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OPPLE and h are go Si



Double trouble

6 2-year-old Purna Maya Tamang of Rayale village in Kavre *(above)* moves around a temporary shelter tending her chicken. She looks forlornly towards the space where her double storey mud and brick house once stood. It was the home her husband Singhabir brought her to for the first time after they got married 42 years ago. Now both the house, and her husband Ten years after the conflict

are gone. Singhabir 14 years ago Maoist guerrillas abducted Singhabir saying they would bring him back in a few days. They threatened the family not to look for him. Two weeks later, news came from another village that a body had been found in a nearby forest.

"The villagers went to look and it was my husband," recalls Purna Maya, holding Singhabir's photograph, "there

photograph, "there were cuts all over his body, we had to stitch him up for the cremation."
Then, ten years later, tragedy struck again when her house came down in the earthquake. Far from rebuilding, there is no one to even clear the rubble.

"I remember him every day, especially since our house was destroyed," says Purna Maya. She has a widow's cheque from the government, her daughterin-law sends some money from Kathmandu, but there is no sign of the Rs 200,000 the government promised for reconstruction. Her son has been jobless since the earthquake, so there is no money to rebuild.

As for the war, she hasn't forgotten what happened that night and still fears the Maoist



destroyed in the earthquake are being rebuilt by local communities faster than the government is helping reconstruct homes

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was one of the more educated people in the village, he had a government job and had voiced dissatisfaction with Maoist threats and intimidation of villagers. At midnight

the earthquake, tales of wartorn families that suffered a dual disaster.

ended, and one year after



will come for her son and grandchildren. *Sahina Shrestha in Kavre*

Full coverage page 13



PAGE **8-9**





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BACKSIDE

2 EDITORIAL

COPING AND HOPING

It is a glaring indictment of the state, that it gives citizens no reason to expect much from their elected representatives.

 $2^{\rm 016}$ is a year of war anniversaries. It is the bicentennial of the Sugauli Treaty, it has been a century since some of the worst slaughter in the Belgian trenches during World War I in which 20,000 Nepalis were killed, this year is the 20th anniversary of the start of the Maoist conflict and this month marks the 10th year after it ended. The war has been over for as long as it lasted.

Also, on 25 April we will mark the first anniversary of the earthquake. In this issue of Nepali Times we take a look at how wartorn families, communities and indeed an entire nation that were finally finding closure after a decade, were pitilessly shaken up by an earthquake. There are tragic stories from Sindhupalchok and Kavre of families, which were already torn apart by the war having to suffer the devastation of the earthquake ten years later. The field reports represent a microcosm of what the 10 million people living in 14 districts hit by war and earthquake endured collectively.

The agitation and violent protests that followed the promulgation of the new constitution by parliament in July last year paralysed governance and relief delivery to earthquake survivors. Then there was the five-month Indian blockade that stopped supplies of petroleum and other essential imports. The country ground to a halt, and 2.5 million inhabitants in the mountains of Central Nepal spent their first winter in flimsy tents.

To the international press that spent a week here last April and has started parachuting in again for obligatory anniversary stories, we have this to say: Where were you when this country was blockaded for five months? Nepal's economy was devastated and the wellbeing of its people damaged beyond repair much more seriously by the Indian siege than by the earthquake,



yet this stark reality did not register on your radars. Members of the international community now bemoaning the government's slowness in reconstruction: your silence during the blockade spoke volumes.

To be sure, the Koirala and Oli governments showed unconscionable incompetence in dealing with relief delivery and reconstruction. The two parties politicised the establishment of the Reconstruction Authority and the appointment of its CEO, even as millions waited for

emergency relief and reconstruction grants. There was merely one reason for this: one political party wanted to thwart the other from getting all the credit for bringing support to survivors. The Oli government, in particular, used the blockade and the Tarai agitation as an excuse for its ineptitude. It installed a political

apparatchik as CEO, whom no one listens to because he is too junior. In the absence of elected village and district councils, there is little grassroots accountability for relief distribution.

It is a sobering thought that many of the relatives of the victims of the decadelong war - the murdered, maimed or missing - have still not received adequate compensation. The movers and shakers in the districts, the ones with political connections or those who know how to work the system have pocketed the state's reparations, even if they were only tangentially affected.

Because it is the same state structure, the same politicised bureaucracy with the same lack of accountability that is responsible, we see the same lethargy and delays in relief delivery. In fact, it would be astounding — given the state of governance in this country and the lack of a sense of urgency from the PMO downwards — if we suddenly had state

mechanisms that were speedy, efficient and functioned with integrity.

It is cynically said that disasters are a godsend for politicians because they provide an opportunity to prove their worth, to show the people they care, and to demonstrate their ability to govern and manage. For the whole of the past year, there seems to be no such appreciation here, or any indication that politicians are pouncing on this chance. Another opportunity squandered.

We can detect a glimmer of hope when we interview individuals, families and communities that have coped with the double disasters of war and earthquake, and learnt to stand up on their own. It is a testament to the Nepali spirit that we continue to persevere in the face of such immense human made adversities.

But what a glaring indictment of the state, that it gives citizens no reason to expect anything from their elected representatives.







MOON IN NEPAL

The Unification Movement sounds like yet another anti-secular, anti-LGBT (possibly anti-feminist) religious party that will seek to curtail human rights through the policing of morality ('Korean movement gains political foothold in Nepal', Seulki Lee, #802).

Flambe

I never knew that Nepal had a significant following of Sun Myung Moon's philosophy of Unificationism. I am confused about one thing though: People can retain their Hindu faith and belief but also follow that of Moon's philosophy which seems to be a modified Christian doctrine. Also, found this quote interesting: "The unification movement is to turn us into true Hindus, true Christians, true Buddhists or true Muslims by finding the best path to make one's religion 100 per cent." Well, what about atheists? Will the moonies also turn atheists 100%?

and see what he has done to promote peace and protect our values in different villages. We have to salute anyone who is working for such a noble cause. As they say little knowledge is dangerous, we need to see the full picture before evaluating anyone.

YOUR SAY

Ek Nath Dhakal of the Nepal Family Party was rewarded by the Maoists for funding the insurgency by siphoning money from such religion peddlers. He

methods of disposing off e-waste ('Dangerous rubbish', Lok Mani Rai, #802).

Namah

IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

In a country where the Hukums of the likes of Chandra Shekhar, Shyam Sharan, etc are implemented with zeal, it will not be a surprise if KP Oli's government is toppled as per the hukum of Delhi ("It's a jungle out there', Om Astha Rai, #802).

GOPEN RAI



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Most popular on Twitter Escape velocity by Rubeena Mahato (41 retweets, 57 likes)

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(1,812 views)

Most visited online page

Korean movement gains political

foothold in Nepal by Seulki Lee

Poudyal

I am neither a member of Nepal Family Party nor The Unification Movement, but am a fan of Ek Nath Dhakal and his work. Please go out

is still profiting from that. So much for Moon's peace, when they are the ones who helped fund the killings.

