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#NepalQuake
25 April 2015
2 years after

BIKRAM RAI

CONCRETE FUTURE

Highrises like this one in Kathmandu (above) and ferrocement buildings that replaced mud mortar ones damaged in the 2015 earthquake, may not survive the next Big One.

On the second anniversary of the disaster, a reminder that Nepal needs to upgrade search and rescue capacity for the mass collapse of concrete structures.

BY OM ASTHA RAI AND SONIA AWALE

PAGE 14-15

GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY EDITORIAL

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

GUEST EDITORIAL
BY SURYA NARAYAN SHRESTHA

PAGE 2

Coming together

A day after five major parties agreed to go for local elections on 14 May with or without Madhes-based parties, five fringe parties from the Tarai announced unification on Thursday. Called the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the new party has avoided using words like 'Madhes' or 'Tarai' in its name – indicating that it wants a national rather than regional identity.

On Wednesday, while Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was asking five major parties if local elections could be held in two rounds to try to persuade Madhesi parties to participate, across town five Tarai-centric parties were discussing who would lead their unified party.

Dahal backed off after NC and UML leaders argued that there was no guarantee that Madhesi parties would participate in polls even in the second round. Madhesi parties, for their part, could not agree on a leader.

With 23 seats in Parliament, the RJD is now the fifth largest party – a position previously enjoyed by Bijaya Gachhadar's party that recently dropped the word 'Madhes' from its new name. Upendra Yadav is not part of this party, but has also cut 'Madhes' from its name, and is likely to merge with Baburam Bhattarai's New Force.

Manish Suman of the RJD maintained the merger was not for polls, but to intensify protests against elections: "We can now push our agenda more strongly. The election is the least of our priorities at the moment."

However, Janakpur-based analyst Surendra Labh told us the unification was good poll strategy: "They were previously divided, and Kathmandu did not treat them as a force to be reckoned with; now their bargaining power has increased."

Tarai-based parties are busy poaching cadre from other parties and discussing possible mayoral candidates. Santosh Mehata of Sunsari, whose Sadbhavana is part of the RJD, says he wants elections, but needs to show voters some concessions after the prolonged agitation.

He said: "If we fight until the last day of nomination, the government will sign a deal on our terms. If we take part in elections after that, we will emerge as strong as we did in 2008."

Om Astha Rai

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GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY

This month, as Nepal marks the second anniversary of the 25 April 2015 earthquake, we are reminded once again of that curious link between geology and geography. The earthquake was a result of the Indian subcontinent ploughing into and under the Eurasian landmass. Nepal is located along the rocky wreckage thrown up by this cataclysmic collision that started 70 million years ago and continues to this day.

The earthquake anniversary coincides with the visit to India by President Bidya Devi Bhandari, the continuing ambiguity surrounding preparations for the 14 May local elections, announcement by Tarai-based parties of a campaign to disrupt those polls, and contradictory signals from New Delhi about the Constitution. This is also the week that a contingent



of the Chinese New Peoples' Army is in Kathmandu for joint training with the Nepal Army. Although the two militaries have said officially that it is about counter-terrorism and disaster preparedness, there is some nervousness in Delhi about Chinese 'inroads' into Nepal.

Not to take the geological analogy too far, but the release of geo-tectonic tension along the Main Himalayan Thrust was mimicked by the pressure applied on Nepal by the Indian state in support of the Tarai movement against the Constitution promulgated in September 2015. The Indian Blockade came five months after the earthquake and lasted as long. It disrupted already delayed relief and reconstruction, ruined what was left of Nepal's national economy, and set back development by a decade or more. Geo-political aftershocks

of the Blockade were more devastating than geo-tectonic ones of the quake.

This 25 April, we must also introspect on the domestic politics that left Nepal vulnerable and unprepared for geopolitical and geological upheavals. Rulers wasted the peace dividend with never-ending squabbles, arguing about who got to form governments, how to conduct elections, about federalism and the Constitution. For the decade since the end of the war in 2006, Nepal has been governed by a political cartel that has demonstrated little accountability or concern for the welfare of people brutalised by war, natural disasters and political turmoil.

One of the primary factors in delayed relief and rehabilitation in the aftermath of the earthquake was the fact that local government units in the villages, districts

and municipalities were staffed by bureaucrats instead of elected representatives of the people. This lack of local accountability had harmed overall development for the past two decades, but it became particularly acute after the earthquake – forcing more than a million survivors to still remain homeless. Which is why it is deeply puzzling to see the silence of the international community (which has usually been quite vocal in these matters) about the need for local accountability through elections.

Much more painful, however, is the fact that Nepal's ruling class does not seem to have learnt any lessons either from the earthquake, or from the Blockade. There has been no progress in the bill to upscale the National Reconstruction Authority into a broader Disaster Management Agency. If reconstruction in the 14 districts affected by the earthquake has been slow, programs to prepare western Nepal for the Next Big One are virtually non-existent. The strategy of creating construction jobs at home to slow outmigration has remained just a dream. The grand goal to diversify Nepal's import of petroleum and open alternative trade routes fizzled out.

Moral of the story: Stay calm, prepare for disasters and pay attention to (geo)politics.

GUEST EDITORIAL

SURYA NARAYAN SHRESTHA

Better late than never

Two years after the earthquake, there is some justified worry about slow reconstruction. However, we are not much slower than the rebuilding that followed other disasters like in Gujarat or Pakistan.

In Nepal, official reconstruction only really started after December of 2015. Also, how can we expect reconstruction to be 100 per cent on target when the government only spends 40 per cent of the development budget even at the best of times?

If people were free to rebuild however they wished, it would of course be faster. But we are trying to build back better with financial and technical assistance and ensure compliance. Reconstruction will pick up momentum as we go along.

Politicians and the mass media may also have raised public expectations too high after the pledging conference in July 2015 when billions were pledged by donors. The public perception was that there was all this money and that reconstruction would take place immediately.

One area in which we failed was to respond to the need for transitional shelters until permanent structures were built. On average, 50,000 houses are constructed in Nepal every year, but we need to build more than 700,000 homes in the next five years. This is an enormous task and demands much more human resource, material supply and other support.

Local response was slowed by the absence of elected councils and the lack of coordination between various agencies. However, we are on the right track and just need to remove the impediments to speedy rehabilitation. We may also need to be

more flexible in allowing various types of approved building technologies, while maintaining strict safety standards.

The 2015 earthquake did not release all energy accumulated in the fault, still there is a false sense of safety that the big one has passed. We need to prepare for the next major quake, but after the last one there is a public perception that concrete structures are safer. The proliferation of unsafe concrete buildings will mean destruction on a much bigger scale in the next disaster. Concrete in itself isn't bad but reinforced concrete pillars and beams need stringent quality control. If not, they will become death traps (*see page 14-15*).

Heavy reinforced concrete structures need specialised search, location and rescue skills among community-first responders, and security personnel need proper tools and training. We need to scale up preparedness activities.

There are some bright spots. Dharan Municipality is effectively enforcing the building code, and others are following suit. Communities are being trained in search and rescue. We need to work on preparedness not just in the 14 districts but in the rest of Nepal as well.



Surya Narayan Shrestha is a Structural Engineer and Deputy Executive Director of National Society for Earthquake Technology- Nepal (NSET).

Nepal

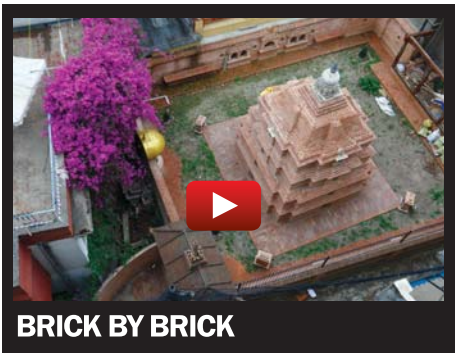
Times.com

ONLINE VIDEOS



NT STUDIO

This week's *Nepali Times* Studio features Asia Foundation Nepal Representative **George Varughese** telling our Editor **Kunda Dixit** that local elections on 14 May are more important than ever. These polls for village, district and municipal councils are being held after 19 years, and will fill a longstanding political void at the grassroots.



