

## HANGING ON

A girl in Barabise of Sindhupalchok swings in a hammock slung under a container truck that serves as her family's home. Two months after the earthquake, 2 million Nepalis are living in temporary shelters.

JAN MÖLLER HANSEN

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# TROUBLE IN THE RUBBLE

Like Krishna Mandir, Nepal is standing but needs more support

As the date of the international meeting on earthquake assistance to Nepal on 25 June nears, the Nepali media is suddenly festooned with headlines about the transparency, efficacy and even the necessity of international assistance. There are concerns about most post-disaster aid being siphoned off by expensive consultants from donor countries, of lack of coordination, the cost of relief flights by the militaries of various government being counted as part of the humanitarian assistance package, wastage and duplication.

A lot of these concerns are valid, and emanate from the disastrous wastage of relief after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, where various evaluations have stated that only 16 per cent of the \$16 billion pledged for emergency relief actually ended up in Haiti. There have been shocking revelations of waste by the American Red Cross. Five years after the quake killed 300,000 people, many are still living in tents in Haiti.

“Nepal should not be another Haiti” is the popular refrain from senior government officials. The Finance Ministry’s aid coordination division has accused Nepal’s donors of deliberately bypassing government in disbursing funds and distributing aid. Now, in an effort to take charge, the government is asserting itself and adopting a hard line on how aid in cash and kind can be spent.

Unfortunately, the government has done this in the ham-handed fashion that we have all come to expect of it: not for better coordination, but for control. Ministries involved in preparing for the donor meeting are working at cross purposes. New policies and rules are utterly confusing and often unenforceable. When in doubt about something, the government’s knee-jerk reaction is to immediately ban it. The attempt to channelise the money charities send to Nepal has stopped millions of dollars in donations that would have benefited survivors.

Contradictory and ever-changing tax rules have stopped relief material like tarps, tents and food urgently needed by the 2 million people whose homes went down. Rudely refusing offers of helicopters hasn’t just damaged Nepal’s image abroad, but created a logistical bottleneck,

with a backlog of hundreds of tons of relief supplies stuck at warehouses (*see page 14-15*). And on Wednesday the government tersely announced a ban on all relief material after 22 June to stem ‘dependency’ among survivors. Most aid groups would be perfectly happy to hand over their relief material to the government for distribution if its systems were efficient and equitable, but we have seen they aren’t.

Who makes these absurd ad hoc decisions? It’s not



KUNDA DIXIT

just aid workers and volunteers who are frustrated, local government officials in the VDCs and DDCs who have been working tirelessly for two months now in relief distribution are disgusted with the lack of support, and the politicisation of aid in Kathmandu. Some branches of government that are functioning well are getting demoralised by the greed and lack of a sense of urgency among top politicians.

To be sure, the National Planning Commission, under the plain-speaking Govinda Raj Pokhrel, has moved systematically to bring out a needs assessment report and recommended that a high-powered, independent agency be set up to supervise and manage reconstruction. It has tried not to be too ambitious with its \$6.6 billion estimate for rebuilding. Much of that is going to be allocated for the reconstruction of homes, and the World Bank is taking the lead in mustering the resources needed (*see page 4*). After speaking to officials and donors, we get the feeling money is not a problem as long as the government demonstrates the capacity for equitable, impartial and effective disbursement of housing grants and subsidies.

Unfortunately, the government’s track record on compensation for conflict victims doesn’t bode well for post-quake reconstruction. Since perception is reality, and since trust in government’s transparency and accountability is so low, it is all the more urgent and important that the reconstruction agency be headed by a credible team that is apolitical, competent and (above all) honest.

Having said all that, aid agencies also have a lot to answer for. This is an elected government, it has systems in place even if they don’t always work well, these structures cannot be bypassed. Much of the criticism of the lack of transparency, wastage, tied aid and exaggerated generosity are legitimate and corroborated by donors’ own oversight bodies. So, for a Kathmandu-based envoy to use Twitter to fly off the handle at media criticism of aid is not just unbecoming of a diplomat, it is actually incriminating.

It is time for both the government and donor representatives to ratchet down their egos, look beyond their turfs and focus on the 2 million Nepalis waiting, patiently so far, for help to rebuild their lives.

## YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

### WHERE IS THE MONEY?

A staggering amount of donor funding is wasted on consultancy services and administration, with little spent on the cause (‘How not to reinvent the wheel’, Bihari K Shrestha #762). It seems donors don’t care because they get what they want -- publicity. I question their real intentions. They damage the country’s reputation by showing desperate images. They seem more desperate than the children in the picture.

TC Ghimire

■ You mean dollar slurping ‘capacity building workshop’ by donors? Nah... nah... we don’t need the Haiti model.

Sudip Khaniya

### ONE AFTER ANOTHER

Corrupted leaders stole relief supplies and sold it on the black market (One crisis at a time, Malika Aryal #762) while the earthquake victims continued to suffer. Welcome to modern day Nepal of Maoist Supreme Leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who once said he’d turn Nepal into Singapore or Switzerland.

Alex Shrestha

### FOR POLITICS’ SAKE

Stop moaning whingeing and whining. (For politics’ sake, Bidhushi

Dhungel #762) Do something. Have you media people never heard of investigative journalism? Examples: Watergate, UK parliamentary expenses. Where are the guts or courage of Nepali journalists? Try some headlines: NC/UML cave in to Maoist bullying. Politicians care more about personal power than the nation. *Nepali Times* investigates lawmaker allowances, Bidushi Dhungel exposes Bhattarai’s lies.

Brian Metters

■ Major political parties have reached an understanding to promulgate the new constitution by mid-July. This is another blatant lie. They will miss this deadline, you can take my comment to the bank.

Ajaya Rana

■ Democracy in Nepal is a privilege only for the big corporations, the people who own them, and the corrupted leaders who have been stealing from the people. For the rest of the 99 per cent of Nepalis, democracy has resulted in struggling for jobs and ways to support a family, shortage of water, electricity, gas etc. Our leaders have no qualms in even stealing relief materials meant for the victims and selling it to make more money. Anyone who believes these very people will bring us peace and prosperity is delusional.

Babu Magar

### IT REALLY HAPPENED?

This 16-point deal is a farce, another face saving device. (‘Was that for real?’ Damakant Jayshi #762). These corrupted Nepali leaders, specially the Khaobadi ex-PM, Dahal and Bhattarai cannot accomplish anything without first dealing with Ganga Maya Adhikari and C K Raut. Until the political garbage is thrown out, nothing will change in Nepal. I just wonder what results the next election will bring and how many of these ugly faces will still be around.

Gopal Tamang

■ No names, no borders, just a number: 8. Do our leaders think federalism is a joke? Once again, our leaders are fooling us, it was only signed because each of them got what they wanted. It wasn’t for the benefit of the people or the country. I see no difference between Oli, Dahal and Koirala. All are inept, corrupted and selfish. The sad truth is there is no one to replace them.

Bikas Pandey

### NEPAL’S BUREAUCRACY

A great report on the obstruction to relief aid. (‘Bureaucracy as usual’, Stéphane Huët #762) Can’t believe the red tape and bureaucracy here.

Lukas Law

■ It seems that a few greenbacks

would let any crooks in the country. Government says they want to coordinate but they have shown how lamentable they are in this domain. Get off your couch to see that people still need clothes, tents and food.

Pravin

### RESILIENT NEPALI WOMEN

How content they are even with so little (Sheltering women, Sahina Shrestha #762). We all can learn a lot from Nepali women.

Susan Kutar

### SELFIE

Maybe altruism is a mixture of complex social and biological mechanisms, (‘Survival of the altruistic’, Anjana Rajbhandary #762) which makes sense in an evolutionary biological way, but at the same time also in a conscious social way. What matters in the end is that people help, whether they post it on Facebook or not should not be such a huge point of discussion, since you will probably never really find out anyway.

Bar

### DOG MOTHER

Gyani Deula’s life truly tells the story of compassion in action (‘Dog Mother’, #762). Though she didn’t live that long, she truly lived a worthy life.

Tashi Lama

Times

## THIS WEEK



KUNDA DIXIT / AYESHA SHAKYA (254 LIKES)

**Most liked on Facebook**  
Patan Darbar Square at 3PM on 25 April (*left*) and on 15 June (*right*). Cultural heritage sites in Kathmandu reopened on Monday.

**Most shared on Facebook**  
Buddhist monks hold a candle-light vigil at Boudhanath in memory of earthquake victims on Friday.

**Most popular on Twitter**  
Bhaktapur is waiting for you by Peregrine Frissell (86 retweets, 77 favourites)

**Most visited online page**  
Bureaucracy as usual by Stéphane Huët (1,820 views)

**Most commented**  
How not to reinvent the wheel by Bihari K Shrestha (15 comments)

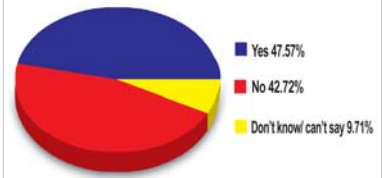
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nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #763

Q. Are you happy with the 16-point deal?

Total votes: 103



Weekly Internet Poll #764  
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should Dharara be rebuilt or left as it is?



