Dangerous new highrisers are springing up even before ruins of buildings that collapsed in the April 2015 earthquake are cleared (above), despite warnings of more catastrophic disasters in Nepal.

The country marks National Earthquake Safety Day on 15 January, with a focus on preparing for the next Big One. Geological evidence of a massive earthquake 800 years ago that uplifted terrain by more than 16m was discovered recently south of Kathmandu. Enough tectonic energy has accumulated since then for another magnitude 8 earthquake, scientists warn.

“If we fail to prepare for the next Big One, there will be much more damage than we suffered in 2015,” says Bijay Krishna Upadhyay of the National Society for Earthquake Technology.

All this comes even as the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) is blamed for delays in rehabilitation of the estimated 3 million people who lost their homes in the 2015 quake. So far, only 40,000 families have rebuilt homes.

The NRA is mired in politics, and the Cabinet on Wednesday sacked Subash Gyawali and re-appointed Govinda Raj Pokharel to replace him. Although Pokharel is highly regarded, there are doubts if he can get the NRA to make up for lost time.

Meanwhile, desperate families enduring their second winter in the open are rebuilding with traditional salvaged material without waiting for reconstruction grants, which means that Nepal hasn’t learnt the lesson of 2015 to build back better.

In his previous tenure, Pokharel presided over the Post Disaster Needs Assessment report and the formation of the NRA, and it is hoped he can hit the ground running.

A day after taking office on Thursday, Pokharel told Nepali Times “I promise most earthquake-affected families will have new homes before the next monsoon.”

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G-sample 1

So far, the only first Rs50,000 installment of reconstruction grants have been distributed, and it is not sure when the next tranches will go out. Pokharel has pledged to expedite, but families are already building homes that may not be able to withstand the next big earthquake.
FUTURE SHOCK

25 April 2015 was just a slap on the wrist compared to what is coming.

2015 could be just a slap on the wrist compared to what is coming. The quake did not fully release accumulated strain along the Main Himalayan Thrust, the fault along which the Indian landmass ploughs under the Eurasian plate at 1cm every 10 years.

Now, scientists from Tribhuvan University, Hiroshima University and the University of Nevada have found evidence of surface upliftment of as much as 10m in a major earthquake eight centuries ago. This finding confirms historical records of a megathrust in Kathmandu in 1255 that killed one-third of Valley’s population, including King Alhaya Malla.

The 2015 rupture travelled eastwards along the fault line, but petered out to the south of Kathmandu, not allowing stored tectonic energy to be released. This section of the Himalayan Frontal Thrust is ripe for another rupture, and an 8.5 magnitude earthquake so close to Kathmandu would be 20 times more powerful than April 2015. In addition, the region west of the 2015 epicentre is sitting on a seismic gap where a megathrust has not occurred for more than 500 years. The city of Pokhara probably created the landslide dam burst on the Seti that deposited a debris field 100m deep on which the city of Pokhara is now located. A big earthquake in Western Nepal, scientists reckon, would cause the terrain to be lifted by 10m or more. And that is not a matter of if, but when.

A stronger Nepal

We do not intend to spread panic, but the sad fact is that Nepal has squandered the lesson of 2015, and we are woefully unprepared for a disaster sure to come. This doesn’t just mean rebuilding structures that came down two years ago, but also retrofitting buildings in western Nepal where a Big One is imminent. The delayed and ineffective response in 2015 and the lack of serious preparedness is a result of a further lack of governance. As our report shows, the whole corrupt building permit process has to be overhauled so that safety comes before revenue. We cannot afford to wait for the politicians to fix it, our greatest concern now should be on time–preparedness and to learn from past experiences.

Word 17 of Kathmandu is an example that readiness with stockpiled of relief equipment and material pays off, and that neighborhood offers a lesson for other communities not to wait for the government to get its act together. Some organizations had started working on retrofitting schools and public buildings in western Nepal even before 2015, and these efforts need to gain momentum.

As Himalayan seismologist Roger Billham points out: “The mitigation of earthquake risk requires the knowledge of hazards to be delivered to the people that need it.”

KUNG FU NINJAS

Find out how training runs can save your life at the Kapan Military School in Kathmandu, where they get lessons in martial arts, and are taught to be an equal fighting with monks.

WHATS TRENDING

Most visited online page (x.4.000)

Nepali Times

Nepali Times are regretting for untrue stories about making a deal with a relaxation back home http://bit.ly/2BLdnKh

Ashraful Dahi

Ashraful Dahi

Editor

Kamal Mani Dixit (1939 – 2016)

By Arun Thapa

Tribute to Kamal Mani Dixit, who was the closest Nepali cartoonist to be a journalist, a thoughtful man, and who died on 25 December.

RECHARGING THE MOUNTAINS

Great article with lots of key lessons indicating subtle (and less subtle) shifts taking place in Nepalis rural communities (Recharging the Mountains, Sonia Awale, #840), deterioration of local soil and habitat, dependency on expensive external inputs, no incentive for farmers to keep soil, or to stop deforestation. How to migrate to urban, powered by urban populations seeking lucrative investments, uncertain impact of earthquake on water supply, climate change, earthquake risk, changes of roles of men and women in livelihoods – impacts society which impacts culture, multiple challenges nurturing... Thank you for the coverage.

Colin McQuaid

REBUILDING HERITAGE

The government should work on how it can involve the local community in rebuilding heritage sites (Owning up to the past, Sarina Shrestha, #844). Even after the 1934 earthquake Nepal rebuilt monuments on its own, so why cant we do so now? Why depend on donors and contractors? Why not take the counsel of local affairs? The government should call public hearings and train local craftsmen for reconstruction.

Nimesh Shrestha

#840 (Thu-Neh-2016)

#841 (Fri-Neh-2016)

#842 (Sat-Neh-2016)
DISCOVER
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The end of diplomacy

Nepal’s disastrous international positioning is the result of decayed domestic politics

Not since the precarious days following the departure of the British from India has Nepal been as internationally vulnerable as it is today. Its outreach is scraping rock-bottom, with foreign policy as much in shambles as domestic affairs.

