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BIKRAM RAI

## Flood of recrimination

As the waters of last month's devastating floods recede, bodies of the missing are starting to appear. Guddu Kumar Singh, 12, was washed away on 13 August, and his body was found in Sirisiya near the Indian border. His mother is so traumatised she has been hospitalised, and his father is looking after her. Guddu's grandfather, Mahendra Singh, is alone at their flood-ravaged home with just the boy's photo as a memory (above).

Singh blames the 10m-high levee on the Indian side of the border for the rising waters that killed his grandson and dozens of others here. "We never had to worry about floods before India built that embankment on No Man's Land," he says bitterly.

When it rained heavily for four consecutive days starting 11 August, much of Nepal's southern plains were inundated with water that flowed out through breached

embankments on Tarai rivers. The exits to the flood waters were then blocked by east-west levees built across the border in India.

In Rautahat, over 70% of the land was under water for days. In Saptari, four people were killed and nearly 35,000 families displaced. In both districts there are many embankments, elevated roads, dams and other infrastructure restraining the water flow.

Damage was relatively less in Siraha, with no deaths and only about 1,800 families affected. Locals say this is because they didn't allow the Indian side to build a levee. "Our struggle paid off this time," says Raj Dev Yadav, who staged a sit-in against construction of a levee in a village across the border in 2012.

Flood survivors are angry at India for causing the floods, but angrier at their own leaders for indifference. In Saptari, 62-year-

old Kisun Dev Raya asks: "Where are the Madhesi leaders? They used to claim to represent us."

With elections for Province 2 due in two weeks, Madhesi leaders in turn blame Kathmandu for doing nothing. Abhi Ram Sharma of the RJP in Mahottari, says: "We want the government to form a reconstruction authority, just like after the earthquake. We cannot help people on our own: this is not our job."

In New Delhi last week, Prime Minister Deuba discussed with Indian Prime Minister Modi measures to tackle recurring floods. But the locals believe it was just "empty talk". Deuba was also meeting Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on 27 August while the Indian side was rebuilding the embankment that inundated Rautahat (see story, page 14-15).

Flood relief is better organised in areas with new elected local governments. Speedy relief

### Flood and food

Many farmers in the Tarai will have no harvest until next year  
BY **SUNIR PANDEY**

PAGE 14-15



### DISAPPEARANCE OF JUSTICE EDITORIAL

**CITIZENS RUSH IN**  
GUEST EDITORIAL  
BY **SUMANA SHRESTHA** PAGE 2

distribution is also the main issue in local elections due here on 18 September. But most voters are not optimistic. They feel all parties do the same: make empty promises about flood relief. **Santa Gaha Magar** in Rautahat

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# DISAPPEARANCE OF JUSTICE

Our rulers keep sending us proof of an utter lack of humanity and morality: the historic neglect of the dispossessed, slow response to the earthquake, doing nothing to prevent floods and delivering relief too little too late when the disaster affected 20% of the country’s population.

The latest sign that these self-appointed leaders are devoid of basic compassion is the way they tortured, butchered and disappeared their own citizens for 10 years. After the war finally ended in 2006, former enemies formed the state, and ever since have colluded to prevent being answerable to the unspeakable crimes they and their minions perpetrated in the name of revolution or counter-insurgency.



It took a full 10 years after the end of the Maoist war for the government to finally form two transitional justice bodies in 2015: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP). They were each given two-year terms during which all they did is perfunctorily collect complaints and file them away in steel cabinets. Their mandates were so vague nothing was going to come out of it.

In February, they got their tenures extended by one year each. With just six months to go, they show no signs of any seriousness to pursue what the victims and their families want: truth, justice and

reparations. Instead, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction is preparing a draft for the Cabinet, seeking three-year extensions.

As Nepal marked the International Day of the Disappeared this week, the CIEDP’s Lokendra Mallik admitted there is no way it can complete pending work in the remaining six months.

Conflict victims are sick of this, but they have come to expect so little from governments that they are not surprised. The former enemies are now coalition partners. The main target of Maoist violence were Nepali Congress cadre, and it was during previous tenures of Sher Bahadur Deuba that we saw some of the most egregious violations of human rights by state security. Now that his closest ally in government is the former supreme commander of the rebels he sought to annihilate, they are air brushing away each others’ war crimes.

They handpicked apparatchiks to head the TRC and CIEDP, making party loyalists members. Ever since the appointments, their sole role has been to stall investigations and absolve leaders.

TRC Member Shri Krishna Subedi has publicly claimed the Maoists were not involved in the murder of Purni Maya Lama’s husband, who was abducted and killed by Maoists in 2004. Nanda Prasad Adhikari died during a prolonged hunger strike demanding justice for his son’s murder. Bal Krishna Dhungel was convicted by the Supreme Court for a war-time murder, but walks free. Etc, etc.

In its extended tenure, the CIEPD formed just eight teams to investigate 157 of the 3,093 complaints of disappearances – all of them in Kathmandu Valley. The two commissions do not have the political will to deliver justice, and there is no point extending their mandates yet again.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

SUMANA SHRESTHA

### Citizens rush in

Whenever disasters strike Nepal, citizens are the first to respond. There is an emotional outpouring of empathy for the survivors, and this has been the case time and again: after fires, cold waves, earthquakes and following the recent floods. As civilians, we have learnt how to crowd-source and organise, taking advantage of our strong desire to help.

Some people have vast geographical knowledge, some are tech whizzes and some have communication skills to bring people together. The concept behind forming an alliance of citizens stemmed from past disasters in which not every team had all of the resources to provide broad relief to communities.

Alliance for Disaster Relief was formed in response to the floods in the Tarai. Organisations, professionals and volunteer groups expanded the reach of each member exponentially in distribution and procurement. We sourced and supplied more than 55 tons of food, over 5,000 mosquito nets, water purifiers to clean the equivalent of 2 million litres of water and 1,100-plus tarps, in 10 districts. We even sent 200 vials of tetanus vaccine to volunteers working in debris removal. All this with just Rs 4.3 million.

The flow of money, donations and procurement rates were all noted in Google docs and receipts were posted on the group’s Facebook page. All funds raised were used to support flood victims: there were no salaries.

We sought collaboration with government to get the needs and distribution data updated daily. We could have found volunteers to complete Excel entries of all

materials that came in and went out of each district, making the organisation of relief materials much easier. But our offer to help was turned down.

The shelter cluster report of 20 August indicated that the government was procuring 88,000 tarps: that is 70% of all that has been distributed or planned. Our aim was to strengthen the government’s capacity so relief can move quicker.

Most of the Alliance volunteers had other jobs, which they have returned to. Our responsibility was to quickly help while bigger organisations took time to get going. Many agencies are now in flood-affected areas with supplies, and our work is done.

We wanted to offer the government a team of people who are extremely good at what they do and were ready to work for free for two weeks in an emergency to minimise human suffering. If the government calls for volunteers with specific skills in the future, there will be more response than it can handle, because people in Nepal are truly compassionate.

We can share everything we have learnt with anyone who wants to provide support in the event of future disasters. When they do occur, let us hope that compassionate people are permitted to help.



**Sumana Shrestha** is with the Alliance for Disaster Relief  
Facebook.com/reliefalliance

Times.com

### ONLINE PACKAGES



**REBUILDING RISK**

The floods of 15-17 August inundated 70% of Rautahat Levees in Nepal gave way, and a 10m high embankment across the border in India acted as a dam blocking the flood waters. State neglect and inability to negotiate with India was the real cause of this disaster. Watch video of workers rebuilding the breached embankment in India this week.



**YOMARI SESSIONS**

Yomari Sessions, an online video series that promotes Nepali artists through one-take live recordings is back with a new season. Read story on page 7 and go online to watch behind-the-scenes footage of how the songs are recorded.

**EFFECTIVE EARLY WARNING**

Could not agree more with your Guest Editorial ('Early warning', Man B Thapa, #873). Having designed and installed numerous systems, the fundamentals include acquisition of reliable and accurate data, simple forecasting, rainfall routing models and highly reliable and robust mass notification stations. It is not rocket science. It simply requires careful planning, funding (and a relatively small amount compared to loss of life, impact on GDP etc), appointment of an expert team with a thorough practical understanding of all aspects of the solution, a commitment to ongoing operation and maintenance. We can send Voyager to Mars, we can find the Titanic, we can build the dams so why not invest in effective forecast and warning systems?

**Mark Wolf**

■ How is this flood warning communicated to those affected? Also, are there safe havens organised?

**Siobhan**

*Reply from Nepal Flood Alert @DHM\_FloodEWS on Twitter:*  
Through-websites, end to end government channel, Mass Media, Toll-free services (1155), Mass SMS, Twitter, Facebook & direct communications

**MELAMCHI**

Thank you *Nepali Times* for a realistic appraisal of the water shortage in Kathmandu ('Not enough for everyone', Sonia Awale, #873). It is a warning for those who think Melamchi is the end of their problems. It will meet less than half of the Valley's current population, the rich neighbourhoods will get most of the first water. So we need to keep on harvesting rainwater, reviving traditional water spouts and recharging the depleted aquifers.

**Ashok KC**

■ So, we are back to square one with water?

**Kalps Para**

**PREACHING THE GOSPEL**  
Last week's package on Christian conversions elicited a massive response from our readers, with most feedback sharply critical of evangelical groups active in Nepal. Turn to page 11 for a selection of these comments.

