SURESH Shrestha (right) was sitting down for lunch with his family in his house (in Imn Baba) four years ago when there was a terrifying, subsequenearth quake, and his building started shaking. Shrestha, 46, knew it was an earthquake, and while he was concerned the house could collapse, he was even more afraid that an adjacent 9-floor highrise that a neighbour had just built would topple on him. An hour later, there was a big aftershock and the tall building swayed like a tree in a storm, creating deep gashes on his house. Seismologists warn that the quake four years ago this month was just a warning, and that Nepal faces the risk of even bigger ones in future.

Experts say attention should now shift to retrofitting schools and hospitals across the country. Nearly 1,200 health facilities and 5,000 schools were completely destroyed in 2015, and tens of thousands of children could have been killed if the disaster had happened on a weekday. While hospitals and schools are being rebuilt in areas affected by 2015, what about the rest of Nepal? A recent Ministry of Health (MoH) study showed that four hospitals in Western Nepal were structurally very weak, and one in Nepalgunj even needed to be demolished.

"The study is a warning. The condition of hospitals in the rest of Nepal is similar; we need to quickly retrofit them before the next disaster strikes," warns Chhusamani Bhandari at the MoH. "Western Nepal is in greater danger, so we decided to focus there."

The next step is to carry out an inspection of medical centres around the country. The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) plans a survey of schools and hospitals, but only after it is done with reconstruction of 2015.

With support from DFID, the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) is resuming the school retrofitting in Western Nepal that it had started before 2015. Says NSET's Surya Narayan Shrestha: "We need to concentrate on Western Nepal because the vulnerability of public buildings there is high."

Schools are community hubs and making them safer raises public awareness about sound construction practices. Deepak Sharma of the Ministry of Education explains: "The few schools that were retrofitted before 2015 suffered no damage, so we are trying to retrofit schools in all districts for future earthquakes.

SEWA Bhattarai and Prakriti Kandel
LESSONS UNLEARNED

A
other earthquake anniversary.
More occurred to make lessons not
learned from 25 April 2015.

Four years later, Central Nepal is still
bruised by aftershocks of 2015. That
peculiar earthquake shook everything to
the east of the epicentre, and inflicted almost
no damage at all to its west. The release of
tectonic energy appears to have travelled
along a rupture zone from Gorkha and ground
to a halt somewhere beneath the southern
end of the Kathmandu Valley. The stress
tension of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake is
only partially spent.

Under the federal structure, we have a
new opportunity to document disaster
preparedness, planning and management.
Every municipality now has to take
responsibility from ward level up, so that
there is a search, rescue and relief plan to
place. But given that so many mayors and
local elected officials are contracting who
are awarding construction jobs to themselves,
there is not much hope. We wish the
independence of Kathmandu Municipality in
earthquake rehabilitation of monuments was
an exception, but it is the rule. The delays
in rebuilding Sain Pokhari and Kantamandap
are national disasters in themselves. It is
hard to find out who is more culpable.

Mayer Shakyas or the Department of
Archaeology.

There are lessons to be
learned about how not to organize
reconstruction. While a lot of the grants
have been cleared, there are
many families who have found
building to fully cemented jobs just
to get their hands on the cash.

As our coverage this past month in the
run-up to the fourth anniversary of the
quake, and in this issue (pages 1, 8-9, 14-15),
indicate it is now time to also turn
attention to the seismic risk in the rest
of the country. For the past four years,
we have been in rehab mode, picking up
the pieces of the damage in Central Nepal’s
14 districts. It bears repeating that the risk
is now to the whole country from the massive
nep is that it is nother way to put
it: the death and destruction from it will
be nationwide and catastrophic.

INTERNET ADDICTION

Not just in Nepal — it is a worldwide problem
but I find that Asian countries appear to be
worst (Nepal is becoming a nation of net
addicts), Sonia Devkota, #5995

Nepal’s naturalist elite

Nepal’s very naturalist groupie historically gather
from Nepal to the Okhaldhunga plains, a small
link between the Himalaya and stark urban
terrains. Many think landscape properties and
wildlife operations involved throughout the
adjacent slopes are truly run by naturalists
who eat their teeth in the jungle of Chitwan and
Sudur Paschim.

follow up

Sudur Paschim. Story page 7

Editors

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

This editorial was half full from issue #447 of 16/11/2009 and
looked at the sight occuring on 25 April 2015.

Nepal Times (Nepali Times)
Nepal Times is a morning English daily.

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WORKSHOPS SCHOLARSHIPS CONCERTS

JONAS WINTERHALTER BIG BAND
Germany. April 25th - 30th

SEGON TEMPS
Spain. Orquestra de Cambra d’Albal. April 21st - 24th

GERWIG & GONZALES
Germany/Mexico. Piano duo. April 19th - 20th

Coming to Kathmandu this April!
The workshops and concerts are open to anyone that is interested. Register now to book your seat.

Deserving candidates will be selected and offered scholarships for one year of study in the KJC Diploma in music performance.

FESTIVAL STARTS APRIL 15th

More info/register: www.katjazz.com.np/jazz-day
Nepal is being loved to death

Four years after the earthquake, we Nepalis have got really good at playing victim.

Four years ago, on a Saturday, the earth below us began to tremble. We were shocked and overwhelmed as we tried to hold on to something not moving, and quickly ran out of the house. The air was moving. Telephone poles swayed, buildings bowed, ponds overflowed and trees shook.

½ FULL
Anil Chitrakar

The Dharahara Tower crumbled, killing at least 68, and 700 temples and monuments came down in clouds of dust. Over 1,400 health facilities, 700,000 homes and 32,000 classrooms were damaged, and nearly 9,000 people lost their lives across Central Nepal.

A month later, the Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) put the cost of the damage at over $8 billion. The earth kept moving in hundreds of aftershocks, some of which were strong enough to be earthquakes in their own right. The whole world converged to rescue and help in the recovery process.

Four years on, thousands of Nepalis are not just still living in makeshift shelters, they are thoroughly confused. Where has the $4 billion in aid pledges gone? Why is it yet to be disbursed? Is there $3 billion of relief money?

Many schools, hospitals and private homes have been rebuilt. Monuments that had been rebuilt have been destroyed. We know recovery is going to be a long term process. Standards, guidelines, rules and regulations had to be made from scratch. Many villages on unstable slopes have to be moved from the path of landslide. Houses along highways are in the ‘right of way’ - Nepal is paying a huge price for past mismanagement.

