Delegates to the International Conference on Nepal’s Reconstruction in Kathmandu on Thursday pledged more than $3.5 billion in earthquake rehabilitation. But exactly two months after the disaster, we also got a sobering reminder about unmet needs:

- 1 million people require emergency food
- 800,000 homes destroyed and damaged
- 50,000 households have got no help at all

Even in accessible areas, many families haven’t got the emergency cash grant of Rs 15,000 the government announced right after the quake. This raises questions about how support for housing reconstruction will be disbursed.

There are also concerns about how much of the money pledged on Thursday will actually come to Nepal, and whether it will evaporate en route in contracts, consultancies and overheads for foreign agencies.
TROUBLE IN THE BUBBLE

The government’s handling of offers of help from the international community has been a public relations disaster (Trouble in the bubble, Editorial #763). Even if it wanted to control the aid, there would have been a way to properly disburse it. Instead, the Nepali government was downright rude. The donors were also arrogant, but the nepal government was downright rude.

The mood of the Nepalese people at this juncture is against the time proven failure called the political party men. This is most important factor to take into account. Engage those whom the people have good will, faith and belief on.

Jim Morgan

It may be an ‘elected’ government, but it hasn’t really acted like one for most of the last seven years, has it? Most key decisions are made behind doors, or by the top leaders of the three (or four) main parties behind closed doors. Even this ‘opposition’ is useless as it is, may have been a bit acceptable had the parties had some internal democracy. But no, it appears it is the interminable and stale of the top bosses that really drives decision-making of this syndicate. Hence, we may have gone through the motions of electing a government, but it is a far cry from being a truly representative, democratic and therefore trustworthy one.

Abhishek B

MONEY FOR BUILDING CAPACITY

The word ‘dose’ is a curse for Nepal. They actually take all their donations back to support their own staff (How not to reinvent the wheel, Bhairi K Shrestha #743). Otherwise, after 50 years and millions of dollars, why is Nepal still stuck in a rut and Nepals dirt poor? Look at those who made a pledge to donate in Haiti. They never did, or if they did, it was a small percentage of what they pledged. This will repeat itself in Nepal. Nepals will have to rebuild themselves. Foreign aid will just make Nepal neta har richer even than they are now.

Alex Shrestha

It’s the government and the elite of Nepal who want to random rent seeking and attitude from massive technical organizations.

Nirmal Ghimire

I disagree. Reconstruction is specific and justified, vague ‘capacity building’ cannot be the worst form of aid. Building schools is not the priority – it is improving access to education and ensuring trained teachers that are at school.

David Seddon

OUT OF DARKNESS

Well said Dr Sanduk Ruit. (Moving out of the darkness, Dr Ruit #763) Your incisive assessment reflects your decades of track record of making things happen.

Sathi

Dr Ruit and Dr NC, both true Nepali heroes that dedicated their life for the relief of Nepal who should abandon rent seeking for times. Instead, the Nepali government should be guided by those heroes.

Agreed. This is a chance to restructure education from the ground up.

Utpal

After showing continuing progress for five straight years, Nepal’s Education Index ranking has stagnated last three years. Why?

Pratik

GURKHAS

Brave Gurkhas! I respect Nepal Times and David Seddon for highlighting the forgotten heroes of the world war (The Gurkhas of Gallipoli, #463). I am looking forward to reading more articles on Second World War and the Burma campaign as well as the less documented and researched part of World War II.

Pradeep Kiran

The Gurkhas, one of the few things, we Nepalis, can be proud of.

Airline Guy

More than aid, we need help to boost tourism, investment, trade and to create jobs in reconstruction

Abhishek B

crowdfunded funding for private relief work has filled the gap left by the state’s delayed and patchy response.

But such aid lets the government off the hook and allows it to abdicate its responsibility. Piecemeal relief can never match the scale of operation needed, which only a national government has at its disposal.

The Nepali government’s concern about aid dependency among survivors in parts of some districts is, however, valid. While farmers in remote areas will need help with food for the medium term, many living near roads who have paddy seeds are not planting this season because there is so much free rice being doled out. We should be careful emergency food aid doesn’t crowd out long-term food security.

Nepal has been labelled ‘aid dependent’ because about three-quarters of our annual budget for health, education and infrastructure comes from overseas development assistance even at the best of times. This has given foreigners and Nepalis the impression that this country will grind to a halt if aid was stopped. This may be the right time, then, for us to look beyond aid to trade, tourism, investment and job creation as better alternatives for self-sustained growth, and to build a prosperous future.

For the kind of natural and cultural assets Nepal possesses, we haven’t even begun to scratch the surface of tourism’s true potential for revenue and employment. Visitors who choose to visit Nepal do so because our mountains, heritage and biodiversity are such powerful draws, not because there has been any strategic marketing. We seem to excel at making it as difficult as possible for tourists to visit. Nepal should scrap visas, revamp our national airline, streamline entry points, encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more.

If they really want to help, donor governments should drop their inaccurate and outdated travel advisories, and the irrational ban on domestic air travel for nationals. High insurance costs are also dissuading tourists from visiting Nepal, especially after the earthquake. Distorted international media coverage that only shows destruction, and amidst fundraising billboards of aid agencies in public places in Europe have frightened off potential visitors.

Instead of more aid, we should ask donor governments to facilitate more trade. For this we don’t have to look beyond our immediate neighbours. India and China are the locomotives that Nepal should hitch its wagon to. Europe and the United States can help by lifting tariffs, redeploying aid agencies to help promote Nepal products in their countries, as GIZ has done with Nepal tea. Nepal’s private sector is more than capable of stepping in if governments open their doors.

The path ahead for Nepal is clear: we need to invest in infrastructure and encourage post-quake reconstruction through grants and soft credit for massive job creation. The path ahead for Nepal is clear: we need to invest in infrastructure and encourage post-quake reconstruction through grants and soft credit for massive job creation.

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The path ahead for Nepal is clear: we need to invest in infrastructure and encourage post-quake reconstruction through grants and soft credit for massive job creation.
Hold it right there
Because a super fast-track constitution is unacceptable, let’s hold local elections

After 8 June, many people, even if just for a minute, saw a glimmer of hope for a constitution in the making. Only two weeks later, the light at the end of that long dark tunnel is rapidly dimming again.

Instead, naysayers to the 16-point deal seem to be winning in this political arm-wrestling. The latest Supreme Court stay order couldn’t be more welcome for them – proof that indeed the deal was illogical, and not to mention, unconstitutional. The Court’s foray into political waters be damned, again.

Everyone already knows that we all voted in November 2013 while the Chief Justice was the Premier of the country after the SC dissolved the CA-1 by not allowing an extension. There were a few cities over the muddling of the separation of powers, but only silence had followed the former dissolution order in May 2012 when, for a moment, it seemed a deal was imminent. But the Court thought not. And, three years later, it has happened again.

Political parties claim they will continue with the constitution-writing process regardless. But amidst criticism from certain quarters over how the 16-point agreement has dealt with the citizenship issue, relegated the responsibility of federalism, abandoned the inclusion agenda and fast-tracked the process to earn a quick buck, the SC decision certainly adds to the agreement’s already-apparent legitimacy crisis.

However, it is worth pointing out that SC stay orders in Nepal are usually taken less than seriously, especially when the Court meanders into perceived political territory. Many court orders remain unimplemented over allegations that the justices have overstretched their hands. Maoist leader Ila Krishna Dhungel who was found guilty of killing Ujjain Kumar Shrestha in 2002 and against whom there is a SC order for life imprisonment, is the first which comes to mind.

The same goes for Justice Lal’s decision. Quite frankly, the 16-point agreement is unacceptable to major Madhesi parties and activists whose politics is fundamentally rooted in the demand for identity-based federalism.

Even if that weren’t the case, however, one cannot discount that it is absolutely deplorable for a leadership to be incapable of addressing the difficult situations, which it has consciously put itself in. That too, by bypassing an existing constitution in order to forge the political consensus needed to write a new one. Federalism still remains the most difficult aspect of constitution writing and that is why the leadership, which chose to take on the challenge now has no choice but to rise up to it. A super-fast-track constitution, which not only relieves the political class of its responsibility, but denies equal rights to women and is unaccountable to the people is no better than the Interim one.

And we’ve already got one of those.

A more effective approach would be to call for local elections as soon as possible while taking more time for the constitution-drafting process. The urgency for local accountability is the most palpable necessity throughout Nepal, and especially in the earthquake-hit districts. It is not a ploy to forgo the federal agenda, either. It is simply a measure to jump-start grassroots development in the absence of federal and decentralised structures. Every group and volunteer who worked to distribute relief in the aftermath of the earthquake has felt the absence of local accountability.