Lumi

Jiba

 Ek Nath Dhakal is just an opportunist who doesn't care about this country or its people, he only cares about getting paid by the radical Moonies. Followers of Moon are religious radicals who pretend to be do-gooders. This cult needs to be regulated. Dimaag

E-WASTE

A nation which struggles with solid human waste will hardly have the time or energy to research novel and innovative





Q. Should the government permit wildlife resorts to be set up inside the Chitwan National Park?





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4 NATION

BIMSTEC, BCIM, BBIN – & 'BCIN'

A fresh look at the map will show how Bangladesh-China-India-Nepal could now be connected

KANAK MANI DIXIT

The acronyms that have invaded the diplomatic and Track Two discourse hold the promise of converting 'connectivity' from a goal to reality. BIMSTEC, BCIM and BBIN represent efforts to link the northeastern quadrant of South Asia through transport, energy grids, services and seamless commerce, all of which would lead towards economic growth and social justice.

While some may be wary or skeptical of the bilateral steps taken by Nepal recently with India and China, they could be a trigger for regional commerce. Despite geopolitical and practical obstacles, we may finally be seeing the energising of societies through efficiencies and economies of scale made possible by bilateral, trilateral and multilateral trade in goods and services.

BIMSTEC is 20 years old, and was evolving like the ponderous SAARC, but now it has new energy with the democratic evolution of Myanmar, and the grouping has just opened its secretariat in Dhaka, the city that would be fulcrum to this particular sub-region. BIMSTEC holds the prospect of linking Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar and Nepal, but first we need the tension between Kathmandu and New Delhi to subside.

Started as the Kunming Initiative, BCIM is an effort to bring China (mostly Yunnan) into collaboration with Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar. A look at the map shows why this is geographically sensible: Beijing would find it more convenient to connect to the sea via Chittagong than reaching all the way to Gwadar in Pakistan.

The BBIN motor vehicle agreement (for passenger, personal and cargo transfer) has unexpectedly emerged these past two years as a possible catalyst. It would boost commerce between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, and also pave the way for future BIMSTECwide and SAARC-wide connections.

The breakaway moment came when Indian PM Narendra Modi told SAARC's Kathmandu summit in November 2014 that sub-regionalism was the answer if all eight member countries could not agree on strategy and action: "either all of us or some of us". Pakistan had reservations on the SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement then under negotiation, and, under India's urging, the other countries moved with unexpected speed. The BBIN agreement was signed in Thimphu in June 2015.

The BBIN agreement allows for protocols to provide unhindered road and rail transport across the borders of the four countries. Prime Minister KP Oli deserves credit for having created an enabling environment for BBIN with his trips to New Delhi and Beijing in February and March. In India, besides inaugurating the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur 400



THE RAILWAY TO THE SEA ROADWAY. (RESEARCH FOR MAP BY: DIPESH KHANAL)

KVA line, which allows two-way transfer of power, New Delhi agreed to rationalise Nepal-to-Bangladesh transit for both truck and rail transport.

To the north, besides a 400 KVA transmission line linking Kathmandu to Kerung, Beijing agreed to study the feasibility extending the Qinghai-Tibet railway line into Nepal. Much more immediately significant was the agreement to build what could be called the Kimathanka Highway, running from Biratnagar along the Arun River to the northern border.

Connecting with the Chinese railway network, and given the emphasis of Beijing's leaders on cargo movement by rail, the Kimathanka Highway would be an all-weather link between China/Tibet and Nepal. This would work as much for Nepal's benefit as the larger economies to the north and south. President Xi Jinping told PM Oli across the table in Beijing that he was interested in fostering a "trilateral relationship" including India, but it would actually be quadrilateral including Bangladesh.

There are hurdles. Is Beijing actually confident enough on Tibet to allow open international commerce? The evident reluctance to reopen Kodari after the earthquake and throughout the five-month blockade should give one pause. Will Kathmandu have the good sense to follow through on agreements just concluded with Beijing and New Delhi, or will it go into relapse as in the past?

Regionalism requires India and China to loosen up their visa regimes, which is easier said than done. While the scale of trade between India and China may seem to be a guarantor of the proposed connections, there is as yet an undertow of distrust between the two powers.

It is important to ensure that the BBIN motor vehicle agreement is implemented as soon as possible, to create facts on the ground, making reversal difficult. While the three larger countries have ratified the agreement, Bhutan is holding back, apparently fearful of market and demographic inundation. The diplomats are presently contemplating addressing Thimphu's fears with protective protocols, or going in for a 'BIN' without Bhutan for the time being.

The proof of connectivity will, of course, be in the implementation. But following Kathmandu's recent initiatives to the north and south, it may be appropriate to add one more acronym to the mix, bringing together Bangladesh, China, India and Nepal – 'BCIN'.





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Pokhara airport airborne

After four wasted decades, Pokhara may finally be getting a much-needed international airport

RABINDRA ADHIKARI IN POKHARA

n Nepali New Year 2073 on Wednesday, Prime Minister KP Öli will lay the foundation for Pokhara International Airport, bringing Central Nepal and the tourist city nearer to a long cherished dream of having its own aviation gateway.

As far back as 1970 a Japanese company was commissioned to do a detailed survey for an airport with a runway long enough for large jets. A few years later, the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) suggested that Pokhara needed a bigger airport, keeping future traffic in mind.

Some key Pokhara personalities started lobbying for an international airport, and in 1976, the government acquired 3,106 ropani of land east of the city and along the highway to Kathmandu. Inexplicably, work on the airport didn't get underway even though every prime minister from the absolute monarchy days to the era of democracy visiting Pokhara have reiterated the commitment to build it.

It took nearly 28 years for the government to even make a call for proposals based on the BOOT (Build, Own, Operate and Transfer) model. Two Korean

companies showed interest, but the government was apathetic, and that was that.

In 2009, the elected Maoist government led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal finally gave the go-ahead for the Pokhara International Airport. Later that year, the UML's Madhav Kumar Nepal decided to set aside \$50 million unspent from the Upper Trisuli Hydro Project and requested the Chinese Exim Bank to invest in the airport as it had invested in the Upper Trisuli as well. It proposed a \$215.95 million project with a 3,000m runway with a parallel taxiway, two terminals, a hangar, cargo terminal, radar and air traffic control equipment, able to accommodate Airbus 320s and Boeing 757s.

The delays angered the business community and the people of Pokhara who had hoped that the airport would bring new prosperity to their city. They staged a series of protests and hunger strikes in 2013, but the government in Kathmandu remained impervious.

Just when the hope was about to die again, there was a new sense of urgency. The closure of Kathmandu airport for four days in the peak tourism season in March 2015 after the runway was blocked by a Turkish Airbus 330 focused everyone's attention to

the need for an alternative airport. A month later, the earthquake proved just how vulnerable Nepal was having only one international airport to handle relief and rescue. Kathmandu airport was so crowded, relief planes had to be sent back. The third factor was the Indian blockade, which underlined the need for aviation to reduce the dependence on surface transport for trade.

The new airport will handle domestic flights as well as direct links for tourists who want to bypass Kathmandu, and will also cater to passengers from central Nepal flying to the Gulf or Malaysia.

