









# SHAKING THINGS UP

t is difficult to imagine that things will ever be 'normal' in Nepal again after Lthis catastrophe, but 'normalcy' does inevitably return over time.

Devastating natural disasters like these are cathartic, shaking up society so much that they can help settle problems that looked intractable before the event. The Sri Lankan war and the Aceh separatist conflict in Indonesia both wound down in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami that hit both countries hard ten years ago. There is reason to hope that a crisis of this magnitude will allow Nepal's rulers to also draw a lesson or two, be more far-sighted and not hold the country hostage to their personal ambitions. Tall order, but no harm in hoping.

Earthquakes have tectonic origins and we call them 'natural disasters', but the devastation and loss of life they cause are often man-made. Poorly built houses, settlements on slopes vulnerable to landslides, botched rescue and relief, all cost lives. And the primary reason for such lethal negligence lies in politics – too much of it, or too little.

When you have too much politics, it means elected officials spend so much time clawing at each other to get to power and plunder resources that they have no inclination to work to fulfill the long-term needs of their constituencies. And when there is too little politics in a democracy, it erodes the accountability of elected officials. Nepal currently suffers from both: too much politics at the national level, and too little politics at the grassroots where we haven't had local elections for 18 years.

The result is not hard to discern during the current crisis. National level politicians, instead of coming together during this emergency are already trying to make political capital out of it. Vocal political leaders who don't miss an opportunity to be seen at public gatherings to give long exhortative speeches are conspicuously absent in the aftermath of the earthquake.



# What undermined our ability to deal promptly and adequately with search, rescue and relief was first and foremost a failure of politics.

They have all gone into hiding. The 'youth forces' and 'voung communists' that the parties mobilise to burn buses and block roads could have been employed to dig up people trapped under the rubble of buildings, take relief supplies to remote areas or help manage shelters.

The absence of elected village, district and municipal councils has been felt most acutely during this crisis. Local leaders now have no incentive or compulsion to be accountable to their people. Some residual responsibility still remains in VDCs from elections two decades ago, and other communities where there is a tradition of collective response still make it possible for emergency services to be promptly delivered. But at the national and district

level, there was deadly delay in search, rescue and relief.

Contrary to what some senior ministers said, this earthquake was not "unexpected", everyone knew it was coming. What was unexpected was that it was not a M8.5 mega-earthquake which could have killed at least 100,000 people outright in the capital. Tragic as the loss of life and damage in Kathmandu Valley was, it fell far short of that worst case scenario. The phones worked most of the time, electricity was back within three days, the hospitals were intact and 85 per cent of the residential buildings survived. The highways out of Kathmandu were open, and the airport wasn't damaged. We may not be so lucky next time.

Seismologists have done a preliminary analysis of last Saturday's thrust earthquake. Subsequent ruptures along the fault that set off the aftershocks trail off to the east. This means a lot of the tectonic tension beneath Central Nepal has now been released possibly postponing a mega-earthquake for now. However, this leaves a 500 year seismic gap west of the epicentre (Pokhara and westwards) where the chances of a major thrust event is even more likely. What all this simply means is that this earthquake was a lesson for us all that we must be prepared for an even bigger one in western Nepal which could happen tomorrow or 50 years from now, but it will happen. And a M8.5 earthquake in western Nepal will shake Kathmandu up even more than the M7.9 on 25 April.

Nepal is one of the most denselypopulated mountain countries in the world, and there is no other alternative but to be prepared for future disasters. We have indications of it this time in the 12 worst-affected districts. The destruction is so complete and vast that even the most well-prepared state apparatus in the world would have found it a challenge to cope. Entire villages of 500 people wiped off the map by a massive avalanche, village after village razed, rivers blocked and valleys cut off – where does one even begin to respond? Very soon, search and rescue will be pointless, it will only be a question of getting relief supplies in. And that means tents, food and medicines in that order.

The bottleneck is not relief material, but logistics. The Nepal Army only has five small helicopters and a large one, even with additional air assets from India we are spread too thin. The international outpouring of aid shows that there is tremendous goodwill for Nepal, but all the food, medicine and shelter needs to be taken to those who need them most and that is our job. To do that job well, to coordinate effectively, we have to first fix our politics.

### YOUR SAY

Most of your previous predictions about a big earthquake in Kathmandu estimated death of at least 100,000 ('Day 3 Update', eSpecial). Plus all the houses above two and half stories collapsing and, among other things runway/bridges getting damaged and isolating the surviving population. I guess we were 'lucky' in that regard. But what you failed to see was the danger of old, non-reinforced mud and brick houses, and temples and people living in them. There was a lot of focus on the vulnerability of taller, newer, concrete reinforced buildings, which, almost all are intact. Now, in hindsight, more needs to be studied about these houses and their structural integrity and how to improve them. And it has to be based on actual empirical evidence than the stereotyped bias against 'unsafe urban sprawl built without any earthquake norms'. It is not practical to have a two-storey house in this limited, highly congested city. Krishna S

Courage, Nepal. The world is aware, and we are sending prayers and, more importantly, donations, to help as best as we can.

### **Chris Winter**

 The capital has an acute shortage of open space, not because we don't have them but some of them have been usurped by the state or parastatal institutions and public utilities like schools, even politically connected ones ('Second night in the open', eSpecial) . Even those still empty have turned into ugly looking caricatures of parks.

### Grimalzee

**Ashis** 

- After the Nepal quake, epidemics are going to be a serious issue. Awareness must be raised to some extent but I guess some new strategies must be thought out.
- First, inspect the buildings, mark them safe and then go back to business. Until then let the aid go directly to the

How to cope with a disaster? (Coming out stronger from crisis, Anjana Rajbhandary, #755) Send help to meet basic needs, so parents are not fearful or stressed then children follow in happiness.

### **Gypsy Soul-fire**

The people of Nepal are not alone. While it is their courage and fortitude that will see them through this monumental tragedy, the world stands with them in solidarity.

### ashok759

Tears well up, as we see the heart-breaking pictures of Nepal in ruins. We pray and hope that people may still be alive under the debris. It will definitely be a herculean task to resurrect the economy of Nepal. But people of Nepal will once again rise like phoenix and stand tall like mighty Himalayas. As they know while the earthquake may crumble buildings, it will never crush the spirit of brave people of Nepal.

T S Karthik

The disaster today will be growth tomorrow. Do not be discouraged.

### Alejandro Alvarez

It's their luck that they survived ('Thanking the Living Goddess for life', nepalitimes. com). How could a girl, believed to be a living goddess stop a house from going down? I don't believe she saved her family by using her divine power. It was just a coincidence. Worshiping the living goddess is part of our tradition but we should not be blinded by faith. In disasters like Saturday's earthquake, nothing but presence of mind can help you.

### Nitya Nanda Sharma

Nepal Army, police and rescue teams working at this hour need equipment and detectors like those of the French team (82 hours, eSpecial). Commendable rescue effort.

Barsha

### Times THIS WEEK

Most liked on Facebook Coming out stronger from crisis by Anjana Rajbhandary (134 likes)

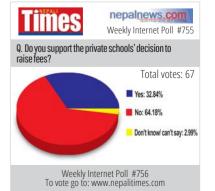




Most visited online page "Langtang is gone" by Sahina Shrestha



(23.728 views)



 ${\tt Q}.$  How do you rate the government's response to Saturday's earthquake?







# A slow start

### Whatever happened to 'Disaster Preparedness'?

ver the last few days, a massive earthquake followed by a series of 'aftershocks' - many of which were also extremely severe - have together killed probably as many as 6,000 people, injured possibly twice as many as that, buried whole villages and destroyed or severely damaged thousands of homes and public buildings across the hill areas of central Nepal, including the Kathmandu Valley.



David Seddon

The response to this disaster has been relatively swift, compared with the response to many disasters in other countries on other occasions, at least in the Kathmandu Valley itself. But serious questions need to be asked as to why the government and other agencies in Nepal were not able to provide the kind of technical and material assistance that was urgently required across all the areas affected within the first crucial days after the initial shock.

Valley, in addition to generally older residential buildings, many centuries-old structures were destroyed, including some at UNESCO World Heritage sites.

This series of earthquakes and aftershocks constitutes the most severe 'natural' disaster to strike Nepal since the 1934 Nepal-Bihar earthquake. Its effects were also felt across large areas of Tibet, North India and Bangladesh. When it came, it came as a surprise but geophysicists had warned for decades that Nepal was vulnerable to a deadly earthquake and Kathmandu is universally regarded as the city most likely to experience a major earthquake for many years.

In the last five years in particular, the numerous aid agencies in Kathmandu have been preparing programs, projects and protocols relating to 'disaster preparedness', which has become something of a mantra in 'aid' circles. DFID Nepal, for example, last year approved a new, generously funded Community Development Programme (CDP) with a particular focus on strengthening the resilience of local communities.

The Government of Nepal has also signed up to this new conventional wisdom regarding the priority to be accorded

In all such disasters, the immediate priority is to provide adequate resources for the rescue of those buried under collapsed buildings and the treatment of injuries sustained in the disaster. It is evident from reports that the response provided by those government and non-government agencies on the spot in this initial crucial phase was inadequate.

By contrast, the Indian Armed Forces, with the support of the government, swiftly initiated Operation Maitri (Operation Amity or Friendship), a humanitarian mission with the primary objective of conducting relief and rescue operations in Nepal. The Chinese government quickly sent a team to assist in the rescue and relief operations, and offers of assistance and pledges of funds were received from many other countries within a few days, including a generous \$1 million by the government of Bhutan. Money is not a problem, but effective action on the ground has been.