# Braving the monsoon

Putting-off federal demarcation will anger some, but the 2 million people without homes have other worries

Even before the April earthquake mutual self-interest among top political leaders were beginning to converge, and there was an effort to finalise the constitution. The earthquake expedited that process, giving both the Maoists and the ruling parties an excuse to compromise without bruising each other's egos.



**BY THE WAY**  
Anurag Acharya

If things unfold the way they are expected to, the country will get a constitution by next month by putting federal demarcation in the back burner. It is a recipe for future bickering, but there doesn't seem to be any other way for now.

Meanwhile, 30km away from Kathmandu in Lamidanda of Kavre, Urmila Adhikari (*pic, above*) is clearing the debris of her home with bare hands. Every now and then, her seven-year-old son and five-year-old daughter carry bricks to lend a hand, but she shoos them away.

Urmila's husband is a daily wage earner but his meagre earnings do not even buy a loaf of bread for the family, let alone school stationery for the children. While the wife toiled under mid-day sun, man of the house was nowhere to be seen.

Lamidanda residents have not received much relief from outside. Urmila and her neighbours have heard about government's pledge for Rs 15,000 emergency cash relief but doubt if they will get it before the rains set in.

"I need help to get this rubble cleared soon and rebuild my house. I can't keep the children under tarpaulin sheets when the storms come," she said.

The government's cash distribution program has run into trouble with rising cases of fake applicants (*see page 4*). Pressure from powerful locals looking to pocket cash compensation for fake houses is so strong that officials in many districts have fled.

We often talk about the greed of our national leaders, but the earthquake has exposed how corruption is decentralised. A stable government at the centre with accountable local government would have helped check malpractice, and expedited relief and rebuilding. But for now, we have to live with the choices our leaders have made.

On the brighter side, last week's political convergence has sent a positive message to the donor community, ahead of the 25 June conference. Even so, the government will have to lay out a clear plan of how it intends to mobilise resources that will be pledged. There just isn't enough time for the international community to make pledges by next week, but at least we may have a strategy.



ANURAG ACHARYA

For better or for worse, the 16-point agreement is based on nothing but mutual interest of top leaders to secure their own positions. The power sharing

deal, which is at the heart of this pact, foresees a government led by the UML's KP Oli, with the Maoists and the Gachhadar led MJF-Democratic getting key

ministerial positions alongside the NC. It also foresees a NC President with yet another Madhesi Vice-President.

However, nothing is as simple

as that in Nepal. Unless there is a clear incentive, there is no reason why the NC, being the biggest political party, would want to concede leadership to maintain an alliance whose utility will end the day statute is declared.

KP Oli is forced to trust the NC because Sushil Koirala wants to pass a constitution while in office. Even those angry at Dahal and Gachhadar's opportunism know that this is the maximum compromise for the present among such a diverse group of stakeholders.

So, the right question to ask now is not if this is a good time to be drafting the constitution, but whether it will help the country move ahead. And for survivors like Urmila Adhikari, the concern is only to have enough food for her children and a roof over her head. 🇳🇵

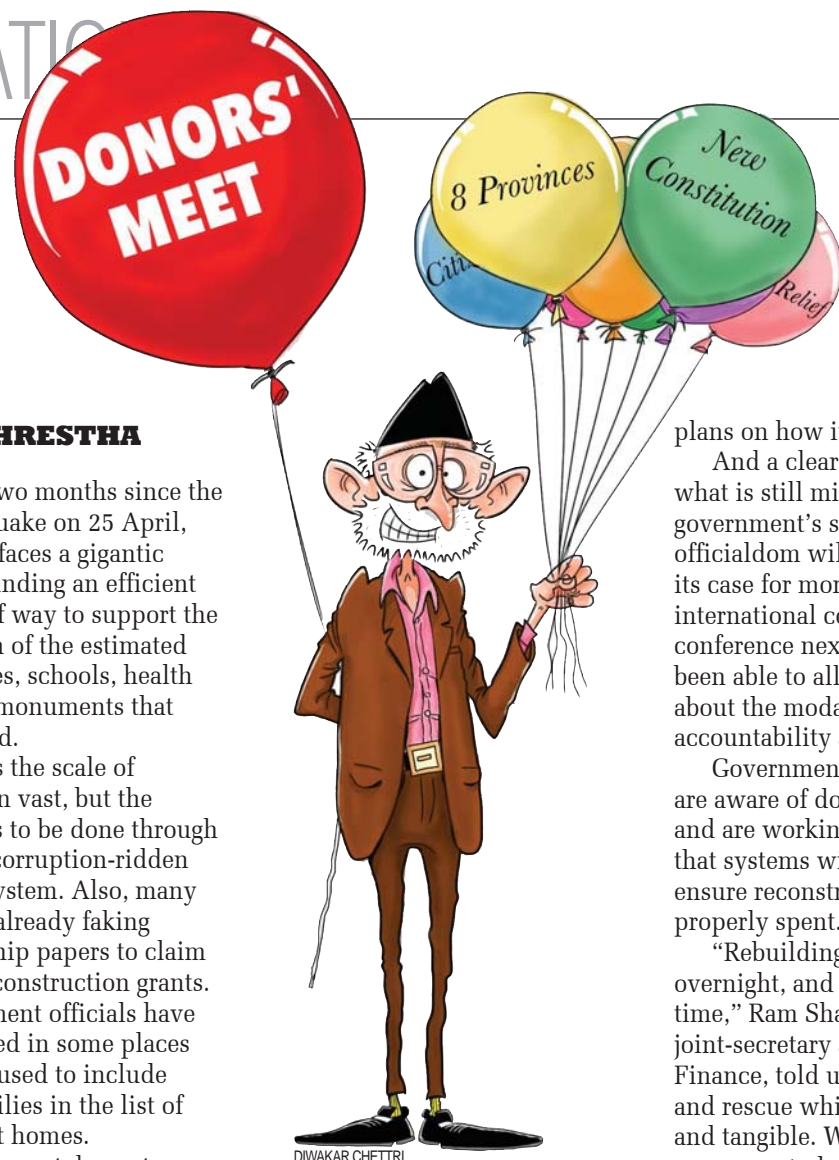
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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

# Friends in need

Plans for disbursement of home rebuilding grants and loans face obstacles

**SAHINA SHRESTHA**

Nearly two months since the earthquake on 25 April, Nepal faces a gigantic challenge in finding an efficient and leak-proof way to support the reconstruction of the estimated 800,000 houses, schools, health facilities and monuments that were destroyed.

Not only is the scale of the destruction vast, but the rebuilding has to be done through a creaky and corruption-ridden government system. Also, many survivors are already faking home ownership papers to claim emergency reconstruction grants. Local government officials have been threatened in some places when they refused to include ineligible families in the list of those who lost homes.

The government has set up the National Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Fund (NRRF) with an initial target of \$2 billion, and has deposited \$200 million in it as seed money. The draft report on Post-Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) conducted by National Planning Commission (NPC) has put the estimated recovery cost

for the country at \$6.66 billion.

“The results of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment show that reconstruction will be costly and time-consuming,” said Johannes Zutt, World Bank Country Director for Nepal in a statement. “To raise the money needed, there must first be clear

plans on how it will be spent.”

And a clear plan is exactly what is still missing from the government’s strategy. While Nepali officialdom will be presenting its case for more aid from the international community at a donor conference next week, it hasn’t yet been able to allay their concerns about the modality of disbursement, accountability and transparency.

Government officials say they are aware of donor apprehension and are working to assure them that systems will be in place to ensure reconstruction money will be properly spent.

“Rebuilding can’t be done overnight, and planning for it takes time,” Ram Sharan Pudasaini, joint-secretary at the Ministry of Finance, told us. “It isn’t like search and rescue which is immediate and tangible. We need proper assessment, decide on priorities, raise funds and then spend it efficiently. We are working on those plans now.”

The government is currently distributing emergency financial assistance of Rs 15,000 to each family which lost its home to make temporary shelters. It has also announced a home rebuilding grant

of Rs 200,000 for those who wish to rebuild their houses on their own. Such families will also be eligible for subsidies or soft credit.

The NPC’s vice-chairman, Govinda Raj Pokhrel, said the government is preparing a detailed plan on the modality of disbursement for reconstruction: “We are working with financial experts, civil society and our development partners.”


He added that the Rs 200,000 will be provided in installments to eligible families who want to rebuild their homes. “The families will have to strictly follow the standard norms and building codes set by the government and the money will be distributed during various stages of rebuilding after monitoring,” Pokhrel told *Nepali Times*. A separate mechanism for financial monitoring is being worked out to make it tamper proof.

