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RAMESH GIRI / RSS

That sinking feeling

When PM KP Oli assumed office in February, he was blessed with almost everything he would need to deliver on his promise of rapid economic growth: he swiftly cemented his grip on power by unifying his UML party with the Maoists, inducting one of the two Madhesi parties into government, restoring ties with India and winning Chinese support for large infrastructure projects.

But the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) government now seems to be sinking into a quagmire, like the submerged streets of Bhaktapur on Thursday (pictured, above).

His own ministers, especially ex-Maoist ones, are making things worse for the prime minister. PM-in-waiting Pushpa Kamal Dahal keeps a low profile, letting Oli stew in his own gravy as his ex-Maoist ministers mishandle hunger strikes

by Govinda KC and Gangamaya Adhikari, whose separate fasts entered the 13th and the 44th days respectively on Thursday.

Despite leading Nepal's strongest government since 1990, Oli doesn't have the flexibility to address KC's demand to roll back a regressive medical education bill. Oli ordered police to arrest one of the accused in the murder of Adhikari's son in 2004, but ex-Maoist ministers are firmly against the extradition of another accused, Rudra Acharya, from Northern Ireland to face trial.

Interpol has issued a red-corner notice against Acharya, believed to be the shooter. Sources say the UK is ready to extradite Acharya if the government assures in writing that he will not face capital punishment and torture. But ex-Maoists in the government are stalling, and Adhikari doesn't want to call off her hunger strike.

As other political problems fester, hope is fading that Oli can expedite economic growth. The private sector was cautiously optimistic about a Communist government, now it is nervous.

Shekhar Golchha of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), told us: "The way this government is dealing with the private sector is very frustrating."

Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa is on a selective crackdown. He ordered the arrest of four sugar mill owners for not paying farmers. He detained contractors for not completing construction in time, but NCP co-Chair Dahal's landlord Sharada Adhikari enjoys impunity even though his firm is reportedly responsible for massive delays in high profile projects.

When a delegation of businessmen protested the high-handedness, ex-Maoist Industry Minister Matrika Yadav

warned: "Be careful. This is a people's government, it is not for businessmen."

Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatriwada, the architect of Oli's economic vision, is raising taxes, but doing little to win the private sector's confidence on investment.

Ex-banker Anal Raj Bhattarai says: "The hope that the investment climate would improve is fading fast, and this government is squandering a golden chance to set things right." 🇳🇵

buzz

WARNING:
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PAGE 8-9



RED RICE
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2



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RED RICE

They say a picture speaks a thousand words. This one spoke billions — of rupees.

A lavish lunch is laid out with curry, dal and plates of nutritious red rice from Jumla. Tucking it all in are Prime Minister K P Oli and Prime Minister-in-waiting Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The third man is their host: business tycoon Durga Prasai, in whose house this picture was taken earlier this year.

The UML-Maoist alliance was in government, but negotiations on party unity had stalled. Prasai was mediating, and this was the lunch meeting in which the deal was finally struck: the two would take turns leading the new party, and they agreed on dividing up positions for their loyalists.

The photograph went viral this week because it is so symbolic of our times. Here is Prasai who, as owner of the B&C Hospital in Jhapa, is a powerful figure in the medical-industrial complex. He had a lot to gain from the unity of the two parties.



The trio is seen feasting on a multi-course lunch while today 1,000 km away in western Nepal, campaigning physician Govinda KC is on the 14th day of his fast-onto-death to pressure the government on medical education reform.

The rice they are eating in the photo is the Marsi variety from Jumla, which is the highest paddy growing region in the world. The glutinous red rice is known for its nutritious value, but ironically it is in Jumla itself that KC is on his hunger strike to draw attention to the lack of health facilities in remote Nepal.

As the photograph was shared, public disgust and ridicule crossed party lines — KC's sacrifice and single-minded pursuit of equitable and affordable health services in this country has a lot of support from citizens fed up with shoddy government hospitals and expensive private ones.

This is KC's 15th hunger strike. After previous ones he had wrested government agreement for his main demands: stop corruption in universities according affiliation to private medical colleges, restrict universities to maximum five affiliations, limit the number of new private medical colleges in Kathmandu Valley to ten. This time, KC added one more demand: allow the Karnali Health Science Academy in Jumla itself to conduct MBBS courses.

Those who do not understand just how deep the rot is may not comprehend why

anyone should be opposed to more medical colleges. Although there are more doctors in Nepal today than 20 years ago, the population has also increased in that period. Nepal's doctors to population ratio is one of the lowest in the world: 2 physicians for every 10,000 people.

However, in a country so chronically mismanaged for so long, there are only a few areas where one can strike it rich quick. Which is why smuggling and human trafficking are a politically-protected racket. Extortion is a profession, and the practice of doling out protection money is so endemic most companies actually set aside a budget line for it.

But by far the most lucrative way to make a fast first billion is to open a medical college. An entrance test is a formality for students whose parents can afford a 'donation' of Rs10 million, and there is no shortage of those. This sets off a vicious circle where after graduation, new doctors seek immediately to recoup their investment by over-charging and over-prescribing, making treatment unaffordable.

They say a picture speaks a thousand words. This one spoke billions — of rupees.

It is no surprise that some politicians are in cahoots with the medical mafia, just as they also protect the bus cartels, the smuggling syndicates and the real estate barons. Besides Prasai who owns B&C Hospital, Rajendra Pandey and other former UML politicians have invested in the Man Mohan Memorial and the Kathmandu National Hospitals. NCP financier Upendra Mahato (whose brother-in-law is Transport and Infrastructure Minister Raghuraj Mahaseth) also wants affiliation for another hospital in Kathmandu.

KC's hunger strike is a direct challenge to KP, who wants to rush the Medical Education Bill through Parliament by deleting previously included clauses on the limit to affiliations and a cap on new medical colleges in Kathmandu Valley — recommendations made by the Kedar Mathema commission. KC's campaign is trying to break the cycle of commercialisation by ensuring affordable, accessible and quality health care to all Nepalis.

The tragedy of Nepal is that a government that came to power with so much promise for reform is letting the kleptocracy strike even deeper roots. State failure has poisoned our air, water, food, making Nepalis ill. But it is a cruel joke that they cannot afford treatment because of the same state failure.

The NCP government can reclaim some of its lost credibility by helping save the lives of tens of thousands of Nepalis by the saving the life of just one Nepali — Govinda KC.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The issue of *Nepali Times* from ten years ago this week (#408, 11-18 July 2008) was preoccupied with the aftermath of the Maoist victory in CA elections. Our editorial that week, titled 'Seeing the forest and the trees,' looked at the impact of the political uncertainty on Nepal's forests:

'As it happens, every time there is a messy political transition in this country it is Nepal's hard-fought achievements in forest conservation that suffers a serious setback. After April 2006, there has been an accelerated clearing of Tarai forests.

Three months after elections, the party that won the most seats in the assembly hasn't yet been able to form the government. The current anarchy is caused by the prolonged political deadlock in Kathmandu. This state of statelessness is having a devastating impact on our national parks and the plunder of forests that communities have invested decades to protect.'



ONLINE PACKAGES



POISONOUS AIR

Most of us are aware of visible dust and smoke in Kathmandu air, but few know about the invisible toxic gases motorcycles give off. There has been sharp rise in lung ailments, cancers, diabetes and heart diseases in Kathmandu associated with 820,000 two-wheelers in the Valley. Watch this video to learn about the solution to this growing health emergency.



HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS

The number of houses built by earthquake survivors has increased four-fold in just one year due to a July 2018 deadline set by the government. But do these hurriedly built homes meet basic safety standards? Watch this video to see how survivors are working under deadline pressure to build makeshift sheds just so they are eligible for earthquake grants.



BOOM TIME

The Butwal-Bhairawa corridor, already a national hub for the economy, is all set to go international with the soon to be completed Gautam Buddha International Airport. Watch video to see how the area is preparing for the boom in pilgrims and tourists with new luxury hotels like the Tiger Palace.

ROAD RAGE

What a waste (From nowhere to nowhere, Basanta Pratap Singh, #917). Money spent just for the sake of spending money.

David R. Addor

■ This long and clear story is quite sad, even though it was all predicted long before.

Tom van Groeningen

TASTE BOOSTER

Gundruk is an amazing ingredient and adds vitamins to the Nepali diet (A Kiwi takes to Gundruk, Thomas Heaton, #917). It is also a great way of preserving food for the bitter winter when few vegetables grow.

Eliane Castro Smith

■ Thanks for this great article on gunruk. It is a quick dish which you can make very fast on the go. It also preserves Vitamin C.

Udaya Neupane

DOCUMENTING RECONSTRUCTION

What an amazing initiation by Paasapi group (Mapping the earthquake with art, Sewa Bhattarai, #917). Great job capturing the devastation and resilience.

Sahaj Tamrakar

1,000 FLOWERS

Only when we 'let a thousand flowers bloom' can we know who is a flower and who the weed ('Let a thousand flowers bloom', Om Astha Rai, #917).