Nepal signed a soft-loan agreement with China Exim Bank during PM Oli's recent visit to China, and it looks like the airport construction is finally getting the green light. Land for the airport has already been acquired and their owners, compensated. A contractor has been hired, preparations for the construction of the airport are now over. There is local support for the project, and in fact Pokhara will launch big protests if the airport gets stuck again. 💟



Rabindra Adhikari is a UML MP from Kaski and heads the Development Committee of Parliament.



Excellent Sales

Laxmi InterContinental, the authorised distributor of Hyundai vehicles for Nepal, was recently awarded the 2015 Excellent Sales Award – Asia and Pacific Region at the Hyundai Asia Pacific Dealer Convention in Auckland, New Zealand. The company was evaluated for its sales performance during 2014/2015.

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The restless Tarai

If Kathmandu doesn't listen, public anger in the Tarai is going to grow once more to boiling point

For the last few weeks Madhesi leaders have all been in huddles, planning their next move. The vast silence from the rulers in Kathmandu, the lack of confidence-building and an almost deliberate effort to ride it out has made the Madhesi parties suspicious.



The uncertainty also seems to have made the foreign policyintelligence establishment in New Delhi a bit jittery again. Why else would they slip in a paragraph about Nepal in a long list of other bilateral matters in a communiqué during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the EU in Brussels?

The Madhesi leaders seem fed up with being ignored, and there is a sense of desperation since the wind has been taken out of their sails and it will be difficult to fan another agitation in the plains right now. However, the anger is simmering just under the surface and all it needs is another spark.

For now the Madhesi Front has warned of another forceful protest after the New Year if the government keeps ignoring its past commitments. These have to do with further amendments to the constitution to address, mainly, the issue of demarcating the two Tarai provinces. This the most contentious among the demands for which the Madhesi Front agitated for nine months and blockaded the border.



Back then, they tried to make it clear that they hadn't given up their struggle, just the mode of protest. But the Oli coalition seems to see this as a time-buying strategy and is fast losing the little trust it had among Madhesi leaders. They see no progress has been made in the last two months, and some in the Front find no other recourse but to launch an even more hardline movement.

Madhesi leaders I've spoken

to in the past weeks say they have no trust in the government, especially Prime Minister Oli, to meet their political demands.

The only thing holding them back is a realisation that the Madhesi people have had enough with agitations for now, and want to get on with their daily struggle for survival without distruptions. However, they also know that the Tarai will never have permanent peace or prosperity without a GOPEN RAI

structure that guarantees federal autonomy from Kathmandu. It has come to a point where destabilisation is necessary to create the conditions for their demands to be met.

The plains are still not back to normal. The main political parties cannot move around freely or hold public meetings. Government offices function sporadically, and the people have been deprived of basic services. Recently, the Madhesi leaders had a conclave with members of sympathetic national civil society to see what kind of agitation would make Kathmandu's rulers listen to them.

They have now formulated a phasewise protest plan that will start with hunger strikes in district headquarters of Tarai districts. The week after that they plan to close down all local government offices, except schools and hospitals. And if Kathmandu still doesn't listen they want to launch an indefinite strike in the Tarai.

Santosh Mehta of the Sadhbhavana Patry told me: "Kathmandu will only respond to pressure from the ground, they are charging and detaining local leaders without any evidence."

Contrary to belief in Kathmandu that India has launched an international offensive against its democratic constitution, the feeling in the Tarai is that Kathmandu has managed to silence international criticism of its handling of the constitution.

Madhesi leaders handed over a memo to PM Oli this month, asking to end "state terror" in the Tarai. If the government doesn't listen, public anger is going to grow once more to boiling point.

There is still time for the Oli administration to defuse the situation and hold genuine dialogue, even though Madhesi intellectuals have little trust in him. This is a dangerous situation for the Madhes, for the government and for Nepal.

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2073 A New Year New Enthusiasm





As we go into the real summer, a large high pressure system dominating northern India has Nepal under its spell too. This is likely to continue the serious drought conditions in western half of Nepal, which is affecting agriculture and spreading gastric infections. The temperature will now touch 30 for the first time this year in Kathmandu, with breezy afternoons and not enough moisture in the hot dry winds to create the thermals. The high mountains will see evening storms with some precipitation. The clouds will not return to Central Nepal till midweek next week. Till then, dress light, rehydrate often and keep cool.





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EARNING EARNIN

Kathmandu Valley restoration can be an international showpiece, says award-winning heritage conservationist

SEULKI LEE

Three days after the 25 April earthquake last year, conservation architect Rohit Ranjitkar was shocked to see Army bulldozers moving in to clear the debris at Patan Darbar Square.

Among the heap of bricks and timber were thousands of priceless religious artefacts - wooden, bronze and stone carvings - that adorned the 12th century Hari Shankar temple, the 400-year-old Char Narayan temple and the Mani Mandap pavilion.

Ranjitkar, who is director of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), was appalled. He entreated the soldiers to keep the bulldozers away while his team rescued the religious objects from the Malla-era temples. The Army relented and Ranjitkar and his colleagues mobilised the local community and volunteers for nine days, digging out and carrying the fallen items from the ruins into the courtyard



SAFEKEEPING: Rohit Ranjitkar inspects some of the intricately carved eaves from Patan's fallen temples that he helped rescue after the earthquake, and (*left*) showing Britain's Prince Harry around last month.

He also lauded the efforts to revive traditional wood carving by training craftsmen.

Ranjitkar's challenge now is to rebuild by keeping as much as possible to the original materials, make the structures stronger so they can withstand another earthquake, and ensure that Kathmandu Valley's monument reconstruction is an international showpiece.

"If you rebuild a destroyed 17th century temple from new material, you erase 350 years of history, so we try to reuse as much of the original material that we salvaged as possible," says the soft-spoken Ranjitkar, who won the 2005 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Culture Heritage Conservation. an absolute, it has to reuse as much as possible by adhering to traditional materials and adapt newer methods of construction. This philosophy has been put to the test in Kathmandu Valley's post-earthquake reconstruction.

"What I learned from the previous earthquakes is that conservation is not just a philosophy but also a question of human safety, we have to be pragmatic and compromise with modern materials to ensure structural strength," Ranjitkar explains.

KVPT has given itself the target of reusing up to 95 per cent of the salvaged material for reconstruction of Patan monuments, and has brought in a team of 50 craftsmen to repair wood, metal and stone pillars, struts and eaves.

SEULKI LEE

of Patan Museum for safe-keeping.

"Those were very valuable pieces, and they have now all been inventoried so we know which piece goes where when the temples are rebuilt," he told us, "even if they are broken or damaged, they are a part of our history and religious heritage." GOPEN RAI

Timely intervention by conservationists in Patan is now recognised as a model for restoration of heritage sites after disasters. Ranjitkar's work was praised by Prince Harry (*pic*, *above*) when he visited Patan Darbar Square this month and inspected the artefacts in storage.

For him conservation is not

Says Ranjitkar: "Restoration also means reviving the traditional craftsmanship that originally made these temples possible. It is not just a profession, it is the main knowledge element of Kathmandu Valley's architecture."