Reality is even blacker and white. It is grey at best. The Indian foreign minister made a knowledgeable speech at the reconstruction conference held in Kathmandu in July 2015 to help Nepal rebuild. It has taken four long years for some of the money to finally start trickling in for a monumental and godforsaken, the business community in Patan said it did not want foreign money, and would restore the Bhimsen Temple on its own. Many relief agencies have been in villages with little to offer than building in Kathmandu rejected $10 million reconstruction aid from Germany because there were too manywesterners attached. Many people from all over the world who sent money and relief materials to Nepal, they did not find any trace of it four years later. We have not seen any audit of the Prime Minister’s Relief Fund, which is perceived to be a ‘black hole’ into which donations disappear.

While Rani Pokhri in Kathmandu is still in a pathetic state, the Darbar High School nearby proudly displays banners of China Aid - putting many passersby to shame. If every graduate of the school gave a thousand rupees, how many schools could we build? What led politicians and the people who keep them in power to become so dependent on foreigners to rebuild? How do we rebuild ourselves after every earthquake to the past?

Many families broke up on paper after the earthquake, hoping they would get multiple tranches of relief provided by the global community. The NRA was formed in the absence of an elected government, headed changed with every new government, and the authority hired technicians who are constantly creating conflict for their own benefit. Nepal’s Foreign billboards are still showing 15 minutes of same footage in front of a temple in Baktapur he is not paying to rebuild.

In Unicef Nepal knows that one day the free ride we are getting will come to an end. Till then we are all willing to play the victims, and we are getting really good at it too. From poor citizens to the rich, in the name of软wares in power, we know our lines in the Nepal recovery drama.

In the meantime, the energy is building up again below us. The world will move again. And next time it may not happen on a Saturday or at soon when most people are in the cornfields. The chaotic response to the recent tornado in Bina and Parsa is a warning signal that is not prepared we are. All the training, capacity building, study tours, technical assistance and technology, may only result in greater dependency.

Like garbage collection and the plights of the poor, we need to make disaster preparation a Nepal problem and not a White Man’s Burden. The fire that destroyed the Notre Dame holds lessons for safety planning and safety consciousness. Sadly, so many people have high-paying jobs, fancy cars and offices in the name of vulnerability. While a real objective conversation is not possible. Perhaps Nepal is being loved to death.

Anil Chitrakar
President of Siddhartha

Turkish’s Great Move to new Istanbul Airport

Turkish Airlines inaugurated flights from its new Istanbul Airport by flying to Marrakesh on 6 April, the first destination to be added to the airline’s new hub. This makes Marrakesh Turkish’s 300th destination globally as the airline seeks to expand its fleet and add new routes from the higher capacity airport.

The airline is working on a new strategy to utilise opportunities already brought by Istanbul Airport, which will be the world’s largest single-runway airport and is expected to serve 200 million passengers per year when it is fully completed in 2018. It has state-of-the-art equipment and is designed for passenger convenience, with check-in kiosks and other amenities. Over 90% of customers of Turkish Airlines between Kathmandu and Istanbul are transit passengers and the new airport is expected to make these connections much smoother.

“The new airport was a must to accommodate ‘Turkish Airlines’ growth plans, and we hope to give passengers to and from Nepal much more comfort and flexibility with better connectivity.” Turkish’s Nepalese manager Abdullah Yavuz Kaced told Nepal Times.

At present, flights westward from Kathmandu have been affected by runway repair work, which closes the airport from 19PM till 4AM every day, as well as the closure of six routes across the India-Pakistan corridor.

On the weekend of 6 April, Turkish Airlines completed its “Great Move” to Istanbul Airport from Ataturk Airport, which had been the airlines’ home for 64 years. The UK4 flight to Singapore carrying 319 passengers and 18 cabin crew members was the farewell flight from Ataturk Airport.

Regarding the move to Istanbul airport, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, M. Ilker Aycar, said, “Currently the biggest airport project of the world, this enormous facility will be the home of the resounding local and global growth of Turkish Airlines, with its state-of-the-art physical capabilities and capacity.” The move to Istanbul Airport has been described as an important aviation milestone for Turkey, which has used to establish strategic alliances with Asian, Europe and Asia as the News report. Turkish Airlines supplemented, adding that the new generation of longer-range aircraft like the Airbus A350 XWB and the Boeing 777 X, which can circle the world with just one stop, can use Istanbul as a hub.

One of the biggest projects in aviation history, the construction of Istanbul airport was initiated by Turkish’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan through the Istanbul Airport construction project, in addition, the new generation of longer-range aircraft like the Airbus A350 XWB and the Boeing 777 X, which can circle the world with just one stop, can use Istanbul as a hub. Turkish Airlines will be in a position to fly to 200 destinations from Istanbul airport, which is expected to be the world’s largest airport.

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Qatar wins big
Qatar Airways received multiple awards in April for its in-flight service and charity work. The airline’s CEO was a special award to ‘Best Charitable Initiative’, which had won the airline’s breast cancer awareness campaign.

TVs on Daraz
TV sets and other electronics are now available online on the shopping website Daraz, which is offering a discount of 10% for the first 100 buyers, to help consumers cut costs. The offer is only applicable if 1 purchase is made from Kathmandu.

The Flight, EVNH from Kathmandu to Dubai, is part of the UK’s airline’s larger commitment to the environment. The aircraft seen annually when it flies to UK by 60%, not only in flight but also at the airport.

The offer is only applicable if 1 purchase is made from Kathmandu.
Ncell ruling opens a can of worms

The Supreme Court verdict on Ncell last week left more questions unanswered

An extended full bench of the Supreme Court comprising of five judges, including Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana, after listing the case regarding taxation of Ncell at least 14 times for hearing announced its verdict through a written order this week.

GUEST HOUSE
Semanta Dahal

The judgment, though not devoid of reasoning, has placed reliance solely on Section 57(1) of the Income Tax Act to impose tax liability on Ncell and its current largest indirect owner the Axista Berhad Malaysia. In its subsequent press release, Ncell stated that the Axista Group Berhad was not party to the dispute decided by the Supreme Court, and that it is further reviewing the decision without prejudice to its remedial rights. The decision is considered non-appellable or open to review because it was delivered by an extended full bench of the Supreme Court.

The most important issue for the court to resolve was the tax implication on Ncell arising due to the shares of Ncell that were held in St Kitts & Nevis, a Caribbean nation famously recognized as a tax haven. The ownership (shareholders) of Reynolds Holdings incorporated in St Kitts & Nevis and holding majority shares of Ncell was changed from Telia Sonera Norway Holdings to Axista Investment Limited (a company incorporated in the UK) under a Share Purchase Agreement executed outside Nepal.