Gauri Rimal

WHAT'S TRENDING



Mapping the earthquake with art

by Sewa Bhattarai

'Paasapi' is a group of young artists who are depicting the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake on canvas. Documenting history through paintings, they portray not just the desolation but also human emotions involved in overcoming the crisis. After more than 200 paintings of damage, the group is moving on to capture the reconstruction. Visit our website to read the inspiring story and watch a short video about the artists and their work.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

From nowhere to nowhere

by Basanta Pratap Singh

Floods have always been prevalent and unpredictable throughout Nepal during the monsoon. But now, even normal precipitation can trigger landslides because of haphazard road construction which disturbs natural drainage, unleashing flash-floods downstream. Read this in-depth analysis of how random road building fuelled by corruption destroys Nepal's countryside.

Most visited online page

Most popular on Twitter

A Kiwi takes to gundruk

by Thomas Heaton

Visiting New Zealand journalist Thomas Heaton not only enjoys making gundruk from scratch but also loves to eat it. Read his interesting take on Nepal's almost national dish, and get re-introduced to gundruk from a fresh new perspective. Visit our website for the fun article and watch him as he shows you how to make your own gundruk at home.

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

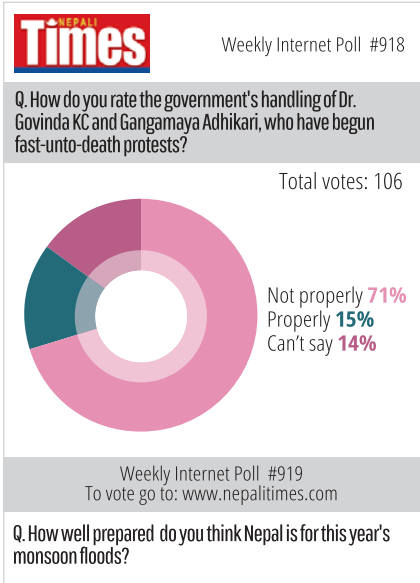
Nepali Times @nepalitimes Jul 5
Haphazard road construction on hills is ravaging the Nepali countryside, triggering flash floods and landslides that damage fields and threaten lives. Basant Pratap Singh reports from Bajhang

Dave Petley @davepetley
An excellent article in the @nepalitimes about the impacts of uncontrolled road building in the mountains of Nepal:- https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/from-nowhere-to-nowhere/ ... "Haphazard road construction is ravaging the Nepali countryside"

madhukar upadhyaya @madhukaru
Sadly, budget allocated for agriculture is being spent on road construction by several newly formed local governments. Slope stability and erosion is not a priority of the development agenda.

Peter @peterfrancon
With any luck the machines will all wear out before they've paid for themselves and this chaos will grind to a halt.

Rojen Manandhar @neorizify048 Jul 10
Rapid development of Nepal. Using 16th century standards or even worse for the 21st century





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ALL PHOTO: BIKRAM RAI

Sewa Bhattarai in Bhairawa

Earth movers are at work trying to make up for lost time in completing what will be the Gautam Buddha International Airport. The Bhairawa-Butwal corridor is a six-lane highway with new hotels, steel and cement factories, residential areas, and even breweries.

Everywhere you look in Kapilvastu and Rupandehi

districts these days, there are signs of economic boom. The hidden potential for tourism, trade, and industries in this Central Tarai region bordering India that has remained untapped for so long, is about to be unleashed.

Take Lumbini. More than 200,000 tourists from India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Korea, China and Japan enter Nepal every year through Bhairawa for pilgrimage at the birthplace of the Buddha. But Nepal never really benefited because most of them came for day visits as a part of the Buddhist circuit tour package

in India.

“So far, Lumbini has been just a day stop for Indian tour packages to Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar. Some even bring their own food,” explains Chandra Bahadur Thapa, general secretary of Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents for Province 5.

All this looks set to change. This week Nepal and India signed an agreement to jointly promote the Ramayana and Buddhist Circuits. The Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) has also come up with new Buddhist Circuit tour packages that

highlight other pilgrimage sites in Nepal like Kathmandu, Halesi, Muktinath, Kakrebihar and even Mansarovar in Tibet.

The idea is to make Lumbini a gateway to the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit, and not the other way round. All this is preparation to capitalise on the new international airport near Lumbini, which has been delayed by five years because of political corruption.

Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari is a man in a hurry. “There are 500 million Buddhists in the region, which is a huge

market close to home. But we cannot benefit if we do not have the infrastructure. Even before the airport is completed, we need hotels, highways, airways, and other facilities in place,” he says.

To be sure, the district is already humming with activity. Leading the trend is the 5-star Tiger Palace resort owned by the Australian company Silver Heritage. With a foreign investment of \$52 million, the largest yet in Nepal’s hospitality industry, the resort boasts of Nepal’s longest swimming pool and biggest casino.

Gambling on the future



Rows of palm trees greet visitors on arrival, lining both sides of the driveway to the entrance of Tiger Palace Hotel. At the back are more palm fronds bordering both sides of a canal and the hotel’s swimming pool -- the ambience is reminiscent of beach resorts in Dubai or Thailand. Just that a jungle forms the backdrop, and not an ocean.

Nepal’s latest and biggest foreign investment in the hotel industry, the Tiger Palace Resort, is located on the booming Bhairawa-Butwal corridor. Despite this, being amidst forests gives it a wilderness feeling. Owned by the Australian Silver Heritage company that specialises in gaming, the resort opened in March, and is designed to cater to the expected boom in tourists, pilgrims and luxury-minded visitors from India.

The resort has 100 rooms, two villas, a gym, spa, and a 123m swimming pool, supposedly the longest in Nepal. From some rooms guests can step directly into the



pool, and swim to Cabana Avenue restaurant, or walk over to dine at Ramro Chowk. The hotel plans two more restaurants and also plans to expand rooms to 300 in the second phase, and perhaps another Resort soon in Jhapa in eastern Nepal.

Tiger Palace employs close to 800 locals, says its general manager Brett Model (pictured above): “A lot of people are leaving Nepal to work,

but many are coming back. We have employed some incredible talent who have returned with experience in hospitality in Dubai, Qatar, Malaysia. They are great assets.”

With Lumbini 30 minutes away and Chitwan 2 hours away by car, Tiger Palace Resort is well situated as a stopping point for visitors to the two World Heritage Sites. It targets the busy international traveller with multiple attractions. The resort also boasts of Nepal’s largest casino of international standard, and now that it has its ownership dispute sorted out, is looking forward to a busy autumn season.

Brett Model adds: “We wanted to be the first and largest 5-star integrated resort in Nepal, and we are happy to be the first in this market. I am very excited for what the future holds for Nepal’s tourism industry. We can offer an inspiration for others to push forward in business and improve the tourism sector.”

Sikuma Rai

**BIZ BRIEFS**

Istanbul stopover

Turkish Airlines marks one year of its free stopover service for transfer passengers with a round trip ticket and connection time of 20 hours in Istanbul. In the past year 14,000 passengers have used this service which covers 19 countries and will soon add 10 more including China and India.



Buddha adds ATR-72

Buddha Air this week took delivery of its fifth ATR-72 bringing the airline’s fleet strength to 11 planes. The airline also started bi-weekly Varanasi-Kathmandu service, and is expected to soon launch Nepalganj-New Delhi flights. The airline is also diversifying from Kathmandu and has stationed one of its planes in Biratnagar.



Investment bank

Nepal Investment Bank established its 73rd branch in Piskar of Sindhupalchok as part of its campaign to extend rural banking. The bank aims to provide services to more than 15,000 residents of the town, offering soft loans to 22,000 underprivileged families.



Football livery

Qatar Airways has introduced a Boeing 777 aircraft with FIFA livery that will fly



Pokhara ice cream

Baskin-Robbins International in partnership with Sun International has opened its first ice cream parlor in Lakeside, Pokhara. This is the 12th Baskin-Robbins outlet in Nepal and was inaugurated by Mohit Khattar of Graviss Foods and Saurabh Jyoti of Sun International.





The Butwal-Bhairawa corridor is already a hub of domestic economic activity: two national highways—the east-west Mahendra and the north-south Siddhartha—intersect here, and other tourist hubs like Palpa, Chitwan, and Pokhara are a few hours drive away. Butwal is now Nepal’s fastest growing city, offering modern hotels for a new breed of visitors who are not necessarily pilgrims.

New industries have come up in an area already known as an industrial strip (Jagadamba Steel, Ruslan Vodka, Warsteiner Beer, Hulas Auto Craft, Panchakanya Steels, Brij Cement, etc), which

means hotel accommodation is in high demand. Not only are conferences and major events of the companies held at these hotels, but increasingly, social functions like weddings and guniu-choli.

“I am quite impressed by the growing affluence of this area. We are seeing many repeat customers, which means that the domestic market here can afford luxury hospitality, and has developed a taste for it,” says Brett Model, general manager of Tiger Palace Resort. “We hope that our success will attract more foreign investment in the hospitality industry here.”

With its proximity to the

border, the resort also attracts Indian customers, who may not be particularly interested in Lumbini. Strict restrictions on alcohol and gambling in India have made Tiger Palace a draw, and there are many who come in for a few hours and go back before the border curfew at 9PM.