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Heritage sites in Kathmandu Valley destroyed in the earthquake are being rebuilt faster than homes

SMRITI BASNET

well-organised network of community trusts, international funding and support from the government has meant that a year after the earthquake, Kathmandu Valley's damaged heritage sites are slowly rising again.

In Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Patan and other historic towns, reconstruction of temples is in full swing while on the same streets, homes destroyed by the quake are still in ruins. The reason is that while families wait for word on government compensation, local *guthis* have pushed ahead with reconstruction.

There is a precedence for this because the Valley's kingdoms have always had to rebuild on their own after earthquakes that strike once





Swayambunath

Perched on a hill that is believed to have risen out of the former lake that was Kathmandu Valley, stands the white dome painted with the iconic eyes of the Buddha. Although the dome itself withstood the earthquake last year, its peripheral monuments: Santipur, Anantapur, Pratapur, and Tashi Gomang all suffered and were badly damaged.

"We are not waiting for the

at the entrance have been restored, and the committee is repairing the giant staircase leading up to the temple. Work on the public rest houses around the monument is also being carried out simultaneously.

Murals on the walls of the destroyed Santipur, two pillars and some of the rescued artefacts have been transferred to the National Museum. Art

Patan

Come of the most important **J**temples of Patan Darbar Square were destroyed in last year's earthquake, including Char Narayan, Shankar Narayan, Mani Mandap, Swotha and Radha Krishna. Of the 44 classified monuments in the palace square, 21 were damaged and the six completely destroyed. Having finally received approval of the government, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust is working to reconstruct seven of the monuments and temples in the heritage site.



government, and have taken the initiative to reconstruct the smaller structures," says Mahendra Ratna Buddhacharya of the Swayambunath Management and Conservation Committee. The south pillar and the bell conservators are working to preserve these and will return them to the destroyed monuments once they are rebuilt.

The national government hasn't been of much help. "If we got more support from the government we could finish everything in one year," said Buddhacharya.

The embassies of China and India have shown interest in reconstructing the monuments, but the committee is reluctant to entrust the reconstruction work to foreign entities since only designated priests have access to many of the holy Tantric shrines.

Boudhanath



White sacks of cement are strewn around the damaged Boudhanath Stupa and a makeshift ladder takes workers up to the cupola. Renovation of the damaged monument is in full swing.

"We were a little late in estimating costs which might have delayed restoration, but now we have started," says Sampurna Kumar Lama of Boudhanath Area Development Committee.

The committee received Rs 70 million in donations of the Rs 180 million needed, and the work started in January. Situ Rinpoche and Chinese Buddhist Association are some of the main contributors.

"We plan to use 20 per cent of the salvaged bricks and some of the timber to keep costs down," said Lama, who adds that the committee also wants to make the new structure seismic resistant with pillars and timber frames to give strength to the stupa. "Unlike 1934, there was a lot of damage this time."

The reconstruction is expected to take another year.





every century. The traditional mechanisms for earthquake reconstruction have been revived this time.

"The government had set aside funds for us, but we are not waiting for that, we are rebuilding with donations, and got our drawings and materials approved," said Sampurna Kumar Lama of Boudhanath Area Development Committee which is rebuilding the famous stupa.

Nearly 450 monuments in Kathmandu Valley were affected by the 25 April earthquake last year out of which 83 completely collapsed. The government estimates it will cost up to Rs 17 billion to reconstruct them all, and says it is a priority to allow people to worship again and to help revive tourism.

The cupola of Boudhanath is in scaffolding, work is underway to rebuild Swyambunath, locals are starting to restore fallen shrines in Patan. But wherever the central government is involved, there are delays and uncertainty. Most of the sites are either still being assessed, government departments are bogged down in paperwork, and the process of drawing up tender bids have delayed reconstruction.

One place the government seems to have its act together is in Bhaktapur, where reconstruction of temples in the Darbar Square has started. "If we don't face any obstruction, we hope to finish all the reconstruction in the next five years," said Suresh Shrestha an archaeologist with the World Heritage Conservation Section of the Department of Archaeology. The department is also moving ahead with the reconstruction of Kasthamandap and exhibiting the new designs to the public and asking for suggestions. 💟

ALL PICS: GOPEN RAI

Bhaktapur

Dhaktapur suffered the most damage during the April earthquake, and **D**unlike Patan and Kathmandu, a lot of residential buildings also went down besides some famous temples. Interestingly, temples restored by a German project in the 1980s all survived. Work has started on rebuilding the Sesh Narayan temple to the south east of the Palace of 55 Windows.

"For this financial year we are working on nine projects at the cost of Rs 30.5 million," said Ram Govind Shrestha, architect with Bhaktapur Sub-Metropolitan City Office. Of this, 70 per cent is coming from the Ministry of Local Development and the rest from the municipality.

Out of the 139 classified monuments in Bhaktapur, five collapsed and 14 were partially damaged. Much of the reconstruction will use salvaged building material.

Some of the temples destroyed in 1934 and rebuilt with inappropriate design, and which collapsed again last April, will now be restored to pre-1934 specifications. One obstacle is the shortage of masons and carpenters versed in traditional seismic-resistant building methods.

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EVENTS

DINING

GETAWAY



Mountains, A photo exhibition showcasing World Food Programme's earthquake response in Nepal.

Moving

1 to 8 April, 10am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)5260607

New Year 2073,

Wishing all readers a joyous and prosperous Nepali New Year 2073 13 April

Art Market,

A place to sell and buy art -paintings, prints, posters and design products. 9 April, 12 to 4pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, nayantara@photocircle.com.np, pranidhi@image-ark.com



Rafting in Trisuli,

Participate in the first edition of the Himalayan Freestyle Kayaking Championship. Winners receive Rs 50,000. 10 April, 9am to 5pm, Fishling, 9818888 944, info@nepalkayakclub.org

Radiant Women Project,

An awareness campaign against human trafficking and violence against women with Planète Enfants. Supported by the European Union, the program features a photo exhibition by Natalie de Oliveira, music performances, live painting exhibition and circus. 9 April, 4 to 6pm, Tundhikhel

From the Ground Up,

Listen and share stories with a young group of people involved in reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Nepal. 12 April, 5 to 7pm, Alliance Française, Teku, (01)4242832



Heritage ride,

Join Tour De Lumbini, Kathmandu Cycle City 2020 and Cycle City Network Nepal on a ride along seven world heritage sites of Kathmandu Valley. 23 April, 8am onwards, Basantapur Darbar Square, 9841303867

Historical exhibition,

A display of 40 paintings by celebrated mid 19th century Nepali landscape artist Rajman Singh Chitrakar. 10 to 24 April, Taragaon Museum, Baudha, 9843722329

Ride along,

Get ready for the eighth Enfield rendezvous and poker run starting from Kathmandu and ending at the scenic lake city of Pokhara. 12 to 14 April, Rs 10,400. For more information: 9559112666/9793185744

Karavan Kathmandu,

A pop-up design bazaar featuring made in Nepal clothing, jewellery and home décor hosted by Tabela Restaurant. 9 April, 12 to 5 pm, Tabela Restaurant, Naxal, karavankathmandu@gmail.com



KJC for Kids.

