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Gagancare

Health Minister Gagan Thapa hit the ground running when he took office seven months ago. Even though he hasn't been able to launch a national health insurance plan, sick infants will now get free treatment, and the government will pay for patients needing dialysis and kidney transplants.

Thapa's new year gift to Nepalis hasn't gone unnoticed, and some of his fans have even proposed that he declare his candidacy for mayor of Kathmandu in the 14 May elections. But, in an interview (page 9) Thapa says he still has a lot more to do. "People are worried how the government can afford all this free treatment, but no government can run from this basic responsibility to

provide this kind of health service to the people. It's not a luxury, it's mandated."


That may be easier said than done, and Thapa seems to be walking too fast for his ministry to keep pace. Health Secretary Senendra Raj Uprety says there has been no official decision on the announcement about free kidney transplants. Bhola Ram Shrestha of the Health Ministry says they are looking at options: "Now that the minister has announced it, we have to find the money. But there will be a budget for this in the next fiscal year."

Waiting for his dialysis at Bir Hospital this week, Gopal Sarki praised Thapa: "We need more ministers like him." Kidney patients get Rs 300,000 for transplants but the


actual cost is Rs 450,000, even if they find a family donor. The government will now cover the shortfall. Previously, kidney patients received free dialysis twice a week for two years. Last year, Prime Minister K P Oli (who has had a double kidney transplant) announced free, lifelong dialysis to patients. Thapa went a step further and announced three free dialysis sessions a week.

But hospitals are finding it hard to cope. A doctor at Bir Hospital told *Nepali Times* the decision was not realistic: "There is a long waiting list of patients, and we are finding it difficult to offer dialysis even twice a week."

There are only 200 dialysis machines at 36 hospitals in Nepal, so only about 1,000 patients get the treatment. Besides transplants and dialysis, patients also need support for expensive medicines (see page 8-9).

"Free transplant will reduce the number of patients needing dialysis," says Toyenath Dawadi of National Kidney Centre. "But we still need many more dialysis machines."  **Om Astha Rai**

#NepalQuake
25 April 2015



2 years after

Receiving End

Two years after the earthquake, the tale of a village in Chitwan that fell through the cracks because the district is not officially among those listed as affected. And how the earthquake changed the lives of a Nepali couple and their Danish friend forever.

PAGE 14-15

Exposure to expression

Children in an earthquake-ravaged village are given digital cameras to explore their lives.

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SECOND CHANCE

EDITORIAL

PAGE 2



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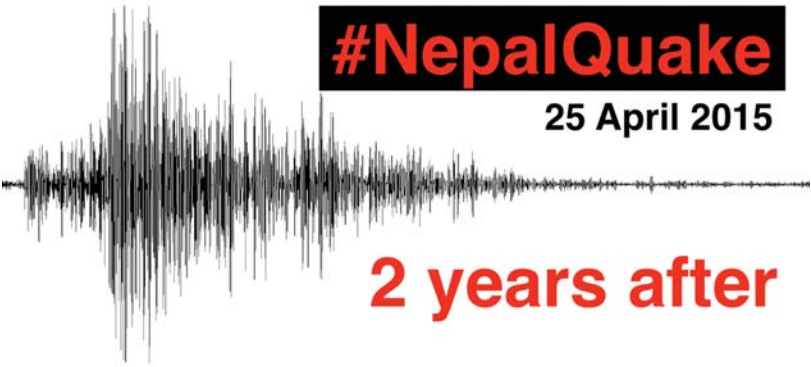
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SECOND CHANCE

It is hard to believe that it has already been two years since an earthquake devastated Central Nepal, leaving nearly 9,000 people dead, more than 2 million homeless and a country in a state of shock. Although the loss of life and destruction was tragic, Nepal got off lightly. Only 14 of the country's 75 districts were affected, the frequency and duration of the shock waves meant that concrete structures were spared, and 25 April 2015 being Saturday saved thousands of school children.

There were important lessons we could have learnt about preparedness for the inevitable Even Bigger One. Post-earthquake reconstruction provided the perfect opportunity to reverse the out-



migration of young men. Political parties had the chance to prove that they had the welfare of Nepalis foremost in their minds. The aftermath of the earthquake should have shaken us enough for parliament to finally set up the Disaster Management Authority to deal with future calamities. We squandered it all.

Relief and rescue could have been better managed if there were elected local councils accountable to the people. Finally, there is a glimmer of hope that we may have elections on 14 May for village, district and municipal bodies. But as the second anniversary approaches, there isn't much more to add to a similar editorial we wrote last year in this space on the first anniversary.

The only difference is that the lack of urgency on the part of the state is even more glaring. Mired in politics and competition to take credit for relief, political parties have cancelled themselves

out – leaving the people to largely fend for themselves. The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) has been bogged down by the NC and UML taking turns to oust and induct their own chiefs.

The NRA headed by Govind Pokharel got off to a fine start in 2015, and won the confidence of donors. But after it came to power, the UML replaced him with its own flunkie. Pokharel was recently reinstated, but he is being made to jump through hoops by political appointees within the NRA.

The agency has become a convenient lightning rod for blame, to let a lethargic government machinery off the hook. The NRA has only a coordinating role, and needs a nod from the Ministry of

Finance for every paisa; all reconstruction work is coursed through other ministries where there is little coordination. In a candid interview last week, Pokharel told us that this was not the NRA he had envisaged in the 2015 Post Disaster Needs Assessment report. We endorse his call for the NRA to be able to manage its own funds.

And speaking of funds, Nepal has actually received less than a third of the \$9.38 billion the NRA estimated it needed to rebuild homes, public buildings and infrastructure. Of the \$4.1 billion pledged by donors in 2015, only \$2.73 billion has actually materialised (most of it in loans). This is not even enough for the housing grant of Rs 300,000 per family, which itself is inadequate to rebuild. The NRA has come up with a new affordable design, but there seems little interest.

The main takeaway on the second anniversary is: International help has fallen far short of pledges and is much less than the amount actually needed, a lot of it is not going through the NRA, and (as in other spheres of development) the government has failed in coordination.

GUEST EDITORIAL R K AGRAWAL

Saving our kidneys

The number of young Nepalis suffering from kidney problems and seeking treatment is increasing dramatically. This should be a matter of serious concern for families and the nation, because failing to take care of our kidneys will add to the burden on our healthcare system.

The causes of kidney diseases in younger patients are different than those in the elderly population. The primary reason for kidney failures among the youth is Glomerulonephritis – an immunological disease aggravated by infections caused by problems related to lifestyle and the environment, like poor sanitation, drinking water, pollution and consumption of junk food.

About 80 per cent of Glomerulonephritis cases are primary, meaning that they are caused by altered immunological factors. In the remaining cases, the causes are secondary, led by infections. Increased use of painkillers and other drugs are also causing Glomerulonephritis.

We can save young kidneys by raising awareness about Glomerulonephritis so younger people can take preventive action. A simple urine examination is all it takes to detect the affliction, and if treated early, more than 90 per cent of cases can be cured. But late detection and lack of treatment may force the patient's kidneys to fail, forcing dialysis treatment or even transplantation.

The government has made dialysis free, and has also announced that kidney transplants will be free from this month. Scaling up these services is important, but what is even more important is to prevent kidneys from failing in the first place.



R K Agrawal is the Head of the Nephrology Department at Bir Hospital

Nepali Times.com

ONLINE VIDEOS



DIALYSIS LIFE

Having spent years toiling in the desert of Qatar, Morang's Badri Bhandari and his brother-in-law Bhakta Tamang had dreamed of coming back to a prosperous and healthy life. Instead they have ended up at Bir Hospital for their twice-weekly kidney dialysis. Hear Bhandari and Tamang talk about their ordeal, just two of many Nepali migrant workers who have suffered kidney failures.



GAGAN STYLE

As Health Minister, Gagan Thapa has tried to be a doer instead of a talker. In the seven months since he took office he has cracked down on politicians going abroad for treatment, promised to improve regional hospitals, and expanded free treatment of serious illnesses. Go online and watch Minister Thapa share his future plans.



LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

While the debate on whether modern materials and techniques can be used in the restoration of built heritage continues, an artisan father and son from Bhaktapur carry on the ancestral occupation of woodwork. Log on to *Nepali Times* online to watch two generations in action renovating a temple in Mahaboudhha.

UPDATE



Many *Nepali Times* readers were so moved by the story of two-year-old Buddha Maya Biswakarma (#850) they contributed for the welfare of the severely malnourished child. As of 6 April, Rs 82,190 had been collected.

The Sundar Dhoka Foundation has moved Buddha Maya and her mother to a care facility in Nakkhu. Buddha Maya has been diagnosed with Atrial Septal Defect (ASD), and needs medical care.

Some of the donation money was used to buy the family a mobile phone before Buddha Maya's father and four sisters returned to Dang. Rs 14,000 will be used to pay off the loan the family took for two goats.

Contributors can send suggestions of how the rest of the money can get the Biswakarma family back on its feet.

Write to: editors@nepalitimes.com by 13 April 2017.

Go online to watch heartbreaking video of the Biswakarma family struggling to keep their daughter alive.

WHAT'S TRENDING



Broken promises

by Om Astha Rai

Most media coverage on the first anniversary of the earthquake zeroed in on slow reconstruction, delayed relief and the \$4 billion pledged by donors squandered. All that is true. But it is also true that only about half the money pledged international donors has actually been received.

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From New Road to New York

by Tsering Dolker Gurung

"I have got used to the apathy and anonymity," Phiroj Shyangden tells *Nepali Times* from New York. He has no regrets leaving 1974 AD and fame behind in Nepal.

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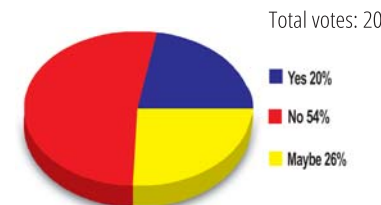
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Two years after the earthquake hundreds of thousands of people are still in temporary housing. Trauma unabated

Nepali Times

Weekly Internet Poll #853

Q. Is the National Reconstruction Authority back on track?



Weekly Internet Poll #854
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Can Nepal afford all the free health services that Gagan Thapa is promising?



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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 santosh@himalmedia.com
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GOPEN RAI

THE PLACE OF NEPALI

We must accept the fact that the emplacement of Nepali as the state language and lingua franca of the country has resulted in weakening of the numerous



ON THE WAY UP
Kanak Mani Dixit

tongues of this diverse land. But one question to ponder is what language would have taken over if not Nepali, under the nation-state that emerged two-and-a-half centuries ago.

It may have been *Newa Bhae* (Nepal Bhasa), radiating out of Kathmandu Valley with its *Ranjana lipi* script, had the Malla kings decided to go on a campaign of conquest. Or it could have been Maithili, used with regularity in the royal courts of 'Nepal Valley'. Had it been up to some political leaders after the fall of the Rana regime, Hindi would have been foisted from the top.

But it was Gorkhali/Nepali that made headway, and not only because it was the tongue of the conquering Khas. The well-known linguist George

van Driem, expert on languages of the Himalaya, proposes that Nepali has spread far and wide not so much because it was an imperial tongue but because it is a language with dynamism.

He says: "Nepali is a sophisticated and successful language. The reasons for its success are diverse and complex and the linguistic topography needs study by social scientists." By 'linguist topography,' van Driem says he means "the entire constellation of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors which determine the robustness of a language."

Kyare and Byare
Nepali spread over hill and plain for numerous reasons, most importantly the patronage of the Kathmandu state and the push given it in the modern era by King Mahendra in the 1960s. In large part this was done as a tool of administrative control, but many in the intelligentsia of the time were also committed to developing a language for diverse communities to communicate and find common cause.

There are many other engines that helped spread Nepali across the rugged countryside. Nepali was the link language

of the Brigade of Gurkhas during the British Raj, and demobilised Gurkha (read *janajati*) soldiers returning to home villages from the battlefields of WW I, WWII, the Waziristan campaign, etc. helped spread Nepali into the capillaries. Many carried with them Bhanubhakta's *Ramayan*, printed in Benaras.

In the modern era, modern Nepali 'folk music' incorporated (some would say captured) local tunes and music genres, which lent dynamic flair and acceptability to the language as spread by Radio Nepal (and later the hundreds of FM radio stations).

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NEPAL
WHEREVER
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Study may show that Nepali’s evolution differed from the other Sanskrit-based sister languages of South Asia, such as Bangla or Hindi, because of its engagement with diverse local tongues over the centuries. Evolving in the western midhills, having to communicate across geographies and demographies, something seems to have happened that as yet we recognise in shape but not in depth.

One facet of the dynamism seems to be Nepali’s ability to address complex thoughts and emotions with brevity and simplicity. As the Himalayanist Ted Riccardi of Columbia University told a gathering in Patan a couple of years ago, the distinction between *byare* and *kyare* can be held up as an example of simple words carrying great nuance which in many other languages would require lengthy description.

Malai timi man parchha kyare, would translate crudely as – ‘I have a feeling that I probably like you’. Whereas *Malai timi man parchha byare* would mean – ‘I am saying that I actually like you regardless of what may be the impression others (or I myself) may have been giving’.

Onomatopoeia

But it is in onomatopoeia that Nepali excels, providing colour, texture and oral energy to communication. In the 1950s, the progressive troubadour Kalanath Adhikari sang a series of songs that were confidently off-metre,



Kalanath Adhikari, the singing progressive. Portrait by the late Kamal Dixit.

in colloquial Nepali, full of metaphysical references and calls to social transformation.

Kalanath used the Nepali language in its full range and potential, with a message that remains relevant amidst today’s ennui, but you will have to go to YouTube to listen to his songs as he awaits rediscovery.

In *Yo jaldo philingo*, Kalanath spins a powerful narrative out of the study of an ember – the glowing remnants of what people think of as a dying fire. For Kalanath, the ember (*philingo* – probably a word taken etymologically from one of the hill vernaculars) is actually a

metaphor for society’s power of renewal and rejuvenation.

The interlocutor is asked not to ignore the ember, even if she/he is otherwise disinterested, and to at least look at it *pulukka*. I can only try to translate this onomatopoeic term – it renders a glance that is simultaneously inquisitive and diffident.

Lucky a language (and its users) which can describe descending water in so many different ways, from the *simsim* of light drizzle, to *dhararara* of deluge, the *salalala* of smooth flow, *tuptup* of droplets hitting a hard surface, to the *gadgad-gadgad* of a mountain river in spate.

Insularity

We may accept that at least some of the reason that Nepali has struck root in the central Himalaya is its vibrancy linked to inherent strengths and osmosis with surrounding tongues. The advantages of vigour and acceptability has meant that within the confines of this non-colonised country’s borders, there is not the English vs. Vernacular divide you find in other parts of South Asia.

But when it comes to projecting Nepal and its challenges to the outside world, or understanding subcontinental and global trends in order to fashion a domestic response – the insularity promoted by the embrace of Nepali has been troubling. This will be the topic for discussion in my next column. 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Further flights

Turkish Airlines has introduced flights to Voronezh in Russia, with a round trip fare of \$189 between Istanbul and



Voronezh. The flight will be operated thrice a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. With this addition, the carrier now flies to 298 destinations in 120 countries.

On air cargo

Qatar Airways Cargo has started freighter service to Cambodia’s capital city, Phnom Penh. The state-owned flag carrier of



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Laxmi InterContinental Pvt. Ltd, the authorised distributor of Hyundai vehicles, has introduced the new bold and stylish Grand i10 with hi-tech



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Mustang adventure

Ford is joining hands with Yeti Travel for a seven-day off-road adventure drive



to Lo Manthang. The event is being organised to promote use of SUVs in such terrain and to encourage tourism beyond Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan.



