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JYALAL SAH

## Bridging hills and plains

When Madhes-based leaders rose up in 2015 against what they saw as a conspiracy in the new Constitution to further marginalise the plains, highlanders in the Tarai were fearful for their safety. When violence broke out, many sold property and fled north.

In Birganj, the epicentre of the 2015 Blockade, cadres of Tarai-centric parties would issue veiled but often blatant threats against hill settlers. Two years later, as Province 2 prepares for the first local elections in two decades, that fear has mostly dissipated, with mainstream parties fielding Madhesi candidates and some Tarai-centric parties having candidates of hill ancestry.

Rastriya Janata Party Nepal (RJPN), the recently formed alliance of Madhesi parties, has chosen a Newar businessman as its mayoral candidate in Birganj: Rajesh Man Singh (pictured above campaigning door-to-door). He was active during the Madhes

Movement and supports greater autonomy for the plains in the new federal structure.

Says Birganj-based rights activist Kamal Mohan Pokharel: "The RJPN and other Madhesi parties have sent out a message of harmony and social integration by choosing hill settlers as their candidates, and this has removed to a certain extent the sense of fear among them."

The RJPN has also fielded six hill-origin candidates for Ward chairs in Birganj. Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (FSFN), another Madhes-based party, has three highlanders as Ward chair candidates. Nepal Loktantrik Forum has not put up candidates in all ward committees, but it has one hill candidate in a Madhesi-dominated Ward.

After years of polarisation between hills and plains, the parties appear to have realised the benefits of integration. Candidates are busy campaigning for the polls on 18 September, and their

message is no longer divisive, but about improving relations between traditionally excluded groups in the Tarai and the rulers in Kathmandu.

Mainstream parties based in the capital have also fallen back on Madhesi candidates for local governments. Youth from mountain communities are actively campaigning for Madhesi candidates, and vice versa.

Instead of ethnic politics and caste vote banks turning communities against each other, therefore, next week's local election has ended up bringing Nepalis in the Tarai together.

Says Birganj resident Babita Poudel, "It's not that we people from the hills and the Tarai don't want to unite, it is politicians who are keeping us apart. They created a situation where the highlanders and the plains people started hating each other."

**Julia Thomas** in Birganj

Full story **page 14-15**

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST**  
**EDITORIAL**

**MAFIACRACY**  
**GUEST EDITORIAL**  
 by **Shekhar Kharel**

**PAGE 2**

**GO KIRTIPUR**

People talk of Kirtipur as if it is in the boondocks somewhere, and this perception of isolation has kept this 12th century hilltop town largely untouched

by **Sebastian Wolligandt**

**PAGE 8-9**

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# LAST BUT NOT LEAST

After much vacillation, the third phase of local elections is finally happening on 18 September. These were already important polls because the eight plains districts of Province 2 between Parsa and Saptari are electing local leaders to much more empowered municipalities and village councils for the first time in 15 years. But what makes the polls even more significant is that they will be a referendum on the issues raised by Madhes-based parties like the RJPN and the FSPN.

If the turnout is big and the NC, Maoist and UML dominate the votes, it will mean that the issues of federalism, regional autonomy, citizenship, delineation of constituencies and the use of Hindi language as raised by the Madhes-centric parties, were not of primary concern to the people of the Eastern Tarai.

If there is a massive turnout and a big win for the Tarai-based parties, then we should understand that those issues are genuine, and the RJPN alliance truly articulates the interests of the people of the eastern plains. However, if the turnout is low and the three mainstream parties are ahead, it would show that most Madhesi voters have not bothered to cast their ballots and do not believe in the new Constitution under which the polls are being held. Whatever the outcome, these elections have given the neglected people of the plains a say in their own destiny.

The very fact that this poll is going ahead is an indication that the Constitution has been endorsed. That Madhes-based parties are fielding some hill candidates and mainstream parties all have Madhesi

candidates is a sign of better hill-plains integration. (*See page 14-15*) It was the Madhes-based parties' disagreement with provisions in the new Constitution that delayed voting in Province 2. They refused to take part in elections unless amendments were made to the Constitution, but the polls are being held without those changes.

These polls are also a referendum on the UML's nationalism platform. The NC, Maoists and the RJPN would like to erase the lead the UML built up in the other phases of local elections, and also make up for their own poor showing. A reasonably strong outcome in favour of the UML would carry a geopolitical message that the five-month blockade by India in solidarity with the agenda of the Madhes-based parties doesn't have much support even in the Tarai. A UML defeat would prove that its anti-Indian rhetoric has backfired in the plains.

But most of all, the results of Phase 2 will be decisive in determining the political future of the RJPN which has been weakened by confusion and internal strife. There is also disgruntlement within the three big parties about the way tickets have been given out. Many who were not selected are standing as independent candidates, and may cut the votes their parties might have got.

Next week's election is an opportunity for the people of the Tarai to send a strong message against the discrimination and disrespect they have suffered historically from exclusivist leaders in Kathmandu, and to reject the politics of patronage and corruption that have tainted the Madhesi leaders who claim to represent them.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

SHEKHAR KHAREL

# Mafiacracy

Who is actually running Nepal? That, as they say, is the million-dollar question. But at stake is much more than a million bucks.

To be sure, we do have what could pass as a government. There is a Parliament, a Supreme Court, a civil service and security agencies. There is a supposedly independent, anti-corruption watchdog and a human rights commission, too. We have those institutions in place, but still we don't have good governance.

This week two years ago, after nearly a decade of political transition and as the capital was still rocking from aftershocks of the earthquake, Parliament voted in a new Constitution. We hoped Nepal would finally be an inclusive and well-governed nation. But, as we mark the second anniversary of the Constitution, hopes are fading fast.

So why aren't we on the right track yet? Just look around you: the king is gone, but he has been replaced by lots of little kinglets who treat Nepal as their fiefdom.

In a democracy, rulers must be accountable to people, but in our federal secular republic they are more accountable to mafia. The currency note is more valuable than the ballot paper. The mafia control everything, and are protected by political patronage. Even the anti-corruption watchdog protects the corrupt.

Govinda KC has risked his life 11 times pushing for reforms in the mafia-run medical education sector. Yet, despite the government's written commitment to not allow new medical colleges for the next 10 years, Tribhuvan University secretly granted affiliation to

Kathmandu National Medical College, which does not even meet minimum standards for a health facility. Following public outrage, TU withdrew its decision, but no action was taken against its Vice Chancellor Tirtha Khaniya even though he misinterpreted a Supreme Court decision to grant affiliation to a college that had forged documents.

Media is awash with exposes of a land scam involving the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC). A parliamentary probe panel concluded the utility misused public money by buying overpriced plots of land through agents instead of following the protocol of building its infrastructure on land acquired by the government. The Public Accounts Committee asked the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority to investigate the scam, but the watchdog looked the other way. Supply Minister Shiva Kumar Mandal vowed to take action against Gopal Khadka of the NOC, but he suddenly did a 180 and is defending Khadka and going after designer shoe stores on Darbar Marg instead. Education Minister Gopalman Shrestha is defending the tainted general manager of Sajha Prakashan, Dolindra Sharma.

The checks and balances no longer work, and politicians are just puppets in the hands of Nepal's mafiacracy.