Music lessons, vocal training, ballet dance, beat boxing, arts and more for your kids at the KJC Spring Camp for Kids. For children aged 5 to 11 years old. 4 to 15 April, 10am to 4pm, Mondays to Fridays, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554



Shangri-La Hotel and Resort,

Enjoy your Saturdays with a wide spread of shawarmas and pastas at Shambala Garden and Club Sundhara. Rs 1500 per person, 11am to 3pm, Shangri-La Hotel & Resort, Lajimpat, (01) 4412999

Little Italy,

Go vegetarian at this Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special, the chocolate bomb. Kamaladi, (01)4233577



The Dwarika's Hotel,

Nepali BBQ at Dwarika's live cooking stations every Friday evening. Reservations recommended. Price: Rs 1800 plus taxes (Includes can of beer, a soft drink or 30 ml local alcoholic beverage), 6.30pm onwards, The Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali, (01)4479488, sales@dwarikas.com

Hotel Yak & Yeti.

Mouthwatering BBQ, an international selection of beverages and a premium shisha menu awaits all. 10 April, 12 to 4pm, Price: Rs 2000 plus taxes, Poolside garden, Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, (01)4248999



Everybody's longtime favourite Italian



Celebrating 2073, Usher in the Nepali New Year with

Sabin Rai & The Electrix, B-Eight, DJ BKI Cool and DJ Angel. 12 April, 7pm onwards, Victory Lounge, Darbar Marg, Tickets: Pre sales Rs 1000 (till 11 April), door sales Rs 1500, 9801031277 /9802961566/9802961570

Mt 8848 Live.

Tap to the beats of the rock and folk music fusion band Mt 8848 this Nepali New Year's Day. 13 April, 5pm onwards, Rockers Magic, Thamel, 9803837675, hardrockktm@gmail.com

1974 AD Live,

Celebrate this Nepali New Year with the new line up of Nepal's popular rock band 1974 AD. 13 April, 2 to 6pm, Pharping Tamv Ground,

Pharping

Music mania,

Be part of the rock and roll mania with the 12th edition of the KCM Inter College Music Competition. Preliminary rounds on 15 and 16 April. Registration fee: Rs 5000, 10am onwards, 23 April, Jawalakhel Football Ground,

9849149154, 9849465316, 9813505758



ZikLag Live,

Spend the evening enjoying soulful jazz with ZikLag followed by a performance by electronic music producer Ranzen



Park Village Resort,

Yoga, detox and ayurveda treatment in a quiet corner of Kathmandu. Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, (01)4370286, peace@wellness.com.np

Tiger Mountain Lodge, Situated 1000 ft above Pokhara valley,

this resort offers spectacular views of Machhapuchchre, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu. www.tigermountainpokhara com, (01)4426427,9849194874



Himalayan Height Resort,

Tucked away near a jungle at the side of a hill with a 270 degree view of the Valley Pharping, Kathmandu, 4371537, 4371561



Neydo Monastery,

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Pataleban Vineyard Resort,

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restaurant. Revisit this spot for some good pizzas. Thamel, (01) 4426474

Jha. Entry fee: Rs 300 8 April, 8pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com Japanese-influenced eco-resort with great views, jungle walks, and picnics. Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364





FROM THE NEPALI PRESS 11

A rebel village

Hira Bahadur Gharti Magar for Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ) in *Himal Khabarpatrika* (20-26 March)

हिमाल

In May 1979, after a violent student movement, King Birendra agreed to hold a referendum on the monarchy. When staunch royalist Pashupati Shumsher Rana spoke in Thabang of Rolpa district during a nationwide pro-Panchayat campaign, village leader Barman Budha Magar told Rana to his face that they would vote against the absolute monarchy. Despite being charged with public offence, Magar went on to form a unanimous consensus in favour of democracy.

It's that kind of anti-establishment psyche that gave this tiny hamlet the moniker 'rebel village'. It has a 60-year history of rising up against the Kathmandu rulers, and was also the birthplace of the Maoist movement in the early 1990s.

Thabang people chased them away,"

legacy."

he says, "locals are proud of their rebel

whether to vote in or boycott elections,

it is often unanimously. In 1959, when

Nepal held its first parliamentary election.

every citizen in Thabang voted for Khagu

Lal Gurung, a communist candidate. The

next year, after King Mahendra dissolved

Parliament, villagers boycotted elections.

In 1981, during elections for the National

ballots, villagers replaced pictures of the

king and queen with images of communist

leaders like Marx, Engels and Lenin in local

Because of its proclivity towards

rebellion, people in Thabang are also used

to resisting security forces often sent in to

1996, the government launched 'Operation

quell 'anti-system activities'. In October

Panchayat Council, instead of casting

government offices.

And when the village acts politically,

Romeo' to nip the Maoist movement in the bud, but the failed operation in which police randomly barged into houses, destroyed food and raped women only radicalised villagers even more. "That really fuelled anti-establishment sentiment here," recalls Shah

At the height of the Maoist war, Thabang suffered the wrath of the state more than any other village. In March 2002, a Nepal Army unit burnt down 13 houses in Thulogaun of Thabang. "We survived by hiding in the woods," says Radhika Roka Magar, whose house was also reduced to ashes.

Thabang has also historically been a victim to oppressive policies that have hurt the village economically. Prior to the government ban on marijuana farming in the 1970s, cannabis was one of the major sources of income for many there. And according to a 2003 conflict assessment report by Mercy Corps, people in Thabang

were pushed into the communist fold after the ban went into effect.

Moreover, former lawmaker Ram Bahadur Thapa Magar (not to be confused with the former Defence Minister) writes in a research paper that though 96 per cent of Maoist party members in Thabang have little knowledge of the nuts and bolts of communist

Resham Kumar Shah, a local school teacher, says Thabang's roots go even further back, before the unification of modern Nepal. "In 1869, when the rulers of Rukum came to collect taxes in Rolpa, Nanda Bahadur Gharti Magar, a

student of political science in Thabang, says: "People are not born rebels here, they are angry because the state does not represent them."

Over the years due to its tendency towards collective action, Thabang has garnered political clout. In the first Constituent Assembly elections of 2008, all 3,600 villagers voted for Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal. But after Dahal quit the Rolpa constituency people in Thabang decided to teach him a lesson by switching allegiances to the Mohan Baidya-led Maoist faction.

Of late, Netra Bikram Chand, who split from the Baidya faction, is rising as the new communist leader in Thabang, continuing the anti-establishment trend.

Bar Man Budha Magar, the icon of Thabang's rebel attitude, says: "It is our identity to take collective decisions, and we are proud of it.