‘Telia Sonera Norway Holdings’ as per the Supreme Court decision, is ultimately owned by ‘Telia Sonera Sweden’ and ‘Axista Investment Limited’ is a conduit company of ‘Axista Berhad Malaysia’.

Section 57(1) of the Income Tax Act applies in situations where there is change of underlying ownership of 50% or more of an entity compared to its ownership in the last three years. The Supreme Court, after carefully interpreting each of these following expressions in Section 57(1) — ‘entity’, ‘asset’ and ‘ownership’ — concluded that Ncell is the ‘entity’, the license to provide telecommunication service is the ‘asset’ and ownership change from ‘Telia Sonera Sweden’ to ‘Axista Berhad Malaysia’ as disposing of underlying assets of Ncell.

Since there has been disposal of assets, the Supreme Court further adds that the gains should be taxed at 15% in accordance with Section 6A(1)(b) of the Income Tax Act, and that the tax must be paid by Ncell and not outside Malaysia.

The Supreme Court has directed the Large Taxpayers Office (LTO) to determine the exact tax amount within three months but has not clearly set a timeline for the payment of the outstanding tax liability for Ncell and Axista Berhad Malaysia. The outstanding tax liability, in addition to Rs 52 billion that Ncell has already paid, can only be determined after tax assessment by the LTO. On Tuesday, the LTO ordered Ncell to pay an additional Rs 9.9 billion in taxes by 22 April.

The decision of the Supreme Court, even though a pronounced assertion to ensure taxation of an offshore transaction in Nepal, has relied on Section 57(1) with marked intention to impose tax liability on Ncell, but it has left more questions unanswered than it settles.

An investor, especially a foreign investor, would seek more clarity on issues including:
- Will Section 57(1) get attracted even in cases where the change of shareholding by selling of shares is less than 50%?
- What if the period of change of ownership is more than three years?
- Will the company whose shares are being transferred be held liable to pay tax even in a situation where the seller pays the capital gains tax?
- Most importantly, will share sale transactions occurring outside Nepal having the effect of changing ownership of a company in Nepal be taxable?

Lastly, will the taxation in Nepal of an offshore transaction be pursued under certain prescribed criteria?

During the entire episode of taxation of Ncell neither the government nor Parliament took any substantive measures to reform laws to establish the principles and criteria of taxing an offshore transaction having implication in Nepal. Further, the evident wavering position of the government added to the conundrum. This is appalling, especially in light of entered Bilateral Investment Treaties, which require Nepal to provide fair and equitable treatment to foreign investors. Nepal has such a treaty with the UK and one of the current indirect shareholders of Ncell Axista Investment Limited is a company incorporated in the UK.

The Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act, 2019, only imposes an obligation to notify the share transfer or sale of a foreign investment company occurring outside Nepal. A judicial remedy on taxation matters creates uncertainty and unpredictability about its implication for future offshore transactions, therefore it is time for the government and Parliament to take steps to pass legislative enactments that are predictable and follow established principles to cover offshore transactions.

An opportunity is forthcoming. The Finance Act, 2019, to be promulgated in June, can make amendments to the Income Tax Act.

Semanta Dahal
an associate
abroadbranch
When Nepali art is mentioned, the first things that come to mind are chhaiga paintings or bronze Tens. Now, an exhibition at Europe’s foremost ethnographic museum in Vienna paints a surprisingly vibrant picture of contemporary art in Nepal.

The Nepal Art Now exhibition at the Weltmuseum Wien is the largest ever exhibition of modern Nepali art outside the country, and includes 130 paintings, sculptures, videos and installations by 40 artists from Nepal.

“There is an exhibition that showcases the creativity and energy of Nepali artists who redefine the influence of the West, and it shows how the local, national and global permeate each other,” said Christian Schicklgruber, director of the Weltmuseum Wien, who co-curated the exhibition.

Schicklgruber and the late Dina Banjel came up with the idea for a major exhibition three years ago. Banjel died suddenly in 2017, but the project went ahead in her memory with co-curator Swooshi Rajbhandari Kavaya of the Nepal Art Council. In the meantime of the Weltmuseum is another presentation of Maithili art by female painters, put together by Claire Burkert.

“The hardest part of the exhibition was to select art works from more than 800,” recalls Kayathar. “We worked extra hours to curate it, and had to leave behind many works by artists we know. But these paintings represent the best of Nepali art today.”

Indeed, the works by Hit Man Dhumung, Sonal Sigdel, Sameer Mahajan, Ang Thubrin Shrestha, Asha Dangol, Madhumita Raut, among others, represent world-class talent that bodes traditional Nepali art forms like paithali, wood carving and metal work, with modern elements. Although “modern” has come to mean “western,” the exhibition is proof that Nepal is now recognized as a centre for contemporary art that abounds western homogeneity, and has carved out its own space based on tradition, shared national history, and cosmopolitan influences.

When you said Nepali art in the past, people expected traditional art forms. What we see at this exhibition is the vibrancy and creativity of contemporary Nepali art, the role of women, as well as the global and local impact of the works. Being an ethnographic institution, it makes sense to have the exhibition at the Weltmuseum,” director general Sabine Haug said at the inauguration last week.

Even though some of the art works are rooted in Nepali culture and traditions, they use modern forms of oil and canvas. Installations and sculptures to address contemporary issues like exclusion, social justice, gender, conflict, the 2015 earthquakes, commodification of religion, migration and the environment. In fact, many of the works are not just aesthetic or spiritual in their function but are imbued with deep socio-political commentary.

The inaugural ceremony of the exhibition at the Weltmuseum featured the Himalayan Quartet, led by Nepali composer Rupak Kumar Shakya, which played several fusion pieces based on popular Nepali folk songs. The Weltmuseum is located in Vienna’s Hofburg, the winter palace of the Hapsburgs that became infamous for a speech given by Adolf Hitler from one of its balconies after the Anschluss (forced unification of Germany and Austria) in 1938.

Claire Burkert
Nepal’s traditional carvings and paintings by anonymous masters that adorn temples and monuments have been worshipped over the centuries, and are still regarded as emblems of the divine. However, they came to be regarded as ‘art’ after being stolen and exhibited in museums in Europe and America, and were detached from their original spiritual value.

The contemporary Nepali art on exhibit here is defined not by its style, but by paintings, sculptures and installations that were created in the past 50 years, with diverse themes ranging from devotional, social commentary, abstract and modern.

Most of the artists here championed ‘Western’ techniques, and gone global to develop a unique grammar of their own. Suja Schlick: “Modernism had its roots in London and New York as its traditional centres of art. In the postmodernist age, other cities have joined this exclusive club. One of them is Kathmandu.”

