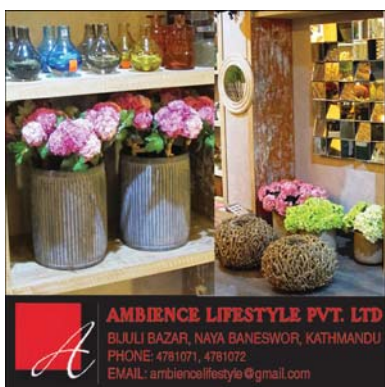




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## Cliffhanger

The bad news is that it required political intervention by the Nepali Congress to bring back Govinda Raj Pokharel to head the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). The good news is that during his previous tenure after the 2015 earthquake, Pokharel had moved quickly on preparing a Needs Assessment report and to convene a donor pledging conference.

This week, Pokharel hit the ground running to launch the distribution of the second installment

of the Rs 200,000 rebuilding grant to survivors in Gorkha, Sindhuli and Makwanpur. However, as our report (page 14-15) shows, many families in Nuwakot have not even made it to the list to receive the first installment.

The delays in distributing the rest of the reconstruction grant and excluding eligible families from the list points to government negligence and mismanagement. The buck stops in Kathmandu, but the delays in delivery are due to political interference in the NRA as well as lack

of coordination between line ministries.

Pokharel was appointed by the NC government in 2015 and was sacked when KP Oil became prime minister to be replaced by UML apparatchik Sushil Gyawali who faced obstacles because his party was in the opposition. He was finally sacked last week, and Pokharel brought back. In an interview (page 14-15) Pokharel assured us no genuine earthquake victim would be left out during his watch.

Meanwhile, in roadless Upper Gorkha cut off by landslides since the earthquake, engineers have built Nepal's first ever cantilever pathways (pictured, above). Mule trains carrying earthquake relief, school children and trekkers on the Manaslu Circuit have returned as the steel paths have made it possible to follow the narrow gorges of the Budi Gandaki in Yaru Bagar and Syar Khola. 🇳🇵



### FEMININE FM

Women-run radio stations across Nepal cater to the special needs of villages devoid of men

### Healing with radio

Conflict victims make radio programs based on interviews with other survivors who have suffered like them

PAGE 6-7

**Cantilever trail**  
 BY SONIA AWALE  
 PAGE 8-9

**Failing to make the list**  
 BY SHREEJANA SHRESTHA  
 PAGE 14-15

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# BHAGBANDA POLITICS

Things start falling apart when the centre cannot hold because it is too busy dividing up the spoils.

As the country is allowed to drift, governance decays, state authority declines and service delivery suffers. But the top leaders of the main parties are completely comfortable to let things slide. They are so cosy with the division of the spoils of *bhagbanda* status quo politics that they don't want to make any sudden moves. That would upset the apple cart.

The people, for their part, are so used to the government not doing much that they don't expect anything from the state. Individuals, families, communities go about their daily lives relying on the informal sector, undocumented transactions, and the parallel economy. The people want the government to leave them alone, and the government for its part seems to be perfectly happy with that arrangement.

The political parties are in no particular hurry to have elections because they are profiting so much from dividing up the state coffers, nominations and positions among themselves. Ambassadors are appointed based on the relative

No surprise, therefore, that politicians are fanning out across the plains addressing rallies, strategising with local cadre, trying to understand the mood of the Madhes.

The conclusion of the mainstream parties after these trips seems to be that the Madhesi party leaders who were trounced in the 2013 elections are still not held in high regard. They detect a divide between the Madhesi people and the leaders of the Madhes-oriented parties, and see an opportunity to exploit the simmering distrust. The party that can restore linkages between hills and plains will have the upper hand, not the one that tries to divide the regions.

For their part, the Madhesi parties have concluded that their electoral future can only be assured by keeping the federalism pot at boiling point. It is in their interest to stoke Madhesi animosity against Pahades. Last year's violent agitation radicalised young Madhesis, and they feel that level of anger needs to be maintained for their political survival.

The mainstream parties also sense that many people in the Madhes towns, particularly Birganj and westwards, do not have the stomach for another prolonged agitation. The economy of the Tarai border towns suffered due to the Blockade, so even Madhes based parties have softened their rhetoric of late. The four main parties see the demographics shifting with disproportionate out-migration of young men from the eastern Tarai. Hill settlers of the plains may therefore form a larger proportion of voter turnout on election day than they would

otherwise.

The other wildcard is the Hindu votebank. A recent report in this paper from Janakpur suggested a strong backing for the RPP, and even for a return to a constitutional monarchy among the middle class and traders. If this translates into votes at the ballot box, it will be at the cost of support for the other parties.

The politicians may be doubtful about a lot of things, but of one thing they are certain: they must conduct elections in 2017 even if they don't really want it. According to the constitutional rulebook, there should be three elections: local, provincial and voting for the federal parliament by 18 January 2018. For now, though, the top leaders seem to have shelved the idea of local elections because of intractable differences over provincial boundaries, their demarcation and rearranging electoral constituencies.

Holding federal elections will be the fig leaf that the parties need to demonstrate to the public that they are not against polls per se. This would prolong the political transition, but that doesn't worry wheeling-dealing *netas* who benefit so much from extending *bhagbanda* politics.



parliamentary strength of the parties. The KU vice-chancellor and the NRA CEO are selected on *bhagbanda* basis. Not being accountable suits politicians fine. Why risk an election if things are so hunky dory? Things aren't that bad, we're still some ways off from the edge of the cliff, so why make any precipitous moves? Everything, therefore, is in wait-and-watch mode.

The parties appear to have spent all their energy in the past month haggling over the constitutional amendment, announcement of elections and the impeachment of the suspended CIAA chief. They had wanted to sort this out in a package deal, but their stands cancelled each other out which is why politics is now in a state of *rigor mortis*.

Politicians are using the lull to recharge their batteries. The Prime Minister even found time for a junket to Abu Dhabi. Most politicians are busy travelling to their home constituencies, and are behaving as if they are already on election campaign mode. Competition is hotting up among the political parties to grab the holy grail of Nepal's elections: the Tarai which now has more than half of Nepal's population.

Times.com

## WATCH VIDEOS



### MENDING OUR WAY

After the April 2015 earthquake, the movement of local people and trekkers on the Manaslu Circuit was affected as Upper Gorkha was cut off. Many sections of the Budi Gandaki Trail were destroyed by landslides. Now, unique steel pathways have been installed to reconnect the region. Watch how it was done.



### A WAIT TOO LONG

Genuine earthquake survivors in jiling, Nuwakot are missing from the list for those eligible for housing grants due to frequent changes in government. With the re-appointment of Govinda Raj Pokharel there is renewed hope among families who were left out.

## TUNE IN



nepalitimes.com

Community radio stations are increasingly becoming an alternative support network for women as their programs address vital issues like the migration of men, domestic violence, child marriage or family problems.



nepalitimes.com

Conflict victims Sarita Thapa and 19 others are being trained by The Story Kitchen to collect, record and prepare radio reports of fellow-survivors of the conflict. For the reporters and the interviewees, the broadcast medium is allowing them to heal old wounds by sharing their war experiences.



### SAFE KEEPER

The Zoo is doing a laudable effort but still not as good enough ('Call of the wild', Smriti Basnet, #841). We still cannot ignore the fact that the animals are kept in very small cages where their freedom of movement is limited. I do not totally oppose the idea of zoos, but what I do have a problem with is the environment they are kept in. Pool more resources from the unworthy government that gets money for conservation efforts. Then maybe visitors won't shun the cages for being too shabby or stinky and will actually pay attention to the message that the Zoo is trying to give about the preservation and condition of endangered species.