### WHAT'S TRENDING



**Preaching on high**  
by Brot Coburn

This investigation of the activities of a US-based Christian evangelical group in the holy valleys of Buddhism in the Himalaya got phenomenal response online, was widely shared on social media and was the most read story on nepalitimes.com. Visit the site to read the story in case you missed it, and join the online discussion.

- Most reached and shared on Facebook**  
(23,025 people reached)
- Most commented**
- Most visited online page**  
(7,298 views)

### Leading from beneath

by Sahina Shrestha

Sixth Grader Anita Rai was drying her books after the flood in Chitwan last week when our reporter met her. Others were saved after they got a phone call from as far away as Australia about the floods. Read the full field reportage online and find out why relief is distributed better in areas which now have elected local governments.

**Most popular on Twitter**  
(33 retweets, 56 likes)

**QUOTE TWEETS**



**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
A #secular #Nepal sees a surge in #conversions to #Christianity by evangelical groups More: <http://bit.ly/2wDE7PK>



**Sameer Khatiwada @Khatiwada\_S**  
Excellent article on spread of Christianity in Nepal @nepalitimes Hinduism is unkind to Dalits, no wonder they're embracing Christianity.



**suryaparsad upadhya @UpadhyaSp**  
@Swamy39 @myogiadityanath @RSSorg @friendsofrss When country is confused and poor, outside agencies tend to infiltrate. Save the vulnerable!!



**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
A school girl dries her books after #NepalFlood2017 A family got #flood warning from Australia More: <http://bit.ly/2wEfDe@> [sahinashrestha](http://bit.ly/2wEfDe@)




**Asha Thapa @aashathapa**  
The one-door policy for flood relief was widely criticised, but it can work if newly-elected local governments take charge.



**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
19th century #painting of Chiru by a Nepali artist has been restored & placed on a wall of the library @OfficialZSL <http://bit.ly/2wumgum>

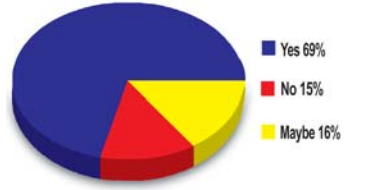


**Spirit-of-the-forest @Foresthani**  
Painting from mid 1800s #Nepal provides #historic linkage how the #TibetanAntelope got its scientific name P. hodgsonii. #wildl



Weekly Internet Poll #874

Q. Is it good news that RJP-N has announced it will participate in local elections in Province 2?



Total votes: 95

Weekly Internet Poll #875  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. Should Dr Govinda KC resume his hunger strike on 6 Sept if the government continues ignoring his demands?





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# Middle ground in Doklam

The climax this week in the India-Bhutan-China dispute restored the status quo, but created a new normal in the trilateral relations

Haa is perched at 3,000m in a remote part of Bhutan where India maintains a military training school, an army



CONNECTING DOTS  
Dinkar Nepal

hospital, a helipad and a golf course.  
A day's trek to the northwest

from this bucolic town is the Doklam Plateau, where for more than two months till Monday, Indian and Chinese soldiers were 'eyeball-to-eyeball', as military types like to put it.

The spectre of a full-scale war between these two nuclear powers has, for now, been averted. The two sides agreed to an 'expeditious disengagement' of their troops just a week before the summit in Beijing of BRICS

(Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). It would have been pretty embarrassing to have a summit where two of its members are about to go to war.

Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi stayed in Haa in 1958. 'I shall be going to a country, Bhutan, which is more cut off from the world than perhaps any other country,' Nehru wrote then from Gangtok. Nehru reached Haa after

crossing the Nathu La pass in Sikkim, where India maintained a 'political officer' responsible for contacts with the Himalayan kingdoms of Sikkim and Bhutan. The easiest route to Paro, then the summer capital of Bhutan, was via Sikkim from Nathu La and across a far-flung corner of Tibet near the Yatung trading post.

The Prime Minister's entourage spent a night at Yatung, and crossed the Tibet-Bhutan border where they were met by the Prime Minister of Bhutan. Riding through the high passes, Nehru got to Paro, where the 28-year-old 'Maharaja' was waiting with a 'spectacular procession consisting of hundreds of knights, dignitaries of the Buddhist clergy in their special robes, troupes of dancers, etc.'

That took place at a time when Tibet was in trouble but hadn't yet been annexed by China. And Bhutan was, in Nehru's words, 'another world'. Trouble with China was brewing, though, and many Indians had already started imagining their role as the saviours of Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan. Soon, the Chinese over-ran Tibet, and the Dalai Lama fled to India.

In 1962, China and India fought a war over their Himalayan border, and Thimphu was spooked by China's claim to Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan because it said they all belonged historically to Tibet, which itself was always under the suzerainty of the 'Motherland China'. The Dragon Kingdom swiftly snuggled into India's protective lap, accepting the offer that was 'not formal but had always been there'.

In 1960, a team from the Indian Army went on a reconnaissance mission to Bhutan. It was followed by a road construction project by the Border Roads Organisation under Project Dantak, and a year later, establishment of the Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) headquarters at Haa.

The Himalayan War left

Bhutan largely untouched, mostly because of China's disinterest in drawing a third country into the conflict that it started to 'teach India a lesson'. India was, however, eager later to use Bhutan for military logistics, and built a landing strip at Paro.

The geographical and geopolitical realities in the region have changed in the last 60 years. Tibet is now part of an 'autonomous region' of China, Sikkim a state in India, which even China has recognised.

But Beijing has consistently maintained that Bhutan is a 'sovereign' and 'independent' country and has criticised India's role of 'mediating' on bilateral issues on behalf of Bhutan.

The Doklam dispute, owing to its colonial legacy, remains unresolved because of India's strategic interest, and Bhutan's own helplessness about not being able to move out of Delhi's protective embrace.

In the past, Bhutan and China had agreed to disagree over the border, and settled into a comfortable status quo in which both maintained their claims over the disputed territory.

There is a consensus within Bhutan to accept China's offer to exchange the Doklam area with another disputed territory along the northern border that is almost three times the area.

The trouble is, Doklam is situated smack at the entrance from the Tibetan Plateau into the Siliguri Corridor, and is therefore of utmost strategic importance to India. The territory swap proposal, therefore, is not openly spoken about in Thimphu.

This week's agreement, in which the Chinese have agreed to stop construction of a road in the disputed area in return for Indian soldiers stepping back, is a tactical win for India. But China won strategically because now the whole world knows about Bhutan seeking direct diplomatic channels with Beijing. This is the new normal.

There is a strong desire among the Bhutanese to untangle the big-brotherly embrace of India, and Thimphu may try to derive benefits from this new reality soon. 🇧🇹

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Farm to Table

The US Embassy in Kathmandu hosted a 'Farm to Table' event to highlight the importance to the national economy and family income of Nepal's agriculture. Agri- entrepreneurs, farmers, suppliers, credit providers met to network and share innovative solutions to improve productivity.



US Chargé d'Affaires Michael C Gonzales said: "Our objective is to spark a conversation on how best to instill this concept of farm-to-table and encourage people to learn more about new and evolving products and services available in Nepal."

More frequent QR

With the holiday and tourism season in mind, Qatar Airways is adding a fourth daily frequency between Kathmandu and Doha from Friday. The overnight flight



will arrive in Kathmandu at 8:55 AM. Passengers can now use the Doha hub to connect to the airline's 150 destinations around the world, including newly opened flights to Canberra, Chiang Mai, San Francisco and Rio de Janeiro..

Ford Festive Offer

Ford has launched its Dasain offer of 'Cash Ma Cash' campaign. Those purchasing a Ford vehicle in the coming months will have a chance to win a lucky draw of up to Rs400,000. Accessories worth Rs30,000 are also on offer with every purchase.



Wheel of Fortune

Sykar Trading that sells Honda motorcycles and cars has also launched its Dasain and Tihar scheme 'Honda Wheel of Fortune 2' with scratch coupons worth up to Rs100,000 on the purchase of Honda motorcycles and scooters, discount up to Rs30,000 on Honda big bikes and accessories, etc. Ten customers from lucky draw win up to Rs 1 million.



HONDA

Dashain with Mi

Customers purchasing Mi smartphones can win a trip for two to Dubai, Bangkok, a Pulsar bike and Mi products like



TV, laptop to vacuum cleaner and phone under the Dasain offer from Vatsal Complex. Customers need to download the Mi Nepal app and fill out a registration form to enter the contest.

Healthy flight

Turkish Airlines is partnering with Dr Mehmet Oz, renowned cardiologist and producer and presenter of 'The Dr Oz Show' to provide a more comfortable



and healthy travel experience for its passengers. The collaboration will be a part of Fly Good Feel Good Project and will feature short videos with expert advice on the Airlines' official website, social media and in-flight entertainment systems.

Hyundai's Xcent

Laxmi InterContinental Pvt. Ltd. the authorized distributor of Hyundai vehicles in Nepal, has unveiled the new Hyundai Xcent sedan car at the NADA Auto Show being held at Bhrikutimandap. The new Xcent boats of quality, comfort, style and



premium look, and will be available in two petrol variants, Xcent (S) priced at Rs 3,096,000 and Xcent (SX) priced at Rs 3,356,000.

New Hexa

Sipradi Trading, the authorised distributor of Tata Motors in Nepal has launched its premium SUV, Hexa in the domestic market. Powered by 150PS/320Nm or 156PS/400Nm 2.2 litre VARICOR engine it comes with standard five or six-speed manual transmission or six-speed automatic transmission.



prabhu BANK



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# One day of life in the jungle

“Welcome to Tiger Tops. We’ll be leaving on the elephants for a jungle safari once the aircraft has departed, so please wait in the shade.” I greet the guests emerging from the Royal Nepal Airlines aircraft, dazed by the bright April light, and usher them into the simple thatched shelter with wood plank benches that passes as the Meghauli Terminal.