Before going to Vienna, Nepal Art Now was pre-exhibited at the Nepal Art Council in Kathmandu in December 2018. Most of the works on display are different from both traditional Nepali art and western postmodernism. You can see influences of Picasso, Matisse and Warhol, but almost as parody. Mona Lisa also appears in Manj

Baba Minht’s famous ‘selfie portrait’.
Manish Harijan’s audacious renditions of deities duelling with modern cartoon characters are a critique of the commercialisation of religion, and got him into hot water with fundamentalists in 2013. Asba Dangol’s theme deals with disasters like earthquakes and environmental degradation.

One could say that Nepal’s artists are not influenced by the ‘West’ but by ‘transcontinentalism’. Sustaining Nepali religious and cultural visual metaphors with modern techniques giving our vernacular a new spin – turning the local into global.

Nepal Art Now
Open daily except Wednesday
10AM – 8PM
Adults: Rs 17

The Chitrakars of Kathmandu

Ever since Lalla Thi was invited to the court of Kublai Khan in the 14th century, Nepali artists have ventured abroad, and picked up new techniques. Raj Man Chitrakar did sketches and watercolours with British resident and naturalist Brian Houghton Hodgson in the mid-19th century and Budha Man Chitrakar accompanied Jang Bahadur to Britain in 1939. It was Durga Man Chitrakar who travelled to England with Chandra Shamsher Rana in 1898 and there is a long list of Nepali artists including Bijj Chitrakar right down to Jai Chitrakar in the present day, whose pavilion is among the exhibits in Vienna.

Connecting with the Nepal Art Now exhibition was Presenting Classics, an exhibition of photographs by four generations of Chitrakars at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. The exhibition, which ended on 13 April, included prints by Durga Man Chitrakar, Ganesh Man Chitrakar, Man Man Chitrakar and Saurav Man Chitrakar.
Up-cycling Nepal’s post-earthquake architecture with a model house

Sapana Shakya
and Aman Raj Khatakho

One of the lessons not learnt from the earthquake four years ago is the possibility to re-use and up-cycle bricks, metal and timber for reconstruction instead of buying expensive imported material. But it is still not too late.

Traditionally, Nepalis have reused building materials for temples, or homes, salvaging and recycling them after every earthquake in the past. Nearly 700,000 houses went down in the 2015 quakes, leaving a huge amount of stone, bricks, useful mud mortar, timber and roof tiles.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake on 25 April 2015, survivors quickly built temporary shelters made of bamboo, tarps, plastic, corrugated steel sheets and anything else available. Relief agencies supplied corrugated steel sheets, some of which were barely 0.2 mm thick and could be bent into semi-circles to make shelters.

Soon, the temperatures in the low valleys rose to 36°C, and the space under the metal became very hot. Temporary schools also overheated, and there were reports of children dehydrating and fainting. Once the monsoon came, the sound of rain on the tin roofs made teaching impossible. Strong winds tore the paper-thin steel sheets loose, turning them into flying galliwasp.

Poor families had no other option than to stay in their temporary makeshift houses, turning a large part of Central Nepal into slums. These were not homes.

Our Sustainable Mountain Architecture (SMA) team came up with an alternative design for transitional houses, made from salvaged materials and locally grown bamboo or thatch. The base of the single-storey

Nepal’s tradition

Reviving flexible building methods can help reduce damage in future

Shelin Teo

After the April 2015 earthquake, the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) released two manuals to address the repair and retrofit of masonry and reinforced concrete structures. Later, it added an updated guideline for masonry structures.

The NRA advisory is consistent with international approaches for earthquake-resistant houses, with a focus on using new, commercial products available in the construction market, but we can also learn a lot from Kathmandu Valley’s historical building traditions about alternative designs.

There are many ways of building resilience into structures, but the most historically prevalent and still important today is flexibility. Strong but flexible jointing of ductile and appropriately-stated structural members that hold a building together allow it to sway with movement loads during an earthquake, making it less likely to collapse.

Such design is seen in old timber-framed and intricately jointed buildings in Japan and China, and also in structures across Nepal. For example, roof rafters are jointed to ridge poles and wall plates to allow a pivoting motion that helps isolate the roof structure from the rest of the building in case of ground movement.

Traditionally, buildings in Nepal were constructed with timber and brick walls. Timber is a scarce resource, and masonry has fallen out of favour in the face of the militant march of concrete. From the plains to the mountains, buildings were made of stone, timber, mud, brick, thatch and tiles.

Just as the frames and jointing were made to be flexible, the walls were thick, rigid and robust, which is another stabilisation technique. These days, because building with concrete and bricks means walls are thinner and weaker, corner ties and banding can help keep fissure walls intact.

Other earthquake-resistant building techniques include lightweight roofing, which in the past was done with wood and bamboo sub-structures to hatchet roofs — especially in the Terai — and triangulation, seen today in trusses and pitched forms, traditional Newari scroll capitals and decorated rafter sticks.

At a seminar this month on seismic risk organised by the National Society for Earthquake Technology and the United States Geological Survey, experts said Nepal had a strong tradition of resilient construction.

Modern skyscrapers in earthquake prone places like Tokyo use base isolation to counter seismic movement. The Nyatapola Temple in Bhaktapur, Nepal’s tallest, has similarly stood the test of time and two massive earthquakes by combining base isolation with triangulation.
seismic resistant designs for earthquakes

The zigzag form that supports the five-storey timber and brick tower is essentially a robust pile, separating the sacred relics and its towering housing from the shaking, while providing ample seating for the beautiful carved guardians of the vernacular grid.

But just as important as building resilience into a structure is caring for it. In the past, buildings lived and breathed within settlements, cared for on a daily basis, and would fall apart if neglected. Ritual care, for example yearly renovations for Danakil, ensure that homes and community buildings are regularly maintained and kept intact, and thus less prone to falling apart in the event of a natural disaster.

In the old towns of the Kathmandu Valley, Newari dwellings and temples were built with both flexible and rigid elements — timber, bricks and clay clustered together in courtyard configuration, each courtyard effectively creating walled squares that are more capable of withstanding shakes. Similarly, communities in the high Himalayas build settlements that stop another into a hillside, or side by side on contours in mass-like configuration. These buildings, rising from the ground as an agglomerated system of dwellings, are a breathtaking symbol of communities leaning on one another, in a telling, enduring tradition of deep-rooted resilience.

For retaining warmth in winter, the house — at 1.200m — uses a south-facing asymmetrical saddle roof for passive solar energy gain. While most buildings in Nepal are now using thin, 0.5mm corrugated steel sheet for the roof, we looked for a more robust solution, reusing bottoms of scrap tar drums 60cm in diameter and 1.2mm thick. The completed house rests on a concrete ring beam, the only place where cement is used.