Rescue operations were largely confined in the first 24 hours to the central areas of Kathmandu and Patan and appear to have been mainly the result of impromptu and largely uncoordinated efforts by local people and some local service

of disruptions to power and the danger of collapsing buildings, hospital and clinic staff treated many of their patients outside in the streets.

It was not really until the second and third days that it was recognised that the major areas affected would be the towns and villages outside the central conurbation of Kathmandu and Patan where most of the attention had hitherto been focused. Now, increasingly, there were reports from further afield inside and outside the Valley - that Bhaktapur had been badly hit and that towns no more than 25 miles outside the main conurbation were also sites of death and destruction. Initial reports from aerial stories to the areas considered to be the epicentre of the earthquake (Gorkha and Lamjung), began to reveal both the extent of devastation and also the lack of resources for rescue and relief.

But it was not until the third day that aerial and satellite photos revealed that large parts of districts to the north east of Kathmandu, such as Kavre, Sindhupalchok and Dolakha, were also severely affected and effectively constituted another major disaster area. Not until days three and four was there

Within Nepal, the UNDP moved quite quickly into action to coordinate a response, but there was little indication that the government of Nepal was in a position to take the lead and it was not until several days after the initial earthquake that the Prime Minister made any kind of public statement. A few politicians, notably Babu Ram Bhattarai, were prepared to take action individually, but in general there has been a woeful lack of responsibility from those supposedly governing the country.

None of the many bilateral and multilateral aid agencies with a presence in Kathmandu were prepared practically for such a disaster by, for example, stockpiling the predictably required essential goods, such as blankets, tents, bottled drinking water, food supplies, medical equipment and medicines, sanitary towels etc. which they could make available immediately during the crucial initial rescue and relief phases.

Nor does it seem that they had made any preparations to have teams of appropriately trained technical personnel available for the inevitable rescue operations, to support the government emergency services and Army. There is little



We should also question whether the funds that are now pouring in from public and private donations (already approaching \$50 million) will be used effectively and accounted for, transparently. It is still not clear what happened to the substantial fund of donations given last year both to the PM's Disaster Fund and to CDOs in many districts to provide relief after the exceptional summer of drought, floods and landslides.

The earthquake triggered an avalanche on Mount Everest, killing at least 18 in the area of the Base Camp. It also triggered another huge avalanche in the Langtang Valley, where villages were buried and several hundred people at least are missing. Large areas in the western districts of central Nepal, like Gorkha and Lamjung, and in the region to the northeast of Kathmandu, such as Kavre, Sindhupalchok and Dolakha, were severely affected, with whole villages devastated in some places. In the Kathmandu

to 'disaster preparedness', particularly in the context of climate change, and has in recent years established its own institutions and procedures, from the national down to the local level. For example, the Prime Minister's Disaster Fund was set up to receive donations and to allocate resources at a national level, while in each district there is now a Disaster Relief Committee which, together with the CDO and LDO, is supposed to respond to and coordinate responses to natural disasters in any given district.

However, despite all this talk of 'disaster preparedness' and some effort to educate the population at large in the need to 'be prepared', there is little indication that either the government or the foreign agencies on the spot in Kathmandu, or the hospitals and other emergency services, were in fact adequately prepared to meet the demands resulting from the earthquake and series of aftershocks in the crucial first days.

providers. In the first two days, information provided regarding the impact and implications of the disaster was heavily reliant on individuals posting reports and taking photographs of areas where destruction had been particularly severe; there was virtually no information of any kind, and certainly none on the situation in areas outside the Kathmandu Valley, provided by government sources or by any of the foreign aid agencies. Such reports tended to focus on Kathmandu and Everest Base Camp.

The hospitals and clinics in Kathmandu were clearly unprepared and effectively overwhelmed by the sudden demand for treatment from the many people injured: there were even private hospitals and clinics that turned people away, presumably because they could not pay – although the government did quickly intervene to oblige private hospitals to treat all patients in need. In part because of their unpreparedness and sudden massive demand, but also because

any real 'on the ground reporting' from any of these areas, let alone any attempt to bring resources to bear to assist with local efforts at rescue and relief.

After the initial phase of rescue and treatment of injuries, the main concern in responses to disasters is usually to provide relief, usually in the form of shelter, blankets, drinking water, food and continuing medical treatment. It seems clear that the initial responses in most areas were simply those of the local population, fleeing damaged and collapsing buildings or running for cover, working together to look after family members, friends and neighbours, or simply trying to save themselves, often camping out in the open for night after night. By days four and five there were indications that, in Kathmandu and in the other areas severely affected, there was growing anger at the apparent lack of government or other external support for largely local efforts to respond to the growing needs of a devastated population.

indication either that any of the numerous INGOs or NGOs based in Kathmandu, but with branches outside the Valley, have been initially in a position to provide immediate assistance, despite their awareness in principle of the importance of 'disaster preparedness'.

There is no intention here of 'blaming' anyone – and it should be recognised that the efforts now being made by all parties are impressive - but it was a slow start, and there are serious questions to be asked as to why there was so little 'disaster preparedness' to respond effectively to the needs and demands of the Nepali people so terribly affected in those crucial first few days.

There is also a real need to monitor and to account openly for the flow of funds being donated for disaster relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, something that will take many months and even years to achieve, under the best of circumstances. @pigreen

### Himes

# **Surviving trauma**

### Hello everyone,

I hope you are all taking care of each other. Last Saturday's earthquake has affected millions of Nepalis. Experiencing and dealing



### ASK ANJANA ANYTHING

Anjana Rajbhandary

with the aftermath of a natural disaster is traumatising for many people. Witnessing loved ones lose their lives and their homes can cause severe and persistent posttraumatic stress and grief.

Aftershocks are common and they tend to bring back bad memories of the incident. Sometimes sights, sounds and sensations can remind people of the earthquake and cause mental distress. The lucky ones do survive without any physical injuries but may be mentally scarred, and some may exhibit aggressive behaviour or be more withdrawn. It is important to pay attention to signs of trauma and provide support as needed. Families can help each other and if needed, they should reach out to mental health professionals. Please send me more questions

askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com or @AnjyRajy

My 12-year old daughter is getting nightmares after the earthquake and keeps asking me if we will die after every tremor. I try to reassure her that we will all be fine and we will not die but even I am not sure. I keep hearing about there being more powerful earthquakes. How do I make sure that she is not traumatised for life?

AR: I am so sorry that your daughter is having a very difficult time after the earthquake, but it is quite natural for children and adults to have such reactions after going through a very traumatic experience. In case of younger children, they can be

more resilient than adults because they tend to be able to cope and recover more easily than adults after experiencing or witnessing extensive trauma. With sleeping outside and not having power, routine gets disrupted. Now that we have fewer aftershocks, it is important you get back to your regular routine as soon as possible to start getting used to your old way of life. Try talking to your daughter and explain it to her that you are now safe, but need to be careful as always. It is not necessary to tell young children every detail that you hear about potential earthquakes. There have been stories about what may happen. Earthquakes cannot be predicted. One important

thing I would stress on is that children's functioning and reactions do get influenced by the way the parents or adults react, as children look up to adults. Children tend to do best when parents remain or at least appear to remain calm and respond to the children's questions. It is necessary to address these concerns of nightmares from an early stage so it does not deteriorate over time. Some local organisations are training volunteers with trauma related psychosocial training, so hopefully there will be enough resources and support available as it will be necessary after the dust of the earthquake settles. Good luck.

Anjana is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician and has four years of experience in adult mental health in Maine, USA

# **Coming out stronger from crisis**

Our mountains and temples has been pulverised, but Nepal will rise again

It started like just any other Saturday morning, we were busy preparing for a wedding to go to in the afternoon. But, as they say, 'it takes an instant to change lifetime' and at 11.56AM on 25 April that is exactly what happened. The geography of our history crumbled into a pile of dust.

In early April, I had taken my overseas friend to all three Darbar Squares and she considered them the most beautiful urban landscapes she had ever seen. Little did we know that it would be the last time we would see them intact. All three historic palaces are now in ruins.

Monuments, however, can be rebuilt. The priority now is to save lives – of the trapped, the wounded and the infirm sleeping in the rain and in the open. Could five minutes change so much? Yes, it changed the face of Nepal. But amidst all the news of deaths and destruction, there were also heart-warming stories of generosity, kindness, and altruism.

In horrifying times like this, people still have the innate capacity to overcome hardships and demonstrate a hidden strength to cope. People cope,



families cope, communities cope and so do countries. Despite all its problems, Nepal and Nepalis are coping. Our mountains and temples has been pulverised, but Nepal will rise again, we will come out stronger from this crisis. It will take time, but we will get there.

The earthquake is a reminder of trauma and loss, and it is going to affect our future behaviour as individuals and as a nation. Not being able to meet one's basic needs can affect anyone's resources and coping skills. People can only tolerate that much, and to cope with the stress some survivors may be more likely to engage in delinquent or careless behaviour and substance abuse.

There will be an increasing number of survivors of the earthquake who will experience post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Major natural calamities like this one cause widespread anxiety, even the slightest

movement can remind individuals of the recent disaster create panic and fear.

Apart from dealing with the immediate grief of a relative or friend who died, there is also the shock and dread at having witnessed such a cataclysmic event. Some are wracked with guilt for having survived while a near and dear one perished, others will find it difficult to erase the memory from their minds.