This is a time when Kathmandu needs to carefully calibrate its relationship with New Delhi and Beijing, even as India’s Nepal adventurism continues and China flexes its muscles. Kathmandu is more alone than ever in the international arena, with many overseas friends having seemingly ceded their Nepal policy to India.

We are so engrossed in internal affairs that we do not look up and notice what is happening to Nepal’s global standing. The immediate issue is that we have a prime minister whose overriding concern is personal political survival, for which he is willing even to squander the national interest. He is given to intemperate rhetoric in public, while being totally subservient in private with select embassies, as required.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s self-serving term at the helm of government only adds to Nepal’s internal instability, which in turn makes a mockery of Nepal’s diplomacy. His most egregious departure was the so-called ‘trilateral meeting’ at the Goa BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit in October. The prime minister collaborated with his son-cum-personal secretary Prakash Dahal in publicising what seems to have been an informal and inadvertent meeting with Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi in a lounge as they waited for conversations.

The son took a picture of Mr and Mrs Dahal together with a Chinese president in laid back pose and an attentive Indian prime minister – and posted them on Facebook! The Nepali side went into overdrive selling the meeting as a trilateral démarche, the Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson called it “entirely coincidental”, while the Chinese chose not to behave the matter. But that show of cavalier insouciance on the part of the Dahal duo damaged Nepal’s credibility at the highest echelons of the two paramount powers.
GOINGS ON IN GQ: (Page 4)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sri Dalai, Prime Minster Prithvi Koirala, Dhali and Chinese President Xi Jinping will be the main guests at the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit G 9 in New Delhi in October. Dhali’s son Prakash posted this photo on his Facebook.

Diplomatic stopper

There was a time when high international dignitaries used to make a beeline for Kathmandu, starting with Queen Elizabeth II in 1961. During BP Koirala’s years in government, including as prime minister in 1999-2000, Kathmandu had begun to carve a leadership role in Asia. Even if India’s cold shoulder weakened the idea, King Birendra’s Zone of Peace proposal was able to garner the support of more than a hundred countries.

Most recently, Sushil Koirala was able to orchestrate the 18th SAARC Summit in November 2014 as well as host Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi. KP Oli signed a slew of agreements in Beijing, including on trade and transit, on the rebound of the southern blockade. In contrast, even as current chair of both SAARC and BIMSTEC, the Dalai government lacks the international gravitas to lead either organization. He can do nothing but watch from the sidelines as SAARC is forced into decline.

It does not help that key Western embassies seem so willing to sacrifice bilateral relationships cultivated over decades. Many are still in the stupor induced by Ian Martin of UNMIN and his support for self-determinist forces in the name of post-conflict adjustment. Occasionally having doubled in social engineering, these embassies are just not there to help a people in distress, proof of which lies their studious neglect of human rights concerns (consider the abandonment of Ganga Maya Adhikari).

This descent in Nepal’s international standing must be reversed, for which we first have to tackle the consensual, distribute-the-spoils dhbangdo politics that is destroying domestic solidarity. Only then can Kathmandu be politically stable enough to sharpen its engagement with Beijing and Delhi to begin with, even as the West collapses under the weight of Donald Trump.

There was a time when diplomatic embarrassment for Nepal would be in the form of shoplifting ambassadors and embassies whose adrenalin. It’s time to serve the royal family. Today, it is the visage of a prime minister who puts personal survival before the people’s interest.

Blood bond

NIB, a Bank has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Nepali Red Cross Society to conduct blood donation camps across Nepal under the banner Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Together, the organizations will also conduct awareness and motivational programs for blood donors.

Oppo honoured

Chinese electronics manufacturer Oppo won two honours from International Data Group. The company was awarded the 2016-2017 Global Top Smart Phone Brand and also won the 2016-2017 Global Top Smart Connected Devices Brand.

Warm winter

Dobhar Nepal’s Sujal Dhungana praphrprplpa arranged awareness programs on staying warm and immune during the winter season at schools in Kathmandu valley. The company collected warm usable clothes from the schools and handed it over to CNN Nepal Prithi Koirala’s Youth Childcare Development Center after adding its own contribution of clothes.

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Times

BUSINESS 5

13 - 18 JUNE 2017 #841
NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.

SMRITI BASNET

Three Himalayan black bear cubs whose mothers were probably killed by poachers for their gall bladders to be sold in China as traditional medicine would have most certainly died had the rescued animals not been brought to the Central Zoo.

Two of the cubs were found in Delti and one in Jhakha, and transported to Kathmandu in May last year when they were just two months old. The triplets had little chance of survival without their mothers, and without the specialised attention of vets at the zoo.

"Alive in the wild they would not have got the needed care and maybe the poachers would have got them," said Ganesh Koirala, assistant curator at the Jawalakhel Zoo. Smugglers across the mountains are killing the endangered bears to take out their gall bladders, skins and paws for sale within Nepal and in China.

Fed six times a day, the cubs are now healthy and chubby and have become one of the most popular attractions at the Zoo. The Zoo is now serving as an important sanctuary for rescued endangered wildlife: a man-eating tiger darted and transported from Chitwan, rescued leopards, Eurasian owls, and more recently a pair of red panda cubs found and raised by a couple in Rolpa.

In the past year alone, 368 rescued animals have found their way to the Central Zoo, and this figure is double that a year before. Among them 148 were adopted by the Zoo, 133 were released back into the wild, and 87 died in the quarantine facility.

"We release them once we know they can make it out there, otherwise we usually keep injured or the ones we think cannot survive in the wild," said Koirala.

While some animals are brought from various parts of the country, what keeps the zoo busy these days are rescue operations in Kathmandu itself — especially since wildlife like leopards have started straying into the city.

"Our job is like that of a policeman," says Zoo vet Radha Krishna Chatri, "we try to bring them in before as soon as possible. If it’s really urgent then we give them first aid about half a kilometre away from the area of rescue."

Chatri has already rescued three leopards since July, and his expertise in capturing the spotted big cats has earned him the title ‘Leopard Catcher’. A Mahindra pickup equipped with tranquiliser dart guns and nets is permanently on standby for Chatri and his rescue team.

The government has a plan to set up wildlife rescue centres near protected areas across the country, but till that happens the Central Zoo in Kathmandu will continue to be a refuge for rescued animals.

