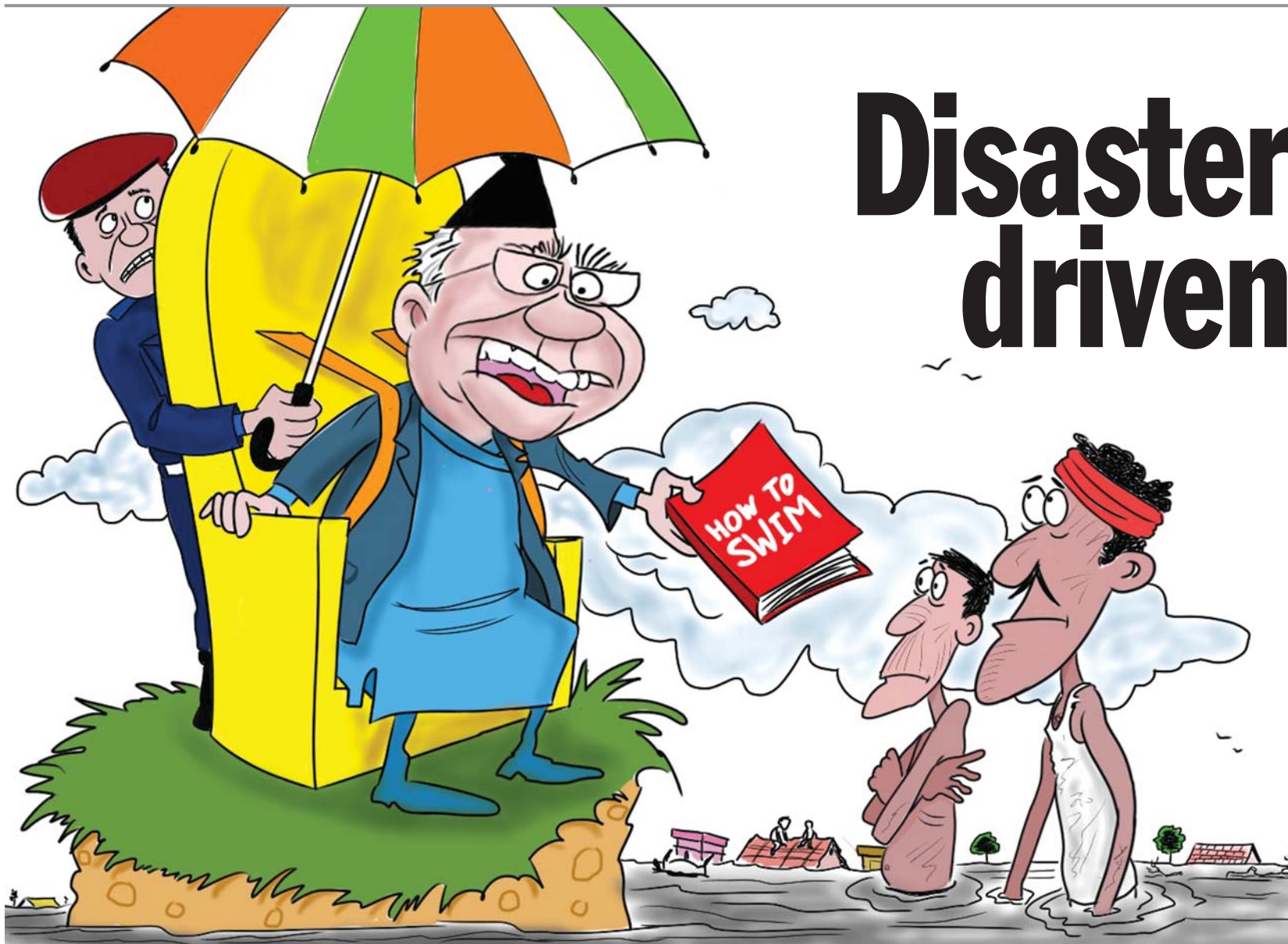



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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

## Disaster driven

If the earthquake in April 2015 brought together four major parties to fast-track the Constitution, this week's devastating floods have given the government a chance to push through the deadlocked Constitution amendment bill.

In an all-party meeting on Wednesday, Prime Minister Deuba urged the main opposition UML to help pass the bill to pave the way for the Tarai-centric RJPN to participate in upcoming elections, and speed up flood relief.

The UML refused, but promised not to obstruct the House when the bill is tabled. That was what Deuba wanted to hear. Having already persuaded the RJPN to take part in elections even without a two-thirds majority for the bill, Deuba's road ahead looks less bumpy.

The bill is expected to be voted on next week, when a date will be set for simultaneous

provincial and Parliamentary elections. The government has already proposed 21 November to the Election Commission (EC), nearly two months after the last phase of local elections in Province 2 on 18 September. The EC is against holding the two polls on the same day, but it has no choice because both the ruling and opposition parties want it that way.

Deuba wants an election date and an amendment bill tabled before his five-day India visit beginning 23 August so he can show New Delhi that he is on the right track towards implementing the Constitution. Nepal-India relations, damaged by the Blockade, were on the mend, but this week's floods, which killed at least 120 people and affected 20% of the country's population, have the potential to sour relations again. The anger of border villagers at India's new east-west Indian road embankments

for exacerbating the flood has received widespread media coverage in Nepal.

Water expert Ajaya Dixit says Deuba must raise the embankment issue with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "The visit could be a chance for Deuba and Modi to agree to make a joint effort to install an end-to-end early flood warning information system in the Ganga basin."

Meanwhile, the government has repeated the mistake it made after the earthquake of announcing a one-window policy for relief distribution. The true extent of the devastation is only now becoming apparent. There has been a massive loss of livestock and crops, and the floods hit a region with one of the highest out-migration rates. Even one week later, families are fending for themselves as government response has been too little too late. 🇳🇵

**IN DEEP WATER**  
**EDITORIAL**

**DISASTROUS**  
**UNPREPAREDNESS**  
**GUEST EDITORIAL**  
BY **AJAYA DIXIT**

**PAGE 2**



**The rivers are fighting back**  
BY **MEGH ALE** **PAGE 4**

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# IN DEEP WATER

What is surprising about this week’s floods is that we seem so surprised by them. Nepal is prone to water-induced disasters, and after the 1993 catastrophe the Japanese even helped set up a government department for early-warning and management of floods. Yet floods continue to ‘wreak havoc.’

We also like to call floods ‘natural disasters.’ They are ‘natural’ only in as much as they are caused by heavy rain. This annual monsoon phenomenon is actually man-made, or at least exacerbated by poorly-planned infrastructure. There is a human cost to floods mainly because we tamper with the natural flow of rivers, damage the watershed and obstruct drainage.



Farmers have long known that floods are actually beneficial because they bring down nutrients and replenish the soil, and they have learnt to live with them. The situation has only become unmanageable because we have constricted rivers with flood ‘control’ levees to ‘tame’ them.

Floodplains over which rivers once spread to accommodate excess runoff are now built over. Deforestation of the fragile Chure hills directly upstream from the Tarai

has resulted in rivers being choked with sediment, causing them to meander through villages and farms. A river will find its own way to the sea no matter what we do to block its path. We have turned a predictable annual occurrence into a calamity.

It is true that floods are getting more destructive. The monsoons are getting more erratic, and cloudbursts are more common. But even this is man-made because the changes in weather patterns appear to be caused by climate change.

Most flood damage in the Nepal Tarai and India this year was not caused by Nepal’s four main Himalayan rivers but by flash floods on streams that flow down from the Chure. The waters rampaged through the Tarai and in some places were blocked by road embankments on the Indian side. The irony of it all is that the Chure was mined for gravel and sand to feed India’s infrastructure boom, an act that has made floods more destructive in India itself.

The Kosi Barrage is a ticking time bomb, not so much for Nepal, but for Bihar. The weir and the dykes downstream were a political and engineering folly because they allowed the Kosi’s sediment to raise the river’s bed so it is now flowing several metres above the surrounding terrain. A more serious breach in the levees, as happened in 2008, or a future flash flood, could make the Kosi bypass the barrage altogether with destruction of biblical proportions.

Floods and landslides will only get worse in Nepal in coming decades, that much is sure. Preventing them requires understanding nature’s ways, and letting rivers flow free again.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

AJAYA DIXIT

# Disastrous unpreparedness

Floods have been part of the life and livelihoods of the people living in the Indo-Gangetic plains for millennia, though written historical records of large floods only exist starting in the 17th and 18th centuries. Understanding the hydrology of South Asian rivers is critical to deepening our understanding of floods. The bottom line is that floods occur when a river channel is filled with water. This often happens during the monsoon season, when more than 80% of annual rainfall arrives in just four months. As long as the Himalayan range forms a barrier for rain clouds moving in from the Bay of Bengal, the monsoon will continue to bring floods. Within Nepal, however, there is great variation in the amount and intensity of rainfall.

Recent advances in meteorology and weather system science have helped us to better understand the causes and movements of the monsoonal troughs that create heavy rainfall in different parts of the country. The movement of similar troughs caused the cloudbursts that unleashed catastrophic floods in central Nepal in 1981 and 1993. In 1981, a weather station in Godavari, Lalitpur got 169mm of rain in 24 hours, while in 1993, 540mm of rain fell in over 24 hours in Tistung in the Kulekhani watershed. More than 1,000 people lost their lives in the resulting floods, critical infrastructure like roads, bridges, hydropower stations and irrigation barrages and canals were damaged, and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people were in jeopardy.