**Shekha Kharel** is a freelance journalist.

Times.com

## ONLINE PACKAGES



### KIRTIPUR BY DRONE

Kirtipur is only 5km away from Kathmandu but feels much further. The 12th-century town is not actively promoted by tour operators, but Kirtipur is worth lingering in. Watch this drone video for a leisurely bird's-eye view of the historic hilltop town with its clean, well-preserved streets, temples and ancient neighbourhoods.



### STEALING PARADISE

Watch Maldivian journalist Zaheena Rasheed's investigative documentary *Stealing Paradise* that she helped make for Al Jazeera English which exposed corruption and money laundering at the highest levels of the Maldivian government. After the documentary was aired, Rasheed was forced to flee her country last year. Read Rasheeda's profile on page 7.

#### FLOOD, DEMOCRACY, POLITICS

I used to think that local elections would increase accountability and make leaders more responsible ('Flotsam', Editorial, #875). But having seen the behaviour of Kathmandu's mayor I am not so sure. It's also cynical the way candidates are promising the sun and moon to flood victims. Nothing is going to change unless we have a real political alternative.

Jit S

■ Not a realistic editorial. Accountability of Nepali politicians is a pipe dream. Earthquake victims are still ignored, so one can expect the flood victims also to not get effective attention. Hope you can eventually distinguish between democracy as found in books, and 'democracy' as found in Nepal.

K K Sharma

■ Corruption is a way of life for 20% of the elite in Kathmandu. The rest of 80% are honest, hard working Nepalis. This 20% rules over the 80 %. This has to change.

Anil Jha

#### NEW GENERATION OF HONESTY

'The problem, as we all know, emanates at the top of the political superstructure.' ('Day of the Carpetbagger', Kanak Mani Dixit, #875). The solution is not to vote for them. Until you remove the axis of evil (top political leaders), nothing will change. So, do not vote for the axis of evil if you love Nepal. Vote for a new generation of honest men and women.

Nirmal Adhikari

■ We need vigilante justice in Nepal. The corrupt government will not deliver justice. The IGPs are in jail. Judges are bought and sold. Corruption is rampant in every walk of life. Yet we continue with the same people in power. We Nepalis are insane, for we do nothing but accept maltreatment of these evil politicians. A few hundred in the cesspool aka Kathmandu, living in luxury, the rest of 30 million living in misery. Go figure that out.

Pratap Sharma

#### TREK KING

Hey Ass, how do you come up with this crap week after week? ('Trek king', Backside, #875) Thanks for the laughs. Don't stop!

Mick Angelo

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Window to a New Future

by Shreejana Shrestha

Niten Memorial Higher Secondary School in Tokha, helps abandoned mothers like Sonam Gyalmo (*above*) who was driven from her home for not giving birth to a son. Many like her have found a new footing in life. The story and film was widely shared on social media. Go online to watch a heart-warming video of Gyalmo and others with their stories of survival and hope.

**Most reached and shared on Facebook**  
(13,477 people reached, 39 shares)

### The Beautiful Square

by Sahina Shrestha

It took nearly 10 years, and an earthquake interrupted the restoration, but Patan's Sundari Chok has finally been transformed. Our report on this historic courtyard of the Malla kings was the most read story last week.

**Most visited online page**

**Most popular on Twitter**  
(50 retweets, 118 likes)

### Flotsam

Editorial

Every time politicians visit flood survivors asking for votes, the people should ask them a counter question: Why did you cause so much suffering for us? Visit nepalitimes.com to read feedback to this Editorial.

**Most commented**

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
Watch former #migrants who've become commercial #farmers earning more than they did in Qatar or Malaysia Full story <http://bit.ly/2wTXW4i>

**Lalbahadur Pakhrin @LalbahadurPakhr**  
Inspiring experience of migrant returnees

**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
It took nearly 10 years but re-making of the square is finally complete. Sundari Chok has been transformed. Read: <http://bit.ly/2vUqs6Y>

**Bibek Bhandari @bibekbhandari**  
One of the most beautiful courtyards and masterfully executed restoration projects. Patan leading the way, setting an example.

**Ananda Raj Devkota @9841906**  
Gratitude to all those involved in the restoration. May their work also bless other abandoned cultural heritages across Nepal.

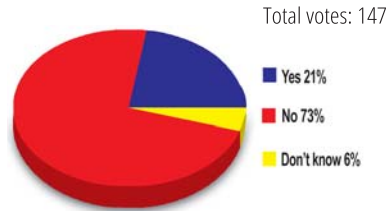
**Nepali Times @nepalitimes**  
Trading tears for votes A bullet killed her son. Now she is turning to the #ballot for #justice. Read: <http://bit.ly/2wNpyXg> #NepalVotes

**David Seddon @pigreen**  
So many people in this new Province want to be able to express their views and have their voice heard — let's hope this will be possible

Times

Weekly Internet Poll #876

Q. Is the devastation caused by flooding in the Tarai getting the attention it deserves?



Weekly Internet Poll #877  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. How should Nepal deal with the current wave of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar?





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# Civil society to the fray

You cannot wake up someone pretending to sleep

Not a day goes by without another banner headline in the Nepali-language press exposing the blatant plunder of the state in broad daylight. Every one of these cases of looting have taken place with active participation of the kakistocracy. The barefaced greed and the money involved has surpassed everything we have seen in Nepal's sordid recent history.



**CONNECTING DOTS**  
Dinkar Nepal

The infection has set in from the head down, and has hollowed out the top political leadership. Using its 'political mechanism' to infiltrate the judiciary, legislature, bureaucracy, the security

forces, human rights organisations and the anti-corruption watchdog, kleptocrats have sabotaged the system to divide up the spoils.

Last years, we had an indication of what was to come when one of Nepal's most ruthless and tainted officials was appointed to head the anti-corruption body. The man was himself hounded out, not because he had become a law unto himself, but because he threatened the power of the political syndicate.

Malfeasance and malgovernance are guaranteed when power-hungry and corrupt septuagenarians with a proven inability to lead in the national interest are given turns at the helm. MPs enact laws allowing politicians convicted of corruption to contest elections. The head of the Nepal Oil Corporation, embroiled in a land scam, is protected by political patrons. Parliamentary committees are infiltrated by the medical-industrial complex. Despite Govinda KC



risking his life, the evil nexus of mafia and political goons are not worried because they have rigged the system.

The moral, political and financial

decay is in brazen display at every level of government right across the land. A thoroughly disillusioned public is too busy trying to survive, and those who can are leaving by the tens of thousands weekly.

The way out of this mess could have been an internal revolt within the political parties by the next generation of reformist-minded leaders. There was a glimmer of hope with figures like Gagan Thapa and Rabindra Adhikari, but they have taken the path of compromise.

Rabindra Adhikari has not yet served in government, but his shady conduct in the Ncell tax case and silence about licensing of medical colleges lacking adequate infrastructure are telling. For all his youthful energy, Gagan Thapa caved in to party pressure on appointments in medical institutions.

One hope to overhaul the system could be the self-proclaimed alternative force,

Bibeksheel Sajha Party. It has jumped into the election fray, and garnered protest votes in Kathmandu during local elections. But it has not been able to turn its dissent into a movement. The party is distracted by complicated election management issues and has the singular aim of saving face in coming elections. Its actions have been neither strategic nor collaborative enough to break the stranglehold of the mainstream parties.