The upper floor is lightweight with timber structure and double walls and deck walls. These cut out slightly from the lower stone wall with timber beam reinforcements. The largest upper floor span of 6m is made by one steel I-beam, to conserve trees.

Building resilience

- Flexibility/shock absorbency (timber, steel, painted joints, hydraulic mud mortars)
- Rigidity/integrity/banding/outer reinforcements/buttresses (thick masonry walls, corner walls, providing stack, outer reinforcement, spandrels, spandrel caps — linters)
- Base isolation (concrete, deep foundations, root piles)
- Braiding/triangulation/shear walls/lateral loading/banding (timber, corrugated sheet metal, lap joints, reinforced concrete or timber banding, metal ties, plywood brace wall panels)

Lightweight Roofs (teral sheet, truss, shingles, corrugated tiles)

ANASTOLIS: (Fram for left)

Decimated resting platform (gall) in Kathmandu being rebuilt using traditional materials and methods.

The Nyatapola Temple, erected in Nepal, has withstood many big earthquakes because of base isolation and triangulation. Rafter inside the arched of an old Nepalese house show how the roof beams are joined with ridge pales and wall plate.
KatJazz International Festival
An 18-member band from Germany and Switzerland, a classical orchestra from Spain, a classical piano duo from Germany and Mexico, and Harini, a classically trained Carnatic vocalist, have come to Nepal for this music festival. Don't miss the opportunity to enjoy and learn about a range of good music. Until 30 April. KatJazz Facebook, (888) 5543554
Some highlights:
Gerwig & Gonzales, Piano Duo Concert from Germany/Mexico, 20 April, 7pm onwards
Classical Orchestra (Strings Workshop), from Spain, 21 April, 10am-2pm
Jam Session, Hosted by Jonas Winterhalter, 23 April, 4-6pm
Asim Lama, Recital, 24 April, 7-8pm
Prajolan Jung Thapa, Recital, 25 April, 7-8pm
KatJazz Kultur

Escap Game
Utilize your brains, and the skills of each member of the team, to solve various puzzles so you can escape a room as quickly as possible? May be a team of maximum four members in this game created by Alliance Francaise.
April 14, 2pm, Alliance Francaise Kathmandu, Pachali, (01) 5800237

Around the Globe
Get ready to laugh and enjoy the international line up with Aspoq Sreensha from Nepal, Fedor Reijer from the Netherlands and Brian Ahward from Canada, also winner of Stand Up Comedy of the Year 2015. April 14, 7-9pm, B300, Sabriq, Aisholp, 9817961751

Imagine Cycle
On the occasion of Heritage Ride, help create a cycle friendly Nepal with cycle lanes and healthy people. Act locally, think globally. 20 April, Early morning, Boudha

HUR Talk
Host Hari Summers and his team from expeditions in the landscapes of Pakistan & Afghanistan. Summer's has been trekking in remote parts of the world for the last 20 years and will reveal how adventurous and exciting these countries can be.
20 April, 6:30pm, Nabin Jog, Thamel, 9807027204

3D Printing
In the coming panel review and open house of American Art Institute, witness 3D printed projects created by 17 participants. They were part of a month-long workshop on digital fabrication and 3D printing by Jennifer Berry.
25-27 April, 2pm, Nepal Community House, 9817017964

Heaven and Hell
Naval Kaire and band ‘Feather’ will release their new album ‘Man Made Disaster’. Other guests are Aannah; Sharmi in Shade, Roxy, Piyalpaul, The Voices, United, Wobbly, Mijax.
20 April, 1-6pm, RNLO (prema), RNLO (dhaka), 25 Hours, Tonggale, Nepal, 9817017962

Le Trio
If you visit Le Trio, don’t miss to visit Motra Cha with Idol Adams. The most famous dish of this place are the little dumplings that smell, taste and look delicious.
7pm-10pm, Pulchowk and Dharan Mog (01) 5273529

Chi Chi Grills
A small haven for street lovers, Chi Chi Grills is a dinner plate seeking, mouth-watering grilled items in three categories: Grilled Chicken pieces, Grilled Fish and Grilled Duck. Also, prepare to handle the chicken with your bare hands because there will be no eating.
7am-10pm, Shold, 9812222229

Bandipur Safari Lodge
The town of Bandipur is famous not only for its cultural assets but also for its wild terrain, with animals like elephants, deer and tigers. Bandipur Safari Lodge is the optimal getaway for this single experience. You can enjoy activities like Wildlife Safari, Bird Watching and Nature Walk. Biodiv, 0669170000, 0667322888

Dhulikhel Lodge Resort
The lodge is nestled amidst the beautiful natural hills of Bhaisi, 5 km from the city, 6 km away to the Bagmati river and 30 minutes away to the Chisapani. The rooms are spacious and surrounded by nature. The rooms have all necessary amenities. DHU (01) 5210532, (01) 5212003, (01) 6680046

The Little House
A sanctuary in the middle of gangorous and green rice fields. You can enjoy beautiful views from the terrace, a peaceful walk in the garden and relax in the easy shared lounge. Alata: 9842159026

Club Himalaya
Located in the heart of Kathmandu, the hotel is a blend of natural and modern sensibilities. The accommodation is comfortable, easy and the food is delicious. The famous sunrise and sunset can be viewed from the private balcony of each room. Alata: 9804080000, 9804080002

Gorkha Gaun Resort
Located in the district famous for its rich, green glow, you can enjoy in the comfortable cottages of this resort. Offering services as restaurant and bar, you can enjoy breathtaking views of the village and its surroundings. The hotel offers a comfortable stay to the guests. The resort is located in the heart of Chisapani. Gorkha: 066740252, 9817015782
Impact Feature

Earthquake affected communities realize a holistic recovery with the support of Caritas Nepal

Looking back after four years, there are some good examples where earthquake affected households have learned from the earthquake of 2015, realized a holistic recovery by building back better, and are moving towards further development in a confident manner. These households and communities have constructed houses using local materials and earthquake resistant techniques; they have formed user groups and repaired or extended drinking water systems; re-established livestock assets; and are pursuing disaster risk reduction and social protection strategies to build resilient communities. Interested journalists have looked for examples of such communities and found quite a few of them in Caritas Nepal supported locations.