If local elections can be held before the year is out, the constitution, federalism and all, can come after. Parties should effectively use what time the CA tenure has left to produce the kind of document most – if not all – Nepalis will be willing to accept as the new constitution. That was what was promised. By then, it will already be time for new local elections to be held under the new federal set up.

@bidush

OPINION

ONE TO MANY

Bidushi Dhungel

C’mon GET ACTIVE

MADE FROM 100% JUICE

NO ADDED PRESERVATIVE

NO ADDED SUGAR

To know more about an active lifestyle log on to www.berblickin.com

100% Juice Content

Apple

Reg: actiV

100% Juice Content
Carving out a niche

Rebuilding temples won’t just restore our heritage, but also create jobs by reviving the woodcarving industry

SONIA AWALE

The 600-year old Kathmandu Durbar Square, the iconic nine-storey Basantapur Durbar Square, the Hari Shankar temple in Patan, and the Machhendranath temple in Bungamati were some of the Valley’s historic temples that were destroyed on 25 April. Although the earthquake razed ancient towns, it also offered a chance to revive traditional wood carving and create new jobs.

Nearly 500 temples and monuments in Kathmandu Valley were damaged. Historic towns like Sankhu, Bungamati and Khokana were badly hit. Wood carvings are essential architectural elements in Newari architecture and many carved eaves, columns and struts were crushed under falling masonry.

“There is definitely a need to rebuild these structures accurately, and it could revive the wood carving industry and boost sales of handicrafts also,” says Uprenda Rana of Nepal Traditional Crafts, an established exporter of Nepali handicrafts.

The hub of wood carving in Kathmandu is the town of Bungamati, which was almost completely destroyed on 25 April (See page 20-21). Most of the town’s inhabitants are busy clearing the debris, living in temporary shelters, and haven’t had the time to think about their traditional occupation of wood carving.

“I hope government will use our ancestral skills of carving wood to rebuild our temples. This way, the monuments get rebuilt and the people here get jobs,” says Manik Raj Shakya, 49, who started wood carving when he was only 12 and was crushed under falling debris.

Raj Shakya, 49, who started wood carving when he was only 12 and has been to Thailand and Japan to carve photo frames, has been the wood carver of the family business.

“Santa Bajracharya’s neighbourhood was destroyed, but she has gone back to her hammer and chisel to carve photo frames for sale to tourists. She is optimistic that sales of carved curios will pick up once tourists return. “It will take time to go back to how it used to be, but we have to work like before,” says Bajracharya who works alongside her husband amidst a stack of carved frames.

“Despite the toll the earthquake took on the people of Bungamati, there are signs of hope and inspiration. Santa Bajracharya’s neighbourhood was destroyed, but she has gone back to her hammer and chisel to carve photo frames for sale to tourists. She is optimistic that sales of carved curios will pick up once tourists return. “It will take time to go back to how it used to be, but we have to work like before,” says Bajracharya who works alongside her husband amidst a stack of carved frames.

At the Patan Industrial Estate, the wood carving workshops look quiet. Many workers have not returned from their home districts, and showroom sales are down.

But Srijana Silpakar who runs Nepal’s pioneering wood carving company, Wood Carving Industries, sees an opportunity to resurrect the tradition and train new apprentices.

“Reconstruction will start soon, the temples have to be rebuilt, and we will need more skilled carvers. When handicraft sales went into decline a lot of wood carvers got other jobs, now they could come back,” says Silpakar.

“Remaking some of the intricately carved windows and columns will not be easy, though. It will need patience, precision and practice. The skills and tradition are still alive, and need to be passed down to a new generation. “If we want to rebuild our temples exactly the way they were, we don’t even need tourists to boost the wood carving industry, there will be enough work for us,” says Silpakar.

Even so, the handicrafts industry has ups and downs that correlate with figures for tourist arrivals. So, just as sales of wood and metal artefacts went down during the conflict, there has been a similar slump in business after the earthquake.

“If the government makes concrete plans to revive tourism with promotion abroad, it will automatically help boost the wood carving industry,” says Milan Silpakar of Nepal Wood Carving in Patan.

Besides tourism, Nepal’s wood carving industry also has great export potential, which is only partially tapped. For example, Walt Disney Animal Kingdom in Florida has been buying Newari and Tibetan motifs from Wood Carving Industries to create Tibetan City in its popular Expedition Everest exhibit that opened in 2006. The earthquake showed that there is immense goodwill for Nepal abroad, and if promoted right, this could translate into increased exports of Nepali wood art.

Says Srijana Silpakar: “This is a big chance for us to conserve our own cultural heritage.”
Needless drama
Like killing Caesar to prevent an anticipated misadventure

We should all thank Supreme Court (SC) Justice Girish Chandra Lal for exposing all the forces stacked against a new constitution for the past seven years. It has also exposed the hypocrisy of our political class. Acting on a writ petition against the 16-point agreement between four major political parties because it ostensibly violated the Interim Constitution’s provisions on state restructuring, Justice Lal issued an interim order on 19 June, directing the government and the Constituent Assembly (CA) to halt the constitution drafting exercise until further order. He cited violations of Articles 1, 82 and 138 of the Interim Constitution.

Justice Lal justified it further by saying that the new constitution would invite controversy, impact the law and order situation and cause conflict if it violated the Interim Constitution. Whoa! Killing Caesar to prevent an anticipated misadventure? Can justice be based on what might happen?

To be sure, the political parties that engineered the 16-point deal on 15 June did not see a vision for the country but out of pure political calculus. Sure enough, they lashed back at Justice Lal’s interim order, terming it an overreach of the judiciary and intruding on the exclusive preserve of the assembly and ruling on a ‘political’ issue. Some even suggested that Lal could be impeached. Some parties opposed to an independent judiciary saw this as a great opportunity to clip the wings of the apex court.

The irony of political leaders citing the separation of powers and an independent judiciary was not lost on the small proportion of Nepalis still following the endless saga of Kathmandu politics. But this is not to say that Justice Lal’s interim order is not full of contradictions. The 16-point pact was reached by four political parties, but Lal issued the interim order in the name of the government and the CA. It is preemptive in that it aims to stop the CA from acting on the 16-point agreement.

The biggest contradiction is that the order purportedly sets out to protect the CA from political interference but, in doing so, the single bench blatantly interferes in the exclusive domain of the CA. Justice Lal based his order, among others, on Article 138 of the Interim Constitution. Here’s what Clause 3 of the same Article says: ‘The final settlement on the matters relating to the restructuring of the State and the form of federal system of governance shall be as determined by the CA.’

The SC has neither authority nor role in instructing the CA to act in a certain way. It can, of course, determine whether a final product of the assembly is as per the provisions of the Interim Constitution. So the question arises: Why the haste?

The most unfortunate consequence is that the interim order lent credence to calls to rein in the SC’s independence. Justice Lal’s order was aimed against a political decision. In the past, the SC has refused to entertain writs because they dealt with political issues: for example when Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi was named the head of the interim government, the SC refused to deal with it.

The SC’s May 2012 order refusing any further extension of the first CA has been compared to Justice Lal’s interim order. The argument goes that if the 2012 decision was acceptable, this one should have been as well. The first CA, elected for two years in 2008 was extended four times – first by a year, then by three months twice and finally in November 2011 as a last and final extension of six months. At the time of approving the last extension, the SC had said that the CA would be automatically dissolved after the end of the ‘last’ extension even if the parties fail to draft a constitution within the extended period. It suggested either a referendum or a new election. There is simply no comparison, in spirit or content, between May 2012 and June 2015.

That order of 25 November, 2011 had this to say: ‘Whether to deliver the constitution within the next six months or to go for a referendum or a fresh mandate or any other option is purely an issue to be decided politically, or “these are not supposed to be managed judicially”. Was Justice Lal aware of this?’

The larger bench could decide on Lal’s interim order, but this was such a needless drama and a waste of time.

THE DEADLINE
Damakant Jayshi
Two months old

Babies born during the quake remind parents of the dreadful day, but also give them strength to face the future

OM ASTHA RAI

I t was just before noon that Saturday at the Paropakar Maternity Hospital in Kathmandu. Pregnant women were waiting to be admitted, their families were busy filling out forms, paying the cashier and buying necessary medicines.

Nabina Jamkattel, 25, had been admitted that morning and wheeled into the delivery room with labour pains. Just as the contractions started, the room began to shake violently. The wobbly bed was bouncing, the midwife ran for her life, and a nurse held on to Nabina’s bed.