Civil society influencers are divided by ideology and personality. Those still on the streets have resisted jumping in because they feel Govinda KC's sacrifice has been hijacked by Bibeksheel Sajha. There are signs that the fight against the rot hasn't yet found a visionary leader who can drive the movement.

Continuous mobilisation and sustained emotional effort at the mass level is demanding, but there is no other way to bring about transformation in a democracy. Civil society stalwarts need to overcome their reluctance and join the alternative political force to give it a strategic direction.

Leaving the responsibility of the crusade against corruption on the frail shoulders of Govinda KC alone, and blaming the system from outside the walls will no longer suffice. 🇳🇵






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### Millennium grant



Finance Minister Gyanendra Bahadur Karki signed a \$500 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact on Thursday at the State Department in Washington DC in the presence of Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan and MCC Acting CEO Jonathan Nash to upgrade connectivity and power transmission in Nepal.

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### 10 years with Etihad

Etihad Airways is celebrating 10 years of service in Nepal by offering customers a 20% discount on economy and business class tickets to their 10 most favourite destinations in its network. Passengers have to book tickets by 25 September and travel by 21 March 2018.



### From Doha to Cardiff

Qatar Airways is launching direct daily flights to Cardiff in Wales starting 1 May 2018, making the Doha-based airline the first Gulf carrier to serve Wales and southwest England.



### Turkish cargo

Turkish Cargo has received accreditation as a Qualified Environmental Supplier (QEP) from temperature-controlled container provider Envirotainer. This means the airline now has certification

### Home deals

Customers looking to buy a new house now stand a chance to win a Civil Homes apartment in Dhapakhel in a lucky draw under the company's Dashain-Tihar scheme. Buyers will get free insurance for a year on the purchase of every house and a special discount after making a booking of Rs500,000.







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The monsoon is now in full retreat, but there is one last low-pressure system (pictured in green, left) that is reluctant to pull back, and still carries a lot of moisture. The water vapor will rise along the mountains as the sun heats the plains and valleys, creating towering cumulus systems across the Himalayan hinterland. This will bring isolated afternoon showers and night-time lightning storms. However, the squalls will be localised and the afternoons will be hot and muggy across the Tarai and midhills.

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# Fleeing paradise

JULIA THOMAS



She packed a suitcase and told her family she would be back in a week or so. There had been threats: a machete hung on the door of her newspaper office, a text saying she would be next.

Zaheena Rasheed, a journalist from the Maldives, fled the country on 31 August 2016 fearing for her safety because of reaction to a documentary she helped make, *Stealing Paradise*. She has been in exile ever since.

Rasheed is an investigative reporter who has uncovered high-level corruption despite censorship, a former editor of the *Maldives Independent* and recipient of the Index on Censorship Press Freedom Award 2017.

“A year has passed since I left, the situation in the Maldives has only got worse,” Rasheed told a conference of South Asian journalists in Kathmandu last week, organised by the International Federation of

Journalists. Indeed, many of the tactics used against Rasheed were familiar to attending journalists.

*Stealing Paradise*, made for Al Jazeera English, presented recorded interviews, data and correspondence from the former Maldivian vice president’s phones. The film received the One World Media Corruption Reporting Award, exposed international money laundering of up to \$1.5 billion, and the sale of atolls for private gain by President Abdulla Yameen’s inner circle.

The Maldives media had been under attack ever since President Mohamad Nasheed was forced out of office in 2012. A tv station was torched, there was a near fatal attack on a journalist, and another journalist, Ahmed Rilwan from the *Maldives Independent*, disappeared in 2014. In April, blogger Yameen Rasheed was killed outside his apartment. Both Ahmed and Yameen were Rasheed’s colleagues.

Rasheed’s first foray into journalism was during the 2008 presidential elections for *Minivan News*, predecessor of the *Maldives Independent*. She remembers the time as one of heady freedom: “For the first time there were debates about policy. For the first time you had the choice of multiple candidates.”

After she took over as editor of the *Independent* in 2015, she covered the political trials of opposition leaders, an explosion on the president’s speed boat and the purge of the judiciary and security forces that followed.

Investigating the details of her colleague’s disappearance for *Stealing Paradise* was emotionally intense for Rasheed. The leaks revealed shocking details, and her probe led to threats from the president not to pursue the story.

“How do you tell a story objectively when that story is something that is happening

to people close to you? It was very hard to report updates on what was happening in that investigation,” Rasheed said. “As much as we talk about safety and security protocols, I think it’s really important to address mental health in the newsrooms.”

Rasheed now works as a producer for Al Jazeera in Doha, and says there is a need for more on-the-ground coverage of countries less recognised by the international media.

“One of the things I’d like to do at Al Jazeera is focus on small countries that don’t get as much press first-hand: there are so many interesting stories that need to be told,” she said.

Despite lack of coverage of the conditions for journalists in the Maldives, Rasheed says the network of journalists across the region contributed to her safety and well-being after she left.

“One of the things that you hear often from Maldivian journalists is this sense of being

alone, of not knowing what to do next,” she told *Nepali Times*. “You’re just caught up in these events happening to you and you don’t know how to react to them.”

She says journalists who face official intimidation and threats have a lot to learn from each other and need to build solidarity across the region. She adds: “We need a louder regional conversation on press freedom in South Asia.”



Watch the full investigative documentary that Maldivian journalist Zaheena Rasheed helped make for Al Jazeera English. The reaction to it from the government forced her to flee the country last year. [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

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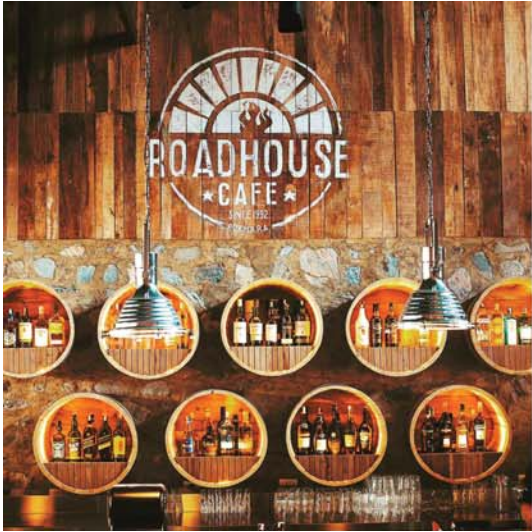
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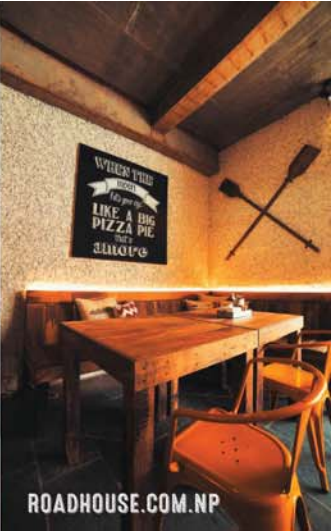
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**JWAJALAPA:**  
The 12th-century town's skyline (*above*) may now be dominated by apartment blocks, but the kingdom that held out against the conquest of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1767 still retains its pride, and its quaint and relaxed ambience.