THE GREAT HIMAL RACE/FACEBOOK

Racing through the Himal

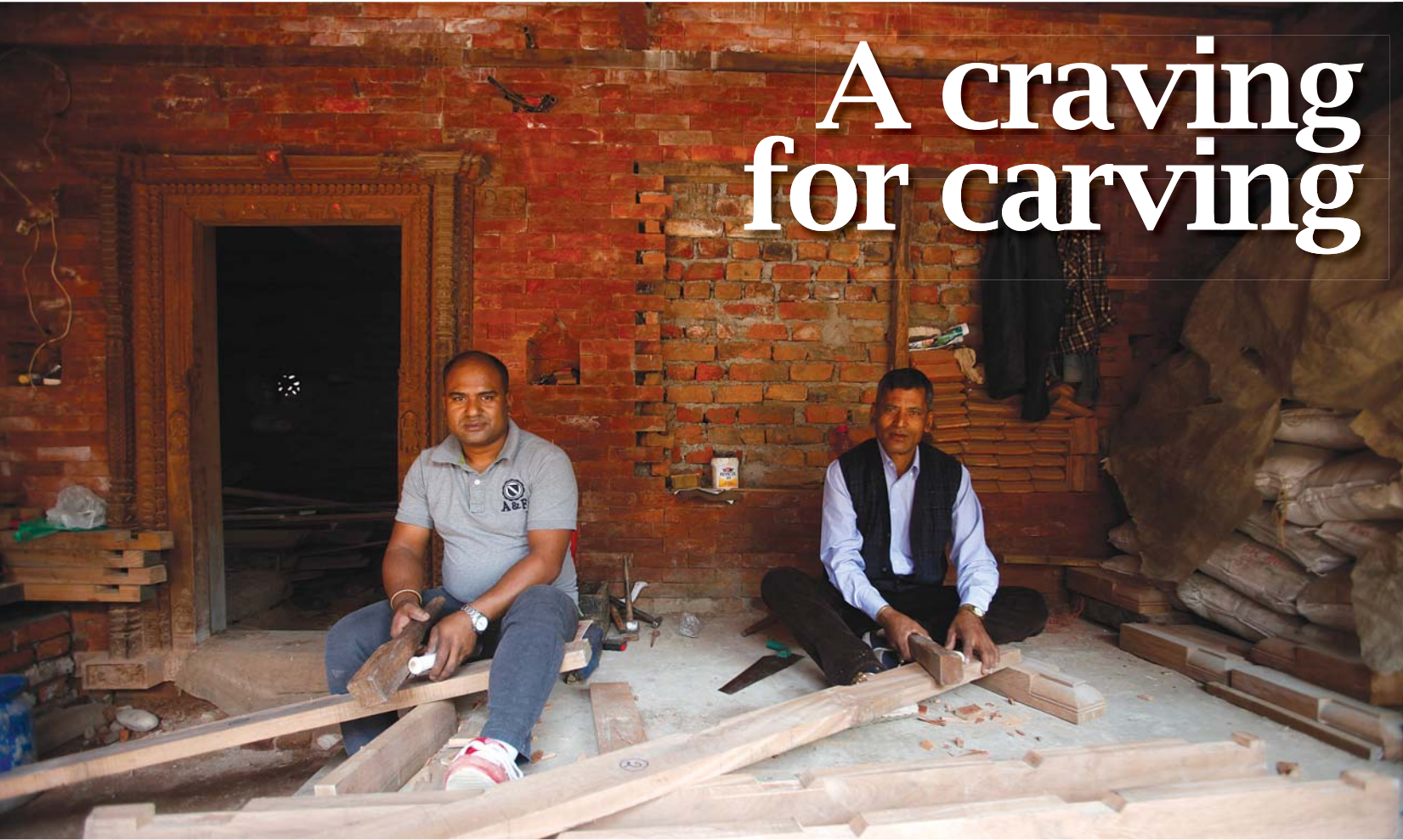
As you read this, more than three dozen athletes have begun a more than 1,400km race through the Nepalese Himalaya, from East to West. Starting near Kanchenjunga Base Camp in Taplejung (5,140m), on 6 April, they will follow the Great Himalayan Trail, winding through Langtang, Ganesh Himal, Manaslu, Mustang, Dolpa and Humla Valley, before ending at Hilsa at Nepal’s border with Tibet. At their highest point, the racers will reach an altitude of 5,800m.

One of the longest foot races on earth, through the world’s greatest mountain range, people also refer to the Great Himal Race as “the race you can see from the moon”. This year, participants will traverse the entire Nepalese Himalaya for the first time. In 2016, the race also started in Taplejung, but ended in Kathmandu.

The Great Himal Race was organised by Bruno Poirier, who himself ran across Nepal in 1994, along with the French running collective. Apart from many French and other international runners, eight Nepalis will also participate. Runners have chosen to run solo or in a team of two or three. They will receive assistance every five-seven days.



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A craving for carving

Artisan father and son carry on the ancestral occupation of woodworking



PICS: BIKRAM RAI

ANUSHKA TULADHAR

When your father’s resume includes building Kathmandu’s famous temples, you have your work cut out if you intend to follow in his footsteps.

Despite that, Ratna Sundar Silpakar made the brave decision to emulate his famous dad, Mangal Bahadur Silpakar, but changing times have complicated that choice.

Both father and son uphold the tradition of wood carving, but are pragmatic when it comes to adapting to modern construction techniques, especially after the earthquake destroyed many of

Kathmandu Valley’s monuments.

Mangal Silpakar has in the past worked on the Aakash Bhairab shrine, the Mahaboudha temple, *Dyo Chhen* at Tebahal, the Naksal Bhagawati, Dhumbarahi Mahadev Mandir and the reconstruction of Hanuman Dhoka museum.

Today, both father and son acknowledge the challenge of finding the right raw materials in post-earthquake rebuilding. Reconstruction is not an exact science, and they try to get the original design of fallen monuments from the municipality, but these are usually not accurate.

“In the case of temples that got damaged during the earthquake and don’t have any measurements, we look at the available



SAZIYA SHRESTHA

photographs and estimate the dimensions,” explains Mangal, who has in the past used steel beams for the wooden dalin while working on the *Dyo Chhen* at Mahaboudha because a 13-foot

timber span was unavailable.

Even the traditional bajra mortar has been modified for strength. The original 1:1 ratio of *surki* and *chun* has been replaced with one part cement

since the limestone is not of the required quality. The father notes that the time taken to make a temple is directly proportional to the availability of raw materials.

Ratna Silpakar graduated from Bhaktapur Multiple College but dabbled in wood carving only as a hobby as he tried a few salaried jobs. He eventually came back to what he felt was his true calling: learning the art of wood carving under the patient and diligent tutelage of his father, whose own knowledge was passed down from generation to generation.

In his early days, Ratna began with simple designs and small souvenir items for tourists. Eventually, like his father, he was confident enough to attempt reconstructing temples.

We ask Mangal what difference he sees in the profession of wood carving today: “There is much more use of machines now to cut wood, but the final product is inferior to hand-carved items.” He takes his father’s advice and uses chisels and tools that haven’t changed in nine centuries.

But the real challenge is to find the right type and quality of wood.

Ratna is an exception in Kathmandu: most from his generation have not followed their ancestral professions, preferring to migrate for work or study abroad. He says he has found his life’s passion, and believes there is enough work to make a decent living.

What hasn’t changed are the qualities needed by a successful carver. Says Mangal Silpakar: “Carving is a skill that requires lifelong devotion and practice. You learn from your mistakes, and you get better with every item you carve.”