As panic-stricken doctors, nurses and patients scrambled out of the hospital, Nabina’s husband Bhawanath ran in, staggering through the swaying corridors looking for his wife. He found her in the delivery room, swept her up in his arms, and tried to escape. But a part of the ceiling had fallen and the door was jammed. He knelt down, laying his wife on the floor and looked around for another exit.

“Big cracks opened up in the walls, window glasses shattered and there was broken glass everywhere. I thought we were all going to die,” Bhawanath recalls.

By the time Bhawanath returned to the hospital in Thapathali, his wife had delivered a baby boy. Nabina recalls she was struggling to deliver even as aftershocks came one after another. “I felt one big jolt on my back from the ground below me, and I pushed the baby out,” she recalls.

The Jamkattel family’s house in Dhading was destroyed in the quake. Their rented room is intact, but they were too scared to stay inside. For the first two weeks, the family slept in Bhawanath’s delivery van, then moved to a temporary shelter. They are now back in their rented room in Kathmandu. Altogether 39 babies were born at Paropakar Maternity Hospital on the day of the earthquake. Two women had Caesareans, and doctors were stitching back the uterus of one of them after removing a dead baby when the quake struck.

The other was Sunita Sunuwar, 19, who had just been anaesthetised when the operation theatre started shaking. Doctors and nurses ran outside leaving her alone, but they went back in immediately after the main shock and continued with the operation despite aftershocks. The baby was taken out at 12:21 PM, 26 minutes after the main quake.

When Sunita reached her village in Ramechhap district, she did not find her house. The earthquake had flattened it. She told Nepali Times on the phone from her village: “When I came out alive from the operation theatre, I felt like I had conquered death. I don’t think I will die now.”

After she gave birth in the hospital lawn, people told Nabina Jamkattel to name her baby ‘Bhukampa’ (Earthquake), but the parents have decided to call him ‘Vision’, for the hope of the future that he brought to their lives.

“We were expecting just one new life,” says Nabina, kissing her baby, “but I feel we were all reborn that day.”
That has been a pretty late and weak start to the monsoon. The Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea arms of the southwest monsoon have low pressure troughs that are colliding over northern India, keeping the region sweltering and humid. The Arabian Sea depression is moving northeast and the Bay monsoon is turning northwest over Bhutan. Ultimately the Bay will hold sway and that is when we expect the monsoon to begin in real earnest. That we expect is still two weeks away, till then it will be partly cloudy days with night rain, heavy in places.

KATHMANDU

and kitchen with my friend. But you cannot depend on others forever.”

Shyam Awal is a driver, but with construction stopped by a government ban till mid-July he can’t find a job. “They have told him there may be no work till Dasain,” says Rashmila, who had to borrow money from her sister for Sonia’s school uniform. The only reason she can go to school is because someone paid her fees. Rashmila used to knit sweaters and socks to earn money, but she has her hands full with little Sonish who starts crying the moment he is left alone. After what she went through, Rashmila can’t let her baby out of her sight.

Still glad that the family is alive, Rashmila can’t help worrying about the future. The little money they had saved is all used up, the house and property is co-owned by Shyam’s brothers. Says Rashmila: “Both my children are miraculously alive, and that means more than all the money in the world.”

SAHINA SHRESTHA

I t is an iconic image of the Nepal Earthquake: a baby, caked in dust, held up by rescuers on being dug out after 22 hours from under the rubble of a house in Bhaktapur.

Sonish Awal was just five months old, and the story of his miraculous survival made cover stories in newspapers and magazines in Nepal and around the world. Two months on, after countless interviews to reporters, the Awal family is still homeless but feels blessed that both children are alive.

“Sonish is a happy child,” says his mother, Rashmila, as she leads us to the ground floor of a friend’s house in Bhaktapur where the family is staying. “He has started to recognise me now.” The baby, now seven months old, looks up at his mother and smiles almost on cue.

After their building collapsed on 25 April, neighbours and Nepali Army rescuers tried frantically to look for survivors under the rubble. They rescued Rashmila’s daughter Sonia, but gave up as night fell. The next morning, Rashmila heard a faint cry from the ruins of their four-storey home and the soldiers returned to dig him out.

Today Sonish shows no sign of the ordeal except for a scar on his left thigh. He coos and gurgles as he tries to crawl on the floor of the unfurnished room.

“Everything was stolen from the house including the gas cylinder and cooking utensils,” says Rashmila. “All I could salvage were a few clothes.”

The family was living in a tent at a school, but had to vacate when classes resumed last month. Sonish fell ill and lost a lot of weight, and with the rains coming Rashmila didn’t want to take any chances. Unable to afford a room to rent, Rashmila’s friend agreed to let her live in a room in their house.

“My husband is out of work, we don’t even have enough money to buy furniture,” she says, looking at the bare room. “For now we are sharing a room and kitchen with my friend. But you cannot depend on others forever.”

Shyam Awal is a driver, but with construction stopped by a government ban till mid-July he can’t find a job. “They have told him there may be no work till Dasain,” says Rashmila, who had to borrow money from her sister for Sonia’s school uniform. The only reason she can go to school is because someone paid her fees. Rashmila used to knit sweaters and socks to earn money, but she has her hands full with little Sonish who starts crying the moment he is left alone. After what she went through, Rashmila can’t let her baby out of her sight.

Still glad that the family is alive, Rashmila can’t help worrying about the future. The little money they had saved is all used up, the house and property is co-owned by Shyam’s brothers. Says Rashmila: “Both my children are miraculously alive, and that means more than all the money in the world.”

THE BABY WHO LIVED

Two months on, the Awal family is homeless but happy that both their children survived the earthquake.

HAPPY FAMILY: Rashmila Awal with her seven-month baby, Sonish, who was pulled out of the rubble of their home in Bhaktapur after 22 hours (above). Sonia Awal was also rescued alive and now baby sit her sister when she is home from school (left).
Unite for Changu Narayan, Support the locals of Changu Narayan to clean the temple complex damaged by the earthquake.
26 June, 7am, Changu Narayan Temple, Swayambhu, info@trailrunningnepal.org, www.trailrunningnepal.com

Sindhupalchok Trail Races, Three trail races of 29km, 15km and a shorter 1km in Thulo Sirubari, Sindhupalchok, about three hours drive from Kathmandu to the East to raise money for quake survivors.
27 June, 7.30am, Sindhupalchok, info@trailrunningnepal.org, www.trailrunningnepal.com

Inauguration on Inferno: A Monologue, For the best Italian plates in town.
Thamel, 014420210

Fire & Ice Pizzeria, Enjoy a draught's
Dhokaima Café,

Dan Ran, Enjoy the summer and chill with indigenous cocktails at the Rukhmuni Bar.

The Vesper House, Stop by for the best in Italian and all local favourites, in their breezy outdoors setting.

Kathmandu Kora, Join hundreds of cycling enthusiasts and ride for 50, 75, or 100km to raise money for a birthing centre in Pyatari, Lalitpur.

Prasad, An urban art show to inspire the youth by reminding them of the heroes Nepalis share in common, with music, beat boxing, live art and video mapping.
UWC Nepal

UWC Nepal, One of the biggest complaints of the local patrons these days is the unreliable closing times. If a bar has no customers, they often close earlier than stated.

Blues night, Rustynails plays some of your favorite blues and soul music.


Blues night, Music for healing,

Back to school,

Sindupalchok Trail Races,

Inferno: A Monologue

Sindupalchok Trail Races, Three trail races of 29km, 15km and a shorter 1km in Thulo Sirubari, Sindhupalchok, about three hours drive from Kathmandu to the East to raise money for quake survivors.
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All is well in Jhamel
Thamshikhel aka Jhamel may not be as popular with foreign tourists as Thamel, but it is precisely why it has escaped the ghost town vibe that inhabits the tourist hot spot post quake.

As evening sets in and children make their way home from school, parents and cars start crowding this bustling area. ‘Restaurant Row’, as the street with several higher-end restaurants, bars, and grocers has been unofficially dubbed, slowly starts filling up with people looking for a fun night out in town.

The popular Moksh Bar fills up every night of the week, with its calm backyard patio seating packed with Nepalis and foreigners from around the neighbourhood and far.

The Backyard Grill Joint and Pub is a pleasant stop too. Though it doesn’t consistently overflow as Moksh, the prices are more wallet-friendly and the ambience is more casual and easy-going.

One of the biggest complaints of the local patrons these days is the unreliable closing times. If a bar has no customers, they often close earlier than stated.

While this is a common phenomenon in Kathmandu in general, it is becoming more frequent since the earthquake.

Due to the steady stream of their local clientele, places in Jhamel are less likely to damages to its building. But within days, they started serving their delectable cuisine just next door at the Vesper House.

Suraj Missra, a chef at Bakers bakery, said the frequency of local office goers for lunch has gone down since the quake.

