and even the contours of the hills surrounding Kathmandu correspond to reality.

The paintings may not be historically accurate but recreating such events on canvas takes a lot of effort and imagination which Sharma displays in abundance.

Part of the excitement is seeing historical moments and events alongside the lifestyle of pre-modern Kathmandu Valley. Although not a Newar himself, Sharma has studied the culture intimately and this influence is reflected in the



strokes of creative genius on his canvases. He gives us a rare glimpse of ancient Kathmandu Valley captured in almost photographic detail.

Nischal Pradhan

Hari Prasad Sharma
Kathmandu Valley Down the Ages: Reviving Glorious Culture & Architecture
Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, Kathmandu
Until 7 October

nepalitimes.com

■ Surrealism on canvas, #101



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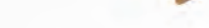
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Are you a traveler who likes to snapchat your vacation and wonder which Instagram filter would best enhance the picture of the delicious dessert you just ate? Do you like to be out in nature, but can't bring yourself to compromise your own comfort? If your answers are yes, then the Kasara Resort is the place for you.

This luxury resort, located in the lush setting of the Chitwan National Park, is both minimalist and modern, offering guests a relaxing, mosquito-free, stay in the jungle. Every section of this property is so well-designed and the scenery so spectacular that it would be selfish not to share your pictures on social media.

Once you are done with social media uploads, you can join jungle activities to explore this exotic locale. For those who value their privacy and prefer a more secluded stay, Kasara offers two private villas with (oh-la-la) private pools.

We heard on Twitter that the last king stayed here recently. You may even bump into ex-royalty at Kasara.

Dasain packages start at Rs 8,000++ per person on double occupancy. Packages include one night accommodation, all meals, and a selection of wildlife activities.
www.kasararesort.com,
info@kasararesort.com
 (01)4437571/4438570

EASY ESCAPISM

The *Nepali Times* reviews some of the most talked about getaway spots in Kathmandu and outside.



www.gyanfarm.com
 (01)5521120

This newly opened farmhouse at the base of Chure Hills is only a four-hour drive from Kathmandu. Gaining popularity among Valley denizens, the Gyan Farm in Hetauda is the ideal vacation spot for those who love outdoor activities. There are lots of cycling trails around the farm and for those who prefer water sports, there is tubing on the nearby Rapti River. If you are not really the active type, but prefer just to lounge around, Gyan also has a natural spring-fed swimming pool and hot tub. The farm uses fresh organic produce from its garden for all of its meals, service is excellent and the staff super-friendly. You read about it first here.

The Famous Farmhouse in Nuwakot is a fabulous stopover on your way from Kathmandu to Pokhara. It has converted some of its old buildings into family friendly lodging and is home to many animals including white rabbits, a turkey (get there before Thanksgiving), a rescued donkey, ducks, sheep and dogs. The lodges, each filled with antique furniture, are surrounded by beautiful gardens. There are also a number of cozy, small hotels on the main road in Bidur town. Spend a night or two here to recharge and detoxify, and move on to Pokhara. Follow the Trisuli River to Galchhi on the Prithvi Highway, stop at River Side Springs Resort or Brigand's Bend across the river for lunch.

Robin Marston

www.ruralheritage.com, (01)4422617



EVENTS

Pink rally,

A walkathon to raise awareness on breast cancer and breast self-examination.
 10 October, 7am, Walk starts from Patan Darbar Square and ends at Ideal Model School, [facebook.com/rosefoundationnepal](https://www.facebook.com/rosefoundationnepal), 9841467697

Hemp exhibit,

A wide range of hemp products on display.
 9 and 10 October, 11am to 9pm, Patan Museum, Lalitpur, 9841430679

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



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 quake-affected.
www.nepal425.com



Art market,

As a prelude to Photo Kathmandu, the first ever photography festival happening in November in Nepal, this month's art market is dedicated to the art of photography. With live music by Kanta Dab Dab.
 3 October, 12 to 4pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, Lalitpur, pranidhi@image-ark.com

Farmers' market,

The biggest gathering of local producers in the Valley selling organic produce, dairy products, artisanal bread and pastries and home-made goodies.
 8am to 1pm, Le Sherpa, Lajimpat, every Saturday, (01)4006587, 9802028777



Trans-Himalayan,

Chinese artist Zhao Jianqiu's ink wash paintings on Nepal and China celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
 Opens 11 October, 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, (01)4218048, 4433930, sthapa@mos.com.np

The Pump,

Test your fitness level in a variety of competitions at Nepal's first cross-training facility and win attractive prizes.
 3 October, 2pm onwards, Gyanmandala building, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur

Home Sick Blues II,

The second edition of the exhibit features more works from Danish artists Anders Brinch, Christian Finne, Jon Stahn and Melou Vanggard.
 Opens 9 October, 5pm, Tings Tea Lounge, Lajimpat, Free entry

Help rebuild,

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/#support

Retelling history,

Lecture by NayanTara Gurung Kakshapati, co-founder of Nepal Picture Library and founder of photo.circle. Organised by Cultural Studies Group of Nepal.
 9 October, 9.30am, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, entry Rs 400 (non-members).



Nepal Cup 2015,

A charity football tournament to raise funds to rebuild quake-affected schools in Nepal and promote the country as a tourist attraction.
 2 to 4 October, Dasarath Stadium, Tripureshwar, info@nepalcup2015.com, www.nepalcup2015.com



Milla Guest House, Bhaktapur

The three-story refurbished Milla Guesthouse in Bhaktapur is one of Bhaktapur's (and the Valley's) best kept secrets. The same architect who designed the Patan Museum and the Garden of Dreams in Thamel (Gotz Hagmuller) also remodeled this place. With its low wooden ceilings, brick walls and terracotta tile floors, Milla has preserved the Malla period ambience but with solar panels, fast wifi and a small kitchen.

As a guest, you will enjoy plenty of privacy. The guest house only has two spacious rooms, each with its own bathroom. There is a top floor dining room (which also doubles as a living-room) with a kitchen and open terrace. Here you can relax on the deck chairs and take in the views of the southern hills of the Valley.

Laxman and Sanu, the friendly Nepali couple who look after the guesthouse, make your stay truly memorable AND make you feel right at home. Elaborate, western-style breakfast in the morning sets you in the right frame of mind to explore post-quake Bhaktapur.

The impeccable service is what makes the \$70 per night well worth it.

Toh Ee Ming

Prices start at Rs 7,000++ per night.
mghbhaktapur@gmail.com
9851024137/9851027012

Himalayan Height Resort (formerly Hattiban Resort), 20km south and 800m above Kathmandu Valley, is the place to be this Dasain for a retreat amidst pine forests and spectacular views. You can have a foretaste of this serene place if you start walking from the main Pharping Highway which may be a bit steep if you take the shortcut but quite pleasant if you follow the gravel road.