**SO FAR SO GOOD**  
Lisa Choegyal

With practised hands the bags are loaded onto the open Land Rover, the prop engines keep spinning for a quick turnaround, and the departing guests leave with thanks and hugs and waves. “What an amazing place, we have so enjoyed our stay!”

A couple of stray dogs and several undernourished cattle are chased off the airstrip, and the flight lifts past us with a brief roar, heading to Kathmandu. Silence settles back on the grass runway. A few locals who had paused to watch the daily spectacle of ‘Big White People’ return to their grazing goats. In faded cotton saris and glinting glass jewellery, two ladies cross the runway with firewood balanced high on their heads.

Airport duty is already my favourite, although I had been working at Tiger Tops only for a few months. The daily flight is our sole link with the outside world, and I am first to check the green office mailbag carried down by the pilot, containing details of guests, supplies and news of home. Later, Chitwan is connected with radio, telephones and mobiles, but in 1974 the Kathmandu office managed reservations only with telegrams and telex.

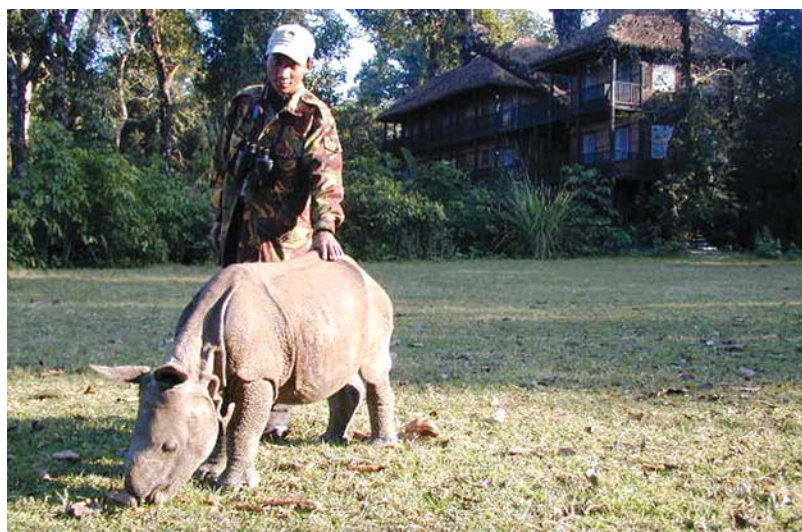
On unlucky days when the flight was cancelled due to weather or aircraft problems, after waiting all day we would return with the guests to the Lodge, guessing at tomorrow’s flight time and logistical rearrangements.



Today the guests leave on elephant back and I climb into the baggage vehicle as the driver bangs his door closed. Laughing, the boys perch on the luggage and staff families hitch a ride – a young wife squeezes into a rear corner of the Land Rover with her kohl-eyed baby.

At the height of its success, Tiger Tops’ elephant safaris, nature walks and guided boat trips were an iconic must-see of Nepal tourism, attracting not only regular guests but also celebrities, royalty, movie and rock stars. This was the beginning of nature tourism in Nepal, a responsible tourism initiative rooted in conservation and community, hailed as one of Asia’s best wildlife experiences long before the term ‘ecotourism’ was coined.

I relished the rhythms of jungle life, the complex logistics and the apparently effortless precision timing, which in fact required meticulous planning. The Tiger Tops Chitwan community numbered about 200 people, mostly men, if you included all the elephant camp and the chaps who laboured to



pump the water and maintain the roads. Dressed in varying shades of buff and khaki green, we were a self-contained group with lives defined by our jobs: a hierarchy of interlocking relationships. Behind the scenes, back-stories were rife and interactions were complex, including with the surrounding wildlife whose habitat we inhabited.

The laundry workers had a tedious job, carrying endless bundles down the jungle path then back in neatly ironed stacks

through the apricot afternoon light. Washed on the river’s edge, bed sheets dried on makeshift lines in the open sun, and clothes were spread on the warm grey sand. Heavy irons were filled with hot coals, like in Victorian times. Without electricity, cleaning and replenishing the petromaxes and paraffin lamps used to light the Lodge, rooms and paths was an onerous daily task. Later, our solar power installation was the largest in Nepal. The egg man was a lonely figure, pedalling

Long before the term ecotourism was coined, an initiative in Nepal rooted in conservation and community was hailed as one of Asia’s best

valiantly through the jungle with trays of village eggs balanced precariously on the back of his elderly bicycle. Unexpectedly one egg hatched, the chick comically attaching itself to Thapa, the veteran storeman, thinking he was its mother.

John Edwards had a little dog that was eaten by a leopard, and the mongoose kept by Margie McDougal hid in the copper fireplace chimney and stole chocolates. Hashim, the earnest Indian naturalist, lost his spectacles to a sloth bear during a jungle walk. Several orphan rhinos were adopted, with mixed success — Munghal’s mother drowned in a flood, but he became a great favourite with guests, fearlessly entering the dining room (*pictured*).

Late on New Year’s Eve 2003, enjoying a few drinks with Anton Mosimann, the dapper Swiss celebrity chef, a fully-grown adult rhinoceros startled us by wandering purposefully into the elephant camp, then settling peacefully, stretched out by the open fire like some bizarre giant dog. Reared in captivity in Sauraha, this individual felt safer at night amongst humans, and was returning home after an unsuccessful attempt at rehabilitation in a distant corner of the Park. It seems irreverent in retrospect, but the rhino allowed us to clamber onto his armour-plated back for surreal selfies. 🇳🇵



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After that brief sunny spell and nearly-Dasain type weather, we expect more rain over the weekend with the monsoonal trough that unleashed the violent storm in Kathmandu on Wednesday night. Much of the rain will fall in short, sharp bursts, mostly at night and accompanied by lightning and thunder. Water vapour from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal are mixing and rising over the Himalaya in towering rain-bearing cumulus.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26° 19°	24° 19°	25° 19°

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# Sweet original sessions

KATHA HARU

Raw, intimate and candid, online video series Yomari Sessions is back with a new season

On a lazy afternoon earlier this week, members of the contemporary folk band MiKu trickled in to Katha Haru's studio in Dhobighat. As they settled in, the production team joined them for a screening of their performance recorded in July. The silence was punctured by whispers of lyrics and occasional jabs as members appeared on screen.

The band, Kobid Bazra (sarangi), Samyog Regmi (guitar), Pushpa Palanchoke (vocals), Riken Maharjan (bass), Bikesh Bazra (nagara) and Merit Maharjan (sound effects/percussion) will open the new season of the unique web series Yomari Sessions on 6 September. Organisers say this year's series will be bigger and better with a new episode every week.

Started by production company Katha Haru, the first

season featured performances by Shreeti and Baaja, Stairs of Cirith, Flekke, Sakcham and Abhyu with Stairs of Cirith's 'Raktim' generating over 65,000 hits online.

"When we browse the web, there is a lot of focus on covers and while they do tend to get more audience, we felt the need of providing a platform to deserving artists where they can showcase their original music," says Katha Haru Director of Photography Rocky Prajapati.

What emerged was an amalgamation of raw and candid music across a variety of genres, a quality that spiked the popularity of the first season. Each video of Yomari Sessions is a live, one-take recording where artists perform an improvised version of their original compositions.

"When you record a song

in multiple takes any song can sound good. But what we wanted to show was that there are really good musicians in Nepal who can produce good music," says Creative Director Shashank Shrestha. "We wanted to provide a platform for really good independent artists to show an undiluted one-take version of their performance," he adds.

Says Kobid Bazra of MiKu: "For new bands like MiKu, performing live is an opportunity to get more people interested in our music, and working with Yomari was fun."

The new season will feature original scores from bands Miku, Pahelo Batti Muni, Ember Eyes, Manda; and Space. Departing from the indoor setting and black and white muted videos of season one, this year will see the bands performing in locations around Kathmandu Valley.

"The idea is to give the audience the raw and intimate experience of a live musical performance," says Suyog Shrestha, CEO of Katha Haru. "When you watch a live performance you get to see the way the band interacts with each other and the instruments, and that is an experience we are trying to emulate in this season."

Not sponsored or supported by any big brands, Katha Haru is adamant about controlling the creative space. Prajapati says music is all that matters at the end of the day, "The music has to be good and has to connect with everyone."

As of now, the bands featured aren't paid but can use the recordings from their session. "Yomari Sessions is a unique platform for the bands. Since both the audio and video is recorded simultaneously,

the bands really have to be professional," says Prabin Maharjan, manager of MiKu. Yomari comes as a breath of fresh air, and a much needed stage for the burgeoning indie music scene in Nepal. Producers and artists say they're expecting more audience engagement this year.

Says Shashank Shrestha: "There is a scene for emerging musicians and it is the same 100 people going to all the concerts. If we can at least open up the market and spotlight these musicians, I think we'll have achieved a lot."

Sahina Shrestha

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

Go online to watch behind-the-scenes video of one of the recording sessions for this season and catch up with the performances from last season.

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## Image-inations

Tales of old Tibet have fascinated me since childhood: the *chanteable* of ancient manuscripts where heroes battled brigands and gods vanquished demons.

It must have come from the textures of my own infancy – as a little boy in a trading family doing business with Tibet, like so many others, in bustling Kalimpong, where fortunes were bartered and friendships were built for life.