Smiling young attendants (*left*) at the Ka:Shi Cafe, a favourite watering hole for visitors.

Besides Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur (*right*) Kirtipur was the fourth kingdom within the Kathmandu Valley till the 18th century.





# Kirtipur in slow motion



TEXT AND PHOTOS

SEBASTIAN WOLLIGANDT

Situated along an elongated ridge in the southwest corner of Kathmandu Valley is Kirtipur, but it tends to feel farther away than it is, even for the inhabitants of the capital. People talk about it as if it is in the boondocks somewhere. This perception of isolation is what has kept the 12th century hilltop town largely untouched, even though it is only a 15-minute bus ride from the Ring Road.

The sense of pride and fierce independence is in the DNA of Kirtipurans because this was where Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquests came to a grinding halt in 1767, as he faced stiff resistance in his strategy to take over the Kathmandu Valley.

Today, the town of 66,000 people is still not actively promoted by tour operators, who prefer the traditional Bhaktapur-Patan-Swayambhu loop. If they do come, tourists tend to visit just the main temples, have lunch and then head back to their homestays in Thamel or Patan.

But Kirtipur is worth lingering in. Life progresses in slow motion among relatively clean and well-preserved streets, and residents are a relaxed lot. The old city with its ancient neighbourhoods is nearly car-free, and the place has the aura of an open museum – much the same as Kathmandu or Patan used to be 40 years ago. There is only one hotel and two easy-to-find homestays.

"Normally visitors stay only two to three hours here in Kirtipur," says guide Shristy Maharjan at the Tourist Information Centre. "Now the situation is better, but the government should promote Kirtipur more. Only one in 10

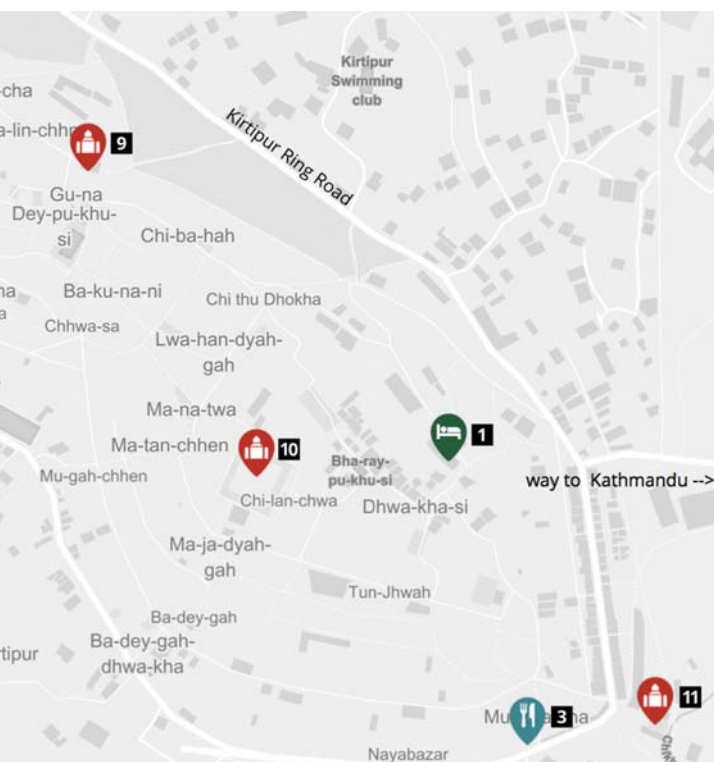
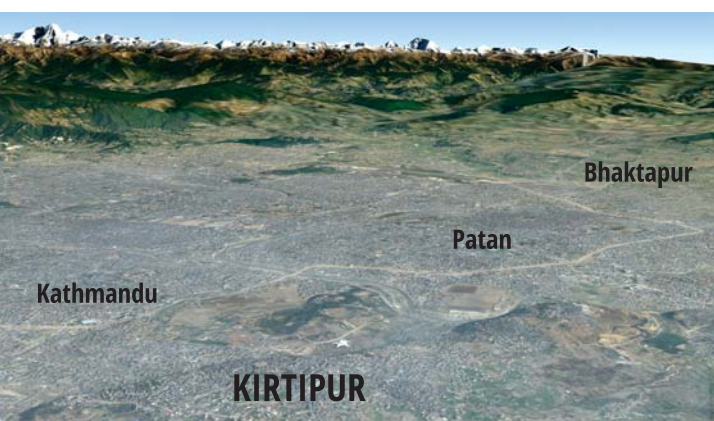
tourists visiting Nepal in 2015 came here."

Babu Maharjan started his homestay in 2004, after being a trekking guide for a Swedish company. "Kirtipur is only 5km away from Kathmandu, but very few know about it. When people come to my place, they are astonished how stunning it is." He gets about 200 guests a year in his four rooms.

Nepal's Vision 2020 seeks to increase tourist arrivals to 2 million, and tourism-related employment to 1 million. After the earthquake in 2015, tourism has rebounded (*see graph online*) with half of visitors from five countries: India (16%), China (14%), Sri Lanka (8%), US (7%), and UK (6%).

Saroj Tuladhar, 27, is a hotel management graduate who sees a bright future in tourism in Kirtipur. His restaurant, Ka:shi, overcame the slump after the earthquake and Blockade, and is now running well. Unlike many of his friends who have gone abroad, Tuladhar has decided to make a living in his native town and has no regrets. "My only problem is finding good staff for the kitchen," he says.

Pradeep Khadgi, a Kirtipur-based film-maker, is shooting a movie on Kirti Laxmi. It's based on a book by Basu Pasa about the woman who kept fighting with her bow and arrows even after Prithvi Narayan finally captured the town in 1767, and took her own life after being arrested. He hopes to revive awareness among Nepalis about Kirtipur's history, and correct some of the misconceptions. 🇳🇵



## ACCOMMODATION

### 1 Kirtipur Hill Side Resort

Single and double rooms facing north, with views of the Valley and the mountains beyond. Attached bathrooms, and wifi  
Price per day per person: \$15-30  
+977 1-4334010  
www.kirtipurhillside.com

### 2 Homestay Nepal

Four rooms, wifi, comfortable beds, hot water and western style bathrooms  
Price per day: \$17-\$25  
+977 1 4336257  
www.familyhomestaykathmandu.com

## RESTAURANTS

### 3 Ka:shi Cafe, Lounge & Bar

Rustic ambience, menu includes Nepali, Indian, Chinese and Continental  
Mon - Sun, 7am - 9:30pm  
+977 1 4333636  
kashicafekirtipur@gmail.com  
www.facebook.com/kashicafekirtipur

### 4 NewaLahana

Newari traditional food and beverage  
+977 9841116232  
Mon - Sun, 10am - 9:30pm  
www.facebook.com/pages/Newa-Lahana-Kirtipur/202577299791765

### 5 Sasa Newari Restaurant

Traditional Newari menu  
+977 1 4336770  
Mon - Sun, 9:30am - 8pm

### 6 Viewpoint Restaurant

Newari and international menu, beer terrace  
+977 9813672828  
Mon - Sun, 10am - 9:30pm  
https://www.facebook.com/kvp.np

### 7 Melbourne Café

Wide variety of good coffee



## TEMPLES

### 8 Uma Maheswar

The pagoda-style, three-storied temple is at the highest point (1,414 m) of Kirtipur. Two stone elephants stand guard at the shrine originally built in 1673 with a four-tiered roof, but one was lost in the earthquake of 1934. Wood carvings show tantric and fertility rituals.