BRICK BY BRICK

Two years after the earthquake, reconstruction of heritage sites is still slow. The government's lowest-bid contract system led to insensitive repairs, and communities are now directing restoration that respects heritage. Watch video of Rani Pokhari, Kasthamandap and Ashoka Chaitya in Thamel to see how restoration is progressing.

MOST VIEWED



GAGAN STYLE

An interview with Gagan Thapa about his first seven months as health minister has generated massive engagement on social media. You can watch Minister Thapa online as he shares his future plans to improve the health of Nepalis.

NO BODY SHAMING

Thank you for laying out the repercussions of body shaming ('Slim dreams' by Shreejana Shrestha, #854). Nepalis don't realise that their '*kasto motako*' or '*chya ghatnu parchha timi*' is harmful. It all comes down to how we have glorified size zero and what society considers to be the 'right' body image. We should stop focusing on the figure and actually try and be healthy for once. Diets are in no way the solution. Introduce a healthy lifestyle, and stop body shaming.

Maya Lama

TONI HAGEN

Agreed, Toni Hagen was and is still a figure we ought to look up to ('A serious Swiss' by Lisa Choegyal, #854). His books and teachings should somehow find their way into our school syllabus to make our youth understand the importance of having a vision.

Ashriya Thapa

MUST READ

Cannot stress the value of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, especially now ('Ministry of Alternative facts', Sonia Awale, #854). It's a must read for today's youth as much as it is important for the generations to come.

Prateek Lamichhane

WHAT'S TRENDING



Basking in Bisket

The annual week-long Bisket Jatra of Bhaktapur, famous for its tongue-piercing and dramatic chariot pulling, concluded this week. If you missed it, go online to catch glimpses of the festival in an exciting video.

Most reached and shared on Facebook
(34,221 people reached, 165 shares)

Mountainous change

Guest Editorial by David Molden

Mountain countries, like island states, can create a shared voice in climate negotiations to influence others to work together to reduce emissions.

Most popular on Twitter
(27 retweets, 32 likes)

New Year Readings for 2074

From *The Great Derangement* by Amitav Ghosh to *Nineteen Eighty-four* by George Orwell, *Thamel* by Rabi Thapa and *Nepali Painting Through the Ages* by Madan Chitrakar, check out our book recommendations for the New Year.

Most visited online page

Push to undo hash ban in Nepal

by Sahina Shrestha

Is it high time Nepal legalised medical marijuana?

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

- Nepali Times@nepalitimes

Is it high time for #Nepal to legalise medical marijuana? http://bit.ly/2ob6oFC @sahinashrestha
- Nissim Raj Angdebmay@nissimangdebmay

Marijuana could be legalised so that ordinary marijuana smokers are not labelled as dangerous criminals.
- #LegalizeNepal@RajivKafay

Good one @sahinashrestha congrats - explains science in detail from patients' perspective where as doctors seem to have no idea whatsoever

- Nepali Times@nepalitimes

Meet Ratna Sundar Silpakar who made the brave decision to emulate his famous dad, Mangal Bahadur Silpakar Read more: http://bit.ly/2oHG9uh
- sagar pandey@sagarhetramp

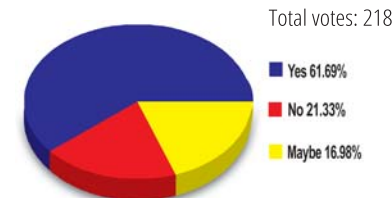
very glad to see.. in such times it's necessary to preserve our gift from such great and historic culture .. Jai Nepal

Nepal

Times

Weekly Internet Poll #855

Q. Do you expect 2074 to be a better year for Nepal than 2073?



Weekly Internet Poll #856
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Are you in favour of Kathmandu's new No Horn policy?


Nepal


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Publisher and Chief Editor: **Kunda Dixit**
Associate Editor: **Om Astha Rai** | Design: **Kiran Maharjan**
Published by **Himalmedia Pvt Ltd** | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518
Marketing: **Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma** rachanas@himalmedia.com | Advertisers: **Ram Krishna Banjara** | Subscriptions: **Santosh Aryal** santosha@himalmedia.com
Printed at Jagadamba Press | 01-5250017-19 | www.jagadambapr.com



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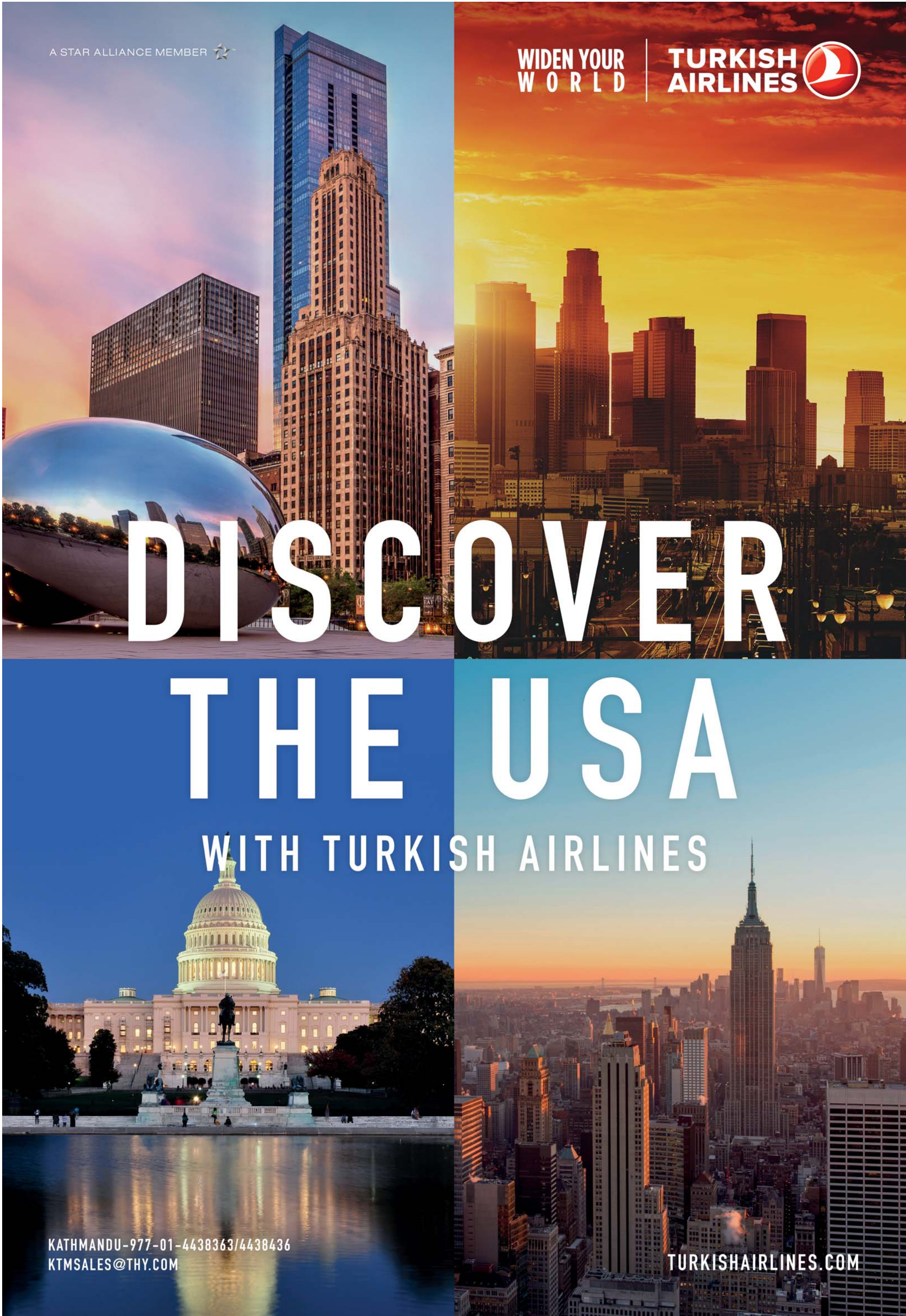
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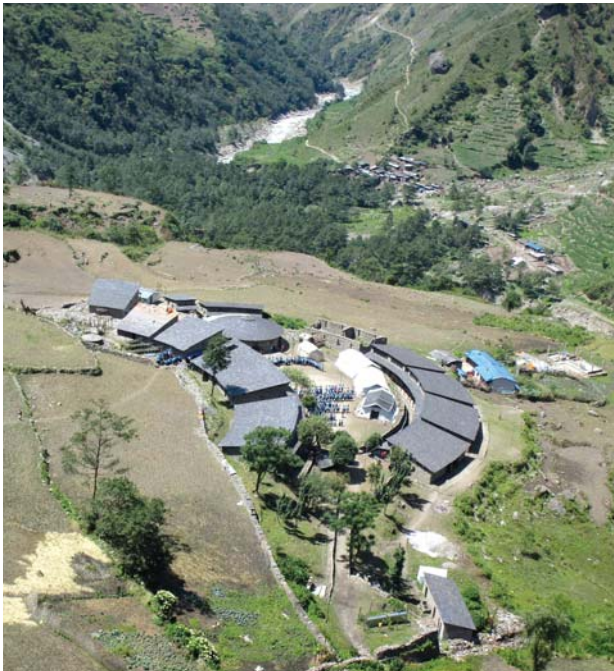
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Philim 2 years later