FRESH NEW LOOK SAME GREAT TASTE







किचेन वेयर, रेडिमेड जार्मेन्ट, सारी, कुर्ता, जुत्ता, चप्पल, इलेक्ट्रोनिक्स र कस्मेटिकका सामानहरुमा १०% खुट साथै ग्रोसरी र विभिन्न ब्राण्डका मंदिरामा ५% खुट

12 **Duizz**



THE BIG SHORT

t takes a while to adjust one's brain to the incessant information lobbed at you from the moment *The Big Short* opens – some may even give up. Such is the density of the material that needs to be processed to understand how a series of increasingly risky, highly leveraged



bets against an established, guaranteed set of home loans that were considered, wrongly, by the U.S. banking system to be a sound investment resulted in the collapse of the financial market in 2008.

Of course, the technicalities of how the market came crashing down is much more complicated. *The Big Short* (adapted from a book by the same name) ambitiously tries and succeeds in analysing and explaining the underlying mischief and willful blindness on the part of the Wall Street banking fat cats who ignored the perpetuation of unsound practices that were bound to fail.

Unfortunately, eight years later we have moved on, the United States economy has recovered, and sleazy bondsmen such as Jared Vennett (played extremely effectively by an unattractively coiffed Ryan Gosling) are at it again – prompting the "Occupy Wall Street" movement.

If you think this review has become more of a rant against Wall Street than an analysis of the film, that is testament to a movie that cleverly explains the entrenched rot in an established financial system so effectively that you almost end up liking the clever but morally nebulous guys who made money by betting against a deeply corrupt system.

With some solid writing, hilarious celebrity cameos (Margot Robbie, Selena Gomez, Anthony Bourdain all put in an appearance) to explain the hard, technical bits, and a very strong ensemble cast, *The Big Short* is a blow by blow account of all the players who saw the crash coming, placed their bets, cashed in, with some of them trying their hardest to warn of the dangers they were exploiting.

For a mainstream film with actors like Ryan Gosling, and Steve Carell as Wall Street hedge fund manager Mark Baum, a rare man with a conscience, in major roles, the film's budget at \$28 million is surprisingly low, making this Oscar nominated film an interesting, surprisingly political venture.

Unfortunately, despite the success of *The Big Short* not much has really changed, making the film ring a bit hollow despite its intentions to expose all the wrongdoings that led to such a devastating event. In the end the film only proves that our most base instincts will out, money is always respected over honesty, and decisions made on a small island in the U.S. can result in tidal waves all over the world.

nepalitimes.com Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



SECOND VICTORY: Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba waves to supporters after being elected the party's parliamentary leader on Wednesday.



IN MEMORY: A volunteer pastes white paper butterflies on the walls of Kalmochan Temple on Wednesday in memory of earthquake victims.



PREP UP: Children play on the chariot of Bhairab in Bhaktapur Darbar Square on Monday as it is prepared for the Bisket Jatra held annually to celebrate the Nepali New Year.





BIKRAM RAI

NEW HERO: Chairman Abheek Jyoti of Nepal General Marketing *(right*), the authorised distributor of Hero two-wheelers in Nepal, launches Hero Duet scooter in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

NEEDLE WORK: A Japanese man gets his torso tattoed at the sixth International Tattoo Convention in Kathmandu on Sunday. Over 150 tattoo artists from around the world participated in the three-day event.

NATION 13

Recurring nightmare

Families who lost their homes in the earthquake remember their loved ones killed during the war.

SAHINA SHRESTHA IN KAVRE

6-year-old Maiya Ranjitkar has been waiting for ten years for her youngest son Jiwan to come back home. Sitting at the door of her earthquake damaged house in Rayale village of Kavre district, she stares at the road leading to Panauti on which she last saw her 18-year-old son walking away.

A tenth grader, Jiwan was living away from his family in a rented room in Panauti preparing for his SLC exams. The last time he came home, Maiya had asked Jiwan to stay back but he left, saying he had something important to do.

"I told him not to go, but he paid no heed to my words." remembers Maiya, "We didn't even know he had joined the Maoists." A few days later, she received word that Jiwan had been detained by the Army, and soon after news came that 'Comrade Mausam' was dead, his body was never found.

The Maoist party gave the family Rs 200,000 compensation, but even after ten years the family is still waiting. "I don't think he'll ever come back but we want to know what happened," says Maiya, tearing up.

The youngest of five siblings, the vivacious tenth-grader was just stepping into adulthood when the course of his life changed like many others at the time. Maiya doesn't know why her son decided to join the Maoists, whether he was forced or it was of his own accord.

She just knows the son the family had pinned their hopes on for a better future will



DOUBLE TROUBLE: The Army disappeared Jiwan, the son of Maiya Ranjitkar (*above*) ten years ago from Kavre. Ten years later, she lost her home in the earthquake.

not return. "We had sent our son so he could receive education, who knew this was going to happen," asks Maiya, who remembers his face, his gestures, little moments in their lives every time she moves around the house. But the home with such strong

memories of Jiwan is no



longer the same. The earthquake last April damaged it, and made the top floor uninhabitable. The Ranjitkar family moved to a temporary shelter after the quake but were forced to live in the damaged house through the winter. Maiya's husband Bhagat Bahadur, a mason, lost his sight in one of his eyes while working six months ago.

When they moved back, Maiya took to patching up the cracks on the wall of her house with clay and red mud. But she no longer does that. The Gwarko to Panauti road that is under construction will slice right through her house, and the family has been asked to vacate the home.

"First my son and then my house, I don't know why God is trying me," she says, looking at her cracked fingers and dirty nails that testify to her hard life.













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14 NATION



OM ASTHA RAI

No one would have ever heard of Thokarpa if it hadn't been the scene of an aerial bombardment by the Army in March 2006 that killed four Maoist guerrillas and a civilian gathered at a local school for a victory celebration. Images of the dead strewn amidst the ruins of the classrooms made the front pages of Kathmandu papers.

The Bagh Bhairav Higher Secondary School in Thokarpa was rebuilt after the war ended, but ten years later, it was destroyed again in the earthquake of 25 April 2016. Kamal Neupane was five and had just enrolled in Grade I, and doesn't remember the helicopter raid. But he grew up amidst the bombed out rubble of his school. Today, he is in Grade 10 and gets a feeling of déjà vu seeing his school in ruins again.

"I grew up with vivid

VIOLENT SHAKING: This villager herding goats *(above)* was among five killed in an aerial bombardment of the Bagh Bhairav School in Thokarpa in 2006. Students at a recent morning assembly at the school, which was destroyed once more by the earthquake last year.

memories of my school destroyed first by bombs and then by the earthquake," says Neupane, who is giving his SLC exams this week. "I have seen it all before."

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal on 25 April, destroying 4,000 schools in 14 districts. It is estimated that 75,000 children would have died if it hadn't been a Saturday. Most of the schools in Sindhupalchok have not been rebuilt, and classes are still held in temporary tin huts. Broken bricks, wooden beams and crushed furniture litter school grounds everywhere.

The conflict had just entered its tenth year in March 2006 when Maoist guerrillas ambushed an Army truck in Kavre, killing 13 soldiers. Army helicopter

BOMBED, REBULT, DESTROYED AGAIN A village made famous by the war and then the quake



gunships were trying to trace the attackers and came upon a large gathering of Maoists in Thokarpa who were celebrating that victory.