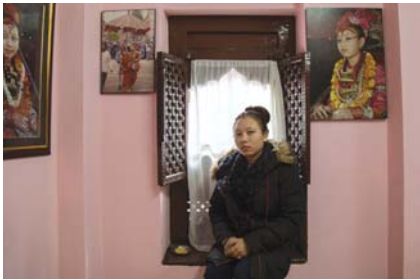
Sabita KC

### BUILD BACK DANGEROUSLY

Corruption is still rampant and government officials and bureaucrats are still not concerned about the safety of the citizens ('Not out of danger yet', Sonia Awale, #841). For example, the Sagarmatha Apartments B&B is constructing a new eight storey building in Sanepa-3 near Nick Simon Institute. Nearby residents have filed complaints numerous times with the Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan Office but they do not seem to care. With no one to turn to the residents have lost all hope

Saugat

## WHAT'S TRENDING



**Most reached on Facebook**  
(8,975 people reached)

### A lonely goddess

by Kristina Shperlik  
Six years after retirement from being the Kumari of Patan, Chanira Bajracharya admits that the life of a former goddess is not easy. She has a reclusive life, trying to fit back into society. Follow the former living goddess as she strolls through Patan.

**Most shared on Facebook**

### Future shock

Editorial  
Nepal has squandered the lessons of the 2015 earthquake, and we are woefully unprepared for an even bigger disaster that is sure to come.

**Most popular on Twitter**  
(24 retweets, 177 likes)

### Stronger Nuns

by Qiu Tian  
Novice nuns at monasteries in the Valley are treated on an equal footing with monks in both education and martial arts. Meet the Kung Fu nuns of Kathmandu.

**Most visited online page**  
(1,918 views)

### The end of diplomacy

by Kanak Mani Dixit  
Kathmandu is more alone than ever in the international arena, with many overseas friends having seemingly ceded their Nepal policy to India.

**Most commented**

### Not out of danger yet

by Sonia Awale  
Nepalis struggling to cope with the last earthquake haven't given much thought to warnings of the next Big One. A government embroiled in day-to-day politics is also too distracted to plan for a mega-disaster sometime in the future.

## QUOTE RETWEETS

**Nepali Times** @nepalitimes  
We are so engrossed in internal affairs that we do not look up & notice what is happening to Nepal's global standing <http://bit.ly/2iuL6CI>

**Geeta Kochhar** @KangJing  
Should Nepal look 'inside out' or 'outside in'?

**Ratna Deep Lohani** @RatnaDeepLohani  
It's decayed. Everyone knows why yet no one can act on it. #Weakness of #Nepali people - #Poverty #Cronyism #IndianSycophancy & what not.

**Ananda Raj Devkota** @9841906  
No more donations, lets add few lines against the donors when highlighting Nepal's diplomatic failure.

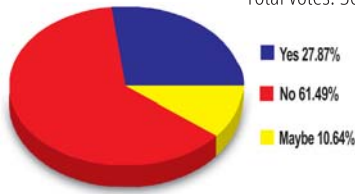
**Roshan Bhatta** @roshanbhatta700  
Failure of Nepalese Diplomacy. I think there are weakness in diplomats so, it's time to appoint skilled ones.

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #842

Q. Has Nepal learnt its lessons from the April 2015 earthquake to be prepared for the next Big One?



Weekly Internet Poll #843  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. What are the chances of Govinda Raj Pokharel being successful at the National Reconstruction Authority?


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# Separating powers

Judicial Council nominations of judges are always controversial, this year was no different

Every time the Judicial Council nominates judges, its members are usually criticised for being partisan. They are accused of violating the doctrine of separation of powers by politicising appointments to the judiciary.

In today's *bhagbanda* politics in which the parties divide up every appointment among themselves, the controversy is a



**LEGALESE**  
Binita Dahal

given. Last Thursday, the Council finalised the nominations in a late-night decision by the majority after the two members left the Chief Justice residence in Baluwatar.

Among the 80 recommended judges, the Council decided on 37 judges from the district courts, 27 advocates and 16 joint secretaries and special class legal officials from the Attorney General's office. The appointments come amidst a huge backlog of pending cases in the High Courts and their extended benches.

The Nepal Bar Association (NBA) and other Tarai-based organisations and government lawyers from the AG office expressed their displeasure at the list, accusing the Council of not following the principle of proportional representation. They threatened to pull out from the NBA if the decision was not rescinded.

Despite the opposition, the newly appointed 80 judges took their oaths of



GOPEN RAI

office under a tent in the Supreme Court premises on Wednesday (above).

The decision would not have been criticised to this extent if the two members of Judicial Council, Baidya Nath Upadhyay and Ram Prasad Sitaula had not left the meeting in a huff. Their displeasure is centred, as before, mostly on the perceived politicisation of the appointments and on nepotism.

Some of the newly-appointed judges are indeed close relatives of the members of the Council and some are affiliated to the three main political parties.

However, looking back at previous selections of the Judicial Council, it would be fair to say that they are never above controversy. The most recent was

the appointment of 11 justices of the Supreme Court by the Council led then by Kalyan Shrestha, a Chief Justice known for his integrity and fair judgement.

Much more controversial was the Judicial Council's decision three years ago to appoint eight justices to the Supreme Court. Three of them are now next in line to be Chief Justices when Sushila Karki steps down in April.

Senior Nepali Congress leader Narahari Acharya was among the Council members involved, and he had fiercely defended the disputed nominees. That decision was controversial because all nominations were from among career judges, excluding some well-deserved professional lawyers, the Attorney

General's Office, Law and the judicial administration.

The Judicial Council is lead by the Chief Justice, and includes the Law Minister, senior justices of the Supreme Court, one lawyer recommended by the Prime Minister and the other by the NBA. Of the five members, three already have partisan interests because of their positions. It would be really difficult to find lawyers without political affiliations.

This time, after Upadhyay and Sitaula left the meeting, Law Minister Ajay Shankar Nayak and Padam Baidik (both from the Maoist party) were in the majority in the Council. Even so, the appointees cover nearly all sectors including government attorneys, lawyers, civil servants and judges from district courts. Those nominated from the judicial administration and Law Ministry are also experienced.

To make the decision inclusive, some less deserving candidates are also in the selection and lack experience to be High Court judges. This is why sitting judges in the districts are dissatisfied with the system wherein novice lawyers become more senior to them just because the process needs to be inclusive.

Even so, the Judicial Council's selection this time is comparatively less controversial. In future, the makeup of the Council itself should be changed with a majority from the Judiciary. However, it will be difficult to reduce the political influence in the judiciary, as it is in every sphere of national life today. 🇳🇵

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### Fly to Kharkiv

Turkish Airlines has added flights to Kharkiv, which is considered the second largest city in Ukraine, starting 30 March this year. The starting round trip fare from Istanbul will be \$109 and will be operated four times a week. The airline plans to increase it to seven times a week from 30 May onwards.



### Go shopping

R.P. Group inaugurated Fashion Store, a womenswear store in Maitidevi, recently. The store offers a variety of sarees, kurta saluwar, lehengas and tops.



### New fare

With its new Airbus 320-214, Himalaya Airlines has added two new destinations: Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and Yangon in Myanmar. Starting 10 February the airlines will have five weekly flights to Kuala Lumpur while the Yangon flight will fly twice in a week starting 24 February.