Children are more resilient and may

not be as mentally affected as adults, and proof of that is the sight of children playing cricket in the shelters in Kathmandu these past few days, while their parents try to keep them out of the path of falling buildings. Their level of trauma in children depends on the amount of fear and stress the parents or adults themselves exhibit. If parents show fear, the children are afraid. If the parents are stressed, the children are also tense.

Slightly older children and teenagers could be more affected by the fear of death. Seeing destruction at close hand makes a very powerful impact on the lives of young adults. Their lives are forever changed.

Children and adults may have nightmares and sleeping problems, and also have issues with relationships and coping abilities. As adults and parents, it is necessary to support each other. As for parents, be caring as possible, explain to the children what happened without the unnecessary details, and establish a routine as soon as possible and when needed ask for help. Make sure to take care of yourselves in the process. Embrace the emotions, as it is natural to be sad and afraid.

Once the dust settles, we will notice more mental and emotional distress and if left untreated, they can become a bigger problem later. Please meet with a medical or mental health professional if needed. With support, we can help each other overcome the trauma of 25 April. Anjana Rajbhandary @AnjyRajy







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# Believe it, or not

Accurate and prompt information was a commodity in short supply in the aftermath of the earthquake

onight will be the sixth night out in the open in a field near our home for my family since the earthquake hit on 25 April. Although our



### BETWEEN THE

Tsering Dolker Gurung

neighbourhood in Ekantakuna did not suffer serious damage, families are refusing to sleep inside because they have heard rumours fanned by some Indian tv channels that a bigger, more

disastrous quake will strike any day. Even government officials and police have fanned the panic by repeating this in public.

The absurd prediction that a 9 magnitude earthquake would occur at 6PM on Monday was shared widely on social networking sites, sending an already panicked crowd into a state of terror. Then came rumours that the city will soon face a famine, or that the moon had flipped.

During emergencies nothing matters more than the family's safety. That will explain why even educated intellectuals were so quick to believe and spread these rumours despite knowing it is impossible for scientists

фремента варк BIZ BRIEFS

### How you can help

Prime Minister's National Relief Fund

**Everest Bank Account 1,** 

Number: 00100-105200270, SWIFT Code: EVBLNPKA

**Everest Bank Account 2,** 

Number: 00101102200012, SWIFT Code: EVBLNPKA

Nepal Bank Ltd,

Number: 00211053313, SWIFT Code: NEBLNPKA

Global Bank Ltd,

Number: 0411010000005, SWIFT Code: GLBBNPKA

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Ltd,

Number: 18013243801, SWIFT Code: SCBLNPKA

Nepal-Bangladesh Bank Ltd,

Number: 035141C, SWIFT Code: NPBBNPKA

**Sherpa Adventure Gear** is raising money to relieve the suffering through its Paldorje Education Fund network, already set up to benefit the children of Sherpa families in remote villages www.crowdrise.com/helpsherpashelpnepal

**Prabal Gurung** is raising funds through the organisation, Shikshya Foundation Nepal.

www.crowdrise.com/nepalearthquakefund

**Trekking Adventures** have set up a trust account for donation for its guides, porters and their families who have had their homes damaged during the earthquake.

Bank Name: Westpac New Zealand, Account name: Guides & Porters of Trekking Adventures Trust Fund, Account number: 03-1522-0109147-000

**Lions Club of Kathmandu** is raising funds to buy relief materials and organise transportation to dispatch items to the affected areas as soon as

www.lionsclubs.org.np

**The City Museum** has launched an international online fundraising to help address the loss of cultural heritage. It will also organise auctions, sales of art and local events.

info@thecitymuseum.org



to predict exactly when or where an earthquake will occur. Rational thinking and the use of logic takes a back seat when you are constantly warned of an approaching apocalypse.

Partly because of the rumours, hundreds of thousands of people thronged Kalanki and Gongabu this week to flee the city. Cashing in on the widespread panic were bus owners and shopkeepers who fleeced customers for everything from water to waiwai. A bus driver paid Rs 500 for a jar of water, which costs only Rs 50 on other days, and he passed on that cost to his passengers who had to pay Rs 2,000 for a ticket to Hetauda that would normally cost Rs 600.

Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, free messaging apps like Viber helped Nepalis abroad reconnect with families at home as phone lines went dead. My own family reached out to me on wechat, and so did relatives in Tibet, which was also affected badly by Saturday's quake.

While these sites proved valuable for worried relatives to check up on the status of their families in Nepal, it also became a place for people to spread propagated news, rumours and to spread panic.

Most Nepalis still have not understood that most information shared on social media is unfiltered. There is no editor on Facebook or Twitter to check and verify the accuracy and authenticity of each post. The impression among Nepal's five million or so Facebook users seem to be that the Internet is the most

credible medium there is because it is the most modern form of communication.

This is precisely why a person who just shared a post about a five star hotel denying permission for shelter seekers to camp on its lawn will enthusiastically share another one five minutes later refuting it once that goes viral. Thankfully, the social web is also governed by the self-correcting phenomenon of the 'wiki-effect' where users with expertise can quickly correct misinformation: which means false rumours on Twitter like that of a tiger escaping from Jawalakhel Zoo will be quickly corrected.

We also saw this week how rumours and gossip thrive when experts, those with authoritative information or the government, stay out of the informationsphere in times of crisis. During the royal massacre in 2001, rumours spread fast and wild because the government was absent. When there was finally an official statement, people did not trust the information because the public had been lied to so often.

An absence of updates by the government fueled speculation and helped spread panic. Only days after the earthquake did Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) update its website. The Ministry of Home Affairs busied itself announcing the death toll from each district, but had no information about what relief material was needed and where. How could volunteers contribute, where were the shelters? Ministers did come out on radio, but the reach of FM has now been taken over by the reach of FB. Smarphones were spreading rumours, radio was too slow to counter it.

The lack of information not only delayed rescue and relief where it was needed most, but demoralised eager volunteers, and led to concentration of help in few areas and duplication of relief. In the absence of direction from the government locals took it upon themselves to find out where and what kind of help was needed.

Bibeksheel Nepali, a youth group, set up a help desk at the airport after reading about rescue workers being stranded there. Another group of young people from Jhamsikhel are helping distribute relief packages to locals at Harsiddhi. Others have gone to Khokana, where there has been no government help. Hundreds of volunteers have been participating at clean-up campaigns of Tundikhel and BICC, which together shelter more than 500 families.

These are all commendable efforts. One can't help but imagine how much more help would have reached the right people had the information been available more readily. We have help, but not enough of the right kind of information.

The outside world got its visuals from parachute journalists who descended upon Kathmandu. The images they sent out only showed the ruins of the Darbar Squares and surrounding areas. No one took pictures of the 85 per cent of residences still standing in the capital. The media highlights and magnifies the negative, and in doing so distorts the truth. @Chenreeyang





### **APPEAL**

Yeti Airlines and Tara Air have been conducting their CSR through the Yeti Foundation Fund for nearly a decade. Looking at the present crisis in our country, Yeti Group of companies have decided to donate NPR.4 million to the Yeti Foundation Fund. The fund will be utilized for the rescue, medical help and support for the victim and needy.

All Yeti Group staff have also committed to contribute their one day salary to this fund. Furthermore, Tara Air and Yeti Airlines have been assisting wherever possible to transport evacuate and rescue back to Kathmandu.

We would like to inform you that Yeti Airlines and Tara Air have already presented a total financial assistance of over NPR 20 million to various social organizations who are undertaking relief work during this crisis.

Interested person who wish to join the cause can donate in the following details.

At this moment, every little contributions can make a big difference. If you would like to be a donor or contribute in any way please visit

www.yetifoundation.org

If you are injured and in need of emergency medical support. Please call 9801012507, 9802523727, 9801005389 for emergency bookings.

One Twin-Otter will also be made available for the relief distribution to the mountain regions where the company has served for nearly 17 years.

**Account Name** Yeti Foundation Nepal

**Account Number** 00511148815

**Bank Name** Laxmi Bank Ltd., Hatisar, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Swift Code LXBLNPKA** 



# **GIVING TO THE LIVING**

### **FUNDING**

- **Sattya** is helping raise funds for earthquake survivors in Lamjung and Gorkha, where entire villages have been levelled. *relief.sattya.org*
- **UNICEF** is raising money for the 1.7m children who are in urgent need of aid in the areas worst-hit by the earthquake. www.supportunicef.org/nepal
- **Childreach** is raising money to help villages of Sindupalchok and Manikharka. www.childreach.org.uk/nepal-appeal
- **Possible** works with America Nepal Medical Foundation to raise funds for the Nepal earthquake relief efforts. www.possiblehealth.org
- A crowd funding project to raise fund for the rebuilding of Sankhu, where 90 per cent of buildings have reportedly been damaged.

  www.crowdfunder.co.uk/rebuild-sankhu
- Maya, directed by Veemsen Lama, was shot in Nepal to raise awareness about street kids. The crew organises a crowd funding to support children left with nothing, after the earthquake. life.indiegogo.com/fundraisers/help-the-children-of-nepal--3
- Help Nepal Network (HNN) is raising money to procure relief materials and to dispatch items to the affected. www.helpnepal.net
- **USAID** lists organisations through which donations can be sent. www.usaid.gov/nepal-earthquake