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LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

While post-earthquake reconstruction is in limbo, this father-son duo are tirelessly working to renovate a temple in Mahaboudha. Watch the two in action.

nepalitimes.com



The temperature is finally climbing to the high 20s, which means summer is here. Unless it gets really hot, we know that the monsoon will not be healthy. So we will have to endure 27-28 degrees over the weekend. There is a band of clouds riding a westerly moving across Central Nepal on Friday that may trigger afternoon thunderstorms along the mountains, but the weekend should be mainly clear, and hot. Mornings will still be cool, but the minimum temperature is now into the teens.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 27° 14°	 27° 13°	 28° 12°



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SONIA AWALE

Tap and tour

Bhuntu is a smart phone app that explains Nepal’s culture from the perspective of locals

CLARA BULLOCK

In a small office space across from City Centre mall, programmers, researchers and interns are busy developing a new smart-phone app. Bhuntu will be a tool for tourists who want to discover Nepal’s culture. Sumana Shrestha started the project when she realised that a lot of tourists she met had a wrong picture of Nepal’s culture. “They’d say things about the Kumari or traditions that were just wrong,” Shrestha says. “We wanted to change that.”

Shrestha wants to show tourists how she sees her country: she views Nepali culture as made up of many layers, but most people usually only see a few of them. Bhuntu is supposed to reveal the layers they’ve missed.

Naming the app Bhuntu, small child, is not a coincidence. The app is supposed to awaken the childish enthusiasm of discovering and learning about new things.

“Children are curious about everything and they want to know more about the world they live in. We want grown-ups to rediscover that curiosity,” Shrestha says. To achieve this, the app has three features. The events section explains important festivals and holidays going on in Nepal. The team will host their own events as well, for example food tastings. The group also researched information about all the important attractions in Kathmandu and hired locals to record tours. In section two, those tours can be purchased and listened to so tourists can explore buildings, places and streets.

The third feature is a platform for meeting people: everyone who has the app can add interests to their profile and meet likeminded tourists who might want to accompany them on their adventures.

However, the app is not only meant for visitors. Shrestha wants to make the information accessible to Nepalis as well. “Even people in Kathmandu don’t know everything about their heritage,” she says. “We offer the app itself and the events section for free, so locals can learn more about the traditions too.” Bhuntu is part of Shrestha’s bigger goal of preserving Nepal’s heritage. She believes protecting the culture starts with educating people about history and traditions. Plus, the group will donate a percentage of the income from sales of the app to the preservation of heritage sites. They believe everyone working in the tourism industry should do so: that way there would be regular income for maintenance, and the cultural sites essential to Kathmandu’s tourism would retain their attraction.

Download and discover

Bhuntu is not the only app that helps people discover Kathmandu and Nepal. From finding domestic flights to booking a trek, there’s almost nothing you can’t do with your smart phone. Here is a selection of a few helpful apps.

Nepal Flights

If you want to go outside of Kathmandu but avoid buses, Nepal Flights offers domestic flights. You can book on various airlines flying to Pokhara, Biratnagar, Bhairahawa, Bharatpur and more.

Taxi Fares Nepal

One of the most annoying things for tourists in Kathmandu is when taxi drivers charge too much. This neatly arranged app shows the common price for whatever route you are about to take. Additionally, it mentions waiting charges and night prices. This app might also be useful for locals.

Yellow Nepal

Whenever you’re in a new part of town and fancy a nice dinner at a restaurant, this app will help. Yellow Nepal uses your GPS to find restaurants near you, and provides their details and reviews. It will also let you know about events and deals near you.

Honey Guide

Honey Guide is a trekking app that helps guide you through the Himalaya. It offers treks to Everest base Camp, ABC and Poon Hill. Aside from showing you the way, it reviews lodges and details on places along the way.



PeakLens

While you’re out trekking with Honey Guide, you might want to know more about the mountains around you. With PeakLens when you focus on a particular peak you will see its name and altitude. You can also add the names of mountains to photos in your gallery.



NEPAL
WHEREVER
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Nepali
Times.com

A mysterious rash of kidney failures

There is an alarming increase in renal failures among Nepali migrants working in the searing heat of the Gulf

OM ASTHA RAI



Bhakta Tamang and his brother-in-law Badri Bhandari have a few things in common: both worked in the Gulf, are 33-years-old – and both lost their kidneys in their 20s.

Tamang was working in Bahrain when he started having high fever, headaches and swollen limbs. He was just 27 when doctors told him both his kidneys had failed. Bhandari had just got back home after working in Qatar when he found out at age 25

that his kidneys were no longer functioning.

Two years after Bhandari began having dialysis, Tamang joined him. They left their homes in Morang, and now share a rented flat in Kathmandu to visit Bir Hospital for dialysis on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Every time they walk out of the dialysis room, a man in his late 40s is waiting for his turn. He is Gopal Sarki from Ramechhap, and he too lost his kidney shortly after

returning from Qatar eight years ago.

Nepal is now facing an alarming trend of kidney disease among its younger population, a significant number of them migrant workers, who are more vulnerable to renal failure because of tough physical labour in the desert, where they are often dehydrated.

“The conditions are difficult, they sweat a lot and do not drink enough water: that is why so



Staying alive

By now, 22-year-old Dhan Bahadur Bohara (*pictured*) should be graduating from college and getting a job. But the young man from Bajhang in the far-western mountains could not complete his school education, and is now spending hours at the hospital just to stay alive.

When he was giving SLC exams five years ago, Bohara vomited blood and was rushed to hospital. He never returned to school, and both his kidneys failed. He was lucky to receive a new kidney from his mother, and lived a much better life for three years. But then his body rejected his mother’s kidney, and he has needed dialysis ever since.

“I spend three days a week at hospital, and this is the only work I do,” says Bohara, who now lives in a rented room in Kathmandu with his 20-year-old wife and two-year-old daughter. His wife does not have a job either. He receives monthly for expenses from his father, who has migrated to work in India.

Bohara is one of the thousands of young Nepalis suffering from chronic kidney damage, and can survive only if he gets a new kidney, or keeps having dialysis at least twice a week.

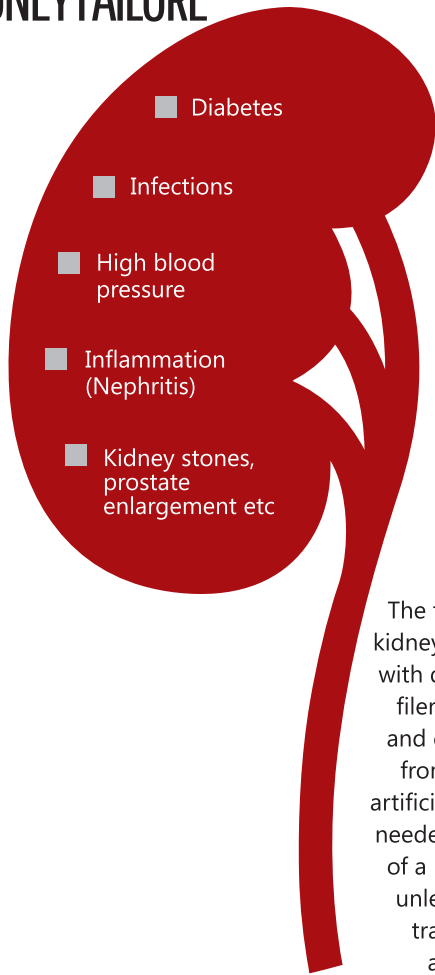
It is estimated that 10 per cent of Nepal’s population is suffering from kidney diseases, and about 3,000 patients suffer kidney failure every year. There is no data on their ages, but doctors say more and more of the patients seeking treatment are young.

At Bir Hospital, the first hospital in the country to provide dialysis, 161 new kidney patients have been registered in the last three years. Seventy-three of them are below 40, and 43 are below 30. Twelve are even younger than 20. If this is any indication, it would be safe to say that half of Nepal’s kidney patients are below 40.