### Big deals

Ford recently announced deals and discounts on select models and variants of 2016 makes. The motor company has also opened bookings for its 2017 models. For more information: [www.ford.com.np](http://www.ford.com.np)

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# Stigma and silence

Economic hardships, political chaos and natural disasters have lead to an increase in the incidence of mental disorders in Nepal

## KETAN DULAL

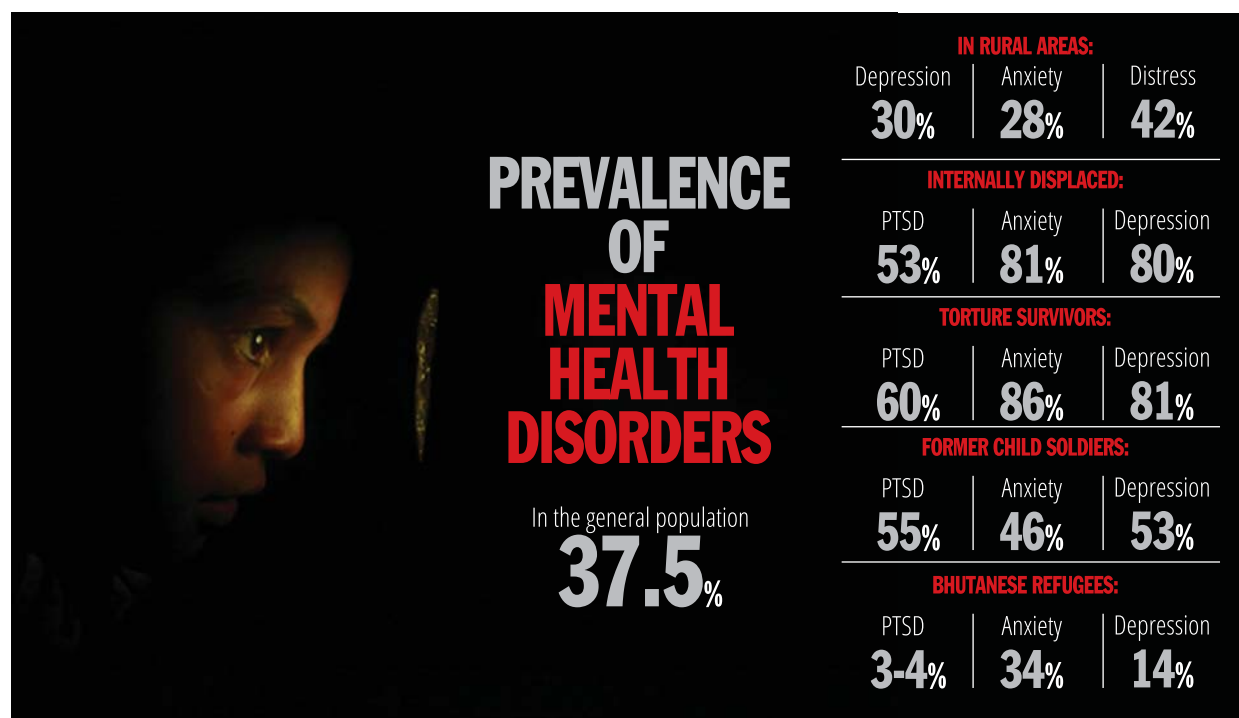
I had just returned to Nepal from Germany after experiencing my first psychotic episode, and like most patients with mental disorders in those days my parents took me to a shaman.

Behind the curtain, the female faith healer shook violently showing that she was under the spell of spirits that would tame my demons. She emerged from her trance to give us a small pouch of rice. I was to bathe before dawn and chew on one grain of rice every day.

My mother would dutifully wake me up at four every morning, force me to bathe and then hand me the single grain of rice.

Things have moved on a bit in the diagnosis and treatment of mentally ill people in Nepal, but visits to the shaman are still common. Most people, it seems, have more faith in faith healers than in modern psychiatry.

Indeed, society had conditioned me to regard psychiatrists as people who dealt with 'crazy' people, those who were ill because of their own fault. Psychiatric disorders brought shame to the family, and I had seen patients stigmatised and ostracised. Persistent ignorance of



SOURCE: THE LANCET

mental disorder has meant that society labels people afflicted with everything from epilepsy to schizophrenia as being 'mad'.

Then I was diagnosed with schizophrenia myself, a disease that had greater stigma than any other mental illness. For decades I kept it hidden because of the indignity attached to the condition in Nepali society. I could not talk about it openly with friends and relatives, and

although I acted normal the disease was killing me and my family. I was lucky that my affliction was not severe enough to induce hallucinations and delusions, and I did not succumb to substance abuse.

But what my mother and grandmother did to me was also a form of abuse, the kind of treatment that people with mental illness endure from their families across Nepal every day.


A recent study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that the situation of the mental health system in Nepal remains dismal.

The study shows that the ratios of psychiatrists and psychologists in Nepal (0.22 and 0.06 per 100,000 population) are one of the lowest in the world. A quarter of Nepal's psychiatrists work outside the country. This leaves most mental patients alone

to fend for themselves and battle both the disease as well as the social stigma on their own.

The conflict, political instability, migration, economic woes and the earthquake have combined to take a serious toll on the mental health of Nepalis which has gone largely unnoticed because of society's reluctance to talk about it. A recent study in *The Lancet* outlines the increase in the prevalence of mental health problems in Nepal (*see left*) and argues that mental health should no longer be regarded as just a health issue but a socio-economic burden on the country.

Help can be provided to patients only if they seek it in the first place. The stigma attached to mental illness is so strong in Nepal that most people would not seek help when they need to. Even some of my own family members used to believe that if I do not have the motivation to work then it is my own fault. If I wake up with hallucinations they believe that an evil spirit has possessed me. It has taken years for them to understand that mental conditions are treatable and there are medicines that can reduce the symptoms of the disease.

If we just remain silent about the epidemic of mental disease in Nepal tens of thousands of patients will continue to suffer in silence. Nobody will understand mental disease unless the people who suffer from it first speak out. Society will only listen if we make ourselves heard. 

**Ketan Dulal** is a PhD candidate at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada.

A full-page advertisement for the Hyundai Creta. On the right, a man in a dark suit, striped tie, and a traditional Nepali topi (black cap) stands with his arms crossed. He is wearing glasses and a watch. The background is a dark, textured wall. On the left, a red Hyundai Creta SUV is shown from a front-three-quarter view. The car's license plate area says 'CRETA'. In the center, large white text reads: "I AM PERFECT I AM CRETA". Below this, in smaller white text, is the name 'Sagar Nath Upadhyaya' and 'Classic Tech'. In the top left corner, the Hyundai logo is followed by the text 'NEW THINKING. NEW POSSIBILITIES.'. In the top right corner, the word 'CRETA' is written in a large, bold, italicized font, with 'THE PERFECT SUV' underneath it. In the bottom left corner, there are logos for Hyundai and Laxmi, with the text 'HYUNDAI Laxmi' and 'SOLE DISTRIBUTOR OF HYUNDAI FOR NEPAL www.laxmihyundai.com' below them. On the far left edge, there is small vertical text: 'Pisatmak/16'.



# Feminine FM

Women in radio stir a nationwide conversation

EMMA STOLARSKI  
in MORANG

As Nepal's hinterland gets steadily more feminised because of the outmigration of men, community radio stations have stepped in to offer women an alternative support network with companionship and advice.

Women working in radio have proven to be especially effective in addressing issues like domestic violence, child marriage or family problems. Women are obligated to work in the kitchen, and as one listener here said, radio often plays in the background making kitchen work more tolerable.

Nepal's community radio network now extends across all 75 districts and is broadcast in more than 70 of Nepal's 125 spoken dialects. While only 60 per cent of the population speaks the national language, community radio is able to transmit content in local languages. Radio has also been instrumental in the aftermath of the April 2015 earthquake to spread information on relief and rehabilitation.