However, given the reported irregularities in even the distribution of Rs 15,000, there are many who question how honestly the rebuilding grants will be disbursed. It’s not just delays and corruption that experts are worried about, fake home

ownership papers are already being used to claim compensation. VDC secretaries are being pressured and threatened by powerful individuals with political protection to certify people as victims.

The government has directed Chief District Officers to take action against fraudulent victims claiming ID cards, but that is hardly a deterrent. Lack of proper monitoring has already hindered relief assistance from reaching the actual victims.

Nepal Rastra Bank has worked out the procedure and issued circulars to banks to provide soft loans to homeless families who don’t own another house. Those living in the Valley will additionally get loans of up to Rs 2.5 million and those outside Rs 1.5 million at an interest rate of 2 per cent.

The money will be disbursed in installments and families will have to present recommendation letters from VDCs or municipalities. The banks will provide loans only to creditworthy families with collateral. To ensure repayment, the NRB is pushing for loan guarantees through the Deposit and Credit Guarantee Corporation. 



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## Guess who’s coming?

With only a week left for the 25 June donor meeting, Nepal’s authorities coordinating the conference, which aims at securing foreign assistance for rebuilding of the earthquake-devastated country, are desperately waiting for confirmation of participants.

Nepal’s closest neighbours India and China have not yet confirmed who is attending although there are unconfirmed reports that India’s External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj is coming. Nepal is also waiting for the final list of guests from the US, the UK and other European countries.

Early this week, Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat went to New Delhi to officially invite Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on behalf of Prime Minister Sushil Koirala. But Modi is unlikely to attend.

“India has not confirmed anyone’s name as yet,” said Narayan Dhakal at the Ministry of Finance who is involved in conference planning. “We are also waiting for a confirmation letter from China.”

Nepal has invited 62 donors – 37 governments, 22 international organisations and three ‘celebrities’: former US President Jimmy Carter, Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio and British film star Joanna Lumley. But only 13 donors have confirmed their participation in the meeting to be co-hosted by Japan.

Norway’s Foreign Affairs Minister Børge Brende, Japan’s State Minister of Foreign Affairs Yasuhide Nakayama, Sri Lanka’s Disaster Management Minister A. Abdul Hameed Mohamed Fowzie and Bhutan’s Finance Minister Namgay Dorji have been confirmed.

The World Bank’s Vice President for the East Asia and the Pacific Axel van Trotsenburg, European Union’s Development Commissioner, JICA’s President Akihiko Tanaka, ADB President Takehiko Nakao and UN’s Under Secretary General Gyan Chandra Acharya have also confirmed their participation. UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon will not attend but will send a video message urging the world to help rebuild Nepal.

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# How not to reinvent the wheel

Donor funding should not just go for reconstruction, but also help build capacity



BIKRAM RAI

Ahead of a major donor conference scheduled for 25 June in Kathmandu, Nepal and its international partners need to seriously think about what kind of help would be most cost-effective and sustainable.



## GUEST COLUMN Bihari K Shrestha

By taking it so seriously, the government is going all out to convince donors to overcome their misgivings about the lack of accountability and governance, and open their purse strings. It has put a target of Rs 6 trillion for earthquake rehabilitation.

As the ongoing relief work has once again shown, making resources available is only part of the story. Getting it quickly and efficiently to the neediest beneficiaries is the bigger, and often unmet challenge. Relief supplies have been derailed, hijacked by the national government or local political cadre. Even some well-meaning NGOs didn't really care where the supplies went as long as they had their handover photo-ops.

The Rs 15,000 immediate relief for families whose houses were destroyed is also being sidetracked by the not-so-neediest, and the number of houses in certain VDCs has exceeded the total number before the earthquake. Political goons are threatening and forcing VDC secretaries to certify themselves as victims many times over. Despite a quarter of a century of

democratic institution-building, there is still no accountability and nothing to protect us from local political tyrants.

In a column titled 'Follow the people' in this space two weeks ago, I drew attention to the exemplary work done by forestry user groups and Female Community Health Volunteers in Nepal -- a feat made possible through concerted support of many donors coordinated by the Nepal government. It proves that building national capacity for managing development and relief must be a vital part of what is discussed at the donor meeting. There is no point reinventing the wheel.

We now know that money alone does not make rehabilitation work. In fact, by itself it is more of a nuisance and distorts and worsens the power relations between local 'high caste' feudal elite and their poorer 'low caste' neighbours by widening the income gap. In fact this is why Nepal has remained desperately poor and underdeveloped despite 25 years of 'representative democracy'.

Survivors of the quake have once again brought into focus the real face of Nepal's widespread and chronic poverty. Most of the 700,000 houses that came down with the quake were those built of stones, brick and mud mortar. That was what the poor could afford. Earthquake rebuilding and rehabilitation must therefore acquire a wider scope and include rebuilding economies as well. This would call for a longer term undertaking that goes far beyond one-time pledging and grant of big money as the government seems to optimistically expect.

Plainly put, the donors for earthquake rebuilding must first

realise that their accountability is much more, if not exclusively, towards survivors of the earthquake and not the political and bureaucratic bosses who pretend to represent them. The people already know fully well that the so-called 'national unity government' is going to be a mechanism for a share in the earthquake rebuilding pie for all politicians.

Without concomitant institutional innovation and capacity building at the grassroots, earthquake rebuilding funds too are going to evaporate in transit as it has in the long sordid history of foreign aid in Nepal. Donor agencies, particularly the big ones, must prevail upon the government to:

**1** Institute an apolitical leadership for earthquake rebuilding, possibly by the President himself, like the way it was done in the Pakistan earthquake of 2005.

**2** Form a professional agency to work out a program of action, including an institutional mechanism for effective quake rebuilding.

**3** Install an apolitical mechanism, perhaps involving the security forces, to backstop the quake-affected communities at the grassroots.

**4** Create a network of quake survivor groups at the grassroots to manage their own reconstruction and rehabilitation.

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Yeti Airlines recently launched a photo contest on Facebook. Yeti flyers can participate by posting a photo of themselves inside a Yeti Airlines aircraft or with one in the background. Winners chosen through lucky draw will receive one roundtrip ticket to Pokhara and an overnight stay for two at Atithi Resort & Spa. The contest is open till 14 July.



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### It's official

Educational Consultancy Association of Nepal (ECAN) has appointed Prabhu Bank as its official banking partner. The two signed the agreement last week.

### Air show

Qatar Airways showcased a selection of its latest generation fleet on the opening day of the Paris Air Show, one of the world's leading aviation events. The Qatar Airways A380, A350 XWB, A320, A319 and Boeing 787 Dreamliner were displayed at the event.



### 15 years

On the occasion of its 15th anniversary, International Money Express (IME) organised various CSR programs in Kathmandu. IME staff participated in clearing debris in Kirtipur and the group also deposited Rs 889,269 to the PM's Disaster Relief Fund.

### General meeting

Agriculture Development Bank held its eighth annual general meeting on 13 June at Bhaktapur. The assembly decided to give shareholders seven per cent bonus share and 8.79 per cent profit share. Four of the nine members of the working committee were also elected during the meeting.



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# The Gurkhas at Gallipoli

Part 3, June 1915

This is the third part of a series of articles on the Gurkhas at Gallipoli, drawn from what will eventually be a book on Nepal, *The Gurkhas and the Great War* by David Seddon.

On 14 May, the 69th Punjabis and 89th Punjabis were withdrawn from the conflict and embarked the next day for Egypt en route to France. This was said to be because they contained a significant proportion of Muslim troops and could not be relied upon not to mutiny in sympathy with the Ottoman army.

In the short time they had been on the peninsula, the 89th Punjabis had suffered over 100 casualties, while the 69th Punjabis, which had not been engaged in the front line, had nevertheless lost 10 and 23 were wounded. These units were replaced, although not until 2 June, by the 1/5th and 2/10th Gurkha Rifles from Nepal.

For a week or so, the ANZAC sector had been relatively quiet. Even so, casualties in the Cape Helles sector had mounted. The attacking forces and the enemy were by now both in trenches which in the case of the former stretched from short to shore, raids and counter-raids were taking place with increasing intensity.

On 19 May, the enemy made a night attack on the ANZAC forces. Four divisions of up to 40,000 men descended from the heights above the beaches to crush the ANZACs. But the attack went horribly wrong and the intended victims were able to destroy the oncoming Ottoman forces which suffered heavy casualties with some 10,000 killed or injured.

The next day, when they came out under a white flag to collect their dead and wounded, the Allied troops were willing to help and even give the wounded and prisoners cigarettes and chocolates. Charles Bean, a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist who became the official historian of the Gallipoli campaign for the Australians, wrote in his diary that ‘the Indians with the mules down here also take the prisoners chocolates – they give our men some also’.