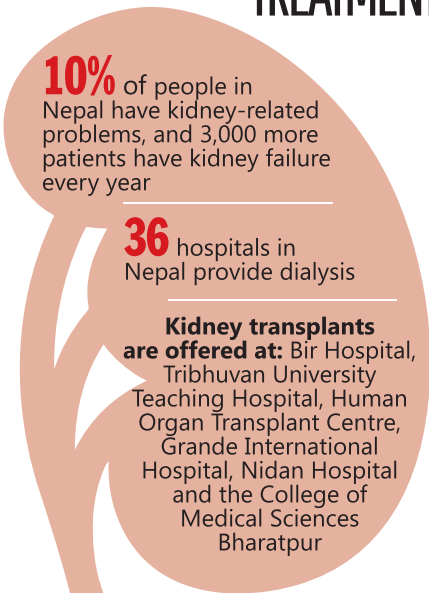
R K Agrawal, Head of the Nephrology Department at Bir Hospital (*see Guest Editorial, page 2*) says diabetes and hypertension are the main causes of kidney problems among the elderly, but among the young it is an immunological disease called glomerulonephritis, which can be aggravated by poor sanitation, contaminated water or even pollution.

CAUSES OF KIDNEY FAILURE

TREATMENT



The treatment of kidney failure starts with dialysis which filters out waste and excess water from the body artificially. Dialysis is needed for the rest of a patient’s life, unless a kidney transplant is available.



- Most people have 2 kidneys, each the size of a fist
- Kidneys have millions of nephrons that filter body fluids
- The waste is disposed in the form of urine
- Kidneys also regulate the blood pressure and control production of red blood cells



ROBBED OF KIDNEYS: Badri Bhandari (left) and Bhakta Tamang after a dialysis session at Bir Hospital this week.

PICS: BIKRAM RAI

many Nepalis are coming home with malfunctioning kidneys,” explains Shakti Basnet of the Nepal Kidney Foundation.

At Bir Hospital, senior nurse Indira Gaire has learned from frequent examinations of returnee migrant workers suffering from renal problems that the use of painkillers is also an important factor.

“Migrant workers suffer cramps after long hours of hard work, and fear losing their wages if they cannot work. They tell me they take painkillers, which lead to infections and renal failure,” she says.

Tamang was waiting for his dialysis on Tuesday morning and didn't seem to know why his kidneys failed. He was a healthy man when he went to Bahrain, and had a pre-departure medical test to prove it. Within a year, both his kidneys had stopped working.

Tamang would go to the company infirmary where he was given painkillers. “I don't know if those medicines damaged my kidneys, but I feel I would still

have my kidneys if I had stayed in Nepal,” he says.

Bhandari nods in agreement, looking at his brother-in-law. “The sun would be really hot, we had to lift heavy objects, and there was little time to rest,” he says, “Doctors? I had neither money nor time for that. I just took painkillers because I couldn't afford to lose a single day's work.”

The Nepal Kidney Foundation says the prevalence of kidney disease is increasing among migrant workers, but there has been little research to pinpoint the reasons.

“We need to find out the causes, in addition to dehydration, and then ways to prevent them,” says Basnet of the Foundation. “We also need to make migrant workers waiting to go abroad aware about the danger to their kidneys.”



Hear Badri Bhandari and Bhakta Tamang talk about their ordeal during their twice-weekly kidney dialysis at Bir Hospital. They are just two of many Nepali migrant workers who suffer kidney failures.

nepalitimes.com

Policies for the people



Health issues have been making headlines since Gagan Thapa became health minister seven months ago. He has promised to crack down on political leaders going abroad for treatment, expanded free coverage for serious illnesses and pledged to properly staff regional hospitals. But in the following excerpt, the minister told *Nepali Times* his preoccupation is long-term policy changes.

Nepali Times: Do you ever wonder if you're being too ambitious, if you've bitten off more than you can chew?

Gagan Thapa: I don't think so. What I feel is that the system here is not in sync with the speed at which I'm trying to move forward. Or I'm not fitting into the system. That is my observation in the last six months.

Sometimes it sounds very ambitious and people also feel that when we haven't been able to fix basic things: getting medicine, basic services in hospitals, a number of other services. And when you talk about providing this and that it might sound ambitious and I accept it, but we are not just making these statements without any solid evidence or homework.

To give you an example: when I talk about ensuring specialist services in peripheral health facilities, particularly zonal hospitals, district hospitals, in the next 3-4 years, I'm making this statement on the basis that the ministry is going to start a post-graduation course in at least five zonal hospitals in the next three months, and we're planning to go for the next 14 hospitals in the next year. The hospital is already there, the faculty is already there, demand is already there. The only thing we need to do is start this program.

We hear about the challenges, about the health posts that don't have medicines, for example. It's been seven months: what are some of the positive developments you can point to?

The biggest thing which I claim as an achievement is we've already introduced this Integrated Infrastructure Development Project... The idea is that within seven years of time Nepal will finish construction of all its health facilities.

Now for the first time we've calculated that we will need 3,300 doctors. How are we to produce those doctors? We'll be requiring 20,000 more nurses: how will we be getting those nurses? This is the first time those things have been brought to the table. And we have a number of policies to support this. Now the thing we need is resources: we have a resource deficit, and we are looking into this.

These plans sound impressive, but the average Nepali will know that something has changed when they go to the health post and the medicines are all available. When will that happen?

From Day 1, one of my priorities has been to fix the basics. Not announcing new programs, not going for any stunts, but whatever is already on the list, let's implement that. Let's make people feel that – ‘we are getting what we deserved, what was promised to us’.

For the very first time, instead of procuring all the medicine from the centre, we gave almost half of this money to the district level, so now each district has the money it needs to buy medicines,

at least for the next three-four months.

It's the same with doctors. We're going to start post-graduate courses in a number of zonal hospitals, but it will take at least four-five years to get these doctors who we can send to the health facilities, but what about today's need? We decided: let's go and partner with private hospitals... Just yesterday we had a long meeting with the teaching hospitals.

Now at least I can say 'in the next two or three months you will find that at least basic services will be assured at district hospitals'. This is not a long-term solution, again. But this is how we're trying to work – have a short-term solution and a long-term solution in each of the major areas.

The international community has been involved in a lot of the work of the health ministry. How would you like to see that evolve?

As Health Minister I have to acknowledge the role played by the partners over a long period.

But now as the health ministry is trying to go for long-term programs, looking for long-term solutions, I expect partners also to play a crucial role, instead of these fragmented programs, stand-alone efforts and scattering of resources.

You have incredible drive and ambition and enthusiasm. How much of that is coloured by your thinking 'I have to get things done before the political situation changes and maybe my position changes'?

When I got the health ministry I was so so disappointed. I even wondered if I should go or not. So the health ministry was completely new for me. This whole area is completely new for me... I've been very lucky that the Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Chief Secretary, my party president, from Day One, I've been getting all their support. Also, from all my other colleagues in cabinet.

Would you like to be here one year from now?

Yes, of course. Now what I feel is that I want to see some results from the policy steps that I have taken. I have invested all my time and energy in these policy reforms, and I want to see the result, and I want to see the continuity for at least one year ... But no one knows.



Health Minister Gagan Thapa says he is fixing short-term problems like shortages of medicines and also addressing long-term policy issues. Learn more in our video.