After an Islander reconnaissance place spotted the gathering, it radioed base, and four attack helicopters soon arrived to bomb and strafe the school. Four of the guerrillas were killed as well as an elderly villager herding goats. Six of the school's classrooms were destroyed and the office building was riddled with bullets.

Chhatra Neupane used to run a grocery in Thokarpa back then. Sitting on a stool outside his shop, he



The hospital that was





war, hospital was in the crosshairs of an earthquake ten years later

PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

hen Maoist guerrillas attacked a Royal Nepal Army unit guarding a telecom tower adjacent to Sindhupalchok District Hospital in Chautara in April 2006, health assistant Hemanta Shrestha nearly lost his family. A bomb had exploded just outside his house, damaging it.

Almost exactly ten years later, when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal on 25 April, his wife and children managed to run outside just before their house collapsed.

"I have been lucky twice," Shrestha says, "my family survived not just one but two deadly calamities within one decade."

In April 2006, Kathmandu was the epicentre of a pro-democracy movement against the autocratic monarchy of King Gyanendra. It had been under curfew for weeks, and the demonstrations were getting bigger.

Some 70 km to the northeast, Maoist fighters were preparing to attack the Army unit to avenge the military's attack on Thokarpa of Sindhupalchok a month previously in which four guerrillas were killed.

On the night of 23 April, Shrestha had gone out to meet **HOLE IN THE WALL:** Chautara Hospital (*above*) was destroyed in 2006 during a Maoist attack, and its corridor was used for an exhibition of war photographs after the ceasefire. The hospital was rebuilt and inaugurated a year before the April 2015 earthquake destroyed it again and in-charge Sagar Rajbhandari (*right*) has been working out of a tent for the past year.

hospital in-charge Nanda Lal Sikarmi. Just then, he heard a deafening explosion followed by more blasts and intense gunfire. He and Sikarmi hid under the bed from where he tried to call his wife. The mobile phone did not work. It was dawn by the time the fighting stopped, and Shrestha rushed home to find his wife and two small children still hiding under the bed. A bomb had blown up a portion of their house. "If that bomb had fallen closer, my wife and children would not have

survived," he says.

The Chautara attack turned out to be the last big battle in the decade-long Maoist war. Gyanendra reinstated parliament the next night, paving the way for the parliamentary parties to sign a peace deal with the Maoists.





was watching Maoist fighters decorating the stage. They had brought in people from surrounding villages and Maoist commanders Barshaman Pun (who later became Finance Minister) and Agni Sapkota (currently Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation in the governing coalition) were

expected to address them.

Shortly after Pun turned up, an army plane was spotted high above circling the village. A Maoist sentry shouted: "Eagle in the sky.'

Neupane, who now teaches English at the school, did not know that was the Maoist code for an imminent aerial attack. Soon,





on 25 April, and his family was still in the same house that had been repaired after the bomb damage ten years earlier. The house collapsed, but his wife and children escaped once again. The family now lives in

> a rented house, but Chautara Hospital where he still works will take years to reconstruct. For the past year, the hospital operated out of tents in the nearby Tundikhel. There is a prefab birthing centre, and the emergency room is a tarpaulin shelter. "We spent the last monsoon in tents," says hospital in-charge, Sagar Raj Rajbhandari, "we will be spending many more monsoons in tents." Like many others, Rajbhandari is frustrated with the slow pace of reconstruction, and despite being a government doctor, is vocal in his criticism of the Ministry of Health. He says: "The ministry is virtually paralysed, it takes months to take just one decision." The hospital had sought Rs 500,000 to build a stronger temporary structure, but the ministry neither denied the budget nor allocated it. "I have given up hope," says the dejected doctor, "I am now seeking help from the district administration and nongovernment organisations, not

four helicopter gunships crested the ridge, and began firing and dropping bombs.

Neupane swooped up his four-year-old daughter who was playing outside and took her into his shop. He did not feel safe there either, and ran out into the open. "Bullets were coming down like hailstones," he recalls. "I just ran and ran, without looking up or behind me. I hoped that the army would not hit a man carrying a little child.'

He survived, but the school was a smouldering ruin. There were bodies of dead Maoists, the wounded were screaming, and dead livestock were everywhere.

The Maoists took revenge against this aerial raid one month later by attacking the Army Base in the Sindhupalchok capital of Chautara (see below), across the Bhote Kosi from Thokarpa. Fortunately, that was one of the last battles of the war, and a month later the ceasefire of 24 April 2006 brought the conflict to a close.

The school spent Rs 1.1 million, some of it a grant from the newly-established Peace Ministry, to rebuild classrooms, and the repairs were completed in 2010. Five years later, the school was destroyed yet again. And one year after the earthquake, the rerebuilding hasn't even started.

"The earthquake struck us just when we were struggling to overcome the scars of the war," says Principal Bishnu Neupane. "After the earthquake, we drew up a six-year plan to develop our school as the best in this district, but we need at least Rs 70 million for that. I don't know how we can manage so much money." 🔽







KUNDA DIXI1

KILLING FIELD: The eucalyptus tree where six villagers of Thulo Sirubari were executed by the Army in 2002 for being suspected Maoists (above) and students have class in the open because of earthquake damage to their school.



Victims of war and earthquake

SEULKI LEE IN SINDHUPALCHOK

we we have a struct that was ravaged first by war and then an earthquake have heard of the village of Thulo Sirubari. Located along a ridge, the scenic settlement offers a view of the district capital of Chautara and beyond that, a grand panorama of Langtang and Jugal Himal.

Visitors approach the village of 5,000 people through a community forest, and it was here that in 2002 six villagers were tied to a tree and executed on suspicion of having helped the Maoists. 14 years later, the people still think the forest is haunted. The eucalyptus tree with its white bark stands out prominently in a forest of pine, like a memorial to those killed there.

The Maoists had spent the night at the homes of villagers, and the Army found out about it. A patrol led by Capt Keshab Shahi from Chautara and another from Panchkhal surrounded Thulo Sirubari and went house-to-house. But by then the Maoists had fled, and the soldiers took away the villagers who had hosted them.

Soon after, gunshots were heard from the forest above, and villagers later found the bodies of six of their blindfolded neighbours, killed execution style. The soldiers had left a note warning that the bodies shouldn't be removed, so the corpses rotted and were eaten by wild animals.

A decade later, Thulo Sirubari hadn't even really begun to recover from the violence when the earthquake struck on 25 April. Only 74 of the 2,100 houses in the VDC are still standing. One year later, the homes are still only heaps of rubble. There is hardly any reconstruction going on.



OBSERVATION ROOM

The government took eight long years to rebuild the Sindhupalchok District Hospital, and the modern new structure had just been inaugurated one year previously when the earthquake struck.

Shrestha was in Kathmandu

Construction (DUDBC) has not decided yet whether to repair the building, or demolish it to build again. Maniram Gelal of the DUDBC says: "We are still assessing the damage."

The new hospital looks

intact, but it has deep structural

cracks. On closer inspection, the

have been built with substandard

Urban Development and Building

concrete beams look like they

material. The Department of

from Kathmandu."