It was in 2007 that South Asia's first women-run radio station, *Radio Purbanchal*, was founded by Kamala Kadel. Today there are seven AM radio



EMMA STOLARSKI

stations run by women across a country that is beginning to counter patriarchal values.

"My motivation was to give a voice to the voiceless, it was important that women's stories and ideas are heard," said Kadel. While the station is a success, she received a lot of criticism from her male peers when she started ten years ago. Many doubted that a station could be maintained entirely by women. "They didn't think we could do it," she recalled.

Some men took it badly that they were being excluded: "They thought that a women-run radio station was reverse gender discrimination against men." However, such criticism motivated her even more to create a platform for gender activism and to educate the public about discrimination against women.

It is very common for women to lack support systems within the family and society to turn to community radio for solidarity.

**RADIO ACTIVE WOMEN:** A *Radio Purbanchal* journalist interviews women in Laxmipur of Morang for a radio program.

Listeners describe women in radio to be like friends they can turn to when in need, they often call or write to the stations about problems they are facing at home. In the studios, the women are more than journalists they are counselors dispensing advice on a diverse range of subjects. Radio stations also invite survivors

and activists to share their own stories on air.

At *Radio Didi Bahini* in Tanahu, Durga said: "A woman can understand another woman best, and that is an indication why women related programs are important. We can learn from each other."

Besides their ability to build a community for listeners, women in radio are also able to collect data and stories for others to tune in to nationally and globally. Through community radio networks like ACORAB and others, stations connect villages that have developed especially effective programs or have gathered pressing stories to syndicate nationally.

Women in community radio have proven to be especially successful in extending support in ways that national stations based in Kathmandu have not. While the capital is quick to pass laws to protect women, rural areas do not receive the benefits, such as awareness or accountability. Community radio becomes especially important in the absence of local elections, which haven't been held for two decades.

Here in Morang, *Radio Purbanchal* still struggles to survive. Part of the reason is that the station is selective about the commercials it chooses to promote. It endorses Nepali products, but does not air advertisements for soft drinks, junk food and the like. 🇳🇵

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

Listen to live programs in Radio Didi Bahini, a community radio run by women in Parbat.



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With no major westerly front on the horizon, the weather will continue to be fine and sunny for the weekend. A low pressure area that has brought heavy snowfall in Northern India and Western Nepal will make its way into the Central Himalaya, and this may bring some cloud cover over the Valley. We expect a slight rise in the maximum temperature to just above 20 Celsius, but the minimum will remain in the 3-4 range. The weather pattern will probably remain the same into early next week.

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THE STORY KITCHEN

### SMRITI BASNET

Sarita Thapa was only 11 when her father was disappeared by the army, the same day Congress politician Govinda Poudel was killed by the Maoists in Bardiya. For 17 years, Thapa was carrying the weight of her father’s loss in her heart until she met others like her while working to get stories of conflict survivors. “When I compare my pain with them I see how similar our problems are. I forget my own pain,” said Thapa, now 28. Thapa is part of The Story Kitchen (TSK) which has been training 19 others

like her to collect, record and prepare radio reports of the victims of the conflict and their relatives. There are reporters each in Jumla, Kalikot, Rukum, Rolpa, Surkhet, Dang, Bardiya, Banke, Kailali and Kanchanpur. A selection of 26 programs by the group has already been broadcast on *Radio Nepal*, and syndicated through FM stations around the country. “We read Nepal’s history and it is always about what the men have done, we wanted to present the women’s narrative, to look at major events in history from a woman’s perspective,” said TSK’s Jaya Luitel. In the last five years, the Kitchen has documented stories of Nepal’s conflict told from the perspective of women. Last month, the

# Healing through radio

## Conflict victims and their families are sharing and broadcasting stories of their war experiences

organisation was presented the Tomorrow’s Peace Builder award by Peace Direct based in London. The reporters are given recorders and trained to conduct interviews and approach victims with sensitivity prior to being sent to the field. A member of the National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders serves as a coordinator in each district, and the reporters say journalism has boosted their confidence. “It has changed how society views me, now they talk to me in a much respectable tone,” said Hira Bhandari (*pic, above*) who is working in Kanchanpur. Bhandari’s husband along with her nephew and five others from the district were killed during the conflict. The women do not just report, their radio documentation is also valuable testimony for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In Bardiya, Thapa has single-handedly collected 500 complaints and sent them to Kathmandu. Having already served as an active member in the Conflict

Victims’ Common Platform (CVCP),Thapa says that the women find it easier to talk to her because she too is a victim. Many have trusted her with their war experiences, some of them of torture and rape, which they haven’t registered with officials who are mostly men. “For women social justice is important, and even more important now is to tell them that it was not their fault,” explained Luitel. TSK is supported by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Governance Facility, and hopes to extend its work. Said Bhandari from Kanchanpur: “I don’t know if I am qualified to be a radio reporter, but I really wish to work in this field in the future.” 🇳🇵

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

Listen as conflict victims narrate their war experiences in an episode of the radio series prepared by reporters like Sarita Thapa and Hira Bhandari who are themselves war victims.

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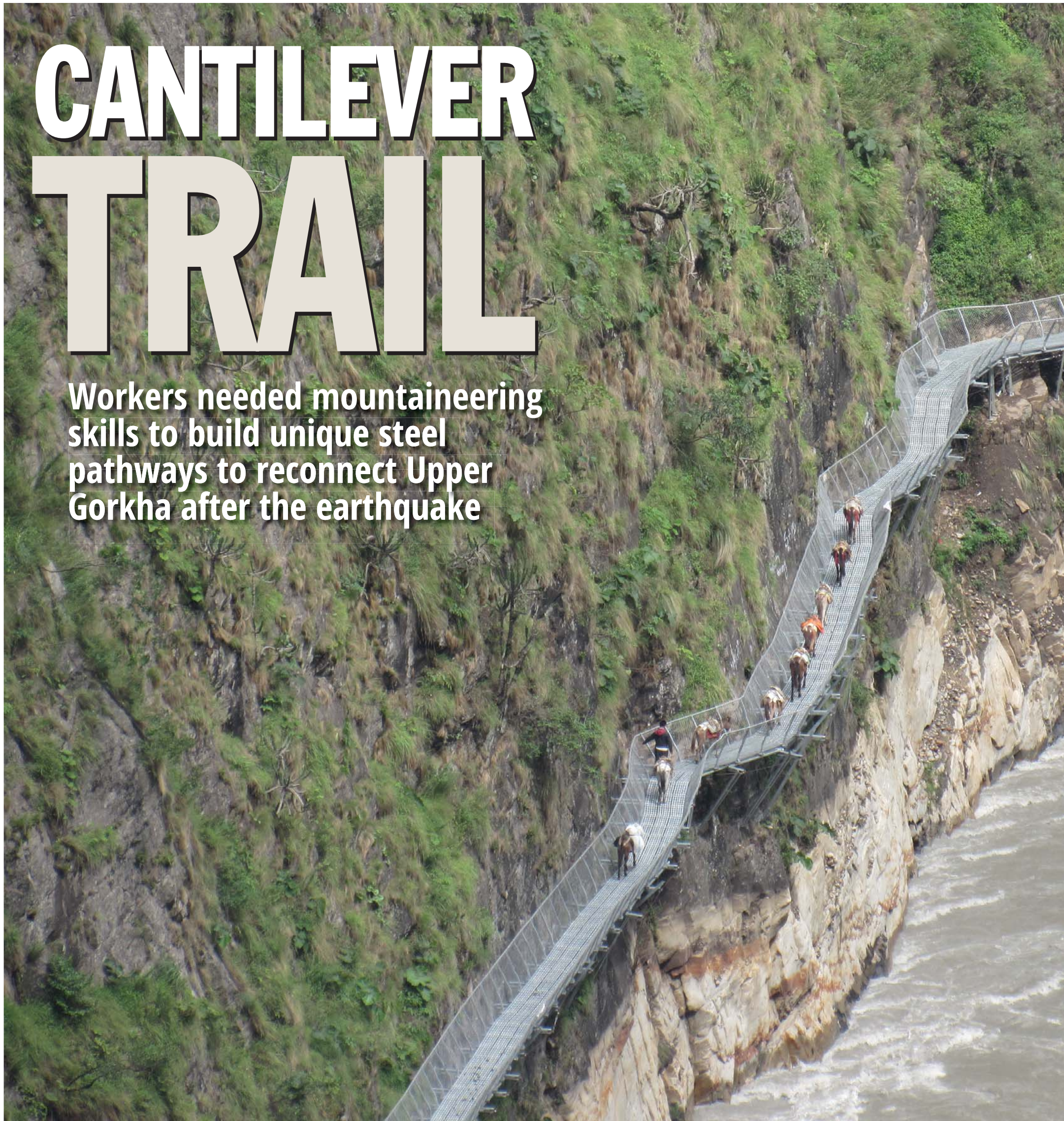
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# CANTILEVER TRAIL