Indian families enjoy weekend getaways, and every so often there is a destination wedding, with the entire marriage party camping out at the hotel for a few days for all the ceremonies. Tiger Palace has already hosted a dozen such weddings, with customers coming in from as far as Delhi, Mumbai and Kanpur for a

luxury ‘foreign wedding’.

The region’s new businesses, industries and hotels are also excited by the prospect of an international airport nearby, so that access will be easier and faster. More casinos and hotels are coming up to cater to the Indian market.

All eyes are now on the completion of the Gautam Buddha International Airport. After being stalled often, the project is expected to be completed in early 2019, making Lumbini more accessible to two distinctly different types of tourists: Buddha devotees, as well as free-spending tourists from across India. 🇳🇵

BOOM TIME



The economic and industrial hub districts, Kapilvastu and Rupandehi, are rapidly urbanising. Go online to watch this short video to see how the Lumbini-Bhairawa corridor is fast developing luxury facilities and gearing up for arrival of more tourists with the completion of the Gautam Buddha International Airport.

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Can't fool all the people all the time

Nepalis now know what a world class sports facility should look like because they have seen it during the World Cup

In the past month, there have been several opportunities for local communities to meet their elected local representatives to hold dialogues – providing a glimmer of hope for Nepal and our development aspirations.



½ FULL
Anil Chitrakar

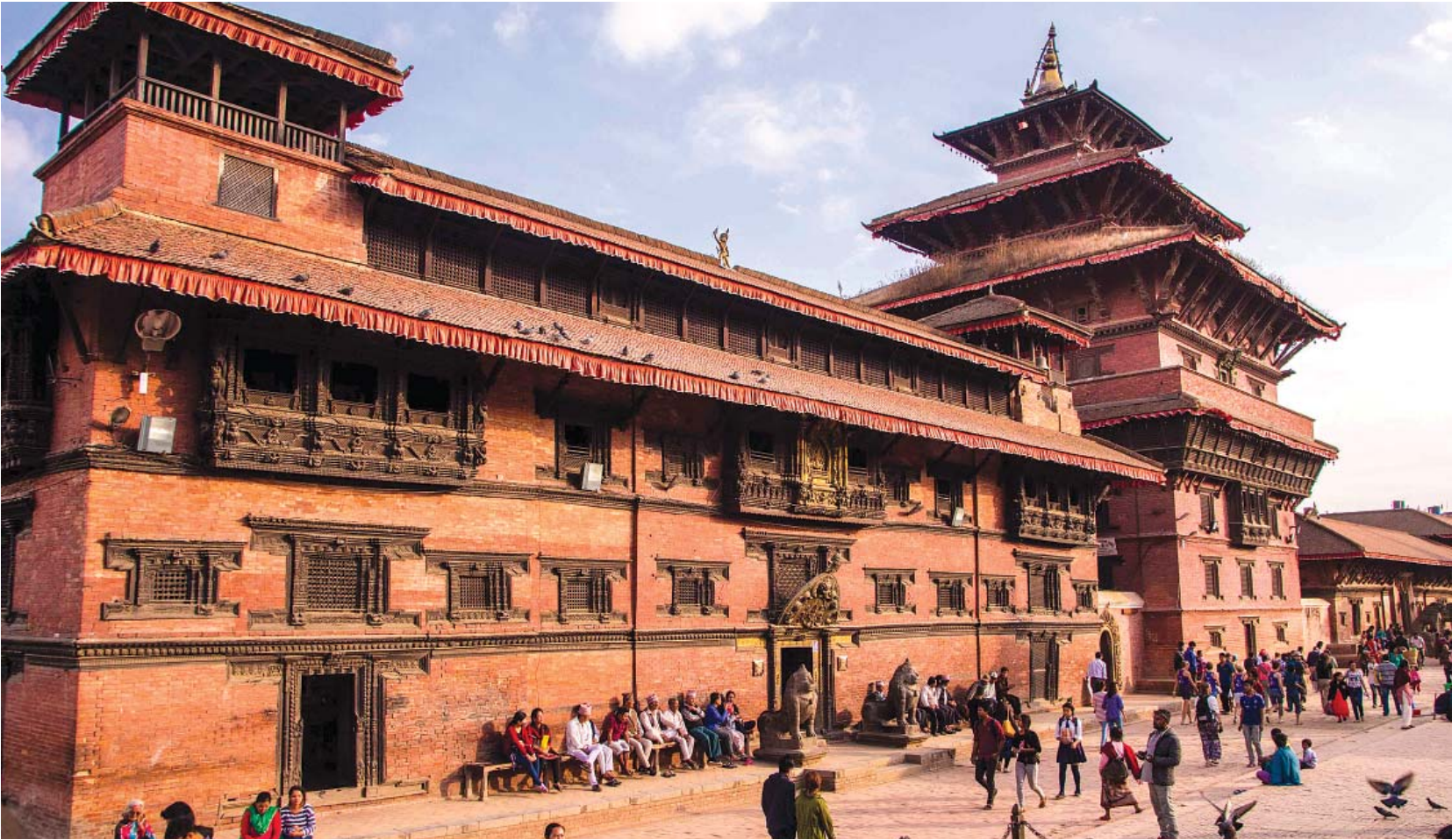
The first was a gathering of all youth volunteers of Ward 16 from Patan, and the second was a hearing of the residents of Handigaon, the ancient neighbourhood of Kathmandu that dates back to the Lichhavi period nearly 1,000 years ago. In Biratnagar, all elected representatives of Province 1 came together to discuss pressing problems that federalism needed to resolve.

As expected, a portion of the time in each of these gatherings was spent on venting frustration, and playing the blame game. The people who were in power once and are now out of it, were naturally the ones who were most critical and eloquent. The ones in office, minced their words and made excuses for inaction. That aside, the proceedings provided rare insight into the current state of governance in Nepal.

The representation of the public and their elected representatives was notable because it is the partnership that can finally break the stalemate that has frustrated us in Nepal for so long. NGOs and civil society groups have tried to fill the space left by poor governance for the past three decades.

A few minutes into each gathering, it was immediately evident that there is a trust deficit and that is where the real investment will be needed in the short term.

The general feeling is that



HANNAN LEWSLEY

politicians are there to take people for a ride, and despite last year's elections, are not really accountable to anyone. They still used goons to extract and win infrastructure contracts, while the tax payer waits for promises that are never kept. It would do well, therefore, to identify and deliver some 'low hanging fruit' in each constituency with the sole goal of just building trust for now.

The consultations also exposed that there is not yet a constructive opposition. Nepalis have understood the word 'opposition' to mean oppose for the sake of opposing. Instead, it would be much better if they took a stand to say: "We are watching, we

shall share and keep the people informed, we shall make sure there is no corruption on the procurement process."

It may take many more years before this cultural shift actually happens even though Nepal urgently needs oversight at all levels. The people's aspirations have risen. Nepalis today see the whole world through travel, study trips, work and the social media. They know what world class sports facilities mean by simply watching the World Cup.

They know about trains and airports while working abroad. They know about rules and laws and enforcement because they have paid the price of not abiding

by them in a foreign land. There is little room for elected office holders to distract people from their aspirations. The people know what they want, and how to get it.

The consultations also made it clear that everyone needs to learn and master new skills to move this country forward. Many still believe, thanks to donors, INGOS and development partners, that trainings are only effective if they happen in exotic foreign lands. Nepal has the infrastructure and the capacity to conduct its own training here for politicians, administrators and stakeholders. And we may not need expensive foreign consultants as trainers, we have enough Nepalis who are more familiar

with the country's problems and its solutions.

The most positive aspect of the consultations was that people are more than willing to meet their political leadership half way. Respect them, build trust and ask nicely and people will do their part. Most Nepalis want to join the global community as equals.

In the Patan meeting, participants said there is enough work in the city, no one needs to go abroad. At Handigaon, conservation of the ancient Lichhavi town was seen as a path to prosperity through tourism. In Biratnagar, Province 1 is determined to be the number one province. The glass is half-full. **Anil** is President of Siddharthinc

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Ocean to mountains

A group of Irish artists exhibit their work in Nepal for the first time

Sewa Bhattarai

Ask any Nepali about Ireland, and most have no idea where it is and some may mention the Irish pubs in Lukla, Thamel or Pokhara. Ask a person on the street what a ‘Guinness’ is and the answers will pertain more to a certain book of world records rather than the dark beer.

Which is why the first-ever exhibition of Irish art in Nepal is such a landmark in Kathmandu’s cultural firmament. It is a small brief window that gives people here in Kathmandu a glimpse of the sensibilities of this gentle land on the edge of the north Atlantic.

The artists, affiliated with Wexford Arts Center in Ireland, have brought to the Siddhartha Art Gallery an eclectic collection that includes landscapes, portraits, mixed media and photographs. Viewers are exposed not just to contemporary art themes but also techniques: some exhibits hang by clothes pegs on washing lines, tiny installations are framed in the style of miniatures, and there are renderings of the Irish landscape.