### **RELIEF CAMPS**

- Tundikhel, Kathmandu *Navraj Bhandari: 9843478995*
- Khulamanch, Kathmandu *Khumraj Punjali: 9851015011*
- Dasrath Rangashala Stadium, Kathmandu
- Dipendra Sharma: 9841484335
- Halchowk, Kathmandu Shanka Prasad Adhikari: 9851124753
- Sankha Park Ringroad, Kathmandu Vishwa Prakash Pandit: 9851031149
- Narayan Chaur, Kathmandu, Shridhar Gautam: 9851095200 or Narbhadur Rajwar: 9841339292



- Sinamangal, Kathmandu, *Rajan Khanal: 9851106244*
- Balambu, Kathmandu Lok Darshan Regmi: 98415555741
- Khumaltar, Kathmandu, Beshraj Sharma: 9851130365
- Sano Gaucharan, Kathmandu *Madhav Prasad Regmi: 9841068328*
- Jawalakhel, Patan
- Laxman Prasad Mainali: 9851147128
   St Xavier's School, Patan
- Bhola Prasad Shiwakoti: 9851109320
   Pulchok Engineering College, Patan
- Dhanbhadur Tamang: 9851105991
- Kirtipur
- Mohdutt Timilsina: 9841028792
- Bhaktapur Darsbar Square *Krishna Chand Poudel: 9851147128*
- Tinkune, Sallaghari, Bhaktapur *Tankamani Sharma: 9851065900*
- Saraswati Secondary School, Kamalvinayak, Bhaktapur
   Thok Prasad Shiwakoti: 9841376930

### **ONLINE RESOURCES**

- Infographics of humanitarian response and earthquake data. Those working on the field are invited to use this platform to help share information and coordinate efforts. See page 13. www.kathmandulivinglabs.org
- A crowd sourcing Google Spread Sheet to notify and check status of hospitals. bit.ly/anmf-hospital-status-report
- A day-by-day overview of the earthquake's aftermath.

  www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/
  operations/nepal/
- Facebook group with information on on-going volunteer efforts and rescue operations www.facebook.com/ NepalEarthquakeReliefVolunteers

- Volunteer with your Internet skills to coordinate volunteer crisis mappers for Nepal.
- www.onlinevolunteering.org
- A website listing the help proposed and supplies provided, through different categories and locations. www.kaha.co
- The National Emergency Operation Center (Ministry of Home Affairs) is providing online updates. www.neoc.gov.np

### **DONATION**

- Donate clothes, blanket or volunteer with a click.www.nepalshare.org
- Donate food, medicine and reconstruction materials for heavily damaged villages. *Yagraraj Maharjan for Bungamati and Khokana, 9841490611*Dhwoj Bahadur Gurung for Barpak in Gorkha, 9849230700

### **FOOD AND WATER**



- Distribution of free noodles.
  Chaudhary Group Noodle Factory,
  Bhaisepati, Bhusan Gurung, 9851077802
- Drinking water, delivered by tanker anywhere within the Kathmandu Valley. Nepal Police Headquarters, Naxal, (01)4412780
- Distribution of bottled water, Dasrath Stadium
- Food and water, distributed by local ministries.

  Ministry of Agriculture, (01)4211905, (01)4211950, (01)4211697

  Ministry of Commerce and Supply, (01)4211631

  Ministry of Urban Development, (01)4211673

### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

- Plastic sheets, ropes and bamboos for construction of toilets at Tundikhel. *Ishan:* 9851016445
- Tent, blankets and medicine needed in Gorkha.

Subhash Ghimire: 9851194247

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

- IMPACT Nepal is looking for volunteers to distribute tents, food, water purification tabs, medical supplies to the 4500 residents of Duwakot, Dhading. 9841519660
- Volunteers are invited to register into a database before being assigned tasks. Volunteers should wear comfortable shoes, rain wear, carry water and bring their own transport if possible.

  Everyday 10.30am, The Yellow House, Sanepa, 9741311750

  www.youcaring.com
- Volunteers required for cleanups. Clean Up Nepal, 9841381046, info@cleanupnepal.org.np
- Bir Hospital Trauma Centre needs volunteers as well as water supply. 9851090730
- Teaching Hospital needs volunteers with or without medical skills. *Aman Pandey: 9848557560*

### **HEALTH AND SANITATION**

- Ujyalo Foundation is distributing water purifiers, oral rehydration packages, women sanitary items, baby wipes, anti diarrheal medications, and first aid kits. Sony KC: 9851160203, Avinash Jha: 9851237070, Watsal Rajbhandari: 9803002203, Amuda Mishra: 9813791459
- Doctors from B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS) are providing care in Gorkha.

  Santosh Chaudhary: 9852056887,

Girish Dahal: 9813560280, Madhur Basnet: 9852056415, Surya Rimal: 9857045671

■ 24 hours medicine supply in Kathmandu.

\*\*Prasit Kadel: 9851133822, Shailesh Sharma: 9851017553

- Health care by local ministries.

  Ministry of Health and Population:
  (01)4262543, (01)4262802, (01)4262696,
  (01)4267376

  Ministry of Home Affairs: (01)4211208,
  (01)4211214

  Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local
  Development: (01)4200000, (01)4200309
- Road Clearing by local ministries, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport: (01)4211782, (01)4211931, (01)4211732, (01)4211655

  Ministry of Home Affairs: (01)4211208, (01)4211214
- Disposal of animal carcasses, Kathmandu Metropolitan City Clean Nepal, Padam Thapa, (01)4279713, 9818302920
- Waste disposal, Sisdol dumping site is in operation since 30 April, for sanitation related issues within Kathmandu (01)4227240, (01)4231719

### **RESCUE AND RECOVERY**



- Nepal Engineering Council and other practicing professionals will assess affected buildings free-of-cost. *(01)5010252*
- Nepal Armed Police Force: 1114
  Ministry of Home Affairs: (01)4211208, (01)4211214
  Ministry of Defence (01)4211289
  Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport: (01)4211782, (01)4211931, (01)4211732, (01)4211655
  Department of Tourism: (01)4247037, (01)4256228, (01)4256231, (01)4256232
- Tent and shelter management by local ministries.
  Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, (01)4200000, (01)4200309

Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and *Transport, (01)4211782, (01)4211931, (01)4211732, (01)4211655*Ministry of Defence, *(01)4211289* 

Ministry of Urban Development,

(01)4211673

# Small is more useful



The contraption is so simple and intuitive, you wonder why no one thought of it before. But Singaporean corporate executive, Hassan Ahmad, did.

After rushing to disaster zones after the Philippine typhoon last year or the cyclone in Burma, Ahmad found that safe drinking water was always the most important item needed by survivors living in shelters. He used to take plastic water bottles, then machines that needed a generator to filter water, but they were either unsustainable or unwieldy solutions

Ahmad (pictured in Kathmandu on Thursday, left, with his water purifier) got his Singapore-based Corporate Citizen Foundation to work with a manufacturer to design a simple pedal-powered membrane filter system that can purify up to 1,500 litres of water per hour and remove germs up to 1 microns. Ahmad and his five-member Swift Emergency Evaluation Deployment (SEED) team arrived on Monday and has already deployed the system at the Annapurna Hotel and through volunteers is distributing water through five tankers to shelters in Kathmandu Valley.

"The system is so light and mobile that

"The system is so light and mobile that it can be sent anywhere as a water filtration solution," Ahmad says, "it doesn't need electricity, and the only thing it can't do is remove chemical contamination."

Corporate Citizen Foundation got 500kg of free cargo on a Silk Air flight from Singapore this week to also bring muchneeded stretchers, body bags and other emergency items. Body bags were in high demand. and were nearly all gone since many of the unclaimed dead were lying in the open when the team arrived.

The Corporate Citizen Foundation was set up by Singapore-based companies after the Asian tsunami to respond to disasters in the region. Its strategic partners include Pacific Flights Services for rapid air mobility, Golden Season which makes the water filtration system, Thomson Medical for medicines, HSL Constructor for engineering and MediaCorp for communications.

Its philosophy is to travel light, buy and access as much as possible of the relief material needed locally and provide appropriate and catalytic relief. www.corporatecitizen.org





he weather becomes the least of our problems when here is catastrophe as serious as the earthquake that veather became a critical factor for the survivors in helters as well as for rescue flights. A westerly front vith heavy snow in the mountains and cold rain in the hills. This spread misery among those sleeping out in the have more seasonal temperatures from Sunday











# The earthquake from above

### **KUNDA DIXIT**

t had been an unseasonably cold and **L**rainy Saturday morning. Twelve of us from the staff of Nepali Times were on a hiking retreat on a hill overlooking the city. The sky was overcast, and we were disappointed not to have a view of the Himalayas to the north. Some of us looked down at the capital spreading out in the bowl-shaped valley below and talked about its rapid, haphazard growth.

As we were descending along the ridge, about a two hours' walk away, suddenly there was a big jolt. The whole mountain started bobbing, as if set on the ocean. We could barely stay standing. "This is the Big One," I thought.

Kathmandu is first on the list of cities deemed most vulnerable to seismic risk in the world. Every year in mid-January, Nepal marks National Earthquake Safety Day to commemorate the massive earthquake that flattened Kathmandu in 1934. Our newspaper's coverage of that occasion this year had highlighted the need for Nepal to better prepare for a disaster; it was only a matter of time before the next one hit.

Puffs, then billows, of dust rose from various parts of the city, within minutes shrouding the whole valley in a brown blanket. The historic town of Bhaktapur, at the eastern edge, looked like it was being swallowed by a sand storm. Kathmandu disappeared.