Workers needed mountaineering skills to build unique steel pathways to reconnect Upper Gorkha after the earthquake



**WEEK 1** The Syar Khola cliff in Tsum Valley where the trail was destroyed by a landslide after the 2015 earthquake.



**WEEK 2** Local workers were trained in rock-climbing techniques to drill into the cliff face.



**WEEK 4** Using experience in bridge construction, Nepali engineers built the trail.





**THE GREAT BARRIER:** The cantilever pathway in Yaru Bagar replaced the trail that was washed away by the river after the 2015 earthquake and has restored movement along the Budi Gandaki trail.

Trekkers have returned to the Manaslu Circuit and Tsum Valley because the pathway has restored connectivity to Upper Gorkha. (right, top)

The completed 195m steel pathway at Yaru Bagar (right, below).



ALL PICS: SAMARTH / AF-ITECO


The April 2015 earthquake triggered landslides that destroyed many sections of the Budi Gandaki Trail, cutting off Upper Gorkha, affecting the movement of local people and trekkers on the Manaslu Circuit. Now, engineers have used cantilever technology to restore damaged sections of the trail along the narrowest and steepest parts of the Budi Gandaki gorge. A 195m metal path along a cliff at Yaru Bagar now allows mule trains and porters to connect the Tsum Valley and Larkya La for the first time after the earthquake. A second cantilever path is under construction in Tsum Valley



where the earthquake wiped out an entire section of the foot trail to the scenic region near the Tibet border. Yaru Bagar was only 5 km from the epicentre of the earthquake on 25 April 2015, and it uplifted the Budi Gandaki, forcing the river to change course and wash away the trail along its gorge. Eight VDCs in northern Gorkha were cut off for more than a year, and 8,000 people had to depend on helicopter ferries for food and relief. The construction of the cantilever pathways was supported by the British aid agency, DfID through the Samarth program, and the Swiss company AF-Iteco used the bridge-fabrication experience of Balaju Yantra Shala in Kathmandu. After considering several options, the engineers decided on a cantilever pathway as the most suitable option. “I am very proud that DfID has, through our tourism programme SAMARTH, invested in this cantilever bridge. Having an open trail is very important to the livelihoods of the people living in the hills,” said Gail Marzetti, Head of DfID Nepal. “The cantilever is a new technical solution in the mountains and we are keen to do more



of these to support communities.” Workers had to be trained in mountaineering to hang from ropes on the cliff to drill into the rock, and 400 local people were also employed for the project. Yaru Bagar was completed in two months at a cost of Rs 38 million. Today, the pathway is busy with school children, mules and trekkers going up and down the Budi Gandaki Valley. The same team is now working to build the Tsum Valley steel pathway which is nearly complete. “We have people with necessary skills and proper design for cantilever pathways. With that confidence we can now build them in other places as well,” said Bishnu Shah, project manager with AF-Iteco.

Cantilevers can be dismantled and 80 per cent of the material reused to erect the pathway in another location. The technology can be used in other gorges in remote parts of the Himalaya.  **Sonia Awale**



Watch video of workers using rock-climbing techniques to drill into the cliff face to build the steel pathways in Yaru Bagar and Syar Khola in Gorkha District. [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)



construction, metal pathway.



**WEEK 6** Fastening steel platforms to cantilever ramps.



BILLI BIERLING

**WEEK 7** The cantilever pathway at Syar Khola nearing completion last week.



# EVENTS



## Heritage walk,

Experience the culturally rich and beautiful Bhaktapur Darbar Square preceded by a yoga session and followed by a sumptuous Newari meal. The event is organised by Sooriya Wellness and Yoga Centre. 31 January, 8 am to 1 pm, (01) 4001714, sooriyawellness@gmail.com

## Fashion Bazaar,

Don't miss out on the Octave Fashion Bazaar which will feature some of Kathmandu's well known brands, designers and stores. 21 January, 10 am to 5 pm, Octave, Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg, 9818375888

## Night of ideas,

Attend a panel discussion on economic development of landlocked countries featuring experts: Dr Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, Pierre Jacquet, Valérie Julliland and Swarnim Wagle. 26 January, 4 to 7 pm, Hotel Himalaya, Kupondole, RSVP before 23 January: communication.afk@gmail.com



## ADB in pictures,

Attend the photo exhibition 'Towards a prosperous Nepal, ADB and Nepal: 50 Years of Partnership' to celebrate Asian Development Bank's 50th anniversary. Until 25 January, 11 am to 6 pm, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, (01) 4220735

## Film school,

Mark your calendars for a two-day film making workshop with American film maker and instructor Dov Simens. 22 & 23 January, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road, Register: https://www.facebook.com/KSCNEP/app/684336108254110/

## Pictures for a cause,

Attend a photography exhibition in tribute to poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran to raise funds for cataract surgeries at the Sagarmatha Choudhary Eye Hospital. The three-day long event will also feature poetry recitations, sufi and jazz performances. 20 to 22 January, Bikalpa Art Center, Pulchok (01) 5013524

## Karnali Dialogue,

Attend Karnali Dialogue's 17th series to get to know more about the art of storytelling in Mugu. 24 January, 3 to 4.30 pm, Martin Chautari, Thapathali, (01) 4102027



## Agro fair,

Don't miss out on more than 50 stalls of organic tea, coffee, vegetables, juice, herbs, spices from across Nepal. 27 to 30 January, 10 am to 6 pm, Patan Museum, Patan Darbar Square, 9851082828, kteorganicfair@gmail.com

## Champadevi hike,

Escape the hustle of the city and enjoy a day hike to Champadevi hill via Pharping. The event is a fundraising event to support Asia Pacific Veg Congress – 2017 to be held in Kathmandu. 21 January, Meeting point: Bhrikuti Mandap ground, 7 to 7.15 am, Registration deadline: 19 January, 9851149579/ 9856060734, Rs 1000



## MISS MOTI-VATION

**KRIPA JOSHI**



# MUSIC



## Remembering Yama,

Come together to pay respect to the late Nepali rapper Yama Buddha featuring artists MC Flo, Sarkar, Under Dogs, Vten, Dbrunk, 2Faces and more. 21 January, 3 to 10 pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172

## Kar.Ma sessions,

Live music featuring Nomad Radio coupled with hot cups of coffee and tasty snacks. 27 January, 4 to 8 pm, Kar.Ma Coffee, Jhamsikhel

## Sufi nights,

Spend a musical evening listening to sufi melodies with Amrit Chhetri this weekend. Every Friday & Saturday, Green Leaves Restaurant, Uttara Dhoka, Lajimpat, (01) 4433002