### 9 Bagh Bhairab

Dedicated to Bhairab in the form of a tiger. Local people call it Ajudeu (Grandfather God) and worship it as the guardian deity of Kirtipur. The three-storied temple (*pictured below*) was built in the early 16th century.

### 10 Kirtipur Ashoka Stupa (Chilancha Vihar)

Chilan (immortal) and Cho (hill) is a stupa thought to have been built by Emperor Ashoka, and turned into a monastery in 1515.

### 11 Sri Kirti Vihar

Nagar Mandap Sri Kirti Vihar is a Theravada Buddhist monastery built in 1975 in traditional Thai architectural style.



## KIRTI PUR BY DRONE



Take flight in this video for a bird's eye view of the historical hilltop town of Kirtipur, and alight for a street level tour of its temples and eateries.



# EVENTS



## Violin classes,

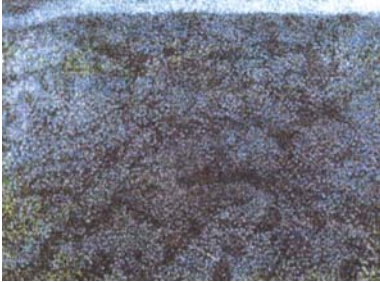
Get violin lessons from Luxembourg's Ann Majerus, who has performed in Switzerland, Germany, the UK and in her home country.  
*September-November, Kathmandu, Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikel, Lalitpur, (01) 5013554, 9813556945*

## Nepal Africa Film Festival

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*

## 100 years of Toni Hagen,

Don't miss this opportunity to see Nepal through the eyes of Toni Hagen in an exhibition of his works to mark 100 years after his birth anniversary.  
*16-24 September, 10am-5pm, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, (01) 4220735*



## Japanese art,

Visit this exhibition to view some of the finest paintings by Japanese artists Masae Suzuki and Setsuko Suzuki.  
*18-27 September, 11am-5pm, 12-5pm (Saturdays), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Kathmandu, (01) 4218048, (01) 4433930*

## Kathmandu Marathon,

Register to join hundreds of others in the 11th Kathmandu Marathon. People above 18 can participate in the full (42 km) or half marathon (21km) or open category (5km), while those above 12 can choose the school (5km) or wheelchair (3km) category.  
*16 September, 5am-12pm, Dasarath Rangasala Stadium, Kathmandu, 9851016492*

## Art therapy,

Register on time to attend the 'Introduction to creative arts therapy' workshop facilitated by Neha Christopher, a licensed creative arts therapist and registered dance/movement therapist,  
*16 September, 8:45am-4:15pm, Mathi Ko Hall, Gyaneswor, Kathmandu, 9803207772*



## Cultural studies,

Become a member of Cultural Studies Group of Nepal and enjoy fascinating lectures on Nepal's heritage, walks in and around the Kathmandu Valley and studio visits.  
*22 September, 9am onwards, Shankar Hotel, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, csgninkathmandu@gmail.com, Membership: Rs3,000/year*

## Public speaking,

Take part in this public speaking session and debate on feminism and overcome your fear of speaking to an audience.  
*16 September, 10am-12:30pm, MIC For Youths, Dilibazar, Kathmandu, 9804064094, Rs300*

## Adventure for a cause,

Take part in this fundraiser for street dogs in Kathmandu while enjoying an adventure, in this unique combination of bush hike, wet and dry canyoning and bouldering in Shivapuri National Park.  
*16 September, 7am-5pm, Meeting point: Opposite Himalayan Java, Thamel, 9801205076, Rs2,500*

## MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



# MUSIC



## Move with the flow,

Spend the weekend with close friends swaying to the rhythms of the Flow.  
*16 September, 7-10pm, Ai-La Lounge Restaurant, Kumaripti, Lalitpur, 9801018681*

## Friday night live,

Warm up your Friday night listening to soulful classics and soft Nepali and Indian hits featuring The Silent Killers Band.  
*22 September, 5-9pm, Bajra Restaurant, Satungal, Kathmandu, 9841907914*



## Nitro tour,

Book your tickets now for the Nepal show of once-glam metal band Nitro, featuring vocalist Jim Gillette and virtuoso guitarist Michael Angelo Bati. They will be joined by drummer Chris Adler and bassist Matt DeVries of American metal band Lamb of God.  
*27 September, 8-11:30pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, Kathmandu, 9803719781*

## Rock & Roll,

Enjoy live rock and roll by local band The Trailers while enjoying scrumptious delicacies and drinks.  
*16 September, 3-9pm, Mitho Mitho The Tavern and Restaurant, (01) 5591723*

## OUR PICK



## LOGAN LUCKY

Opens in Kathmandu on 15 September

Directed by Steven Soderbergh of *Ocean Trilogy* fame, *Logan Lucky* is a comic thriller that tells the story of two brothers, Jimmy Logan (a divorced father, played by Channing Tatum) and Clyde (an Iraq War vet played by Adam Driver). The duo attempt to pull off a heist during a NASCAR race in North Carolina by recruiting explosives whiz Joe Bang (Daniel Craig).

# DINING



## Yala Mandala,

Spend an evening at a café in this urban artisan village. Take a tour of the gallery and handicraft workshop until your food arrives.  
*Kwalkhu Road, Lalitpur, (01) 5536690*

## Prazada,

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



## Hankook Sarang,

Serves incredible Korean delicacies, including superlative steamed rice, to anchor meals fit for kings.  
*Thamel, (01) 4256615, info@hankooksarang.com*

## Utopia,

For a relaxed ambience and mouth-watering food. Delivery service available.  
*Ekantakuna, (01) 5000584*

## Saigon Pho,

Spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes.  
*Lazimpat, (01) 4443330*



## Cellar's Café,

Perfect place for breakfast, lunch or dinner. The only place in town where you can shop for wine of your choice as you dine.  
*Lazimpat, (01) 4410463*

## Around the Corner,

Spend an evening and have a dine-in-nature experience. The homey environment at this full service restaurant adds flavours to your food.  
*Bansbari (Inside The Standard Nursery), 9861631197*



## Oriental Kitchen,

Devour authentic Chinese and Indian food this weekend. Tip: try the momos and dragon chicken.  
*Baluwatar, (01) 4443110*

# GETAWAY



## Kasara Resort,

A luxury resort located in the lush setting of Chitwan National Park. For those who value their privacy and prefer a more secluded stay, Kasara offers two private villas with private pools.  
*Chitwan (01) 4437571/4438570, kasararesort.com*

## Pokhara Grande,

A swimming pool to escape from the sweltering heat, a massage parlour and spa to loosen up and a gym to release stress: a great place to unwind.  
*Lakeside, Pokhara, (61) 460210, dosm@pokharagrande.com, www.pokharagrande.com*

## Glacier Hotel,

Good value and friendly service for travellers on the lap of Lake Phewa.  
*Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 463722, www.glacienepal.com*



## Temple Tree Resort and Spa,

A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massages and sauna. It'll be hard to leave once you've arrived.  
*Gaurighat, Lakeside, (61) 465819*

## Chhaimale Resort,

Enjoy the beauty of nature and a peaceful weekend. Perfect for BBQs, picnics and family hangouts.  
*Dakshinkali, (01) 4628121, 9851181409*

## 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*



## Milla Guesthouse,

If you enjoy 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*

## Tranquility Spa,

De-stress, relax and pamper yourself to a wide range of massages at any of the spa's nine branches in Nepal.  
*www.tranquilityspa.com.np*

## Pataleban Vineyard Resort,

Japanese-influenced eco-resort with great views, jungle walks and picnics.  
*Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364*

## Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,

Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at probably the best hotel in the area.  
*Lumbini, (71) 580220, 9801033109, info@ktmgh.com*



# Cash and caste

Birendra Prasad Yadav in *Prateek Daily*,  
2 September

Ahead of the much-delayed last phase of local elections, there is excitement in the air throughout Province 2. People here are happy to be able to elect their own

mayors and village chiefs for the first time in 20 years, which can revive grassroots democracy and ensure provincial and parliamentary polls in November.