Our sense of shock turned to fear as we thought of our families down below. Worst-case predictions had forecast that an 8-magnitude quake in Kathmandu could kill 100,000 people, injure 300,000 and level the city. We hugged each other, some of us crying. We reached for our phones The lines were down.

An hour later, as we were still walking downhill, there was another tremor. I felt like I was being yanked forward a couple of meters. The whole mountain seemed to lurch. There were more dust clouds. After those cleared, we noticed through our binoculars that most of the residential areas



Puffs, then billows, of dust rose from various parts of the city, within minutes shrouding the whole valley in a brown blanket. The historic town of Bhaktapur, at the eastern edge, looked like it was being swallowed by a sand storm. Kathmandu disappeared.

of the city seemed intact. That brought us some measure of relief.

A few members of our group had managed to contact their relatives. But four of us had not, and we hurried back. We retrieved my car parked at the foot of the hill, and headed into town. On the road we had to skirt fallen masonry and tilted buildings. People were sitting clustered in open spaces or in the middle of the streets, as far as possible from anything that might collapse. In front of a hospital, we saw patients lying on mattresses set out on the sidewalk.

By late Saturday afternoon, it started becoming clear that though in Kathmandu the casualties were high and the damage was serious, notably at various World Heritage sites, the quake's effects might not be quite as devastating as feared. My own family was safe, though my bed-ridden mother had to be

carried out into the garden; we live in the residential part of Patan, where buildings are sturdier.

But the devastation was expected to be far more severe in the mountains near the epicenter, about 50 miles northwest of the capital, and in the surrounding districts. Reports — including from one resident of Barpak village, to the north, who had walked eight hours to get a phone signal — were just trickling in that entire villages have been wiped out. Landslides were blocking rivers. The highways were unusable.

Any government in the world would have been overwhelmed by the scale of this disaster, but the logistical difficulties in Nepal, a poor, near-roadless, mountainous land, are extraordinary. The country's only international airport is still operational, and China and India quickly started flying in relief help. But the Nepali Army itself has only one big helicopter.

Nepal's unstable political scene is another major obstacle. After a decade of conflict between the government and Maoist insurgents, Nepal's politicians have been too busy battling one another, most recently over constitutional reform, to treat disaster preparedness as a priority. There have been no elections at the district, village or municipal level for almost two decades, and the committees that run local councils aren't organised to coordinate emergency assistance.

And so much of the relief work has fallen on community groups; some, like the one headed by Gopal Awale in Patan, had devised some basic emergency plans in case of a disaster. On Saturday, such groups were helping to take people away from the old

buildings of Kathmandu's inner city, which were hit especially hard, and putting them up in tents in schools, parks and other designated safe areas.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Kathmandu and surrounding areas spent Saturday night on the streets. My family and I slept in a tent in our backyard. It has now been more than 24 hours since the first quake, and by my count we have since been rocked by more than 50 tremors, some major. Yet there is no sign of overt panic. On Sunday, people in my neighbourhood were gathering water bottles and sleeping bags, calmly hunkering down for another night out in the open. 💌

This piece was originally published in The New York Times Opinion on

### SECURE A PPEALING FUEL EFFICIENT EXTREME **HONDA IS SAFE**











# MONUMENTAL LOS

Centuries of Kathmandu's architectural heritage was destroyed in 80 seconds last Saturday

### STÉPHANE HUËT

he bad news is that much of Kathmandu Valley's historic core was reduced to rubble in the 25 April earthquake. The good news is that the temples and palaces have frequently been destroyed every 100 years or so, and they have always been rebuilt.

Many of the historic temples, rest houses and ancient palace complexes that came down on Saturday were also destroyed in the 1934 earthquake, and hastily rebuilt. Some were restored in their original architecture style, others with Newari-style roofs were converted into stucco Moghul domes, and some were simply reinforced.

Fortunately, these temples have been documented and can be rebuilt to their pre-1934 splendour based on period photographs. Five days after the quake, it is apparent that many monuments in Bhaktapur, Patan, Kathmandu, Kirtipur, Bungamati, Khokana and Sankhu have been destroyed.

Bhesh Dahal, Director General of the Department of Archaeology, says a total of 57 monuments of the Kathmandu Valley have been destroyed. "Our team is currently on the field to make the deeper inventories," he told *Nepali Times*.

Many of the edifices that were rebuilt and restored in the past 20 years have remained intact. The Patan Museum courtyard, parts of the Hanuman Dhoka Complex, restored temples and the 'floating' Taleju Temple in Patan remained largely unscathed. The Nyatapola Temple in Bhaktapur and Patan's Krishna Mandir survived 1934, and 2015 as well.

However, as Rohit Ranjitkar of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), points out, there were exceptions. "Our first restoration project was Swota's Rada Krishna Temple but that came down like a house of cards on Saturday," he said.

During a meeting in Patan last Tuesday, KVPT decided to study the technical mistakes while restoring the old temples. "Theory is vague, we have to learn from real life," Ranjitkar told us.

KVPT, has also tried to collect all the artefacts from the damaged monuments before they are stolen or damaged further. Volunteers have been collecting carved wooden columns and eaves, stone and bronze figures of deities and putting them inside the Patan Museum courtyard for safekeeping. In Bhaktapur, the community is involved in protecting the ruins, and making an inventory of the damaged monuments.

Ranjitkar says Kathmandu's kings restored the city after every earthquake through their own resource, and there is no reason why we can't do that again. "It would be good if we did the restoration ourselves but, frankly, at this point I don't mind where the money comes from."

The board members of KVPT in New York are preparing to raise funds, and some donors are already said to be interested in chipping in. But more than money, the real challenge is that the restoration is accurate and conforms as much as possible to the original.

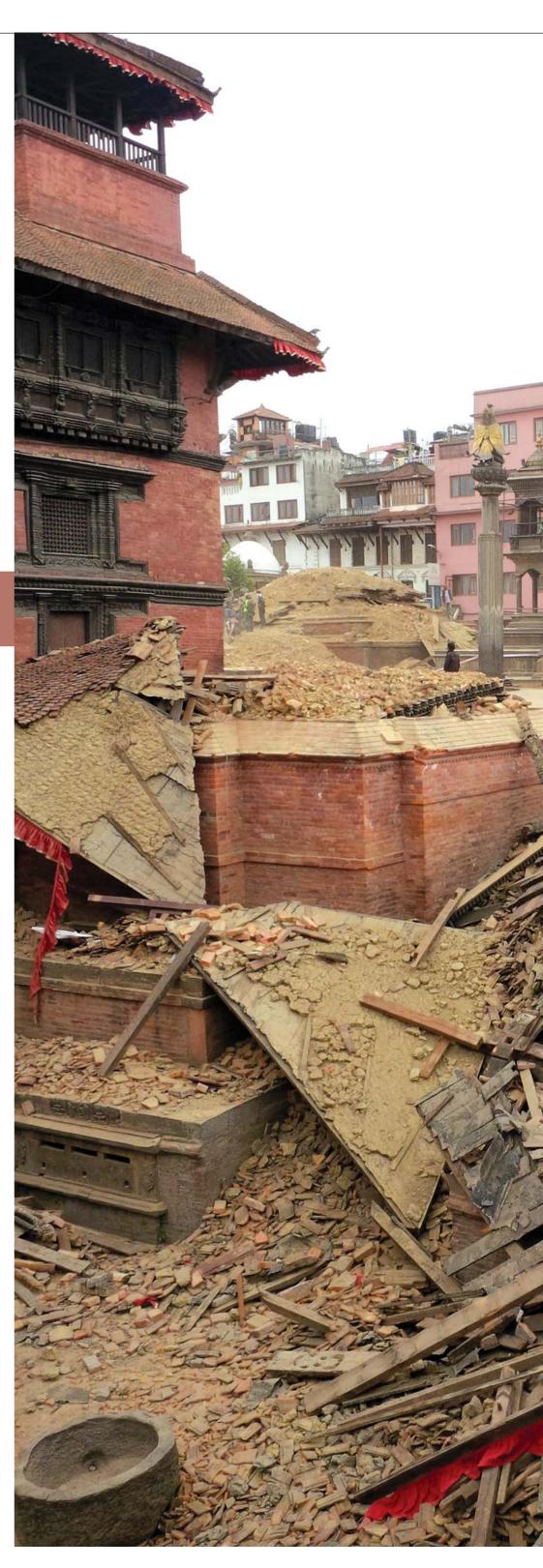
"Some will want to rebuild new temples in concrete since our living culture is more about the resident god rather than the temple's architecture," Ranjitkar explained.