Nepalis have always suffered from monsoon floods, and many factors indicate that they will worsen in the future as climate change causes our weather systems to alter and we continue down dangerous and unequal development pathways. Our response to such disasters remains focused on reactive rescue and relief activities, which unfortunately often get politicised. As a society and a nation, we have failed to shift our efforts towards reducing risks by proactively preparing for the next disaster.

Poor planning and a lack of understanding of risks, as well as of the natural flow of rivers, are why current and future floods will be more destructive than past ones. We must learn from the past to minimise the loss and destruction from future disasters. Instead, we seem to keep repeating mistakes that have brought death and destruction. Aiming to control floods, we have jacketed rivers by building embankments without serious attention to local hydrology, resulting in waterlogging of the land along riverbanks. These rivers regularly breach with severe consequences for local people, who live with a false sense of safety because of the embankments. When we construct new roads, we ignore how they may exacerbate future floods by blocking natural drainage channels. When we pave over surfaces with concrete and asphalt, we rarely build the needed drainage.

Unlike some places in the world that face only one type of hazard, Nepalis must learn to live with multiple and regular hazards like floods, landslides, droughts and earthquakes. This means that minimising disaster risk should become a central part of our development journey.

Recently elected local councils must swing into action to develop disaster management plans for local communities. Early warning information about floods must reach the most vulnerable in risk areas, and we must have systems in place to help them minimise the impacts from such floods. Immediate relief and rescue efforts are critical to save lives and property. But only by preparing now can we ensure that we have the mechanisms and systems in place to prevent a flood from turning into a large-scale disaster.



**Ajaya Dixit** is a water expert with the Institute for Social Environmental Transition Nepal (ISET-N).

## ONLINE PACKAGES



### STINGING OPERATION

The Metropolitan Police Office (MPO) is trying to make female bus passengers safe from gropers with its 3-month ‘Safety Pin Campaign’ sting operation. Nepali Times reporters join undercover police to catch harassers in the act.



### EMPTY MOUNTAINS

Join us on a tour of Tangting village of Kaski where most young men have migrated for work. The scenic village, tucked away below the Annapurnas, has everything: a well-equipped school, plenty of clean drinking water and a micro-hydro station. Find out why young people are trading clean air for the cities’ dust and pollution.



### SUBMERGED LIVES

Floods and landslides triggered by heavy rainfall have claimed at least 123 lives and 35 people are still missing. Travel with our photojournalist to Saptari and Janakpur and see the devastation wrought by the disaster: paddy fields, schools and settlements inundated by torrential rain, and locals forced to leave their homes and belongings in search of safe shelters.

### THE VICIOUS CYCLE

These “ridicules” do not make any difference to these politicians (‘3-party dictatorship’, Editorial, #871). The fact of the matter is the country is caught in a vicious cycle composed of these three parties. Besides, even if other parties were to make it to power, they hardly make any difference. After all, a successful politician in Nepal is necessarily a corrupt man and it is with that ill-gotten money they make it back to power. So, a distinguished paper like *Nepali Times* should be asking this question: How can the people of Nepal break free of this apparently endless vicious cycle?

**Bihari Shrestha**

### QUESTIONS

- 1) Why is Madhesh getting so much attention from the mainstream parties (‘Fix a date’, Guest Editorial, Rameshwar Bohara, #871)?
- 2) Why are their demands plausible compared to other indigenous race or marginalised groups?
- 3) What is the hard proof that Madhesis or Tharu’s demands will not be the reason for the downfall instead?
- 4) Why aren’t they ready to compete in local level election?
- 5) Why are they insisting on controversial points on constitution amendment?
- 6) Do they acknowledge that their concerns are threatening national security?

**Tamang**

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Let’s talk about boobs

by *Suvekshya Ghimire*

The video and article by a young breast cancer survivor speaking about her battle with the disease was the most popular online package last week. Many readers praised Suvekshya Ghimire for her courage and commitment to speak out, so young Nepali women become less squeamish about breast examinations, and tumours can be detected and treated early. Visit [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com) to watch the viral video.

**Most reached and shared on Facebook**  
(28, 537 people reached, 88 shares)

**Most visited online page**  
(2,530 views)

**Most commented**



### Flood of recrimination

by *Kunda Dixit*

While most headlines this week blamed India for not opening the gates of the Kosi Barrage, in his blog Kunda Dixit says the deadly inundation on the Tarai was caused by flash floods on streams that flow down from the Chure, and blocked by road embankments in India. What is surprising is we are surprised by the floods, he argues.

**Most popular on Twitter**  
(38 retweets, 43 likes)

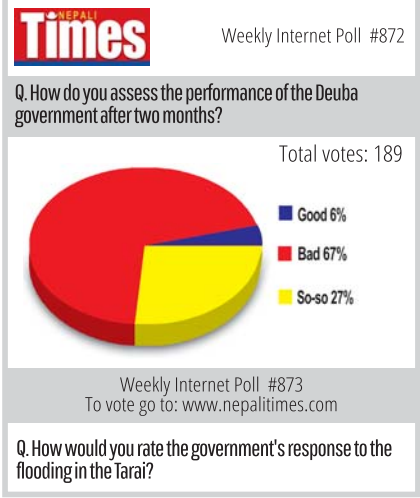
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**Nepali Times@nepalitimes**  
In Sindhupalchok 84% of #earthquake survivors are still living in temporary shelter, reports @Asia\_Foundation <http://bit.ly/2wt1SpbJ>

**Bobbie Clinton@ThquiltsBobbie**  
Replying to @nepalitimes @Asia\_Foundation  
This is horrible!! Corruption at its worst!

**Nepali Times@nepalitimes**  
What is surprising about this week’s floods is that we seem so surprised by them @kundadixit <http://bit.ly/2fCC1bv>

**Stephen Woroniecki@StephenWoronic**  
When climate change and sand mining come together, the effects can be catastrophic #Nepalfloods2017 @nepalitimes <http://www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/thebrief/2017/08/13/flood-of-recrimination/> ...





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# The rivers are fighting back

The only way to save Nepal from future floods is to respect a river's right of way

The deaths and devastation caused by this week's floods in the Tarai were frightful. But what is even more frightening is that this may be just the trailer for even more horrific disasters in the future if we do not manage our rivers right.



**COMMENT**  
Megh Ale

It may sound like a cliché to say that these were not natural but man-made disasters, but sometimes clichés are more accurate. To understand why these floods are man-made and how future disasters can be prevented, we have to look at the way we are treating our rivers.

Rivers are the arteries of the earth, and the roots of human civilisation. Rivers were there before humans came into existence, freely flowing

and nurturing plants and creatures in their courses to the sea. In fact, Nepal's three main rivers are older even than the mountains, carving through these mighty gorges over the last 65 million years as the Himalaya rose.

But we have desecrated these sacred veins of water. We have exploited them for water, irrigation and energy but also for sand, gravel, boulders and other construction material. We think we can tame rivers by building embankments, or dam them to get rich. But the rivers are fighting back.

There are more than 6,000 rivers and rivulets in Nepal, but we have never cared about managing them sustainably. Isn't it bizarre that a country with so many rivers does not have a long-term policy or vision to use its resources without destroying them in the process?

When our policymakers discuss rivers, they cannot think beyond sand mining, gravel excavation, sewage or hydropower. Rivers are not just for these commercial

purposes, and it is not a sustainable way of managing rivers. Removing sand and boulders from the rivers increases the velocity of the water, making them more destructive. Building embankments and encroaching on the floodplains constricts the rivers, squeezing them so they cannot handle runoff after heavy rainfall.

To manage rivers sustainably, it is important to let them take their own course and flow freely. Rivers are supposed to be holy here, but we have destroyed their sacredness. A river in which you cannot swim, drink or fish is a dead river. The Bagmati, despite the clean-up campaigns, is near-death. It has been straight-jacketed, it is a dumping ground and a sewer. If rivers mirror our well-being as a society, the Bagmati proves just how toxic we have made our own city and country. The putrid odour of the Bagmati is the smell of the greed and selfishness of a decaying society.

Nepal's official policy never reflected the respect we need to accord our rivers.

Just like the exploitation of the Chure, we have mistreated and abused our waterways. The rivers are now seeking their revenge, and we have pushed them to unleash this disaster.

Better late than never, we must start a dialogue to preserve rivers, managing them sustainably and preventing future disasters. The 17th Bagmati River Festival on Saturday is an annual ritual to commune with the holy waters that nurture the Kathmandu Valley civilisation. For the last 17 years, the festival has aimed to raise awareness about a problem that has become much more grave in that time.

The Bagmati River Festival is not just about the Bagmati, but aims to draw attention to the degradation of sister rivers all over the country. The key message is: Don't mess with rivers, or they will mess us up. 🇳🇵

**Megh Ale** is a river conservationist, and has been organising the annual Bagmati River Festival since 2001.



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# The shining subaltern

DB Parihar overcame caste barriers to struggle for Nepal’s and India’s freedom

It is 14 August 1946 at Deshapriya Park in South Calcutta, where more than half-a-million people are present. A 16-year-old brandishing a shining khukuri gets up and roars: “Gorkhas have been wrongly alleged to be mercenaries for the British, but we shouldn’t forget that not less than 15,000 Gorkha troops deserted the British command and joined Netaji’s Indian National Army...”