The hotel is nestled in the middle of a wide lush ridge with bungalows laid out in a row – all facing north for a view of Kathmandu below and the mountains beyond. Each bungalow has a small and intimate terrace. The rooms are wide, varying in space to welcome couples as well as families with children. Wifi and/or sauna for those so inclined. The dining building is situated near the entrance of the compound, the food is not something to write home about but, hey, you came here for the view – including Mt Everest on a clear day. You can also hike up to Champadevi (2249m) for an even better panorama of the Himalaya.

Packages start at Rs 4,000++ and include one night's accommodation and breakfast.
(01)-4371537, 9801151167

Himalayan Height Resort, Hattiban



Chhuksang, Mustang

Surrounded by spectacular views of Dhaulagiri and Nilgiri, with the Kali Gandaki river running right through it, travellers have used Jomsom as a base to acclimatise before moving on to Kagbeni or Muktinath. But if you want

an even bigger challenge, go beyond Kagbeni to Chhuksang.

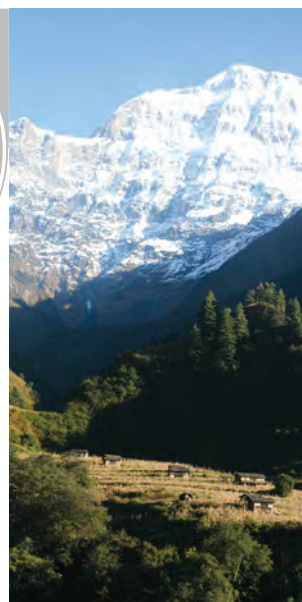
Getting to Chhuksang is an adventure on its own. While you can hire private jeeps to take you there from Jomsom, it is better, and cheaper, to go in local cars. On the way to Chhuksang, you drive through the river, climb steep roads and often change vehicles more than once. But once you have caught the first glimpse of Chhuksang's majestic cliffs, you forget all about the uncomfortable journey. For those who decide to hike from Jomsom to Chhuksang, the trek takes around 3-4 hours altogether.

Located right beside the massive Kali Gandaki river, and surrounded by the dry, rugged terrain that Upper Mustang is famous for, Chhuksang is highly underrated. A small village with a tight-knit community, it gives visitors a taste of what the rest of the region is like. Although it is not littered with hotels and lodges like Jomsom or Kagbeni, Chhuksang has a small selection of clean and cozy guest houses.

Gurja Khani in Myagdi, also known as the Hidden Village, is home to 250 farming households. This Dalit village is a week-long trek from Kathmandu and offers splendid views of the Dhaulagiri range. The more adventurous can choose to forego an easier trail and tread on a challenging circuitous route, which involves crossing a 3900m high pass. For those hikers who find steep passes and deep canyons unappealing, there are horseback riding trips up to the honey-hunting cliffs.

The Himalayan Map House recently published a map of the Gurja Himal and the Hidden Village with a detailed trail guide that includes photos and additional information about the surrounding area which would be of great help to anyone planning a trip there this October.

Gurja Khani, Myagdi



Tiger Mountain Lodge, Pokhara

This mountain lodge, situated 1,000 feet above the Pokhara Valley, offers spectacular views of Machhapuchhre, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu. This month the lodge became the first hotel in Nepal invited to join Secret Retreats, a group of

individual, small, unique hotels throughout Asia.

www.tigermountainpokhara.com,
(01)4426427, 9849194874

DINING



Hannah's Cafe,

A low-key cafe serving excellent breakfast.
Dhobighat, Lalitpur

Bodhi Books and Bakes,

This newly opened cafe offers a rich collection of cakes and pastries and good books.

Maharajgunj, 9851193262



Taza,

An excellent Middle-Eastern restaurant serving succulent kebabs and shawarmas.
Pulchowk, (01)5541592, 9860960177

Coffee, cake and wine,

A monthly event by kar.ma coffee, on offer are coffee, wines, cheese and pastries.
3 October, 2pm to 7pm, Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur

Maan nam,

Enjoy a nice cuppa coffee in the lush garden or try out your golfing skills.
Naxal

Big Daddy,

A zippy new place that serves mostly burgers and steaks.
Thamel, near Himalayan Java.

MUSIC

Ankit Tiwari Live,

Popular Bollywood singer comes to town for the first time.

3 October, 3 to 8pm, Jawalakhel Football Grounds, Lalitpur, Tickets Rs 500/Rs 1,500/Rs 3,000

The Latination,

India's reputed Latin jazz outfit brings you festive sounds from salsa and rumba to modern jazz, and Afro-Latin rhythms.

9 October, 7.30pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku Road, Tripureshwor, Kathmandu, (01)4241163

Gharana Music Festival

A one-of-a-kind international classical music festival organised by the Gharana Music Foundation (see page 13).

5.30 to 8.30 pm, 8 to 11 October, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbarmarg, www.gharanamusicfoundation.org



Jazzmandu,

The 13th edition of Kathmandu Jazz festival.
4 to 10 November, www.jazzmandu.org

GETAWAYS



100-day package,

Soaltee Crowne Plaza in collaboration with Nepal Airlines has launched attractive casino packages for Indian tourists. Packages start at Rs 19,000++ and includes accomodation, return air fare, buffet meals, sight-seeing trips.
Tahachal, Kathmandu, (01)4273999, www.crowneplaza.com

Festive Shangri-La,

Three days, two nights in a deluxe room, complimentary breakfast and one free meal, lots of discounts on other services.
Rs 6999 nett per person on twin sharing basis, till 31 October, Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara, (01)4420252, (01)412999, shangrilavillage@hotelshangrila.com

Relax at Hyatt,

Enjoy a one-night stay at the five-star for only Rs 9,999++. Package includes a complimentary breakfast for two, spa access. (Only for Nepalis and local residents)
Boudha, (01)4491234, sales.kathmanduhr@hyatt.com, kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com

Dasain at Rupakot,

Packages start from Rs 6,000++ .
Rupakot, Kaski, (01)4004687, prabhakar.khadka@rupakotresort.com



NEPAL IN INK AND BRUSH

A Chinese artist's
creative journey across
the Himalaya

JUSTIN ZHAO

Nepal has been an irresistible fascination to me with its juxtaposition of different Asian races in this small yet diverse Himalayan country. I watch the majestic peaks each time the plane flies over the mountains that separate Nepal and China.

This past January, I decided to invite my parents over for a visit. My father, Zhao Jianqiu, is a famous artist in Chinese ink wash painting and very fond of depicting natural landscapes and folk architecture. I was nervous but sure that he would find Nepal interesting.

The first morning we had breakfast at a rooftop restaurant in Thamel from where we could see the geographic outline of the Kathmandu Valley. The fog was thick and mountains invisible, but my father was intrigued by the varied forms of low concrete buildings in the city. He was amused by the flocks of crows, which are inauspicious birds in China. I explained that although they are also associated with death in Nepal, people revere them during a



PASHUPATINATH TEMPLE

special festival.

My parents' first encounter with the city was during a walk from Thamel to Basantapur through Jyatha, the same route I took on my first day in Kathmandu. The bustling market and crowded alleys reminded my parents of their youth in the Dongting Lake region of China. Upon

reaching Basantapur, my father immediately set up his tools to paint the rather obscure Kotilingeswor Mahadev Temple next to Taleju. He must have been experimenting with the new subject matter and therefore did not choose the more grandiose temples.