## Tribute to Coldplay,

Get to hear covers of famous British rock band Coldplay's tracks as part of Phase 10 of Tribute Series Nepal event. 21 January, 3 pm (Gates open), Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, Rs 500 (Advance sales), Rs 700 (Door sales)

## Fork and Rock,

Spend a musical evening at the Wicked Spoon as they celebrate their second anniversary. 20 January, 6 pm onwards, Wicked Spoon, Jhamsikhel, 9841461765

# DINING



## Taza,

An excellent new Middle-Eastern restaurant with a Syrian chef. Don't forget their shawarmas! Pulchok, (01)5541592, 9860960177

## Hyatt Regency,

Usher in the Chinese New Year with a wide variety of sumptuous and mouth-watering dishes. Also, win a chance to stay at the hotel by participating in a lucky draw. 27 January (Dinner), Rs 2,000 plus taxes per person, 28 January (Brunch), Rs 2300 plus taxes per person, The Cafe, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudha, (01) 5178334



## Tasneem's Kings Kitchen,

A charming restaurant proposing the unique flavours of distinctive Bohra Muslim Food. Jhamsikhel, 9801282727, (01) 2239532



## Dechenling,

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# GETAWAY



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## Atithi Resort & Spa,

A quiet sanctuary that fuses Nepali tradition with modern amenities, complete with a fancy pool and a cosy restaurant. Lakeside, Pokhara, (06)1466760, info@atithiresort.com

## Jhule mountain resort,

Resting 2050m above sea level, the eco-resort boasts a farmhouse that stretches across a hill covered in fresh pine. Enjoy an organic homestay experience. Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, Lapsiphedi-3, Jhule, (01)6212399



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# Dolakha reincarnated

The earthquake destroyed the historic trading town of Dolakha, rebuilding it would revive its historical importance

SAHINA SHRESTHA  
in DOLAKHA

At 97, Dabal Bahadur Shrestha has fond memories of his scenic hometown of Dolakha Bazar. These days the recollections are especially poignant because he has seen that the earthquakes of 2015 destroyed the historic town. Now living in Kathmandu, Shrestha recalls how townsmen all knew and greeted each other, rejoiced during festivals, worked hard in the terrace fields and feasted on buffalo meat that cost next to nothing. Shrestha's ancestral home was near the town's famous Bhimsen Temple, which was one of the few structures that survived 2015.

The Newar inhabitants migrated to Dolakha from Kathmandu in pre-Malla times, hired by the nobility there as artisans and to work in the famous mint that supplied coins to Tibet. Both the ancient mint and Shrestha's 335-year-old three-storey ancestral home with intricately carved lattice windows were damaged.

"The house was built by my female ancestor after her husband passed away," says Dabal Bahadur in Dolakhae Newari (*see box*). The foundations were strong enough to withstand multiple earthquakes including the Big One in 1934. Over the years, except for the tin sheets that replaced the original thatch roof the house has remained as it was. Like the old house locally called puranchhen, much of the historic town including its numerous temples and chaityas and historic buildings are in ruins.

Nearby, the old mint is also partially collapsed (*pic, above*). Weakened by the 25 April 2015 earthquake, the structure collapsed in the 12 May aftershock which had its epicenter only 8km away from



KUNDA DIXIT

Dolakha. Dhan Bahadur Shrestha, 85, is a descendant of the people who made the famous silver coins used in Tibet.

"My family made those leather coins before they were replaced by copper and silver," Shrestha says, "none of the leather coins remain, but we had the house. Now even that is gone."

A year and a half since the earthquake, some of the residential buildings in Dolakha are being reconstructed, but there is a danger that the original look of the old town will change with the use of concrete. Rebuilding Dabal Bahadur and Dhan Bahadur's homes will require the expertise of conservation architects.

"It is not just about rebuilding the private and public houses," explains Surya Bhakta Sangachhe of the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), "it is about reconstructing heritage sites and festival routes, reviving the economy and the



Series coordinated by  
Alok Siddhi Tuladhar

cultural heritage and developing skills and social infrastructure."

NSET is working with the community and the Municipality to plan the reconstruction of Dolakha's core areas. "The task here is to regenerate and redevelop a town that has seen a major decline in recent years," adds

Sangachhe, "and it is the locals that need to take the lead."

Dolakha's history goes back before the 16th century when it flourished as a kingdom on the ancient trade route between India and Tibet along the Tama Kosi Valley. Newar traders from Kathmandu Valley settled here, bringing with them the vibrant culture and festivities, adapting it to suit their new habitat. Dolakha even has its own version of the Kumari.

There was already outmigration, but with the earthquakes 70 per cent of Dolakha's original inhabitants have moved out. The town wears

## Speaking in tongues

There is an apocryphal tale of how the Newari dialect spoken in Dolakha came into being. When the five Pandavas were passing through the jungle during their exile, they developed a secret language so as not to be identified, and that is what the Newars of Dolakha speak today.

To anyone familiar with the Newari spoken in Kathmandu Valley, hearing it spoken in Dolakha is starkly different. There are even those who claim that the Newari language originated in Dolakha and came to Kathmandu, and not the other way around. This is a claim Kashi Nath Tamot refutes. He says: "The Newari language did not originate from Dolakha, but the Newari spoken in Dolakha is indeed how it was spoken in Kathmandu 500 years ago. The language evolved in Kathmandu, but because Dolakha is so isolated it remained intact there."

In Dolakhae Newari a cat is called bhati, in the Valley it is called bhau. It is from bhati that the word for cat eventually became bhau. Scholars also say that the Newari spoken in Dolakha is strongly influenced by the indigenous Thami and Tamang languages.

a deserted look and locals admit that keeping the history and traditions alive is an uphill task.

"The town used to be vibrant and people from as far away as Patan came to see our Machindranath Jatra. But the festivals are not the same anymore, and now even the house of the gods are gone," says Shyam Krishna Shrestha, 76, leaning on the building in Pingal that houses the chariot.

While the earthquake brought down many temples including the famous Tripura Sundari, Pashupati, and Narayan Temple, some of the heritage sites including the Harisiddhi temple, Rajkulo and Raniko Darbar had lost their original form even before the earthquake.

"There was a house here, and the idol of Harisiddhi was on the first floor," recalls Som Prasad Shrestha. "After the property was nationalised, the house came down and the municipality built a smaller structure but even that was damaged by the earthquake." Because the building is gone, so have the dance festivals performed in the dabali in front of the Harisiddhi Temple. Som Prasad says: "There is no one to carry on the traditions."

The old Kumari *Chhen*, from where the Bhairav Kumari jatra begins, lies dilapidated. Every year, Renuka Shrestha, 65, donates money to the trust to celebrate the Kumari jatra. "But finding people willing to participate in the festivals is becoming more difficult," she says, "I am not sure how much longer the festivals can go on."

On the last day of Khadga Jatra, men from the Thami community used to suck the blood of buffalos during ritual sacrifices, but that no longer happens. The three toles of the town each had their *lakhey* dance during the Hiley Jatra but not all three are performed each year anymore.

Bhagwan Das Shrestha has watched the festivals vanish one by one. He says: "Most people don't live here anymore, so the guthis don't have anyone to perform the festivals. We need to figure out how we can move ahead without looking back. We need to revive our cultural heritage by rebuilding a stronger community." 🇳🇵

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# UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS

The fifth installment in a largely slammed series, *Underworld: Blood Wars* is a film for all the fans of Selene (played by the very game Kate Beckinsale) who is a long persecuted elite vampire death dealer, with aristocratic blood running through her blood, but hunted by her own kind and an



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

adept in battle. She is the ultimate anti-heroine, a similarly brooding analogue to Milla Jovovich's Alice in the *Resident Evil* films that are equally disparaged but continue to provide endless entertainment for the people who are mesmerised by these kick-ass protagonists who, despite what anybody may say, are

better than the usual cardboard cutout action hero tropes that continue to proliferate.