"The Zoo is having a difficult time coping with the overwhelming number of rescues," said Ghana Gaurung of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal. The Zoo is running out of space and is overwhelmed.

There is a plan to transfer the bigger animals in the Zoo to a new 245 hectare facility in Surya Bhanjyang, but the Zoo will have to manage the best it can till it opens.

"With a bigger zoo in Surya Bhanjyang it will be easier to house rescued wildlife, and other animals will also have more space," said Deputy Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Gopal Bhattarai.

The Surya Bhanjyang site is being demarcated and levelled and will be designed to comply to modern zoo standards by providing animals space and vegetation much closer to their natural habitat.

The zoo in Jawalakhel will be upgraded and continue with its conservation education programs, explained Govinda Gajurel of National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). WWF’s Gaurung believes bigger enclosures will be better to rehabilitate rescued animals and feels making it look like semi-natural habitats will contribute largely towards conservation education. He added: “For visitors, these semi-natural habitats as opposed to smaller cages is both visually appealing and can add to their understanding of the species.”

WILD AT HOME: Ofpurnu Himalayan bear cubs rescued from the forests of western Nepal last May are now looked after at the Central Zoo in Jawalakhel. (Left)

Zoo vet Radha Krishna Chatri carries a tranquilised leopard from a house in Kathmandu to be translocated to Shivapuri National Park. (Above)

Red Panda cubs rescued in Rolpa were also given refuge at the Central Zoo last year. (Right)
Ex-Kumari Chanira Bajracharya tries to adjust to the real world

KRISTINA SHPERLIK

Chanira Bajracharya may look like any other millennial girl, but after getting to know her it is clear that she has little in common with the lives of other young, Kathmandu women. After all, she was once a goddess.

At 21, and six years after retirement from being the Kumari of Patan, Chanira admits that the life of a former Kathmandu women. After all, she was once a goddess. "As a Kumari you need to follow a lot of rules, you are not allowed to leave the house alone, you cannot speak to foreigners, it becomes quite stressful once it's all over," she says.

"I was happy being a Kumari. It is an important part of Nepal's national heritage, but for former-goddesses adjustment can be difficult. Lacking exposure, she had to learn social skills, and despite a business degree had difficulty finding a job. "One fine morning this week, Chanira had just rushed home at lunch break from her job in a secondary school to chat with her grandmother. She looks relaxed and casual, dressed in black jacket, jeans, pink lipstick, and fabulous hair. Outside on the street, she blends in with the crowd, indistinguishable from other young women. Chanira gets up early to walk to her school job by 7am, comes home for lunch with her family, and after work attends Newari dhaa music classes till 8pm before heading home for dinner. "I just prefer to be alone, I don't like to show off," says Chanira in English. She is one of the best-educated ex-Kumaris and plans to pursue her Masters. Having been tutored at home while a Kumari, she values education a lot, which is why she works in a school. Chanira plans to set up a support group for ex-Kumaris in the Valley and help them with peer counseling for education and jobs. It hasn't been tried before and Chanira admits this is uncharted territory. "I was happy being a Kumari. It is an important part of our culture which should be respected, but need some amendments and better facilities for the girls who will return to the real world," says Chanira. She says the old beliefs that Kumari could not marry because the husband would die is not taken seriously anymore, and most ex-goddesses are married. Chanira remembers how difficult it was to adjust to the real world when she turned 15 after spending her childhood giving blessings and officiating in Chanira festivals. She says: "I did not know how to join a conversation, could not understand how people behaved, everything was strange."

But Chanira has adapted well, and today waves confidently at people who recognise her on the street. Some people still bow respectfully when they pass her. She steps into a pharmacy to buy pink nail polish, shampoo and sunscreen. In a café on Durbar Square, she sips tea, and says: "I like to keep myself busy, because then I don’t have to think about how I am doing.”

In her free days Chanira prefers to stay home with her family or visit relatives. She now has a passion for travel and likes going to other towns in Nepal where she will not be recognised. She is planning her first trip abroad, to Thailand, next month.

The Kumari tradition is considered an important part of Nepal's national heritage, but for former-goddesses adjustment can be difficult. Lacking exposure, she had to learn social skills, and despite a business degree had difficulty finding a job.

Chanira’s plan is to help her Kumari counterparts in the Valley and help them with peer counseling for education and jobs. It hasn’t been tried before and Chanira admits this is uncharted territory. Chanira’s plan is to help her Kumari counterparts in the Valley and help them with peer counseling for education and jobs. It hasn’t been tried before and Chanira admits this is uncharted territory. Chanira’s plan is to help her Kumari counterparts in the Valley and help them with peer counseling for education and jobs. It hasn’t been tried before and Chanira admits this is uncharted territory.
A LONELY GODDESS

Ex-Kumari Chanira Bahramcharya tries to adjust to the real world

KRISTINA SHPERLIK

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At 21, and six years after retirement from being the Kumari of Patan, Chanira admits that the life of a former goddess is not easy. She has a wholesome life, trying to fit back into society.

“As a Kumari you need to follow a lot of rules. You are not allowed to have the funerals, you cannot speak to foreigners, it becomes quite stressful once it’s all over,” she says.

The Kumari tradition is considered an important part of Nepal’s national heritage, but for former goddesses adjustment can be difficult. Lack of exposure, she had to learn social skills, and despite a business degree had difficulty finding a job.

One day this week, Chanira had just rushed home to lunch before her job in a necessity store to chat with her grandmother. She looks relaxed and casual, dressed in black slacks, green lipstick, and a thick top. Outside on the street, she blends in with the crowd, existing almost invisible from other young women.

Chanira gets up early to walk to school by 7 a.m., comes home for lunch with her family, and after work attends Naxal music classes till 8 p.m. before heading home for dinner.

“I just prefer to be alone, don’t like to show off,” says Chanira in English. She is one of the best-educated ex-Kumari and plans to pursue her Masters. Having been trained at home while a Kumari, she values education a lot, which is why she works in a school.

Chanira plans to set up a support group for ex-Kumari in the Valley and help them with peer counseling for education and jobs. It wasn’t tried before and Chanira adds this is an uncharted territory.