The Chinese brush-strokes and ink wash created an image that was completely

different from the common oil paintings that I saw in Thamel every day, and I was glad to have brought my father to Nepal. My father was impressed by Patan Darbar and Pashupatinath, and complained incessantly that he didn't have time to find the best angle from which to paint. Bungamati residents were intrigued when he moved



“AN ENCHANTING

Noted Chinese artist Zhao Jianqiu spoke to *Nepali Times* about his forthcoming exhibitions in Kathmandu and Beijing.

Nepali Times: Why did you choose Nepal for your art?

Zhao Jianqiu: Nepal is an enchanting country. My initial curiosity and longing for new inspiration led me to explore Nepal, and immediately I was overwhelmed by the grandiose and exquisite classical architecture, as well as the spectacular natural scenery of Nepal. So I was determined to paint what I saw.



NUWAKOT DURBAR

the location of the stupas on his canvas for a better composition, and he entertained villagers in Panauti as he bantered with the women knitting on straw mattresses.

We travelled to Kakani, where my parents had a glimpse of the Himalayan Range before heading down to Nuwakot Darbar. We stayed at the idyllic Famous Farm inn where we enjoyed superb hospitality and delicious organic food. The views were clear enough to observe both the golden sunset over Ganesh Himal and the dreamy morning mist shrouding the Trisuli valley.

In Pokhara, Machapuchre welcomed us every morning and we walked from hilltop to hilltop looking for the the best view. My father was enthralled by the ingenuity and playful designs of the village houses, and he lovingly drew the stone-slab adobe houses shadowed under the snowy peaks, and included our jeep in the painting as an homage to its contribution.

My parents returned to Nepal in April, and my father rode rickshaws everyday between Thamel and Basantapur painting non-stop from dawn to dusk. He became friends with the palace guards and rickshaw drivers, and later painted two

pieces in their honour. My parents left a week before the earthquake struck. Shocked by the news of damage to the places he had visited, my father worked furiously in his studio to finish the panoramas of Pashupatinath and the Darbars of Basantapur, Patan and Bhaktapur. He also refined a new approach to draw the Himals and created monumental works of the mountains and human residences. His Nepal works have won the appreciation of art critics in both Nepal and China, and will be exhibited in October and November in Kathmandu and Beijing. 🇨🇳

Justin Zhao is with the Beijing Centre for Chinese Studies, and visits Nepal frequently.

ZHAO JIANQIU
Celebrating the Trans-Himalayan Bond: An exhibition of Chinese Brush Paintings on Nepal and China

October 11-18
Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, Kathmandu

November 8-20
National Museum of China, Beijing

feel welcome and at home. The fantastic architecture of the Kathmandu Valley embodies the core of the Nepali people's wisdom and creativity. I feel extremely privileged to have seen this great heritage in its totality before the damage of the earthquake. Though Nepal's current economic development is facing challenges, her rich natural resources and unspoiled ecology are Nepal's strength and true treasure. The rich and intricate texture, lines, and forms in Nepal's architecture and folk houses are a gold-mine for Chinese brush paintings. The ink wash painting style can deliver the delicate charm of old bricks, walls, wood and tiles. The bright natural colors and formidable mountain peaks allow an adaptation of Western oil painting style in traditional Chinese ink wash painting.



ARNIKO HIGHWAY

TRANS-HIMALAYAN ART

The exhibition 'Celebrating the Trans-Himalayan Bond: An Exhibition of Chinese Brush Paintings on Nepal and China' by Zhao Jianqiu marks the 60th anniversary of Sino-Nepal diplomatic relations. The historic ties between China and Nepal go back to the 4th century when monks like Faxian (337- 422) and Xuanzang (602-664) made their way to Nepal, and recorded their travels.

Later, there were matrimonial alliances between the royal families of Nepal and Tibet and Princess Bhrikuti helped spread Buddhism. Skilled Nepali craftsmen journeyed to Tibet to construct monasteries and share metal casting and pauba painting skills. The Nepali artisan Arniko left an indelible mark in Beijing with his White Stupa.

So, when Zhao Jianqiu came to Kathmandu he saw the architectural antecedents of the monuments and shrines of Tibet and China here. The echoes of history are found in his ink and brush depictions of Kathmandu and the Himalayan landscape. The paintings have a Chinese character, but the subject matter is Nepali.

Intricate brushstrokes on Chinese rice paper capture the urban vibrancy of Kathmandu and the vast vistas of the Himalaya. Earth tones dominates the artist's palette and colour is used

sparingly -- sienna highlights the terracotta composition created by the roofs, red accentuates the fabric that hangs directly below the temple roof and yellow marks the brass spires and domes of revered monuments. Emphasis is laid on only a few members of a crowd gathered at the courtyard - a delicate wash of translucent color highlights their vestments. Motorcyclists, blue plastic water tanks and an obscure garden umbrella are treated similarly.

Zhao's 'Village near Pokhara' provides a lead into larger panoramic paintings of the Himalayas. The painting is an idyllic celebration of the rural as the artist portrays a small cluster of village homes, literally in the lap of the towering Himalaya. The vegetation and hay stacks illustrated by the artist are a sharp contrast to the barren mountains in the distance. Zhao's monumental landscape painting of the Himalaya shows craggy snowcapped mountains shrouded in mist.

This exhibition also includes Zhao's exquisite paintings of the diverse Chinese landscape and folk architecture, from the southern lakes to northern hills. The juxtaposition of Zhao's Nepal and China paintings are a celebration in canvas of the historical and cultural ties between the two neighbours.

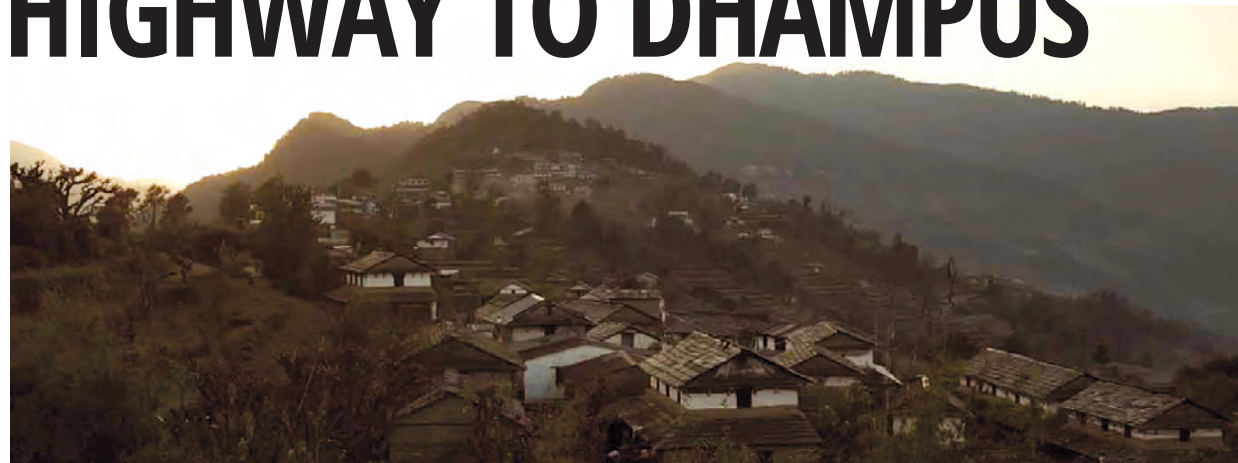
Sangita Thapa

COUNTRY"

Does your Chinese technique work for these paintings?
The secret of Chinese ink wash painting's longevity lies in its absorptive spirit, and learning from other art is the key to creativity. I take inspiration from Nepal's architecture and scenery and realise new forms and expression for my art. The exhibited paintings are experimental works and I welcome criticism from Nepali artists and audiences.