PICS: PETER REID

CLASS STRUGGLE: Dara Punjal Lama (*second from right, above*) with his family in Tsum Valley. Several times a year he has to walk two days to Buddha Middle School in Philim (*left*) across dangerous trails damaged by landslides. The school won an international award for architecture in 2009, and was partially damaged in the earthquake. More pictures: www.nepalitimes.com

Dara Punjal Lama is 14, and lives in the remote northern end of Tsum Valley behind Ganesh Himal. Since there are no schools in this spectacularly scenic and sacred valley, he has to walk to Philim two days away.

The trek used to be treacherous even at the best of times, but after the April 2015 earthquake Dara risks his life several times a year walking along steep paths etched out of mountains mauled by landslides.

Now in Grade 6, Dara’s family cannot afford a private school so he goes to the Buddha Middle School in Philim. Luckily, unlike other government schools in the region, the school has good infrastructure and teachers.

It was designed by the Japanese group Asian Architecture Friendship (AAF) and won first prize in 2009 in the Marmomacc International Stone Architecture Award.

The uniquely designed school, with its circular stone dining-hall and classrooms, survived the 2015 earthquake and was back in use soon after. But three of the five dorms were damaged, forcing students to live in tents for the past two years.

A fortuitous meeting in 2015 between Marian Hodgkin of UNICEF, Lava Deo Awasti, then at the Ministry of Education, and VSO volunteer Peter Reid led to support from Rotary to upgrade the school.

Every month a Nepali restaurant in Plymouth, England, puts on a fund-raising meal for friends of Nepal and donates half the money raised to help the Philim school. Rotary International chips in with matching funds.

Back in 2015, the trails to northern Gorkha were still blocked by landslides and the school was being supplied by UN helicopters. The money donated so far has been used for furniture, equipment, fixtures and plumbing, and Japan’s AAF will rebuild the damaged hostel.

Philim’s townspeople are helping in reconstruction of the school, which has 15 teachers and 400 students, 140 of them staying in five dorms since they live too far to come and go daily. A British primary school teacher trainer will visit for three months a year to work alongside teachers in seven feeder primary schools.

Medical doctor Iman Singh Gurung, who grew up in Philim and completed his PhD as a

Gates Scholar at Cambridge University, has been advising on rehabilitation of the school.

“The AAF is already involved in hardware, we should use the Rotary money for software,” he said.

Since the school is adjacent

to the main Manaslu Trek trail, and tourist traffic is picking up after the landslide damage was repaired, the school is encouraging trekkers who stop in Philim for the night to visit the classes, interact with students and fund future expansion. 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Look new

The Beauty Bar in Naxal has introduced offers on the occasion of Nepali New Year 2074. Customers can now get a facial, hair colouring, hair cut, full arms waxing, full legs waxing and threading for Rs 6000.

Qatar awarded

Qatar Airways has become the first airline to achieve compliance with International Air Transport Association



(IATA) Resolution 753 at Hamad International Airport in Doha. The carrier

was recognised after it fulfilled provisions for tracking every piece of baggage from the start till the end of a journey.

New Samsung

Samsung Electronics launched the Galaxy S8 and Galaxy S8+ in Nepal this



week. Both phones feature an 8MP front camera, 12MP rear camera, a 10nm processor and an expandable 64GB internal memory. The S8 is priced at Rs 88,900 while the S8+ will cost Rs 98,900. Both will be available from 5 May. Pre-booking is available till 2 May. www.s8prebooking.com

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Disastrous discrimination

Dalits left behind as Nepal slowly recovers from the 2015 earthquake

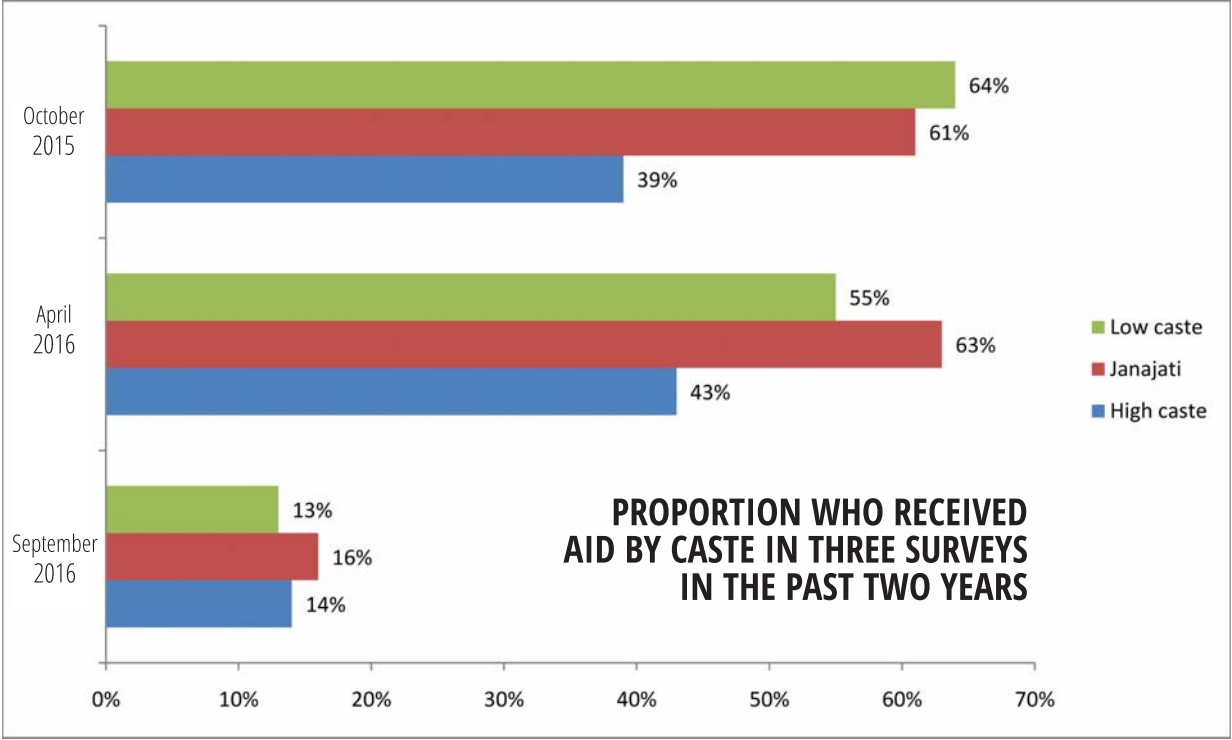
PATRICK BARRON

Natural disasters do not discriminate in who they impact. Yet an individual’s ability to recover is strongly shaped by systems of social and economic stratification. Dalits and other lower caste groups face particular barriers, which are making recovery more challenging.