Bigu is a rural municipality in Dolakha. Ward number two of Bigu, Dangbang village, was first village to dedicate construction of all houses in the village (as per National Reconstruction Authority Act at the time) in April of 2016 out of more than 700 similar villages affected by the 2015 earthquake. There was happiness and joy in the face of the households as they shared how they built their houses using local materials such as stone, mud and wood. Mrs. Maha Thakuri, Ms. Kanchi B.K., Ms. Budha Maya Tamang are three of the 245 households in Dangbang village (Bigu-2, Dolakha) to realize a good recovery. They have earthquake resistant houses, toilets and access to drinking water systems and have re-established their livelihoods affected by the earthquake. Mr. Keshi notes that having the toilet nearby is a luxury for now, but it does not have to go out in the dark at night. Similarly, having a drinking water tap nearby her house has saved her the journey of walking half an hour in the spring to fetch water. In this village, Caritas Nepal is providing support for recovery and reconstruction in shelter, WASH, livelihoods, and protection and psychosocial concerns. Following are examples from some more locations where earthquake recovery support was provided by Caritas Nepal.

Caritas Nepal recovery efforts

- Full house grants supported households (Rs. 100,000 per household) - 4,764
- Housing Grant supported households - 4,358
- Shelter sector socio-technical supported households - 12,500
- Drought/Water and food supported households - 20,900
- Drinking water system beneficiaries - 7,200
- Modern housing for earthquake resistant technology awareness - 35
- Masons trained (Skilled Mason Training) - 1,393
- Masons trained (Unskilled Trained) - 219
- School building blocks being constructed - 7
- Construction of dwellings using the bricks - 22
- Construction of houses using the bricks - 98
- Construction of houses using the bricks - 98

Caritas Nepal earthquake recovery locations

- Omkha: Dangbang, Village number 2, Bigu-2, Dolakha
- Sindhulpalchowk: Panauti, 11, Mandeni Deurali-10, and Chauri Bazaar, 1,3,5 of Karpaliwalshe, Dolakha
- Gorkha: Municipality of Gorkha district.

Ms. Durga Deel Nepal says building house with Compressed Soil Earth Blocks (CSEB) bricks has provided comfortable living space for her family. She also adds the structure is strong and earthquake resistant. She notes that Caritas Nepal provided her village CSEB production machines, and trained local Masons to construct houses using the bricks. In this way the 22 Dali households of Dangbang village along with 90 others households in Thukarpa, Sindhulpalchowk now have new CSEB brick houses. Some dali households in the village have also planted coffee and other crops.

Other households have re-established their farming assets.

Shanti, Shanti, Dami and Paheli Dami noted that they have not only built a new house, but worked with Caritas Nepal to build the Sindhulikhor Bandarikh drinking water system. Now safe drinking water is accessible in their front yards. 150 households of this village dug pipes to 500 meters down hill to the Sindhuli river source (Thukarpa, Sindhulpalchowk). The water is pumped to a reservoir above their village using solar technology. The use of solar technology means the villagers do not have to pay regular electricity charges for pumping water. For perennial water scarce areas, the villagers say this is a sensible change that has improved both their physical conditions and reduced mental stress.

79 households of Mahagun are proud owners of newly built brick cement maisonette houses. The households have constructed houses with two rooms. Mahagun is a congested village of fisherfolk in the bank of river Karnali that flows on the border of Chitwan district in Sindhulpalchowk district. The households have not only constructed houses, but also built toilets and are accessing drinking water from a solar driven drinking water system that pumps water from the Indrawati river.

Yeti Airlines offers the widest network in Nepal

Yeti Airlines offers the widest network in Nepal.

Yeti Airlines offers the widest network in Nepal.
Game of Thrones familiar to Nepalis

Every Monday morning for the next few months a lot of Nepalis young and old will be up early to watch it. Yes, not for the Champions League, but for the latest episode of the final season of Game of Thrones.

Our own bloody history of palace intrigues and royal fratricidal purges make Nepal familiar with the conspiracies, back-stabbing, walls and belief in the superman who are capture of the HBO series based on the novels of George R.R. Martin. Those who think there is too much blood and writing, politicking gone on an unreal battle plan only have to look back at Nepal’s own history of massacres at Kat, Bhaneshwor and Narayanhiti to know that this is all too real.

The royal massacre of 2001 is still fresh in many minds, and would have made a good title to start, any melodrama that Hollywood or Bollywood could create. In Nepal may lead the rest of the war in real life bloodbath, but are still behind in their utterance representation. This must be why from the land of the north, the 24 Kingdoms take viciously picturesque in bloody battles in the 7 Kingdoms of Westeros.

There is nothing earth-shattering in the first episode of Season 8. In fact it leaves the viewer distinctly underwhelmed. There are some predictable meetings that flash back to Season 1, Episode 1 almost 10 years ago. Sure, Jon gets an army to try the first time and Targaryen to manoeuvre in a mountain, and sure, Arya has her carpet The Hound, but there is nothing extraordinary or memorable, especially after a long wait to Season 7. That was perhaps to be expected, however, because the episode is only setting the scene for the finale.

The episode did have its moments, one of which was that Cersei, as usual, has a new lover, but this time her brother is not by her side. The fact that she orders her beloved (and impotent) brother Jaime killed is quite a shocker, even for Cersei. Meanwhile, the other queen, Daenerys, known to fit with women, misses badly this time as she comes across a battle-hardened Sansa Stark. The interaction between the two women, friendly up front but simmering with mortal risks below, is something to behold.

And this brings us to the end of the finale, which has been playing for two to three minutes what is going to happen now? You know it in the beginning of the end when the episode goes back to the very beginning, with a huge reunion meeting into Westeros. Hopeful scenes changed, and yet, everything has changed. The Stark are now the secret列车 they used to be, and yet, they continue to be major列车.

Game of Thrones is famous for its spectaculars, While and moral ambiguity in a plot that is like a cross between Romeo & Julietting and The Sopranos. For the past few seasons, as the story focused on the threat of the White Walkers, there have been clearer heroes and anti-heroes. Everything is looking good for Jon Snow, and Daenerys Targaryen in the snow scene towards a significant acting right after all.

Viewers will also notice that the colours palette for this season is relatively muted (blues, greys and the occasional white on Braavos), but none of the iconic blues of Mordor in the flambouyant yellow of Elaria. The colour range owes a lot to the fact that winter has come to the empty north. It also suits the northern mood of the White Walkers’ Army of the undead has finally proven through the maze like wall. The colours are stunning as usual, and there is much to enjoy visually, apart from the drama. The reserve life sequences, for one, includes new locations, new textures and interior of the castles that we’ve previously only seen from outside.

The big reveal of the episode, Jon Snow’s lineage, was not a big surprise to viewers, who have been long ago with their turn to win. But finally something has changed, and the next episode will hopefully see more action along these lines. All along Jon Snow knew nothing, and now, he knows something.