That gathering 71 years ago organised by the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee one year before Indian independence from Britain was to be addressed by none other than Satish Chandra Bose, Sarat Chandra Bose and Kiran Shankar Roy. Sarat Chandra Bose had asked DB Parihar to address the gathering “as a representative of Indian Nepalis.”

DB was a ferocious political activist, who went on to become a founding executive member of the Nepali National Congress, a writer and a filmmaker bestowed with the honour of making the first Nepali feature film, *Raja Harishchandra*.

Shankar Tiwari was researching Nepal’s democratic movement when he stumbled upon the handwritten memoir of DB Parihar while going through the Bholu Chatterjee Papers at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) in New Delhi. It was written by DB as a long letter to Chatterjee, a prominent journalist with sympathies for the Nepali Congress who later covered Nepal for 40 years.

“At first I was confused,” admitted Tiwari, who is editing the rare memoir, to be published by Public Policy Pathshala next month. “DB Parihar’s contribution to Nepal’s democratic movement, the Gorkha movement in India and Nepali cinema seemed historic. But it is clear we hardly knew anything about the man.”

DB’s family was exiled by the Rana regime to Darjeeling in 1935 when he was two years old. Like many other prominent Nepalis banished from Kathmandu, he was sucked into the Indian struggle for independence. In 1939, while at the Scottish mission school Dr Graham’s in Kurseong, he schemed to meet Subhas Chandra Bose, the legendary freedom fighter who believed in taking up arms against the British and who



was under house arrest in Kurseong itself. Six-year-old DB charmed the British guards with his Scottish songs and carried letters between Bose and other leaders of the Indian National Congress, baked into bread loaves or hemmed into his shorts, which became known as the Rotiwala Courier Service.

Later, while he was actively involved with the Gorkha League from Calcutta, DB was unhappy with the high command’s decision to support the Rana Regime in Nepal and formed the All India Gorkha Congress in November 1946. In January 1947, the AIGC merged with the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Congress formed in Banaras, becoming the Nepali National Congress.

DB was an executive member and secretary of this party, which merged with the Nepali Democratic Congress to become the Nepali Congress at the Calcutta Convention in 1950. He was then sent to Kathmandu for a secret mission of the party carrying pamphlets about ethics of Satyagraha, letters and circulars of the party. DB recounts this secret, one-man mission with excitement in his memoir.

“Many leaders had written about this mission, and some have mentioned DB. But they came to know about the identity of the

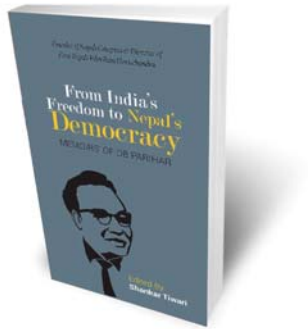
man behind it much later: it was a very important role,” says Tiwari. “Nepali society needs to learn about DB: why was such a historical figure consigned to oblivion? Why have Dalit organisations not paid attention to him?”

In his recent book, *Singha Durbar*, Sagar SJB Rana writes: ‘DB, representing the minority and Dalit community and from the Gorkha League, was elected unanimously to the Central Executive Committee of the Nepali National Congress.’ Such mentions, rather than an acknowledgement of the talent and contributions of a magnificent leader, are examples of the systemic discrimination Dalit leaders have faced because of the patronising attitude of the elite.

“DB’s memoir makes it clear that he got the position out of merit rather than for the sake of inclusion: Sagar Rana is not correct,” says Shankar.

Being a Dalit, DB faced much discrimination. For example, he was deprived of the position of editor of the party mouthpiece. As a result, DB was attracted towards cinema, because he could show in cinema what he was denied discussing in politics. DB’s memoir is a reflection of the bitterness of exclusion.

Says Tiwari: “There is clear evidence that this memoir was written when DB’s self-esteem was low. But whatever his state of mind, DB must have known he was writing to a prominent journalist. It tells us a lot about an incredible life, but it may also help us take a deeper look at ourselves.”



From India’s Freedom to Nepal’s Democracy  
Memoirs of DB Parihar  
Edited by Shankar Tiwari  
Public Policy Pathshala, 2017

## prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

### Turkish aid

Turkish Airlines has partnered with the group Love Army for Somalia (spearheaded by social media stars Jerome Jarre and Casey Neistat and actor Ben Stiller) to deliver aid to fight famine



and drought in Somalia. Hundreds of tons of food and supplies have been delivered in cargo planes to Somalia since the campaign started in March. Turkish is the only international airline that flies to the African country.

### Sagarmatha meet

Sagarmatha Cement, manufactured by Ghorahi Cement Enterprises, recently organised a dealer’s meet where



outstanding sellers were presented with awards and appreciation letters. 2,200

metric tons of Sagarmatha cement is produced every day using a new roller press machine, manufactured with German technology.

### Dammam flight

Himalayan Airlines has announced the launch of its daily direct flight service between Kathmandu and Dammam in Saudi Arabia, where roughly 500,000 Nepalis work. One-way and round-trip tickets from Kathmandu start from



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*Himalaya Airlines*

\$231.85 and \$370.18 respectively, while the airfare from Dammam starts from \$226.65 (one-way) and \$362.65 (round-trip).

### High-lift champ

Sipradi Trading, the authorised distributor of Tata vehicles in Nepal, handed over its specialised High-lift Catering Champ to Soaltee Crowne Plaza at a program



Wednesday. The vehicle can carry loads of up to 3,000kg and is often used to load on-board catering service at airports.

### Youth day with Qatar

Qatar Airways marked International Youth Day 2017 by kicking off the KidzMondo



Doha indoor ‘edutainment’ theme park. The park aims to prepare children in an entertaining way to become well-versed citizens in the professional world.

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# Hillary meets Hillary

“So how do you check out an elephant – there’s nothing in the security manual.”

The insects sang but the birds were mostly silent in the lull after lunch — a desultory peacock called in the far distance. On an early April afternoon in 1995, I perched on the wooden seat overlooking the tangled Chitwan grasslands that stretched down to the Riu River. Our largest male elephant, Shamsheer Bahadur, waited patiently nearby, saddled and ready, his trunk resting curled on his impressive ivory tusks.



**SO FAR SO GOOD**

Lisa Choegyal

Despite their urgency, I could not give a satisfactory answer to the polite, persistent guys with sunglasses, earpieces and wrist walkie-talkies. Wearing dark baseball caps emblazoned with ‘US Secret Service’, just in case we had missed their bulging weaponry, their job was to keep the First Lady alive. But mine was to give her a good time at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge. “I’m sure you have nothing to worry about,” I reassured them evasively.

Previous experience with bemused presidential guards at Tiger Tops made me wary. During Jimmy Carter’s visit in 1985, the cry had gone up in camp one evening that “The tiger has come” — meaning to the bait site, where guests were taken barefoot along swept paths deep inside the forest. His confused security detail was found cowering on their beds in fear, their doors barricaded.

Hillary Rodham Clinton was taking a break during an



official South Asian tour, the first without her husband, the US President. Smartly dressed in safari gear and accompanied by her teenage daughter Chelsea, she strode over from their secluded bungalow, waved briefly to her hovering entourage, and climbed the steps to board Shamsheer. With nervous smiles from the passengers, the elephant lumbered off through the grass down to a spot where the world’s press lined the riverbank ready for the single photoshoot negotiated to take place on her day off — I had made sure their background featured a fine view of Tiger Tops.

“Fancy meeting you all here,” Clinton called out to reporters from under a wide-brimmed straw hat. Cameras clicked and whirled as the media captured one of their more memorable



images and unusual stories of the First Lady deep in Royal Chitwan National Park, soon to be seen globally on television and in print. Jokes were bantered about Democratic donkeys and Republican elephants. On hearing

that a mother and daughter pair of one-horned rhinos had recently been sighted, Hillary Clinton niftily brought the topic around to her advocacy for women’s education. “Mothers and daughters?” she exclaimed.

“Are they sending their girls to school?”

Increasingly comfortable atop her elephant, I noticed a conspiratorial chat with Dhan Bahadur, the naturalist escort balancing behind her howdah. Instead of returning back to the Lodge as planned, with a cheeky wave Clinton mother and daughter crossed the river and vanished into the trees, happily in search of rhinoceroses, spotted deer and other wildlife on an impromptu safari.

The poor Secret Service chaps were close to panic. Walkie-talkies crackled in agitation. Not only was their charge on an unfrikked elephant, but now she was disappearing out of sight and into the jungle. Hastily commandeering a passing elephant, three agents and their gear were hoisted aboard and despatched in pursuit -- but not before the driver was given instructions in Nepali to keep a good distance to preserve their solitude. Rarely for them, Hillary and Chelsea were able to experience the undisturbed joys of the Tarai jungle just like any other tourists — well, almost.