“I was happy being a Kumari. It is an important part of our culture which should be respected, but we need some improvements and better facilities for the girls who will return to the real world,” says Chanira. She says the old beliefs that Kumari could not marry because the husband would die is no longer seriously pained, and most ex-goddesses are married.

Chanira remembers how difficult it was to adjust to the real world when she turned 15 after spending her childhood giving blessings and officiating in Pashupatinath. She says, “I did not know how to join a conversation, could not understand how people behave, everything was strange.”

But Chanira has adapted well, and today works confidently at people who recognize her on the street. Some people still bow respectfully when they pass her. She steps into a pharmacy to buy pink nail polish, slops and sunscreen. In a café in Durbar Square, she signs her name, and says, “I like to keep myself busy, because I don’t have to think about how I am doing.”

In her free time, Chanira prefers to stay home with her family and visit relatives. She now has a passport for travel and is going to other towns in Nepal where she will not be recognized. She is planning her first trip abroad, to Thailand, next month.

Being on the list of 130 women in 2016 made her a cyber celebrity of sorts, providing some unwanted attention on social media. Chanira admits she is tired of publicity and, adds with a smile, talking to the media

She recalls how on her first day at school the teacher introduced her as ex-Kumari. Her classmates’ attitude suddenly changed. They treated her with fear and respect.

From her third-floor window at home, Chanira can see the Kumari temple in Patan which was her home for six years. The walls have pictures of her as a little girl and presents from admirers: teddy bears, Barbie dolls and Wario the free. She has everything but ordinary for someone who has been a living goddess.

The Kumari is on the monastery again, with a priest waiting around her, and singing about the big to support the Kumari in her daily life.
The Sorcerer Supreme, who has supernatural powers in the Hollywood blockbuster shot partly on location in Kathmandu, Doctor Strange, has given nuns from Nepal a veil of infinite mystery.

In reality, novice nuns at monasteries in the Valley cannot make magic, but are treated on an equal footing with monks in both education and martial arts.

A historic milestone was set in Buddhist society last month as 20 nuns, including two from Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu, were conferred the Geshema, the highest academic degree awarded in Tibetan Buddhism. Since it was only given to monks before, the degree marks a new chapter in empowerment and education of nuns worldwide.

The Geshema degree in Buddhism is equal to a PhD, but much more rigorous since it requires at least 21 years of study of the five main Buddhist texts, combined with a regular session of prayers and recitations.

“We used to just repeat whatever we were taught like puppets, having no idea what to do next,” admitted senior nun Chosang Phuntsok, “but now I have my own ambition, which is so motivating.” The nun is finishing her studies in 2017 and begins four-years of exams to qualify for the Geshema degree in India.

With this degree, nuns are able to acquire higher positions like leadership roles in monastic and lay communities, as well as being qualified to teach Buddhism. The Venerable Jangchub Gyaltso is one of the Nepali nuns who received the Geshema.
18-year-old nun from Bhimsen.

In the traditionally patriarchal Buddhist monastic system, women used to be considered inferior to men. Monks usually still occupy all leadership positions, leaving nuns to household duties and other tedious chores.

All that changed with the head of the 1,000-year-old Drukpa lineage, His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa. He introduced the kung fu idea from Vietnam where nuns are trained in martial arts for self defense.

By practicing specific postures such as the zama step, boxing, and brick-breaking techniques everyday, kung fu nuns had become strong enough to play an important role in earthquake relief work last year.

In 2012 when the Sikyong of Tibet, Lobsang Sangay, expressed strong support to open the exam for nuns, “It is not only about honor, but also about equality,” Choabang added. “Everyone wants to be the best. We study the same thing as monks, but why cannot we take the same exams as them?”

Eight years ago, the world’s first order of kung fu nuns graduated from Druk Amitabha in Kathmandu, breaking from tradition to get training in kung fu, and making themselves equally eligible as monks on physical training.

“Kung fu offers us an opportunity to learn what only monks could do in the past, which let me feel a real fairness and equality,” said Jigme Wangchuk Chamo, an
EVENTS

Pictures for a cause, Ahad, a photography exhibition in tribute to poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran to raise funds for satirist surgeons at the Sagarmath Chaudhary Eye Hospital. The three-day long event will also feature poetry recitations, sufi and music performances. 20 to 22 January, Bisho Art Center, (Ph) 4710500

Birds of Nepal, Visit an exhibition of artworks on Nepal’s birds by artist Hiru Lal Danupali, until 17 January, Nepal Art Council, Bahari Marg, (Ph) 4710505

Kamali Dialogue, Ahad Kamali Dialogue’s 17th series to get underway, look forward to the art of storytelling in Nagarkot. 24 January, 10 to 12 am, Martin Chhowat, Thamel, (Ph) 4710257

Mastering maps, Hands-on workshop on digital mapping by Storyteller and Google Map Maker Community. 9 to 10 February, Mahabir’s Center for Nepal Connection, Application, http://bit.ly/2IVR3Jn, (Ph) 4710500

Champepadi, Escape the hustle of the city and enjoy a day hike to Champepadi hill via Thanglung. The event is a fundraising event to support Aisa Pacifc Veg Congress – 2017 to be held in Kathmandu. 21 January, meeting point: Mahabir Mandap ground, 7 to 10 am. Registration deadline: 19 January, 8 to 9 PM, (Ph) 4710500

Self defence, Participate in the self defence classes for women with Ramrakhi Girls, South Dhan and young national referee of judokind. 20 January, 10 am to 1 pm, RSTGA, Lazimpat, Ticket: https://form.jotform.