My prankish days were spent playing horse over mountains of wool and mounds of yak tails. We teased the mule trains that had traversed for months over the passes, and we risked whacks from the unsheathed daggers of irascible muleteers.

We saw things and we heard stories of a wondrous and perilous land of magic and mystery that was months away by foot, but felt close enough for everyday touch. One day it all vanished, and all I had was this novel by Henrich Harrer to show me a land I have always yearned to go to.

The closest I got to Lhasa and Kham is through the voice of my wife, Tseten, who was born in Lhasa but never was able to see her land. So she saw it through the eyes of her Pala.

These photos of a bygone era are from the collection of Tseten's family, The Chamatsangs (one-time prominent trading house from Kham) and The Yuthoks (aristocrats of that old world). The picture of the ladies is from the Yuthok family's collection and reflects how the nobility lived then in Lhasa, a distant cry from the farmers and nomads of greater Tibet.

The picture of the milkmaid is reminiscent of how women folk worked in the villages. The images of the mountains and valleys are from different regions and cast their own splendour of a place in time.

**Tashi Sherpa**

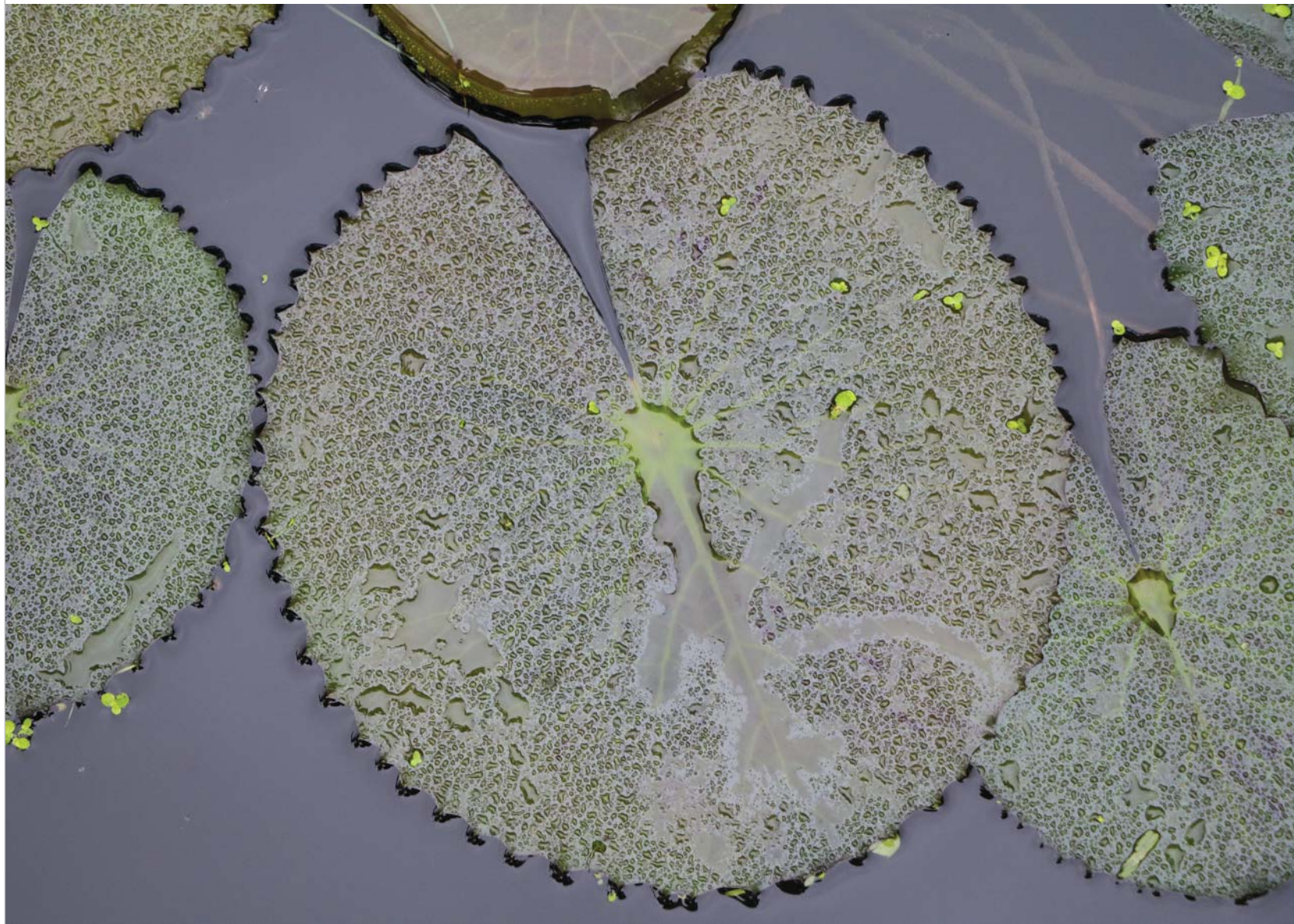


## The daughter (Unseen Tib

I still remember well  
when you carried me  
the magic, the music of  
your legends and fables.  
I've always sought to know -  
the secrets of the unsaid  
How high does the eagle soar  
to be above the gilded roof,  
Does the white crane rest there,  
on its way from the north,  
or was it to the south?  
If the Stonewall hums with pilgrims,  
and under the summer sun  
do urchins still frolic  
in the happy river,  
The one you called Lhasa  
Where is Khesar now?  
With his sword-steed  
Cleaving demons and devils  
And why did the ragged minstrel  
Sing rhymes of heroes and rogues?  
Do young men still swagger  
In their boots and braids?  
Does the milkmaid still lament  
of home, heart and longing,  
even as her tresses flirt.  
Or is this all a figment of color  
much like the halo above that hill.  
Does Che Potala still glint tall  
with its thousand panes  
against the setting day?  
And when does the swallow greet  
the wildflower spring in Kham ?  
Does the sky float in turquoise  
where your white pony roamed?  
Do its meadows glide endlessly  
like some unending fantasy.  
And how liquid is that crystal  
where the blissful hermit bathes.

How many  
and how n  
to where t  
on that ce  
Do you thi  
or did he t  
Like you a

Does the n  
where the  
Was it the  
did you re  
such ones  
I wonder i  
where whi  
for the val  
Is the juni  
Is the broo  
Can this st  
in this uns  
just as it w  
I cannot sa  
It's always  
Didn't mat  
home was  
here today  
I have liste  
to fill this  
Tell me Pa  
these tales



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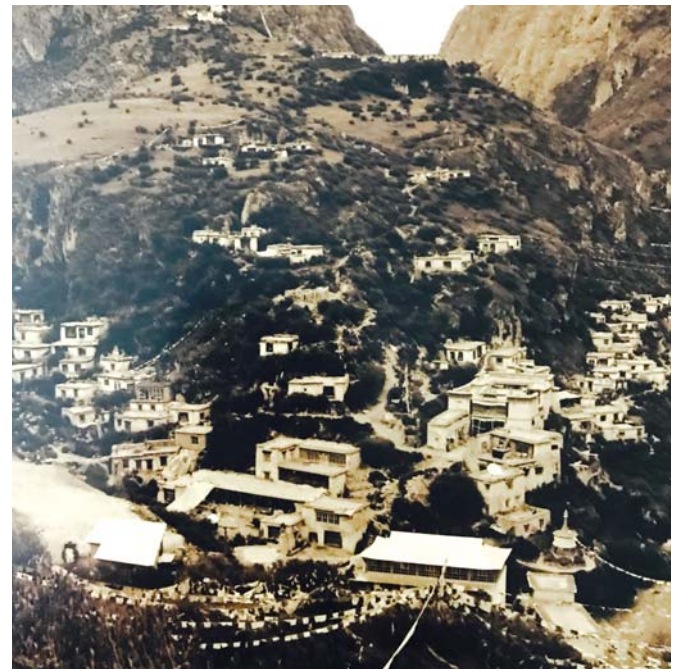
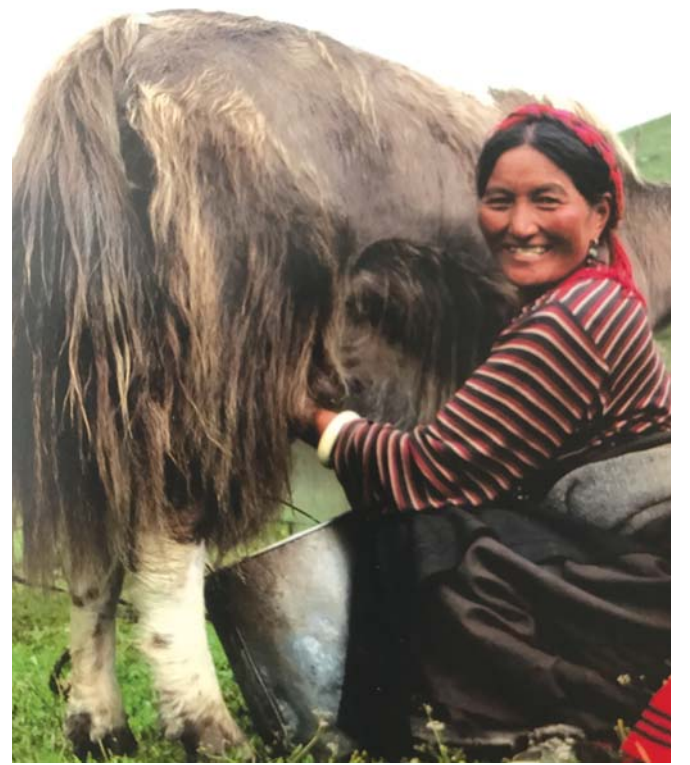
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## er's song (et)

ny days in the snows  
many Koras  
he Blue One meditates  
ntrifugal summit.  
nk he'd be there,  
oo leave  
nd a million others.

ight still shine of diamonds,  
wind mates with the wolf?  
greenest of green,  
ally draw clouds  
I can only imagine?  
f the ranges sing freely,  
ispers turn to echoes  
eys up and below.  
per still pure,  
ok still clear?  
ill remain as is  
een vista  
as when I heard you,  
ay for sure  
been this way for me  
ter where I was,  
always elsewhere,  
y, there yesterday.  
ened and I have waited  
unfilled space  
la once more again,  
s of your land.