Because the artists came from so far away and on such short notice, they mostly brought smaller pieces. The collection has landscapes which artists say is representative of contemporary Irish art trends.

“I do not paint exact representations of the landscape, what you see, are my emotional response to it,” explains Olivia O’Dwyer (*below, right*) whose dreamy, almost pointillist series is called ‘*Between the Sky and the Sea*’.

Declan Cody looks for themes in the abstract, and ventures beyond landscapes to visuals like cow skin, groups of birds, or a close up of a patch of sand. He says: “I prefer to call my art abstracted rather than abstract, to differentiate it from traditional abstract art.”

Oil and acrylic mediums and techniques of layering are popular among Irish artists, and they hope to foster a cultural exchange between Nepal and Ireland, learning from each other’s art forms through this exhibition. The Irish visitors attended an art camp for Nepali artists in Kathmandu on Thursday.

The use of pastels, blue, white, gray, soft pink dominate the paintings. Bernadette Doolan’s impressionist portraits stand slightly apart from the trend of landscapes, capturing “emotions rather than persons”. Her titles



PHOTOS: SEWA BHATTARAI

like *Determined, In Quiet Agreement, It’s My Party, I wish*, are intense with emotional expression.

“As adults we pretend to be strong, but in reality we all have a child in us,” explains Doolan (*below, left*). “And children are strong, but also vulnerable. My portraits remind us all to let the child out sometimes.”

At the other end of the spectrum lie inert machines, which photographer Michael Duggan (*top*) foregrounds in his skillful compositions. Tools like a plough and a forge, which have now fallen into disuse, give us a glimpse of the transition in Ireland’s traditionally agrarian society.

“I capture machines that were once beautiful in their efficiency, but today are just ornamental, and so, beautiful in

another way,” says Duggan. “Documentary photographers everywhere try to capture things used today that will disappear ten years later. Our work might not make sense at the moment, but it will be valued more as time passes.”

The artists all agree that the scope of art as a career is limited and full of struggles in Ireland, just like everywhere else in the world.

The exhibition hosts works by two other artists who could not make it to Nepal: Kate Murphy whose titles seem larger than her miniature mixed media frames, and Paddy Lennon’s elegantly inked *Water Series*.

“Nepal and Ireland have completely different landscapes, one has mountains and the other has oceans and islands,”

said Veronica Cody, European Union’s Ambassador to Nepal, who is herself Irish. “Our landscapes affect how we see the world, and exchange of art is an opportunity to transcend that worldview and get a glimpse of another.”

Cody hoped the exhibition could be an inspiration for Nepali artists, and that Ireland would be inspired to host them in future. 🇮🇪

Irish Artists in Nepal
An Exhibition of Mixed Media Works (till July 20)
Bernadette Doolan, Declan Cody, Kate Murphy, Michael Duggan, Olivia O’Dwyer, Paddy Lennon
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited
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1/3 of Nepal's petrol import is consumed by two-wheelers.

2% of motorcycles cause half the pollution from two-wheelers.



Poisoning the a

Dust and smoke can be se

Sonia Awale

Most residents of Kathmandu are aware of the dust and smoke in the air, but few know that their masks do not protect them from the poisonous gas emissions from the capital's ubiquitous motorcycles.

Because of the nature of their engines, two-wheeler exhausts give off carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides, and elevate the

concentration of street-level ozone. Doctors say these poisonous gases have led to a worrying increase in respiratory ailments, cancers, Alzheimer's Disease, diabetes and heart attacks.

"A few motorcycles would not be so dangerous, but there are now nearly 1 million of them on the city streets and their emission is a great public health hazard," warns respiratory health expert Raju Pangeni at HAMS Hospital in Dhumbarahi.

Although motorcycles burn much less petrol than four-

wheelers, they are up to ten times more polluting per passenger-kilometre than buses and cars. The internal combustion engine of motorcycles is also less efficient, and their exhaust systems lack catalytic converters.

Because there are fewer two-wheelers on the roads in the West, emission standards for them are more lax than for four-wheelers. However, in places like Nepal, Vietnam or Indonesia, where motorcycles outnumber cars, their cumulative emissions poison the city's air with noxious gases.

A recent study showed that up to 2% of poorly-maintained motorcycles contributed to close to half the total pollution from two-wheelers on Kathmandu's streets.

"The recent spike in cardiovascular diseases in Kathmandu hospitals is partly a result of slow carbon monoxide poisoning, mainly from motorcycles," confirms cardiologist Prakash Regmi at Bir Hospital. Residents near congested intersections in Kathmandu with thousands of motorcycles emitting gaseous pollutants are the most at risk (*see map, left*).

Ozone is the other toxic gas formed when carbon monoxide and nitrous oxides in motorcycle exhaust react in the presence of sunlight with volatile organic carbons. Large parts of Nepal have ground-level ozone in much higher concentrations than the WHO standard in the spring, as per several studies published last year in the journal *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*.

Arnico Panday, atmospheric scientist at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) who co-authored the papers, explains that incomplete combustion of fuel in motorcycles engines gives off carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds like benzene, and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) which are precursor gases to ground-level ozone -- itself a highly reactive gas that can aggravate chronic respiratory diseases like asthma, bronchitis and emphysema.

The studies showed that minor servicing of two-wheelers did not reduce gaseous pollutants much, and motorcycles were a major source of carbon monoxide in Kathmandu Valley air.

Public awareness about air pollution has grown in the past two years after suspended dust particles from road-widening and water mains laying work worsened air quality that was already thick with

soot particles from diesel exhaust and garbage burning.

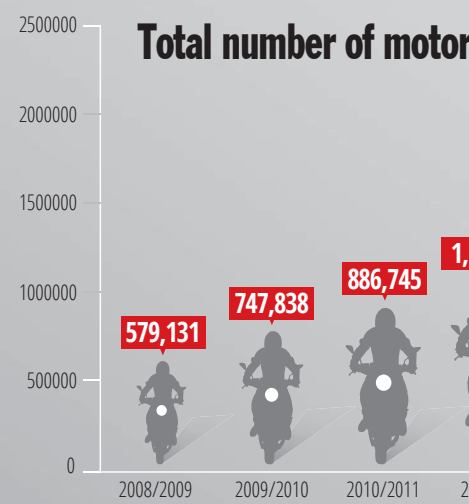
But only a few commuters interviewed for this article in the past week knew of invisible and odourless gases like carbon monoxide, ozone and nitrous oxides. Nine of ten motorcyclists had no idea about the poisonous gases, and blamed only dust and diesel smoke for poor air quality.

Kathmandu air pollution levels on most winter mornings are the worst in the world. The hourly Air Quality Index (AQI) from the U.S. Embassy and Phora Darbar stations which feed live into the *Nepali Times* website is a composite of the concentration of ozone and particles finer than 2.5 microns in the air. The daily averages in this paper (*page 10*) show AQI is high even during the monsoon, proving that the rains are not enough to clean the air of pollutants.

"Given that 80% of total vehicles today in Nepal are motorcycles and scooters, there should be a mechanism to monitor and control their emissions, like issuing green stickers," says BhusanTuladhar of UN-HABITAT. In the longer term, however, only an efficient public transportation service can reduce the number of motorcycles and cars on the roads.

GAS CHAMBERS

Traffic hotspots in Kathmandu with high concentrations of dust, soot, carbon monoxide and ozone.





air we breathe

en, but invisible poisonous gases in motorcycle emissions are making us sick

Besides Nepal, Vietnam and Indonesia also grapple with two-wheeler congestion and poor air quality. Hanoi is banning scooters by 2030, and China now only allows electric two-wheelers.

Energy expert Manjeet Dhakal says there is no sense banning motorcycles in Kathmandu without first offering a convenient alternative: “Two wheelers are polluting and unsafe, but environment-friendly public transport policy should be implemented first.”

Moving to electric mass transit, a battery-operated Bus Rapid Transit, and offering tax incentives for electric scooters and motorcycles would be the first step. Experts say the cause of Kathmandu's air pollution is government policy that allowed unlimited vehicle imports so as to generate greater tax revenue.

“Lack of regulation on motorcycle numbers undermines the government's own effort to promote zero-emission safe tempos and electric vehicles,” says communications officer Mona Sharma at ICIMOD.

With local governments in place after 20 years, priority should also be on ending the monopoly of transportation syndicates so the existing public transport system is streamlined.

An already-available alternative could be electric scooters, the prices of which have dropped to Rs138,000 for some models like the Japanese Terra Echo. Chinese-made Niu M1 scooters are costlier, but are stylish and convenient. Both have showrooms in Kathmandu. Tax rebates can bring prices down more.

Says cardiologist Prakash Regmi: “The government has to decrease the number of petrol two wheelers, provide better public transport and promote electric vehicles to ensure a healthy future for us all.” 🇳🇵



Just a few motorcycles and scooters would not have been dangerous, but having 820,000 in an already-polluted Valley has poisoned Kathmandu's air. Motorcycles give off lethal carbon monoxide, ozone and other invisible poisonous gases.

nepalitimes.com



PHOTOS: GOPEN RAI

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a lethal gas given off during incomplete combustion of fuel.