Wave in concert, A rock tour featuring famous bands like AB, Sahib Rai & The Pharaoh and other Nepali artists. 24 January, 3 pm onwards, Jawalakhel Youth Club Football Ground, (Ph) 4710500

Sufi nights, Spend a musical evening listening to Sufi melodies with Anit Chhier every Fridays and Saturdays. Every Friday & Saturday, Green Leaves Restaurant, Uttar Dhaka, Lazimpat, (Ph) 4710500

Art Market, A place to shop and buy art in the form of paintings, prints, posters and design products. 14 January, 10 am to 4 pm, The Yellow House, Sankhu, (Ph) 4710500. For bookings: info@artmarket-nkl.com, reservations@photo Erica.com, opus@artmarket-nkl.com

AFK opening, Mark your calendars for the grand opening of Alliance Francaise de Kathmandu in Pulchok. A folk treat for the circus show. 14 January, 3 pm onwards, Alliance Francaise de Kathmandu, Dhulikhel Road, Pulchok West at St. Mary’s School, (Ph) 4710510, (Ph) 4710500, recepcion.qf@gmail.com

Birdwatching, Dedicate half of your Saturday morning to watch birds in Chobar and Taudaha with fellow bird lovers. 14 January, Meeting time: 7.30 am, starting point: Jhulukay Temple, (Ph) 9841325315/9849321477

Thiefייס, A photography exhibition by poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran to raise funds for satirist surgeons at the Sagarmath Chaudhary Eye Hospital. The three-day long event will also feature poetry recitations, sufi and music performances. 20 to 22 January, Bisho Art Center, (Ph) 4710500

Tribute to Coldplay, Get to hear happy songs of famous British rock band Coldplay’s tracks as part of ‘House to House’ concert in Nagarkot. 24 January, 3 pm (Gates open), Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, Rs 500 (Advance ticket), Rs 700 (Door price)

Impromptu Music Sessions, Front concert in the Impromptu Music Sessions series with indie pop-folk-jazz singer and songwriter Marta Rosa accompanied by her band with ưutsnu Shrestha, Pratik Bajarki and Jugannath Dhungana. 24 January, 8.30 to 10 pm, Makal, Thamel. Gates available at Kathmandu art Coseroyer or Mobil, (Ph) 4710500

Kar Ma sessions, Live music featuring Namal Radio coupled with hot cups of coffee and tasty snacks. 27 January, 7 to 9 pm, Kar Ma Coffee, Thamel

Mulchowk, The blend of crunchy expertise and charms of a burglar’s era. Doshi Mohan Rawal, (Ph) 4710500

Shangri-La Hotel, Don’t miss out on the Gokyo, a Tibetan pot full of sumptuous delicacies, at the Shangrila Garden. The minimum order is for four persons, and should be ordered two hours before. 12 to 2 pm (Lunch) & 7 to 10 pm (Dinner), Shambhala Garden, Shangri-La Hotel, Lazimpat, (Ph) 4710500, Rs 1600 (per person), Rs 3600 (per couple)

Saigon Pho, Spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes, Lazimpat, (Ph) 4710500

MUSIC

GETAWAY

The Last Resort, Test your limits with canyoning, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping.

Jhulel mountain resort, Nestled 200m above sea level, the eco-resort boasts a farm house that stretches across hill covered in fresh green. Enjoy an organic homestay experience.

Shangrila Garden Restaurant, Located 10km from Durbar Square, the restaurant is a treat for the eyes and the palate.

Temple Tree Resort and Spa, A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and saunas, it’s hard to be left alone once you go in.

Worms Eye View, A beautiful view of Bardiya National Park and the Marshlands.

Fulbari Resort, Enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, dinner, and dining. Green Cayate, Pokhara, (Ph) 4710500

Kripa Joshi

Where there is no struggle, there is no progress.
The end of Karkiocracy

Lokman Singh Karki’s departure raises questions about who mysteriously appointed him and why

Bishwambhark Shrestha and Sapana Pradhan Malhi re-opened the hearing of the writ petition prematurely filed against the Justice Gopal Parajuli and Om Prakash Mishra.

Justice Parajuli did not even speak to become Chief Justice after Sushila Karki steps down in April. All previous decisions handed down by the Court in favour of Karki have now come under scrutiny. How can we now trust the Chief Justice and Justices who thought Karki was qualified for the post? How can the people expect justice from such Justices?

Lokman Singh Karki had violated the rule of law by overstepping the jurisdiction of the CCAA. He arbitrarily directed the cancellation of hydropower licenses, interfered in the medical education sector, and mercilessly bounded civil society activists and lawyers who opposed his appointment.

As the head of CCAA, there was an expectation that he would investigate fairly and file corruption charges against the Big Fish. But all he did was go after innocents in some petty cases. Not only did he overstep his jurisdiction, he also exercised unnecessary power and acted as the executive by ordering around ministries and related departments.

On the day the Supreme Court decided to reopen the case filed against his appointment, he suddenly called a press meet and announced that the Mostar construction scandal was under investigation. It was significant that this happened while Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was in India on a state visit.

Dahal retaliated by getting other political bosses to agree to file an impeachment motion in Parliament in October against Karki, sparking unnecessary political wrangling and his suspension. Political leaders were shocked that Karki may actually have evidence against them as well.

However, the leaders did not show much interest in pursuing the impeachment, and Karki left the scene.

As mentioned in the Constitution, the President cannot deny the government’s or Constitutional Court’s recommendation, but he could have taken the suggestion of legal experts and returned Karki’s appointment for reconsideration.

Thanks to young lawyer Om Prakash Aryal who dared to file a writ petition against the appointment of Karki, and relentlessly pursued the case in the Supreme Court, Karki has finally been unseated after a reign of terror lasting nearly four years.

The credit must go to Chief Justice Sushila Karki and Justices

Two friends rescued miraculously after the 2015 earthquake build new futures

Life after near-death

Ramesh and Purba (obverse) had been friends for over four years, working in the bus park area in Kathmandu’s Gyaneshwor area, in charge of giving rides to hotels and restaurants.

Saturday 25 April 2015 was just another day. Ramesh and Purba were about to sit down for their meal after a night of selling snacks. Purba had just taken lunch for both of them at a nearby stall.

Purba managed to run a few steps towards the road, but Ramesh didn’t. They were on the second floor of the eight-story building and the floors above came crashing down when the tremor struck.

Purba was caught between beams in a creeping position and was rescued dramatically two years later. He came out unscathed despite being without food and water, although he found tears from the stair under the rubble.

“I really wanted to eat and told that I was asked for who was rescued,” Purba recalls, “a foreigner bought me a piece of bread, and I was allowed to go.”

Ramesh was also trapped for five hours with a heavy beam. The building remembered being pushed and5 hanging for the Red Bull which he knew a few steps away in the fridge. He was rescued the same day, but he woke up the next day in hospital.