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- तेस्रो भर्ना सूचीका विद्यार्थीहरूको भर्ना- २०७४ भाद्र १७ र १८ गते साँझ ५ बजेसम्म

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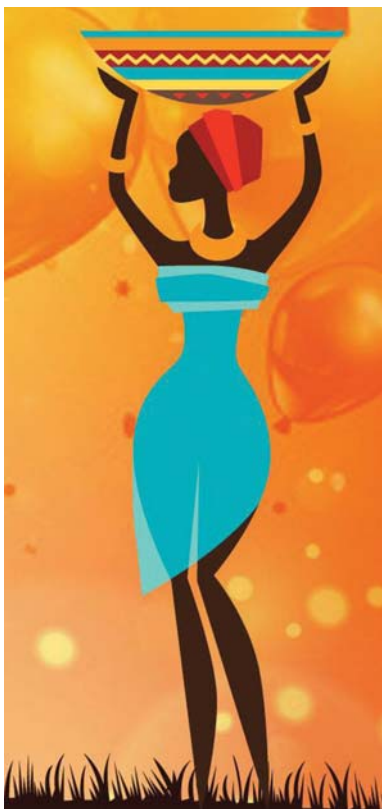
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# EVENTS



## Nepal Africa Film Festival,

Don't miss the opportunity to watch selected African films at the sixth edition of the Nepal Africa Film Festival.  
 18-20 September, 9am-5pm, Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari, (01) 4416650

### The connection,

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



### Displaced

Be part of an art exhibition that reflects the stories of refugees in Nepal.  
 30 August-12 September, 8:30am-10:30pm, Yala Mandala, Kwalkhu Road, Free, 9841797260, 9818239744

### Cosmic Shades,

Artist Sushila Singh is back with her second solo exhibition, which focuses on 32 specific heritages of Nepal.  
 3 September, 2:30pm, Aaju Art Gallery, Durbar Marg, (01) 5546705, [infor@scc.org.np](mailto:infor@scc.org.np)



### Mexican Amate,

Save the date for the Mexican Amate painting.  
 2-14 September, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Kathmandu, (01) 4218048, (01) 4433930

### Online safety,

Learn how to make your children safe from online threats and risks at #Net4Good fair.  
 2 September, 10am-4pm, Rashtriya Sabha Griha, Free entry, 9851054140



### Biointensive gardening,

Everything Organic Nursery (EVON) will be offering its basic 3-day course in Nepali biointensive gardening.  
 5-7 September, 10am-5pm, Reservation: 9849325002, [www.everythingorganic.org](http://www.everythingorganic.org)

### Narratives of courage,

Listen to stories of how women survivors of armed conflict are struggling for survival. Support their fight for justice.  
 1 September, 2-4pm, Staff College, Jawalakhel, (01) 5010979, 9851066665

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



# MUSIC



### Mitho tour,

MiKu is presenting a month-long city tour, the 'Mitho Tour', where you can enjoy a unique blend of poetry and music.  
 2 September (Evoke Café and Bistro), 9 September (Moksh), 22 September (Café Aamu), 7-10pm, Free entry

### Basuri duo,

Indulge in an evening of Asian classical music, with Hiroshi Nakagawa from Japan and Nagendra Bikram Rai from Nepal.  
 8 September, 5-7pm, Alliance Française Kathmandou, Rs500, Rs300 (for students), (01) 5009221



### Live with Jovan,

Spend the weekend with close friends swaying to the rhythms of Jovan Bhujia.  
 1 September, 6:30pm onwards, Bricks Café, Kupondole, (01) 5521756

### Acoustic Friday,

Enjoy live music by Sambodhan and try the Arna light beers for Rs1,000.  
 1 September, Genesis Café, Panipokhari, 9841466304

## OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu on 1 September

Set in India during the state of emergency from 1975-1977, real-life events inspire this thriller about stolen gold and an eclectic cast of characters up against an elite army. With Ajay Devgn starring as a thief, Vidut Jammwal as an undercover cop, and Ileana D'Cruz as a character based upon Maharani Gayatri Devi, the film weaves together action and heist in a historical context with colorful shots to capture the journey.

# DINING



### Dunga,

Head over for some delicious continental food and don't forget their signature cocktails, all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space.  
 Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 463321

### Capital Grill,

This American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone's tastes.  
 Bhatbhateni, (01) 4428426, [grillcapital@gmail.com](mailto:grillcapital@gmail.com)

### 1905,

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

### Falcha,

Give yourself to the twin pleasures of lemon jeera chicken and mutton handi kabab.  
 Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, 9851013475, [bipinpiya@gmail.com](mailto:bipinpiya@gmail.com)



### Wine tasting,

Wine connoisseurs can participate in a wine tasting workshop. Rs1,950, Rs1,750 (for members and AFK students).  
 2 September, 4:30pm, Alliance Francaise de Kathmandou, Lalitpur, 980808418422

### Ladies night,

Ladies get a free cocktail and discount on food.  
 Every Wednesday, 7-9pm, M Hotel, Thamel



### Koto,

Japanese cuisine of the highest quality, served with meticulous attention, food fanatics will find themselves in a haven for sashimi and tempura.  
 Pulchowk (01) 5542936 or Darbar Marg (01) 4220346

# GETAWAY



### Monsoon madness,

Two nights, 3 days at Shangri-la Village Resort, Pokhara, with cash back coupons worth Rs3,000. Rs6,299 net per person on twin sharing basis.  
 Pokhara, (061) 462222, [shangrilavillagepokhara](http://shangrilavillagepokhara.com)

### Mango Tree Lodge,

Culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration and jungle safari at Bardia National Park.  
[info@mangotreelodge.com](mailto:info@mangotreelodge.com)  
 Bhetani, Bardia, [info@mangotreelodge.com](mailto:info@mangotreelodge.com)

### Famous Farm,

Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the *aankhijhyal*.  
 Nuwakot, (01) 4700426, [info@rural-heritage.com](mailto:info@rural-heritage.com)



### Atithi Resort,

A perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna and delicious food of your choice.  
 Shantipatan, Lakeside, Pokhara, (61) 466760, (01) 4002077

### Shivapuri Cottage,

Escape the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and enjoy peace, tranquility, good food and fresh air.  
 Budhanilkantha, 9841371927



### Park Village Resort,

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

### Jhule Mountain Resort,

Resting 2050m above sea level, the eco-resort boasts a farmhouse that stretches across hills covered in fresh pine. Enjoy an organic homestay experience.  
 Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, Lapsipedi-3, Jhule, (01) 6212399



### Solid Rock,

Enjoy a relaxing stay in this traditional Nepali farmhouse away from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu.  
 Solid Rock Lodge & Restaurant, Dollu, near Pharping, 9823233093





■ So sad that Christians often seem to think they know, and are better. Why not just be kind and respect each other instead of trying to change people?

**Karen Wassenaar**

■ I thought religious crusades happened during the Middle Ages.

**Margit Eggemann**

■ How do people “decide their own religion” if they are not permitted the freedom to explore their own faith? When social or legal standards deny the possibility of such exploration, it becomes more like a cage than a faith.

**Davis**

■ Trying to convert people by building schools may not be ideal, but I know of many religions that try to bring change in communities with terrorism, bombs, rioting and rape.

**Bill**

■ Why can people not let others follow their own traditions, customs and religions? Why do they not simply help the poor without trying to convert them to Christianity? No wonder Marx said: ‘religion is opium’.

**Nishz Gurung**

■ Why can religious people not leave others in peace? This sort of manipulative arrogance is very negative. Let people choose their own religion. What these religious people are practising is not religious freedom but religious fascism.

**Nigel Betts**

■ All blame must go to the Social Welfare Council, which signed the 5-year contract with MountainChild. Did the council not know this was an evangelical group? I wonder how much ‘commission’ exchanged hands! ‘Caste-based hierarchy’ is given as the reason for conversions

# Sermon on the mountain

Last week’s *Nepali Times* package on Christian conversion in Nepal (‘The golden age of the gospel’ by Om Astha Rai, ‘Preaching on high’ by Brot Coburn and ‘Fake secularism’ by Dambar Chemjong, #873) generated vigorous debate online about secularism and proselytisation. Here is a selection of the feedback:

to Christianity. It is certainly one of the reasons that Hindus opposed to conversion must tackle.

**Birat Simha**

■ Evangelicals come into Nepal under various guises driven by their ‘mission’ to ‘convert’ people to Christianity. Often, their methods are questionable or outright despicable, leveraging on the poverty of ordinary people by luring them with financial aid. The imposition of one religion over another using false arguments and threats should not be tolerated. Conversion by stealth and trickery is unacceptable and should be resisted. It misses the essence of Christianity.

**Gerald-Fernando Heng**

■ Nepal should become a true secular country, that is the only way to be inclusive for all religions and non-believers.