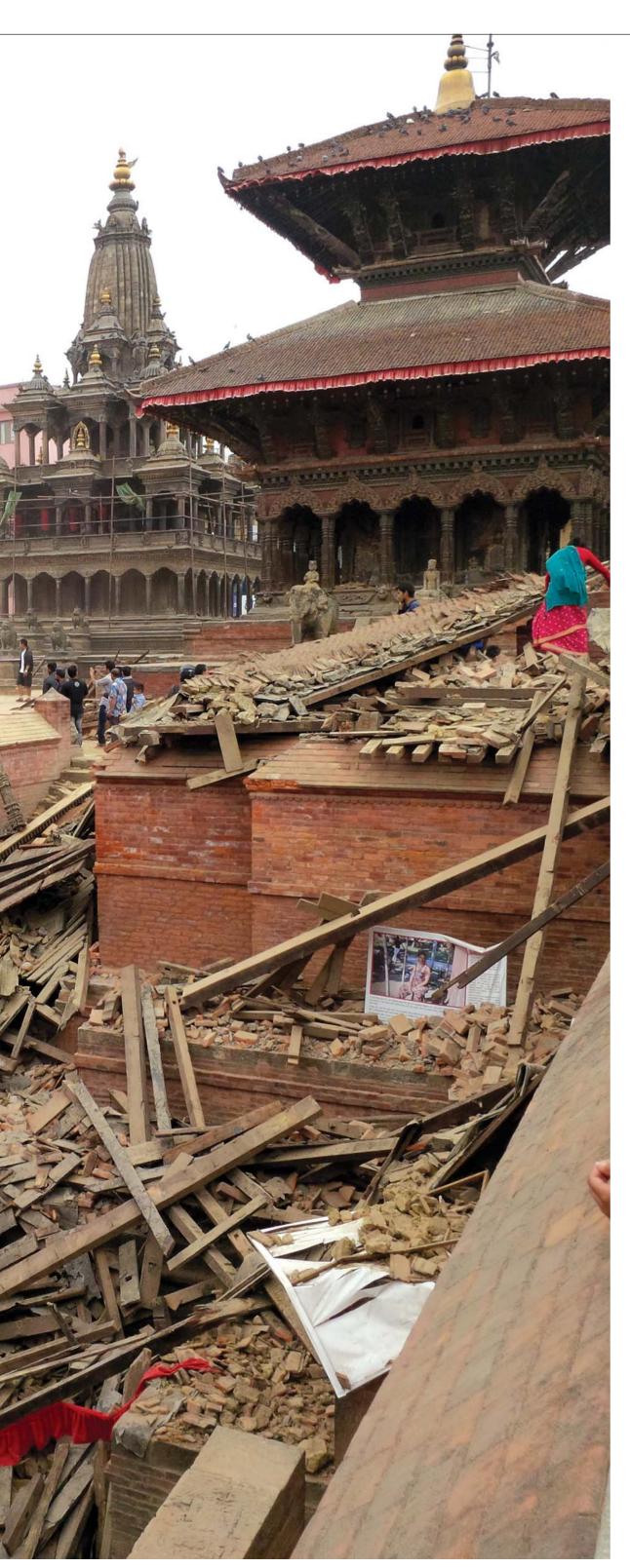
But this might cause the loss of Nepal's soul. It is thus legitimate to ask: can we preserve the essence of our heritage and make it more resistant to future earthquakes?

"It is important to examine the collapsed monuments and learn why some withstand multiple earthquakes while others keep falling down," Ranjitkar said. This process and the reconstruction could take up to seven years, and experts being faithful to the original is more important than the time it takes.

It is reasonable to question whether rebuilding monuments is a priority at a time when the death toll has been so high, so many people are still trapped under collapsed buildings and relief supplies have not reached survivors.

"If there is no people, what is the use of heritage?" asked Ranjitkar. "Those alive will always be able to restore the monuments."











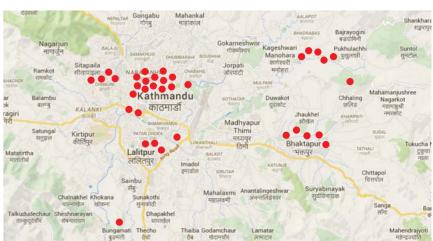
PICS: KUNDA DIX

**TEMPLES OF DOOM:** ( *Clockwise from left*) Krishna Mandir is one of the few temples still standing in Patan Darbar Square.

The statue of King Yognarendra Malla which was knocked off its pedestal in the Patan Museum courtyard for safekeeping.

Priceless carved wooden columns lie amidst the ruins.

What remains of the Radha Krishna Temple in Patan.



• Location of temples and historical sites destroyed on 25 April.



Nirmala Maharjan's collapsed home in Khapinche (*above*). Juju Kaji Awale's wife who died in the earthquake being cremated, along the Bagmati, at Bholdhoka on Sunday (*below*).



# Microcosm of a calamity

### CYNTHIA CHOO and SONIA AWALE

t was a typical Saturday for eight-year-old Nikesh Maharjan, who was playing in his room when his mother came calling for him. The next thing he knew, the floor below him caved in.

The earthquake that hit Kathmandu that morning caused his home in Khapinche of Patan to collapse on itself. When he finally emerged from the rubble a few hours later, he found out that half of his family had perished.

His older brother Rupesh, his mother, Nirmala Maharjan, himself and his elderly grandfather were the only members left in his original family of eight. The young boy lost his father, uncle, aunt and a seven-month-old niece.

Nirmala Maharjan was still in shock two days after the quake happened. "I want to talk but it is still very difficult for me to do so," she told us, her face swollen from weeping.

"There was an earthquake. My house collapsed. I got wounds on my face and shoulders, and it hurts," young Nikesh recounted. His mother also suffered cuts on her face and bruises to her body.

Nikesh is now living in a cramped temporary shelter with his mother and brother in the same neighbourhood, where water and food supplies are running low. The shelter currently houses more than 100 locals seeking refuge from the continuous aftershocks.

At least a dozen houses in the Khapinche, Chikanbaili and Tunchigali areas of Chyasal in Patan collapsed, as did many temples in the historic Darbar Square in

Juju Kaji Awale lost four family members when his house in Tunchigali collapsed during the quake. He lost his wife while his younger brother Rakesh Awale lost his whole family, wife and two children. They cremated their deceased family members in Bholdhoka along the Bagmati. Juju Kaji was too distraught to speak. Like many, he does not have insurance for his house and remains stranded in nearby shelters.

Shiva Shrestha, originally from Chitlang lost his wife and his young children. They were running a roadside eatery, which they had bought just two months ago in Chyasal. The building collapsed along with two other nearby houses.

A customer from Ramechap and a pedestrian who happened to be walking nearby, Ramesh Maharjan, was buried in the ruins. Shrestha's wife was also trapped under the same rubble for six hours.

The Shrestha family also lost their house in Chitlang to the destructive quake, rendering them homeless in the city and the village. Shrestha says he has not received help from the municipality or the government since disaster struck on 25 April.

"All of our things are in the house. We have nothing with us except for what we are wearing," he added.  $\ \ \ \ \ \ \$ 





**JUST SURVIVING:** Chunchok Tamang with her one-year-old daughter. She is paralysed from the waist down after a rock hit her (*above*). Karsom Tamang with her children, the family had a close escape when an avalanche destroyed Langtang Valley (*below*).



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

# "Langtang is gone"

### SAHINA SHRESTHA

he avalanche of ice and rocks fell on the village of Langtang just after the ground started shaking on 25 April. Even before the family of Dawa Tamang could run for safety the debris had engulfed them.

Tamang, 35, has a dazed look on his face at the courtyard of Kathmandu Medical College (KMC) where his family was evacuated by helicopter on Monday. Tamang himself was in Kathmandu with his elder son when the

earthquake struck.

Doctors examined his two-and-half year old son Thindup who broke both his legs while the family tried to escape from their house. His five-year-old daughter Pasang Lhamu escaped with minor injuries. His wife Karsom, 32, sits nearby with an injured arm.

The Tamang family was one of the lucky ones. Nearly all the 200 inhabitants of this tiny village at the base of Mt Langtang perished under a mountain of boulders and ice. The Tamangs only got out

because a trekker chartered a helicopter and evacuated them to Kathmandu.

"The entire village is gone, our house is gone, where can I go once this is over?" asks Tamang whose son will have to be operated in a few days. He says his family was lucky to have a benefactor who brought them out, there was no presence of the government in Langtang.

Next to Tamang in a makeshift bed is Chunchok Tamang, 29, paralysed from the waist down after a rock hit her. Her one-year-old





daughter plays nearby. Her husband and mother-inlaw were killed. "I survived because I wasn't inside the house," she adds, "but my entire family is gone, where will I go with this little one?"

Waiting on her is Kunga Tamang of the same village. "I have been trying to get in touch with my family. But the phone lines are down and there is no way to get there. The roads are blocked and they say even the helicopters haven't been able to land there now. I don't know whether they are dead or alive," says the 20-year-old.

On the ground floor of Civil Hospital in New Baneswor, Ram Lal Danuwar of Sindhupalchok waits on his wife Kali Danuwar, 45. "There was a big bang when the earthquake struck, I was in the field so I escaped injuries but we had to dig my wife out of rubble, she had a broken leg." Danuwar took his wife to Kathmandu in a milk van.

"There are no houses left in the village, they have all been reduced to dust," he says.

Also from Sindupalchok is another Danuwar family, who lost several family members. Five-year-old Regina lies on a bed with broken limbs. "She couldn't make it out of the house soon enough, but at least she survived. Many of our relatives didn't make it. My wife lost her sister-in-law and nephew," says Raj Kumar Danuwar. Altogether 11 people died in his house.

Dipendra Purush Dhakal of KMC says he is overwhelmed with casualties, and the hospital is providing free care and food to the injured.

In a small alley in Gongabu bus park are a row of guest houses that usually accommodate Nepali migrant workers on their way to or from their home districts.

Today, the guest houses are all leaning on each other, with broken windows, cracks and gaping holes where their walls used to be. On the road, amidst piles of broken bricks and a strong stench of rotting bodies, are abandoned flipflops, shards of glass, wires. At the end of the alley, a seven-storey house has pancaked into two. Many of the bodies have been removed. But a man has just been found inside, he is still alive.