The *Underworld* films represent a franchise that draws on the lure or endless fascination that people have about vampires before the *Twilight* books and films had even become a part of public consciousness. Included in the film lore is the now well-known animosity between the vampires and the lycans, or werewolves, factions who have engaged in an age old war for dominion over mere humans, upon whom they feed and sneer.

Despite the breakneck action that marks the films and an unfortunate proclivity for gore, this one being no different, the makers of the films understand that there is a great power in creating sleek, dark, albeit fairly superficial, action movie universes

where everyone is dressed in black, the settings are straight out of gothic romances, and even the bad guys are gorgeous.

*Underworld: Blood Wars* is dazzling to look at, the 3D enhances the beauty of the action sequences, and Beckinsale does not disappoint, her ferociousness and her exquisite features tempered over the years by the loss of her love (he was a lycan), her hybrid daughter Eve (the product of that strange union), and her now itinerant lifestyle as she strives to live the millennia that the vampire is blessed or cursed with.

This is not a film for those who have not seen the previous installments and have no stake in the future of Selene, Eve, or the incredibly handsome David (Theo James from the *Divergent* films), a vampire who has a surprising ancestral history that manifests as a major plot point. For those who do care though, and have stuck through the past four films, there is much here to look forward to, particularly the settings, a rather fun villainess, and several surprises, small and large, that add a bit to a film that makes quite a bit of something out of nothing. This is Beckinsale's show, she knows it, she does her role and her fan base justice, and the director, Anna Foerster, wisely allows for Selene's character to show some nuance, however slight, bringing some levity to what might otherwise have been the equivalent of a bloody video game. 🇳🇵

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

■ View trailer

## HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

**HOME COMING :** Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal returns to Nepal after participating in the World Future Energy Summit in United Arab Emirates on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

**I SWEAR:** Newly-appointed judges of the High Courts take their oaths at Supreme Court on Wednesday.



GOPEN RAI

**LIKE A YAM:** Former Prime Minister KP Oli at the two-day long 'China Nepal Think Tank Conference 2017' at Hotel de l'Annapurna on Tuesday.



RSS

**MADE FOR EACH OTHER:** President Bidya Devi Bhandari's daughter Nisha Kusum Bhandari weds former president Ram Baran Yadav's grandson Abhishek Yadav at Shital Niwas on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

**LORDS OF LAUGHTER:** Comedians Madan Krishna Shrestha and Kiran KC attend a program to honour senior citizens in Khokana on Sunday.

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# “This much.”

Rupa Joshi in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15 – 21 January 2017

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

All through the night Dada (our father) lay on the hospital bed, as his life was sapped out of his body. My brothers, sisters-in-law and myself lay vigil at his bedside.

As I watched Dada wilting away, I nurtured a wish but was not able to say it out loud. Just before dawn, Dada left us, leaving a huge void in our lives. He joined our mother who had passed away just a year earlier.

Dada was a reformist, broad-minded and always open to new ideas and innovation. Despite that, it was hard for him to entirely shrug off the notion of letting a daughter spending money on him. “Don’t burden me this way,” he would say. “How much will you keep on doing?”

I used to shrug at his not too enthusiastic complaint, saying: “Sons and daughters are equal these days, Dada. And I do it also because I can afford to do this much.” Dada would shake his head in complacent disbelief.

I did not get to spend much time with my family after being married off right after

wash Dada’s face and apply the sandalwood paste on his forehead.

When they were going around Dada, Kanak called out to me and asked me to join them. The priest did not object, and I soon was part of the rituals along with my brothers. A sense of fulfilment welled up deep inside me.

When it was time for the final rites in front of the crematorium kiln, the priest once again called my brothers to light the funeral pyre. Emboldened by being included in the rituals earlier, I mustered a weak, “What about me? Can’t I join too?” The priest shook his head. Another priest nearby said, “No you can’t.” A third voice nearby said sternly: “Of course you can’t”.

My heart sagged. My brothers had already started to encircle Dada with the flame. It was then that my maternal uncle urged me to join them. My sister in law said: “If you want to, then go.” Then Kanak pulled me up behind him. The priest did not complain.

We three siblings then encircled Dada two more times, before laying the flaming piece of wood on his chest. Bowing at his feet we bid a final goodbye to our father before he was interred into the kiln.



DEVENDRA BHATTARAI

school more than four decades ago. When we began losing Deviji (our mother) to Alzheimers I started spending more time with Dada. I began spending even more time with him in the past four months when he became ill and was in and out of hospitals. I got more time to care for him, which gave him more opportunities to tell me: “How much will you keep on doing?”

As Dada’s hold on life began to wane, the memory of my mother’s cremation flashed before my eyes: how a year ago my brothers had performed Deviji’s last rites, paying the ultimate tribute a child can for a parent by lighting the funeral pyre.

It would be Dada’s turn soon. If only I could join my brothers for the final cremation rites, I thought, it would be the most definitive way of expressing my love and respect for our father. But I was not able to voice the wish despite my seemingly educated broadmindedness. It must have been the unspoken social norms and the boundaries drawn around what a girl can and can’t do that held me back.

Hours later at the electric crematorium, as the priest was instructing my brothers about various rituals, I was just a sad bystander. Once everyone present had paid their last respects, the priest called on my brothers to



*Rupa Joshi’s father, noted Nepali literary figure Kamal Dixit, passed away on 29 December. See himalkhabar.com for Nepali original of this tribute.*



**Newspaper:**  
*Pokharel In Gyewali Out*  
- Sir please sit! Cleaning is over.  
- I'll work while standing. If you get too cosy they'll remove you.

कान्तिपुर

Batsyayan in *Kantipur Koseli*,  
13 January

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Take it as the greatness of the Prime Minister. ”

Government Spokesperson Surendra Karki on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's decision to appoint two new ministers from fringe parties, *onlinekhabar.com*, 19 January

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# Failing to make the list

Many genuine earthquake survivors are missing from the list for housing grants due to frequent changes in government



**SHREEJANA SHRESTHA**  
in NUWAKOT

The flimsy tent doesn't protect Rameswor Pudasaini and his family from the biting cold and wind, but nearly two years after the 2015 earthquake he has resigned himself to treating this as his home.

There are dozens of families here in Jiling of Nuwakot district who have found out that their names are not on the list of survivors entitled to receive even the first installment of the Rs 200,000 government reconstruction grant.

There is renewed hope in many of the 14 worst-affected districts that with the changing

of the guard at the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) and the reassignment of Govinda Raj Pokharel as CEO, the remaining money will materialise. But not here.

"My house was certified unsafe by engineers, but my name is not included in the government's list," says Pudasaini, "I don't understand why, when even people without land ownership certificates have got their Rs 50,000 first installment."

For now, all he can do is file an appeal at the NRA, but seeing the slow pace of relief, he is not very hopeful. For now, he has taken loans to rebuild a small house from salvaged material, but says: "I cannot keep my 80-year old mother and small children in a tent for another winter."

The plight of the Pudasaini



family is in stark contrast with Prakash Dhungana in Ward 4 of Jiling. Although the government has a policy to provide housing grants only to those who have only one house that was destroyed in the earthquake, Dhungana's name is on the grant list even though only one of his two houses was damaged in the quake.