Haemoglobin

Haemoglobin (Hb) is an iron rich protein found in red blood cells in mammals, that carries oxygen to various parts of the body. It has an affinity to oxygen, but binds much more readily with carbon monoxide. When CO attaches itself to Hb, it prevents vital oxygen from reaching various tissues and organs.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning (% CO concentration)

Mild poisoning

0.08%

Headache, asphyxia, dizziness, dry cough, chest pain, nausea, vomiting, hallucinations and high blood pressure.

Moderate poisoning

Up to **0.32%**

Motor paralysis and loss of consciousness.

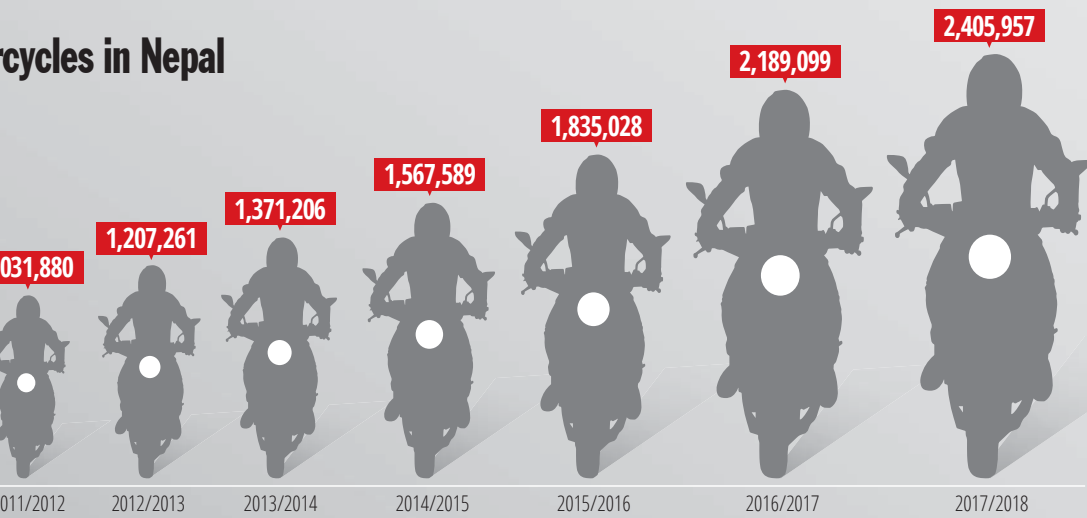
Severe poisoning

Above **1.2%**

Convulsions, respiratory arrest, coma, leading to death in 3 minutes.



Motorcycles in Nepal



SILENT KILLERS

Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO), a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas found in vehicular exhaust, is so poisonous it is one of the commoner methods of suicide.

It is produced from incomplete combustion of fuel, and should not be mistaken for carbon dioxide (CO₂)

which is a gas essential for plant life while being the primary greenhouse gas warming the Earth.

Motorcycles are particularly notorious for producing CO because of the incomplete combustion in their engines. A few recreational motorcycles on the roads may not pose a danger, but when there are 800,000 motorcycles in a city like Kathmandu, it poisons the air we breathe.

“Prolonged exposure to carbon monoxide acts as a slow poison, causing various diseases of the heart,” explains cardiologist Prakash Regmi at Bir Hospital.

Human blood is red because it contains the iron-rich protein haemoglobin (Hb) in the red corpuscles which has an affinity for oxygen and carries it to various organs and tissues in the body. But haemoglobin has a 240 times greater affinity for carbon monoxide than oxygen. When Hb binds with CO, the blood cannot absorb oxygen, leading to suffocation and eventually death.

Kathmandu's streets normally record 0.0012% CO, which will not kill people outright but can lead to cardiac and lung complications. Says respiratory expert Raju Pangani at HAMS Hospital: “Carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen carrying capacity of the body, and can have lethal consequences.”

Ozone

Carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds and nitrous oxides in motorcycle exhaust go through complex chemical reactions in the presence of sunlight to form ground-level ozone.

This is ‘bad’ ozone, and different from ‘good’ stratospheric ozone that blocks harmful solar radiation. The ozone molecule is composed of three atoms of oxygen, unlike the oxygen we breathe which contains two atoms.

As traffic increases, bad ozone builds up during warm sunny days, harming lung functions. Kathmandu hospitals have recorded a sharp increase in patients with chronic respiratory diseases, and higher concentration of surface ozone is one of the factors.

A 2017 study published in the journal *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* measured ground-level ozone at various points in Kathmandu and found that it was highest in the day, during pre-monsoon months, and at higher altitudes on the Valley rim, exceeding the WHO standard.

Says ICIMOD atmospheric scientist Arnico Panday, who co-authored the paper: “Ozone is a growing problem in northern South Asia, and is a threat to both agriculture and human health.”

EVENTS



Kora cycling challenge

Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge is back this July, in its eighth edition. Riders from Nepal and all over the world gather to ride a personal challenge of 50/75/100km around Kathmandu Valley, for a social cause. 21 July, 7am-7pm, Begins at Patan, (01)4412508

Chautari

Mcube Interdisciplinary Students Residency 2018 exhibition entitled ‘Chautari: Under the Shade,’ shows art works of 8 young artists from USA and Nepal created during one month’s residency workshop under the guidance of visual artist/curator Manish Lal Shrestha. 19-24 July, 11am onwards, Gallery Mcube, Chakupat, Lalitpur, 9851170110

Bracelet from waste paper

A workshop on arranging papers, making and coating beads and bracelets, and sharing knowledge on waste paper management, by Ramita Maharjan from Lahana Hastakala Udhog. 19 July, 12-3pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, Rs800, (01) 5521812



One mic, million stories

Pre-session of Astra Mic Night ‘One Mic; Million Stories’ Season 2. Performing artists: Udit Shahi, Purple August, Binod DeubaThakuri, Yagya Raj Bogati, Aadarsh Mishra, Alan Jung Thapa, Sakshyam Adhikari, Pragati Parajuli and Aayush Shrestha. 19 July, 6-8pm, Old School Restaurant, Jhamsikhel, 9813506196

The light of consciousness

Bipin Ghimire’s 11th solo art exhibition exploring social and political themes relevant to Nepali society. 13-14 July, 11am onwards, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, (01) 4220735

Irish artists in Nepal

Bernadette Doolan, Declan Cody, Kate Murphy, Michael Duggan, Olivia O’Dwyer and Paddy Lennon exhibit their mixed media work. 13-20 July, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4433930



Euro film fest

The 7th European Union Film Festival screens over a dozen documentaries on European art, heritage and culture, and fiction films with engaging and thought-provoking narratives. Featuring: Taranta on the Road, The Odyssey, Escape from the Moomin Valley, Tiger Theory, Defenders of Riga, My Pure Land and Berlin Babylon. 14 July, 11am-6pm, Nepal Tourism Board, Tickets available at: Barista Lavazza, Lazimpat, Nanglo Bakery Café, Pulchowk and Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road, (01) 4429445

Educational fair

The 12th ECAN Educational Fair with more than 100 stalls provides information and advice regarding education abroad. 19-22 July, 10am-5pm, Bhrikutimandap, (01) 4421487

From Darkness to Light

Sandhya Regmi’s ninth solo exhibition, consisting of 33 abstract and semi-abstract paintings of spiritual objects. 9-14 July, Art Council, Baber Mahal, (01) 4220735

Sketches by Jagadish

Jagadish Chitrakar, a renowned self-taught sculptor and son of Amar Chitrakar, visualises interesting forms and compositions in his collection of sketches. 13 July-13 September, 11am-7pm, Yala Madala, Patan, (01) 5536690

MUSIC



Shades of Sound

Witness modern-day fusion by Woody from New Zealand as he plays some electronica, downbeat lounge, slash dub, funky breaks mixed live with saxophone and flute. 13 July, 7pm onwards, Electric Pagoda Bar/ Café, Thamel, (01) 4700123

Harish Mathema

A musical night with Harish Mathema and Legend Band. Join in and feel the music with good food and a variety of cocktails. 13 July, 6pm onwards, Last Friday Bar and Grill, Lazimpat, (01) 4002170

Saturday Rock

Double entertainment with live musical performance by Artaj band and live World Cup game screening after the show. Make sure to be there, it’s free entry. 14 July, 2 pm onwards, Jatra Restaurant, Kirtipur, (01) 4330780



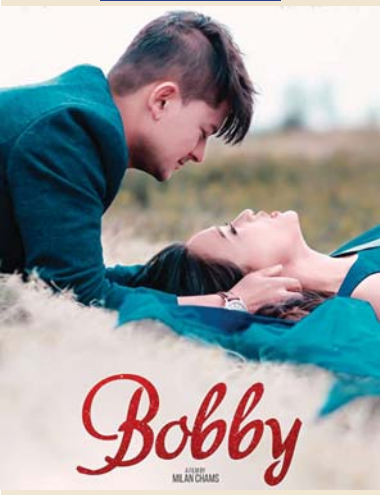
Jammin’ Thursday

A jam session to meet fellow musicians and play a few tunes together. No boundaries in genre, style or lineup. Just have fun listening to people making music and hang out. 19 July, 6:30pm onwards, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5543554

Open Stage

SukraBar stage is open for anyone to sing their songs and tell their stories. Let the stage be yours. 18 July, 7-10pm, SukraBar, Lazimpat, (01) 4428576

OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu on 13 July

The Nepali film, based on a real life love story, is a first of its kind Nepali movie. Not only is it based on a real story, but it also stars the real life couple. Every couple wishes for books to be written and movies to be made on their love story, but this couple’s wish came true. Directed by Milan Chams, the film is shot in Nepal and Norway. It stars Kabita Gurung Thapa and Umesh Thapa as themselves, and portrays the unique journey of their relationship.