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EVENTS



Heritage ride,

Pedal through the seven world heritage sites of Kathmandu Valley with fellow cyclists and bike lovers.
15 April, 6 am to 6 pm, Borderlands Nepal, Thamel, (01) 4381214

Art market,

A special edition in collaboration with the Kathmandu Triennale featuring interactive art events, live music, participation by local and international artists.
8 April, 12 to 4 pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01) 5006665 (Image Ark)

Art of Bangladesh,

Mark your calendars for 'UPHEAVALS', an art exhibition by eight Bangladeshi artists portraying present-day Bangladesh.
Until 9 April, 11 am to 7 pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok



Chandragiri hike,

Gear up for a hike to Chandragiri hill, starting from Macchegaun, going through forests and smaller villages, and finally reaching the top to get an impressive view of the city.
14 April, Meeting point: Boudhanath Gate, Rs 1000 per person, Registration till: 5 pm, 12 April, For more information: 9841704019/9861111466, hikinhnepal@gmail.com

Meditation retreat,

Spend seven days meditating at this retreat in Nagarjun Hills. The session is being conducted by Bodhisattva Swami Anand Arun.
8 to 14 April, Osho Tapoban, Kathmandu, (01) 5112012/ 13, tapoban@wlink.com.np

Kathmandu trail series,

Gear up for a picturesque run that passes through the Shivapuri hills. Escape the chaos of the city with fellow runners.
8 April, 7 am to 1 pm, Starting point: Himalaya Children's Foundation, Nayapati, Registration: <http://bit.ly/2o5xcdt>



Photography workshop,

Discover the inner photographer in you with this 15-day workshop conducted by veteran photographers.
Starting date: 10 April, 6.30 to 9 am, School of Creative Communications, Kupondole, Register: <https://goo.gl/w7VnA>, 9841242307/9851133751, Fee: Rs 7000

Cultural mela,

An event celebrating 70 years of friendship between the US and Nepal featuring live graffiti by American artist Gabriel Specter, a performance by Nepali rap artist Da'NSK, skate board stunts, live music and more.
8 April, 11 am to 5 pm, Staff College, Jawalakhel

Little Picasso,

Enroll your children in this ten-day art workshop to help them develop and nurture their artistic and observational skills.
8 to 17 April, 9.30 am to 12.30 pm including Saturday, Artudio, Chhauni Hospital Road, 9851180088/9810212472/ 9813931488, artudio@hotmail.com, Registration fee: Rs 5500

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



MUSIC



Grunge live,

Live the '90s grunge era this weekend listening to bands Sound Chains Pilots, Newaz and All Stars.
8 April, 2 pm onwards, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, Rs 500, 9849276214

New Year's Eve,

Enjoy live performances by legendary band Cobweb and bands Tumbleweed Inc., Ember Eyes and Last Minute 0059.
13 April, 6 pm onwards, The Factory, Sagarmatha Complex, 9818209006

Starry night,

Spend a musical evening listening to Ciney Gurung while enjoying a meal at Shambala Garden.
Every Friday, 7 pm onwards, Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, Rs 2000 per person, (01) 4412999 Extension 7520,7508



BLU live,

Listen to the New Delhi-based blues band BLU belt out some of their groovy Country/Delta blues and reworked Standard blues.
14 April, 8 to 11 pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172

Drum circle,

Groove to the rhythms of a drum circle this full moon night. Bring along your own drums or just sit back and enjoy the music.
11 April, 6 to 7.30 pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172

DINING



Tasneem's Kings Kitchen,

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

Mezze,

A great atmosphere, friendly staff, and reliably satisfying pizza with a view of the Old Palace.
DarbarMarg, (01)4223087



Privé,

Wine and dine at this eatery specialising in Middle Eastern cuisine located in LABIM, one of the most happening malls in Kathmandu.
Open from 6 pm onwards, LABIM, Pulchok

Barista Lavazza,

The Valley's best European inspired coffee-culture cafe serves excellent mochas and lattes, don't forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich.
Jawalakhel, (01)4005123, barista.nepal@gmail.com



Kaiser Cafe,

Enjoy a cuppa and an intimate meal in the blissful Garden of Dreams.
Thamel, (01)4425341

GETAWAY



The Last Resort,

Test your limits with canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping.
Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247

Shivapuri Heights Cottage,

Unwind this Nepali New Year's Eve at Shivapuri Hills. Make it more relaxing by dropping in for a massage at Neeru's Spa, Budanilkantha, Rs 4500 per person on sharing basis (Includes breakfast and dinner), 9841371927/9802012245, info@shivapuricottage.com



Himalayan Height Resort,

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

Jhule mountain resort,

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



Buddha Maya Gardens,

Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at probably the best hotel in the area.
Lumbini, (71)580220, 9801033109, info@ktmgh.com





PIC BY USHA PARIYAR
Kamala Bayalkoti doing her homework inside a temporary classroom built after the school at Sipapokhare was destroyed in the earthquake.

EXPOSURE TO EXPRESSION

#NepalQuake
25 April 2015
2 years after

The village of Sipapokhari in Sindhupalchok was devastated by the earthquake two years ago. Many journalists visited it to take pictures, but a team of professional photographers trained young boys and girls of the village to use DSLR cameras and let them tell their own stories. For four days last month, the participatory photography workshop helped the youth to explore their everyday lives and give them expression through images of the world around them.

Photographers from Nepal, the Netherlands and the United States, led by Kevin Bubriski, gave the youngsters aged 10-15 from the Dalit, Tamang and Newar communities the chance to make photographic stories of themselves, their families and communities. The collection of the students' photographs premiered on 27 March at Lasanaa/Nexus in Bhakhundol, as part of the Kathmandu Triennale. The 10 students will be hosted there again 6-8 April to meet,

collaborate with national and international artists, and exhibit their photographs. The work will also be disseminated to a large national and international audience through social media platforms. There are also plans to distribute a print publication to every school in Nepal, especially in the remote regions where wi-fi and roads have not yet reached. Ideally this project will encourage all young people in Nepal to openly explore their identity and diversity. 🇳🇵



SHRIJANA TAMANG
Umesh Pariyar's father teaches him to play the trumpet in Sipapokhare.



ROSHMA SHRESTHA
Friends playing with soap bubbles in front of an earthquake-damaged building.



KAMALA BAYALKOTI
Workers reconstructing a home destroyed in the earthquake two years ago in Sipapokhare.



DIPENDRA BAYALKOTI
My friends inside a newly reconstructed home after the old one was destroyed in the earthquake two years ago.



SHIVARAM SHRESTHA
A man takes his cattle out to graze in my village.



It is hard to really define *Jackie*, an impressionistic film about the hours and days after John F Kennedy's (JFK) assassination and how Jacqueline Kennedy dealt with her unimaginable loss, without



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

speaking about the woman chosen to play her and the effectiveness of her portrayal.

The film hinges on the performance of Natalie Portman in the lead role. She has never seemed a great actress to me, her beauty and her mannerisms just not versatile enough to play the variety of roles that a truly great actor like Streep can embody. Portman shares Jacqueline Kennedy's colouring, but that first lady was more beautiful, with a classical face of her times not the elfin features of the also lovely Portman. It is admittedly a bit distasteful to pick apart somebody's looks, but unfortunately when an actor is cast to type, as Portman has been in this case, there is no way out of evaluating both her physical resemblance to the historical figure and the appropriateness of that choice, which seems more motivated by resemblance than by skill.

Personally I think the casting was a poor choice. Rachel Weisz was the initial individual in mind, with her then partner Darren Aronofsky, a skilled, adventurous filmmaker, directing: both choices would probably have yielded better

Jackie



results.

With *Jackie*, Chilean director Pablo Larrain directs his first English language feature, and while the script itself is somewhat cold, there is also a feeling of something lost in translation. Portman's overly mannered copy of Jackie's speech, the signature breathy voice and her distinctive transatlantic accent, just don't sound right, even though other people seem to have been utterly taken in; the role earned Portman a Best Actress nomination which she lost to Emma Stone for *La La Land*.

In addition to this discombobulating performance by Portman is the incredibly strange script that paints every player, including Bobby Kennedy (an always great Peter Sarsgaard), JFK's beloved younger brother, as unsympathetic, unfeeling and wooden. The characters say the right things, the Johnsons - Lyndon and Ladybird - who had to step up as President and First Lady, come off as awful, ambitious people, but

nothing coalesces to show what it must have been like on that horrendous, fateful day.