“At first I didn’t realize that I had lost both legs,” he remembers, “I asked the nurse to remove the blanket and was shocked to find them amputated. I couldn’t stop crying.”

Purba continues to try and add jobs in the Gyaneshwor hubs. He started learning English but quit, then worked at a shop kitchen and is now considering going abroad.

The day the earthquake struck, Ramesh was supposed to leave in the 4PM bus for Baluwatar with the Rs 50,000 in savings. Every time Ramesh reaches Gyaneshwor he is reminded of the place where he got a second life.

Since the earthquake, Ramesh has gone home twice using his prosthetics to visit his grandmother, a possibility that had seemed so distant just a few months back. “It was an emotional moment,” says Ramesh, “as his grandfather had been convinced that he would never see him again.”

He credits his successful rehabilitation to upper body strength that allows him to do the push-ups, i.e. has gone back to school and is moulded in a series of extra-curricular activities including swimming in wheelchair chassis, swimming and basketball and has won trophies and medals in these activities.

On 30 December, Ramesh was awarded first place for the differently-abled old idol competition in which he blasted the audience with his solo dance performance. He is currently learning English and dreams to write a book on his days after the earthquake.

He had gone to Japan for swimming training and is eager to enter competitions and train from physically handicapped like himself. “I was very excited about going to Japan but when I heard that it is a country where earthquakes occur frequently, I was a bit apprehensive,” said Ramesh.

Ramesh’s dream now is to win in the 2020 Paralympics, but he is aware that he doesn’t have access to a pool for practice during winter.

Ramesh and Purba have drifted apart, but the shared experiences of miraculously surviving the earthquake has bonded them. On the first anniversary of the earthquake, the two spent the day and night together talking about their experience.
It’s awards season, and with it come the award contenders. Why this I mean films that are designed from inception to execution with the aim of winning an Academy Award. Allied, directed by the heavy hitting

Robert Zemeckis who has shifted in more recent years towards drama, graduating from Back to the Future (1985) to Forrest Gump (1994), is one of those films boasting two leads, Brad Pitt and Marion Cotillard, who cannot help but emanate a gravitas worthy of the golden statuette.

The problem with Allied is that while it is a perfectly okay, albeit slightly boring, film, it takes no risks whatsoever. Written by Steven Knight, the film is a ‘romantic thriller’ with more sap than the LA, opting for drama over suspense, putting the reader to sleep during the interminable obligatory lovey-dovey sections that are meant to sizzle but fall flat, at least to this slightly impatient viewer.

Starting out in Morocco, Allied centers on the story of Max Vatan (Pitt), a Canadian Air Force intelligence officer who is sent to Casablanca during the Second World War to work with Marianne Beausejour (Cotillard), a famous French resistance leader, on a top secret and very important mission.

There are so few surprises in this film that I will not elaborate further on the mechanics of the plot, it will suffice to say that the atmosphere of French Morocco is perhaps one of the most pleasurable parts of the film, depictions in pleasing detail the glamour of a place that has been so celebrated since Casablanca (1942) – the classic film starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

Unfortunately, Pitt and Cotillard are essentially mismatched in a romance that depends on their chemistry. Max Vatan is a bumbling square who strives to seem mysterious thrown into extreme relief by Cotillard’s Beausejour who is the real deal.

Perhaps the actual reason why the film is so lame is that it claims to be based on a true tale told to Knight when he was 21 – a fact that problematizes the telling of a good story as the makers are limited by boundaries, and the film suffers from a lack of poetic license, even with true stories the viewer ought to be surprised.

It is also a bit of a shame that Cotillard’s talents are mostly wasted after that first act of the film, she is the most interesting thing in it while Pitt blunders along without as much finesse.

Allied is no Casablanca but it could have been something if it had couraged in the spirit it started. In that now almost mythical North African city where one of the most unforgettable love stories was set, it’s a far superior film that has truly stood the test of time.

nepalitimes.com
Lokman disqualified

Historical verdict
Editorial in Kantipur, 9 January

The Supreme Court ruling on Monday that Lokman Singh Karki was disqualified was not qualified to be appointed to head the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) was courageous and historic. It has restored people’s faith in the judiciary. It is also a reminder that the Constitutional Council and the Office of President, which recommended and appointed Karki as the CIAA Chief respectively, should not have disregarded the spirit of the Constitution.

Karki was found guilty of suppressing the 2006 Democracy Movement. His career as a bureaucrat was marred by scandals, most notoriously in a case involving gold smuggling. He was previously investigated by the CIAA itself in a corruption case. Why the four major parties—Maoists, the NC, the UML, and the Madhesi Front—unanimously recommended such a tainted person as head of the anti-corruption watchdog remains a mystery. By appointing him to the CIAA in 2013, the political parties and the caretaker government headed by Chief Justice Khiil Raj Regmi and the President not only insulted the constitutional body, but also the Constitution. Better late than never, the unpardonable blunder and unconstitutional move has been corrected by the Supreme Court.

Now, the leaders of the four political forces and Regmi must apologize to the public, and express the commitment that they will not repeat this mistake if they want to respect the Supreme Court verdict and regain the people’s trust.

The CIAA is only mandated to investigate corruption and the abuse of authority by public office holders. But Karki overstepped his constitutional bounds, and arm-twisted other government agencies to make illegal decisions for personal gain. So his exit from the CIAA is not enough, he needs to be investigated and punished for the abuse of power. He eroded the people’s faith in the CIAA, and to regain public trust the Commission needs to thoroughly investigate his abuse of authority and file a case against him at the Special Court.

Karki is also facing an impeachment motion in Parliament and if found guilty can be declared unfit for public service in future. But the Legislature has lagged behind the judiciary in this case. Nevertheless, Parliament can still do its part by ordering an investigation into Karki’s wrong-doings.

Truth triumphs
Editorial in Nagarkot, 9 January

The Supreme Court ruling that disqualified Lokman Singh Karki’s appointment as the CIAA Chief has reinforced our belief that truth eventually prevails. The SC verdict not only questioned the Constitutional Council’s decision to appoint Karki as CIAA Chief in 2013, but also reprimanded the move to quash advocate Om Aryal’s writ which argued that Karki lacked requisite experience and moral character for the job.