DINING



Embers

A spacious yet cosy place serving a blend of continental and Nepali favourites. Enjoy Ember’s special Nepali Set Thali with Carlsberg beer and World Cup screening. Krishna Galli, Pulchok, (01) 5555306

Rodi Bar

Shake up the summer with fresh and tropical flavour of mangoes, special tangy cocktails and mocktails or beer varieties at the Rodi Patio Bar. Watch the World Cup final while enjoying yummy delights. 14 July, 12:30-10:30pm, Soaltee Crown Plaza Kathmandu, Tahachal, (01) 4273999

Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen

Visit for unlimited authentic Indian food, football finale, and happy hours. 15 July, 6-10pm, Pulchok, 9803299610

Dhokaima

Dhokaima’s Chinese style chicken or tofu chilly goes well with any drink, to accompany you for a thrilling Worl Cup match. Let’s see which team wins! PatanDhoka, (01) 5522113



The Yard

This weekend, catch up with fellow craft beer lovers at the homemade craft beer festival overlooking the restaurant’s beautiful organic garden. Salmon Fillet all the way from Abu Dhabi to add more excitement to your get-together. 14 July, 1pm onwards, The Yard by Oasis Garden Homes, Sanepa, (01) 5532965

Mango Brunch

Get your mouth busy brunching on mango delights. Shangri-La’s Saturday Brunch brings the king of fruits on the plate in varieties of ways. It is Shangri-La’s 40th birthday, join the party! 14 July, 12-3:30pm, Shangri-La Hotel, Lazimpat, Rs1,500, (01) 4412999

GETAWAY



Park Village Resort

Enjoy the grand finale of the World cup at the Park village resort with BBQ, dinner and overnight stay, far away from the hussle and bustle of Kathmandu. Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, Rs12,999, (01) 4370286

Namo Buddha Resort

Constructed in traditional Newari style and surrounded by lush greenery, the resort is an oasis of peace and tranquility, offering spectacular views of the Himalayas on clear days. A short hike to Namobuddha and ThanguTashi Yangtze Monastery is sure to provide much needed relief from the city stress. Namobuddha, Phulbari, 9851106802



Gokarna Forest Resort

The Resort is a numinous paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out cheers for football teams in the World Cup finale. Enjoy the screening with the Resort’s best offer, book 2 rooms on BB plan and get a complimentary room. 17-22 July, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali, Rs21,000, (01) 4451212

Movie Garden

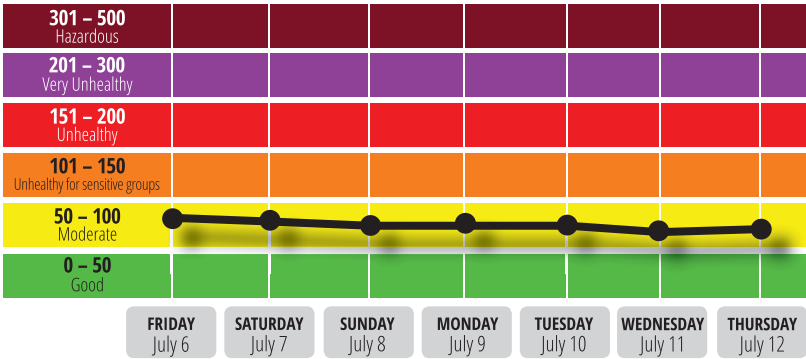
Watch the World Cup games in the garden with a fully stocked bar, a kitchen serving pizza all night, and the perfect setting overlooking Fewa Lake. North Lakeside, 9801022828

Godavari Village Resort

Spread over 14 lush green acres, the resort offers mountain views and traditionally-styled cottages and buildings overlooking vast expanses of rice fields. Godavari, (01) 5560675

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 6 - 12 July



Even with steady rainfall every day in the past week, there is still considerable dust and emissions pollution when the rains clear. The daily AQI in the past week never averaged in the green Good band because of the concentration of particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns (PM 2.5) in the air. So far, the focus has been on suspended particles in the air, but as the story on gaseous pollution on page 14-15 this week shows, the concentration of carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides and ozone is very high. These are from vehicular emissions, especially from the 820,000 motorcycles in Kathmandu Valley. <https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

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Planet Football



Who is the champion in the game against climate change?

With the World Cup drawing to a climax, everyone from economists to an octopus (RIP) have tried to predict who will win. Germany and Russia are out. Brazil and Argentina have gone home. But which of the countries participating in this year's World Cup in Russia are tackling climate

change, kicking out fossil fuels to score a better future for their country and the planet? We looked at the greenhouse gas emissions people in each country produce. So we ran the numbers. Nigeria has the best shirts in the tournament, as well as one of the cooler songs, and they are also the per-capita-emissions champions,

contributing a tiny 0.55 tons of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission per person per year. Nepal would have won this World Cup hands down with its annual 0.2 tons per capita emission. But their route to victory in the Climate change Cup is shrouded in controversy. They beat fellow-West Africans from Senegal, but Senegalese fans had reason to cry foul because Nigeria is a major oil exporter even though Nigerians may consume little of it. Costa Rica, which Nigeria beats in this low-emissions final, is the first and only country in the world that has said it will ban fossil fuels entirely. Costa Rica deserved a free kick. But are per capita emissions the best measure of whether a country is really a climate champion? To decarbonise the economy while improving living standards, deployment of renewable energy

may ultimately be more important. Traditional powerhouses Spain, Germany and Brazil may be out of the football World Cup, but they all made it to the Climate Change semi-finals. Brazil owes more to its reliance on hydropower than Neymar. Unlike the Brazilian football team which relied on one player for goals, the country itself has tried to diversify away from a single source of energy. American soccer fans saw their team miss out on qualification, and their sorrow will be compounded by the fact that this is one World Cup they could have won. Despite Donald Trump trying to roll back on climate action, the US launched more renewable energy projects than any of the nations competing in the 2018 World Cup. Only China has better stats, and the Chinese have only ever qualified for one World Cup.

Fighting climate change isn't just about greenhouse gas emissions or renewable energy. We have already seen global temperatures increase by about 1° C since the 1880s, and even with serious action, we are going to see the impacts of climate change increase as well. While the World Cup was going on, the Siberian Arctic coast experienced the hottest and most prolonged summer on record. Unfortunately, the per capita carbon emission champions were immediately eliminated in the World Cup qualifying rounds. Every African and South American nation is now out. This should be a wake up call for some of the richer nations at the tournament, who are supposed to be financing efforts to adapt. Instead, the adaptation World Cup is dominated by small, rich European nations. And even then, it's a pretty low scoring affair. Most countries are simply not ready to defeat climate change. The most worrying is that the next World Cup in 2022 is scheduled to take place in Qatar – the country with the highest per capita emissions in the world. Qatar has a lot of work to do if it wants to be a World Cup climate champion. Adapted from Responsible Business.



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European Union Film Festival

On the occasion of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the European Union and British Council Nepal are holding a European Union film festival. The first phase of the festival was held in Pokhara last week. In the second phase, films from the UK, Germany, Italy, France, Finland, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Luxembourg and Portugal will be screened at Tourism Board in Kathmandu, 14-16 July.

My Pure Land 14 July | 11:00 AM

Based on the true story of a woman in Pakistan who has to defend her land from scheming relatives, after her husband is incarcerated in a bitter family feud. Though their arms and ammunitions are limited, the women take up guns against 200 hired mercenaries in an isolated farmhouse.



Berlin Babylon, Germany 1:00 PM

Set in 1929, this period drama explores a troubled time in World history through the eyes of German police officers. Based on novels by Volker Kutscher, the movie contains characters trying to uncover a web of intrigue, while themselves battling traumatic pasts.



Teorie Tygra 3:15 PM

A comedy about an aging man who leaves for adventure and freedom, to get away from his controlling wife. After the death of his father in law, he realises that his mother in law had been controlling him in the same way as his wife controls him, and his daughter controls his son-in-law.



Defenders of Riga 5:15 PM

The most watched Latvian movie after its independence in 1991, the movie depicts Latvia's battle to defend Riga in 1919. Novice Latvian riflemen defeat a much larger and better prepared army of Germans left behind in the area, one year after the end of WW1.

L' Odyssee, France 15 July | 11:00 AM

This biography of French adventurer, biologist, marine conservationist, writer, and filmmaker Jacques Cousteau spans 30 years of his extraordinary life. In his adventurous life he researched the sea and all forms of aquatic life, and helped develop the aqua-lung.