GURKHA MUSEUM

On 24 May, a truce was agreed. Hunter Weston was promoted to lieutenant general and made a corps commander. His VIII Corps consisted of the long-suffering 29th Division, the RND, the 42nd Division and the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade. As for the Gurkhas, by the end of May, all of the original company commanders of the 1st/6th Gurkhas had been killed or wounded, and even the other two battalions which had hardly been engaged as yet had also suffered losses. By this time, the two battles of Krithia had been fought to no avail, so that the beach-head remained pitifully small. As on the Western Front, gains were counted in yards and only under the protection of the overhanging cliffs could the Allied troops seek respite from enemy fire and, to some extent at least, from the heat. For as the summer advanced, the weather became hotter and the major concern became the temperature and the flies, and the putrid, unburied dead. Dysentery spread rapidly and claimed victims by the score, while lice added to the discomfort of the soldiers.

On 2 June 1915, the 1st/5th and 2nd/10th Gurkhas arrived to replace the two withdrawn and re-deployed Punjabi battalions of 29 Indian Brigade. What would come to be known as the Third Battle of Krithia was planned for 4 June, and the new arrivals

were soon in action. The objective was the capture of Achi Baba, a feature some 200m high, which commanded both the Helles beach-head and the Narrows. After two barrages from the Allied guns directed at the Ottoman defences with a view to destroying any barbed-wire entanglements, the 1st/6th Gurkhas and 14th Sikhs of the Indian Brigade, together with the Lancashire Fusiliers, went forward at noon, advancing on the extreme left along Gully Spur, with the 29th and 42nd Divisions in the centre, the RND on the right centre, and the French on the right.

The Allies had about 30,000 men and the enemy had up to 28,000, half of them in the front line. The French attack failed quickly, three battalions of the RND went forward, but the fourth, the Collingwood Brigade, which made the second assault was wiped out in less than 30 minutes and the other three battalions took ‘frightful casualties and lost all but ten of their officers’. The Manchester Brigade of the 42nd Division advanced strongly as did the 29th Division on their left, but eventually, the Manchesters were marooned and forced to retreat.

Along Gully Ravine, on the left again, the Indian Brigade was hard hit. One Gurkha battalion lost 23 officers out of 29, and the other lost all of its British officers. The 14th Sikhs, one of the few non-Gurkha pure class battalions

of the Indian Army, composed of seasoned Jat Sikh soldiers from Punjab, launched repeated attacks in the face of murderous gunfire against the Ottoman positions astride Gully Ravine. One section managed to penetrate the barbed wire and to charge the enemy with their bayonets. But the cost was devastating: on that one day, the unit’s casualties amounted to 82 per cent of those engaged in the battle. The Sikhs lost 380 men out of 514. Only three of their British officers were left alive and unwounded.

Writing to the Commander in Chief in India a few weeks after the event, Hamilton paid tribute to the heroism of these men:

‘In the highest sense of the word, extreme gallantry has been shown by this fine Battalion ... in spite of these tremendous losses there was not a sign of wavering all day. Not an inch of ground gained was given up and not a single straggler came back. The ends of the enemy’s trenches leading into the Ravine were found to be blocked with the bodies of Sikhs and of the enemy who died fighting at close quarters, and the glaci slope is thickly dotted with the bodies of these fine soldiers all lying on their faces as they fell in their steady advance on the enemy. The history of the Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour

and steady discipline displayed by them on the 4th June has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa. Their devotion to duty and their splendid loyalty to their orders and to their leaders makes a record their nation should look back upon with pride for many generations’.

Later in the day, the 1st/5th Gurkhas were called forward in an attempt to seize success where others had not. The battalion was ordered to follow the same route as C Company of the 1st/6th, but the enemy was now prepared for them. Checked by the barbed wire, which had not been destroyed by the Navy’s artillery, they were prime targets for the Ottoman rifles and machine guns. The attack petered out with heavy losses: 129 Gurkhas fell, as did seven of their British officers. Despite these heavy losses, the 1st/5th kept on attacking, but were decimated.

One last gallant attempt was made by No 1 Company under Major M H W Nightingale, who was later awarded the DSO for exceptional gallantry in leading an attack on a strongly defended spur after he had been wounded.

‘He reached the crest and was again wounded but coming back a few yards he rallied his men and again led them on. He was wounded a third time but still endeavoured to advance until he fainted’.

At dusk, the 1st/5thGurkhas was ordered to withdraw, the odds had been too great. Retreat was inevitable. Hunter Watsons’ corps had registered 4,500 casualties, about a quarter of the troops he had sent forward. The French losses were about 200 and the Turks had lost at least 9,000. It was in the course of this battle, according to Farwell, that Naik Dhan Singh Gurung was captured, but escaped. ‘He was being marched away into captivity when he bolted and threw himself over a cliff. He survived his fall but was again captured, this time on the beach. Again, he escaped, on this occasion by diving into the sea. Few Gurkhas could swim, but Dhan Singh was an exception. In spite of the hail of bullets that pursued him, he managed to make his way, still in all his clothes (even his boots), out to sea and then to swim parallel to the shore until at last he could land safely behind the Allied lines’.

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■ Gallipoli Timeline

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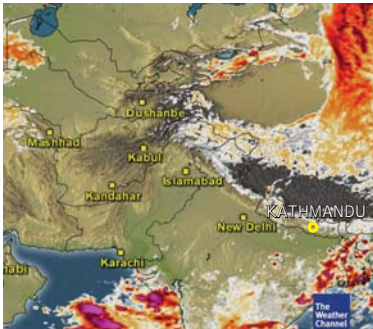
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Contrary to predictions, the monsoon was not late, but early. And it didn't start with a bang, but with a whimper. It is unmistakably the southwest monsoon because the wind is from the east, and the pattern of sunny, humid days with night rain is characteristically monsoony. Fingers crossed that it will gather strength, and the good news is that a large trough is now moving up the Andhra Pradesh coast.

FAQ: Why does the southwest monsoon come from the east?  
Answer: Because after being pushed from the Arabian Sea across India and the Bay of Bengal, the topography of the eastern Himalaya forces the monsoon to curl eastwards over northeastern India.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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# TREKking IN SOLITUDE

A perfect time to trek for those who prefer isolation

## PEREGRINE FRISSELL

Trekking guide Ganesh Adhikari was on an eight-day trek in the Annapurna region when the second earthquake struck on 12 May. Adhikari saw only 35 other trekkers on the route that week. That number would have been in the hundreds in any other spring season.

Even though a majority of the trekking trails weren't affected by the quakes, negative coverage in media, fear of the occurrence of another bigger shake, have kept trekkers at bay.

Nava Raj Pandey of the Thamel-based Motherland Nepal Trekking and Expeditions says his company, along with other trekking agencies, is now working to spread information about safe trekking routes to potential visitors.

"There are a lot of places that didn't

suffer any damage in the quake, and we want tourists to know this. It's not only for business, but it's the truth," says Pandey.

Trekking agents are ready to book trips to the Annapurna region and Everest Base Camp where lodges are open and guides can be easily hired. Because the entire circuit has very little traffic, entrepreneurs say it is a perfect time for those who prefer trekking in isolation.

The area is also not as susceptible to mudslides as other treks that must be closed down during the monsoon. Mustang, which lies in the rain shadow of the Himalaya, is another destination tourism entrepreneurs are promoting for monsoon visitors.

However, trekking agents say unlike tourism entrepreneurs in Pokhara which last month announced huge discounts on hotels and tour packages, slashing off rates is not a viable option to attract tourists.

#VisitNepalAutumn2015

"The cost of organising treks has gone up and as it is we keep very minimal margin," says Prem Shrestha of Eco Trek. Transporting food and other goods from the city to trekking areas have gone up due to damaged roads.

This slump in business has been difficult for many guides and porters who depend on the seasonal job for their yearly income. Many of them are beginning to look elsewhere for work, and some are being hired for relief delivery by the World Food Programme (*see page 14-15*).

Mingma Sherpa from Dolakha has been working as a guide for 13 years. He went to work in South Korea and was earning more there but returned because he wanted to be with his family.

Sherpa says he has no option but to once again go abroad. He hasn't been hired for any treks this season. Sherpa taught

himself a few languages for his job as a guide, and is now learning Japanese not because he expects any prospective Japanese tourists, but because he is trying to go to Japan if he finds a job there.

"I will have to pay brokers at least \$12,000 to obtain a work visa," he says dejected. Even if he gets to go it will be a long time before Sherpa can send money home. 🇳🇵

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Map of safe trekking areas



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# STORIES OF NEPAL



It started with a post about a young tea-seller, followed by a story on a neighbourhood barber, next to go up was a doughnut maker's tale. Since then photographer Jaydev Paudel (*pic, inset*) has shared hundreds of stories about everyday Nepalis on his Stories of Nepal page, fashioned after the very popular Humans of New York. Paudel's stories struck a chord with Nepalis on Facebook and the page currently has over 129,000 likes.

"I had no idea Stories of Nepal was going to be such a hit, it was just a project to understand fellow Nepalis," said Paudel, who moonlights as a graphic designer.

After the 25 April earthquake the 35-year-old set out in search of more stories. He was shocked by the destruction, but more impressed by the strength of survivors: such as this of a new-born earthquake baby in Kavre (*left*).