Today, JFK's White House is remembered with nostalgia, as a kind of Camelot, where the leaders were young, noble, egalitarian, handsome and brave, with Bobby and Jack (as JFK was known) the two main knights in shining armour. That myth was created by Jackie in the weeks after her terrible loss, starting with a carefully controlled interview with Theodore H White for *Life* magazine. There she first planted the seed for the Camelot analogy by telling White that it was Jack's favourite musical.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was undoubtedly one of the most famous women of her time. She was clever, beautiful, complicated and brave; this Jackie does not quite do her justice. 🇳🇵



Watch trailer online

nepalitimes.com

HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

UNITED WE STAND: Kumar Gachhadar (centre) of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik), Shiva Lal Thapa (right) of Rastriya Janamukti (Loktantrik) and Dalit Janajati Party's Yashoda Lama (left) announce unification of the three parties at an event in Tinkune on Wednesday.



RSS

SLIP-UP: Police arrest Hisila Yami at a rally demanding an election symbol for her Naya Shakti party. After being released, she demanded Nepal be "disbanded" and later apologised saying it was a slip of the tongue.



BIKRAM RAI

HOLY JOURNEY: The idol of Seto Machhindranath is taken on a palanquin to Jamal to be placed on a 13-storey high chariot before its annual journey through the narrow lanes of Kathmandu.



DHURMUS SUNTALI FOUNDATION

FROM MINNESOTA WITH LOVE: Sitaram Kattel (second from right) receives a cheque of Rs 20 million from the Association of Nepalese in Minnesota in Mahottari on Monday. Kattel's organisation, Dhurmus Suntali Foundation, is building homes in the Musahar community in Mahottari.



BIKRAM RAI

BEING THE BACKBONE: Spinal injury patients attend the 15th anniversary of the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre on Thursday in Sanga, Kavre.

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Madhav Basnet in *Nepal*,
2-8 April

नेपाल

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal had planned to get his China visit endorsed by a cabinet meeting before leaving Kathmandu on 23 March.

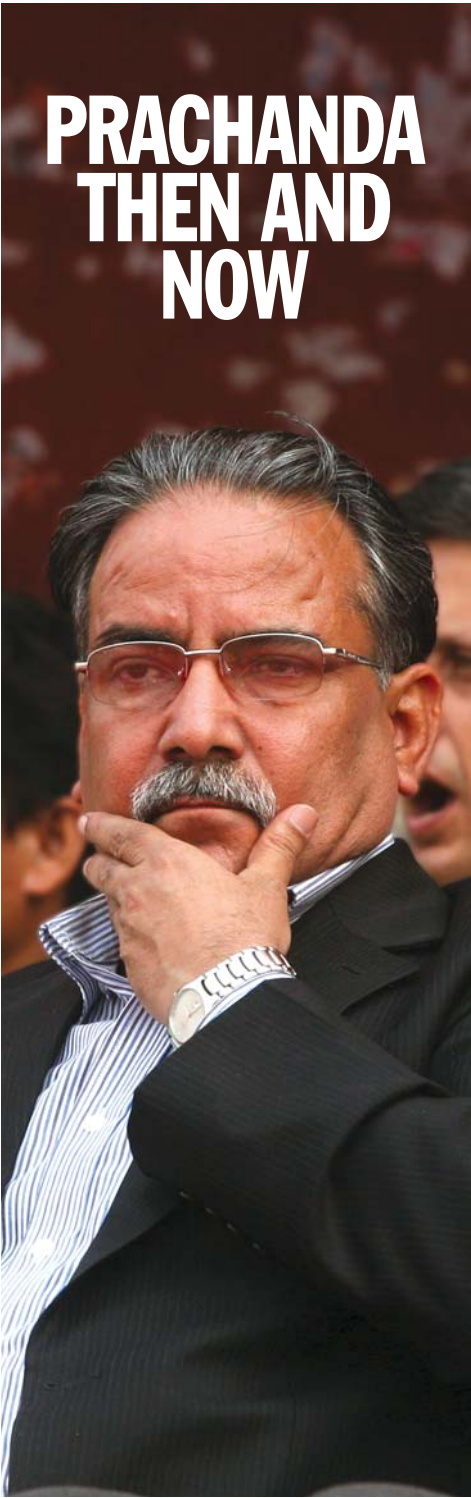
But Dahal was not sure which of his deputies to make acting Prime Minister: Bimalendra Nidhi of the NC and Kamal Thapa of the RPP were both claiming seniority. So Dahal called off the cabinet meeting, and left Nepal for the week-long visit without naming anyone acting Prime Minister.

This is just another example of how Dahal has lost his ability to make bold decisions.

When he became Prime Minister for the first time in 2008, Dahal did not shy from making bold and even controversial decisions. He was then a symbol of fierceness and revolutionary zeal.

Dahal is now a different person. It seems that he has lost his ability to lead and persuade, and is fast becoming a man of inaction.

During his first prime ministerial tenure, Dahal sacked Army Chief Rookmangud Katwal despite opposition from other parties, ended the practice of appointing an Indian as the



head priest of Pashupatinath, proposed a revision of the 1950 treaty with India and agreed to integrate ex-Maoist combatants into the national army despite opposition from hardliners within his party.

This time, Dahal looks a shadow of himself. He has not yet decided whether Nidhi is senior to Thapa. He failed to exercise his power to choose a police chief of his choice, and agreed on the name proposed by NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba. The only significant decision that Dahal has made so far is to announce local elections on 14 May, but this he did only after being pressed by Deuba.

Then, Dahal was defiant to India. This time, he has not uttered a word against the neighbour, even when a Nepali was killed by the Indian border force in Kanchanpur district.

A leader from Dahal’s own party says: “Our Prime Minister has turned into a rubber stamp. He does what he is told by his coalition partners.

CPN (Maoist-Centre) spokesperson Pampha Bhusal puts it differently: “As the leader of the ruling coalition, the Prime Minister has to walk hand-in-hand with other partners. He cannot make every decision on his own.

Bhusal adds that Dahal would have remained the same firebrand leader if the Maoists had triumphed in the last election.



RAM GURUNG/TEAM RUBICON UK

Princely help

Prasanna Pokharel in *nepalkhabar.com*, 4 April



In April last year, pictures of Britain’s Prince Harry labouring to rebuild an earthquake-damaged school in Dharche in Gorkha created waves in the Nepali media. A year later, reconstruction work at the same school, Prabhatikaran Secondary School, is complete.

Children, teachers and parents of the school cannot contain their happiness. Students, who had been studying in makeshift tin shelters, are excited to be moving into a sturdier building.

Principal Jiba Tamu explained that the earthquake-resistant school with 12 rooms was built after an investment of Rs 35 lakhs. It is now gearing up to conduct classes from its new building once the next session starts.

Prince Harry had spent six days in Lapubesi, a village at the epicentre of the

April 2015 earthquake, during his official visit to Nepal last year. On hearing that Prabhatikaran Secondary School needed rebuilding help, Harry volunteered with Team Rubicon UK. It was then that pictures of the prince carrying wooden beams and sacks of cement surfaced in the Nepali media.

News that the school’s new building has been completed has already been conveyed to Prince Harry, says Team Rubicon.

However, the school is not without problems. Although the building is done, it still lacks furniture and teaching materials. Since students have to travel long distances to reach the school it also needs a hostel, said the principal but, “there is no budget,” explained Tamu.

Prabhatikaran is among the minority of schools to have been rebuilt in Gorkha. In total, 443 schools in the district were destroyed by the earthquake. Only 100 have been rebuilt so far, according to the district education office.



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KRISHNA BAHADUR GURUNG



RAISA PANDE in CHITWAN

The 7.8 magnitude quake that rattled Nepal two years ago devastated the lives and livelihoods of its residents. While people around the country are finally moving towards recovery and reconstruction, for

the residents of the village of Sorathok in Chitwan, temporary shelters have become permanent solutions.

Sorathok is in the shadows because Chitwan is not included administratively among the badly-affected districts, even though it borders Gorkha across the Trisuli River to the north.

Before the earthquake,

Sorathok was a thriving Gurung village with 200 residents. But people have moved out and only 45 residents remain, trying to rebuild their homes.