As an artist what impressed you the most about Nepal?
The Gods favour the Nepali people and confer visitors a sense of security. The incomparable hospitality of the Nepali people makes me

HIGHWAY TO DHAMPUS



As the first independent feature-length Hollywood film to be shot almost entirely in Nepal, and with two Nepalis playing central characters, anticipation around *Highway to Dhampus* had been building up in Nepal and in the diaspora for months before its release.

Directed by Rick McFarland, the film's setting plays a pivotal role in the storyline. Elizabeth James (Rachel Hurd-Wood), a rich, spoilt socialite, arrives in Nepal for charity work and photojournalist Colt Morgan (Gunner Wright) is sent along to document her stay to erase her notorious reputation back home in England.

They make their way to an orphanage in Ghandruk with Ajit (Raj Ballav Koirala), who becomes their personal pilot and guide for the remainder of the trip. In Ghandruk, they meet the orphanage's headmistress Laxmi (Suesha Rana) who helps coordinate the gift distribution to her students.

Egos clash as Colt becomes

increasingly frustrated with Elizabeth's diva behaviour whereas a subtle bond develops between Ajit and Laxmi. As the plot unravels, circumstances change, and relationships evolve. Compared to the slow start, the second half of the film carries more emotional depth and explores the theme of love and loss. Since most of the film is in flashback, audiences can anticipate what is coming but they can never fully predict it.

Both Hurd-Wood and Wright give strong performances as the snobbish, British socialite and the seasoned photojournalist. Koirala is effortless, and has a smooth screen presence. Rana gives a nuanced performance as the headmistress, although her delivery could have done with some improvement. For Nepali audiences, hearing the actors converse in Nepali is a joy.

Despite the excellent performances, the characterisation is weak. Elizabeth is known throughout the film as the spoilt socialite, and she acts the part,

but the audience never finds out much more than that. We are not aware of her past and of how she became a fodder for the paparazzi. Similarly, not much is known of Colt apart from the fact that he's a war photojournalist.

Using the spectacular Annapurnas as a backdrop for the film, McFarland makes optimum use of the location with his cinematography. The stunning aerial shots of Pokhara and Dhampus, together with Sam Cardon's moving original music, can make overseas Nepalis homesick. *Highway to Dhampus* is a must-see, and apart from a few inconsistencies, authentically portrays the hardships of Nepalis without romanticising it.  *Ayesha Shakya*

Highway to Dhampus is showing at QFX Cinemas and FCube Cinemas in Kathmandu.

 **nepalitimes.com**
■ Trailer 

HAPPENINGS



GOPEN RAI

I QUIT: Ex-Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai quit the UCPN(M) party on Saturday and travelled to Janakpur to address a Madhesi rally this week.



GOPEN RAI

SIMMERING ANGER: Students stage a protest in front of the Indian Embassy at Lainchaur against the border blockade by India on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

LONG WAIT: Motorists wait in line at the the Nepal Army fuel station Bhadrakali in Kathmandu on Wednesday, five days after the Indian border was sealed.



RSS

NOT OVER: Dr Govinda KC called off his seventh hunger strike for medical reform on Tuesday citing the country's present dire situation.



SOALTEE CROWNE PLAZA

DIVA DELIGHT: Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat at the launch of Casino Mahjong at Soaltee Crowne Plaza with General Manager Upaul Majumdar on Saturday.

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Tulsipur : 082-562575



Western classical comes to town

A four-day international music festival in Kathmandu next week aims to promote western classical music appreciation and education in Nepal and will feature performances from world-renowned musicians.

The festival is organised by the non-profit Gharana Music Foundation which was established earlier this year by Dan Linden, an American classical guitarist and music teacher based in Kathmandu.

Nepal has a vibrant music scene that has strong Indian classical elements and traditional Nepali folk, and Kathmandu has become hub for jazz and blues festivals. Gharana hopes to bring classical Western music into the mix.

"Our main aim is not to entertain but to educate," Linden

said. What helps make the Gharana festival so unique is that in addition to world class performances there will be free music workshops open to the Nepali public. The performers themselves will lead the workshops which will be attended by the music and art community of Kathmandu.

"It is the first time an international classical festival is being presented in such a concentrated way with this level of artistry and with unique educational opportunities for students interested in the genre," Linden explained.

Some of the festival's key acts include a solo performance by well-known New York-based cellist, Laura Metcalf, as well as performances from acclaimed guitarists Rupert Boyd, Ana Maria Rosado and Paul Cesarczyk. It will

also feature local artists like tabala player Rabin Lal Shrestha and didgeridoo player Salil Subedi.

While the workshops are open to the general public, spaces are limited. Linden hopes to make this an annual music event in Nepal. As he said: "We want to see Kathmandu become a music destination and a city where the arts can flourish".

Gharana Music Festival
8-11 October
Yak & Yeti Hotel
Tickets: Rs 500
(Rs 250 for students)
Available at: (Patan and Baluwatar), Himalayan Java (Thamel), Mandala Book Point (Jamal), The Old House (Durbar Marg) Le Sherpa (Lajimpat)
Pre-register for workshops: info@gharanamusicfoundation.org

Kairos Café

Tucked away in Jawalakhel, Kairos Café is a quaint, colourful restaurant with a great coffee selection and a mix of American and British cuisine. While the inside of the café is considerably smaller than the outside patio, it has a long L-shaped couch and several comfy armchairs lined with soft cushions, providing the perfect place to read, study, work or simply lounge around.

On a hot day, we were eager to visit Kairos Café for a sandwich and a tall glass of their famous cold brew coffee. Iced coffee aficionados may

agree that it is often difficult to find iced coffee that not only quenches your thirst but is also flavourful, full-bodied and aromatic. You can call of your search. Kairos' iced coffee is the perfect pick me up. You don't even need to add any milk or sugar. We were told by someone at the café that the secret is in steeping the grounded coffee beans in cold water for a prolonged period of time. This process gets rid of the acidity and leaves you with a naturally sweet, smooth, refreshing cup of iced coffee, which at Rs 250, may seem pricey but is definitely



PICS: MADELINE ZUTT

also fresh and juicy and the red onion complemented the tuna perfectly. The salad was crisp and crunchy and the beetroots and goat cheese went very well together.