People offered to help, and Stories of Nepal took relief materials to 200 families and built 50 shelters in the quake-hit districts.

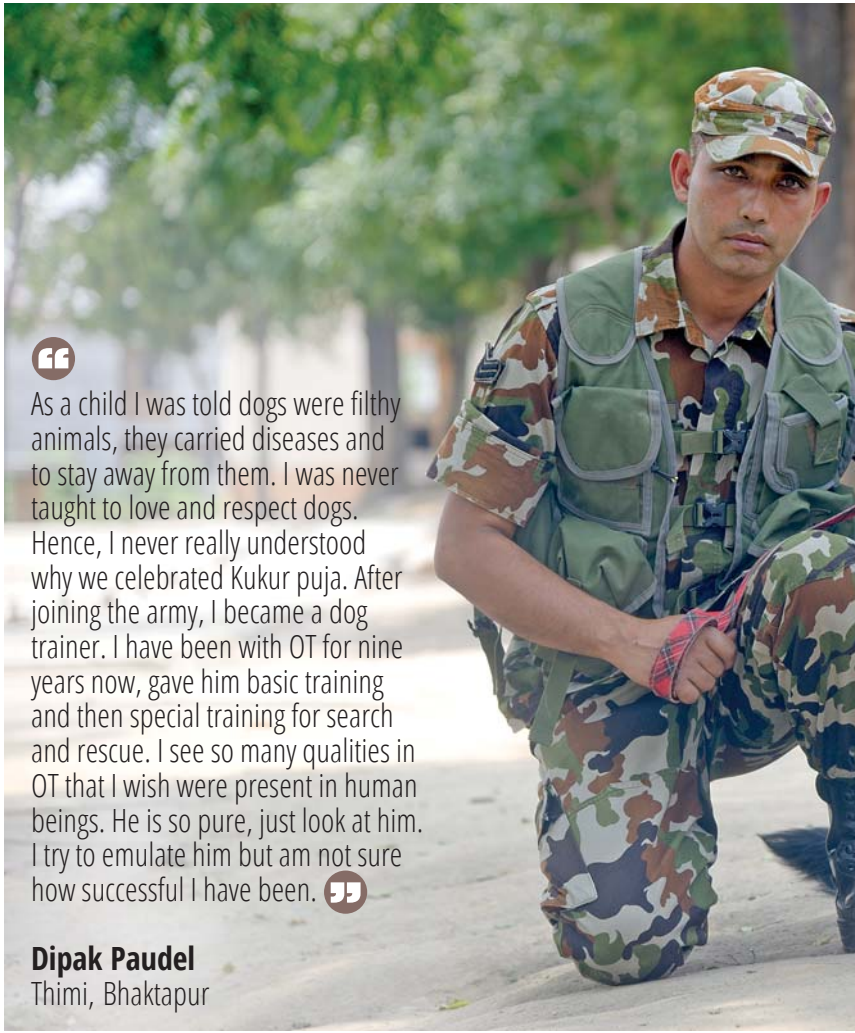
Says Paudel: "I had never before witnessed such love and compassion as I did in days after the quake."

[storiesofnepal.com](http://storiesofnepal.com)  
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The earthquake destroyed my house so I went to the market to buy hammer and nails to fix it up. I also bought this nice bag while I was there.

**Jyurme Lama**  
Melamchi, Sindhupalchok



As a child I was told dogs were filthy animals, they carried diseases and to stay away from them. I was never taught to love and respect dogs. Hence, I never really understood why we celebrated Kukur puja. After joining the army, I became a dog trainer. I have been with OT for nine years now, gave him basic training and then special training for search and rescue. I see so many qualities in OT that I wish were present in human beings. He is so pure, just look at him. I try to emulate him but am not sure how successful I have been.

**Dipak Paudel**  
Thimi, Bhaktapur



They call me mad but I am not. My parents died when I was really young. My relatives who raised me are also no longer alive. I have no family, friends, house, food or companion. Many times I have been beaten for no fault of mine. People pelt stones at me and children run away when they see me. They have no idea the rag I have on my head is to protect it from the wind which gives me a splitting headache. But once in awhile someone comes and talks to me.

**Gyan Bahadur Dagar**  
Gumtha, Mugu







“After a while even the tears run dry. I thought there was no point in sitting and crying anymore. So I picked up these tomatoes from our garden and started selling them to passers-by on the highway. If I can earn even a little amount, I will be able to buy rice and spices on my own.”

**Mina Tamang**  
Gyamdi, Kavre



“I was very handsome when I was young. The girls would start whispering to each other the minute they saw me. I think I still am. I am one of the few men in this village to elope with a girl. My family didn't have enough money for an arranged marriage so I thought I'd just take her away with me. In those days love was very different. We were shy and communication was a lot harder. The youngsters these days have mobile phones so they fall in love over the phones. In our times love happened in person.”

**Bahadur Shrestha**  
Ghumthang, Sindhupalchok

“I worked in a poultry farm in Qatar for five years. My employer was a good man, he often commended me for my hardwork and praised me in front of his family and friends. The day I was leaving for Nepal he gave me Rs 100,000 saying it was a gift from his family to mine. I returned home and built a house for my family and one for my brothers with the money I saved. My children were going to school, crops were growing well, things were falling in place when the earthquake struck and I lost everything. A few days after the quake, my former employer called me on my phone. He said he had seen the news on tv and told me: 'You are like my brother, tell me what you need. Come back if you need a job, I will send you a ticket.’”

**Thapa Dai**  
Ghumthang, Sindhupalchok



“In the end we are all Nepalis. We all die when suffocated, and bleed when cut. The earthquake didn't discriminate people on the basis of religion, caste, and class. Who are we then to set apart people when nature doesn't.”

**Janga Bahadur Majhi**  
Manthali, Ramechhap



# Lessons still to be

**SONIA AWALE**  
in DOLAKHA

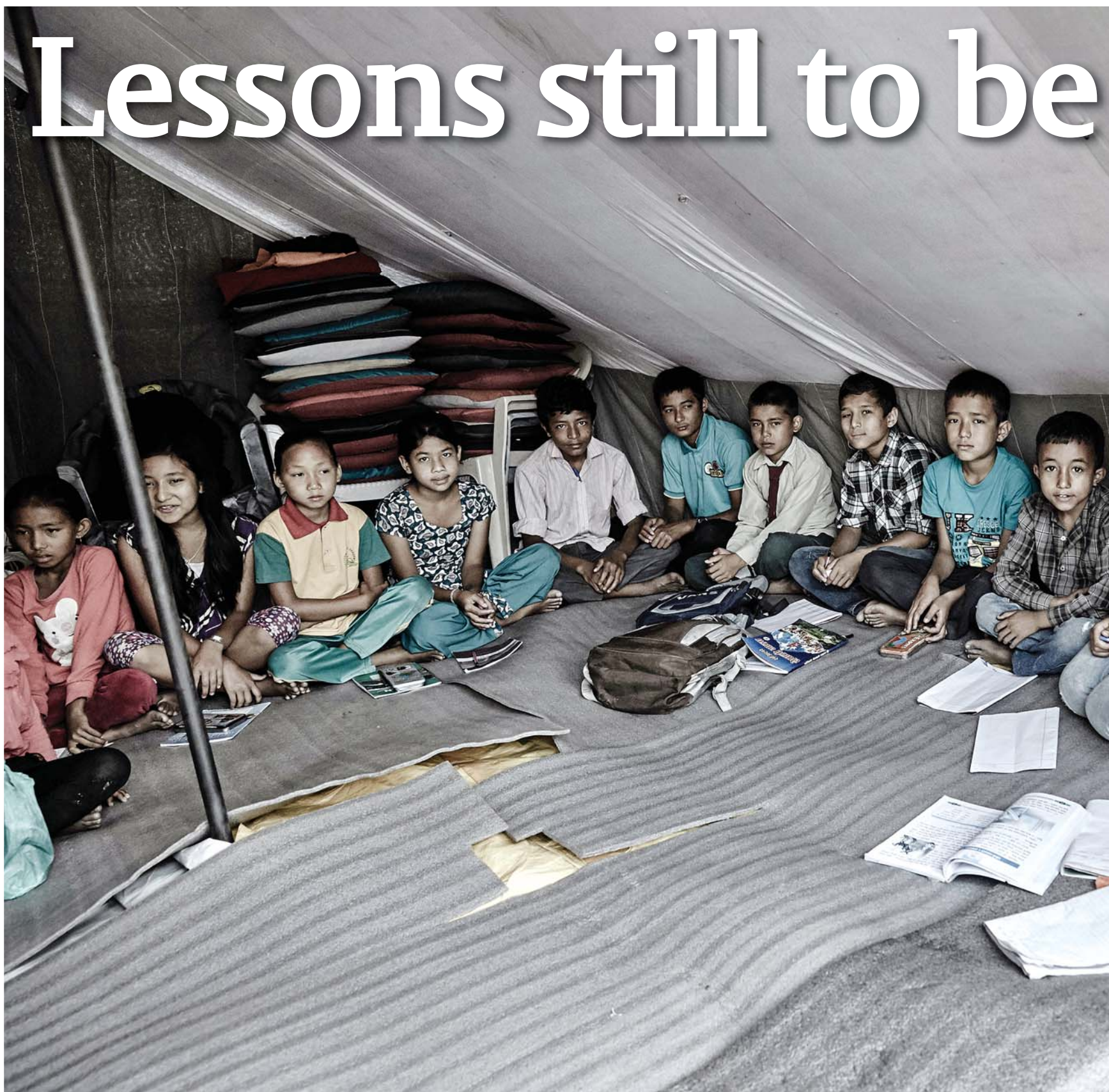
A Mickey Mouse and a flower painted on shattered pillars are a reminder of happier times here at the Raj Kaleshwor School in Dolakha Bazar. A wooden staircase leading to the second floor is dangling precariously – there is no second floor. Desks and benches are crushed and scattered. The gate is the only structure still standing in a school with 250 students (*pic, below*).