**Kamana Rai**

■ Jesuit priests from the US founded St Xavier’s School in the early ‘50s and have graduated thousands since then who have gone on to make significant contributions to Nepal and internationally. St Mary’s did the same for girls. There was a church in the school grounds for the priests, and the students had to participate in regular prayer sessions. However, the main goal of the mission was high quality education and to develop independent thinkers with a civic sense. There was no attempt to convert students to Christianity. The School’s motto was ‘Live for God Lead for Nepal’ and many of the graduates

have grown up to do exactly that. Conversion to Christianity does not have to be linked with supporting education and development in Nepal or anywhere else.

**A Nepali**

■ As long as they don’t use violence, it might be good to challenge long-held beliefs. People in those areas are not museum exhibits: they might find something useful in an outside ideology, or they might find ways to improve their own belief system.

**Alex Walker**

■ Christianity is an inherently imperialist religion that has destroyed indigenous cultures around the world throughout the colonialist period, and continues to do so.

**Konchog Dorje**

■ The so-called Christian missionaries in Africa have done more to destroy the culture of the different tribes than any other organisation. No person, religion, culture has the right to try and indoctrinate any other persons beliefs unless it is to improve definite negative traits such as women’s treatment during menstruation.

**Raymond Fuller**

■ I am glad that the writer makes the distinction between various kinds of Christians. There are the Jesuits who are involved mostly with education and academic research, and then you have these aggressive evangelicals. Nepal should be able to make the distinction and deport

those who bribe Nepali people to convert to Christianity and use the name of God in vain.

**H Linden**

■ Fascinating insight into one example of the efforts by Evangelical church organisations to convert Nepalis to their version of Christianity. There are many more. Here is an example of attempts to convert Buddhists, but it is the Hindus who are the main targets, and there is a strong backlash particularly from those who espouse Hindutva and a reversal of the commitment in the Constitution to secularism.

**David Seddon**

■ They try to convert locals to Christianity since their religion is losing ground in Europe and in the US. Christianity is not welcome here in Asia.

**Anh Minh Dinh**

■ Medieval times are back. But it is the Government that lacks support to these groups in order to develop the social prosperity for underprivileged people. They do not need faith, but education, no Foreign God but competences to foster their wellbeing and ensure a better future for themselves and coming generations.

**Albert Kampermann**

■ Crazy! Proselytising is wrong on so many levels.

**Gina Marie**

■ These American, evolution-denying ‘Christians’ need to go to Texas and do some actual good.

**Paul McCadden**

# Ranting on high

MARK PICKETT

How disappointing it was to read Brot Coburn’s article ‘Preaching on High’ (#873). It is a heady mix of poor research, misrepresentation and unsupported accusation, and betrays an arrogant attitude towards the people of the Himalaya.

It is ironic that Coburn should reprimand the director of the Sama Learning Centre for his lack of scholarly research but reproduce a bit of sad and ignorant drivel from an unnamed trekker’s blog as his own.

Coburn damns the philosophy of the NGO by suggesting it has ‘an ideological link to Assemblies of God’. I wonder what ideological links there may be in the author’s own work: romanticism perhaps, idealism maybe.

Did the director say that he was driven by a ‘conviction of moral righteousness’ or is that the author’s judgment? What is Coburn’s motivation? Completely dispassionate he is not. Morally convicted he clearly is. Is it one foreigner’s conviction against

another’s. Is it arrogant for someone to have a conviction that is different from one’s own? Such a put-down is unbecoming of a quality newspaper. And did the director really say that he is attempting to ‘co-opt a cultural system’? Coburn puts words into said director’s mouth: the director himself is not allowed to speak.

Coburn further misrepresents a text of the Bible: ‘make your enemies your footstool’ (Psalm 110:1) is not a command to followers of Christ and is utterly contrary to the clear command of Jesus to ‘love your enemies’ (Matthew 5:44). This is either plain ignorance of the text or wanton twisting of the text to suit the author’s argument.

We do not know of the opinions of the Nubri villagers because they too are not given a voice. The only other voice in the entire article is that of the local abbot, the one who stands the most to lose if the villagers do indeed abandon their tradition. What about the other villagers? The Nubri people themselves are conspicuous by their absence.

Coburn informs us that the founder of the Footstool Project is a ‘shadowy, godfather-type figure’ in a YouTube video that is no longer available. If we can’t

assess this ‘shadowy figure’ for ourselves surely such evidence is no longer admissible.

The author asserts that ‘Confronting evangelicals can be tricky because exposing their zealous agenda might only drive them further underground.’ Odd that Om Astha Rai and Dambar Chemjong in their articles, don’t seem to share such a fear. If Coburn disagrees with the beliefs of evangelicals he should do so in open debate, rather than simply cast aspersions on their motives. Nepal’s press is still free. But he seems not to want an open debate. He wants the peoples of the *be-yu* to be closeted in a romanticised and idealised bubble. Hence his approval of the present Constitution, with its banning of ‘any act or conduct that may jeopardise other’s religion’.


Would Coburn be happy if such a Constitution were promulgated in his own country? He seeks for the imposition of draconian laws in someone else’s country while enjoying the freedom that his own country accords him. Is this not sheer hypocrisy?

Does he really imagine that teaching in a Himalayan village himself had no impact on their religion? Such people only object to change when they don’t like the

changes that others are advocating.

Like the author, I too lament some of the changes that have happened in Nepal’s recent history. But the freedom of the people to choose their own way of life is not one of the changes I lament. Coburn argues that the people of Nubri are not ‘truly free’ due to the attraction of the material benefits that the project has brought the village. But here the author confuses the freedom and independence of the will.

The people are indeed not independent: they are constrained by their environment and the options that are available to a Nubri villager; they are under the influence of parents, lamas, teachers, government agents. But that does not mean they are not free. To deny them free agency is to emasculate their humanity. The people of Nubri shall decide what they do with both the materials and the message brought to them by the project. Denying them that dignity smacks of imperialism. 🇳🇵

**Mark Pickett** is a writer based in Wales who lived nearly 20 years in Nepal and has a PhD from Tribhuvan University for his dissertation on Newar social order. He is the author of *Caste and Kinship in a Modern Hindu Society (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2013)*.



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More than four years ago, Jane Campion, one of the most original directors making films today, premiered her seven-part series *Top of the Lake*, starring the powerhouse Elizabeth Moss, at the Cannes Film Festival. That formidable, unforgettable series was reviewed in this column in 2013. As much as the story of Detective

six-part installment, *Top of the Lake: China Girl*, which just came out, is an example of long form television that is extraordinary in its unflinching feminism. The series paints a picture of a tough woman detective who is imperfect but courageous, surrounded by an ugly, unequal world of sexism and sexual harassment, where women are trafficked, go missing, and are used for their bodies via prostitution as well as for illegal surrogacy in a desperate modern world where couples are frantic to reproduce no matter the cost.

Robin Griffin has left her beautiful New Zealand hometown of Lake Top, a setting that underscored both the starkness and the almost ludicrous beauty of the first series. She has moved back to Sydney, broken-hearted yet again, and ready to throw herself into her work. When a woman's body is found in a suitcase floating in the waters surrounding Sydney, Griffin is poised and ready to find the killer. Into this mix comes

Griffin's daughter, who she gave up for adoption at sixteen, a few very possessive mothers, a cruel left-wing, pseudo-academic, a handsome grieving father, a loveable female sidekick in the police force with a sharp tongue, and a whole load of women from south-east Asia who are forced into prostitution by abject poverty at home. The mystery here is as strong as it was in the first series, and as with that story, this one too develops characters in a strong, unwavering fashion.

Campion does not direct every episode here, but she co-wrote the script and her stamp is evident from the trajectory of the story and the strong female leads that steal the show. It is heartening to see a director that I have followed for so long constantly pushing her own boundaries as she changes her subject matter and her approach with each project.

Jane Campion is not great because she is one of the few successful female filmmakers: she is stellar because she makes films about women, and about men, without any apology for her feminism. That is what it means to stand up for your own sex. No bra burning or man hating or turning up one's nose at women who don't make the same 'independent' choices as yourself, just telling the truth, eloquently, starkly, about what it is to be female in this difficult world.



Watch trailer online

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

**HAPPENINGS**



RSS

**ELECTION BLUEPRINT:** Chairperson of the Electoral Constituency Delineation Commission, Kamal Narayan Das, submits its report to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in Baluwatar on Wednesday.



GOPEN RAI

**DEUDA DANCERS:** Women sing and dance on the occasion of the Gaura Festival in Tudhikhel on Tuesday when they worship the goddess Gauri.



GOPEN RAI

**LET'S ROLL:** Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Bir Bahadur Balayar inaugurates the NADA Auto Show, 2017 at Bhrikutimandap on Tuesday.



GOPEN RAI

**WHERE ARE THEY?** People light candles to mark International Day of the Disappeared in Kathmandu on Wednesday with the total of 1,350+ people whose whereabouts are not known after the 1996-2006 conflict.



GOPEN RAI

**BEST IN THE BIZ:** From left: Rumu Neupane of *Baaharakhari*, Shreejana Shrestha of *Nepali Times*, Nirashi Thami of BBC Nepali Service and Renu Chaudhary of Sansakar FM were honoured for their reporting on women by Sancharika Samuha on Monday.