Twenty eight-year-old Rishi Khanal of Argakhanchi was pulled out alive from the guest house on Tuesday night after staying trapped underneath fallen floors for 82 hours. A French rescue team and the Armed Police Force (APF) worked relentlessly for more than



# 82 HOURS

ten hours on Tuesday to pull Khanal out safely. The French team had brought special detectors to find out if anyone was still alive, and Khanal was barely breathing, his leg trapped under a broken concrete beam. By Wednesday, the French search and rescue team had pulled out 14 people alive from destroyed buildings in Kathmandu.

"We started drilling a hole through the concrete according to the French team's instructions, then they brought special equipment to cut the beam his leg was stuck under, only to find out his other leg was also caught on something. After cutting the ply, we were finally able to rescue him alive," said Narayan Thapa of APF.

After finding out that Khanal

was still alive a medical team went in to supply him with water and oxygen through a special tube. Rescuers had initially said there was one other person alive underneath the rubble, but he died before they could reach him.

"We had hoped Rishi would make it out alive, since he was talking to us and giving us his name and address," said Kapindra Thapa of the APF, "and he did."

Sahina Shrestha

# Teacher's tragedy

hen we met Babita Kushwaha four months ago in Sanga Chok of Sindhupalchok, she excitedly showed us around the school (*picture, below*) that she had been assigned to by Teach for Nepal, the campaign to bring young motivated Nepali youth to volunteer in rural schools.

Her students were all bright and smiling, and looked up to Kushwaha not just as a teacher, but as a friend and mentor. Many of those students died on Saturday when the earthquake destroyed the building they were in.

Sindhupalchok was 120km from the epicentre of the quake, but the district northeast of Kathmandu bore the brunt of the casualties with at least 1,500 deaths so far. The real figure may be double of that.

Another Teach for Nepal fellow, Jigme Sherpa, who

worked at the Jana Vikas Secondary School was trying to rescue students from the rubble when he received the news that one of his fellow teachers was killed in a falling building.

"I was devastated by the sight of my friend's body under the broken house, I cannot believe that he is gone," Sherpa said. Several of Sherpa's and Kushwaha's students were also killed.

Kushwaha teaches at the Nawalpur Secondary School, and said the earthquake flattened the entire village. "Everything is gone, there is nothing left," she told us.

Teach for Nepal's founder Shisir Khanal said there had not been any organised rescue and relief. "It is very urgent that we get help into Sindhupalchok," he said.

Teach for Nepal's other fellows are now headed to Sindhupalchok, not to teach, but to rescue and provide relief. Teach for Nepal has launched a 'Rebuild Our Communities' campaign to help in at least 100 areas where it works.

Sherpa is determined to go back as soon as he can, and has been posting messages on Facebook, calling for volunteers. He said: "I don't want to go back empty-handed. My village needs me."

Kushwaha told us: "There is nothing I can do except be strong myself. I have to be." 

✓

Cynthia Choo www.teachfornepal.org



■ Back to the village campaign, #745





't is hard to write about the arts, much less a 'fun' film review in times when one has just felt the ground shake between your feet in such a manner that it would seem the earth might break apart.



Sophia Pande

All around us, things are broken, people are traumatised and suffering, mentally and physically: sleeping under the rain, and in a lot of cases, wanting of even basic first aid and supplies.

Perhaps the only film that I have seen that comes close to really portraying the horrific, visceral reality of natural disasters is The Impossible (2012) a film about the tragic Indian Ocean tsunami, triggered by a M 9.2 (approximate) earthquake in 2004

that took 280,000 thousand lives and affected Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, and the Maldives.

For people who choose to see it, be warned, it may be a Hollywood film starring Naomi Watts, as a tough as nails mother, struggling against the elements to save her family, but it is hard to bear. For those of us who have now been through such life altering events, the film drives home one stark point, when earthquakes, or tsunamis, or floods, avalanches, and landslides hit, there is really nothing we can do aside from hold on tight and pray, even if you are a nonbeliever, that your lucky stars are out that day; natural disasters are strangely democratic in that way. They do not differentiate about where they hit, although, it must be said that it is always the poorest people who receive aid last, and are most affected, simply due to lack of access to facilities that the more affluent can get to much

The other lesson that can be learnt from this film is that of basic humanity asserting itself, or not, during natural disasters. The real life story of Maria Belon (Watts) is one of luck, and a great deal of benevolence on the part of the Thai people, who in the midst of being severely affected themselves, helped people who were in need sometimes above, beyond, and despite, their own immediate woes.

We are in that moment of time where we will be judged (and judge ourselves) by how we act when people are in desperate need. I cannot urge you more to reach out to whoever you can, even if it is just in your neighbourhood, and provide what you are able to. Be it food, water, moral support. It is necessary, it is possible, it is in your hands.







LATE ADDRESS: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala addresses the nation on Tuesday, three days after a 7.8M earthquake hit central Nepal on Saturday. The PM in his address declared three days of mourning for victims of the earthquake.



STILL WAITING: An Everest avalanche survivor at an already overcrowded hospital in Kathmandu.



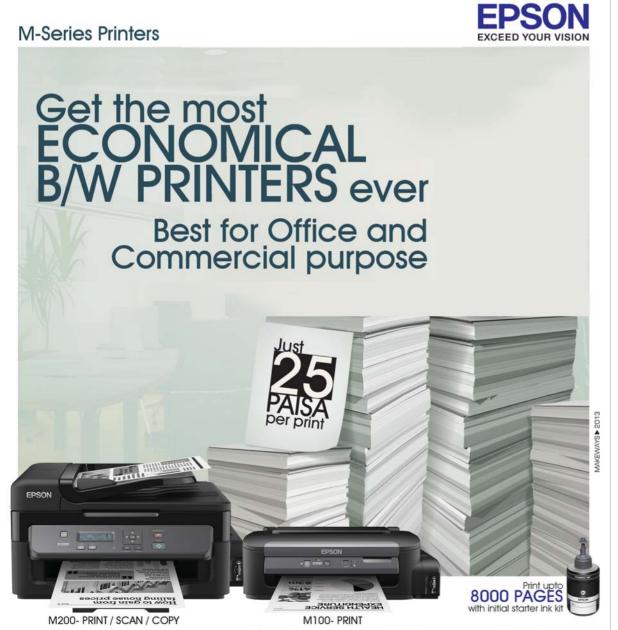
HOMEBOUND: A family gets in the back of a truck leaving Kathmandu Valley on Wednesday. Around 400,000 Nepalis have left the capital since Saturday.



BEST FRIEND: A French rescue worker kisses his dog during a search operation at Sankhu on Wednesday.



HOLDING ON: A Tibetan woman holds onto her father during an aftershock on Sunday in Ekantakuna.



Hiti Pokhari, Durbar Marg Kathmandu, Nepal Tel: 1-4440773/4445920

athmandu Valley Dealers: azimpat : 4410423, New Road ew Road : 4227854, New Road ew Road : 422384, Patan utalisadak : 4268820, Putalisadak

JUST 12 WATTS **POWER** 

CONSUMPTION

Outside Valley Dealers:
Banepa: 011-660888. Biratnagar: 021-538729. Biratnagar
Birtamode: 023-540150. Butwal: 071-545399. Chitwan
Dang: 082-561022. Dhangadhi: 0931-523601, Dhangadhi
Janakpur: 041-525565, Lahan: 033-561205, Mahendranagar
Nepalguni: 081-527092. Pokhara: 081-525300. Surkhet

UPTO 1 YEAR

OR 50,000

SPFFD



# Mapping the aftermath

An Internet repository for geo-located needs data is helping plan and target earthquake relief

### **AYESHA SHAKYA**

In the aftermath of Saturday's powerful earthquake which rattled central Nepal, a global volunteer initiative is working together to map physical infrastructure in affected areas to coordinate rescue and relief operations.

Kathmandu Living Labs
(KLL), in coordination with the
Humanitarian OpenStreetMap
Team (HOTOSM), Mapbox
Bangalore, Nepal Monitor and
Parewa Labs, have brought
together over 2,500 mappers
globally to contribute to the
OpenStreetMap platform to aid
relief agencies and volunteers to
plan and target their relief efforts.

"Kathmandu Living Labs is creating a central repository for geo-located needs data, which is being used for relief efforts," says Prabhas Pokharel of KLL.

The mapping was activated for Nepal the same day as the earthquake and was fully operational from Sunday, 26 April. "As soon as the 5am aftershock on Sunday, our KLL team was in touch with each other. Thanks to solar inverter and ADSL, we immediately began strategising what we could do best to impact and coordinate the situation," adds Pokharel.

Users are allowed to submit reports to the crowd-sourced platform based on the following categories: damage caused by the earthquake, people trapped, blocked roads, help wanted, shelter area and distribution area.

Tags can be added onto the map, allowing users to identify areas that need help and to decide what kind of aid is needed. Larger the size of the tags, the greater the number of reports submitted by users.

"Within two days of launching the platform, we have had a lot of reports coming into the site. But the challenge is to effectively connect that information to the people involved in the rescue and relief work," says KLL's Nama Budhathoki.

The platform serves as a comprehensive database of pertinent issues related to the earthquake, and is supported with location details, contact information, additional photographs as well as videos.



Filter Reports By P

Basely

Germany

G

Users are able to identify issues that need to be acted upon and those that have already been resolved.

KLL have also been working on distributing maps extracted from OpenStreetMap data to aid in earthquake mapping. Most of these maps are focused on the 11 most affected districts, including Sindhupalchok, Gorkha and Ramechhap.