All 363 schools and 1,200 classrooms in Dolakha district were brought down in the 25 April earthquake and the 12 May aftershock. Many students would have been killed if the earthquake had struck on a weekday, or if children had gone back to school when the aftershock came.

“Schools in northern Dolakha are the worst affected, and although we have put up temporary learning centres they are very vulnerable to landslides because the rains have started,” said Dolakha’s Assistant District Education Officer Madhav Sharma. “We are now working to make the temporary classrooms sturdier.”

Across the 15 most-affected districts, 30,145 classrooms were completely destroyed and most of these were in government schools. The earthquake killed 618 students and 45 teachers, and an estimated 1.5 million students were affected.

It has been two weeks since the schools reopened, and most of them conducted extracurricular activities to put students at ease. Even teachers needed psychosocial counseling, and 416 teachers in Dolakha were trained in post-disaster



ALL PICS: JAN MÖLLER HANSEN



instruction in classrooms.

As in Dolakha, many schools in Kathmandu Valley also served as shelters for families fleeing their unsafe homes. Adarsha Kanya School in Patan housed more than 500 people for a month after the quake.

Teacher Muna Kharel said, “We were trained to make students get over their fears and we have a few students who lost their family members who couldn’t even speak in the first few days, but now with counseling they are starting to cope and move on.”

Uniformed students in temporary bamboo and thatch classrooms seemed engaged in class activity and engrossed in chatting with friends after more than a month’s long break. Many, however, are still afraid of

aftershocks. Ninth grader Srijana Senchuri lost her grandfather in the earthquake, and told us she can’t really focus on her studies.

“My favorite subject is math but these days whenever I try to study or concentrate I fear that there will be another shaking,” she said, “what if that happens again?”

Across town at the Madan Memorial School, primary teacher Rita Dulal’s 18-year-old son jumped off the second floor window when the earthquake struck and broke his leg. Dulal said she didn’t just have to counsel her class, but also her son. “Even I panic,” Dulal admitted, “I was the first to run out of the room while I was attending a training in psychosocial counseling, I was so embarrassed.”



Parents and guardians seem reassured that classrooms are being held in the open. Anshu Ayer, 37, a guardian in Madan Memorial School said she was initially fearful about sending her children to school, but was relieved that the classrooms were in bamboo sheds. She said: “It is much safer than my house anyway.”

Madan Memorial principal

Govinda Paudel told us that despite all the preparation, school attendance has been only 60 per cent. He is hoping that once the aftershocks cease and families return from home districts, it will gradually increase.

The earthquake is a chance not just to retrofit school buildings and to construct seismic-resistant schools, but also to reform and revamp Nepal’s ailing education



SONIA AWALE



# learnt

The earthquake is an opportunity to rebuild Nepal's education system, not just fallen schools



**"SAYAUN THUNGA":** Children in Barabise of Sindhupalchok sing the national anthem and attend class in a tent after their school building was destroyed in the 25 April earthquake.

Madan Memorial agrees that schools can always be rebuilt, but it is the corrupt and mismanaged education system that needs to be reconstructed. "We can't blame the earthquake, that wasn't our fault, but we were already doing things wrong and need to correct them," Karki said.

Meanwhile in Dolakha, the task of rebuilding classrooms will not begin till after the monsoon. For the moment, schools are just trying to survive day-to-day and get things as much back to normal as possible.

"All of our schools are damaged, the tents are leaking in the rain, but at least classes are being held," said Chiranjivi Maskey of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists in Dolakha. "But for the long term we need help to rebuild schools not just in Dolakha but in all the 15 districts." 🇳🇵

system. The curriculum needs to be improved, government schools with falling attendance need to be merged and their quality upgraded.

"This earthquake has given a golden opportunity to the Ministry of Education to rebuild the whole education system," said Baburam Biswakarma of *Shikshak* magazine for teachers. Teacher Pushpa Karki at

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

- Back to school, #758
- Lessons from Sichuan, #758
- Unlearning education, #652



JAN MOLLER HANSEN

## Moving out of darkness together

The earthquake is an opportunity to change our perspective and attitude

The earthquake two months ago caused tragic loss of life and property, but also offered us a chance to pick ourselves up and build a better, cleaner and more just Nepal.

We will not get back the lives we lost, but livelihoods can be restored. Historical monuments have been destroyed, but they can be rebuilt. The crisis is a huge loss to the economy, but we can create hundreds of thousands of jobs during reconstruction.



**GUEST COLUMN**  
Sanduk Ruit

The disaster was a catharsis that can help us end the political deadlock so Nepal is governed better, we right the wrongs, and ensure no one is left out. The constitution is already on fast track, let's hope it will be appropriate for Nepal and well implemented.

The upcoming donor meeting in Kathmandu is the perfect opportunity to communicate to Nepal's international partners our determination to rebuild a better Nepal. The National Planning Commission has taken the lead in spearheading outside support, and it is important that we have the right strategy for reconstruction and rehabilitation, and more importantly, that we can convince the international community that we are capable of implementing it equitably, efficiently and with a sense of urgency. Let's present ourselves with dignity and unity and not as beggars.

It is also important that we convince them that we can accommodate those who genuinely want to come and help. Unfortunately, the message going out is that we don't need any more help. Reconstruction after the earthquake needs strong leadership and ownership of the process, not control over aid flows.

We are turning away many who are willing to help. Like Ann, a 60-year-old Londoner who wants to donate \$20,000 to Nepal's earthquake survivors. She doesn't want to give it to organisations with large overheads or the government, but to the neediest directly. There are hundreds of thousands of Anns around the world, and they don't know how to get help. There is tremendous goodwill for Nepal and its people globally.

The state, by definition, is the most important player. It needs to be accommodating, have a long-term vision and a clear understanding of just how important this particular moment is in the history of Nepal.

This is a time of opportunity, a blessing in disguise. It has opened and connected Nepal to the outside world more than ever before.

I have been involved in eye care in Nepal, and we can be proud of what we have achieved at the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology over the last three decades. It was only possible because of team work between dedicated Nepalis and catalytic support from outside. It must be said that it was also possible because we were allowed to work independently with minimal political interference.

Hospitals like these provide a blueprint for affordable and accessible healthcare that do not compromise on the quality of service. Patients who can afford the service pay for it, and those who can't pay a minimum or no fee at all. There is no reason why this sustainable and viable model can't be scaled up to the national level so that no Nepali has to die for lack of medical treatment. All it needs is the political will, and this is the time to muster it.

One of the most positive trends to emerge in the post-earthquake relief has been the eagerness of the youth to volunteer to help fellow Nepalis in distress. This is a tremendous source of energy that the government can tap for nation-rebuilding, instead of politicising the young. I salute the youth who are the future of Nepal and I hope they can keep their unpolluted enthusiasm alive.

Nepal has now achieved high school enrollment rates, and female literacy has doubled in the past 15 years. We must use the opportunity of reconstructing the 5,000 destroyed schools to also revamp the education system so it meets modern requirements and nurtures concerned citizens. The key here is retention of motivated teachers in rural schools by paying them more. It is not just classrooms that need retrofitting, the school curricula also need to be retrofitted. Poverty can be alleviated at the grassroot level by addressing employment and education.

In community after community, I have seen women removing debris and piling bricks from what used to be their homes. The men were nowhere in sight, having long left to work in the Gulf or Malaysia. The quake has added additional burden and responsibility on the women, but it also allowed them to take charge. Our job should be to empower them, assist the women-run households with subsidies for reconstruction and ease their hardship.