Even though caste discrimination is illegal, most lower caste groups in Nepal continue to lag behind others, with 90 per cent of Dalits living below the poverty line. But after the quakes, common problems led to collective responses. Frequent examples were found of people of different castes, including Dalits, helping each other and sharing shelters. Some high caste people allowed landless Dalits to build shelters on their land.

The earthquakes did not affect those of low caste more than others – the houses of 44 per cent of low castes were destroyed compared to 50 per cent for high castes. In the early post-earthquake period, low caste people were much more likely to have received aid than others (64% versus 39% of high caste people).

Concerted efforts by aid



providers to ensure that Dalits and other low castes received support, strong community norms around distributing aid equally, and a sense of solidarity amongst the earthquake-affected that crossed identity lines combined to help low caste people cope in the immediate aftermath of the disasters.

The Asia Foundation’s Independent Impacts and Recovery Monitoring (IRM) surveyed almost 5,000 people with in-depth, qualitative

fieldwork at six month intervals, allowing for an evaluation of which groups are recovering, which are not and why. The surveys found that the potential for pre-existing forms of exclusion and discrimination re-emerged with the shift from relief to reconstruction. Subsequent surveys have shown that low caste groups are now lagging in their recovery.

The third round of research (IRM-3) in September 2016 found that 82 per cent of low

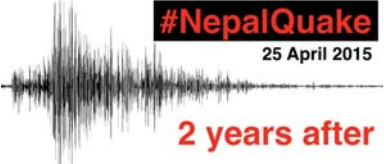
caste people whose houses were impacted said they had yet to start rebuilding, compared to 71 per cent of high castes. Almost one-quarter of those of low caste said they had made no repairs to their temporary shelters, compared to 11 per cent of high caste people.

Low caste people were twice as likely as high castes to report decreases in food consumption over the past year. And they were almost 50 per cent more likely to say a family member continued to suffer from trauma than other groups.

Over time, low caste groups have become increasingly less likely to receive aid compared to others (*see figure*). Whereas a larger share of low caste people in the first round received aid than did others, this pattern has shifted over time.

With relatively little aid available – and recovery slow – low caste groups turned to borrowing, which is not helping them recover, they are still facing credit constraints and there is a real risk for many of getting stuck in debt traps. Low caste people are more likely to have taken loans than others: 46 per cent compared to 33 per cent of high caste and 30 per cent of Janajatis.

Across all people interviewed, those who borrowed three times are the least likely to report that their livelihoods are recovering and most likely to have seen decreases in



food consumption. Repeated borrowing is also linked to people remaining in shelters. Low caste people are also almost twice as likely as others to take loans from moneylenders (22% versus 12%) and relatives (33% versus 19% for high castes), both of whom charge far higher interest rates than other lenders.

Discrimination, often engrained in communities despite legal provisions, has had an impact in earthquake recovery. Tensions between displaced Dalits and upper castes in one village focused on access to drinking water from the public water tap. To avoid conflict, Dalits started collecting water in the early morning but others were not happy, Dalit children continued to face abuse, and there was pressure for them to return to their unsafe land.

The research found that Dalits were more likely than others to be living on the edge of settlements where land was unstable. Many Dalits often perceive that aid providers are also discriminating against them. In IRM-2, 21 per cent of Dalits did not agree that everyone could access aid equally compared to 8 per cent of hill caste people.

Material disadvantages that pre-date the earthquakes make recovery much more difficult. Low caste groups have a lower asset base and levels of education. The literacy rate for Dalits is just 18 per cent compared to the 48 per cent national average. Illiteracy, lack of collateral and an absence of social networks and information on how to approach financial institutions all made it harder for Dalits to access some aid programs. The next round of data collection is underway and provisional findings will be available in June.

Patrick Barron is regional director for Conflict and Development at The Asia Foundation. Excerpted from The Asia Foundation’s blog, In Asia. patrick.barron@asiafoundation.org



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Back at the epicentre



SHANKAR DAHAL
in GORKHA

Unlike most young men from Barpak, 31-year-old Koshi Ram Ghale neither opted for a military career, nor migrated to Malaysia. Instead, he opened a bakery three years ago. Business was just picking up when the earthquake struck 15 km below his hometown on 25 April 2015.

Nearly 120 people were killed in Barpak that day, the town closest to the epicentre of the 7.8 magnitude quake. Of the 1,200 houses, only a dozen remained intact. Koshi Ram's bakery was destroyed, although he managed to save his oven and other equipment.

He waited six months for help that did not come, salvaged timber and stones to build a temporary home and decided to borrow Rs 700,000 from a local cooperative to restart his bakery in the upper part of the town. Today, the smell of fresh bread greets visitors even before they arrive at the house.

"I am in debt, but at least I have a steady



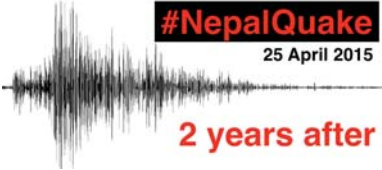
PICS: SHANKAR DAHAL

income and hope to pay back the loan in two years," Koshi Ram says. "The real problem here is that there is a shortage of masons and carpenters to rebuild."

Two years after the earthquake, Barpak hums with the sound of brick-laying, timber being sawed and hammers banging nails. But most of the construction workers are from the Tarai, or even India. Ironically, many young men from Barpak itself are working at construction sites in Qatar.

Most families here say they waited for

BY BREAD ALONE: Koshi Ram Ghale (*above*) has rebuilt his bakery that was destroyed in the earthquake, and Kumar Raj Ghale (*left*) got tired of waiting for help and started rebuilding on his own. Two years ago, the view of Barpak from this spot (*above, left*) was one of utter devastation. Today many new buildings have come up.



government housing grants, but when they found out it was too little too late, they decided to rebuild on their own. In the upper part of town, from where the view two years ago was of utter devastation, today the sunlight glints off the shining metal roofs of newly-built houses.

For two years Kumar Raj Ghale, 54, camped in a family member's tent, waiting for aid. Fed up, he spent Rs 500,000 laying the foundation and erecting concrete pillars for his new house. He needs three times

that amount to complete the structure, but the local office of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) says the design does not meet its seismic-resistant criteria, and he will not be eligible for the rest of the government grant. The NRA has so far approved only 32 building designs in Barpak.

Kumar Raj says he didn't bother to follow the approved design because the wait was too long. When the NRA finally announced the guidelines, he had already started construction. The NRA has advised people like Kumar Raj to strengthen their pillars and retrofit masonry walls to be eligible for the rest of the Rs 300,000 grants.

The dirt road linking Barpak to the highway in Gorkha is being upgraded, and economic activity is picking up. Direct bus service to Kathmandu means there is now potential for Barpak to be the gateway to a new trekking route to Mt Himalchuli Base Camp. At 1,900m, the town offers a stunning view of the Gorkha Himal range to the north.

Says hotelier Meen Gurung: "After two years, for the first time, there is hope for the future in Barpak." 🇳🇵

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Small is Sophisticated

SMRITI BASNET

Driving towards Nag Pokhari from Darbar Marg a stucco yellow former palace dominates the skyline, in stark contrast to the sea of surrounding

grey. With its distinctive neo-classical architecture, the Maya Manor Boutique Hotel not only adds colour to the cityscape but indicates a new trend in Nepal’s hospitality industry towards boutique hotels. As tourism bounces back from the earthquake and Blockade, and

with many international chains like Hilton, Marriott and Sheraton setting up shop, Nepali hoteliers have discovered that small is beautiful. Veteran hoteliers like Karna Shakya of Kathmandu Guest House fame have taken the leap toward small, sophisticated and luxurious accommodations

for tourists. “Tourism is never ending and ever changing. To survive in tourism you should know the trend. Tourists today look for a different product,” said Shakya, owner of the Maya, one of many properties following the new concept. Although grand in

design, the renovated 1935 Rana mansion markets personalised service in a heritage ambience. Lounging in the Victorian styled gazebo in a small garden, guest Keith Mainwaring sounds pleased: “It is less formal than other hotels, more relaxed, sort of like a home.” The Briton came for a business trip,



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HERITAGE HOSPITALITY: Guests lounge beside the roof-top swimming pool at the newly-opened boutique hotel, Baber Mahal Vilas. (*left*)

A waiter tends to a guest in the dining room of the Maya Manor Boutique Hotel in Naxal, which has portraits from the Rana era on the wall. (*below*)

case displays his clothing. Gym facilities, a rooftop swimming pool with a Tharu theme, and a spa are among the hotel's modern touches.