The Maoists had used the nearby post office to attack the Army base. Surya Ghale, a peon at the post office, remembers spending a terrifying night. When he went to see the office the next day, the building was smouldering, and his boss' chair was up on a tree.

Like the hospital, the post office was also rebuilt a few years ago but was badly damaged by the earthquake. It has a red sticker, and the post office has operated out of a garage for a year. "We did not have a building, so we upgraded the garage and set up our office here," explains post office chief, Prakash Chapagain. "We want to rebuild the post office, but the Reconstruction Authority does not seem to be in a hurry." 🔽 Om Astha Rai in Chautara

Former VDC Chairman, Tanka Gautam, was so fed up with the

brutality by both sides in the conflict that he abandoned politics after the April 2006 ceasefire. But when the earthquake struck last year, villagers looked up to him to take the lead in rescue and reconstruction.

"I had to play a role in organising earthquake relief distribution because there had been no local elections in the VDC," Gautam told us.

There were 78 fatalities in Thulo Sirubari – relatively low compared to the extensive destruction of homes. If it wasn't for volunteer groups like the Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS) and humanitarian organisations like Oxfam and Save the Children to help out with the damaged school buildings, Thulo Sirubari would have had to fend for itself.

'There has been no help from the government. The two time cash installment of Rs 15,000 and Rs 10,000 were the only thing we got. We feel there is no Nepal government here for us," said Resham Gardwaj, 45, who has been living in temporary shelter for a year.

Gardwaj lost his 35-year-old daughter-in-law on 25 April when the 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit. His 12-year-old granddaughter was in the house with her mother but survived. Three other family members were out on the paddy field and were saved.

Says pediatric dentist Sneedha Mainali of SEBS after a recent relief distribution camp at the village: "I've been to more than five quake-affected districts and it is heart-breaking to see people affected by the war and earthquake who still have beautiful smiles and a generosity of spirit." 🔽

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6 BACK SIDE

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For crying out loud

'epal's glorious Maoist revolutionaries used to burst bombs, these days they burst into tears.

Just the other day Comrade Horrible, who also serves as the Minister of Vermiculture and Manure in the Unlikely Oli Coalition, shed copious tears on emerging from a cinema in Kathmandu after watching the film Rahdani.

Political analysts are divided whether these were crocodile tears, or if they belonged to an alligator. But whichever the reptile in question, there is no gainsaying that the good comrade must have been over-wrought not because of the movie, but because news had just come in that the CPN(Maoist) had split again into yet another faction, bringing the total number of splinter groups now to seven.

The Ass would be the first ungulate to openly admit that there is a lot happening in this country that makes it want to cry. But our politicians have lately taken public displays of weeping to a whole new dimension, and there is just too much competition out there. They have perfected political dirge as an art, and developed it over and beyond what we thought was possible in an

emerging democracy like ours truly.

Comrade Horrible is not the first Maoist to sob uncontrollably in public. His boss, Awesome Chairman Lotus Flower has been known time and again to use public weeping as an eyewash. Every year when the Maoists mark Martyr's Day, Comrade Gluteus Maximus chokes up and cannot hold back his tears in memory of the selfless sacrifice of his executioners.

PKD and BRB never had any love lost for each other, were rivals throughout their time together underground, and ultimately went their separate ways. But what few people know is that there used to be stiff competition between #1 and #2 in the Annual Revolutionary Crying Competition (Party slogan: "He whose cry lasts, cries best.") And as the two top comrades took part lustily in their howling contest, the gathered cadre were often moved to tears seeing the kind of leaders they were laying down their lives for.

The other Maobuddy leader who is known to start crying right

A Withing Frage



on cue without any prompting whatsoever is Comrade Kazi Narayan. The man is a pro. He can cry for no reason at all, and has a guaranteed slot in Kollywood if his political career should ever fizzle out.

Crying is nothing new in Nepali politics. Chandra Sumshare (yes, the same vertically challenged Sri Tin who wore high heels) once cried for his beloved country during a graduation ceremony at a college he named after himself, Tri Chandra. Historians differ on the reason for that particular outburst, but it seems to have been a case of a royal overdose of snuff.

The Panchayat had its cry babies too. The grand old man of Nepal's politicocivil society, Comrade Rotten Lotus, who has survived everything from an absolute monarchy to royal-military coups, right up to our splendifluous people's democracy, has been known to weep at the

drop of a hat. He cried when the country was partyless, and he cried when the country was multi-party, and he cried at parties, too.

Then there was the late Ganesh Man Singh of the NC who proved that crying was a great way for a politician to relieve stress while at the same time gaining sympathy votes. Crying became so common during functions at which he was chief guest that the hosts felt there was something seriously amiss if Ganesh Man Uncle didn't shed a tear in the national interest.

Not to be outdone, the UML also appointed its own tear leader

who is called upon for crying out loud at public functions just so that the Kangresis did not shed more tears, and garner more support from the electorate. We hear Pradip Nepal is always on standby for emergency deployment in case there is Kangresi speaker on the dais who can outcry the eh-Maleys.

Anti-government protests have become more creative of late, so that instead of burning tyres some have taken to the streets in Rua-Basi Julus (Weeping Protests) on the south gate of Singha Darbar where they pretend to weep, wail and cry loudly to protest whatever they are protesting about. The trouble with fake crying is: how are we to tell if someone is genuinely driven to tears by the state of the country?

As a nation, we may be proud of our professional criers but we have a long way to go to match North Korea, where the entire national population

can be induced to cry at death anniversaries of the Great and Dear Leaders. We need to be in a tearing hurry if we are to catch up.



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Double trouble

2-year-old Purna Maya Tamang of Kayalo Value Kavre *(above*) moves around Tamang of Rayale village in a temporary shelter tending her chicken. She looks forlornly towards the space where her double storey mud and brick house once stood. It was the home her husband Singhabir brought her to for the first time after they got married 42 years ago. Now both the house, and her husband

are gone. Singhabir 14 years ago Maoist guerrillas abducted Singhabir saying they would bring him back in a few days. They threatened the family not to look for him. Two weeks later, news came from another village that a body had been found in a nearby forest.

"The villagers went to look

Ten years after the conflict ended, and one year after the earthquake, tales of war-

and it was my husband," recalls Purna Maya, holding Singhabir's photograph, "there

were cuts all over his body, we had to stitch him up for the cremation." Then, ten years later, tragedy struck again when her house came down in the earthquake. Far from rebuilding, there is no one to even clear the rubble.

"I remember him every day, especially since our house was destroyed," says Purna Maya. She has a widow's cheque from the government, her daughterin-law sends some money from Kathmandu, but there is no sign of the Rs 200,000 the government promised for reconstruction. Her son has been jobless since the earthquake, so there is no money to rebuild.

As for the war, she hasn't forgotten what happened that night and still fears the Maoist



destroyed in the earthquake are being rebuilt by local communities faster than the government is helping reconstruct homes

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was one of the more educated people in the village, he had a government job and had voiced dissatisfaction with Maoist threats and intimidation of villagers. At midnight

torn families that suffered a dual disaster.



will come for her son and grandchildren. Sahina Shrestha in Kavre

Full coverage page 13







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