They are still selling many cakes, but for lunch has gone down since the quake.

Suraj Missra, a chef at Bakers bakery, said

Though the heart of Jhamel beats with more gusto than much of the city, many of the residents’ experiences since the quake add to the somber echo chamber of the residents’ experiences since the earthquake.
Hi all,

People think long distance relationships (LDRs) don’t generally work, but this doesn’t mean living in the same city as your partner guarantees a happily ever after.

**ASK ANJANA ANYTHING**

Anjana Rajbhandary

Nowadays, love is quite underrated so you have to see something in the other person to even consider making an effort. Some can wait, most don’t. If you have a partner you can trust, someone who you value, can communicate with, have a strong friendship with, and selfless love—then the bond is definitely stronger than many. If you truly love someone, being loyal is easy.

In all honesty in the long run, a LDR can be inconvenient and frustrating but it shouldn’t be a dealbreaker. If the two people, are able to see the distance as a temporary test than a permanent relationship challenge, and both want it to work and believe in it: it is very likely that the relationship will thrive. Of course, there has to be a plan to see each other regularly with a strong potential that at some point, sooner rather than later, the two people will be in the same place.

Please send questions to: askanjananything@nepaltimes.com or @ Anjala

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**DOUBLE TROUBLE: A shanty settlement near Boudha (Ar)****

Sita Tamang, 35, used to make a living from a small snack shop. But business is down since the quake. Many families here hope that once reconstruction starts, the government’s ban on new buildings is lifted in mid-July, there will be a lot more jobs coming up.

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

**Love > Distance**

AR: I feel it is possible for two people to be in two different parts of the world and make their relationship work, that being said, there also needs to be some confirmation that eventually there is a possibility of the two people being in the same city or within acceptable distance.

Communication, optimism and trust are key to make a LDR work. Are you and your partner on the same page with similar expectations and working equally hard to make this work? People in LDR tend to be more forthcoming about their feelings. Be more honest, acknowledge that it will be hard and you will want to give up at times, so ask yourself if you are ready to do this. Can you and your partner wait for each other till you feel it is possible to be with each other more permanently than just on a vacation or trip back home?

Not having enough physical interaction can put a strain on any relationship. Is it possible for both of you to be a supportive part of each other’s lives?

If you cannot imagine being without the person, try not to give up on your partner. It really doesn’t matter what other people say, because it is your life and your relationship.

Both should want to be together and both should be willing to work together. I believe when two people want to make a relationship work, they find a way and when they don’t, they find an excuse. Only time can tell what will happen, but it is rare to find someone who makes you want to put in the extra effort. Good luck.

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

Stone inscriptions at Changu Narayan reveal that this hilltop shrine is the oldest known settlement in Kathmandu Valley. With a history going back to the Lichhavi Period more than 1,000 years ago, archaeologists say the settlement is built upon several layers of ruins of buildings destroyed in previous earthquakes. The latest quake this year once more damaged one of Kathmandu’s holiest, most historic sites. The main temple is now propped up by wooden beams. Weakened by aftershocks, the temple’s corners are crumbling and the walls have cracks.

Although the earthquake did not destroy the main temple completely, a lot of damage was done. But before we begin to renovate the temple, we must take precautions to ensure that the structure is not further damaged,” says Aruna Nakarmi of Department of Archaeology.

The plan now is to analyse the soil, strengthen the slopes below the temple to prevent landslides, study the impact of vibration from a nearby road, and only then carry out the renovation, she adds. However, some urgent repair work is being carried out on the outer walls to make the temple complex safe for visitors in future. “Rebuilding the temple from scratch is not feasible. At the moment, we are focusing on the structure’s stability so that further renovation can be done on the outside in the near future,” Nakarmi told Nepal Times.

Around the temple, the four sattals housing the recently-opened Living Traditions Museum has been razed to the ground by the Nepal Army which is guarding the temple complex round the clock. Artefacts from the temple and the museum are currently being housed separately.

“There are plans to rebuild the south section of the museum so that historical objects can all be stored there,” says Sunita Bhadel of the Living Traditions Museum. The army, police and local volunteers have been helping out to clear and sort the debris, but with the rice planting season around the corner help is in short supply.

A Changu resident who lost his family home sums up the mood here: “The earthquake destroyed our houses, but at least the temple is still standing and that gives us some solace.”

BUNGAMATI

From afar, visitors could be forgiven for mistaking the ridge-top village of Bungamati with its russet brick houses and a scenic backdrop of rolling hills as one of those historic towns in Tuscany. Indeed, Bungamati’s charm lies in its architecture, its vibrant festivals and a close-knit Newar community that is proud of its heritage. A large part of that cultural wealth is related to the Machindranath temple and the chariot festival of the rain god. This April, the festival was an important 12-year event and the people of Bungamati were in the midst of celebrating the jatra when the earthquake struck.

Many of the historic mud and brick houses went down along with the large sikhara-style temple of the red rain god. The chariot had already been pulled up to Chasikot where it stopped on its tracks. And that is where it still is, leaning to one side.

Relief workers reached Bungamati immediately with food and shelter but many villagers are worried about the rains. Two months after the quake, the locals have cleared a lot of the debris and have built temporary shelters. But many damaged houses still need to be demolished.

“We want to bring down our house and clear up the space but the road up ahead has been blocked by the houses that collapsed, so the pick-ups to transport the debris cannot reach this place,” says Amar Raj Shakya whose three-storey house went down the hill.

As elsewhere in Kathmandu Valley, Bungamati’s youth have stepped in. Every morning for the past few days members of Bhintuna Pucha have started clearing the rubble in collaboration with the house owners and the community. The group is getting help from the Ganesh Man Singh Foundation and Umesh Shrestha, chairman of Prime Bank.

Naresh Man Shakya of Bhintuna Pucha said: “With the monsoon approaching, it became clear we needed to act urgently. The challenge is to involve the community while working on houses that are not their own.” The group members are given Rs 200 as incentive, even though they are volunteers. For people like Sakali Mali (pic, above), whose three-storey house went down the youngsters are a big help. “We didn’t know where to start but with their help we are almost done in a week,” she says.

Sahina Shrestha
The ancient settlement of Sankhu in the eastern edge of Kathmandu Valley was being considered by UNESCO for inclusion into its list of World Heritage Sites. In January 2008, the Department of Archaeology submitted its application for Sankhu. Then came the 25 April earthquake and the historic Newar town lost most of its ancient temples and houses. The people of Sankhu are proud of their heritage and started picking up the pieces soon after the quake. They cleared the debris themselves, and are now trying to see if they can raise money for rebuilding.

“Waiting for the government isn’t a solution,” said Suresh Pradhan, a social worker who founded the Sankhu Reconstruction Committee. “We will rebuild ourselves.” The assessment was initiated two weeks after the earthquake by Sakwo Vintuna Pacha, a youth organisation founded in 2013 to preserve and promote the cultural traditions of Sankhu. There are now 20 volunteers between 18-26 years old protecting the artefacts, bricks and timbers in the ruined town.

Some 55 historical houses, many more than 100 years old, have been damaged in the earthquake. Amrit Shrestha, 23, a civil engineering student has been inspecting the buildings and deciding whether some of them are safe enough to be repaired, or have to be torn down. Volunteers are also collecting artefacts from damaged buildings to store safely. However, Sakwo Vintuna Pacha is facing challenges, some locals have already sold their sadhyas, the intricately carved wooden windows. “People need money to rebuild their houses,” Shrestha said. “But we have to explain to why they shouldn’t sell them.”

In a meeting with social workers, English teacher Birendra Prasad insisted that safety was more important than preserving old buildings. “We want houses that are resistant,” he said. Christian Manhart, Director of Archaeology at the Nepali Department of Archaeology said: “The plan isn’t a problem, we need a rebuilding policy to ensure the style and safety of our houses.”

Rebuilding Ourselves

The people of Sankhu are proud of UNESCO Nepal, who was at the meeting, explained that houses could be rebuilt in traditional style and still be safe. “Living in a historic city and being safe from earthquakes isn’t a contradiction,” he added.

Archaeologist David Andolfatto accompanied Manhart to Sankhu earlier this week and he was impressed by the work already achieved by Sakwo Vintuna Pacha, especially because they hadn’t been trained in heritage conservation. Two volunteers of Sakwo Vintuna Pacha trained by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) have been sifting carefully through the ruins. Manhart also suggested they could learn how to use KLL Collect app to transmit information on status of damaged monuments.

The Sankhu Reconstruction Committee carried out an inventory of all the historic buildings in the town 10 years ago. But Pradhan says: “The plan isn’t a problem, we need a rebuilding policy to preserve and promote the cultural traditions of Sankhu.”