All of the baked goods at Kairos are fresh, made in-house every day. So naturally, we couldn't leave without splitting a scone or a muffin. We opted for a scone that came with a choice of either strawberry or blackberry jam and a side of fresh cream and cost only Rs 200. Aside from the coffee, this was definitely the best part of the meal. The scone was light and fluffy, baked to perfection, and the jam (we opted for blackberry) added some zest to the pastry dish.

With its friendly staff, excellent coffee and tranquil atmosphere, Kairos Café is a great place to relax and recharge.

Madeline Zutt
How to get there: From the Jawalakhel roundabout, go west towards the Zoo. When the road comes to a 'T' make a right and go about 10 meters. Kairos Café is the third house on the left with a big yellow sign.

OPEN FROM
7 AM
TO
5 PM

worth it.

The menu offers traditional British pub food, like fish and chips (Rs 600) and bangers and mash (Rs 400) as well as a varied selection of salads and sandwiches. Opting for a lighter lunch, we settled for an order of the tuna salad sandwich (Rs 300 for a 6-inch sub and Rs 450 for a 12-inch) and the beetroot and goat cheese salad (Rs 450). Both dishes were exquisite. Oftentimes, tuna salad is either too dry or dripping in mayonnaise but, thankfully, this sandwich was somewhere in the middle. The tomatoes were

KATHMANDU
PREMIUM LAGER BEER



The "Freshest" Beer in Nepal.

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Love can wait?

Hi all,
Relationships are a big jumble of compromises, struggles, confusion, uncertainty, growth and most importantly love and happiness. No two people in the world have the exact same definition of a happy relationship. There are couples who meet and fall in love within months and get married, and manage to live happily ever



ASK ANJANA ANYTHING
Anjana Rajbhandary

after. Then, there are those who have known each other for years, get married, only to find out they can no longer stand each other. If two people truly love each other and want to make a relationship work, I would like to believe that they can always make it work provided

they both put in the effort. However, relationships are not always that simple. Sometimes, situations or people change, priorities change and this in turn changes a relationship. Unless two people continue to share passion, intimacy and a level of commitment to one another, it is not easy to maintain a happy relationship.

Send me your questions to:
askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com or
[@AnjyRajy](https://www.facebook.com/AnjyRajy)

Hi Anjana,
I am a 30- year-old professional woman who has been in a serious relationship with a 35-year-old man for the past three years. My boyfriend is currently in his final year of getting his Masters and I am very proud of him. We both love each other but after being together for three years, I want some sort of promise that this relationship is leading somewhere. He doesn't think this is important. We also live in a culture where, I am constantly scrutinised for dating

someone who is not willing to get engaged. Honestly, I personally do not care about getting married but my family does, and I would like to make them happy. He thinks we can be happy just the way we are and claims that



society is constantly changing, but I disagree and think that our society in Nepal still expects us to get married if we both have been in a committed relationship for this long. I am still with him hoping that we will eventually get married because if he does not have the intention of marrying

me, I cannot invest anymore time in this relationship. Am I being selfish ? Shouldn't he want to marry me if he loves me? How can we stay together without eventually getting married? SWR

AR: Honestly, I do not think there is a right or wrong answer to your question about what is more or less acceptable in Nepali society. If you are both mature adults who have been in a serious relationship for three years and you both want different things, it is clear that you need to sit down and have a serious conversation to voice your concerns to each other.

Your desire to get engaged is not selfish, but getting engaged just to satisfy the societal pressures you may be experiencing may not be the best reason, despite the strength of these pressures in Nepal. If you want to get engaged and get married, you should be able to be honest with your partner about why you want to get married. At the same time, I do not

think your boyfriend is wrong in saying that he is happy just the way things are and does not see the rush in getting married. But, the problem here is that you two are on different pages and want different things out of the relationship. It is important to discuss this and see how you both can reach a compromise – irrespective of how your society may perceive you, are you happy without being engaged to him? Is he willing to get engaged and married to you, even if it is not his own priority?

It is hard to say that a relationship is going somewhere, when the two parties involved want it to go two different directions and it looks like that is what is happening here. Talk to him and see who is willing to compromise a little for the sake of the other, otherwise it will not go anywhere. Good luck. 🇳🇵

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TUFAN NEUPANE

After the constitution was promulgated on 20 September, the Madhesi parties agitating for amended provisions in the new constitution changed their tactic of demonstrations and shutdowns and started blocking the border with India.

One week later, as Nepal reels under a shortage of fuel and other essential commodities the top three parties, which pushed through the constitution, have formed a three-member committee to negotiate with the disgruntled Madhesi parties and talks are expected to begin in a couple of days.

But what are the major demands put forth by the Madhesi parties? They are not different from the seven points that India reportedly pressed Nepal to address.

The Madhesi parties want the five disputed Tarai districts to be in two plains provinces, rights for naturalised citizenship holders to assume important posts like President and Prime Minister, proportional representation in all state organs and demarcation of electoral constituencies in proportion to population.

Are these demands genuine, and are they too difficult for the government to address? Madhesi leaders belonging to the top three parties say two of these demands are genuine and can be easily addressed. But they say the other two, if addressed, will hurt the long-term interests of Nepalis.

Nepal's 2007 Interim Constitution adopted principles of proportional representation



BIKRAM RAI

Tarai talks

Madhesi leaders of national parties say some of the demands of plains-based groups are genuine and can easily be addressed

in all state organs. The new constitution has partially incorporated them. In its preamble, the new constitution states that an equal society shall be created on 'the basis of principles of proportional representation'. In Article 285, it again states that principles of proportional representation shall be adopted to appoint civil servants.

But the word 'proportional' is missing in the fundamental right to social justice. The new constitution merely talks about principles of inclusion in state organs. The Madhesi parties are suspicious that the top three parties are trying to wriggle out of the earlier provision. They believe that the word 'proportional' was

deliberately omitted to exclude already-excluded communities.

"Madhesi parties have misinterpreted it to spread the lie that 45 per cent of government jobs will no longer be reserved for them," says Mahendra Yadav, a Nepali Congress (NC) member of the parliament. "This is not a big issue, and it can be resolved through an amendment."

UML's MP Satrugan Mahato says the top three parties are ready to include this word even in the fundamental rights. "It can be addressed in the next parliamentary session," he says.

UCPN (M)'s MP Surendra Prasad Jaishawal says the demand for demarcation of election constituencies in proportion to population is genuine and the top

three parties are ready to address it.

"Proportional representation and demarcation of constituencies in proportion to population were our demands, too," he says. "We signed the constitution only after our respective parties promised to address these demands by amending the constitution."

All Madhesi leaders of the top three parties believe that addressing these two genuine demands will ease tension in the Tarai. Mahato of the UML says: "People in the Madhes are angry because the state quickly responded to protests in the hills, but did not wake up even after so many deaths in the Tarai."