An urban myth, and certainly the story she told us, speaks of Hillary Clinton believing that her mother named her with two Ls after Sir Edmund Hillary. Now widely discredited — her birth in 1947 was years before the New Zealand beekeeper came to fame after climbing Mt Everest in 1953 — the media opportunity for Nepal was irresistible. A delayed flight from New Zealand prevented Sir Edmund from joining her at Tiger Tops, but a brief meeting was arranged on the hot tarmac of Kathmandu airport. Still dressed in her safari gear with Sir Ed in a dishevelled dark suit, I was pushed forward by her staff to make the introductions. Minutes later, Mrs Clinton’s Air Force jet flew past Everest itself, and ‘Hillary meets Hillary’ echoed around the world. 📷

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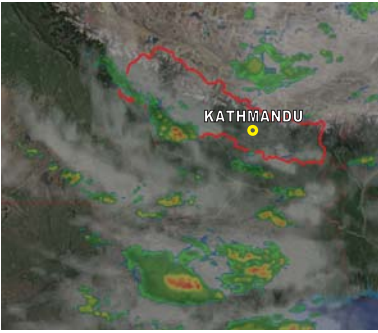
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The government's Disaster Management office issued numerous flood alerts late last week. In this space, we had an ominous looking monsoon front right across the Tarai with reds and yellows on the satellite radar image. But no one could predict the multiple cloudbursts right across the Chure arc. Rivers already constricted by embankments and settlements, and riverbeds raised by increased sedimentation from denuded Chure slopes inundated the entire eastern Tarai. The rainfall will ease, but expect more rains over the weekend.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27° 20°	26° 19°	27° 19°

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## An American team that treated earthquake wounded turns a Japanese highway camp into Sindhuli's newest hospital

Two years after rallying to provide medical care to those wounded in the 2015 earthquakes, a New York doctor and an American medical charity have established a permanent presence in Nepal, inaugurating the Christopher Barley Hospital in Sindhuli last week.

Four hours along the BP Highway from Kathmandu, the facility, also known as the Aatmiya Community Hospital, has 20 beds and will serve up to 100,000 people in the village of Khalte in this underserved district of the Inner Tarai in east-central Nepal.

"We will be able to provide everything short of major trauma or open heart surgery," said Christopher Barley at the opening. He was joined by Michael Daube, founder of the US-based, non-profit CITTA, which is dedicated to providing healthcare and educational opportunities to excluded communities in under-privileged and remote regions of India and Nepal.

Both men rushed to Nepal after the April 2015 earthquake and were involved in search and rescue for a few weeks but realised there was a much more urgent need for long-term health care in districts not affected by the earthquake. The two selected



PHOTOS: SEAN SHOEMAKER



MICHAEL DAUBE

a former housing complex in Khalte used by Japanese engineers while building the highway from Dhulikhel to Bardibas.

"The location was chosen on purpose: we wanted to have access to roads and to take medical care to a community that wasn't being served," explained Barley, adding that they were convinced they made the right choice after 300 people attended a free health camp one week prior to the hospital's opening. Many had serious health issues that needed surgery and treatment.

"It was an indication that this kind of facility is needed here," said Daube. "Our aim is to maintain treatment of the poor. We aren't just extending health care, we are also providing it for a rural community that is deprived of it."

Although Daube and Barley have teamed up before, this project is significant to both of them. Barley has a respected internal medicine practice in New York City, and has been involved with Daube in raising funds to extend much-needed medical



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:** New York physician Christopher Barley at the inauguration of a new hospital in Sindhuli that bears his name. Barley and Michael Daube of CITTA with hospital staff (above). The facility has been converted from a former housing complex (left) for Japanese engineers working on the BP Highway.

care and education to Humla and Sindhuli in Nepal and Rajasthan and Odisha in India. Their motto is: 'Making a difference against indifference'.

CITTA's earlier project to build and run a modern hospital in Simkot of remote Humla district in northwestern Nepal

had to be abandoned after a local partner turned out to be untrustworthy.

"This is the first time we have had a project that's so easily accessible," said Daube. "It can be a safety net for all the villages in Sindhuli." 🇳🇵

**Sean Shoemaker** in Sindhuli

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# It's all IT

Nepali software companies write algorithms for self-driving cars and analysed data for French President Macron's elections campaign, but they could do much more

**SAHINA SHRESTHA**

Even as an information technology student, Pawan Kandel, 23, is already earning up to Rs15,000 a month developing android applications and websites for clients in Nepal and abroad.

This is not just useful pocket money, but also helps him build practical skills. There are hundreds of bright Nepali students like Kandel who have found jobs in the software industry.

"Right now for a person with good technical skills there are a lot of opportunities in the IT sector in Nepal," says Kandel. "But it is not easy, and there is room for improvement."

IT and IT-enabled services are transforming the way Nepalis work, creating job opportunities and making the labour market more inclusive, innovative and global. But insiders say there is a shortage of good managers, and the lack of a forward-looking government strategy is hampering growth as well as innovation.

In the 1980s, American couple Diana and Bill Miller established

DSI International in Kathmandu to build software, train engineers and cater to clients, mostly in the US, heralding the arrival of the IT industry in Nepal. By the time DSI closed shop in the mid-'90s, homegrown companies like Professional Computer System and Yomari were in place. The 2000s saw an influx of medical transcription work and call centres, and more players soon joined the game.

Since then, homegrown and foreign companies have multiplied to meet the software and design needs of customers at home and abroad. They work in data processing, call-centre operations, medical prescription transcribing, map digitisation, mobile and web app development, website development and animation, among others.

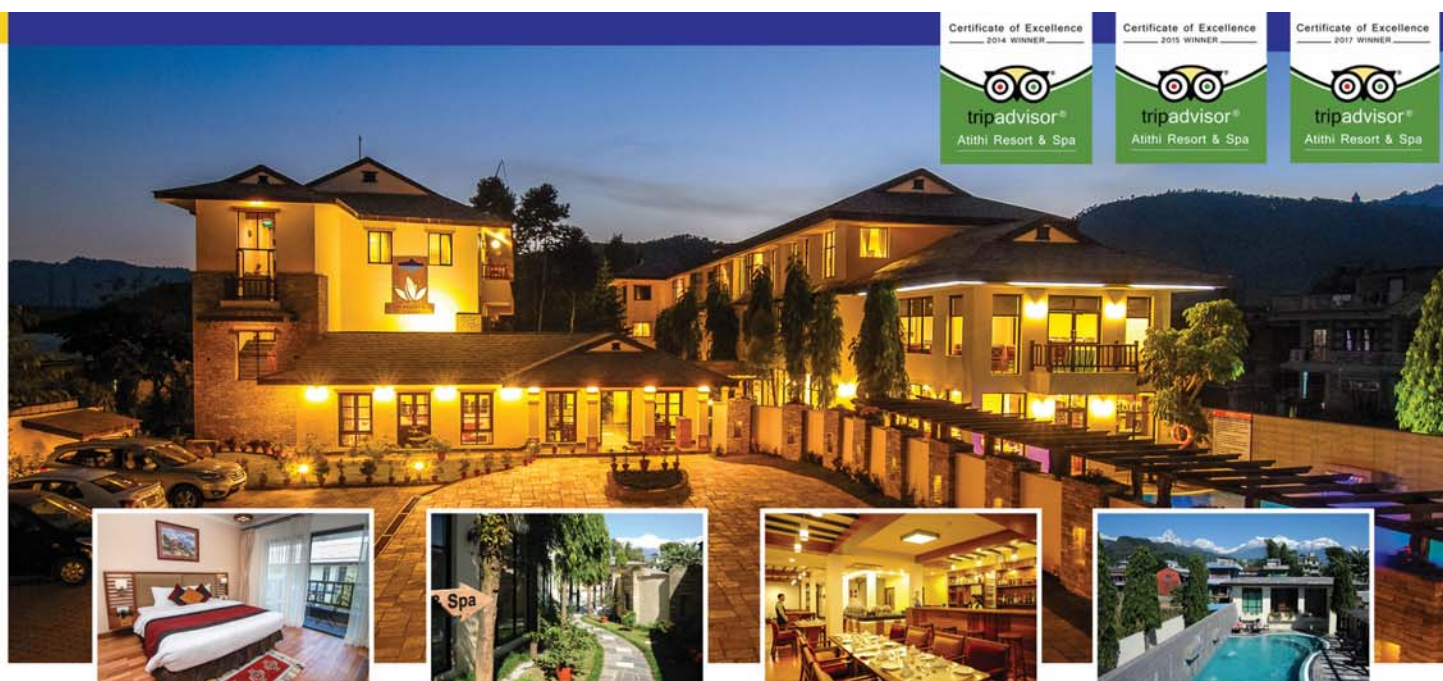
"There are great things happening in the IT scene in the country right now but we still have a long way to go if we are to move from a labour economy to a knowledge economy," says Lava Kafle, a software engineer with over 15 years' experience.

There has been a slew of tech start-ups and homegrown apps, but only a few have made a mark



within Nepal. "Currently, Nepal is a trend follower in the global IT market and real innovation is still missing here," says Bobby Basnet, co-founder of Semantic Creations, who came out with a tourism-related virtual reality (VR) app, NepalVR, last year. "We still have not been able to test out new tech and applications and most of the ideas we pick up tend to be saturated in the international market."

It is still difficult for tech entrepreneurs to secure funding, and long-term financial security



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PHOTOS: GOPEN RAI

remains a concern. Many start-ups are still running on personal funds. "It takes a good four or five years for an IT company to establish itself. The government should consider giving tax holidays for start-ups and establishing specialised economic zones for the industry," says Kafle.

Workshops and mentorship programs to develop the skills of students and fresh graduates are still difficult to come by, and investment in research and development lags. "AI and

machine learning are hot words in the IT world right now, but it is difficult to get research funds and there is a lack of research-minded people," says software engineer Nikhil Shakya.

Industry insiders say government incentives and policies are needed. "Policies are weak and in the absence of a proper regulatory body, the entire industry still remains fragmented," says Hempal Shrestha of the Federation of Computer Associations of Nepal and co-founder and director of

**TECH OFF:** The Semantic Creations team (*left*), which came up with NepalVR, the first virtual reality application focused on tourism, at their office in Pulchok.