After the earthquake, locals realised the alleys were too narrow for ambulances to drive through. “More lives could have been saved had the lanes been wider,” says Maharjan. “The plan now is to make the alleys three feet wider.”

Addis Maharjan: “Even if we are close to Kathmandu, we haven’t received aid from the government. We have fallen under the shadow of the light as a saying in Nepali goes.”

Stéphane Huët
Jurassic World

As a fourth film in a Hollywood franchise, a creation whose inception started in the mind of the late, (arguably) great sci-fi writer Michael Crichton, and was perpetuated into cinematic glory in the first Jurassic Park (1993) by none other than Steven Spielberg, Jurassic World already had a lot to live up to considering its rather splendid roots.

For those of you who are already scoffing at my description, well, don’t even bother to go see this latest installment. It has none of the wonder and awe of the first film, which fearlessly pioneered and used jaw dropping CGI to recreate the Jurassic era brimming with the gamut of wondrous dinosaurs that held people spellbound, young or old.

Unlike the Crichton novel, Jurassic Park wasn’t really all that sophisticated, it just had all the elements of a Spielberg film that put it above par: the crazy science fiction, the blithely naive of the characters, the obligatory kids who are adorable but also intrepid, and finally, technology to match the vision.

Unfortunately, 22 years later, none of the above continue to hold true for poor Colin Treverrow, the romantically named, clearly competent director of Jurassic World who, in his defense was probably never really allowed full rein.

Jurassic World exists as an oft-visited park on the infamous Isla Nublar where so many dinosaurs had run rampant in the past films. It is now a declining attraction where not even the dinosaurs are really that exciting any longer (neither to us, nor to the parkgoers). Hence, the creation of the Indominus Rex, an aberration conceived by the park’s money hungry administrators and board members among whom all are pretty much insufferable due to terrible cardboard cutout characters that not even the likes of Irrfan Khan (who plays Simon Masrani, the owner of the park) can save.

Really, the only reason that you should watch this particular, bizarrely boring film (how can you go wrong with the likes of velociraptors and t-rexes at your disposal?) is to see if you can forget all the silliness of what ought to be clever characters, and perhaps do some person watching in the form of Chris Pratt (who plays Owen Grady, an animal trainer), an actor who made his breakthrough with Marvel’s Guardians of the Galaxy (2014). Pratt, a talented but struggling actor for decades, who is now, finally, getting his due, pulls this slight film together out of sheer will and force of persona. In the words of one of the characters in the film, Pratt is the real badass, not the dinosaurs.
Should Dharara be rebuilt?

After the 25 April earthquake, Nepalis were shocked to hear that the iconic Dharara tower in Kathmandu came down, killing at least 70 people. It gave the first indication of just how serious the quake was, and also took away an important landmark that many had an emotional attachment to.

Prime Minister Sushma Thapa built two towers in the 19th century both of which went down in the 1833 quake. Only one was rebuilt, and it was destroyed again in 1934 and rebuilt once more. Now, some are saying that since it had gone down twice previously, maybe Dharara should not be rebuilt, but the ruins kept as a memorial to the 2015 earthquake.

Rohit Ranjitkar of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust thinks rebuilding Dharara shouldn’t be a priority. “We can leave it as a memorial of the 25 April earthquake,” he said. “It will also remind us of the risk of building high and unsafe constructions.”

Artist Bhishan Rajbhandari, who advocates for the reconstruction of all monuments of Kathmandu, doesn’t agree. He says the Moghul-style tower was part of Kathmandu’s identity. “It symbolised our acceptance of other cultures,” he said. “We must rebuild it by making sure it is earthquake resistant.”

There are many examples from around the world of destroyed monuments being left as a reminder of the disaster that caused it. For example, the Hiroshima monument has preserved a building, and parts of the World Trade Centre building have been kept at Ground Zero in New York. The concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau is now a museum to remember human cruelty. In Siciluan, some of the ruined buildings in Wenchuan commemorate the 2008 earthquake and the loss of life.

Entrepreneur Amar Jyoti Ranjit, who undertook the building of a 2.30-metre cement replica (pic, left) of the tower costing Rs 250,000 on a traffic island in Sandhara, said rebuilding the fallen tower will be symbolic of Nepal rising from the debris.

Ranjit understands concerns about safety, but he thinks there must be a way to construct a stronger Dharara. "Stéphane Huët

The Vesper House

Vesper Café and Restaurant has carved a soft spot in the hearts of Nepali and foreign patrons in the heart of Jhamsikhel, unfortunately the 25 April earthquake took down the beautiful red mud-brick building the restaurant was located in. Within days, the Vesper House next door reopened for business–catering to their loyal fans and providing a relaxing environment for people to unwind and enjoy a good meal.

It was a perfect move. Most restaurants in Jhamsikhel were still closed and people needed a place to unwind. Adding the original Vesper Café’s food menu brought back for most.

Our first entrée was the Smoked Chicken and Jalapeno Pepper pizza (Rs 695). This thin crust pizza came with generous chunks of sliced smoked chicken, lots of little pieces of olives and a sufficient amount of jalapeno peppers to give it just the right kick. The pizza was delicious and a reminder of the pizzas near a corner restaurant in a piazza in Italy. The thinness of the crust balanced the amount of toppings on it.

Our second entrée was Ravioli di Pollo (Rs 415), beautifully layered in a dish with a strong aroma of Italy. The thinness of the crust balanced the amount of toppings on it.

Our filling meal did not leave room for dessert but the Vesper House has a selection of homemade desserts ranging from raspberry cheese cake to panna cotta (both Rs 260), which will guarantee a trip back for most.

How to get there: Located on the restaurant row between DanRan, we can leave the ruins as was done with Qutub Minar in Delhi. Attraks tourist interest as well.

Stéphane Huët

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Even a massive earthquake can’t shake the concerned authorities into actually being concerned

The Interim order and interim constitution

By delving into politics, the Supreme Court verdict on the 16-point deal has once again blurred the separation of powers

The two-page court decision clearly shows that the judiciary has entered into the political realm even though it has mentioned Article 138, 1, 122 and 138 of Interim Constitution are challenged by the recent agreement between the parties.-

The political leaders decided that the disputed issue of federalism would be settled by a two-thirds majority in Parliament based on the report of a Federal Commission to demarcate the borders of the provinces. The Supreme Court, however, issued the interim order to not promulgate constitution without solving the issue of federalism first. But what the honorable justices seem to have forgotten is that this is precisely where everything has been stuck for the past seven years, and the 16-point agreement represents the first hope in arranging the knot.

The interim order doesn’t mean that the Constituent Assembly has to stop work on drafting the constitution, and it is clear that the judiciary is over-stepping its bounds by interfering in a sovereign elected assembly.

The major parties which signed the agreement held an emergency meeting on the same day that the Supreme Court issued the interim order declaring that they will not stop work in drafting the constitution. Chairman of the CA Gopinath Hembang has also been vocally critical of not just the court this week, but also of President Ram Baran Yadav for seeming to side with the court. Actually, the Supreme Court order only alerted CA that according to Article 138, the issue of federalism must be included in the new constitution prior to its dissolution.

The court maintained that according to the provision of Article 138 of Interim Constitution the Constituent Assembly should decide the borders, number, names, structures and headquarters as well as a detailed list of these provinces, their resources and the sharing of duties. Based on this the court and the federal system should be decided by the CA itself and not by a future commission.

It is not normal practice for the Supreme Court to entertain this kind of writ petition, and it was in fact rejected by the Supreme Court administration. This writ was filed by Vijay Kanta Karna, former editor and ambassador to Denmark, and the hearing was conducted by Justice Girish Chandra Lal, who is retiring in the first week of January. The 16-point agreement had sprung hope among Nepalis that there would finally be a breakthrough on the constitution so that the country could focus on post-quake reconstruction.

But the court order has dampened these hopes somewhat. The four parties are putting on a brave face, and have said nothing will stop their agreement from being implemented. Their rhetoric comes from the fact that the UML, CPN(M) and the MHP will all get berths in a new national unity government after the constitution is written. They are all pinning their hopes that the decision branch of the Supreme Court will overturn the single bench verdict on the petition.

Justice Girish Chandra Lal’s decision has also opened him up to allegations of a Madhesis tilt in a decision that favours disgruntled members of the opposition alliance which did not agree with the 16-point deal. Numerous op-eds in the Nepali media have remarked that it is not a coincidence that the writ petitioners, lawyers, and justices are all Madhesis who have been against the constitution compromise.