Article 289 of the new constitution bars naturalised

citizenship holders from becoming President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Speakers of both houses, Head of Provincial Government, Chief Minister, Speaker of Provincial Council and Chiefs of security agencies. But the Madhesi parties say this is a discriminatory provision and naturalised citizenship holders should have equal rights.

Madhesi parties say people in the Tarai share kinship and cultural ties with Indians, and this constitutional provision is a discrimination against those who settle in the Tarai after marrying Madhesi men or women. But Madhesi leaders of national parties believe that allowing naturalised citizenship holders the right to assume important posts would be detrimental to the long-term interests of the Madhesi people.

"Reversing this constitutional provision would mean that those Madhesis who were born in the Tarai will have to compete with Indians married to our sons and daughters to become Chief Minister of the Madhes province," explains Jaisawal of the UCPN(M). "And this provision does not stop our children from becoming Nepal's President even if we are married to Indians."

Madhesi parties want no more than two provinces in the Tarai. The new constitution has created just two plains provinces. But Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa in the east and Kailali and Kanchanpur in the far-west have been put in the hill provinces. Madhesi parties want these five districts to be in the plains provinces. But not all Madhesis support this demand.

UML's MP Shital Jha says: "I am fighting for a Mithila state, but I do not have reservations about how provinces have been demarcated in the Tarai. What if we insert Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa in the Madhes province, and people from these districts rise up against it? We should listen to what a majority of people living there want." 🇳🇵

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Before it's too late

Southern Nepal is in the middle of a humanitarian crisis, we need to act soon

PURU SHAH

The country, its capital and the media have been largely silent about the humanitarian crisis in the Tarai and the human rights violations. Most of the victims are children, journalists, and ordinary Nepali civilians who have nothing significant to gain from the constitution or federalism. They simply want to live with dignity in a safe environment, earn a living and feed their families. Millions of Nepalis in the Tarai who have no say have been caught up in this political unrest.

As the protests turned violent, millions of ordinary Madhesis have locked themselves inside their homes for more than a month now. They are not even safe in their homes as police often enter while chasing fleeing protesters. The blockage of the border is now making life even more difficult.

Most Nepalis of the Tarai have no interest in participating in any of the protests with the Madhesi Morcha, or to attack the police. Please do not let the violent methods of a few thousand overshadow the millions of peaceful Nepalis who are suffering. There was an acute shortage of basic food and fuel even before, now it is worse. The unrest in the Tarai has become mere statistics, but there is a human side to the story and it affects half of Nepal's population.

Millions of children in the Tarai have been unable to attend schools and several have died in protests. Children have been victims of police brutality, and many are psychologically traumatised. My three-year-old nephew is terrified of the police. Army trucks patrol the streets, pointing guns at whoever dares to poke their heads out of doors.

In response to a few greedy political leaders, we have the response of a rogue state. The headlines are all about clashes between protesters and police, but this is a much bigger disaster. The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal will most likely investigate these deaths and send reports to the government. But how is that going to bring back the dead?

We have to end the blame game between the Madhesi Morcha and Kathmandu. Who started it doesn't matter anymore, what matters is that it needs to stop. When innocent children and civilians are killed by police inside their homes, or a mob lynches policemen things have gone too far, and we need to speak out.

The state and most of the Kathmandu-based media have only criticised the violence against the police while the brutality against civilians continues unchecked. A majority of Nepalis are still indifferent, and this needs to change to save Nepali citizens in the south from a full-fledged humanitarian crisis.

We know there are extremists on both sides. People face discrimination in the Madhes and in the Pahad. It is time to move beyond those differences and build a better and united Nepal. Except for a few, most Nepalis are tolerant and want to live in harmony. When a policeman was lynched in Jaleswor two weeks ago, a Madhesi Nepali saved another policeman's life by helping him escape from the mob.

Many young Nepalis in the Pahad and Madhes feel a sense of alienation. Many wonder what has befallen upon us that we have become so deeply polarised that reconciliation seems to be a challenge. The provincial demarcation was all gerrymandering. The number of federal states have oscillated between 14, 11, 6, and then 7 which shows that political agreements can change to accommodate grievances. Sooner or later, political squabbles will be solved, with or without India's mediation. We know this from history. But innocent lives cannot be brought back, and communal tensions need to be healed.

When the earthquakes struck in April, Nepal was united. People in the Tarai collected food and brought relief to the hills. Today, the Tarai is in the midst a humanitarian crisis, yet the rest of the country appears indifferent towards the people there. How can one part of the country celebrate while the other is mourning for its dead?

This constitution is historic because it was formulated through a democratic process by members elected by the people. It has also institutionalised federalism and the republic, which are big achievements. Yet, it has still not guaranteed gender equality for women and citizenship for their children. People in the Tarai and elsewhere have also been cheated on the basis of citizenship, proportional representation, number of constituencies, cultural, and linguistic freedom. We should fix these deficiencies.



Irrespective of the constitution and the federalism model, most Nepalis will still have to fend for themselves, like they always have. The survivors of the earthquake are still waiting for help that never came, but somehow they have tried to make do.

The Madhesi people also know that they cannot depend on the government for jobs, education, healthcare or basic services. Most of us will gain little from the new constitution or the federalism structure. All we want is to live with dignity, but for the past month we have faced oppression, death, fear and humiliation. Even moderate and indifferent Madhesis are resentful. It is still not too late to heal and unite. 🇳🇵



*Puru Shah is the founder of Madhesi Youth.
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BIKRAM RAI



INSULT

SANTA GAHA MAGAR
in MAHOTTARI

Satya Rupa Singh, a 36-year-old primary school teacher in the town of Jaleswor near the Indian border, initially did not care about protests spearheaded by Madhesi parties in the Tarai. Their shutdown had made life difficult for weeks. The police had been firing at protesters, but she wasn't ready to go out and join the demonstrations against the constitution.

But on 10 September, she saw the security forces firing indiscriminately at protesters near her home, killing 15-year-old Ramu Singh and four others. That is what outraged Singh and she decided to join the street protests. Two days later, three more were killed in police firing.

"That was just too much, the police must stop killing us," she said. However, Singh, like many others in these plains districts bordering India still doesn't know what are the demands put up by Madhesi parties. She is just against the violence, and is furious that the state has insulted her people.

In the last three weeks, Singh has not missed a single day of protest, even travelling 10km away from Jaleswor to take part in a sit-in to block the import of fuel

"Every abusive word, every bullet and every death added fuel to the fire."

and other essential commodities into Nepal.

"We endured 40 days of blockade, but the state did not care about our life," she says. "Let Kathmandu now feel the same pain."

What started as a street movement of the Madhesi Front, an alliance of four Madhesi parties, has now become a Third Madhes Movement in less than a decade. In January 2007, Upendra Yadav, who is now a key leader of the Front, was arrested for burning the Interim Constitution in Kathmandu. His arrest set off protests across the plains and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala agreed to include federalism and autonomy for a Madhes province in the Interim Constitution.