This marks the successful implementation of the Constitution, effectively institutionalising republicanism, federalism and secularism. But there is a threat to our democracy, and none of the political parties see it coming. They have

only considered cash and caste in electing candidates. Only those who could splurge or attract caste vote banks were given tickets.

This has sent a message: you have to be wealthy to venture into politics, your ideology or loyalty to your party alone will not get you an election ticket. This trend will only encourage corruption, entrench communal polarisation and erode democracy.

In a weak democracy, public anger will fester and Nepal could plunge into another cycle of conflict and instability.

In the Tarai, more than a dozen VDCs have been merged into single village councils, with populations exceeding 30,000. Bigger constituencies mean more money must be spent campaigning, which the poor but honest cannot manage.

In India, we have seen a tea seller

becoming Prime Minister. That may be too much to ask in Nepal for now, but the least hope is that a subsistent farmer gets elected as his village council chief. If only capitalists can contest and win elections in a communist-majority Nepal, our democracy is doomed.  
(Birendra Prasad Yadav is an advocate and wrote this op-ed for Birganj's most circulated newspapers.)





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# BIG LITTLE LIES

Earlier this year HBO returned to its tradition of airing some of the best television around. Just as it had pioneered *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), which changed how we view writing for television, with *Big Little Lies* the tradition has come round yet again, making another wider circle. This series provides its viewers with a delicious, dark,



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

poignant murder mystery in seven parts written by none other than David E Kelly, who created the great *Picket Fences* and *Ally McBeal*, among many other strong, original, fearless shows.

*Big Little Lies* came to the screen when Reese Witherspoon and her producing partner Bruna Papandrea optioned the novel by Liane Moriarty — an enterprise that has brought us both *Wild* and *Gone Girl* in 2014. *Big Little Lies* is, if anything, a longer, better version of both aforementioned, wildly successful films.

Witherspoon founded her company, Pacific Standard, to make film projects with women and about women, but what has resulted is far from exclusive and always above par. With the massive weight of Nicole Kidman, Laura Dern, Shailene Woodley and Witherspoon herself, this mini-series is unlike anything you've ever seen before. The opening credits are a work of art, the production value is extremely high, watching the series is a feast for the eyes. Set in California, on one of its most beautiful rugged coasts, the cinematography is minimalistic but slick without being overly stylish: things come to life in a way that I've never quite seen before.

The episodes unfold over a central mystery that is revealed in the very first episode: someone has been murdered at the school's gala fundraiser. All the affluent and not so affluent families who covet positions in the town's acclaimed school are present, and the subsequent episodes bring us into the lives of these families and characters

who play such a vital role in the mystery of who ends up dead and why.

It is easy to see why the book will have appealed to Witherspoon: the characters for women are so varied and so richly written that she must have practically salivated while reading Moriarty's novel. And indeed, Witherspoon almost steals the show as Madeleine Martha Mackenzie, a feisty, impossibly single-minded, hilariously determined wife and mother who also has a gigantic heart. Side by side are Nicole Kidman as Celeste Wright, a high-powered lawyer turned trophy wife, Shailene Woodley as a newcomer to the town with a little boy in tow and dark past behind her and finally, the great Laura Dern playing against type as a sharp corporate executive who is used to being the alpha among males as well as females.

What a show this is, both in terms of mystery and the evolution of character. If you haven't seen it, then find it: it is almost compulsory viewing for anyone who loves a good story. This is a fine one, with unforgettable women, some awesomely complicated dads, great children who actually come across as real little people instead of wooden toys who are spoon-fed their lines, and a marvelous soundtrack to augment the love, tragedy, jealousy, fear, comedy, and drama that pervades this crazy, wondrous series.



Watch trailer online

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

## HAPPENINGS



GOPEN RAI

**WE SWEAR:** President Bidya Bhandari, Vice President Nanda Bahadur Pun and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba preside over the oath-taking ceremony of new cabinet ministers in Kathmandu on Monday.



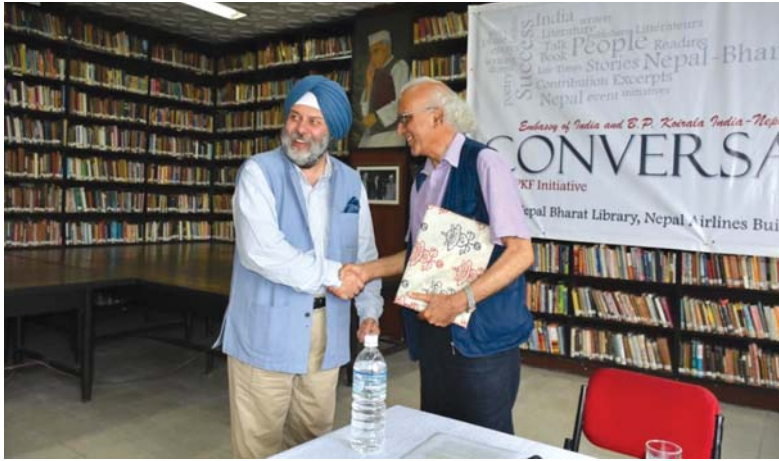
KOICA

**FROM KOREA WITH LOVE:** South Korean Ambassador to Nepal Young-sik Park hands over a hygiene and first aid kit to a flood-hit family in Ratnagar Municipality in Chitwan on Monday.



ASIAN CRICKET COUNCIL

**TEEN WIN:** Nepal's U-19 cricket team celebrates its 7-wicket win over Singapore in the last group stage match of the Asian Cricket Council Under-19 Eastern Region Qualifiers in Malaysia on Thursday. With the win, the Nepali team has topped group A.



EMBASSY OF INDIA

**BP BIRTHDAY:** Professor Abhi Subedi and Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri after a talk organised by the Embassy of India to mark the 103rd birth anniversary of BP Koirala at the Nepal-Bharat Library in Kathmandu on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

**SPORTS STARS:** Winners of the 14th edition of the Nepal Sports Journalists Forum (NSJF) Pulsar Sports Award in Kathmandu on Monday where footballer Kiran Kumar Limbu and badminton player Nangsal Devi Tamang named male and female players of the year.