#Indoluded

Moving Target Foreigh Hand

As the garbage piled higher and water tap stayed dry and it dawned on me the concerned authorities everyone pinned their hopes on were actually not concerned, about the trash, water or anything else. Thus began the Himalayan journey of discovery into Bureaucratic Apathy on a day when nothing was expected or anything else. Thus began the Hand’s journey of discovery into the mindset of those in positions of authority.

The Nepalis I knew and worked with were generous or strict and caring, any first question was how could these bureaucrats be so different? It seems, in short, whoever joins the civil service somehow mutates into a lower, more cynical breed.

My second question was why none of these jokers ever got fired. ‘If only it were that simple,’ came the mysterious response from between the lines. Most government staff need family networks before even getting hired (or they’d never get the job) and spend the rest of their careers building a web of contacts and strategic alliances that’s more important (to them) than the state they’re supposed to serve. Liaisons are forged and mutual benefit societies established that grow more intricate with time. If all this wasn’t so time-consuming (and financially rewarding) the bureaucracy might find time for other matters, like work. I eventually realised it’s not that the authorities aren’t concerned, rather they’re concerned about all the wrong things.

A mutually agreed impunity combined with exceptionally low expectations encourages this indifference to flourish. Plus, let’s not forget that inept official ignoring the water supply or diverting funds might be the uncle of someone you owe favours to, making your best course of action obvious: do nothing.

The fact that some poor villagers in far-flung districts were swindled out of the promised irrigation canal, road or health-post is far less compelling than protecting uncle. The village’s remote, uncle isn’t, and next time it could be your future threatened by some poison criminal. You’ll dupr your co-workers to cover your back and do nothing else.

But somebody must have cared in the past. I sensed, thinking of the beautifully laid-out old irrigation canal of the valley’s towns and cities. Public apathy that delivered water for centuries must have been maintained or they’d dry up as they have now. Communal areas were incorporated in the planning of every neighbourhood, spaces that would likely be sold on the open market by the concerned authorities these days.

As my journey of discovery degenerated into a morbid musle, overwhelmed by examples to ponder, I couldn’t help noticing this negligent bureaucracy is dominated by Brahmins and Chettris. Coincidence? The higher castes have always used their religiously sanctioned status to lord it over ordinary citizens and gain access to the treasury. As a fallen Catholic, I’m no stranger to the duplicity in divine guise but am still impressed by such a devious system that preaches the low castes deserve their poverty and suffering because of sins committed in previous lives. It certainly makes it easy for the elite to shrug their shoulders and pretend they’d like to help, but who can argue with fate?

This high caste sense of entitlement continues to be abused by all the party leaders and their coteries. The Maestos luminaries may be aloof and pretend to be egalitarian but are quick to use the perks of their Brahmin caste, which include the right to pontificate endlessly, act holier-than-thou, and threaten people with hell-fire if they dare disagree.

Whatever caste or party bureaucrats belong to, they usually adopt the habits of the old feudal elite. This was never more painfully exposed than in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. As aid poured in, the concerned authorities froze, almost as if they were only expected to act swiftly and give away valuable emergency goods to a enemy they didn’t care about. Just when the country desperately needed leadership, all party leaders disappeared for a couple of weeks, probably to hide their clue-less faces while plotting to steal a share of the windfall.

The government’s crude attempt to extort customs tax on free donations displays a level of short-sighted greed insulting to both the donors and those waiting for help. Two months on, aid still litters the tarmac at Tribulatin Intl Airport as Customs officials haggle over duties while being an old hand, I must admit this profound level of indifference to free donations displays a level of short-sighted straits is difficult to fully comprehend, especially when considering the dynamic young Nepalis who threw themselves wholeheartedly into helping those in need.

Some dream this disaster would sweep away the old ways and galvanise the politicians into action but all evidence indicates otherwise. Even a massive earthquake can’t shake the concerned authorities into actually being concerned.
The disaster is not over

Assessing the National Planning Commission’s Post-disaster Needs Assessment report

The National Planning Commission (NPC) conducted fieldwork between 22 May-10 June to assess Nepal’s ‘post-disaster’ needs and produced a report with an 18-page executive summary. The Health and Population Sector also submitted its findings to the PDNA (Post-disaster Needs Assessment) Secretariat. The key findings are being considered at the International Conference on Nepal’s Reconstruction (ICNR) on 25 June.

The reports were produced with speed and professional skill, and have pulled together a range of information and provide a valuable overview and synthesis of the scope and scale of the earthquakes. The collaboration between local communities, NGOs, government and international agencies at this stage is clearly far better than it was at the outset, despite continuing issues. It is essential if effective reconstruction is to take place that all parties work together, complementing rather than overlapping or duplicating each other’s efforts. It is important to recognise the overall dimensions of the disaster in time as well as in space. Thirty-one of 75 districts are affected, with 14 declared ‘crisis-hit’, and the geological movement continues as the monsoon looms, threatening further landslides and flooding over several months is of critical significance.

The needs assessment, however, is largely retrospective and does not really begin to address the implications of the cumulative effect of a series of earthquakes followed by months of monsoon rain. A realistic strategy and program for reconstruction will need to include an assessment of likely needs going forward, not only the damage that needs to be repaired as of now. It should not really be a ‘post-disaster’ needs assessment, but rather an assessment of short, medium, and long-term requirements and priorities as the needs emerge.

Two months after the first earthquake, tens of thousands of people, many of them in remote areas, are still living in temporary or transitional shelters. Many have lost crucial assets as well as family members and neighbours, and damage to property and injury to persons is widespread. But perhaps more important still is the damage done to livelihoods, on which hundreds of thousands of people rely absolutely for survival.

The report recognises ‘subsistence-based households are badly affected in rural areas as the earthquake hit Nepal only a few weeks prior to the start of the paddy planting season’. But the key consideration is not only the capacity to engage in activities that will bear fruit later in the year, but arguably even more critically people’s ability (or lack of ability) to sustain themselves through a continuing income stream both in Nepal and abroad. Ensuring that continuing flow of income will be crucial.

Yet the focus of the report is on the damage done to buildings; it points out that almost half of what it calls ‘the destruction and production decline’ was in the housing sector and that the environment, education, finance and agriculture sectors represent 4 and 5 per cent each of the total disaster effects. It concludes, to my mind misguided, on this basis that 49 per cent of ‘needs’ are in housing, only 2.3 per cent in agriculture, and only 1.9 per cent in employment and livelihoods. This seems to be a strange way of assessing both ‘damage’ and ‘need’ and appears to be based on a physical or macro-economic rather than a micro-economic and social model of ‘damage’ and ‘need’. The whole approach, which is essentially very top-down and retrospective, should be reconsidered to recognise that the crucial priority now and over the coming months and even years is to encourage and promote an adequate flow of income to households and local communities to rebuild people’s livelihoods and lives. This can be through whatever sectors are likely to be most effective for income generation: a dynamic grassroots derived model. Finally, any ‘needs assessment’ worth its salt should consider not only the ‘needs’ (derived I suggest from more than an assessment that concentrates on damage and destruction of assets) but also the resources and capabilities, and the institutional and other mechanisms, available to meet those needs. Clearly there will be a role for foreign aid and assistance in the immense task of recovery and reconstruction, and also for the deployment at a national and regional level of government resources of all kinds (human, technical, financial, etc). An integrated overall strategy for infrastructural, economic and social – and political – reconstruction will be crucial. But if there is one thing that has been revealed during the on-going disaster over the last two months, it is the absolutely crucial role of ordinary Nepali people in local communities and through a variety of local initiatives, informal organisations and NGOs, supported by the actions of local government officials, the police and the army working together at the grassroots, in any effective assessment of what is needed going forward the way of response and of the ways in which priorities should be established.

David Seddon

THE GADFLY

#764

REBUILDING OURSELVES

Assessment (Derived I suggest from more than an assessment that concentrates on damage and destruction of assets) but also the resources and capabilities, and the institutional and other mechanisms, available to meet those needs. Clearly there will be a role for foreign aid and assistance in the immense task of recovery and reconstruction, and also for the deployment at a national and regional level of government resources of all kinds (human, technical, financial, etc). An integrated overall strategy for infrastructural, economic and social – and political – reconstruction will be crucial. But if there is one thing that has been revealed during the on-going disaster over the last two months, it is the absolutely crucial role of ordinary Nepali people in local communities and through a variety of local initiatives, informal organisations and NGOs, supported by the actions of local government officials, the police and the army working together at the grassroots, in any effective assessment of what is needed going forward the way of response and of the ways in which priorities should be established.

@pigreen
The first emergency may be over, but the work of rehabilitating lives is only beginning.