"I hope they come and see that it is not unreasonable to make beautiful buildings," said Rana, an architect himself and a descendant of Rana prime ministers. He feels there should be more tax benefits for hoteliers who use heritage architecture, as

the hospitality trade. For them, operating on a smaller scale is a way to carve a niche in the competitive industry.

Despite Kathmandu's shrinking space, boutique hotel owners have found ways to make small properties profitable. Swornim Boutique Hotel's Sandesh Shrestha cannot think of a better use for a small plot of land he acquired in Bhatbhateni a few years ago.

"Many Nepalis want a quick getaway that is not too far from the core city these days," said Shrestha, whose ratio of foreign to domestic tourists is 50-50.

While the pace is picking up, Dalai-La Boutique Hotel's Prem P Gurung feels the country now needs to be promoted as a high-end destination.

"Nepal is better known for budget travellers and hence for



PICS: GOPEN RAI

but has extended his stay by three days to enjoy Kathmandu.

Inside the dining hall hang sepia-toned photos of the Rana era, and the living room is furnished with chandeliers and portraits of uniformed generals. But Maya does not bank on heritage alone, combining it with

modern amenities.

"Tourists have always wanted to come to Nepal but we have failed as hosts," says Varun SJB Rana of Baber Mahal Vilas which has a carefully designed 13-room estate with each room having its own identity. Guests can enjoy architectural styles varying from

luxury suites modelled on the Rana era to wood-crafted rooms reflecting Newar culture. A separate building is dedicated to the people and region of Lo-Manthang in Mustang.

The library is adorned with life-size portraits of Chandra Shumshere Rana and a glass

in Rajasthan and Bhutan.

"Guests are bored with fancy hotels that all look the same. Why do they come to Nepal? To look at the heritage and culture," said Hotel Heritage's Prakash Dhaubadel.

He hadn't planned to build a boutique hotel in his hometown of Bhaktapur but got the idea after his family-run garment business shut down, and the building lay vacant. After three months of research and seven years of building, the hotel was launched five years ago.

Dhaubadel salvaged material from the Lichhavi, Malla and Rana eras, adding elements like a conference room adorned with Mithila art and wood-crafted windows.

"The response is positive," he said, adding that he plans to add 30 more rooms.

Many boutique hoteliers like Dhaubadel are newcomers to

us the market is very small and niche," he said.

Located in the bustle of Thamel, Dalai-La combines Malla-era architecture with Buddhist and Tibetan designs. The 32-room hotel showcases works of local artisans, including hand-carved pillars, lattice windows and hand-printed linen and upholstery.

"To survive here you need to be courageous and willing to take risks," said Dhaubadel, recounting how the Indian Blockade last year caused his hotel's occupancy rate to plummet to near zero.

Despite the uncertainties, Kathmandu's new boutique hoteliers remain positive, and the trend is spreading to Pokhara and Bandipur. With the government planning to bring in 2 million tourists by 2020, a new door appears to be opening in Nepal's tourism industry. 🇳🇵

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EVENTS



Fashion fair,
Raise awareness on ethical fashion. Stay for the display by various fair trade and innovative Nepali brands.
29 April, 12 to 6 pm, EVOKE Café & Bistro, 9851111051

Art25,
A live painting competition where artists will be challenged to complete their finest work within 25 minutes.
29 April, 3 to 7 pm, Nagbahal, Patan, Deadline: 24 April, Apply: <http://bit.ly/2onTzsm>

Stand Up night,
Laugh out loud with stand-up comedians Shailee Basnet and Tyler McMahon.
28 April, 6 to 7.30 pm, Kar.Ma Coffee, Jhamsikhel, 9843767232, Tickets: Rs 1000

Poetic night,
An evening dedicated to spoken word poetry. Register to participate and hear fellow poets perform.
22 April, 4 to 6 pm, NexUs Culture Nepal, Register: <https://tinyurl.com/n5nm6vy>



Monthly mela,
BAC Mela, Local products, foodstuffs and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family at BAC's monthly mela.
29 April, 1 to 7 pm, BAC Art Cafe, Pulchok, 9851147776

Movie screening,
Attend the screening of 'The True Cost', a documentary that looks into the fast fashion industry and its social and environmental impacts. Stay for the discussion.
27 April, 6.30 to 9 pm, Kairos Café, Jawalakhel, RSVP: 9813493902



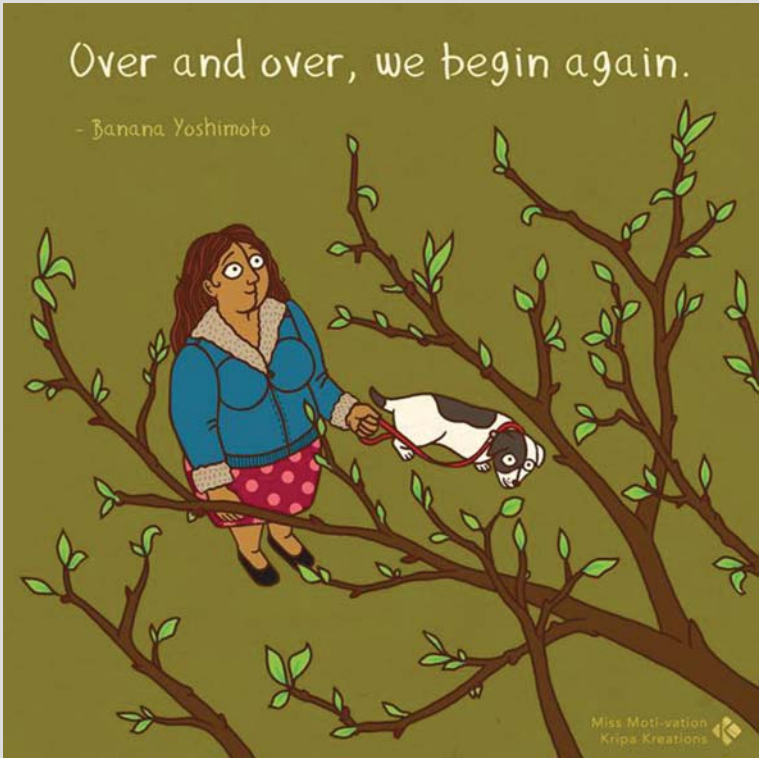
Patan walk,
Explore the alleyways of Patan and learn fascinating tales and histories of this heritage site. The walk is facilitated by Sherpa Shah.
22 April, Starts: 2.30 pm at Golden Temple, Ends: 4 pm near Patan Darbar Square, For more information: 9843241490

Building better
Share stories and ideas on how to build back better on the occasion of the second anniversary of the April 2015 earthquake.
25 April, 5 to 8 pm, Nepal Communitere, Pulchok, (01) 5555856

Hike and yoga,
Enjoy yoga while taking in the view of the hills. The hike and meditation session will be followed by a picnic.
22 April, Meeting point: Sooriya Wellness and Yoga Centre, Lazimpat, (01) 4001714, Fee: Rs 1,500

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



MUSIC



Remembering Prince,
A tribute to American pop singer, songwriter and musician Prince by Nepali cover band Electrix Nepal.
21 April, 8 to 11 pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172

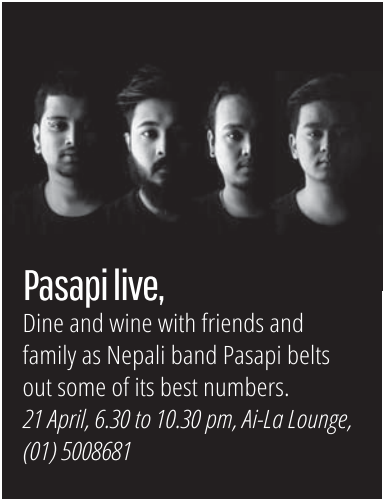
Ciney live,
Live performance by famed Nepali artist Ciney Gurung.
Every Friday, 7 pm onwards, Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, Rs 2000 per person, (01) 4412999 Extension: 7520/7508