Sewa Bhattarai

US-CHINA BREAKTHROUGH: US Ambassador Randy Berry and Chinese Ambassador Yu Hong during the Bheri-Babai Multipurpose Diversion project breakthrough ceremony in Sukhatar on Tuesday.

SAY “ELECTRIC”: Director General of Global Green Growth Institute, Frank Rkalberman, and Bhuvan Tuladhar of Saih Kalyan sign an agreement in Kathmandu last week.

NO JOKER: Water Resoure Minister Bishnu Prasad Poudel, German Ambassador Roland Schefler and Nepal Community Party leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal during an inauguration of an exhibition on German’s renewable energy plan at Fruenok Campus.

HERITAGE LIVE: Charge d’affairs and Deputy Head of EU Delegation to Nepal, Zane Peter, and Multipurpose Thimi with Mayor Milan Sunar Sherpa on Monday to observe Bisket Jatra.

HIMALAYAN FELLOWS: Author Robin Bourne (left) and Peter Hillary at the launch of a new edition of the book ‘The Great Himalayan Thrill Kathmandu’ on Wednesday.
Meet Nirmala Pariyar, 11, who lost her leg when she was trapped under a brick wall during the 2015 earthquake. Despite her trauma, Nirmala (pictured above) is confident, self-sufficient and full of hope for the future. She is a fan of Nepali actress Rekha Thapa, and says she wants to be a heroine like her. "I want to take dance classes despite my leg, but cannot afford it," she says, worldly. Although he got help from charities, Pariyar’s family has already spent 625,000 on his daughter’s treatment, raising cash by selling some of its farm in Dolkha. The government has promised to bear the cost of treatment those wounded in the earthquake. But family is still in debt and any of that support. Her father says he was so preoccupied with saving his daughter’s life that he did not keep the bills.

Kamal Saphota

Nirmala Pariyar’s 2nd life

Nirmala Pariyar was seven and studying in Grade 2 in Chitwan when she decided to accompany her mother to kill her father, Prem Bahadur Pariyar, who worked in a garment factory in Kathmandu. What was supposed to be a joyful holiday turned into a traumatic event that turned her young life upside down.

Nirmala arrived in Kathmandu on 23 April 2015, and was supposed to take a bus back to Chitwan on 30 April. She had gone to a friend’s house on the 22nd and was walking to the house. Just before noon, the house started shaking. She ran out with two friends, but a brick wall collapsed on them. Passersby rescued two of her battered friends right away, but did not see Nirmala under the rubble. Someone thought she had escaped, and rushed her to the Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu, which was teeming with injured survivors. Her right leg had been so smashed that the hospital offered her to the Trauma Centre, where doctors decided to amputate her leg while she was still unconscious.

Nirmala’s parents reached the hospital, and were at her side when she finally regained consciousness four days later. The girl did not realize she had lost her leg, but when she saw her bandaged stub she fainted again.

After four months at the hospital, Nirmala moved to a guest house in Sandara, paid for by a charity that also helped her with an artificial leg. “It was really difficult to get used to the new leg, and I was primitive,” Nirmala, now 11, recalls. “But now I can move around without a crutch or wheelchair. I can still play but only badminton and table tennis.”

Despite her trauma, Nirmala (pictured above) is confident, self-sufficient and full of hope for the future. She is a fan of Nepali actress Rekha Thapa, and says she wants to be a heroine like her. “I want to take dance classes despite my leg, but cannot afford it,” she says, worldly. Although he got help from charities, Pariyar’s family has already spent 625,000 on his daughter’s treatment, raising cash by selling some of its farm in Dolkha. The government has promised to bear the cost of treatment those wounded in the earthquake. But family is still in debt and any of that support. Her father says he was so preoccupied with saving his daughter’s life that he did not keep the bills.

Kamal Saphota
Shaking up the health sector

Nepal’s hospitals have not even recovered from the 2015 earthquake, and now need to be ready for the Next Big One

Sewa Bhattarai

The project is supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), built by consultant Hazama Ando and is expected to be handed over on 15 May. The 2015 earthquake damaged 1,197 health facilities across Nepal, offering them a chance to rebuild so they can withstand future quakes. A survey done before the 2015 disaster had shown that of the 14 hospitals tested in Kathmandu, only 6 (Teaching Hospital and Patan Hospital, built by the Japanese) were seismic resistant. The situation in other parts of the country was even worse.
JICA is working to rebuild modern and safe hospital wings at Patpabari Maternity Hospital (Jhapa), eight and Bir Hospital, both in Kathmandu. They will enjoy advanced technologies like motion-sensor taps in order to reduce infections in wardrooms, flash systems that reuse water from handwashing, handicapped-friendly toilets and treatment plants for hospital waste. Elsewhere in the quake-affected areas, however, reconstruction of health facilities is not going as well. Only 35% of the health posts and hospitals that were damaged or destroyed have been repaired, according to the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA).
“Construction of hospitals was delayed due to technical reasons, but now they are our top priority,” says Manohar Ghimire of the NRA. “Of the 64 structures built, most are prefabricated structures which have already been handed over to the communities. Now we are focusing on rebuilding the rest.” The reconstruction of health facilities was delayed because the central government could not agree on who should rebuild them. The Ministry of Health and Population had planned to do it, before passing it on to the NRA almost a year after the earthquake, where the plans faced further delays. That cost a total delay of two years, resulting in a reconstruction rate of only 55%.

Prakriti Kandel

in Kavre

A t the edge of Tilka Vidyalaya School in Sanga rises a new, three-storey building, much bigger than the one destroyed in the earthquake. The classrooms are airy, bright and spacious, the staircases are wide and there is even a balcony that overlooks the courtyard.

The government school was built 70 years ago with local bricks, and had to be deconstructed after the 2015 earthquake. The new blocks have been designed and built with reinforced concrete to be earthquake resistant, as well as to provide a child-friendly, comfortable environment.

“The old school was dark, and the students looked gloomy. But the new classrooms provide a much better environment for children, and even the teachers are happy with the improved facilities,” says Sushil Raj Karki, who teaches English and computer science.

The government school has been one of the lucky ones. Many government schools in the earthquake area have not only been rebuilt, but they have also been built back better.

Tilka School’s reconstruction is financed by loans from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the Nepalese government. The main academic block of the school now has six rooms, a building for science practicals is being erected nearby with four large rooms spanning over two floors that will house a library, science lab, computer room and music room.

Tilka School is among 8,000 schools undergoing reconstruction after being damaged in the earthquake. A majority of them are government schools and follow similar earthquake-resistant designs created by the Central Level Project Implementation Unit under the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA).