A year later, Yadav and other Madhesi leaders launched another movement and agreed to participate in the first Constituent Assembly (CA) elections only after getting a deal on proportional representation



BIKRAM RAI

AND INJURY

for marginalised communities in state organs. Now, there is a third uprising in progress. Madhesi leaders say this time they will not back off unless the new constitution gives legitimacy to what was agreed upon in the past.

However, the parties leading this struggle did not initially have the organisational structure necessary for a sustained movement. They knew this, and even announced that their future provincial government would give Rs 5 million to families of each Madhesi person killed by state security. Even so, the Madhesi people, most of whom had voted for candidates of national parties like the NC and the UML did not come out into the streets.

After eight policemen were lynched in Kailali by Tharu protesters on 24 August, police started using excessive force in response as the protests spread to the eastern plains. That is when people like Satya Rupa Singh and others joined the protests. As the police used more force, the violence escalated.

When Madhesi parties organised protesters from surrounding areas to overrun Janakpur, an emergency meeting of government officials led by Dhanusa CDO Kali Prasad Parajuli got police prepared to counter it.

“We were afraid we might not be able to contain the situation if thousands of protesters resorted to vandalism,” says Parajuli. Violent clashes erupted and three people were killed in Janakpur as the situation spiralled out of control.

The Madhesi parties appear united for now, but there are groups with varying interests. For example, the people here have already secured a Madhes province, but are divided over which Tarai city should be declared the provincial capital.

Some Madhesi leaders want the trade centre of Birganj, while others are pushing for Janakpur, the heart of the ancient Mithila kingdom. Madhesi groups were competing with each other to be more radical, and to suffer more fatalities to bolster their cause for the location of the capital.

Whatever the reason for the escalating violence, the loss of every Madhesi life added fuel to the fire, radicalising even the moderates.

Lalan Dwibedi became Chief of Thakur Ram Multiple Campus in Birganj with the backing of the NC, but is outraged by the heavy-hand of the state and a lack of respect from Kathmandu for the people of the plains. “How can they call us *dhotis*? We are all Nepalis, and we are now fighting a battle of dignity,” he

says. “Every derogatory word by a government official, every bullet fired by police, and the death of every Madhesi protester adds fuel to the fire.”

Madhesi protesters, who have blocked border points with sit-ins during the days and sleeping on no man’s land at night, have welcomed India’s blockade. However, the seven-point of amendment, which New Delhi reportedly pushed Kathmandu to accept, does not find resonance with every Madhesi leader.

“I don’t understand why there is so much fuss about citizenship,” says Lalbabu Raut, Vice Chair of Federal Socialist Forum and a member of the parliament. “Except for a few Madhesi leaders, the Madhesi people are satisfied with citizenship provisions.”

Raut says proportional representation of Madhesi in all state organs, demarcation of constituencies in proportion to population and wider boundaries of plains provinces are the key demands. “This is what we are fighting for, the other demands are minor” he adds.

Interestingly, after the Madhesi parties changed their tactics and started sit-ins at the border no one has been killed in protests. But the ordinary people across the Tarai are suffering, and they want Kathmandu to take steps to end their hardship. 🇳🇵

Fighting our own battles

Madhesis may be culturally close to Indians, but they are Nepalis first

JIVESH JHA

New Delhi has demonstrated through strong-arm tactics its dissatisfaction over the provisions of the new constitution, and a section of Madhesi society has supported this cross-border solidarity.

The disgruntled Madhesi parties appear upbeat over the southern neighbour’s intervention on their behalf. Ashok Rai of the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal even went as far as to say last week that India’s pressure tactics on Nepal through a blockade was “welcome”.

However, in its pursuit of appeasing the Madhes, the southern neighbour has probably miscalculated. There are many here in India who think that New Delhi will now face an uphill task to regain the trust of a majority of Nepalis. Indeed, the move has squandered all the bilateral goodwill that had been built by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after his visit to Kathmandu last year. Even if it is a policy of ‘divide and rule’, it is hard to see how a communally unstable Nepal would be in India’s national interest.

To be sure, the Madhesis have time and again had to prove their Nepali credentials and loyalty to the Nepali state. So ingrained is the racism, that it has bred resentment in the Madhes, and this erupted when what was seen as a discriminatory constitution was promulgated. Now, the task of proving our ‘Nepalihood’ will be that much more difficult thanks to Indian intervention, supposedly on our behalf.

Yes, we Madhesis share a cultural affinity to the north Indian plains. However, this doesn’t mean Madhesis are beholden to India — neither Kathmandu nor New Delhi seem to have understood that. Madhesis may be regarded culturally as being close to India, but we are Nepalis through and through. A Madhesi Nepali in India, Qatar or Malaysia is regarded as a Nepali first.

There are some provisions in the new constitution which have posed a serious concern for plains dwellers. Article 283 says only ‘citizens by descent’ shall be entitled to hold senior state posts.



GOPEN RAI

Across the Madhes, many have traditionally married across the border. Women born in India and married to a Nepali national will not have the same rights as people who are Nepalis ‘by descent’.

This is discriminatory and violates the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of which Nepal is a signatory. But this is a political issue that needs to be settled by Nepalis themselves. But by lending its voice and imposing a blockade, New Delhi has undermined the Madhesi cause and its own long-term interest.

Those for the provision in the constitution had argued that it was necessary to prevent Indian men, by the millions, marrying Nepalis to acquire citizenship, and by coming out so aggressively India has bolstered that argument. It will now be doubly difficult for Nepalis to attain gender justice in our constitution.

It is time for the silent majority of Madhesis to speak out against outside interference, to speak up in Nepal’s national interest and against the parties, leaders and various funded NGO activists who purport to represent the Madhesi cause.

The Madhesi people are proud Nepalis, they shouldn’t be asked to prove it everywhere they go. And they also don’t need unsolicited ‘help’ from outside for their cause. 🇳🇵



Jivesh Jha is a law student in Dehradun, India

On vest: Madhesi Morcha
Rabin Savami in *Nagarik*, 29 September

Rabindra Manandhar in *Kantipur*, 28 September

BLOCKADE ARCADE

Five principles of peaceful coexistence
1 Kakarbita border 2 Biratnagar border 3 Raxaul border 4 Bhairahawa border 5 Rupaidiha border
Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 28 September

Yuwak in *Nagarik*, 27 September

Pure coalition
Rajesh KC in *Setopati*, 30 September

Book: Constitution
Yuwak in *Nagarik*, 27 September

'Blockade'
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accidentally kneel.
Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*,
29 September

Left: Diplomatic Right: Relations
Dewen in *Nagarik*, 28 September

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The land of the brave

pahilopost.com, 29 September

On 3 August 2014, Indian Prime Minister's "We cannot bear to see our Nepali brothers go to bed on an empty stomach" speech drew thunderous applause in the Constituent Assembly (CA) in Kathmandu.

Fast-forward to 2015, India has imposed an unofficial economic blockade against Nepal, cutting off supplies of essential commodities. With the fuel crisis deepening, people have had a hard time commuting and there is even a shortage of medical supplies. But the same Modi who a year ago expressed his solidarity with Nepalis, is touring the USA and has not spoken a single word on the situation in

Nepal. Instead his employees have been badgering Nepal to amend different articles in Nepal's new constitution.