Workers at the CloudFactory office in Bhaishepati (*below and right*). CloudFactory is one of the leading IT companies, employing over 1,000 people.

the Nepal Entrepreneurs' Hub (NEHUB).

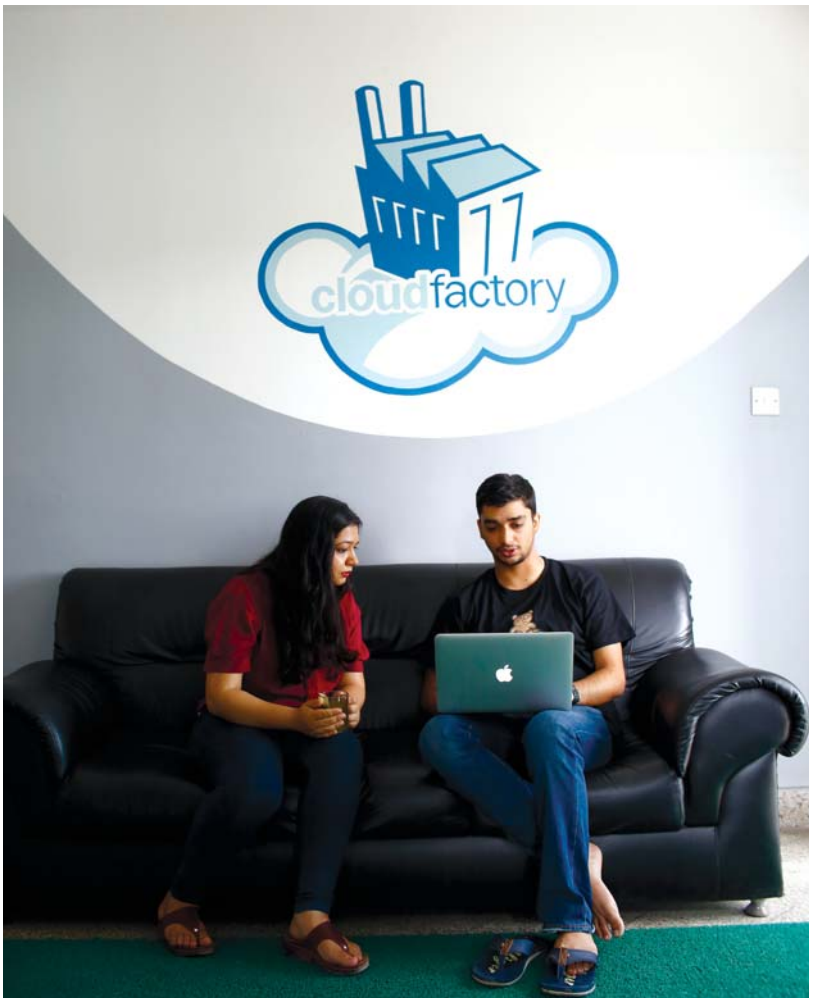
The lack of good managerial skills is another barrier. "Nepalis are great engineers and hard workers but we are bad managers," says Shrestha. "Without proper managerial skills it is difficult to sustain a business."

Insiders say another factor hindering innovation is the absence of domestic demand. "Banking could offer opportunities to the domestic IT market, but not many are using domestic software, opting instead for expensive foreign software," says Shrestha.

Outsourcing is turning out to be one of Nepal's fastest-growing exports. Although still behind India and the Philippines, the country's inexpensive English-speaking workforce is drawing investors. Many Nepali companies and foreign subsidiaries provide services to overseas clients in website and app development, big data management, designing and augmented and virtual reality.

"Nepalis are good at crunching numbers, and work hard at a relatively inexpensive cost compared to other outsourcing destinations. We adapt quickly to newer technologies and our proficiency in English aids in communication and that is what makes Nepal attractive," says Hempal Shrestha. Besides, working with foreign clients provides Nepali engineers with exposure and skills.

Insiders say the industry is surviving on outsourcing: "We are too focused on outsourcing at the moment," says Kafle. "For real development of the field we need to come up with real innovations." 🇳🇵



## A factory in the clouds

In 2008, Canadian technologist Mark Sears and his wife came to Nepal for a two-week vacation. They met talented people who had basic software skills but lacked work opportunities. Sears stayed on, training youngsters in high-demand skills like Ruby on Rails (a programming language) and matching international technology needs with Nepal's capable workforce.

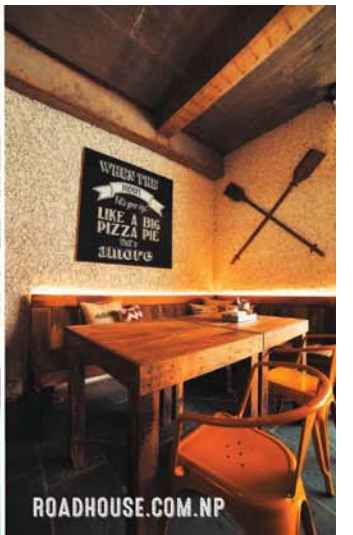
One project led to another and CloudFactory was born. Its vision: to help change the lives of millions of people by linking them to work. The idea was that if an individual has a computer, an internet connection and basic skills, then CloudFactory could connect them to the kind of work that was previously limited to people with programming degrees. Today, CloudFactory employs 2,044 people, 1,280 in Nepal.

The company uses a cloud-based platform to distribute simple tasks from tech companies globally to 'cloud workers' in Nepal and Kenya. The tasks can include inputting data, transcribing receipts and annotating images for companies developing artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms for self-driving cars. Recently, CloudFactory worked with a company in France that applied data to help French President Macron win the recent election.

"What we are doing is not just providing data services for our clients but people who care," says John Snowden, general manager of CloudFactory in Nepal. "We are doing meaningful work using brilliant technology to get there, and that results in people who care," he adds.

What sets CloudFactory apart from its competitors is exactly that: it provides clients a relationship with workers for whom the work is meaningful and who care about doing a good job. Those working here get an opportunity to grow and make a difference.

Monica Ghimire, 25, joined CloudFactory as a part-time worker. Fast forward five years and she is now a project lead in the company. "The working culture and environment here is great. There is something new to learn every day and new ideas are welcomed. There is constant interaction and mentorship," she says.



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EVENTS



Bagmati River festival,

Get ready for rafting, a heritage cycle rally, raft decoration challenge, horse and rickshaw riding, arts competition and much more at the 17th Bagmati River festival. 19 August, 7am-7:30pm, Bagmati Bridge, Kupondole, (01) 4361995

Comic con in Nepal,

Fans of Marvel, DC, Anime, games and the comic genre are in for a treat. The event will also host international cosplay artists from Japan, the Philippines and India. 9 September, 10am-8pm, Heritage Garden, Sanepa, (01) 5013096

Vocal workshop,

Register to learn singing techniques from renowned jazz vocalist Diandra Danieli, hosted by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. 5 July-30 August, (01) 5013554 <http://www.katjazz.com.np/vocal-teacher-diandra-danieli/>



Healing power,

Register if you are keen to learn about the connection between mind and body. Venerable Lobsang Namgyel will be teaching the profound practice of the medicine Buddha to help heal destructive states of mind. 16-17 September, 10am-4pm, Himalayan Meditation Centre, Narayan Chaur, Naxal, 9808296590, [hbmcspsc@gmail.com](mailto:hbmcspsc@gmail.com)



Women circle,

Participate to hear amazing stories of women from all folds. It is a common platform for women to share their dreams and talk about the situation of women in Nepal. 20 August, 2-4pm, Ambassador Garden Home, Thamel, (01) 4700724, [info@aghhotel.com](mailto:info@aghhotel.com)

The connection,

Participate in this charity event to support handicapped dogs. Collected money will be used to build a home for incapacitated and elderly dogs. 1 September, 7pm onwards, The Heritage Garden, Sanepa, Rs3,000, 9860130928

Obstacle race,

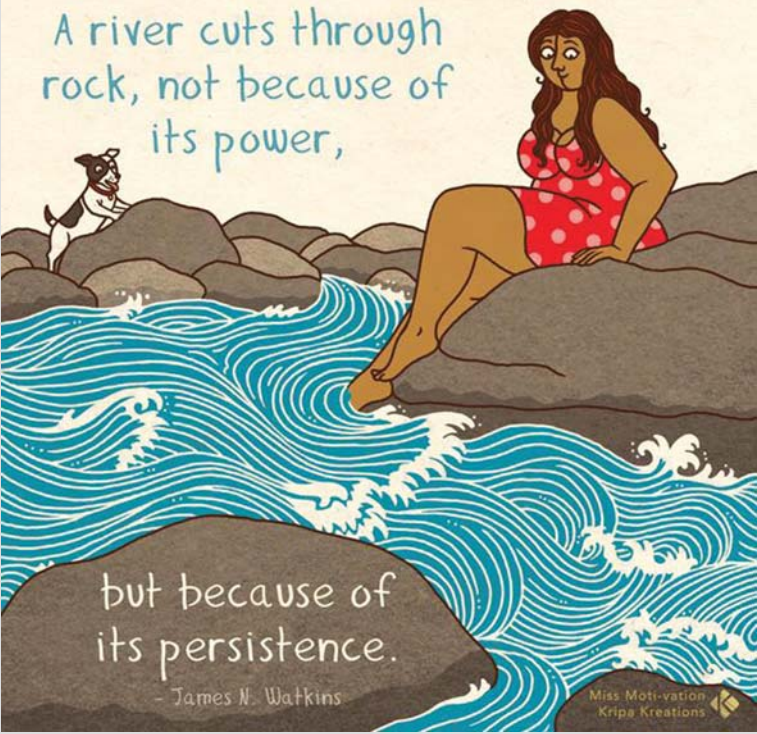
Be adventurous and test your strength in Nepal's first obstacle race. 9 September, 6am, Godavari Football Ground, Rs1,000, free for ultra run.