Let's unite and rise to build a real, new Nepal above all individual and political difference. 🇳🇵

*Sanduk Ruit is the award-winning founder of the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology and the Himalayan Cataract Project.*





# McFarland, USA

American cinema is ubiquitous with films about sports. In fact sports movies are pretty much a genre in themselves, and, to be perfectly honest, of all the feel-good genres, this one is my



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

favourite. Mainly because, the good ones, like the *Blindside* (2009) and *Moneyball* (2011) in addition to being ridiculously uplifting are usually based on real life stories and therefore can be extrapolated as fairly effective teaching tools for people of all ages and inclinations. It is

surprising how people who hate sports tend to enjoy movies on the subject.

*McFarland, USA* is as standard a sport film as it gets. A down on his luck, frustrated football coach, Jim White (played by Kevin Costner) is forced to move to McFarland in California, one of the poorest towns in the state, with a predominantly Mexican American demographic. As an assistant football coach under an already entrenched, inept bully of a man, White visibly falters, wondering how he can pursue the vocation he loves in such a place and also provide for his wife and two daughters.

It is only when White discovers that most of his students can run pretty darn fast that he conceives the idea of training them to run cross country, to compete in the state championships - a sport he

has no previous experience in coaching.

I will not ruin this little gem of a film by elaborating on what follows, just suffice to say that it really will warm your heart. Even while it is formulaic, *McFarland, USA* succeeds mainly because the screenwriters have been smart enough not to downplay the conflict inherent in the ethnic disparities that arise with White being well, white, and having to train young people who, in addition to coming from a totally different socio-economic background, also have an entirely different culture rooted in their Mexican origins.

Kevin Costner, who has always excelled at playing the everyman is perfectly cast as a quiet, stoic, but wryly humorous coach and father figure. While the wonderful Maria Bello is wasted a little in her role, as Cheryl, his pithy blonde, outspoken wife, the young men in the cross country team, are exceedingly well cast, proving that a decent script and stellar casting can raise a film beyond the ordinary; making the mundane memorable.

*McFarland, USA* produced and distributed by Disney, even while being of the glossier kind of American cinema, is one that we could do with more of. It does not shy away from class, race, and the hard realities of American life, presenting a complete picture.

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

## HAPPENINGS



**EQUAL RIGHTS:** Women rights activists and political leaders submit a memorandum to Prime Minister Sushil Koirala demanding correction of a citizenship clause on the new draft of the Constitution on Wednesday.



**MINOR MERGER:** Madhesi People's Right Forum Chair Upendra Yadav (centre), Federal Socialist Party-Nepal Chair Ashok Rai (right), and Khas Inclusive National Party Chair Yuvaraj Karki at the announcement of their newly formed party, the Federal Socialist Forum on Monday.



**THEN AND NOW:** Patan Darbar Square at 3PM on 25 April (left) and on 15 June (right). Cultural heritage sites in Kathmandu reopened on Monday.



**LIGHT UP:** CEO of Mega Bank Anil Shah at a memorial service for earthquake victims at Boudhanath on Saturday.



**RUN KATHMANDU:** Actor Hari Bansha Acharya speaks to participants of Run for Kathmandu on Saturday at Patan Darbar Square.

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DEVIKA GHARTI MAGAR

# Never too late

Devika Gharti Magar in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-20 June

हिमाल

Shanta Chaudhary never went to school because she was forced to become a Kamlari (girl-child indentured labourer) at the age of eight. After being freed, she became an activist, working for the rights of landless farmers and to abolish Kamlari culture.

When the CPN (UML) chose her as a member of the first Constituent Assembly (CA) under the Proportional Representation system in 2008, many were surprised to see an uneducated former bonded labourer in the parliament.

Chaudhary who chaired the Parliamentary Committee on

Natural Resources and Means was often ridiculed by other members for being illiterate.

"I felt humiliated," she recalls. "Had my parents been able to send me to school, I would not have faced such abuses."

Chaudhary then enrolled herself in a six-month adult literacy class, where she learnt to read and write.

At the first parliamentary committee meeting, Chaudhary took more than five minutes to write her name. Other lawmakers watched as she wrote her name with great difficulty.

Last month she enrolled in Grade 8 of Danda Gaun Higher Secondary School near her hometown in Dang.

"I didn't have time and money to go to school when I was a child,"

she says. "I now have both so I am making use of the opportunity."

Chaudhary's two children, a son and a daughter are also studying in the same school. Her son is in Grade 9 and daughter is in Grade 8.

At first Chaudhary says her children were embarrassed to be going to school with their mother, even the teachers laughed at her, but after seeing how determined she was, they have all grown supportive.

Chaudhary wanted to join school last year but she was diagnosed with uterine cancer, and has been undergoing treatment.

In 2013 Chaudhary published a much-acclaimed autobiography about her journey from being a child slave to a Constituent Assembly member.

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

■ She has a dream, #670

# Rohingya in Kathmandu

Pradip Basyal in *Nepal*, 14-20 June

नेपाल

After crossing over into Bangladesh on a boat from Burma, 28-year-old Amir Hussain and his family came to Kathmandu via India in 2012.

Hussain and his family are among thousands of Rohingya who fled Burma after anti-Muslim attacks in parts of the western Rakhine state. The plight of Rohingya 'boat people' is making headlines in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

When the group first reached Kathmandu, they didn't know anybody. They first stopped at Jame Masjid, one of the city's oldest mosques, from where they were advised to go the office of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Although the UNHCR agreed to provide shelter to women and children the refugee families decided to stay at a cheap hotel in Bag Bazar because they didn't want to leave their children. Today, Hussain and his family share a four-room flat in Kapan with two other Rohingya families. Each occupies a single room, and uses the empty room for

namaz prayers.

Rafik Alam and his family were separated during their escape. Only after he was issued a refugee certificate from the UNHCR did Alam learn of his wife and children's whereabouts. However it took Alam more than a year to reunite with his family in Bangladesh.

"My wife was pregnant when I lost her, she was brave enough to deliver the baby and bring them to Bangladesh on her own," he says. "In Kathmandu we face a lot of problems but at least we do not have to fear for our lives."

Before the riots erupted three years ago, Myanmar was home to some 800,000 Rohingya people. International reports show that 120,000 of them have since left the country. A citizenship law enacted in 1984 termed the Rohingya stateless immigrants from Bangladesh. As a result, they were not eligible for government jobs, or to apply for basic services.

But the real tragedy for the Rohingya began in 2012 as Burma embarked on the path to democracy, and the persecution by the majority Buddhists is driving the Rohingya refugee crisis.



Carrot: 16-point agreement

नेपाल

Suman in *Nepal*, 14-20 June

# Madhesi disarray

Kantipur, 18 June

कान्तिपुर

The Madhesi Front was always marred by distrust, and never a firm alliance. After four major parties inked a 16-point constitution deal on the constitution and a national government, the Front has fractured like never before. And every member party is trying to use the deal for its own benefit.

Bijaya Gachhadar, one of the key members of the front, not only signed the deal but also brokered it. Other Madhesi

parties led by Raj Kishor Yadav, Anil Jha, Sharad Singh Bhandari and Mahendra Ray have criticised the agreement. But they are unlikely to reject it, and want to benefit from the 40 per cent seats allocated for Proportional Representation (PR).

Upendra Yadav teamed up with Ashok Rai and announced another alliance: Federal Socialism Forum Nepal. Yadav and Rai both had rejected the deal, but their unified party seems more interested in post-constitution politics and opportunities. The front's leader Rajendra Mahato is alone against the compromise but has no support from other leaders. Mahanth Thakur and some youth leaders are planning an agitation, but look confused over where to start.



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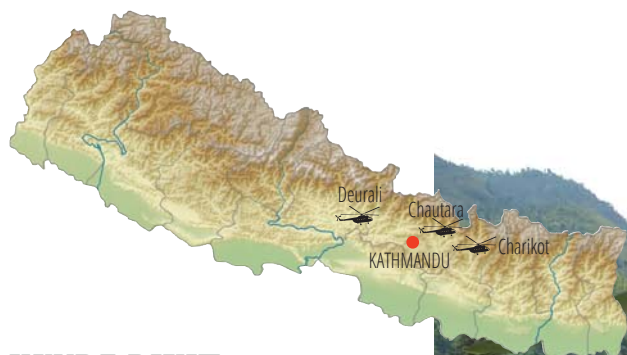
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**KUNDA DIXIT**  
in GORKHA

Not since the conflict ended in 2006 have the locals of Abu Khairani in Gorkha seen as much helicopter activity as in the past two months. An abandoned rubber factory has been turned into a forward base for emergency flights to the mountains.

Many parts of Nepal are hard to reach at the best of times, but after the 25 April earthquake, terrain and weather have become the most challenging obstacles to get urgent relief to remote communities in the 15 mountain districts before the monsoon sets in.

Roads that had been damaged and recently repaired are blocked again by landslides. Helicopters are often grounded due to cloud cover in the high valleys. And now that military aircraft from India, China and the US have gone back, there is also a shortage of helicopters to clear the backlog of some 350 tons of relief material.

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP), which specialises in food deliveries in emergencies around the world, is managing the logistics of taking tents, roofing material, food, medicines and basic supplies to far-flung villages in Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading districts.