Escape from the Moomin Valley 1:30 PM

The film shows the life of Tove Jansson, creator of the popular Moomin characters, who considered herself a painter first and foremost. The movie uses many of her paintings to propel the story, as well as accounts from her family and friends.



Bauhaus Germany 3:00 PM

The movie traces the German art movement called Bauhaus from 1919-1933, that floated the idea of combining art with craft, and combining all forms of art including architecture. The influential art movement has been called the face of the 20th century.

Taranta on the Road 5:15 PM

A man and a woman are thrown together in their journey as illegal immigrants from Africa to Italy. Forced by circumstances, the strangers pretend to be a married couple in the eyes of three musicians who have decided to help them navigate the tricky European police system.

A selection of European short films will be shown on 16 July.



MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: Norwegian Ambassador Lasse Bjørn Johannessen and UNDP country director Renaud Meyer signed an agreement on Monday to launch a project to enhance justice in collaboration with the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.



RATNA SHRESTHA/RSS

CHINA BOUND: Prime Minister KP Oli hands over a pair of one-horned rhinos named Bhadra and Rupasi to Chinese Ambassador Yu Hong in Kathmandu on Thursday.



BIKRAM RAI

VENICE OF THE EAST: Drainage obstruction due to roads and houses caused a massive flood in Bhaktapur on Thursday, blocking the highway near Thimi.



OM ASTHA RAI

TROUBLED WATERS: A school girl blocked by a flooded road in Bhaktapur on Thursday. Many schools were closed because of the flood on the Hanumante Khola.



HBL

ASSURANCE: Ashoke SJB Rana, CEO of Himalayan Bank and Noor Prakash Pradhan of Lumbini General Insurance signed an agreement on Wednesday to deliver Bank assurance services to HBL customers.

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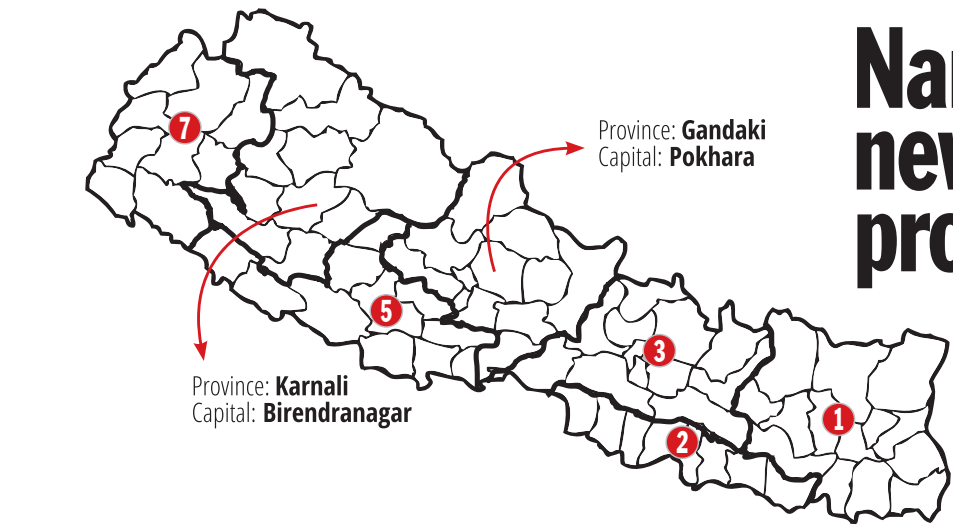
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Naming new provinces

Naya Patrika, 10 July

ग्याँ पत्रिका

Only two provinces have shed their numbers and got names, and also decided on their capitals. At a time when other provinces had not even started a debate over possible names and capital cities, Province 6 forged a consensus to name itself 'Karnali' after the river. It also chose Birendranagar as its permanent capital.

Province 4 followed suit last week, but not as easily as Karnali Province. After an intense debate, Province 4 settled on Gandaki with Pokhara as its permanent capital city. But this was greeted with street protests from those who wanted it named Tamuwan.

What is the status of the naming of the other six provinces?

Province 1

Five months have passed after the first meeting of the Province 1 assembly, but the House hasn't even debated its possible names. Members of the assembly are divided over whether to retain

Biratnagar as the capital, or move it somewhere else. Pratap Prakash Hangnam of the NC says: "A baby is baptised on the ninth day, but our province has not got a name even in five months."

Chief Minister Sher Dhan Rai assured that Province 1's name and capital will be finalised before the ongoing monsoon session ends.

Province 2

Province 2 MPs are divided over the name and capital. The ruling Federal Socialist Forum Nepal and the Rashtriya Janata Party want to call it Madhes Province. But the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and the NC are against this, preferring Mithila Province. The NCP is ready to name it either Mithila or even Janaki. Janakpur is Province 2's temporary capital, but there is an intense lobbying to move it to Birganj.

Province 3

Naming Province 3 has not been a divisive issue, but its capital is. Province 3 MPs from Nuwakot, Kavre, Bhaktapur and Chitwan are against retaining Hetauda as the

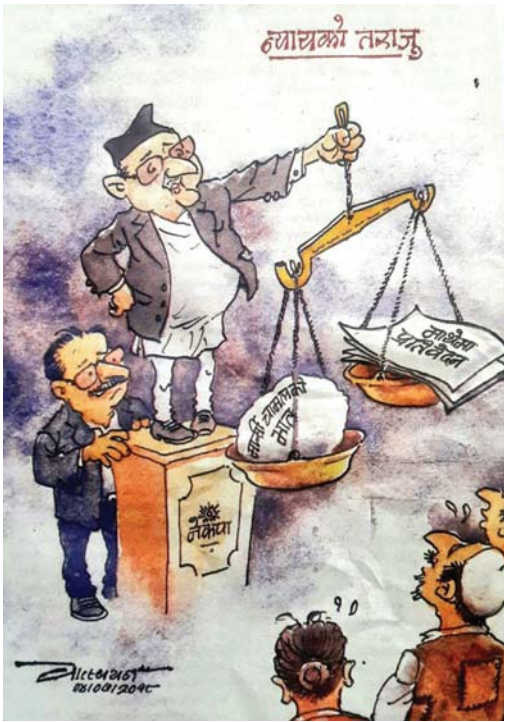
capital. The federal government has formed a 13-member committee led by MP Bishal Khadka to recommend the most suitable place, and it is unlikely to be Hetauda.

Province 5

Naming Province 5 is not as tricky as zeroing in on a capital. Chief Minister Shankar Pokharel favours his home district of Dang, but the NCP General Secretary Bishnu Poudel and the NC leader Balkrishna Khad want to retain Butwal as the provincial capital. Other MPs are lobbying for Banke, Bardiya, Rolpa and East Rukum as well.

Province 7

The main opposition NC has tabled a proposal in the provincial assembly demanding Province 7's name and capital be finalised soon, but there has been no debate yet. MPs from each political party want to move the Province 7 capital to their districts like Doti and Dadeldhura. But others want to retain the headquarters in Dhangadi itself.



Scale of justice

Left: red rice
Right: Mathema report
Podium: Nepal Communist Party

कान्तिपुर

Durga Baral in Kantipur, July 6



"Red rice is tasteless now"

Net: Hunger strike
Rabin Sayami in

नागरिक

Nagarik, 7 July



Rajesh KC in www.12khari.com, July 6

Detaining doctors

www.setopati.com, 12 July

सेतोपाटी

Just like how they used to kidnap people during the war, ex-Maoists -- now part of the government -- have kidnapped a doctor from hospital for refusing to prepare a fake report.

Less than a week after police arrested Sanskrit University Vice Chancellor Kul Prasad Koirala from Kathmandu Airport and kept him in a garage at the PM residence for one hour, Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa (*pictured, left*), an



ex-Maoist commander, has ordered the detention of a physician. Bhojraj Adhikari (*pictured, right*) a doctor at Bir Hospital, was examining his patients on Tuesday afternoon when Thapa's political adviser Surya Subedi, accompanied by other ex-Maoists, barged into the hospital and whisked him away. Adhikari was told that the Home Minister wanted to see him. But he was kept in an isolated room for one hour, and Home

Minister Thapa never showed up at all. Instead, Subedi himself grilled Adhikari as if he was a police officer.

"I was treated like a criminal," Adhikari said. "No one knew of my detention, and I did not know whom to contact. I was really terrified."

Earlier that day, four ex-Maoist combatants had asked Adhikari to give them reports exaggerating their wounds so they could claim bigger monthly allowances as conflict victims. Adhikari did not listen to



them, and they went to complain to the Home Ministry. "The Home Minister's adviser threatened me by saying: 'You have insulted our great soldiers, and you will have to pay for it,'" Adhikari said. Thapa admitted to have taken Adhikari to the Home Ministry, but he denied he was threatened. "We just wanted to ask him a few questions about the concerns raised by his ex-comrades," he said, "I gave him tea, and treated him well."