Become a photographer,

Register for a 10-day photography workshop. August, 7-9am, Artudio, Chhauni Hospital Road, Fee Rs5,500, 9803779777, 9851180088, [artudio@hotmail.com](mailto:artudio@hotmail.com)

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KRIPA JOSHI



MUSIC



Music for a cause,

Your favourite band B-8EIGHT and singer Sweta Singh Hamal will perform live to support the students of Palanchok Bhagwati Secondary School. 26 August, 6pm onwards, Titos Pub and Lounge, Jhamsikhel, 9841647747

Fusion Friday,

Spend the weekend with your favourite band Panchamrit at your favourite place: Attic Bar. 18 August, 7-9pm, Attic Bar, Tangal, (01) 4442615

KantadAbdAb,

Book your seats for a musical night with Nepali fusion trio KantadAbdAb. 18 August, 5:30pm onwards, Base Camp: Outdoor Lifestyle, Jhamsikhel, Rs500, 9841226397

Soulful Sufi,

The Sumiran band will be performing great sufi songs this weekend. 18 August, 5:30-11:59pm, The Crust Pizza, Mid Baneswor, (01) 4483383, 9861977675



Divine live,

Popular Indian hip-hop singer Divine will perform live in Kathmandu for the first time. 18 August, 6pm onwards, The Factory, Thamel, (01) 4701185

Acoustic night,

Enjoy a three-course meal (includes a glass of wine or a cocktail) for just Rs1,499, with artists Priyadarshani Shrestha and Aabhiskar KC. 18 August, 7-10pm, Empire Restaurant & Bar, Kupondole, 981-3967032

OUR PICK



DESH KHOJDAI JAADA

Opens in Kathmandu on 24 August

Based on true accounts of refugees, this film artistically narrates the reality and inner life of a Bhutanese citizen living in Nepal. Years of research went into Director Prakash Angdembe's feature film debut, and it shines through in this narrative that seeks to accurately reflect the experience of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

DINING



Cellar's Café,

A perfect place for breakfast, lunch or dinner. The only place in town where you can shop for wine as you dine. Lazimpat, (01) 4410463

Prazada,

A new pick in town. Spend the weekend with good food and draft beer. Baluwatar, 9801120222



Barista Lavazza,

The Valley's best European inspired coffee-culture cafe serves excellent mochas and lattes. Don't forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich. Jawalakhel, (01) 4005123, [barista.nepal@gmail.com](mailto:barista.nepal@gmail.com)

Ventures Café,

Stop by for the best fusion menu and all local favourites and enjoy the breezy outdoor seating. A great venue for beer connoisseurs. Baluwatar, 9851228014

Monsoon Sundays,

Food connoisseurs can relish a succulent barbeque with a choice of African, Arabic or Mediterranean specialties, along with access to the swimming pool. 23 July onwards, 12:30-3:30pm, Rs1,999 per person, Hyatt Regency [www.kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com](http://www.kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com)

Café Jireh,

For a peaceful evening and the best firewood pizza. Bhaisipati, (01) 5592102

Mezze by Roadhouse,

Spot a superstar at one of Kathmandu's most popular restaurants. Mercantile Plaza, Darbar Marg (01) 4223087



1905,

Heritage boutique suites with garden dining, 1905 Suites and Restaurants is now open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Nagpokhari, Naxal, For more information: 9860374450

Tasneem's Kings Kitchen,

A charming restaurant serving the unique flavours of distinctive Bohra Muslim Food. Jhamsikhel, 9801282727, (01)2239532

GETAWAY



Kasara Resort,

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Shivapuri Heights Cottage,

Treat yourself to a 90-minute ayurvedic massage at Neema's Spa, followed by a healthy lunch at the Cottage. Shivapuri Hills, Bhudhanilkantha, 9841371927, Rs5000 per person, advance booking essential. Transport available on request at extra cost.



Park Village Resort,

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

Rupakot Resort,

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Club Himalaya,

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Gokarna Forest Resort,

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Milla Guesthouse,

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



# “Dallu janey ho?”

An outsider finds Kathmandu buses to be easy and safe — it just takes time

**JULIA THOMAS**

Every bus journey begins with an extended arm, and a question at the window: “Dallu janey ho?” If a nod follows, I climb in to sit on a tempo bench, stand with a hand on the overhead railing or tuck into a bus seat, and the wheels carry on. I’m not the only one asking questions, either: personal interaction, it seems, powers Kathmandu’s web of bus routes.

In many cities, maps charting public transportation exist with standardised schedules. But after commuting in Kathmandu one quickly learns that knowledge of the city’s bus system is established through word of mouth, and lived experience.

Kathmandu’s host of bus options — large Sajhas, minibuses, vans and tempos — appeared complex at first. In my first few days in the city, I watched locals nonchalantly wave over buses that did not seem to have consistent or marked stops.

It soon became clear that, as with many other navigation questions, the best way to approach Kathmandu’s transit system is to ask the people who know it best: the riders themselves. Once taking buses became a part of my daily rhythm, with the help of those around me, it became easy to move around.

During my first tempo ride, co-passengers asked where I was going and pointed out my stop when it came along. I stood crouched in the aisle, since no seats were available, and a woman held onto my arm, kindly steadying me while also acting as a comforting force.



KIM FROST

We continually exchanged smiles and laughed a little throughout the ride.

On every ride except for one, I appeared to be the only foreigner. The Nepali passengers around me have seemed willing and happy to give directions, and I have never felt unsafe or at risk while traveling on buses. I’ve learned, and am still in the process of learning, the timings of certain routes and protocols for banging on the roof to signal a stop.

The Metropolitan Police sting operation (*see adjoining article*) places undercover officers on buses around the city to monitor instances of harassment and assault, particularly against women. It has caught 10 suspects for harassment and assault since it began in early August. This indicates that such events still exist, but compared to years past,

it seems that the level of personal comfort in travel may have generally improved.

A young Nepali man told me he has not taken the bus in 10 years, choosing to move about by motorbike instead — a reflection of the belief that buses are uncomfortable and overcrowded. In contrast, a college student said that she takes buses every day and feels they have become more comfortable for women. She even found fellow male passengers to be helpful and generous in making space for women, recalling a time when she had a very heavy bag and men made space on their crowded seat.

“These days, I feel safe, but two or three years ago I didn’t,” she says. “Now, I think women can speak if they are harassed: they can talk on the spot.”

In most cases, there appears to be a rotating influx of women,

children and men in equal numbers. During one of my rides, a tempo rumbled between Sanepa and Dallu with a female driver at the wheel, and five women riding in the back. Other times, I’ve been the only female rider for long stretches but have not experienced any sort of disrespect.

These days, perhaps, bus riders — particularly women — can travel more comfortably, with the support of fellow passengers. Of buses in Nepal, this I have learned: ask questions, engage with the people around you, and even when you don’t know where you’re going, jump in and follow in line with those who know the routes. 🇳🇵

**Julia Thomas** is a 2017-18 Thomas J. Watson Fellow studying local journalism in countries across the globe. She is currently living in Kathmandu, and is pictured above.

# Going undercover

**TIME:** 4:20pm Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Ratna Park

A crowded white minibus prepares to leave on the Gongabu route. A team from the Metropolitan Police Office made up of two officers dressed convincingly as civilians gets on board.

One of them is the bait. Their mission: to apprehend potential gropers on a bus route that is said to be notorious for harassment of women commuters.

During the hour-long journey, as the bus stops at various points along the way, no one is nabbed. This could either mean public transport in Kathmandu Valley is not as unsafe as it is made out to be. Or, maybe the gropers had an off day.

Police have code named the sting Safety Pin Campaign, and in the fortnight since it was launched only 10 people have been arrested for sexually harassing women inside buses. Most of these were on routes outside the Ring Road.

A total of 84 police officers have been divided into 28 teams and deployed in civies on various bus routes during rush hour. When caught, perpetrators can be detained for up to 35 days and fined Rs10,000.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)



**BUS BUSTS:** Assistant sub-inspector Tekendra Giri and Policewoman Kabita Basnet at Balaju bus stop on Tuesday for a sting operation

Rajendra Pokharel, who is leading the sting operation, told *Nepali Times* most victims are still afraid to speak out while being harrassed, or even to file complaints against perpetrators because of social stigma.

“Our aim is to make public transport safe for everyone. But female passengers are still hesitant to report to us about the problems they face,” he said adding, “This is the major challenge.”

The sting operation also aims to motivate women and girls to seek help if they undergo any problems while travelling.

A 2013 survey showed that more than a quarter of female respondents aged 19-35 said they had experienced some form of sexual harassment on public transport.

Police say the number of complaints has gone down despite women being less reluctant to speak out. This could be

because of greater awareness, and also due to women fighting back. Police hope that the Safety Pin Campaign will make harassment on buses even more rare.

Inspector Sharmila Tamang says she is surprised about not catching anyone: “It could be that the incidence of harassment has really gone down.”