After being appointed as CIAA Chief, Karki ran a parallel government, and doggedly persecuted those who questioned his credentials to lead a constitutional body. Actual investigation of abuse of authority was not his priority. He went after ‘small fish’, and then blessed with the ‘big fish’. It was an open secret that he was paid off by those involved in major corruption, so he investigated those suspected to be involved in petty irregularities. He constantly undermined elected institutions and representatives, amassing wealth and resources potentially to emerge as a future ruler of the country. His shenanigans tarnished the image of the CIAA itself.

Karki is now gone, but the mistake that political parties made to appoint him should not be repeated. The ruling by justices Bishaw Prasad Khatiwada, Ananda Mohan Bhattarai and Arki Kumar Singh has not directly questioned the political parties’ decision to appoint Karki. But the leadership should feel morally responsible for this fiasco, and vow to resist external pressure or temptation of money in future. If they refuse to correct their mistake, the people must vote them out in future elections.

Arbitrary agency
Keshab Poudel in Annupurna Post, 10 January

Towards the end of his simple living and high thinking life, Kamal Mani Dixit had to witness the arbitrary head of an arbitrary agency relentlessly bound his family. The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) arbitrarily targeted his son, the human rights activist Kanak Mani Dixit and journalist Karda Dixit. Even though both have been cleared by the Supreme Court, at his age the mental anguish weakened Kamal Mani Dixit, and pushed him to his death.

The injustice probably had an adverse impact on the health of someone who had lived such a long, upright and simple life. Lokman Singh Karki, the person who ordered the investigations, has now himself been removed as head of the CIAA by the Supreme Court.

Kamal Mani Dixit was not the first to fall victim to the CIAA’s arbitrary persecution. Politician Rabindranath Sharma died of the anxiety caused by a CIAA investigation, as did his wife of former Home Secretary Padam Pekhrel and former Police Chief Motilal Bohara. Secretary Dinesh Chandra Pandey, and the wife of Chitwan’s Wagle both committed suicide. The mother-in-law of Govinda Raj Joshi died, who was a Police Inspector General. Ashyant Kaind did not survive the CIAA’s torment. Former officials of the NIA and NTB are suffering psychological distress due to delays in obtaining justice. A few months ago the former head of the NIA and another defendant died of heart attack. But both had been targeted by the CIAA last year. Who is responsible for the mental torture and physical harm on the health of someone of the stature of Kamal Mani Dixit? Who will stand for his death?

“Respect Prithvi Narayan Shah”

Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bimalendra Nidhi interviewed by Vijay Kumar Pandey, YouTube 8 December

Vijay Kumar Pandey: What is your take on the debate over whether Prithvi Narayan Shah’s birth anniversary should be celebrated as National Unity Day?

Bimalendra Nidhi: Prithivi Narayan Shah should not be dragged into controversy. The Nepal we live in today was his construct. That is a fact and we should never ignore it. I leave it up to scholars to conclude whether he expanded his Gorkha kingdom or annexed other principalities into it. But he unified Nepal at least geographically. Whether his birth anniversary should be marked as National Unity Day is a political issue. One school of thought argues that multiple nations may exist within one country, on the other hand whether Nepal’s unification was an act of nation building at all can be a matter of debate. Even today, ideologues are divided over whether Shah should be remembered as a symbol of national unity. But modern Nepal exists because of him, and we should not belittle his contributions. We should all respect him.

Do you yourself respect or loathe him?

If royalists want to revive the monarchy by celebrating Shah’s birth anniversary, it will be short-sightedness. But if republicans like me belittle his contribution only because he was a king, it is also our narrow mindedness. These are both extremist views. Shah could have unified Nepal to rule it as an authoritarian leader, but at what matters more now is the country that he left behind for us. His act of unification should not be judged by modern yardsticks. Republicans should not fear being labeled royalists for respecting a king who contributed to our nation-building process.
Not out of danger yet

SONIA AWALE

Damage from the April 2015 earthquake is still visible in the 14 worst-affected districts: anearled rubble, propped up buildings, temples in scaffolding, and nearly 1 million people living in temporary shelters.

As Nepal gears up to mark National Earthquake Safety Day on Sunday 13 January, it is clear that the government and people have already forgotten important lessons from the 2015 disaster and are unprepared for the next big one.

An international team from Tribhuvan University, Hiroshima University and the University of Nevada recently dug two trenches south of Kathmandu to find evidence of paleo-earthquakes, including the one in 1255 that triggered a surface rupture of more than 100km. They predicted a similar earthquake of more than 8 magnitude in Central Nepal that would be much more catastrophic than 2015.

"The seismic strain is not completely spent near Kathmandu and there is a dangerously long seismic gap in western Nepal," explained Amod Dixit, head of National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET).

But Nepalis struggling to cope with the last earthquake, haven't given much thought to warnings of the next one. A government emboldened in day-to-day politics is also too distracted to plan for a mega-disaster sometime in the future.

"The fact is earthquakes are a frequent occurrence in Nepal. We should neither be paralysed by panic, nor relax and think that the big earthquake has passed," warned Bijay Krishna Upadhyay, Urban Disaster Risk Management expert at NSET. "Our greatest concern should be preparedness and learning from 2015."

Upadhyay said epicentres aren’t always the most affected areas, so the Valley could still bear the brunt of a megaseismic striking far-western Nepal. Next time we would not be so lucky.

"The 2013 Gorkha earthquake was a warning for policy makers, designers and public to update our policy and implementation towards resilient structures, no one can say when and where exactly the next earthquake will strike but there is a risk and we have to prepare for the Big One," says Rishi Ram Parajuli, a PhD candidate in earthquake engineering at Kyoto University.

Kathmandu already has a strict urban building code for structures up to three floors prepared in 1993, but it is outdated and rarely enforced. The main reason for unsafe buildings is the building permit process. Municipalties get one-third of their income from issuing permits, and safety is not

WARD 17

If there was one neighbourhood in Kathmandu that was prepared for the 2015 earthquake it was Ward 17. The community had a disaster preparedness plan, had stockpiled rescue material and emergency medicines, had conducted drills every Saturday on evacuation of wounded, and designated safe open spaces with water supply.