His neighbor, Bishnu Dhungana, whose only house is

inhabitable because of serious damage, also found out his name not on the list. Like many other earthquake families in Nuwakot, he doesn't know why. Although most of the 600,000 families who have registered have got the first tranche, there are many like Pudasaini and Dhungana who have somehow fallen between the cracks because they cannot work the system.

Prakash Dhungana is a teacher and says: "I don't understand how they decide. Some people have received grants while others haven't even though the damage

**LOST HOPE:** Subba Tamang and his family (upper, left) feel they need to have political connection to get the housing grant.

Rameswor Pudasaini (*above*) has taken loans to rebuild a small house as he has missed out on the grant list.

to our homes are the same." He blames engineers deployed to inspect the houses, saying they lacked experience.

Subba Tamang, 31, of Jiling has no idea how to get on the list and be eligible for a grant. Engineers told him his house was

## "We also need socio-economic reconstruction"



The newly re-appointed CEO of the National Reconstruction Authority Govinda Raj Pokharel is a busy man because he has to make up for lost time on post-earthquake rehabilitaion. He spoke to *Nepali Times* on Monday at his office.

*Nepali Times:* What did we lose in one year?

Govinda Raj Pokharel: We failed to utilise the immense opportunities that we had amidst the crisis. We couldn't adopt an integrated model settlement which could

have saved our infrastructure cost per houses. The NRA has already distributed the first tranche of the housing grant and we can't undo this now. Since we couldn't implement the integrated model settlement, people have lost livelihood opportunities. Likewise, massive training should have started as soon as the NRA was formed last year and at least 25 masons should have been ready in each ward by now.

**People are skeptical about how much you can achieve because you inherit the same system from your predecessor.**

I have just started free health checkups in the earthquake affected districts. The mason training will start to train as many masons as possible. The second tranche of the housing grant will be parked in the district office so that they receive it directly. The current process is too lengthy. At least 7,000 fresh graduates from CTEVT (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training) will be sent to the earthquake affected districts as volunteers to help people rebuild.

**How are you going to pick up where you left off last year?**

We have been very successful in terms of rescue and relief. However, there are certain lapses in reconstruction. I am planning to clear the complaints within a month. The main challenge is to settle the cases related to rented and Trust land, and people who don't have land ownership certificates. I will form a special committee to address those issues and come up with concrete solutions.

**Where would you like to see reconstruction in the next six months?**

Our immediate target is to provide as many houses as possible to earthquake victims by the next monsoon by fast tracking reconstruction. The security forces are committed to help us train masons. We must improve the supply chain to ensure smooth supply of reconstruction materials. Private housing is only 2.5 per cent of reconstruction, we also need socio-economic reconstruction. Our long term plan is to ensure that people have sources of income wherever they are resettled. We need to look at restoring livelihoods.





PICS: SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

unsafe, and he spent Rs 70,000 building a temporary structure for shelter from the rain and cold. But he never got the Rs 50,000 his neighbours have.

“We waited a long time, but it seems we need political connection to get the reconstruction grant,” Tamang said.

Nearly 500 households in Jiling and surrounding villages have appealed, and many of them were omitted because the inspectors failed to certify them. The NRA has identified 626,036 households in 14 earthquake-affected districts as being eligible for reconstruction grants. Of them, 452,887 have received the first tranche of Rs 50,000.

On Tuesday, the NRA announced it would start distributing the second tranche in Gorkha, Sinduli and Makwanpur. In Nuwakot, 50,972 of the 65,759 families identified as beneficiaries have got the grants. The Pudasainis, Dhunganas and others fall outside this list.

The NRA sent 2,000 engineers to the 14 districts and each surveyed 10 to 12 houses a day. Around 200 engineers were deployed in Nuwakot alone for two months of fieldwork, but they seem to have missed out on 32 households in Jiling. Ram Chandra Dhungana heads a struggle committee of victims who have not got compensation, and blames the incompetence of engineers.

The delays in distributing the rest of the Rs 200,000 grant and including eligible families who are not on the list points

to government negligence and mismanagement. The buck stops in Kathmandu, and the NRA is getting a new chief every time the government changes.

Pokharel was appointed by the Nepali Congress government in 2015 and was sacked when KP Oil became prime minister, and was replaced by party aparatchik Sushil Gyewali. When the NC switched sides and joined the Maoist-Centre in the coalition, Gyewali faced obstacles in relief delivery. He was finally sacked last week, and Pokharel re-appointed.

Post-earthquake rehabilitation is suffering due to conflict between the parties in Kathmandu that trickles down to the districts. In addition, the sluggish bureaucracy and lack of coordination between line ministries have also left survivors in the lurch.

When asked about what will happen to the victims interviewed by *Nepali Times*, Pokharel told us in an interview (*see box*) no genuine earthquake victim would be left out in his watch. He said he would re-do the inspections in Nuwakot if necessary.

“The survey was a waste of time and money because a lot of real victims seem to have been missing in the grant list due to technical errors,” he admitted. “real victims should not be missed out, and I will address this issue within one month.”



**WAITING FOR HOUSING GRANT**

Watch the re-appointed CEO of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) Govinda Raj Pokharel responding to the woes of earthquake victims who haven't received the government's housing grant.

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

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Without any eating around the bush or hemming and hawing, the Donkey is leaking for your eyes only, this week's test. Good luck.

1. All motorcycle riders are required to wear helmets at all times:

a. Unless you can present written proof you are a conscientious objector

b. Except your three children aged 2, 4, and 5 sitting on the fuel tank who are required by law to only wear fancy shades and frilly hats

c. At all times

d. Including when you are asleep, or in the bathroom.
2. The best procedure for taking a vehicle from a parked stationary position into the traffic flow is to:

a. Swing out into the lane without looking behind for approaching vehicle, especially if you are a mad micro driver whose days are numbered on Kathmandu's streets.

b. If there are school kids waiting to cross the zebra, accelerate so you can beat them to it.

c. Look into the rearview mirror and wait for a safe gap in traffic to move into lane, even if it means waiting till the next bandh by the Big Plop Faction

d. "Don't stop. Don't look. And go!"
3. A blinking right signal light usually means:

a. Turning right, but not sure yet

b. You can overtake me now if you dare

c. My left signal is broken

d. All of the above
4. You honk on the highway to:

a. Greet fellow travellers

b. Curse fellow travellers

c. Because the back of the truck says "Horn Please"

d. To keep yourself from falling asleep at the wheel

5. When a high velocity VIP convoy approaches on Putali Sadak, you:

a. Speed up and race The Honourable Prime Minister to Balu Water

b. Pull over and give Comrade Prime Minister the middle finger

c. Pull over and salute the national flag

d. Pull over, wait for convoy to pass, and chase it to get to your destination faster
6. A motorcyclist caught in a traffic jam should:

a. Squeeze into every available space, knocking out the rearview mirrors of cars

b. Ignite afterburners, climb up the ramp to overhead bridge, ride down onto the roofs of buses to get to destination

c. Follow traffic rules patiently to reach office after you have crossed retirement age

d. Ride on the sidewalk and don't let sleeping dogs lie
7. If a Red Bull is sitting on the road, you:

a. Treat street fauna as traffic islands and pass them dutifully on the left

b. Wait for animal to get up, which could be until the cows come home

c. Alight from car, lift beverage can, pull tab and drink

d. Alight from car and worship holy cow
8. You are driving down Naxal your mobile vibrates. Do you:

a. Let it vibrate and enjoy the massage.

b. Put it on speaker phone, shout obscenities and gesticulate wildly so cop thinks you have Road Rage

c. Pick up the phone, chat with the caller and when cop pulls you over slip phone down your shirt and pretend to be excavating ear wax.

d. Pick up the phone, chat with the caller and have a Rs 1000 note ready on the dash board.



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