"These maps actually make efforts of the massive online volunteering useful to teams on the ground by providing them access to offline maps on smartphones as well as paper maps," Pokharel adds.

The mappers are vectorising satellite imagery before and after the earthquake to identify roads, tracks and buildings in areas affected by the earthquake. They have mapped 13,199 new miles of roads and 110,681 new buildings. Much of the mapping is coordinated online and is updated every 30 minutes.

KLL works with agencies such as National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), the Nepal Red Cross and Bibeksheel Nepali youth-based political party as well as directly coordinating with civilians to collate the date.

While post-disaster satellite imagery are available for certain parts of Kathmandu Valley, it has been challenging to receive imagery of more remote locations.

Similarly, Google's crisis team is crowdsourcing information to work on getting high definition satellite scans of heavily damaged areas, with priority over inaccessible regions. However, the work is still ongoing as it is looking for assistance to obtain names of villages or co-ordinates

on Google Maps.

ICIMOD is also working with the Government of Nepal by providing its expertise in GIS and remote sensing to support the relief efforts. The Kathmandu-based mountain research institute is working with other stakeholders and space agencies to monitor other hazards triggered by the earthquake such as landslides and bursting of glacial lakes.

To use the platform, visit quakemap.org.

For maps of 11 most affected districts, visit bit.ly/nepalmaps







Soldiers dig under the rubble to rescue Sonit.



Sonit's mother looks on, distraught.



Sonit is found alive after 22 hours under the rubble.



Sonit is unhurt.



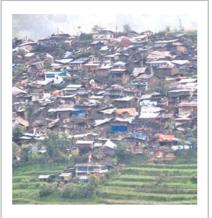
Sonit's mother is in tears

### Rising from the dust

Text and pics by **AMUL THAPA** in www.kathmandutoday.com

Shyam Awal rushed outside his house near Bhaktapur Darbar Square when the earthquake struck on Saturday. Within a few minutes the house collapsed, burying his four-month-old baby Sonit under the rubble. A Nepal Army team worked until late that night to rescue the baby, but gave up and left. Shyam didn't give up hope and stayed put. A few hours later, he heard cries from underneath the rubble and he called the Army back. After digging for several hours, the team finally pulled the baby out.

For more photos of the rescue, see Kathmandu Today http://kathmandutoday.com/2015/04/97431.html



### **Barpak in ruins**

Sudip Kaini, Kantipur, 29 April

कान्तिपर

Anyone who has visited Barpak village of Gorkha district has this image of a picturesque hamlet of identical houses, cobble stone streets, a micro-hydropower plant supplying round-the-clock electricity and home-stay facilities for tourists.

The tiny picturesque village perched on a slope in Gorkha district was completely destroyed in last week's earthquake. Only 50 of the 1,400 houses survived intact. The displaced families have been living in makeshift tents, braving rain and cold weather.

"Even those houses that still stand are not habitable," said local resident, Om Bahadur Ghale. "Altogether 65 bodies had been pulled out from the rubble till Tuesday, but Ghale says there might be

"There was a big jolt and our houses crumbled, the dust covered us in no time," Ghale added. "Within seconds we lost our families, houses, schools, and health posts."

If that wasn't bad enough a fire then started and gutted 35 houses, killing four more people. Eight masonry workers were killed when an building under construction collapsed.

Despite its remoteness, Barpak is not poor. Its industrious inhabitants have prospered from eco-tourism and cottage industries. The village had schools, police office, post office, agriculture office and health post – all of them now destroyed.

The only way rescue teams can reach Barpak is by a helicopter, and Indian and Nepali choppers airlifted 65 injured people on Tuesday. Those who remain survive on biscuits and instant noodles dropped from helicopters.

## Not-so-big One

Dambar Krishna Shrestha in *himalkhabar.com*, 28 April

हिमाल

Seismologists have been warning us about a Big One in Kathmandu for quite some time. Our mountains were formed by the collision of the Indian and Tibetan plates, and they are still rising. The Indian plate is moving north at 5cm a year and this tectonic tension is released periodically, triggering major earthquakes. The worst case scenario in case of a 8 magnitude earthquake are truly frightening. Kathmandu Valley alone would see 100,000 killed outright, 200,000 wounded and 1.5 million homeless. Homes, offices, schools, hospitals would all be damaged, as well as roads and bridges. There would be no electricity and drinking water, telephone lines would also be blocked.

As it turned out, a 7.9 earthquake caused huge loss of life and loss for the nation, but there was much less damage than expected in Kathmandu. As we go to press, the death toll has crossed 5,000 and is expected to at least double. The important World Heritage sites of the Valley have been destroyed. Many villages in Gorkha to Sindupalchok have been reduced to rubble.



Since Kathmandu is situated on a former lake bed, the soil magnifies the shaking in an earthquake which means even well-built structures are vulnerable to collapse. But many houses, offices and apartments do not meet the minimum safety criteria. Even when a 6.0 quake struck Udaypur 200km away in 1990, buildings in Bhaktapur collapsed killing 12.

Despite all this, last week's quake had a lower casualty rate than expected in Kathmandu. One reason could be that it was Saturday, so schools and government offices were closed. The group NSET had predicted that an earthquake like 1934 would kill up to 43,000 students and teachers if it happened during school hours.

In 1934, Kathmandu Valley's population was 250,000, today it is nearly 3 million and we live in densely-packed neighbourhoods and buildings not constructed to withstand strong earthquakes. There is no real disaster preparedness plan, or a coordinated approach to post-earthquake search, rescue and relief. There is little attention to ensuring water supply and food, or managing epidemics in shelters. And even after four days, the government was not able to distribute enough tents in the capital. Specialised expertise in digging people from collapsed concrete structures are not adequate.

A cover story in *Himal* Khabarpatrika (pictured, left) four years ago to mark National Earthquake Safety Day predicted that a big earthquake could happen any day and it listed what needed to be done to ensure better preparedness: food and water stockpiles, prepositioning first aid, emergency and digging equipment, family and community contingency plans. We can be thankful that the quake this time was not as destructive as predicted, even though the loss of life was great.

# **Surviving Dharara**



Shobha Sharma on Setopati, 29 April

सेतोपाटी

On the fifth floor of the National Trauma Center, 17-year-old Ramila Shrestha (*above, right*) and her friend Sanjeev Shrestha (*above, left*) lie next to each other in the same ward. Ramila with a fractured leg and Sanjeev with a fractured arm. Both of them, survivors of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that hit central Nepal completely demolishing Dharara.

Ramila came to Kathmandu two months ago from Ramechhap to help her father Deepak Shrestha with his shop in Kirtipur. Sanjeev, a native of Bhimpokhari, was living with his sister-in-law at
Basantapur. Ever since
reading about Dharara
in school, Ramila had
wanted to climb the
country's tallest tower.
So, on Saturday the two
set out to enjoy a bird's
eye view of Kathmandu
before going to the movies
at Guna Cinema.

Excited about her first visit, Ramila walked ahead of her friend while stopping to look out the circular windows along the stairs. The two had just stepped out into the balcony when the tower started tottering. From the ground people started shouting "earthquake". Ramila remembers Sanjeev sitting down while she held on tightly to the railings as the structure came crashing down. Next thing she remembers, she was lying flat on the rubble with her friend a little further away. The railing she had held on to crushed a mother and her daughter.

"If I hadn't been thrown off, I would have been dead too," says Ramila who was rescued by a policeman. Sanjeev came to in hospital and woke up next to Ramila.







# The Living Goddess lives through the quake

hen the earth started shaking on Saturday just before noon, the family of the Living goddess of Patan had just finished their meal and were sitting together. When the first jolt came, like all other residents of the city, the family started screaming and wanted to run out in panic.

But the 7-year-old Living Goddess, Yunika Bajracharya (*pic*), who was sitting on her ceremonial altar, told them to calm down and not to rush out of the building. "She had her eyes closed as if she was in a trance, and she told us nothing would happen to us," the goddess' father Ramesh Bajracharya recalled.

The floor of the house rocked violently, the house rattled loudly and the family huddled together, and prayed for protection. When the tremors stopped, Ramesh Bajracharya lit the votive lamps and joined his daughter, the Goddess, in meditation and prayer.

"We knew that if the Kumari Majhu told us nothing would happen to us, nothing

विराटनगरः ०२१ ४६३ ६६१. पोखराः ०६१ ५३८ ९१३. नेपालगन्जः ०८१ ५५१ ६४८

would happen to us," Ramesh Bajracharya told us, "and indeed we were all safe in that room because of her faith."

When the aftershocks came, the family was worried even less because they felt the worse was over. "If the big earthquake couldn't destroy the building, we were confident that the smaller aftershocks would not harm us at all."

Indeed, while other temples and buildings on Mahapal Street of Patan came crashing down during the quake, the Kumari Temple did not even lose a tile from its roof. Similarly, while four major temples in Kathmandu Darbar Square were razed to the ground, the temple of the Kathmandu Kumari also survived completely unscathed.

The families of the previous Kumaris who also reside in the courtyard did not run away to safer places. "If the reigning Kumari assured us about our safety, we knew that we would not be hurt," said the mother of a previous Kumari.

On Wednesday, I went to offer my thanks to the Kumari for my own close escape when I got nearly thrown off my balcony during the shaking. When the earthquake struck, I had grabbed my camera, turned off the gas and ran down with my wife and son to Macchendra Bahal. When we came back, we saw that the balcony where I was a moment ago was swaying precariously.

Min Ratna Bajracharya