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Building homes

Deadline for earthquake reconstruction makes survivors erect sheds to claim payment

Om Astha Rai

Kamala Shrestha (pictured, right) wanted to build a new earthquake-resistant house after her two-storey ancestral home in Kathmandu was destroyed by the April 2015 earthquake. But the Rs300,000 housing grant for survivors was not enough to build a decent home.

Her four-member family lived in a tent for some months before moving into a rented room. Her husband went to Qatar to earn enough to rebuild their home. But he was cheated by his employer, and they could not begin work.

Then last year, the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) gave a deadline to survivors who had already received the first tranche of Rs50,000 to start rebuilding their houses before January 2018 to be eligible for the second instalment. Shrestha could not meet the deadline.

So, like her neighbours, the 35-year-old took a Rs200,000 loan from a local cooperative, and built a one-room tin roofed shed in just three weeks so she could get the second and final instalments of her NRA grant, and pay back the loan.

The NRA's January 2018 deadline was so unrealistic many families missed it. It was extended to April 2018, and then again to July. Because rumours spread that those who missed the deadline would have to return the first tranche and

their children would not get birth and citizenship certificates, they quickly built sheds.

"I had already received and spent the first tranche, so I felt trapped," says Shrestha. "I was worried that my family would be black-listed, and my children would not be able to go to school."

Like many others, Shrestha's new home is so small her family will not fit in it. They could add floors later, but that would make it vulnerable to future earthquakes.

Thousands of families in the quake zone are now hurriedly building one-room structures, fearing the repercussions of not being able to meet the July deadline. The NRA can now claim reconstruction has speeded up, but most homes are not fit to live in.

"The government's housing reconstruction and retrofit grants are a huge opportunity to leverage safer housing, but it could be lost if tranche disbursement deadlines continue to force people to build homes that do not meet their living requirements simply to get the grant," explains Siobhan Kennedy at the Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP).

When the NRA first announced the deadline last year, only 42,576 private houses had been completed. That figure shot up to 196,149 this July -- a four-fold increase in just one year. The NRA and the government can boast that they are meeting targets, but the figures hide the fact that a significant number of the new houses are small, one-room makeshift structures.

Sangita Tamang, 36, is building a one-room house also too small for her seven-member family. Her old mud and brick house perched near Shivapuri National Park was damaged by the earthquake, but the family continued to live there after plastering the cracks.

Tamang wanted to build a proper two-room



POSTHASTE:

Kamala Shrestha with her one-room shed, which she built in Gokarna for fear of being black-listed for missing the July 2018 deadline (above).

Sangita Shrestha (left) quickly built a one-room extension to meet the deadline, but her seven-member family will continue to live in the damaged old house.

house after her husband returned with savings from Saudi Arabia next winter, but she had to build it in a hurry to meet the deadline.

"This new house will be our kitchen, but we will continue to live in our old house," admits Tamang, who adds she was worried about her children not getting citizenship documents and missing out on education and jobs in future.

The NRA denies threatening to black-list earthquake-affected families for missing the deadline. "People will have to return the first tranche if they really do not want to build new houses, but the government cannot deny them their



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ALL PHOTOS: OM ASTHA RAI



UNDER AN ULTIMATUM

The latest Community Perception Report by the UK-funded Common Feedback Project in May 2018 shows over one-third of earthquake-affected families rebuilt houses to meet the NRA's July deadline. Half of these are one-room houses that are just sheds. Another 12% said they quickly rebuilt small houses fearing that they would be black-listed if they missed the deadline. Only 6% of families said they rebuilt homes after managing enough money from sources other than the NRA.

What are the two main factors that influenced you to start rebuilding?



basic rights,” says spokesperson Manohar Ghimire. But the rumours have already caused confusion, forcing people to build houses for fear of losing the next tranche, or being debarred from citizenship. The new deadline is next week, but over 300,000 families have yet not claimed the second instalment of their housing grants. The deadline will have to be extended again. The NRA was scheduled to meet this week to decide on the extension, but the government abruptly sacked CEO Yubraj Bhusal as part of a purge against officials appointed by the previous

NC government. The meeting has been postponed indefinitely. The NRA has been plagued by political interference and active non-cooperation from line ministries since it was set up in late 2015 to coordinate reconstruction. It has seen four CEOs, depending on which party was in power. This leaves earthquake survivors once again in uncertainty and confusion. Those who were trying to meet the July deadline despite the lack of money, masons, and raw materials this rainy season want a realistic new cutoff date so they can really build back better, safer and stronger. 🇳🇵



The number of houses built by earthquake survivors has increased four-fold in just one year due to the July 2018 deadline, but watch this video to find out if these hurriedly-built homes meet basic living requirements. nepalitimes.com



Small is suitable

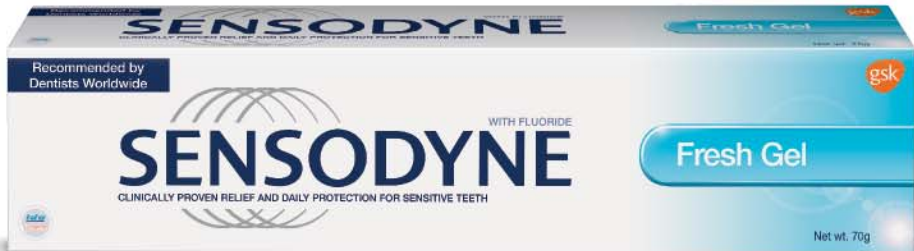
Kumar Tamang, 36, lived with his wife and son in an isolated two-storey house atop a hill in Panauti municipality of Kavre district. The earthquake not only destroyed his mud and stone home, but also blocked their water supply. His wife had to walk up and down the hill every day to fetch water, so he sold his ancestral land and bought a smaller plot where he recently built a one-room house. “My father built a large house because we had a joint family,” says Tamang. “We do not need such a big place anymore because our family is very small.” The new house is adjacent to two other one-room houses built by neighbours Aite Tamang and Junimaya Tamang who share the same long tin roof (pictured, above). Not all the houses are being built small to meet the NRA grant deadline, out-migration and depopulation of the earthquake districts means there are fewer people in the mountains. Traditional joint families are also breaking apart, even in the villages. And some families have split deliberately to claim more reconstruction grants from the government. Aite Tamang’s four-member family is now the largest in the neighbourhood, and he says they don’t really need a two-storey house anymore. Another neighbour, 33-year-old Junimaya Tamang, has also built a one-room house because she doesn’t have children, and her husband just returned from Malaysia after three years. “Why would we need a big house when there are just two of us?” she asks. A survey by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in 2015 showed 86% of the 700,000 damaged houses had two or multiple floors. The UK-funded Common Feedback Project published a new survey report in May, which shows 84% of the newly built houses are just one-storey. Survivors are building smaller houses due to multiple factors like migration, shrinking family size, inadequate land, increased construction cost, and the pressure to rebuild by the July 2018 deadline. Civil engineer Anil Parajuli sees no problem if a one-room house suits a small family. “But if the small houses are built to meet the deadline, they may not be strong enough to withstand future earthquakes.” 🇳🇵 **Om Astha Rai** in Kavre



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Nepal Army, Pvt. Ltd.

After years of conducting war on a war-footing Nepal's erstwhile subterraneans are not pussy-footing around. Now that they have attained power though the barrel of the GONe, they have promised prosperity on a war-footing as well. And since most mouth organs of the state are more or less defuncted, to attain that noble objective we have an urgent need for iron discipline in this country. And who better to instill military-type order than the military?

Which must be why the Minister of Commercialisation, Industriousness and Undersupply Herr Matrik Jadav announced this week that he was preparing to hand over the management of the Hetauda Spinning Mill to the Nepal Army.

My thought exactly. We cannot think of a better institution to manufacture garments on a war-footing than the Nepal Army. With its glorious history of Gorkha Expansionism, and the valuable sacrifices it has made since to defend Nepal's territorial integrity on land, sea and air, there is none more qualified to manage a frock factory. An army that could set up an assembly line to manufacture leather cannons to fight the British in 1816 can easily mass produce socks.

And since the Army HQ is already making the Fast Tarai Track, it may as well take over various other slow-track projects in the PM's bucket list like the Baudgha-Jorpati Canal, and the Kopundole Interbasin Inland Waterway for maritime navigation.

The Army already provides yeoman and yeowoman's service running petrol pumps, hospitals, schools, banquet halls, rents out horse-drawn carriages for weddings, and is into construction and real estate. So it doesn't make sense to restrict its theatre of operations (in a manner of speaking).

Kathmandu Petropolitan City has made a royal mess of managing capital's garbage and sewage, and we are confident the Army can do a much better job turning the Okharpauwa Landfill Site into a top secret research facility for germ warfare and Nepal's secret biological weapons program. This is so hush-hush, I could tell you what is going on there, but then I'd have to kill you.

The Nepal Army should also be given the task of completing the much-delayed Republic Tower National Pride Project. After successive contractors ran away with the money this erectile dysfunction is behind schedule by four years. If we cannot even finish a republican tower, why should the intercontinental community take our republic seriously?

But with the Army taking over, we can be sure it will look like a decoy ballistic missile on a launch pad and serve as a strategic deterrent against foreign invasion of our motherland.

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