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# Through the eyes of a blind king

Prakash Guragain in *Naya Patrika*, 28 August

गयाँ पत्रिका

When the shortlist of nine books contending for this year's Madan Puraskar was announced recently, many of the titles and authors were well known. But a book of poetry, *Dhritarashtra*, by Ghanshyam Kandel, which no one had heard about, was declared the winner of Nepal's prestigious literary award last week.



story of the Mahabharat through the eyes of the blind king of Hastinapur, a mythical kingdom for which the Pandavs and the Kauravs fought the epic war. A personal tragedy inspired the author/poet to re-imagine the characters of the Mahabharat.

Six years ago, when he was head of the Nepali Department at Tribhuvan University, Kandel got an eye infection that never really healed. Despite many operations in Nepal and India, he lost the sight of that eye. It was then that he understood the pain and suffering of blind people, and conceived the idea of rewriting the Mahabharat through the eyes of the blind king.

The original Mahabharat depicts Krishna as a charismatic leader who fights for truth and justice. But in Kandel's verse, Krishna appears as a crafty conspirator who tricks others into fighting the brutal war at Kurukshetra and plots the murder of Duryodhan and Dronacharya.

*Dhritarashtra* is told from the viewpoint of Dhritarashtra the blind king and focuses on how he perceives the protagonists of the Mahabharat war. The book forces us to reread the epic from the perspective of a disabled character marginalised by the original version of the myth.

Kandel says *Dhritarashtra* is more about the modern world rather than the Mahabharat per se. "I just use the legends of the Mahabharat to comment on modern issues," he says.

Born to a Hindu Brahmin family in a remote village of Dhading, Kandel went to Banaras for higher studies. This ancient Indian city on the banks of the holy Ganges River was then the ultimate destination for Nepali scholars. Kandel admired the poetry of Lekhanath Poudel, Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Madhav Ghimire.

Kandel's contemporaries switched to prose, but he remained faithful to metrical verses. Decades later, his passion for a fading genre of literature won him what is likely to be the biggest accolade of his life.



Basudev Poudel on *RSS News Agency*, 29 August

After King Gyanendra dissolved Parliament in 2002, pressure mounted on the Nepali Congress (NC) to renounce its long-held policy to support a constitutional monarchy. But the country's largest party was hesitant, even as King Gyanendra hinted he was preparing for a coup. Cartoonist Batsyayan depicted NC President Girija Prasad Koirala carrying a carcass of a horse marked 'Constitutional Monarchy' on his shoulder (*above*).

The 'flogging a dead horse' sketch was controversial, with the royal palace putting pressure on *Kantipur*, the newspaper that Batsyayan works

## Honour to humour

for, to apologise. Some pro-monarchy writers even demanded that Batsyayan be hanged.

*Kantipur* did apologise, but a controversy like this never fazed Batsyayan, arguably Nepal's most influential cartoonist. He forced people to examine their own culture, society and politics. This week, Madan Puraskar Guthi honoured him with this year's Jagadamba Shree Award for his life-long contribution to the enrichment of Nepali language through cartoon art.

Known in school as Durga Baral, he started out as a water colour painter. But when he began drawing political cartoons during the Panchayat era, he took on the pseudonym of Batsyayan to avoid detection. Baral returned home to Pokhara, and began making and selling paintings for tourists. It was Ramesh Nath Pandey who first inspired him to make cartoons for his weekly newspaper, *Naya Sandesh*. A sprightly 75-year-old, Batsyayan has a irreverent sense of humour comined with artistic skills.

A short epic in verse that deconstructs the myth of the Mahabharat, the slim volume belies its strong message of inclusiveness, respect for the differently-abled, and turns the story of the Mahabharat upside-down.

While everyone bet on big names and their much-hyped books, they are now curious about why *Dhritarashtra* was chosen by the Madan Puraskar Guthi.

Ghanshyam Kandel, 76, wrote five short epics before *Dhritarashtra* that earned him the fame that he rightly deserved. He also has four books of literary criticism and a collection of short poems, but the soft-spoken author who likes to keep a low profile remained largely unknown. Besides, his use of traditional rhyme and metre has been going out of fashion.

In *Dhritarashtra*, Kandel retells the

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राजधानी

Uttam Nepal in *Rajdhani*, 28 August

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The Tarai submerged in the flood due to the levees on the Indian side of the border ”

CPN (Maoist-Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Rautahat, [www.onlinekhabar.com](http://www.onlinekhabar.com), 31 August



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# BORDER WALL

**KANAK MANI DIXIT**  
in RAUTAHAT

More than 70% of Rautahat was submerged in the flood of 12-15 August. The levees built a quarter century ago to protect this border district from the Bagmati to the east and the Lalbakaiya to the west collapsed in places, letting flood waters into the villages and farmlands.

This water had no outlet because right across the southern border in India, immediately adjacent to the no-man's-land (*dasgaja*) was a 10m-high embankment, which acted as a dam. The water level rose rapidly, entering homes as families climbed stairs for safety, salvaging whatever they could. Fortunately for this district of 800,000 people, the southern embankment breached at its eastern end in the early evening of 13 August, otherwise the result would have been even more catastrophic.

The 60m-long break in the embankment was being hurriedly plugged this week by about 200 labourers and three tractors working day and night under the direction of Indian authorities. On the Nepal side, the administration, engineers, politicians and citizens' groups seemed to have their minds elsewhere. The reconstruction of the embankment was happening on 27 August even as Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, on his visit to India, was meeting Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Patna.

What this episode revealed

is the inability of Nepal's state mechanism and national civil society to resolve the inundation crisis along the border with India. It also provides further proof of the neglect of the borderlands by the 'power centres' in political parties and by civil society as a whole.

Locals say that there was a time when the land spread flat on both sides of the border, including the *dasgaja* stretch. The southern embankment started to come up no more than 30m from no-man's-land – and over the last decades additions were made to its height metre by metre. The Nepali state and civil society just watched.

From the start, this embankment has looked like a project to protect Gaur's sister city on the Indian side, Bairania in Bihar state, no matter what it did to upstream settlements and farmlands in Nepal. The soil needed to build the dike was dug out of the land along its northern base, which meant that a gully was created, further endangering the Nepal side. For decades, Nepal has lacked the political will to monitor and control the expanding width and height of this levee.

With embankments on three sides, Rautahat was ripe for disaster. When the Bagmati and Lalbakaiya embankments breached three weeks ago, with the *dasgaja* embankment acting as a dam, the southern half of the district was converted into a large lake. This embankment has no sluice gates, and the 1m hume pipes located every half km were not enough to drain the water. In addition, the gates for each of these outlets were controlled by the Indian authorities.

The question is why the Nepali side has been silent for



years on end as the southern embankment gained height, and why it seems to be quiet even after the tragedy of August 2017. Firstly, the locals themselves thought that the Bagmati and Lalbakaiya levees would protect Rautahat. There was no elected local government to marshal local communities against the southern embankment, and because this was a cross-border embankment everyone looked to the state authorities in Kathmandu, where both the political parties

and state administration were more than willing to shirk their responsibility.

By 15 August, Rautahat was inundated, and the waters were still rising. Families were perched on rooftops, and it looked like thousands would drown. Fortunately, the Bihar-side embankment breached towards the east at around 5pm due to water pressure, and the water began to recede at once. Even though livestock, foodgrain stocks, retail and wholesale items

in shops and storage, and family valuables on the ground floor (including documents) were lost, human lives were saved.

With the embankment breach being repaired without hindrance, it is clear that Rautahat will once more live under threat of inundation. No discussions have been held after the breach about widening the culverts that do exist, nor concerning a protocol on when the existing ones should be managed. In the meantime, the Nepal Government superstructure



PHOTOS: NARENDRA SHRESTHA

## Flood

Many farmers in the Tarai will have no harvest until next year

**SUNIR PANDEY**  
in SAPTARI

After working all day on his family's rice fields in Bhardaha, 30-year-old Chandan Kumar Raut went to bed on Friday 11 August hoping to spend Saturday with his wife and newborn son. For him, it would be a rare day off during a busy paddy planting season.

But overnight Nepal's southern districts received their heaviest rainfall in decades, and by the time Raut woke up the next morning much of Saptari, including thousands of hectares of prime agricultural land, was under water.

"The water was chest high. I carried my son above my head and my wife held my shirt as we waded out on to the highway," recalls Raut.

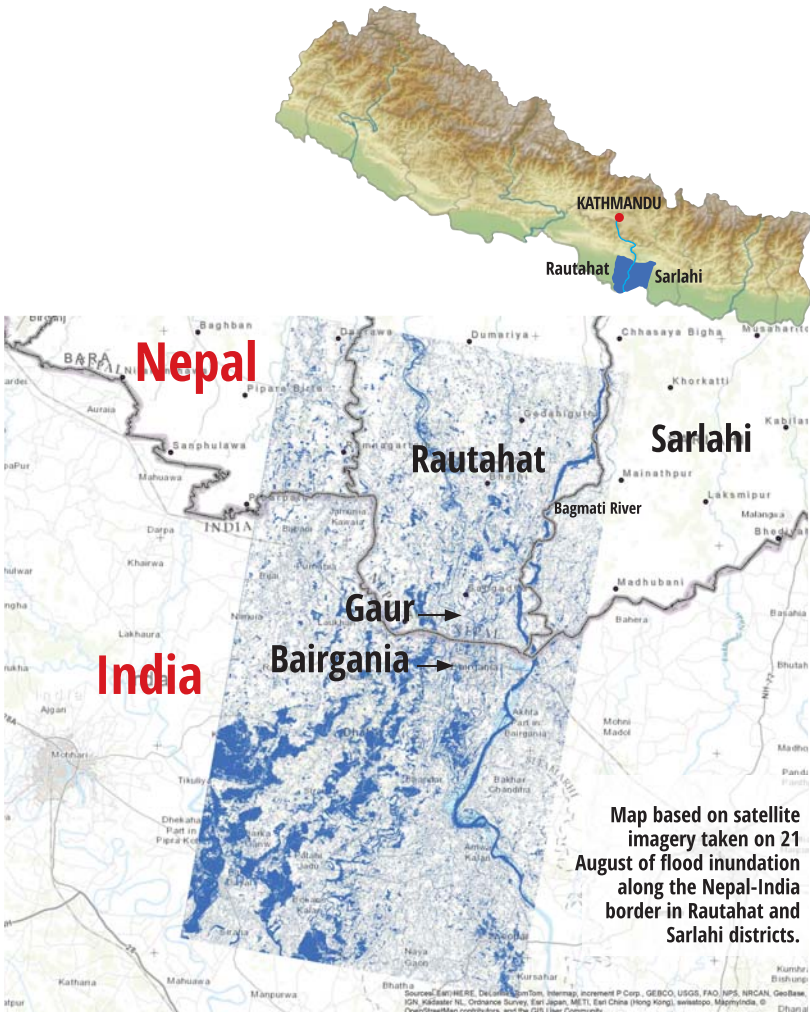


**DANGEROUS DIKE:** Labourers rebuilding a border embankment in India that was breached by the flood on 15 August, saving the town of Gaur from being completely submerged (*below*).