Shreesha Pal, who has been commuting in public buses for the last 10 years, agrees that things have improved: “Public transport used to be extremely unpleasant for us until ago, but the situation has improved somewhat.”

She adds that fear of police and the introduction of larger buses like Sajha, which are less crowded, have helped reduce harassment cases. 🇳🇵

**Shreejana Shrestha**



Go online to watch a sting operation during an evening commute in Kathmandu Valley. A team from *Nepali Times* collaborated with the Metropolitan Police Office to record the journey. [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

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# Okja

For people who love animals, have pets at home that they think of as friends rather than furry creatures to be kicked around, and cannot bear to see living creatures suffer, then *Okja* is a painful must. For those who don't care much for animals and bully vegetarians about why they are not vegan (because



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

apparently, from their sarcastic world view, that's the only real way to make a difference) - then perhaps *Okja* is also worth a chance. This is not because it will indoctrinate you with the irritatingly didactic lectures of sometimes holier-than-thou vegetarians but because it might provide insight into the killing and eating of sentient animals, which could adjust certain mindsets.

That being said, *Okja* itself, an incredibly surprising film by

the idiosyncratically inclined Korean filmmaker Bong Joon Ho, is not a pedantic film in any way. It is instead a wonderful, expansive work of imagination and tenderness that tells the story of young girl Mija (the superb, fierce actress Ahn Seo-hyun) who develops a special bond with her super-pig Okja, a genetically modified creature who is a gimmick used by the evil (there's really no other word for it) Mirando corporation to increase their pork sales.

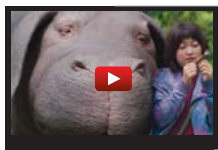
*Okja* is part of a 10-year experiment devised by the totally wonky (not in an endearing way) Lucy Mirando, a scion of the corporation named after her family of admitted psychopaths. Okja is conceived in a lab, unbeknownst to the public who are told she is a "special breed," and 26 of her kind are sent to be reared by farmers around the world so that 10 years later the world can see the "natural" results. In that time, Okja grows up in the verdant rolling hills of

South Korea, playing with Mija, roaming and grazing freely. The intelligence that Okja, who is a huge and adorable mix of pig, dog and elephant, displays is unnerving, even for those who are acquainted with the keen instincts of animals. It is therefore even more heart-breaking when Okja and Mija are separated by Mirando.

The determined, unflappable Mija sets out to save Okja, going first to Seoul and then to New York to rescue her friend. Along the way she meets a group of animal activists who both help and hinder her, and becomes unfortunately acquainted with a superficial world that is easily swayed by the media.

For animal lovers, I will spare you any distress: Okja is saved, but not without some pain, and the final scene where she is led by Mija from an animal factory housing thousands of her kind waiting for slaughter is grim beyond description.

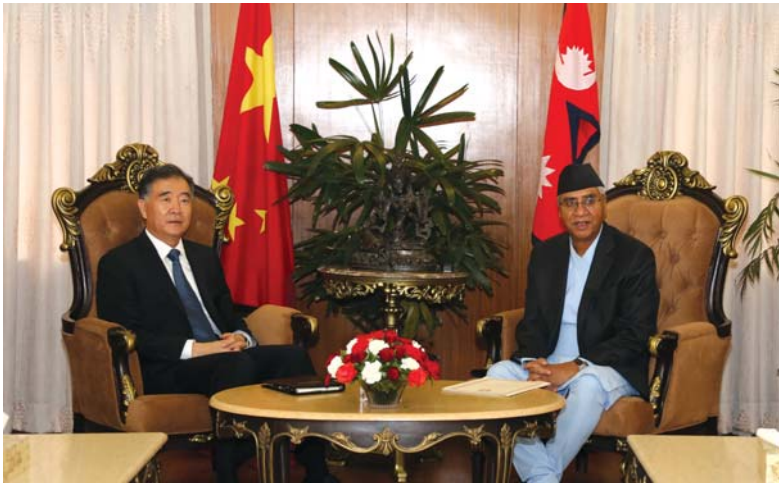
There are lessons here, about people who'll do anything to make money, about human-animal bonds that are sometimes stronger than those between people, but mostly about loyalty and fierce courage in the face of despair. *Okja* came to be because Netflix, now available in Nepal, took a chance on what could have been - and still slightly is - an outlandish film. I did not adore the movie unconditionally, but I do love Okja and Mija, and I will not forget them. 🇳🇵



Watch trailer online

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

## HAPPENINGS



RSS

**NĪ HǎO:** Vice Premier of China, Wang Yang, pays a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba at his residence in Baluwatar on Wednesday.



NEPAL ARMY

**DELIVERING RELIEF:** Nepal army personnel load relief and rescue materials for flood victims in the Tarai on Tuesday at Tribhuvan International Airport. Floods and landslides have claimed 123 lives so far and 35 are still missing.



INDIAN EMBASSY

**DRIVER'S SEAT:** Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Manjeev Singh Puri, prepares to drive one of the 30 ambulances that India gifted to Nepal on its 70th Independence Day, Tuesday.



GOPEN RAI

**ON THE MOVE:** Dr Govinda KC is taken to the ICU at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, Kathmandu, on Tuesday after he ended his hunger strike on Day 23, citing the ongoing crisis caused by floods in the Tarai.



GOPEN RAI

**BAL KRISHNA:** A boy dressed as Lord Krishna on the occasion of Krishna Janmashtami at Patan Darbar Square on Monday. On this day devotees visit Krishna temples to celebrate the birth of the Hindu deity.

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BIKRAM RAI

# Restricting relief

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 16 August

कान्तिपुर

Various organisations and individuals have voluntarily come forward to raise money and collect relief for the people affected by this week’s floods, which is very commendable. They may have been motivated by altruism, but it is difficult to rule out the possibility of the misuse of relief money and materials. Yet, it cannot be an excuse for the government to restrict volunteers from distributing relief in flood-affected areas.

It will take a long time to restore the lives and livelihoods damaged by the floods, but the immediate need is relief. Despite joint efforts by the government, NGOs and individuals, relief has not reached all flood victims. In many places, people displaced by the floods are hungry. They need immediate support, and the government alone is not able to provide that.

Fearing that the relief will be misused or not distributed equally, the government has introduced a one-window policy, requiring all NGOs and individuals to distribute relief only through government

channels. This may delay relief distribution, adding to the sufferings of flood survivors. The government mechanism for relief and reconstruction is notorious for painfully slow responses and unnecessary procedural hassles. So, instead of channeling all the relief through one door, the government must facilitate NGOs and individuals to swiftly reach out to flood-affected communities. The government must work with others instead of alienating them.

Official data shows that the floods have damaged at least 3,000 houses in the Tarai. Tall and sturdy houses were not damaged by the floods, but food grains stored in them are no longer edible. The floods have also damaged water systems, forcing people to drink contaminated water. This could lead to a disease outbreak, and flood survivors have already begun to suffer from typhoid, diarrhea and skin diseases. The Health Ministry should be prepared to tackle this crisis.

There were reports that money raised for the survivors of the April 2015 earthquake was misused. The government must not allow this to happen again. But its one-door policy for relief is not the solution.

# Convicted, yet elected

Madhav Basnet in *Nepal*, 6-12 August

नेपाल

Democracy has its own flaws, and that was proved once again by the victory of an absconding ‘fraud’ in the recent local elections.

Asim Rai, the chairman of a cooperative who made off with millions of rupees deposited by its clients, was elected chief of Sunkoshi Village Council in Solukhumbu district in the second phase of local elections on 28 May.



Unique Group, a savings and loan cooperative established by Rai and six other investors in Gongabu of Kathmandu in 2009, collected about Rs50 million from over 1,000 clients. But the cooperative failed, and Rai went into hiding.

Police arrested Rai, and he promised

in writing to return the money. Some customers then claimed that they did not receive payment and filed a fraud case against him at Kathmandu District Court. The court convicted Rai of defrauding his clients, and ordered him to return Rs3 million to 7 individuals.

Instead of obeying the court’s order, Rai cosied up to Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and secured a ticket from his party to contest elections in Solukhumbu. No one filed a complaint against his candidacy, and he was elected chair of the largest local council in the district. Advocate Rajan Niraula asks: “How can a man convicted by the court deliver development and justice?”

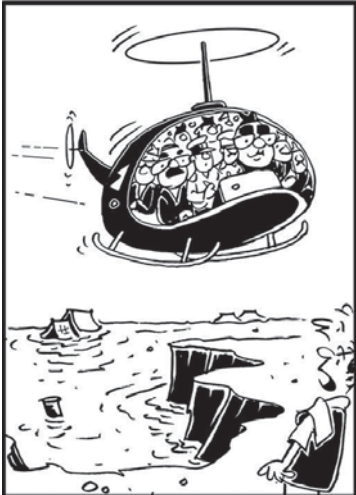
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“Coming, coming ... Gone!”  
14 August



“There is no room for relief  
in the helicopter”  
17 August

अन्नपूर्ण

Basu Kshitiz’s cartoons about floods, *Annapurna Post*

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ I have put my *Satyagraha* on hold in the face of the floods, but I will go on another hunger strike if my demands are not addressed. ”

Crusading physician Govinda KC after ending his 11th hunger strike, 15 August





A tiny village tucked away below the Annapurnas offers clues as to why young men are leaving their homes

SEBASTIAN WOLLIGANDT  
in KASKI

“Sometimes I cry because they all have left,” says 70-year-old Bel Maya Gurung in Tangting village, clearly happy to have someone to speak to in a neighbourhood that has lost most of its young men to migration.