Ramesh Paudel

in Kathmandu

Engineers from the District Level Project Implementation Unit (DLPIU) oversee the reconstruction and ensure that quality is maintained. The NRA says 4,201 of the damaged and destroyed schools have been rebuilt while 2,479 schools are under construction with help from various donors like JICA, USAID, and private groups.

One private group working to rebuild schools is Sustainable Futures, which uses non-traditional building technologies that are said to be environmentally friendly and earthquake resistant. Two schools destroyed in the earthquake, Dwarkapalwor and Bagawari schools of Kavre district, are being rebuilt using rammed-earth technology.

Sustainable Futures is also involved in the project that is using the same technology to expand Sayapaha Hospital in Achham, a facility run by the organisation Possible under a public-private-partnership with the central government. Sustainable Future collaborated with Namaste Nepal in building Segwari school.

“Rammed earth uses locally available mud and manure to compress the walls of the schools, making the buildings better suited for the local climate,” explains Nainar Asharya of Sustainable Futures. Compost is used in the upper and lower tiers so that the vertical and horizontal rods going within the mud walls are well connected. This makes the buildings stronger than traditional reinforced concrete structures.

“At first we thought ‘How can we build a school out of mud?,’ but we realized that there were huge benefits,” recalls Shiv Prasad Baja, chairperson of Dwarkapalwor School Management Committee. “It is fast here in the summer and very cold in winters, and the mud architecture has insulating properties.”

To the north in Siddhauli, the Bhote Nalam school was also completely destroyed during the earthquake and was reconstructed with the support of Helium Education Lifelink Partnership (HELP). The school now has 22 rooms; 12 were new and 10 were retrofitted and six additional rooms were built by the HELP.

Bhote Nalam school serves as the education hub of its community, and it was the local people who took charge of the reconstruction, with help from New Zealand and UK-based organizations. The school was reconstructed using local skills and material without any contractors. Architects listened to the local people’s needs before submitting their design. The school’s frame structure ensures that it is earthquake resistant.

Bhote Nalam has 675 students, and faced a shortage of classrooms and furniture for four years after the earthquake. But today, there are bright modern classrooms, and the students are happy, says Jimmy Lama of HELP, adding that now new sections can be added to accommodate more students.

Apart from being earthquake resistant, many of the rebuilt schools now have much better infrastructure than they did before 2015, allowing them to focus on improving the quality of instruction.

The only problem is that with accelerated outmigration after the earthquake, the villages are being depopulated and there are fewer children. The hope is that with better schools, some of the families who have migrated to the cities may actually return.

Says Baja of Dwarkapalwor school, “Now that we no longer have to worry about infrastructure, we are thinking of expanding the school to Grade 10 and investing in better teachers and improved quality.”
The 2015 earthquake destroyed not just private homes, but also many public buildings like health and educational institutions. The rebuilding of schools and hospitals is going on at a rapid pace, incorporating new earthquake-resistant technologies. Follow our reporters to see just how this is happening.

FOUR YEARS ON

Kathmandu also showed that Nepal’s health care centres are structurally unprepared for future large-scale disasters. Although services and facilities in some of the hospitals have improved, the structures within which they are housed are weak and could collapse.

Kathmandu’s oldest medical centre, Bir Hospital, is in the heart of the city, has no space for expansion. After the 2015 earthquake damaged its mortuary, the hospital is constructing a new building in its place, which will also house its nephrology, cardiology and gastrology departments, but it is still short of space.

“Even after we start using our new facilities, we will need more space for the nursing campus, pediatric and maternity departments, organ transplant centre and many other services,” says Bir’s director Kedar Prasad Century, adding that there is no option but to expand to Dhevakot in Bhaktapur, outside of Kathmandu.

Hospitals with large capacity will be in demand after the next earthquake, and if they are knocked out of service, the injured will have nowhere to go. In 2015, many hospitals worked in the open or out of tents for months after the earthquake.

To avoid such situations, it is imperative that the reconstruction and refitting of hospitals be carried out with the utmost priority,” says NEFi’s Guragain.

If this is the situation in Nepal’s privileged capital, one can only imagine what it is like in district hospitals. Many of the buildings are in advanced stages of disrepair, lack hygiene and are overcrowded, even in normal times. During disasters, hospitals will have to cope with a large influx of patients but the medical centres themselves will have suffered damage.

CATCHING UP: A new wing of Panchkhal Maternity and Women’s Hospital under construction at Panchkhal (left). Nepal’s oldest maternity hospital is currently operating out of cramped quarters, forced to put some beds in corridors due to lack of space (below).
Earth Day Resolutions

It’s another Earth Day next week, and we are lucky we still have a Planet to observe it in with various activities like cutting back on fossil fuels by diluting our diesel with water. Scientists recently announced in the journal Nature that trees do not only give off oxygen, but also methane, which is a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide.

Being alert to the latest scientific discoveries, GONE has therefore launched a tree-planting campaign on a war-footing. The grabbersneed announced a target of moving down forests of an average district in the forthcoming fiscal year. Cutting down 2.5 million trees to build the new airport in Nilghed alone will reduce the amount of methane we pump into the atmosphere and help cool the planet.

We may have been barkin up the wrong trees all these years by trying to increase forest cover in this country. There is really no other option but to start destroying our forests all over again and not let them ever grow back. And we have no time to loo, so let’s get cracking.

There are lots of other things we can do individually and collectively on Earth Day to save the Planet, here are 10 tips:
1. Immediately set a time limit on speeches by all Cabinet ministers to less than five minutes to reduce the emission of hot air.
2. Stop breathing. Every breath you take consumes precious atmospheric oxygen and gives off harmful carbon dioxide. Remember, every molecule counts.
3. Stop fasting around.
4. Besides 30 million Nepalis, there are 22 million cows and 17 million goats in Nepal and if all of them felt free to pass wind without let or hindrance imagine the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. And we’re not even counting yaks, water buffaloes and Asses here, and we all know how embarrassing those three animals can be in polite company.
5. Organise maha yaga in Tundikhel for harmony in the universe and burn 10 tons of rice seeds, 400kg of ghee, and feed 108 Brahmins.
6. Immediately scrap the Community Forestry Program.
7. Create an artificial shortage of petrol and LPG to reduce Nepal’s petroleum import bill and emission of carbon dioxide, but I notice the government has already thought of that.
8. Stop using plastic straws, pour the margarita straight into your mouth using a funnel. And while we are at it, we should also ban plastic surgery.
9. Nepal reduced its carbon footprint by closing down Kathmandu airport 19 hours a day. We can easily increase this to 20 hours a day and do out bit for The Planet.
10. Ask Pashupatinath one last time to protect us all.