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# Friends in deed

NAMRATA SHARMA  
in BANKE

Sita Tharu lived with her large extended family of nine in Rapti Sonari of Banke district in the western plains. The mud hut they lived in simply dissolved as flood waters rose last month. There is a gaping hole in the ground where her house once was, and the family has taken refuge in a nearby shed.

Sita and her neighbours (*right*) said the government provided them with one sack of rice, one packet of oil and one tent. None of them fit in the tent and the food soon ran out. “How can a family of nine live in a tent, and in this heat?” she asked us.

So, instead of waiting for the government to send more help, the neighbours started helping each other rebuild their homes. Salvaging pieces of wood brought down by the floods, they have put up structures of mud and twigs.

Since the men are away working in the cities or abroad, it is the women who have ended up building the shelters. Sita is being helped by other women in the neighborhood. Using improvised tools, they carry the mud, and plaster it over the wooden walls. They have fashioned ladders to carry the mud cakes up the wall.

Purna Bahadur Chaudhary



NAMRATA SHARMA

remembers the waters rising at 3am on 12 August when his family of six were all sleeping. He woke them and took refuge in his sister’s house nearby just as his own house collapsed, washing away all their possessions.

He has received two sacks of rice, 3kg of lentils and one packet

of oil from the government, as well as a small tent that is uninhabitable because of his family size and the heat.

Chaudhary is also building a mud and wood hut for his family with support from neighbours. He thinks his village and surroundings suffered the sudden

flash flood because embankments for the Sikta irrigation project dammed the waters.

He’s not the only one. “The embankment could be responsible for the flood that made so many homeless in Aghaiya village,” says Yadav Gyawali, a teacher at Nepal Rastriya Higher Secondary

School. Local farmers are now demanding compensation from Sikta.

Sita, Purna and others belong to some of the poorest families in the western Tarai, with meager possessions and a subsistence survival. The floods have taken the little they had saved.

The government’s ‘one-door policy’ prevented donors from giving tarpaulins to needy families as they had to go through the Chief District Officer. But the government’s own aid is not enough, leaving the survivors caught in the middle.

Though it’s the responsibility of the Government to support the affected families during disasters, in Nepal this is often not the case. Commitments are made but immediate support does not fulfill the basic needs of disaster survivors. The slow-moving bureaucracies of the Nepal Government and donor agencies mean that aid, when it does arrive, is too little too late.

As Sita Tharu and her neighbours have shown, at times of calamities it is best not to wait for the government but to start helping each other rebuild. The people of Banke have set a dramatic precedent by helping and sharing with those who have less. 🇳🇵



**Namrata Sharma**  
is Chairperson of Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal. More photos online.

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Bahrain	NPR 31,299	NPR 93,929
Muscat	NPR 30,837	NPR 108,789
Gizan	NPR 50,922	NPR 188,926
Jeddah	NPR 44,076	NPR 132,015
Moscow	NPR 45,448	NPR 169,891
Prague	NPR 52,851	NPR 229,417
Entebbe	NPR 43,592	NPR 161,091
Amman	NPR 38,279	NPR 138,184

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# Voting to heal past wounds

Local elections in Province 2 bring together candidates and voters from the hills and plains

JULIA THOMAS  
in BIRGANJ

Birganj is the only metropolitan city in Province 2, and many mayoral candidates told us they wanted to reach across the ethnic divide to heal the wounds of the past. The polls are also a chance for parties to realign with issues and recognise the rights of other people formerly outside their voter base.

RJPN mayoral candidate Singh said: “Ours is not a Madhesi party. It fights not just for Madhesis, but for all excluded communities in Nepal. Even though I am a Madhesi of hill origin, all Madhesi brothers are supporting my campaign. We are fighting for equality for all, not just for Madhesis.”

UML mayoral candidate Basuruddin Ansari, a Maoist candidate in the 2013 elections, was forced to close part of his hospital, the National Medical College, before and after the agitation and Indian Blockade in 2015.

“For parties here, politics is all about creating differences between the hills and the Tarai. Birganj faced a total shutdown for seven months, and people suffered a lot,” Ansari told *Nepali Times*. “Is this what you call politics? You cannot succeed as a politician by enforcing shutdowns and causing pain to people. Only those who understand the people



will be successful in winning elections in Birganj.”

Other candidates proposed to work in better coordination with the central government. If elected, NC contender Ajay Dwibedi plans to introduce a new tax system to fund development projects.

“In the initial stage, we will request the central government to help us, but the municipality will strengthen its capacity to collect taxes, and gradually it will come up and make its own budget,” Dwibedi said.

The NC platform features having a two-thirds majority in Parliament to pass amendments to the Constitution. The UML

is staunchly opposed, so the outcome of this poll will be a referendum in the Tarai about support for amendments.

Campaigning in a Birganj suburb on Monday, Ansari spoke with voters at their doorsteps, and led a chant by supporters carrying flags through the streets. Two female candidates also took part.

For her part, UML deputy

mayoral candidate Sophia Acharya focused on gender and education. “If I get elected, I will work against child marriage, violence against women and the gender pay gap,” she told *Nepali Times*.

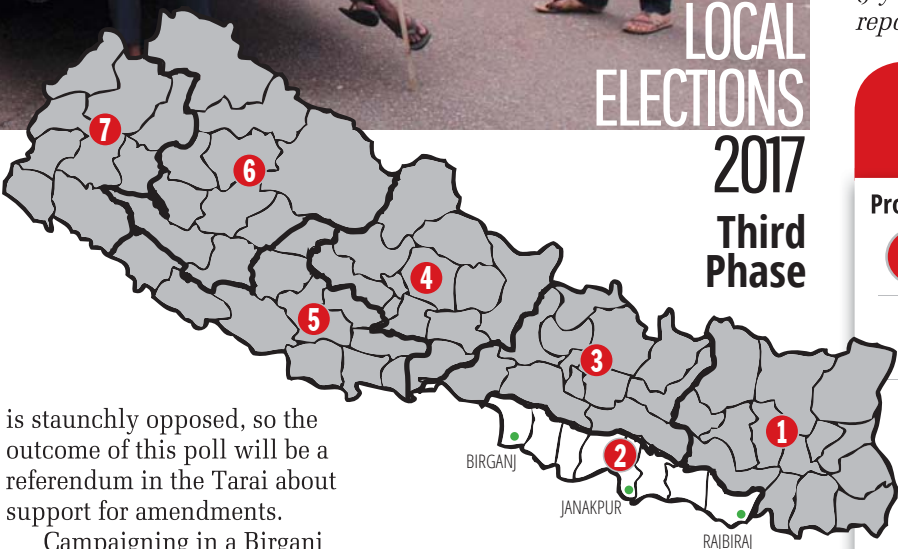
“We can achieve much of this by educating the girls.”

Birganj-based activist Kamal Mohan Pokharel says communal harmony in Birganj was never as bad as in other parts of the plains, and it was exaggerated by the Kathmandu media.

He adds: “In fact it is getting better in this election. I hope the entire Madhes will follow Birganj’s model of coexistence.”

(Jiyalal Sah in Birganj also reported for this story.)

LOCAL  
ELECTIONS  
2017  
Third  
Phase



18 September

Province 2 Six of Nepal’s 7 provinces already held local polls in two phases in April and May, the remaining one, Province 2, votes next week.