She sits on the earthen floor of her house, as flames lap a pot in an open, firewood stove in the kitchen. Over a cup of black tea she talks about her five children, all of whom have left: one daughter is in Pokhara, two of her sons are in Japan and two in Malaysia.

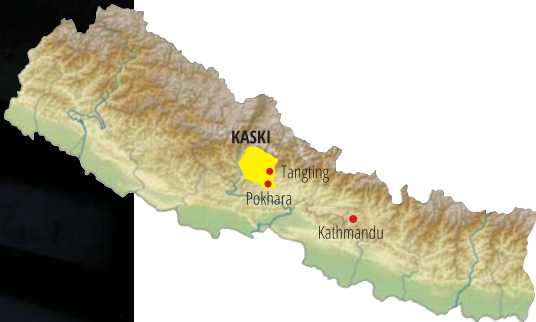
“They send some money, so I can buy food in the shop. But they never come to visit me,” she says.

Tangting is a Gurung village some 20km from Pokhara, situated at 1,650m and with a spectacular view of Lamjung Himal and Annapurna IV. It has been two years since the road was completed, and Tangting suddenly became more accessible to the outside world. But, like most places in the Himalayan hinterland, there aren’t enough jobs for young people and farming is difficult in the terrace farms.

Nepal’s cities are among the fastest growing in South Asia. The proportion of the population living in cities grew from 3% in 1960 to 28% in 2015. More



**LONELY PLACE:** Tangting village clings to a terraced mountainside (*above*). Local children greet visitors (*left*). Despite clean air and water, and a good school (*right*) young people are still leaving Tangting for the grime and pollution of the city.



than a third of the population of Kathmandu is composed of lifetime migrants, with the Eastern Hills and Mountains showing the higher out flows with 24% (see charts).

Om Prakash Gurung, principal of Himalaya Milan Secondary School, is sad to see the steady decline in the population of Tangting. “Our biggest problem is migration,” he says, “the number

of students is decreasing and teachers do not want to stay here: they would like to go to schools in Pokhara or Kathmandu.”

A school in the UK has assisted in making the secondary school's building well equipped, and education is free. Nearly every house in Tangting has a latrine, and a micro-hydropower station delivers electricity. The air is fresh and there is plenty of clean drinking water. Why would anyone want to leave this seeming paradise for dirty, dusty cities?

“The salary we get here is just not enough, there is a lack of facilities and we need a good hospital,” says Hom Bahadur Gurung, whose grandfather was a Gurkha and whose father served in the Indian Army. His parents never left Tangting.

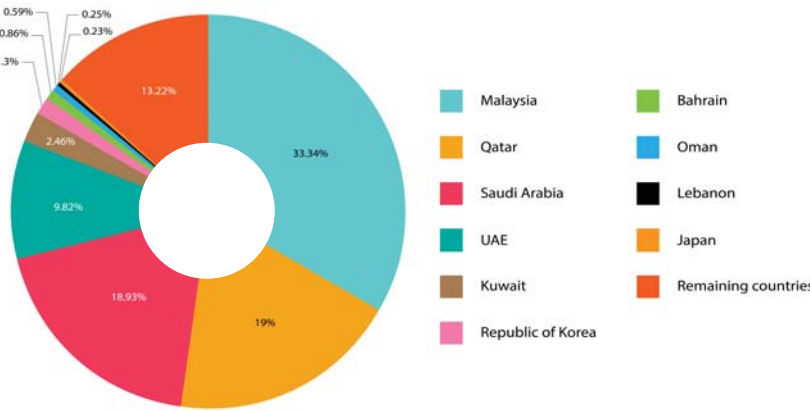
But the 21-year-old, who is volunteering at the village school, eventually plans to go abroad: “Maybe for four or five years for further studies, then I will come back because I think we youth have to change the village with

the knowledge we get abroad,” he tells a visitor.

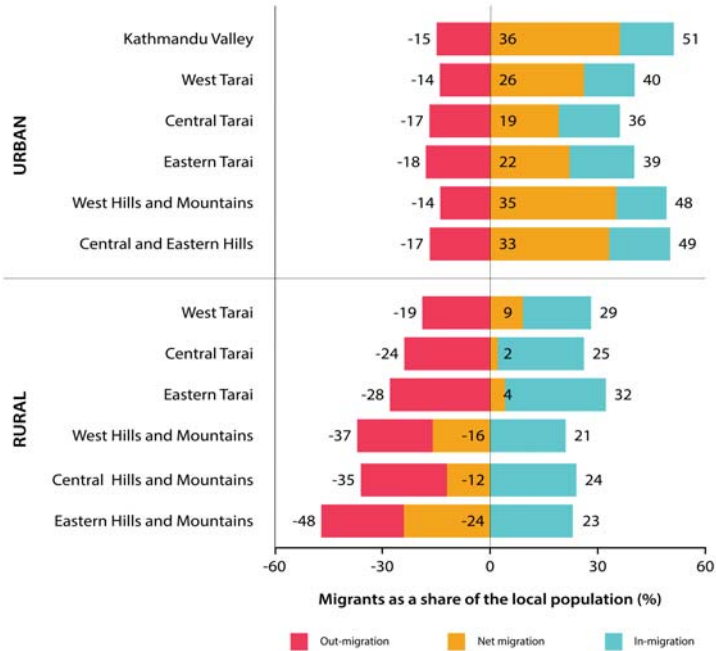
Om Prakash Gurung isn’t as optimistic: “Two or three young people are missing in every

house because of migration. After earning money, most do not come back. Only us old people, the grandmother and the grandfather, are living here. There is no one to

Top-destination countries for foreign employment, 2008-09 - 2014-14



Internal urban and rural migration flows (Lifetime Migration, 2008)







ALL PHOTOS: SEBASTIAN WOLLIGANDT



help with work,” he adds.

Nearly 15% of Nepal’s population is working abroad at any given time, and they sent home Rs590 billion in 2014-15. This is 32% of the GDP, making Nepal the largest recipient of remittances as a share of GDP.

Back in Kathmandu, Minister of Labour and Employment Deepak Bohara is aware of the need for concerted action to streamline migration. He told us: “Issues like lack of labour rights, poor compensation, trafficking, fraud and abuse need to be tackled with a strong political will and multi-stakeholder support.”

That official support is slow in coming, however, forcing young men like Eka Jung Gurung to go ahead without government help. He is one of the few men who has returned to Tangting from Dubai. Now an active community leader, he is training young men of his village to be tourist guides, hotel managers and cooks.

Eka Gurung worked 18 years in Dubai. He says the working

conditions are bad and migrants have to pay recruiters large sums of money to land jobs. He wants to make sure others like him will never have to leave.

“They are working there in 50-degree heat, I saw so many young boys having accidents, and many never come back alive,” he says.

The minimum salary for Nepalis in Dubai is Rs14,000 and Eka says they could easily earn much more on hydropower projects. 🇳🇵

#### EMPTY MOUNTAINS



Why would anyone want to leave a seeming paradise for the dirty, dusty cities? Find out as we journey to a village in Kaski as it grapples with the loss of young men to cities like Pokhara and Kathmandu.

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# Prehistoric headlines

We he-Gorkhalis have never shirked from exhibiting extraordinary valour when we come face-to-face with an adversary: whether it is the East India Company or a rival faction of the Centrist Maoists. Fossilised remains of petrified pre-historic newspapers recently unearthed from limestone caves in Chovar reveal for the first time that the roots of many of our present-day national traits were struck in those hoary days of antiquity at the dawn of history when the Earth was young, and Man was just beginning his journey to the pinnacle of evolution. Here are some belated breaking news items from 60,000 years ago:

### Collision with Mars Averted

**By Our Cosmos Correspondent**  
The Earth suffered a near miss collision with Mars yesterday as the two planets came to within a hair's breath of each other, and disaster was averted only because an alert astrologer in Patan was able to apply the Earth's emergency brakes.  
Royalist Astrologer Mangal said his namesake planet suddenly swerved towards the Earth's orbit without warning, and the two missed each other by a whisker. "Whew, that was close," a visibly relieved Mr Mangal told reporters. "Thank heavens we're not going to have a close shave like that for another 60,000 years."

### Women Fed Up

**By a Feminine Reporter**  
Thousands of women launched the first phase of their agitation against

their slightly better halves this week on the occasion of a prehistoric Tij festival by migrating to their ancestral caves in the East African Rift Valley and went on a hunger strike until their men-folk met their 18-point demand, which included a moratorium on furry husbands running around in their birthday suits, a ban on open defecation in closed spaces, and a requirement that hunter-gatherer husbands also learn to clean up after themselves. "We know it won't happen in a million years," said one irate primordial spouse, "but it may get them off their hairy butts."

### Fire Discovered

**By Our Resident Arsonist**  
Four juvenile male hominoids accidentally discovered fire Tuesday when the woolly mammoth they were herding got struck by lightning on Chovar Hill, a Primeval Home Ministry source said. The mammoth was burnt beyond recognition, and the young anthropoids said the incinerated mammoth tasted much better than a raw one. "This discovery will revolutionise cooking and warfare," predicted an antediluvian military analyst on condition that this would be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Several disgruntled arsonists immediately started playing with fire, setting ablaze their living quarters and reducing their ancestral homeland to ashes.



The Ass

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