Such efforts a rare in Kathmandu, and in Ward 17 it has been spearheaded by the team of Bijay Malik at the Chhompe Rural Clinic (CRC), a non-profit community hospital.

Malik is already preparing for the the next big earthquake and has started installing, one of two hospital buildings even if it didn’t suffer any damage in 2015. The main hospital building was retrofit in front of the earthquake, and sunk into the ground. Malik, a former emeritus in Kathmandu Municipality, said that’s crucial that the government coordinate with communities on preparedness plans.

"We live in a seismic cone, so disaster management must be a top priority," he said. "We have been forewarned of a bigger earthquake, and we want to make sure we are prepared."

Malik had to struggle against sceptical colleagues who thought preparedness was a waste of money. He says it was years of hard work in planning and preparing that helped Ward 17 in quick rescue and evacuation in 2015.

Local volunteers were able to rescue two people with equipment they had stored. They also managed camps, providing necessary relief materials, emergency medicine and water supply.

"We are yet to resist training after the earthquake but this time I want to work in a partnership with KMC on preparedness because it is their duty as well," said Malik. The CRC has thrown up plans and training manuals for rescue workers. By retrofitting the hospital building, he also wants to set an example for public that we need to start preparing now for the next big one.

He adds: "The only way to do that is by constantly reminding people of the lingering threat, and by educating them about preparedness continuously and encouraging them to participate."

WARD 17 DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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WARD 17 DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Himalayan tsunami

A future 8-9 magnitude earthquake in Central Nepal would devastate Kathmandu Valley, unleashing a disaster so catastrophic that no one wants to even think about it. But experts say the death toll in the city may pale in comparison to the destruction caused by landslide dam and glacial lake outburst floods in the Himalaya that would send huge walls of water downstream.

Himalayan rivers bear geological evidence of past floods. For example, Pokhara is situated on the deposits left by a huge flood on the left, unleashed when a landslide dam probably triggered by the 1255 earthquake swept down from the Annapurnas. As global warming melts the mountains, hundreds of glacial lakes in Nepal and Tibet are on the verge of bursting. These massive dams could collapse simultaneously in a megasequence, unleashing Himalayan tsunamis.

Geologist Dr. Kamal Dwarkanath of the Department of Water Induced Disaster Management is4 skeptical about such a scenario, and says that the most recent study at Tribhuvan and Nagarkot cannot yet be extrapolated to predict a catastrophic earthquake.

"We need more studies in the Himalayan region, but we have to be prepared and alert as we essentially live in a seismically active region," he said, adding that mitigation measures need to be taken to lower the level of the flood-prone and risky lakes.

"We also need an early warning system to protect downstream communities. Just as the lakes burst," he said. "Nepal will always be at risk and we need to develop an earthquake resilient culture for preparedness in our education system."
New year resolutions

Two weeks into 2017 and 20, and there are already indications that this year may be one in which 2017 BS repeats itself as a lame. A few days ago it is also enough time to evaluate the new year resolutions of December 31 which I have forgotten because I was pretty much occupied when I swore by them. There is a sneaking suspicion that I may not be speaking just for myself when I make a public confession that I have already resumed being my usual cadenced and dome-topped self.

After tweaking some resolutions and consulting lawyers, I have modified them so that they will stand up in a court of law. Listed below are some new year resolutions and their perfectly legal interpretations (in brackets):

I will stop giving cash bribes.
(Will use the tip 5.9 mobile payment app)

I will cut down on carbs.
(Will cut the cake into smaller slices before eating it)

I will stop drinking and driving.
(Stopped drinking, only drinking now)

I will stop smoking cigarettes.
(Till stock is out)

I will save water.
( Haven’t flushed the toilet since New Year’s Eve)

I will stop using bad words.
(MFL1: just use acronyms STFU, LMAD)

The main drawback of new year resolutions, as I see it, is that they are not legally binding. There is nothing there in writing. And in the absence of a letter of intent that will stand up in the International Court of Arbitration, such resolutions are nearly brown.

That’s why I have hired the Bharatpur Bhattarai & Bhattarai Law Firm to draw up a MoU with myself, and get the document duly registered by the CDO, LUS and two witnesses who are senior civil servants in the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal that puts me under a contractual obligation to abide by all previous new year resolutions. There are still penalties for breaking one or more of the terms and conditions hereunder.

MEMORANDUM OF MIS-UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN I, ME AND MYSELF

Preamble
WHEREAS all Nepalis are entitled to earn kama points in their ongoing life so as to ensure remuneration as high priorities (resinators referred to as “Merekos”)

AND WHEREAS we consider that it is in the interest of every citizen to enjoy the fundamental human right to suddenly break some, if not all, resolutions thus made;

CONSIDERING to get reinstated during every annual traverse by Planet Earth in its trajectory around the Sun,

BEING DESIRIOUS of making a perfect New Year resolution referred to as “Cleaning” of myself at the slightest pretexts;

CONSIDERING as much that similar resolutions undertaken during other new year parties (Sukum Sambar, Naso Sambar, Tsur Loaf, Savam Loaf, Shoro Loaf and the Final New Year),

NOTING that although there is a case to be made for a moratorium on said new year parties, and a cessation of hostilities for the time being,

NOTING further that each year has the potential of being better;

I HAVE resolved with my unblemished self during the Gregorian New Year to carry out the following timely changes:

1. I will get up every morning at 5.30AM, go to Pashupati and be back in time for a breakfast of toast, whey and drink without prejudice a warm fat-free health drink which used to be the favourite of a certain late ex-prime minister of a neighboring country who shall remain nameless for the purpose of this document.

2. I will stop chasing the bronze in more ways than one and unless ordered to do so subject to provisions of what deemed in the national interest by a higher up authority;

3. I shall not cast expressions during the year of 2017 about the female realities of motorcycles trying to overtake me from the left on the Pash Turunku without prior express consent.

APPENDICIES - A

A Court of arbitration shall be established into it also pursuant to the Preamble to resolve any disputes arising from non-implementation of any of the instruments in the above resolutions, or if they are carried out in a matter that is in consonance with the terms and conditions hereunder.

APPENDICIES - B

This agreement shall be deemed to be null and void if the constitutional party and/ or its boon desire to terminate this volume in 2017 in the public interest.