Other renowned mountainous and a group of paragliders, who had been in the country exploring the Himalayas, spontaneously joined WFP’s relief efforts, bringing their intimate knowledge of a dangerous terrain. Pilots flying food, medicine and construction materials on WFP helicopters include Masoud VR, who rescued two climbers on Mt Everest in 1996 – the highest-ever helicopter landing at the time.

Our mission is far from accomplished. Flying over the worst-affected areas recently, I spotted a plume of dust rising from the ground in just one hour. Landslides have always plagued Nepal but with the earth unsettled by the earthquake and aftershocks, they are more frequent. With the monsoon upon us, more villages are at risk of being cut off or hit by floods. Much agricultural land has been lost, and almost 70 per cent of households in the mountain range face poor or borderline food consumption.

The first emergency may be over, but the work is only beginning. Shelters must be rebuilt, livelihoods must be restored, and crops must be planted and harvested. Otherwise, what is now a difficult food situation will get worse.

On 25 June, exactly two months since the first earthquake, high-level representatives of donor countries met in Kathmandu at the invitation of the Government of Nepal. It’s important that donors continue their generous effort beyond the relief phase, allowing the millions of survivors to recover and rebuild their lives.

We at WFP have already started distributing cash to thousands of families with emergency needs in Nepal. As part of the coordination effort, we put together a proposal to spend more than $422 million on emergency needs in Nepal.

Called a ‘Flash Appeal’, it happens in every disaster. The collective appeal is made up of dozens of individual project outlines, submitted by any aid organisation, to prioritise those most in need of help. The appeal is a like a wish list presented by the UN to donor countries. My analysis shows that only a few Nepali organisations applied for funding: they asked for $3.9 million, just 0.8 per cent of the total.

Many Nepali groups I spoke to had never heard of the Flash Appeal. Even if they did know about it, they would have been hard-pressed to apply on time. The online application system is cumbersome, built for insiders and it requires technical English-language skills. It’s a shame because to-date, aid organisations have received $131 million of their requests.

There is no disaster response without locals to do the work on the ground. Nowhere is this more true than in Nepal, where the geography alone is a huge challenge for foreigners. But instead of receiving funds directly, local organisations are being hired by foreign organisations as subcontractors. The aid industry calls them ‘implementing partners’.

In the Flash Appeal, international organisations identified more than 50 local ‘implementing partners’. Why not just fund them directly? It’s not a question of experience. Leaving locals on their own is a systemic bias and it happens every time.

The earthquake response will be much more expensive because of this complex funding structure. Big organisations will take their cut for ‘administrative fees’, followed by our organisation in the chain. The aid response will also be less effective, utilising local experts as little more than hired help.

In Sumithpaloch, Assam Tamang’s entire family of 21 is sleeping under corrugated sheets. Assam has a lot of theories about why he hasn’t received any substantive aid. At the top of his list, he blames the government for stealing the money. As a result, he makes sense. But the problem isn’t theft. It’s that aid is much more expensive than people think it is. Aid organisations are to blame for this misunderstanding. I looked at the claims of 45 major groups operating in Nepal on their websites. They say they’ve provided shelter to more than three million people, a number that is 176,000 people, which is calculated by UNOCHA.

When organisations collaborate on a project, they all claim the aid as their own accomplishment. For example, USAID provided plastic sheets to the country, but ACTION and ACTED, a French NGO, have collectively claimed to ‘provide’ 570,000 plastic sheets. They are actually taking credit for the same aid. USAID donated plastic sheets only to distribute at the airport. ACTED worked with local groups to pass it out.

There is no way to know how many groups are taking credit for the same aid. That means there’s no way to know what it really costs. In the time the big aid organisations subcontract everything, pass around the money, and then implement a thousand other temporary fixes, the money will be gone. Like Haiti, the victims of the Nepal earthquake were already poor and now poorer than ever.

They’ve been faceless and voiceless for decades. A recent survey of the quake-impacted area in Nepal found that 99 per cent of mud houses collapsed, while only 3 per cent of cement houses were damaged.

Five years after the earthquake in Haiti, the international community has rebuilt only 9 per cent of the houses that were destroyed. It will happen in Nepal too, and it is happening now. Like the wooden toy in the antique store, the people who really need help are sitting with their hands out, just waiting, frozen in time, subject to the whims of the truly powerful.

Emily Troutman is an independent writer and photographer. For a longer version of this report, see ‘What Happened to the Aid? Nepal Earthquake Response Echoes Haiti.’ www.aid.works
An opportunity for all: Nepal is open to visitors

Taking a leisure holiday is a choice – and most tourists, even adventure tourists, will select destinations where they feel safe and secure. April 25th shook (among so many other things) the confidence of potential tourists to Nepal. One of the key tasks the Nepali tourism industry now faces is rebuilding that confidence. This is done primarily through marketing, but also through the creation of new products and mechanisms to ensure safety wherever possible. This requires a clear, cohesive plan jointly implemented by the government of Nepal, tourism entrepreneurs and trade associations in Nepal and abroad. It should also be done by thinking of the revival process as an opportunity.

An opportunity to ‘Build Back Better’

The process of rebuilding, rebranding and relaunching Nepal’s infrastructure, products and services creates a significant and rare opportunity for the tourism industry to reposition and reconnect itself. Improved services in hygiene, safety, water management, use and interaction with natural resources, and transport management can be delivered alongside rebuilding efforts. This may be the perfect time train to staff, porters and managers in the industry.

An opportunity for foreign visitors

Tourists can support Nepal at a time of need, to witness reconstruction efforts first hand and directly support communities affected by the disaster. The money foreign visitors will bring in with them will help to rebrand Nepal in a positive and sustainable way.

If you just look at the last couple of weeks, all the cafes, clubs, restaurants, everything, it has all come to life. Once people are here, they will realize, impact is not as it has been projected.

Prasidha Panday, Managing Director of the luxury Shangri-La Hotel in Kathmandu.

Have you ever travelled to Nepal? Start making plans. October and November are Nepal’s peak season for tourism, and are, of course, the best time of the year to come and visit.

Adventure Travel Trade Association, a global trade network supporting sustainable adventure travel worldwide.

How Nepal is safe. So help Nepal by sending your nationals if you want to help Nepal in the real sense.

Kripashur Sherpa, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

What is our next campaign? Feed peace in Nepal - Nepal – a place of wonder Nepal - discover yourself.

Building assessment

More extensive damage assessments and safety audits are required to encourage tour operators in source markets to regain confidence in Nepal’s tourism sector. Hotels, home-stays, trails, etc. were damaged, but many establishments were unaffected and are still running.

If you look just at the last couple of weeks, all the cafes, clubs, restaurants, everything, it has all come to life. Once people are here, they will realize, impact is not as it has been projected.

Prasidha Panday, Managing Director of the luxury Shangri-La Hotel in Kathmandu.

Have you ever travelled to Nepal? Start making plans. October and November are Nepal’s peak season for tourism, and are, of course, the best time of the year to come and visit.

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Kripashur Sherpa, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

What is our next campaign? Feed peace in Nepal - Nepal – a place of wonder Nepal - discover yourself.

Building assessment

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Focus on innovations
Augmented reality
To create a unique and award winning experience for tourists

Restore damaged UNESCO heritage structures is estimated to cost $18 million. While restoring the combined 743 damaged monuments can cost $117m. The restoring and rebuilding of all these cultural sites will take years. However, tourists can be offered new experiences to attract them to the cultural heritage sites. With loss of our heritage assets, the challenge is how to keep tourists in Kathmandu for longer. Exhibitions or murals in front of heritage sites showing before and after images could help attract more tourists to the heritage sites. An augmented reality application could also allow smart phone users to see pictures of what the square would have looked like before the earthquake when the camera is at a certain space or area. There could also be narration by famous actors, information and interactive tools to create a world class and award winning multi-media experience that is promoted in Nepal and abroad. The disaster could be a new beginning.

Training
During the off season to deliver better services
Comprehensive retraining of staff laid off and unemployed at this time (porters, waiters, hoteliers, managers, etc.) could be the ideal next step for the tourism sector to bounce back. In many ways it could be the perfect time. After good management training programs, staff and laid off employees will be ready to provide better services when the tourist season starts again after the monsoon. Training programs will have to focus on helping entrepreneurs and employees provide newer services/products and identifying newer markets. Programs could focus on management, marketing, hygiene, customer care, etc. They could be delivered directly to affected workers as part of a revival package.