They have moved from tarps to temporary tin shelters, but are exposed to hailstorms and rain. Every dark cloud raises fears about food supplies, the safety of livestock and their own

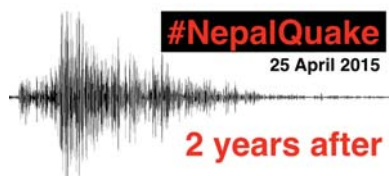
wellbeing.

Luckily, no one was killed in Sorathok, but every house was damaged. Two years later, the village is a jumble of temporary shelters and remains of damaged structures. The earthquake changed more than just where the villagers were to live; it changed their way of life.

Most moved away from

their land to rented rooms along the Kathmandu-Pokhara Highway, from where they have watched relief convoys headed to Gorkha. While other districts received considerable attention from national and international agencies, residents of Sorathok are refugees who haven't even got the first part of the government's housing grant.

At the receiving



LUCIA DE VRIES

A remarkable chain of events shook up the lives of three friends after the earthquake, landing them in a village southwest of Kathmandu. After settling in Dollu, they never looked back. "It may sound strange, but the earthquake brought us so much good," they say.

On 25 April 2015, Danish expat Christian 'Simon' Simmelkiaer (*pic, left*) was frying an omelette when he heard a rumbling. Seconds later he found himself outside the house, unsure what to hold on to. Chirayu Lohani and Swikiriti Acharya (*pic, right*) had just arrived outside the gate, equally upset.

When they met a few hours later, Simon suggested they take a tent and some sleeping bags and camp out in Dollu, a forested valley near Pharping, one of their favourite hiking destinations.

That night the friends slept on a patch of land behind a small restaurant, under the watchful



KARIN HEER

On solid ground

The earthquake changed the lives of three friends forever

eyes of Padmasambhava, the Guru Rinpoche, whose new, 40m statue dominates the settlement. While aftershocks brought further terror to the village, the friends felt strangely at ease.

"It was as if the place wanted us," says Chirayu, a website developer. He and his wife Swikriti, an architect, had for some time been talking about

buying land in a village to escape the city.

A few days later a Nepali farmhouse was offered to them. They bought it, and moved in. Says Chirayu: "The earthquake landed us here. I now believe if there is a dream inside you it will manifest."

Simon's connection with Nepal dates from 1978, when

he arrived in Freak Street after travelling overland from India, and checked into the Lagan Lodge. He returned to Nepal in 2008, as the manager of the UN Volunteer program. When his contract ended in 2013 he stayed on to support a Danish IT company. The 2015 earthquake made him reconsider his life once again.

"Ever since I travelled as a

backpacker to Nepal and India in the late '70s I dreamed of running my own place," says Simon. It took the anthropologist 35 years to realise his dream: establishing the Solid Rock Restaurant and Lodge (*pic, extreme right*) in Dollu. It has six cottages and a restaurant that uses bamboo as an earthquake resistant feature.

Dollu is now known as 'Little Tibet' because of its eight grand Tibetan gumbas, home to 5,000 monks. The resort is located at the valley's edge, and looks out across green hills, farmers' fields and traditional village homes.

"It's that end of the valley feeling that attracted me to this place," says Simon. "There is nothing behind us, just rocks and

end

BETWEEN THE CRACKS: Krishna Bahadur Gurung and his family sit outside their temporary shelter in the village of Sorathok which, because it is located in Chitwan district, has not received as much attention as neighbouring Gorkha. (*left*)


The devastation in Sorathok three days after the April 2015 earthquake (*left, top*) and today. Although the debris has been cleared, most houses are still in ruins (*left, below*).

tend his orange orchard. The earthquake shook everything up, and Gurung has spent the last two years shuttling between Sorathok and the highway, organising relief.

When the earthquake struck, Sorathok was in Darechowk VDC, but with local restructuring for the 14 May elections it falls within Ichyakamana Rural Municipality. However, since they have had little help, these administrative changes mean little to villagers here.

One of the earliest challenges that Gurung encountered post-quake was collecting the Rs 10,000 from each household to clear rockfalls that had blocked the road to the village, for relief that never came.

For most of Sorathok's residents, building a house is synonymous with rebuilding a community and resuming their cultural activities. Despite delays and government neglect, they are hopeful to soon get back on their feet.

Says Gurung: "Last year we thought we would finally get the rebuilding grant, but another year has gone by. We hope the government will keep its word." 

"We are just across the mountain from Barpak but people don't think of us as victims of the earthquake because we're in Chitwan," says Krishna Bahadur Gurung, who heads a local relief committee.

Gurung is a retired soldier who left the city to move back to his village 16 years ago to look after his aging parents and



PICS: LUCIA DE VRIES

mountains, which creates a solid impression.”

Another attraction is the village's spiritual significance. In the eight century, Padmasambhava, the founder of the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, used the local caves to meditate with his Nepali consort Shakya Devi. After reaching enlightenment he is said to have conquered the man-devouring goddess Dakshinkali and built her a temple, before moving to Tibet.

A famous pilgrimage destination for Tibetan Buddhists, for whom the place is as sacred as Bodhgaya, the area is now on the tourist map with the Padmasambhava statue. Hikes

across the hills connect Dolly to Pharping and Champa Devi. Rock climbing is being promoted and it is already known as a paradise for bird watchers.

Simon recently married Meena KC, a student and social worker who supervises the development of an organic vegetable garden at the resort. Although Chirayu and Swikriti regularly return to the city to spend time with their families, they feel rooted in Dollu.

Swikriti continues to work as an architect and says she experiences more clarity in her work: "Living in Dollu has taught me a stability I did not even know I was missing." 🍷

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Tinkune International Airport cum National Park

Pashupati Nath is the patron deity of our secular republic, and it is perhaps the Lord of the Animals' proximity to Nepal's only international aerodrome that has made the aviation hub such a sanctuary for wildlife. While the debate rages on in academic circles about whether the leopard that made a runway incursion this week was a Common Leopard, Uncommon Leopard, Snowy or Cloudy Leopard, one thing is certain: Tribhuvan Interesting Airport should be renamed Tinkune National Park. And it is about time the Civil Aviation Authority came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Animal Husbandry where it rightfully belongs.

This will make it a fitting showcase for tourists arriving or departing Kathmandu by air, to observe our great leap (pardon pun) in Big Cat conservation. The airport management should also induct some lions, and arrange regular sightings of wildlife on the runway so that Nepal goes viral on the Internet and continues to make international headlines.

As we old timers know, there is nothing new about animals straying into Kathmandu airport – they are just reclaiming a habitat that was rightfully theirs in the first place. After all, Gauchar used to provide lush grazing for water buffaloes before it started providing lush grazing for greasy-palmed customs officials. Today, the newly renamed Tinkune International Airport cum National Park offers proof that conservation and aviation can go hand in hand in the buffer zone. Planes and animals can co-exist.

The challenge for the future is how to introduce more wildlife species into the taxiway, apron and hangar areas so that the airport can double as a safari and the International Terminal building can be turned into a Museum of Natural History for wild boar, feral dogs, primates, and last but not least, the Tibetan Wild Ass (*Equus kiang*). But that should not be a difficult proposition for the Kangres-Mau Mau Coalition, which has shown that it is a government with a can-do attitude that has successfully eradicated load-shedding and small pox, provided free brain transplants to politicians, and has now taken the step of going boldly forth where no previous Nepal government has ever dared go before to ban honking.

As a regular driver in Kathmandu on what are euphemistically referred to as roads, the Ass would be the first to admit that he is one horny dude. I honk all the time. And most drivers like me are simply obeying instructions emblazoned across the backsides of trucks to Blow Horn.

Not to toot my own horn, but the donkey is a law abiding citizen.

This is why I am in a quandary whether henceforth on the Gwarko Intersection I should obey the law of the land or the command on the truck ahead of me. We used to honk for everything in Nepal: to greet fellow-travellers, to curse other drivers, to warn pedestrians to get out of the way on zebras, and to keeping ourselves from falling asleep at the wheel. Now it looks like airliners at Kathmandu will need to honk to warn leopards to get off the runway.



The Ass

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