The border pillar near Gaur after the flood waters receded (*below, right*).



PHOTOS: KANAK MANI DIXIT



HTTPS://WWW.DISASTERSCHARTER.ORG/WEB/GUEST/HOME



BIKRAM RAI

## Saved by the bell

Jogendra Raj Giri (*above*) was sound asleep when he received a phone call from his daughter in Australia at 11.45pm. It had been raining the entire day in Sauraha of Chitwan, and people were talking about the probability of floods. But till bedtime at 8pm, everything seemed normal.

“Daddy, where are you? There is news that the Rapti River flooded. Please be careful,” said his daughter, who had seen warnings on social media and had called to check on her father. A driver for Nepal Red Cross Society’s Disaster Management Department, Giri, 50, was in Sauraha on a work trip.

When he checked outside, he saw that the water had covered the bottom half of the vehicle. He moved it to a safer place and started calling his employers, who were still sleeping.

“The water level must have reached 8 or 9 feet,” says Giri. “We were too scared to sleep so we stayed up all night. The water receded only around 5pm the next day.”

While it was difficult to gauge the extent of damage at night, in the morning Giri saw people trying to salvage grains and kitchenware. “Those with mud and bamboo homes had it worse than the others,” he recalls.

Giri is glad to be alive and says, “The government has spent a lot to put the flood warning system in place and it is a good initiative, but maybe now they should think about getting the messags to people more efficiently and on time.”

**Sahina Shrestha**

seemed to have gone to sleep, with no one seemingly informing Prime Minister Deuba, who was in Patna at the very time that the levee was being repaired. The talks between the PM and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar were limited to generalities on reviving a mechanism to deal with inundation at border points.

It is expected that Indian authorities will try to protect Indian citizens, towns and villages. Similarly, Nepal’s national leadership,

administrators and civil society should have been alert to protect Nepal’s citizenry – and the further one goes south towards the border the more marginalised are the communities. However, there is timidity when it comes to talking to Indian authorities about the danger posed by the embankments along the border.

If the national authorities and intelligentsia are not willing to take up cudgels on behalf of the population

of the borderlands, then there is no choice but for them to take the matter in their own hands, through reaching out to the communities south of the border, and through activism. A successful example of such activism can be seen in nearby Siraha district, where local activists successfully convinced the Indian side not to build a flood control levee along the Gagan River – as a result the Nepali villages in that area have not been at risk, including during

this August’s flood.

The fact that Province 2 will soon have elected local representatives in villages and towns gives some hope that these representatives may be more proactive in protecting the home region than national level politicians and MPs. At the time of this writing, the Indian side has nearly completed patching the embankment breach, and it remains to be seen what the Nepal government does about it. But don’t hold your breath. 🇳🇵



Watch a video taken this week of workers on the Indian side of the border rebuilding a dike that blocked flood waters and inundated Gaur. It was only because this levee was breached by floodwaters that the district of Rautahat was saved.

**nepalitimes.com**

# and food



The flood swept away all their belongings: clothes, kitchen utensils, money and food stocks. Raut feared the worst for his crop. After the flooding subsided two days later, his worst fears were confirmed.

“We would have had enough rice to last us a year, now it’s all gone. What am I going to do?” asks Raut.

Years of disagreements over

### SALVAGED GRAIN:

Laduwati Mandal dries what remains of her family’s food stocks (*left*) and posing with members of her family of 22 in Bhardaha (*above*).

compensation had been delaying the construction of embankments along the Khaando river in Saptari. Therefore this year nothing stopped it flooding eastwards

and drowing settlements and farms in Topa, Portaha and Bhardaha. Further south, because of embankments across the border in India, the Mahuli river overflowed and pooled up in places like Hanumannagar, Barsain, Koiladi and Tilathi.

The area now stands to lose up to 2,500ha of produce. Across Nepal, 40,000ha of farmland have been severely affected.

“From our initial assessment eight days after the flooding we did not find anything to suggest a looming food security crisis in these parts,” says Rajendra Uprety of the Regional Directorate of Agriculture in Biratnagar. “But people have lost millions worth of investment and will lose millions more of their income.”

Pramod Kumar Yadav, 25, of Hanumannagar returned from Qatar with savings of Rs 300,000. He used that money to start a goat farm and had steadily added buffaloes to his stable. All his animals, except one buffalo, drowned. He has no idea what to do next.

The Ministry of Agricultural Development calculates Nepali farmers lost up to Rs 6 billion due to the floods. It is now working alongside the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance, on a Rs 1.25 billion relief package for farmers in 30 flood-hit districts.

The MoAD is hoping thousands of people like Yadav who have lost paddy, banana plantations, fish farms, livestock

and vegetable farms all across the Tarai can benefit from this package. The draft proposal allocates a large chunk of the compensation for 15,000 tonnes of urea fertiliser and a similar quantity of compost.

While top-dressing rice plantations with urea does improve yield, the government will find it challenging to guarantee all farmers will get enough fertiliser to help cushion their losses. Also, Nepal does not produce enough compost required right away to condition all the farmland affected by flooding. This limited capacity is now compounded by the loss of so many cows and buffaloes.

“In addition to immediate needs, the government needs to provide free seeds to support the next planting,” says Uprety. From autumn onwards, farmers here will plant corn, wheat and vegetables, and support from the government could help them generate an income by 2018.

Laduwati Mandal, 55, of Bhardaha badly needs extra income to support her extended family of 22. The family lost 10ha of rice and vegetables, leaving them with just a few kilos of rice, dal and spices, and there will be no major harvest until next year. They managed to save their own lives by piling one bed on top of another to stay above the water. Their only other source of income is a tin-roofing shop.

Poring over the grains she has left to dry in the sun, Laduwati asks: “How am I supposed to feed everyone with this?” 🇳🇵





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# On a war-footing

Incumbent PM Dubya IV's visit to India overshadowed Excumbent PM Maknunay's sojourn to Pyongyang last week, and would have gone largely unnoticed had we not seen this headline buried in the inside pages: 'Nepal in North Korea'. We can make an educated guess that MKN and KJU had a one-on-one about missile diplomacy.

GONE can learn from DPRK about how small countries can leverage nuclear deterrence to defend against outside dalliance in domestic affairs. After Lion Brave's Delhi visit (during which he rolled over to say "Yes Sir, Yes Sir, Three Bags Full" while having his belly rubbed) this has become a matter of even greater urgency for Nepal.

So, now that the Department of Geology and Mine has found U235 in Mustang, we need to issue an international tender for centrifuges and reactors to turn our fuel rods into weapons-grade plutonium in an underground facility somewhere in the western sector near Okharpauwa. This is all top secret stuff, which I can tell you more about, but then I'd have to kill you. Suffice for now to reveal that we are working on our own weapons of mass self-destruction ASSAP.

It goes without saying that Nepal's nuclear program will be solely for civilian purposes, meaning it will be used to vapourise civilians in whichever country crosses our path. Nepal will also have a strict no first strike policy (conditions apply) so we need to back all this up with not just a conventional sitting army,

which is what we have now, but a much larger standing army.

Few people know that the most secret weapon in our military arsenal and urinal is the Army's highly-classified biological weapons program which was successfully tested in Haiti in 2010. Nepal has a long history of germ warfare: we kept invaders from the South at bay with our female anopheles Mozzie Army. But since malaria was eradicated, we have no forward line of defence, which is why the Nepal Army is clandestinely culturing the *Vibrio cholerae* and *Giardia lamblia* for the conduct of germ warfare. Covertly infiltrated into the endoplasmic reticulum, the bacteria puts an invading army on the runs.

So, I am not losing sleep, like some pundits are, that the Erstwhile-Royal Nepal Army Pvt Ltd has grabbed Tundikhel, is setting up its own radio station, is building the Tarai Fast Track and even the Second-to-None International Airport at Nijgad.

If money is an issue, the Army can always raise funds by selling tickets to its annual Foolpati Circus. Instead of just guarding our national parks, 5-star generals could run 5-star resorts. And since we are now an inclusive democracy, and crooks can be candidates, there is no reason why commissioned officers shouldn't also be allowed to contest elections to be the executive President of this Praetorian Secular Open-Defecation Free Federified Republic.



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