Safe Trekking Systems
To inspire confidence
As Nepal seeks assurances from international geologists and consultants on its popular trekking routes, especially the Everest and Annapurna regions that attract around 70 per cent of trekkers, the PDNA suggests creating a Safe Trekking System with standards and regulations for the quality of the product and how to manage it. Classifying trails will go a long way in enabling visitors and the industry to assess the risks associated with certain treks and areas based on altitude, length, facilities, location etc.
A Safe Trekking System requires a product that allows good communication along the trail, a monitoring system that tracks the location of visitors & staff during the trek, a responsive rescue system, appropriate shelter along the way, enterprises that offer good basic services and quality infrastructure including bridges and drinking water provisions. The Safe Trekking System also requires an effective management system that looks after classification, promotion, maintenance & investment and staff skills. During the slow monsoon season, the Samarth-NMDP programme is taking the lead towards the establishment of the Safe Trekking System with funds from UK AID/DFID.

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Nepali songs at the Royal Albert

**Himal Khabarpatrika, 21-27 June**

On 26 June, the Royal Albert Hall in London is all set to be resonant with melodies from Nepal. For the first time, 17 Nepali singers and musicians will be performing at the prestigious venue for the charity show ‘An Evening for Gorkha, Charity for the Earthquake Victims of Nepal’ organised by Help Nepal Network UK (HeNN).

Artists including Jems Pradhan, Om Bikram Bista, Deep Shrestha, Trishna Gurung, Sujil Karmacharya and Yogeshwor Amatya will be performing. HeNN’s founder Rabindra Mishra says the charity show will create history not just because of the venue but also because it will have so many luminaries on stage at the same time. Although a concert by Nepali artists at the hall had been planned since last year, Mishra says the earthquake forced them to bring the date forward as well as made it easier for the organisations to lease the world famous concert hall. Organisers are expecting Nepalis from all over Europe to attend the event.

“We believe that both Nepalis and foreigners will come and show their support for Nepal,” says singer Yogeshwor Amatya.

Since its opening in 1871, world’s leading artists including Frank Sinatra, The Beatles, Led Zepplin, Eric Clapton and Elton John have performed at the Royal Albert Hall. The concert tickets are available at Royal Albert Hall’s website.

**Phurpa Tamang in Nepal Khabarpatrike, 21-27 June**

Cultural affairs minister Bhanu Pratap Shastri has already briefed top political leaders about the first draft. And when they prepared the first draft of Nepal’s new constitution. The task force, led by the committee’s chairman, Sitaula, has already prepared a first draft.

Sita Bahadur Thapa, a Nepali Army guard and barely escaped with his life after huge boulders started falling on the project site. One soldier was killed in front of him, and he gave the orders to the others to cross the Bhote Kosi to the other side, where they stayed for four days while rocks fell all around. They were finally rescued when a helicopter spotted them. Thapa’s team is now involved in demolition and rebuilding homes in Thukulang. Many dozens of people working on the highway in Malang were buried by rockfalls, and their bodies haven’t been found.

Life in the shelter at Shambuwar is chaotic. Villagers from the mountains find it unbearably hot here in the lowland. The children have no school to go to and just play in the dirt. There is rice, but no vegetables to eat it with because no one can afford it.

There were 17 people in Asha Tamang’s house when the earthquake struck. They heard the landslide before the rocks started falling, it sounded like a big storm approaching. In an instant, the rocks buried the house and Asha lost his wife, son and daughter-in-law and nine other relatives. Asha barely survived, his head wound has been stitched up and he has two broken ribs. Sunamaya Tamang of Karumrang had gone to gather fodder in the forest when the quake struck. Her brother and sister-in-law were buried by a rockslide. She is now looking after her four-year-old nephew and eight-year-old niece who have been orphaned. “They keep asking about their parents, where will I find them?” asked Sunamaya.

Sita Tamang of Gogane was also in the house when the earthquake struck. She was buried by a rockslide. Her husband had gone to look for their four-year-old son and eight-year-old niece who have been orphaned. “I’m unable to think of anything else. We will not eat until we find them,” she said.

Donors have major reservations about the lack of accountability of the government and the widespread corruption. It is not that the donors themselves are a 100 per cent clean since the amount they pledge for Nepal comes from taxpayers, and provided with evidence any dishonesty will and should be investigated. Unfortunately, the government failed to show necessary diplomatic skills even when inviting heads of delegations from our two neighbours. Why didn’t anyone go to invite the Chinese, when we sent the Finance Minister to invite the Indian Prime Minister? While we may interpret it differently, the question of how China views this lapse remains. In the midst of all this, there is criticism that the rehabilitation agencies should be headed by the Prime Minister is dominated by political expediency. During the donor conference, the government needs to present clear plans and policies, and assure them that they will be implemented transparently with clear lists of expenditures. With the government and political leadership coming under vital criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about severe criticism time and again about
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What’s so funny?

O ne collateral damage from the earthquakes aftershocks ongoing even as we speak! is that some Nepalis seem to have lost their famous sense of humour. Seriously, we’ve stopped laughing at people slipping on banana peels. It’s no joke. Slapstick humour that used to make us LOL and ROFL till as recently as 24 April instead makes us feel like puncturing someone’s gizzard.

For example, I fail to see the humour in this alleged joke:

Q: What is the difference between an astrologer and a geologist?
A: An astrologer can predict the exact time and date of the next earthquake. But a geologist can only give you a 100-year time frame.

Don’t laugh. The Federation of Nepalese Astrologers (Locktantrick) finds it absolutely unfunny because it’s true: Nepal’s astrolgers can’t just forecast aftershocks to the exact minute and second next Tuesday afternoon, they can even predict its epicentre and Rectal Scale to the nearest decimal point.

But, geology and geopolitics have more in common than we realised. Geologists have now proven what some Nepali politicians had been warning us all along: that India is pushy. In fact, it seems that the Indian landmass has had expansionist tendencies for over 75 million years ever since it broke away from Gondwanaland, shed Madagascar and Mauritius along the way, and sailed northwards, ramming headlong into China. And this is where geo-tectonics and geo-politics converge because, as Founding Father of the Nation Prithvi Narayan Shah recognised long ago: “Nepal is a Bazooka Bubblegum between two large molars.”

The result of the Indian plate pushing us relentlessly against the Eurasian plate is that we’ve had no recourse but to go up. This was fine as long as it gave us the highest mountains in the world which we could climb 22 times without artificial oxygen, without underwear, and wearing only flip-flops in order to land ourselves regularly in the Guinness Book of World Records. But at the rate we are being shoved around, in another couple of million years, Nepal will be flattened to a thin zigzag wall about 5,000km long, 23km high and a 100m at its widest point.

This is already starting to happen. As India and China come closer, we have already lost Lipu Lekh. Along the border, border pillars have been sometimes known to move northwards by as much as 5m in the course of one night. Nowhere else on the planet is continental drift happening at such a rapid pace. At this rate, Buddha will have been born more and more inside Nepal each passing year, and we will have to adjust our time zone to make it 37 minutes ahead of Indian Standard Time instead of the current 15 minutes. The other piece of good news is that the earthquake moved Mt Everest 1m to the south, which means the world’s highest mountain is now wholly in Nepal territory. Lose some, win some.

Political anal-yeasts in the capital are currently divided between those who favour a national unity government and those who don’t. Most of us couldn't give a rat’s posterior. National or anti-national, either way they will purse tanapani. In fact, instead of setting up a national government maybe we should have got together with Nepal’s donors this week and set up an international government.

The real question preoccupying our lameduck ultra-national leaders about reconstruction is: who will head the body? Dr BRB, who is currently headless, would have been the perfect candidate, but his arch-rival Comrade Awestruck feared 6thbhabaladiwori would gain too much political capital and called for the rug to be pulled from under him. KPO suspected BB would outshine and outlive him. And Kangrej was afraid the DUC would actually help the millions of people living out in the open and make the NC local like the others. Now that KPO and PKD have both joined the Yellow Hat Sect, their only worry is that Jhusil Da will get too comfy and prolong his stint, or that the Premier will throw a spanner in the works by siding with the Supreme Court.

So, this is what the googblement means by being “accountable”: kleptocrats keep careful accounts of the cuts they get from the arabs and khanals that have been donated for our suffering. As for the PmO, they have more in common than we think. Two peas in a pod.

And since no internationals had any confidence in the Prime Minister’s government, the PMO hit on a cunning plan: get the Nepal Army, the APF, the Nepal Oil Corporation and the Nepal Electrified Authority to donate to it. So what if it’s like one hand giving to the other? At least there is now a fat amount sitting there ready to be misappropriated.

There has been a lot of criticism that GONe is indecisive. Far from it. Jhusil Da has proven himself to be a resolute and speedy decision-maker. It is under his watch that the government moved quickly to ban relief hit on a cunning plan: get the Nepal Army, the APF, the Nepal Oil Corporation and the Nepal Electrified Authority to donate to it. So what if it’s like one hand giving to the other? At least there is now a fat amount sitting there ready to be misappropriated.

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