Jazz day,
Join artists from Germany, Spain, Italy and Brazil as well as local musicians to celebrate International Jazz Day. Attend also for live art, film screening and workshops.
30 April, 12 to 6 pm, Nagbahal, For more information: www.katjazz.com.np/ijd2017



Kanta dAb dAb live,
Spend a musical evening with this sitar, percussion and bass trio. Enjoy as they entice you to groove with their fusion beats.
28 April, 7.30 to 10.30 pm, Places Restaurant & Bar, Saath Ghumti Marg, (01) 4700413



Pasapi live,
Dine and wine with friends and family as Nepali band Pasapi belts out some of its best numbers.
21 April, 6.30 to 10.30 pm, Ai-La Lounge, (01) 5008681

DINING



Manny's,
Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunchy Potatoes and don't forget their signature Manny's Spicy Wings, all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space.
Jawalakhel, 5536919

Bodhi Books & Bakes,
A quiet, snug place offering a rich collection of cakes and pastries.
Maharajgunj, 9851193262



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

The Vesper House,
Great for leisurely dining, serves diverse foods that reflect Italian and Mexican lifestyle.
Jhamsikhel, (01)5548179



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

Café Swotha,
An intimate setting in the heart of Patan, with an atmosphere of sophisticated, romantic warmth.
Patan, (01) 5551184, info@traditionalhomes.com.np



Dechenling,
The place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, their pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings.
Thamel, (01) 4412158

GETAWAY



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Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364, pataleban@mail.com.np

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Enjoy a comfortable stay, sumptuous Italian food and great hospitality at Piano B&B in Ekantakuna.
Ekantakuna, (01) 5000641

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Nagarkot, 4410432



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Gokarna Forest Resort,
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Gokarna, (01)4451212, info@gokarna.net



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Lakeside, Pokhara, (06)1466760, info@atithiresort.com

Solid Rock,
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Solid Rock Lodge & Restaurant, Dolu, near Pharphing, 9823233093

Righting reconstruction-gone-wrong

Kathmandu's youth have taken the lead in lobbying for more sensitive restoration of heritage sites destroyed in the 2015 earthquake



PICS: GOPEN RAI

ALOK TULADHAR

Even before the earthquake, Kathmandu Valley's temples, heritage sites and monuments were being degraded by urban pressure. Two years ago, on 25 April 2015, the Valley suffered its worst loss of cultural heritage since the 1934 earthquake. The government said it would need at least \$169 million to rebuild.

The traditional architectural style and the urban space of the Valley are integral to the ethnic and cultural identity of its people, and the damage caused by the earthquake have further weakened links to community centres and rituals. The physical destruction of the monuments translate into a loss of the Valley's intangible heritage. Traditional festivals and rituals have suffered because of a decrease in financial support from communities and the government.

The Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (PDRF) in 2015 planned to completely restore affected cultural heritage in six years. The Department of Archaeology (DoA) was designated the main custodian in planning, managing and supervising the rebuilding and restoration process.

However, the ground reality two years hence is that the DoA is not following the Framework guidelines. The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) has approved reconstruction and renovation of nearly 70 cultural heritage sites and monuments so far, half of which are in various stages of implementation. But most DoA-funded renovation and reconstruction, especially the larger projects, are being criticised by conservationists, culture experts, local communities and the public.

The reconstruction contracts were given to commercial companies that submitted the lowest bids, even

if they had no prior experience in heritage restoration. The DoA's lame justification is that government procurement rules did not allow them to implement the contracts in any other way. Research, quality control, local community participation and intangible cultural heritage practices were non-existent during reconstruction. In some cases, like the 17th-century Rani Pokhari and pre-Licchavi Tundal Devi, concrete and steel were used to replace traditional materials.

In response, spontaneous, informal groups have sprung up across Kathmandu Valley to lobby the government to treat heritage reconstruction with sensitivity. These youth-led groups have used social and mainstream media campaigns, public meetings, petitions and started small-scale reconstruction with community funding. Good examples are the restoration of the Licchavi-era Ashoka Chaitya in Thamel and the youth initiative on restoring Nepal's oldest public monument, Kasthamandap, which was destroyed in the quake.

As a result of public outrage and national media attention, the government is under pressure to introduce bylaws or modify existing laws to find a viable alternative to the lowest-bidder system. There are indications that community demands for greater public participation and transparency in heritage recovery will be incorporated in the government's new implementation mechanism.

The youth-led initiative has been instrumental in raising public awareness about heritage issues. It has lobbied with elected Members of Parliament and influential political leaders as well as the UNESCO office in Nepal. The Cabinet is expected to soon direct the NRA to abolish or amend the current inappropriate mechanisms in heritage reconstruction.

Although the public activism is encouraging, there

is much uncertainty about how the political elite and senior bureaucrats will react. There is still a possibility that the government will ignore the pressure to adjust prevailing procurement mechanisms. The youth movement is not yet insitutionalised and without clear

and strong leadership could fizzle out.

Kathmandu Valley's communities have built, maintained and rebuilt historic buildings after every earthquake. We can do the same now provided the government plays an enabling role by providing guidelines and technical supervision, and lets experts handle restoration.

*Alok Tuladhar is member of the community-based Rebuild Kasthamandap team.
alokstuladhar@gmail.com*

BRICK BY BRICK



Two years after the earthquake, the reconstruction of heritage sites is still slow. The government's lowest bidder contract system led to insensitive repairs, and communities now lead restoration that respects heritage. Watch video of Rani Pokhari, Kasthamandap and Ashoka Chaitya in Thamel to see how restoration is progressing.



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Patriots Day

Not everyone wants to watch a film about the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Mainstream cinema is for escapism, and standing witness to a horrific event is just not the reason people spend whatever it is they spend these days to go to the cinema.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Unfortunately for *Patriots Day*, which is quite a fine film, this disinclination caused it to do very poorly at the box office: it earned a mere \$44.3 million (to date) against a budget of \$45 million, which officially makes it a financial failure, even as it ought to be praised for so grimly hewing to the truth.

Anchored by the stout Mark Wahlberg, who plays Sergeant Tommy Saunders, and by John Goodman as Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis, the

film follows the events leading up to – and the chase after – the two bombings that occurred just as the first runners started to cross the finish line. Killing three people, maiming 16 (who lost their limbs) and injuring several hundred others, the bombing on the Patriot’s Day holiday was a nightmare for Boston, and precipitated a manhunt for the now infamous Tsarnaev brothers that shook the nation.

Patriots Day is aptly named: it is a film about the fortitude and the resilience of humanity in the face of the banality that can constitute evil. The portrayal of the real life characters who were injured, the gripping police procedural that follows, the terrible callousness of the Tsarnaev brothers as they shoot a police officer dead in his car when he doesn’t give up his gun, the car-jacking and subsequent escape of a terrified, young Chinese immigrant, Dun Meng (Jimmy O Yang), who then gives

evidence crucial in capturing the brothers, are all here in precise detail.

The film is not fun viewing, but it is pretty essential if you want to understand how things work. This is a disciplined movie, with its nuts and bolts carefully in place to manufacture a clear picture of a blurry, horrendous day in American history.

Perhaps what sticks most in my memory are the scenes in the hijacked car, attested to by Meng, when Dzhokhar (Alex Wolff) is sulking with his older brother Tamerlan (Themo Melikidze) because he has been given neither a gun nor been allowed to drive; he was 19 years old at the time. Equally searing is the gunfight in the Boston suburb of Watertown: a harrowing scene that documents the shootout from moment to moment with JK Simmons in a riveting performance as Jeffrey Pugliese, a Watertown police sergeant who goes head to head with Tamerlan just before he is killed.

There is a reason why there are no more films like *Patriots Day*; people just don’t have the stomach to watch them, this reviewer included. But, if you can grit your teeth and buckle down, you will not regret this film, which will teach you the essence of both bravery and cowardice.



Watch trailer online

nepalitimes.com

HAPPENINGS



MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, INDIA

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR: President of India Pranab Mukharjee and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi receive President Bidya Devi Bhandari at Rastrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Tuesday.