Isn't this an insult to Nepal's sovereignty? It's not that Modi is unaware that Nepal is a sovereign nation. While addressing the CA last year he had said: "It is not India's job to interfere in Nepal's business. We need to help you move forward in the direction you want to head towards. Nepal is a sovereign country and we want it to be renowned in the world. That is our wish."

Will Nepal kneel before India's demands? Modi himself answered the question: "If a Gorkhali says he is not afraid to die, it is the truth. This is the land of the brave."

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“As a Madhesi Nepali I support the Madhes Movement, but I oppose the Indian blockade.”

On Twitter: Manish Jha @manishjhanepal

Delhi's next moves

Editorial in Kantipur, 1 October

कान्तिपुर

The Nepali nation and Nepalis did not oppose Indian policies for no reason. If India is really worried about this, it should analyse the root causes that led to the situation and address them because this is not a problem that Nepal created. It was complicated by Nepal's politicians bruising Indian diplomatic egos. To resolve this crisis, India would be well advised to take a hands-off approach. Certainly, the Madhesi and Tharu communities were dissatisfied with their unmet demands. But the three parties had publicly committed themselves to address them through amendments. It would also have been appropriate for India to welcome the new democratic and legitimate constitution like the rest of the

international community. This wasn't expected of a friend and neighbour who had been part of the peace process since the 12-point agreement. Delhi also made other diplomatic mis-steps after that. The decision to send a special envoy at the last moment to try to stop the constitution was especially impractical. Nepal's leaders couldn't have stopped it even if they wanted to. Then, to take revenge for not heeding its advice, India blockaded the border. This one step to make Nepal kneel suddenly unleashed an anti-Indian wave in the country. India had earlier tried to change the way it projected itself in Nepal with behind-the-scene diplomacy. With just one speech to the Nepal parliament, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had changed the perception of India in Nepal. India can now normalise bilateral relations by correcting the mistakes made by its diplomats, lifting the blockade and persuading agitated parties to join the government in decisive talks. India needs to understand the diplomatic, political and economic damage that it will cause itself by forcing Nepal to seek help elsewhere.

8 international laws violated

Naya Patrika, 29 September

नयाँ पत्रिका

Experts of international relations say the blockade has violated at least eight international laws and conventions, and this is tantamount to aggression.

1. The Vienna Convention

The UN passed the Convention on Transit and Trade of Land-locked States in 1965, allowing land-locked nations like Nepal to import goods from other countries without any hindrance.

2. Law of the Seas

UN Convention on the Law of the Seas 1973, to which both Nepal and India are signatories,

allows all land-locked countries unhindered access to the sea.

3. WTO laws

More than 165 countries, including Nepal and India, are members of the World Trade Organisation, and they are entitled to the right to trade with each other.

4. Transit Treaty

In 1989, India imposed an official economic blockade against Nepal when a transit treaty between these two countries expired. The treaty is still in force but India has imposed an undeclared blockade against Nepal.

5. Bilateral Trade Treaty

Nepal has signed a trade treaty

with India to access the sea via Indian territory, which has been violated.

6. Asian Highway Agreement

Asian countries, including Nepal and India, have signed an agreement to connect their highways for regional trade.

7. SAFTA agreement

South Asian countries have adopted the concept of South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) to promote trade and business with each other. SAFTA law does not allow any country to block other country's goods.

8. Members of ASEAN SAARC, and BIMSTEC which guarantee free trade among its member countries.

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(Quote) Blockade (Unquote)

I don't know if I can make you any more cheerful about the state of the nation than you already are this week. But let me give it a try: Nepal may depend on India for fossil fuels, but thank goodness we are completely self-reliant in the production of beer.

As you all know we have been hoisted on our own petard by the Indians with an alleged, unofficial, undeclared, purported, unannounced, so-called, supposed, informal, (quote) blockade (unquote). Since Prime Minister Jhusil Da is not on email, he was sent a telegram by his Indian counterpart this week which read: 'SO YOU PASSED A CONSTITUTION COMMA NOTED COMMA OIL STOP COMMA GAS STOP'.

Scientists have long known that there is a direct correlation between Himalayan geo-tectonics and geo-politics. The April Earthquake and the September Blockade have the same geological genesis, both were caused by India pushing into Nepal. This plate expansionism is linked to the convection of magma deep below the earth's mantle and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it when folks South of the



Border suffer one of their bouts of irritable bowel syndrome.

None of this is new, of course. We have to remember that India has been acting pushy for the past 70 million years, ever since it broke off with Gondwanaland, shed Madagascar and Mauritius along the way as it sailed across an ocean that bears its name, and rammed into Eurasia. Which is why Nepal finds itself squeezed between India and China, a fact that our founding grandfather Kingman Prithvi Narayan the Great recognised 250 years ago when he coined the famous phrase: "Let's face it: Nepal has its nuts in a vice."

Seismologists have used geo-location sensors along the Main Boundary Thrust (MBT) in the Tarai to come

up with the astounding recent discovery that there is no No Man's Land anymore, border pillars have been found to move by up to 50m in the course of one night. Nowhere else on the planet is continental drift happening at such a high velocity as here. And way out there at the tri-junction of Nepal, India and China on Lipu Lekh the tectonic plates have moved so dramatically that a whole chunk of Nepali territory, unbeknownst to Kathmandu, was thrust over to the Indian side.

The Nepal grovelment response to the unofficial blockhead so far has been half-hearted and incomplete. If we are serious about tackling this crisis head-on there are five immediate measures we can undertake on an urgent warlike footing:

Do absolutely nothing. Yes, that's right, let the blockade continue into the unforeseeable future so as to reduce our widening trade deficit with India. In the past week of the blockade Nepal has saved Rs 50 billion in imports. According to FinMin Mahat, if we can keep this up for the rest of the 2015-16 fiscal cycle, Nepal will have a balance of payments surplus with its southern neighbour. Yay!

OK, you say, but that still leaves us with the water crisis. We can do without oil, but kind of difficult to flush the toilet without water. Which is why the government is working on a cunning plan to get Lujendra Ojha who discovered water on Mars, to try to find water in Kathmandu as well. Better hurry before Aaj Tak says Ojha was born in #India.

And speaking of Indian tv, Nepal's Ministry of Disinformation and Miscommunication is worried about the cable operators blockading Indian channels and is planning to transmit North Korean teleserials for Nepalis to watch over the holidays so we can forget our woes.

The government is also weighing its options to dig a motorable tunnel under the Indo-Nepal Line of Control at Bhairawa, Birganj, Biratnagar and Nepalganj in order to bring in essential perishables like bananas, pineapples and pomegranates into the country. We have to have our poms.

As already announced by the Minister of Industry, Nepal will "soon" be exporting petroleum to India. That is why getting the Indians to build the Amlekhganj pipeline was a masterstroke: we will actually be sending crude the other way as soon as we fast-track exploration permits along blocks in the Tarai and strike oil by Sunday.



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