8 districts

2,664,950 voters

1 Metropolitan City  
3 Sub Metropolitan Cities  
73 Municipalities  
59 Village Councils

136 Total local councils

RAMESHWAR BOHARA

Birganj was not just the epicentre of the Madhes movement in 2015, but also the city worst hit by the five-month Indian Blockade.

This gateway to Nepal’s trade, and the only metropolitan city in Province 2, goes to the polls next week. It has not yet fully recovered from the devastating economic impact of the blockade, and many businessmen are still struggling to pay the debts they incurred during the prolonged business slump.

In the final phase of campaigning for local polls on 18 September, Birganj is a microcosm of everything traditionally associated with elections in these parts: money, muscle, betrayal.

Ex-Mayor Bimal Srivastav was expecting a ticket from the Madhes-based RJPN to contest another term. But the party chose Rajesh Man Singh as its mayoral candidate, probably concluding that Srivastav’s political credentials alone would not suffice and that it needed someone with the power of both ‘money and muscle’.

Srivastav was Singh’s political mentor. Singh himself is from the Newar community and a local contractor who hugely benefitted from Srivastav’s political



ALL PHOTOS: JIYALAL SAH

## The Battle for Birganj

Birganj is a microcosm of everything traditionally associated with elections: money, muscle and betrayal

patronage and rose as a youth leader, amassing wealth along the way. The RJPN saw Singh as more capable than Srivastav in dishing out patronage, mobilising youth and hiring goons.

A day before nominations closed last week, Srivastav quit the RJPN, and Bijaya Gachhadar’s Nepal Loktantrik Forum fielded him as its own mayoral candidate for Birganj. The two will now be close rivals for the post.

Upendra Yadav’s Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (FSFN) has chosen businessman Bijaya Sarawagi, ex-president of the Birganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In recent months, Sarawagi has been telling friends and relatives: “I am sick of being extorted by every other political party. Now is the time to make a one-time investment in one party, win elections and stop paying off everyone.”

The Madhes-based parties, especially the RJPN and the FSFN, must win to prove that people in Province 2 support their demand for amending the Constitution, so they chose potential winners even if it meant giving tickets to dubious candidates with iffy reputations.

The opposition UML, which successfully rode the nationalist (read anti-Blockade) agenda in previous phases of local

elections, has not watered down its rejection of amendments to the Constitution. How well its anti-India platform will play out in the Tarai, especially Birganj, remains to be seen. UML leaders have maintained that people in the Tarai do not endorse the agenda of the Madhes-based parties.

The UML is therefore under equal pressure to prove that it is right about the Constitution





JULIA THOMAS

# Youthful force

There is a buzz in the air across Province 2 ahead of elections on 18 September, and first-time voters are leading the charge: the young in the Tarai are energised about casting their ballots in the final phase of local elections. Many of them were too young to vote, or not even alive, when local elections last took place in 1997. "Young people in the past were not directly involved in political activities but nowadays most of them are," says Sudarsh Singh, a candidate of the RJPN for Ward council in Janakpur.

Schools around Janakpur and across the Tarai are closing for a week for the polls, giving time for students to closely follow proceedings. "All the students will be involved in promoting the election, and campaigning for the parties who are up for election," Indu Singh, 31, says.

In Birganj, Neha Paudel, 24, hopes that whoever is elected develops the city for the people, not just for themselves and their families. But she has her misgivings. "It is like a huge festival," she said of elections. "We are happy it is happening after years and years, but each and every person knows that development is not going to happen. Candidates are making promises, of course, but we know that it is just to get votes. It is up to us citizens to chose the right person who can deliver."

In Birganj, the Maoists have fielded the youngest mayoral candidate in this phase of polls, 31-year-old Rahabar Ansari, probably because they are not hopeful about a win here. They are focused on competing with the UML along the East-West Highway.

Neha Poudel, who recently won a local beauty pageant, says: "The youth are excited about voting in this election, but they are also wary of inexperienced candidates."

**Julia Thomas** in Janakpur



**THE RACE IS ON:** UML and ESN's mayoral candidates, Basuruddin Ansari (*left*) and Bijaya Sarawagi (*centre, in green shirt with Upendra Yadav*) are both businessmen. Ex-Mayor Bimal Srivastav (*in red shirt, right*) was expecting a ticket from the RJPN, which chose his protege, Singh instead.

amendment, which means it has to emerge as the number one party in the Tarai, or at least maintain its lead over the NC by winning a significant number of local government positions.

The UML fielded the controversial Basuruddin Ansari as its candidate for Birganj mayor. As an investor in the tainted National Medical College here, his meteoric rise as a businessman is mysterious, and the media

has linked him to underworld don Dawood Ibrahim. The way he is splurging money during this campaign has also raised suspicions about his source of income.

Ansari was initially close to the NC, but joined the Maoists to stop the contant harassment from their trade union in his hospital. He defected to the UML last month.

Unlike the UML and Madhesi parties, the NC has fielded ever-loyal Ajaya Dwibedi, its district president for Parsa, one-time deputy mayor and MP. The NC's coalition partner, the Maoists, have fielded Rahabar Ansari, a 31-year-old, foreign-educated Muslim, among the 21 candidates for the Birganj mayor post. 🇳🇵

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# Dasain perks

As Dasain approaches, there are signs that things are limping back to normalitude with the installation of centerline steel fencing at Blubber Mahal to force politicians not to make illegal U-turns. What a relief it is to see that there is still optimism in the Department of Roads that movers and shakers in this city can actually be forced to abide by traffic rules and drive on the right side, which of course is the left side, unless you are the Banepa Bus in which case you can knock down the metal barrier along the centerline in the wee hours just before breathing your last.

The other sign that the wheels of democracy are turning at their own exorable pace is that Prime Monster Dubya IV has broken his own previous national record by inducting four new ministers to bring the total cabinet strength to 54. There are dark mutterings on the op-ed pages from chronic whiners who shall remain nameless, but Brave Lion has taken the bull by the horns because he knows that in a little more than a month his will be a caretaker government, and there is so much still left to be plundered but so little time to rake it all in.

Because of the size of this jumbo cabinet of wide-bodies there is standing room only at Singha Darbar. Many ministers don't have offices with attached loos nor flagged SUVs, yet in the national interest they are willing to endure that extreme discomfort. We laud

their sacrifice.

Despite that, the Minister of Short Supplies has hit the ground running to pick low-hanging fruit: he isn't wasting time pursuing the elusive head of the Nepal Oil Corruption on his Rs3 Arab landscam to convert a national park buffer zone into a petroleum stockpile depot, rather he has gone after Darbar Marg shops which threaten Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity by selling pricey Reeboks. Minister should give himself a medal.

Now that the country is soon going to be federified, the Ass has finally figured out what a bunch of geniuses the framers of the new Constitution are. All seven provinces will have their own State Assemblies, governments, bureaucracies, tea-makers, orderlies, cronies and peons, which will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs: effectively ending the need for Nepalis to migrate for work abroad. That is called killing two birds in the hand with one stone in the bush.

Across town, MPs in the soon-to-be prorogued Parliament also know their days are numbered, so they are busy voting themselves Dasain bonuses. Reps in the August House have only till end-September to award themselves posthumous pensions so they can keep on enjoying legislative perks in the afterlife.



The Ass

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