PMO

ELECTION AGENDA: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal meets with heads of security forces at Baluwatar on Tuesday to discuss security ahead of the local election.



BIKRAM RAI

UNDER ONE UMBRELLA: Five fringe parties from the Tarai announce unification in Kathmandu on Thursday. Their unified party is called Rastriya Janata Party.



NEPAL ARMY

JOINT FORCES: Nepal Army Major General Binod Shrestha shakes hands with participants in the first Nepal-China joint military training in Kathmandu on Sunday.



RSS

IN LINE: Women of Newari community take part in Sagun Jatra, celebrated on the eight day of Bisket Jatra in Bhaktapur on Monday.

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Electing women

Deepak Gyawali in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 9-15 April 2017

हिमाल

When local elections were last held in Nepal nearly two decades ago, only 20 per cent of those elected were women. This time, the ratio could go as high as 40 per cent.

Polls on 14 May will likely elect at least 13,000 women to various posts, including mayor, deputy mayor and village council chief. And at least 6,000 of them will be from the Dalit community.

“It is a big thing,” says Sarala Yadav, a former MP from Rautahat. “For Madhesi women, it is even more important.”

The Local Level Election Act 2017 requires political parties to nominate at least 50 per cent women for major posts. For example, if a party fields a male candidate for mayor, it must nominate a woman for deputy mayor. But it does not mean that if a female is nominated for mayor, another female cannot be fielded for deputy mayor. The Act has also made it mandatory for parties to nominate at least one Dalit woman for municipal and village ward committees.

So when 36,644 representatives of the people are elected next month, at least 13,300 (36.2 per cent) of them could be women. Considering the possibility that women can also be elected through non-reserved quotas, the percentage of women on local government councils may go up to 40, or even higher.

A recent report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) puts Nepal at the top among Asian countries in terms of women’s political representation. The latest report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) ranks Nepal 48th globally for women’s participation in Parliament.

Nepal’s legislature is now 29 per cent women while the public service is 35 per cent. Local elections could set another milestone in women’s political representation.

There is still no guarantee, though. For example, a municipality could have men as both mayor and deputy mayor. This would happen if people elect a man from one party as mayor and another man from another party as deputy mayor.

Political parties often face charges that they field women candidates only in those constituencies where they are not favourites to win. So women’s rights activists say parties must be honest when they select candidates for local elections.

“This is an opportunity that should not be squandered,” says Nirmala Sharma of Sancharika Samuha, an association of women journalists.

Kathmandu candidates

Bhasha Sharma in *www.nagariknews.com* 19 April

नागरिक

Nepal’s two newest political parties are the first ones to announce mayoral candidates for Kathmandu’s municipality elections next month.

At a time when the NC, UML and other established parties look undecided over candidates, journalist-turned-politician Rabintra Mishra’s Sajha Party and the youth-based Bibeksheel Nepali – both of which have never fought elections – have chosen two unconventional politicians: former secretary Kishor Thapa and 21-year-old student Ranju Darshana.

Thapa of the Sajha Party was an SLC topper, studied architect engineering and served as a top bureaucrat for 22 years. If elected, he says he will expand roads in Kathmandu, expedite the Melamchi and Outer Ring Road projects and introduce a 20-year energy development plan.

Thapa argues Kathmandu needs a political leader with administrative and technical know-how, and claims to be



one. “I am familiar with every alley of Kathmandu,” he says. “As a bureaucrat, I have worked to develop Kathmandu. Now I want to lead the city politically.”

Ranju Darshana, Bibeksheel Nepali’s candidate, has none of the experience that Thapa does. But she has emerged as a feisty youth politician after joining Bibeksheel Nepali three years ago.

Thapa was born the year the Maoist war began, and was just one-year-old when

Nepal last held local elections in 1997. Raised by her single mother in Kathmandu, she says she had to suffer because of the mess created by bad politicians, and joined politics to clean that up.

“If elected, I will work to make Kathmandu greener, pedestrian-friendly and a place where everyone can work and live peacefully,” says Darshana, a bachelor student of development studies.



No horn please !

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

Kirti Kishor Joshi in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 14 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Local elections will go ahead, all 600 MPs should go back to their villages.”

Chief Election Commissioner Ayodhi Prasad Yadav in *www.onlinekhabar.com*, 19 April

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OM ASTHA RAI

Gongabu, the neighbourhood where most concrete structures collapsed in Kathmandu in the 2015 earthquake, is back to business as usual: dancers perform in dimly-lit bars, sex workers wait for clients outside, and migrants from the nearby bus terminal stroll on sidewalks.

But a *Nepali Times* investigation has found that Gongabu is also back to the illegal construction that resulted in so many fatalities here two years ago.

When the 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Central Nepal on 25 April 2015, it was mostly brick and clay buildings that collapsed while the majority of concrete structures stayed intact. However, here in Gongabu it was the multi-storey concrete blocks that pancaked, killing 160 people in this locality alone. Most of them were young migrant workers waiting to fly out, and a few were miraculously rescued after a week.

An expose in this paper in 2015 showed that those buildings had weak foundations and the owners had added extra floors illegally after bribing officials.

The area was a Village Development Committee until December 2014, which meant builders here did not need to follow the 1993 construction code. Now, Gongabu is in the new Tokha Municipality, and there are strict guidelines for concrete structures. But only on paper.

Sher Bahadur Tamang's six-storey building in Gongabu was heavily damaged in 2015. No one died there, but 28 people were killed under the collapsed floors of three adjacent buildings. Rotting bodies were still being pulled out weeks later.

Tamang is now constructing

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE:

An illegal concrete highrise has sprung up from amidst the ruins of buildings that collapsed in Gongabu in 2015, killing at least 28 in this neighbourhood alone. Engineers say this structure will not withstand the next big earthquake.



GOPEN RAI

Building back unsafe

Property owners in Gongabu continue to flout the building code

a new five-storey building in the same place (*see above*) even though the municipality only allowed him a three-storey house, to be built using eight 16-mm rods in each pillar.

Tamang also received the first instalment of the Rs 300,000 housing grant from the National Reconstruction Authority. We confronted Tamang, but he denied he had built five storeys. When he was informed that we have picture of his building, he mumbled: "It's not just me. Everyone is doing it."

Bijendra Shrestha, a Tokha

Municipality engineer, was surprised to see Tamang's house this week. "It was meant to be just three-stories, the foundation will not support five floors in the next earthquake," he told us.

Shrestha says people who do not stick to the approved design will not get a building completion certificate, which means they cannot sell or mortgage the property. But that does not deter those like Tamang who just want to rent floors out, like he did in his previous house.

Others in Gongabu are getting around the code by first obtaining

the completion certificate, and then adding more floors.

Shyam Shrestha's house was destroyed in 2015, and Tokha Municipality allowed him to build just a three-storey replacement. He put up three floors, collected his completion document and promptly added one more storey.

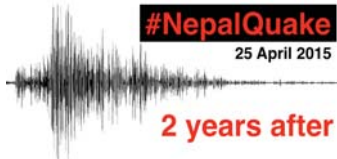
"The earthquake shook people's houses, but did not shake their mindset," says Dinesh Pathak, another Tokha Municipality engineer. "They are trying to save some money, but their greed could cost them their

lives next time."

Most house owners in Gongabu did not live here, so were not bothered about making them safe. A nine-storey building that went down, killing 17 people near the Gongabu Bus Park in 2015, was meant to be just six storeys. Another nine-storey building that buried nine people alive also had a permit only to build six floors.

But the government did not investigate and never took action against those who broke the law in Gongabu, Kapan and other Kathmandu suburbs.

"The government's focus was first on relief, and then reconstruction," explains engineer Pathak. "If the owners of illegal buildings that killed people had been investigated and punished, maybe they wouldn't have dared to repeat the same mistake." 🇳🇵



Search, locate, rescue in collapsed

The 2015 earthquake convinced many to use reinforced concrete for reconstruction, but this will make search

SONIA AWALE

Two years after the earthquake, it looks like reconstruction is finally taking on momentum. But from remote villages to inner city Kathmandu, most survivors are using reinforced concrete to rebuild damaged and destroyed homes.