"In Nepal, we are working in some of the most difficult terrain in the world, and the challenge will be compounded by the monsoon," said Richard Ragan, who WFP brought in from his posting in Tanzania because



ALL PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

# Operation Mountain Express

It is a race against the rains to get relief to remote villages

of his familiarity with Nepal's mountains while serving as the WFP Nepal representative for four years till 2009.

WFP doesn't just transport its own food aid, but also coordinates with the district administration to lift relief material collected by nearly 100 partners to village areas without road access. It has

three Remote Operations Bases in Chautara of Sindhupalchok, Deurali of Gorkha and Charikot of Dolakha where relief material are trucked in to be loaded onto helicopters.

WFP has hired a fleet of five MI8s and smaller helicopters, and is also employing hundreds of trekking porters, mountaineers

and mule trains to repair trails and get to even more remote areas which will be difficult to reach during the monsoon.

The work has been divided into three phases. Immediately after the quake, WFP said it reached 2 million people in the affected areas with 10kg of rice each for families of five. In the

second phase, it is working with local government to distribute rice, dal and cooking oil to last three weeks for 1.2 million people. In the last phase, it will be reaching 900,000 people with cash for work in hardest-hit districts for debris clearance and reconstruction.

Since long sections of foot

## The 8th summit

After seven Nepali women got to the top of Mt Everest in 2008 and finished climbing the seven highest peaks in seven continents last year, they thought they had run out of challenges.

But when Nepal was hit by an earthquake on 25 April, members of The Seven Summits Women's Team immediately put their knowledge of mountains and experience in managing logistics in remote areas to good use for relief and rehabilitation work.

Asha Kumari Singh is from Mahottari district in the plains, but knows Rasuwa district intimately ever since she spent two months here in 2007 for a mountaineering training course on Langtang Glacier. So, when the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) asked if she would like to be a field officer in Rasuwa for relief distribution, she readily agreed.

"I may be from the Tarai, but I am at home here and have many friends," Singh said after returning from delivering food and roofing sheets to the devastated village of Gatlang on Monday. "But my parents are more worried about my safety now, than when I was climbing Mt Everest," she laughed.

Another mountaineer from the team, Chunu Shrestha, is based at WFP's Remote Operations Base in Charikot where she helps assess the need in remote villages of Sindhupalchok so supplies can be dispatched by helicopter, road, or porter.

"It's not just about loading a helicopter and sending it off," Shrestha told us in Charikot on Saturday, "you have to know the specific need in every village. Some villagers are disappointed when you bring them sanitation kits, they want food. Others don't need food, they want tin roofs."

Other team members Shailee Basnet and Maya



KUNDA DIXIT



JANAASENBRENNEROVA

**WORKING OUT OF HOME:** The WFP's Richard Ragan and member of the Seven Summits Women's Team, Chunu Shrestha, at the Remote Operations Base warehouse in Charikot on Saturday (above). Mountaineers Pema Diki Sherpa and Nim Doma Sherpa about to go off on another relief delivery mission in their home district of Dolakha last week (below).

Gurung have been working in Gurung's home village of Bhotenamlang of Sindhupalchok to distribute emergency relief, rehabilitate school buildings and get classes going again. Another team member, Sushma Maskey is coordinating from the WFP office in Kathmandu.

Two others, Pema Diki Sherpa and Nim Doma Sherpa have been assigned to supervise WFP logistics in their home district of Dolakha. The homes of their families in Simigaon have been destroyed, as have the school and monastery. But when we met them last week both were acutely aware that the need was greater in other villages, and they were ready to take emergency supplies to Lapilang.

"Climbing the seven peaks and making Nepal known all over the world gave us a sense of personal fulfillment," said Pema Diki, "but helping in earthquake relief is a different kind of satisfaction, it is like we are helping soothe our motherland when she is in pain."

Kunda Dixit

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

■ High five, #699  
■ They climbed another mountain, #714





**HEAVY LIFT:** A MI8 is loaded with three tons of tin sheets (*overleaf*) at WFP's base in Deurali (*far left*) for delivery to northern Gorkha before the monsoon sets in. Villagers in Philim of Upper Gorkha watch roofing material being unloaded (*below, far left*). WFP staff help unload the tin sheets (*left*). The village of Uhiya near the 25 April epicenter clings precariously to a slope ravaged by landslides (*below, left*).



trails along the Budi Gandaki have been wiped out by huge landslides, the Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) and the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) are readying porters and mule trains to carry supplies across the 5,100m Larkya Pass to Prok and Bihi in

Upper Gorkha and Ripchet and Chhekampar in the Tsum Valley. Trails will also be repaired in Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dhading and Dolakha so locally-hired porters can pre-position supplies. “We have become smarter about this, and have brought in people who know the mountains:

Nepalis and foreign climbers, trekking porters and locals to create jobs while helping with relief and rehabilitation,” Ragan said as he helped unload three tons of corrugated sheets off a MI8 in Philim of Upper Gorkha. WFP has got some members of the Seven Summits Women’s

Team to help out with logistics in the districts (*see box*). In other areas, villagers will be paid cash to carry their own relief supplies from roadheads or material is dropped by helicopters. Tin sheets are in high demand as tents will leak in the rains, some villages need mobile

clinics and others want bridges to be repaired. Taking the right material to the right place quickly needs careful coordination and logistical planning, and on hand to help are Nepalis with experience in emergencies around the world. Subash Singh who was involved in the Ebola Mission in Liberia and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake was brought in by WFP to manage logistics in Gorkha. “The biggest challenge here is terrain and coordination between relief organisations,” says Singh. “But for me the difference with other disasters is the amazing coping mechanism of us Nepalis. We are used to hardships, and we have a tremendous capacity to overcome them.” As with other disasters, relief aid will taper off and WFP itself will wind down its logistical backup by the end of the rainy season. However, that is when the real work of long-term reconstruction of the estimated 700,000 destroyed houses, 5,000 schools, health posts and damaged trails will have to begin. 🇳🇵

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■ Photo blog  
■ Soon, the monsoon, #760





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# Murals of hope

PICS: STÉPHANE HUËT

Over the last two years, Nepal’s vibrant street art has received worldwide exposure and admiration for the personal and political messages. Many promising painters have been featured in international exhibitions and the media.

After the 25 April earthquake there has been an explosion of art along Kathmandu’s roads with messages of loss and hope.

Shraddha Shrestha painted *Hijo, Aaja* (Yesterday, Today) in Kantipath with the help of her friend Matt Rockwell depicting two sets of couples, one crying and the other holding shovels and a pickaxe. “I wanted to convey that yesterday we were mourning, but today we have to get back to work,” Shrestha told *Nepali Times*.

Passersby stopped to admire her work, and a policeman explained the painting to others who didn’t understand the images. “In other countries, it’s illegal to paint the streets, but here I was supported by a uniformed officer,” Shrestha laughed.

Hatemalo Abhiyan (Chain of Hands) is a team of fine arts students led by artist Bhishan Rajbhandari. The group is currently painting a three-storey mural of Kasthamandap (*pic, top*) on a wall in Babar Mahal to commemorate the temple after which Kathmandu is named, and which killed 12 people when it collapsed.

“We want the authorities to understand that the reconstruction of these monuments is important

for all of us,” said Rajbhandari, whose group will paint eight other temples of the Kathmandu Valley that were destroyed in the earthquake.

Another artists’ collective, Artlab, has launched a project called ‘Re-Color’ to bring back social harmony after the earthquake through art therapy. Passersby are invited to join the artists with brush strokes on the walls to make it a community activity. Artlab has held workshops in Patan and Bungamati.

“I feel the children who painted with me were able to take their minds off the earthquake and get over their anxiety,” says artist Kiran Maharjan.

Japanese artist, Mika, who started her painting career in Pokhara says she came back because she owes so much to Nepal. Mika painted several murals in Kathmandu before returning home. She thinks the colourful images cheer people up.

“I wanted to paint a mural to make the people of Kathmandu feel happy,” said Mika who has worked with Sattya Collective to paint the walls on the Pulchok uphill.

Sanjana Mali, assistant designer of Sabah, was disappointed when a painted wall in front of the store came down in the earthquake, but is glad to see the new murals. “It’s so good to have new colourful artwork in front of the shop again,” she added.  *Stéphane Huët*



## INSIDE

### TROUBLE IN THE RUBBLE

Time for the government and donors to focus on people waiting for help to rebuild their lives.

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### LESSONS STILL TO BE LEARNT

The earthquake is an opportunity to rebuild Nepal’s education system, not just fallen schools.

BY SONIA AWALE PAGE 10-11

### BRAVING THE MONSOON

Putting-off federal demarcation in the constitution will anger some, but the 2 million people without homes have other worries.

BY THE WAY BY ANURAG ACHARYA PAGE 3

### FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Nepal will rise again, but only if we use the earthquake as a chance to do things differently.

GUEST COLUMN BY SANDUK RUIT PAGE 10-11



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