The magnitude, intensity and duration of the earthquake on 25 April 2015 were just under the threshold for concrete structure collapse, so most cement buildings in Kathmandu survived. There is therefore a notion that reinforced concrete makes buildings stronger and safer.

"The last quake spread a misconception that concrete structures will withstand the next big earthquake, but substandard cement buildings can be worse death traps," explains structural engineer Surya Narayan Shrestha at the National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET).

Nepalis were extremely lucky that the 2015 earthquake hit on a Saturday and it mostly brought down brick, stone and clay houses. But the next time we



FUTURE SHOCK: The Morgan College of Engineering in Dhapasi (*left*) had a permit only for a three-storey structure. It collapsed in the 2015 earthquake (*centre*) and the site today (*right*). Hundreds of students and faculty would have been killed had the earthquake not struck on a Saturday. Kathmandu needs to prepare for collapses of poorly-built highrises like these in the next big earthquake.

may not be as fortunate because existing concrete buildings and new ferrocement construction may not be strong enough to withstand the greater shaking.

The Gorkha Earthquake did not release all the energy accumulated along the Main Himalayan Fault, which means there could be another big earthquake at any time near Kathmandu. Seismologists also predict a mega-quake in western Nepal, where

accumulated energy has not been released for 700 years. Both could bring down poorly built concrete structures in Kathmandu.

To be sure, concrete in itself is not bad. But it needs strict quality control of cement and steel rods, and care in mixing and curing concrete. Many pre- and post-earthquake structures in Kathmandu do not meet these standards.

However, what worries experts

even more is that search and rescue in collapsed concrete structures will need a lot more preparation, training and equipment.

"We didn't have enough equipment in the last earthquake, we could have saved a lot more lives if we were better equipped," says Diwakar K C of the Armed Police Force, which has a Disaster Management Training Centre in Kurintar.

"We have been training constantly, but need a different kind of expertise for rescue from collapsed concrete structures," he adds.

Nepal Police Spokesperson Sarbendra Khanal agrees: "We had enough rescuers two years ago, but they lacked proper training and tools. We didn't have appropriate equipment to dig people out from collapsed highrises."



SONIA AWALE

Cementing a future

It was one disaster after another for 41-year-old Ram Krishna Awale (*above*) two years ago. He had returned home after cremating a relative just before noon on 25 April 2015 when his house in Patan started shaking violently. A clay mortar structure built before the 1934 earthquake, it was severely damaged. His other cement house also suffered structural damage.

Today, Awale is rebuilding his new home following the government's new building guidelines, and claims to have made it even safer than required by using 14x14-in pillars and 22-in walls for the five-storey concrete building. He has removed all heavy structures in his new house, for example replacing the concrete staircase with a steel one.

"I have experienced first-hand what an earthquake is like, I don't want to put my family at risk with a weak building. It is costing me more, but at least I will get to sleep well at night," said the clothing shop owner.

Across the street, Sanu Lal Awale, 63, has also finished rebuilding his home. He was previously living with his extended family in a traditional Newari mud brick building which was heavily damaged. His new home is a four-storey concrete structure with a traditional Newari facade.

"I couldn't stay in the clay brick house anymore, so I decided to make a concrete building that is much safer and also keep our building tradition alive," he said.

To be sure, the trend towards rediscovering traditional architecture had started in Patan even before the earthquake. But many more residents whose homes were damaged in the quake are trying to blend traditional faades with hidden concrete beams and pillars.

The move to combine old and modern has also been spurred by the rise in homestay tourism in Patan. Residents have realised that guests do not like to rent out ugly concrete and glass structures.

Ram Krishna and Sanu Lal both agree they had tourism in mind while rebuilding their new homes in the Lichhavi-Newari style, but admit it made the construction much more expensive because the craftsmen were difficult to find.

Says Ram Krishna: "But we decided the added expense was worth it because it preserved the traditional architecture while making the structure safer."

Sonia Awale

concrete houses

and rescue more difficult in the next Big One

In fact, the Nepal Army, APF and Nepal Police do not currently have enough of the necessary equipment for Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue so they can search and locate people trapped in the debris of collapsed concrete floors. They will need pneumatic drills, rotary rescue saws, concrete cutters, chipping hammers, hydraulic shoring, and life detectors like thermal, CO₂ and snake-eyes.

"A major lesson from 2015 is that we need to train and equip community-level first responders so they can do the surface rescue before the specialised teams arrive," explains Ganesh Kumar Jimree, an NSET instructor involved in search and rescue in Bungamati and Dharara two years ago.

In the 2015 earthquake, more than 4,000 international rescuers from 19 countries spent millions of dollars to rescue a dozen or so people, while local communities and security agencies employed simple digging equipment to pull out more than 5,000 people from the rubble.

Experts say training communities and rescuers to use heavy equipment is the next crucial step in preparing for future disasters. In 2015, excavators and

bulldozers were sometimes used to dig into the rubble while survivors were still trapped inside. Locals had no knowledge about moving victims with broken bones and severe trauma.

Besides the Army and Police, first responders can also be volunteers from local communities, private security guards, the fire brigade, college students and teachers. Rescue paraphernalia, including digging and lifting equipment, lights, stretchers and first aid, need to be pre-positioned in neighbourhoods, water food and tents stockpiled in designated open spaces, and drills should be held regularly to enhance preparedness.

Jimree remembers reaching Dharara on the night of 25 April 2015 only to find there was no heavy equipment to move house-size blocks of fallen masonry to find survivors. He is convinced that communities must be trained in emergency rescue because by the time specialised teams arrive it may be too late.

He adds: "We have no choice, we must be even better prepared with training and equipment for the next big quake because there will be a lot more concrete structures that will collapse." 🇳🇵



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Headlines on deadline

However vigilant we are as journals there are some goings on in the domestic and international realm that inadvertently fall between the cracks. But as the progenitors of history in a hurry, it is incumbent upon us hacks not to let any item of nationalist interest fall by the wayside as we defend and safeguard the public's right to say no. So, while trying not to pussyfoot, hem or haw, and without further ado in beating around the bush where a bird is not worth as much as the two in the hand, let me get straight to the main points of the news:

One Belt One Robe

After the photograph of PKD in PJs went viral on social media, the First Couple has confidentially told a press conference off the record what they were up to last month in the Honeymoon Suite of the Bow-Wow Asia



Forum Hotel in Hainan. Apparently, President Xi had told Prime Minister Prachanda "Get on the Silk Road", and PKD misheard: "Put on the silk robe." Which is what he and Comrade Sita did as soon as they got back to their room.

Wee-wee Tweet

It is not only Donald Trump who tweets in the wee hours. Our very own Second Deputy Prime Minister and Homecoming Minister Bimalendra Needy got on Twitter at 2AM this week to cast doubts about local elections ever

being held. The next day, after all hell broke loose, he quickly clarified that English is not his first language, and in any case he works day and night, and besides he'd had a couple.

Civil Servant Civil Disobedience

The Overall-Nepal Civil Servants Confederation has called a bund on Friday to protest the gubberment's "unilateral and unjust" decision to cancel a previously scheduled holiday to celebrate the safe return of President Bhandari from her state visit to India. Civilian servants said they needed the day off to stay home and ponder the significance of the presidential trip to strengthen bilateral relations between the two neighbours, and to mull over whether or not President Bhandari was accorded due pomp and respect on arrival at IGIA.

"How can we analyse the accomplishment of the visit with a cool head if we have to work in the office?" asked one civilised servant rhetorically while staging a torch rally on his way home along a dark alley. "We demand our right to sit idly by during the President's comings and goings."

Meanwhile, the Office of the Astrologer General has announced a list of new holidays for the 2074 Lunatic Calendar, including for days with cosmic significance like the peak of the Leonid Shower this Sunday. Any unforeseen asteroid hitting the Earth will also be commemorated with a nationwide (if not planetwide) shutdown.

All Super Novae will be declared holidays retroactively since it would take two billion years for light from the Andromeda Galaxy to reach us. The activities of the sun and moon will be strictly monitored (since they appear on our national flag) so that any partial and/or total eclipses can be declared holidays.



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