



page 6-7



ONCE IS ENOUGH ?

It's a miracle tourists are still coming to Nepal despite everything we do to deter them. Prospective visitors first have to overcome lack of information, shoddy web sites, problems with bookings, and not being able to pay online. The information that is available is dominated by reviews and feedback from tourists complaining about over-charging, grimy hotels, garbage-filled streets, and tourists being stranded for days by shutdowns.

Then there is the cost of getting to Nepal. Leaving aside Bhutan, which has deliberately priced itself into a premium bracket, it is much cheaper and more convenient for tourists to go to neighbouring countries than to come to Nepal. Treks in northern Thailand, Laos and the Indian Himalaya are much more reasonably priced and less of a hassle to get to. With Burma throwing open its doors, visitors now have additional options.

And it is when they land at TIA that arriving tourists find out what we really mean when we promote 'adventure tourism'. The airport is not for the faint-hearted, the queues snake through the dimly lit, low-ceilinged arrival area with few signs showing which line is for what. Tourists without visas end up waiting more than an hour



Being a third world nation can no longer be an excuse to be third rate where tourism is concerned

to get through. Once outside, they find they have to pay hefty fees to enter cities that are full of trinket touts, filth and crumbling infrastructure.

Two Tourism Ministers ago there was an effort to try to make the departure holding areas appear less like gas chambers, but they are back to being scruffy, unventilated, and reeking of unwashed latrines. That minister gave up trying to shake off the mafia that controls the fleet of dilapidated airport taxis. However, for proof that it is possible to run a clean and efficient airport, one only needs to climb upstairs to the restaurant and lounge run by the Radisson Hotel.

Less said about TIA's rubber stamp security the better. The four unsolicited pre-departure patdowns are a joke. The airport police's idea of 'beefed up' security is to add another layer of bureaucracy and an extra frisking on the apron before boarding, instead of fixing unserviceable

x-ray machines. If it's any consolation, Nepalis are treated even more shabbily than tourists by immigration and customs officials in their own country.

The airport can't be an island of efficiency and integrity when the rest of the country is so badly managed, but being a third world nation can no longer be an excuse to be third rate where tourism is concerned. Bringing in a million tourists makes no sense at all if they go home and spread the word that Nepal is a dump.

The sole port of arrival and departure gives the first and lasting impression to visitors, and sadly it shows Nepal in all its grubby microcosm, replicating the squalour, corruption, and the dismissive rudeness of officialdom outside. Down the hill from the airport, the triangular folly known as Tinkune has for more than a decade been a symbol of a failing state. Nepal has the look of a country that doesn't know where it is going, and doesn't care if the rest of the world knows it.

We understand it is a structural problem that stems from the corrupt politics that has blighted not just the tourism industry, but governance overall. And perhaps the poorest country in Asia doesn't deserve to have a slick airport. But if tourism is such an integral part of our economy, and means so much for the image we project about ourselves, the least we can do is to make it easy and pleasant for visitors to come to Nepal, and stay on.

For starters: get rid of the visa requirement for tourists. Stamp their passports and let them stay for two months. Why force them to stand in line for hours filling forms?

There is something that attracts tourists to Nepal even when we make it so difficult for them, just imagine how many more would visit if we removed the aggravations.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

EDITORIALISING

I fully agree with your editorial ('Worth the paper it is written on', #596). Nepal's political scenario is just too volatile at the moment to fool around with ethnicity and we must set aside issues of federalism and presidential system so that a framework constitution can be passed by May. This way we can safeguard democracy and ensure that people still have access to basic services. Also I feel that the Maoists' insistence on passing a 'people's constitution' might just be a euphemism for a North Korean style of governance.

Jaya

Events of the past six years prove that Gyanendra was right all along: the Maoists are not to be trusted and we should not have handed over the country to them. The way the former king was tackling the Maoists was spot on. But media houses such as your own, political parties and civil society followed the wrong strategy and gave the Maoists a chance they never deserved. So what should be happening post 27 May? We must realise that promises of a 'new constitution' and 'new Nepal' are nothing more than lies and understand that a constitutional monarchy is far better for Nepal than a 'Banana republic'. The 1990 constitution should be revived and the monarchy re-instated.

BB

The real objective behind the decade long 'people's war' was not to emancipate Nepali people from hunger, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, but rather for Maoist party heads and their followers to amass money, property and power.

R. H. Rijal

While 2 percent of Nepal lives lavishly, the remaining 98 percent is left to suffer and corrupt politicians, business men and women and civil society are largely responsible for this mess. And to make things worse, a notorious murderer like Dahal is calling all the shots in the country. What a sick joke.

Bikas Lama

WRONG TIME

Kul Chandra Gautam has written a wonderful article, both in terms of style and content ('Wrong visit at the wrong time', #596). I urge the media to send this to the UN on behalf of peace-loving Nepalis and Buddhists from around the world, asking the Secretary General not to join hands with Dahal, unless he renounces violence and repents for his past blunders.

Mina

During his tenure as prime minister, Dahal went on a state visit to the US, delivered a speech at the UN headquarters in front of world leaders, represented Nepal during numerous trips to India and no one was concerned. So why all this fuss now about his meeting Ban Ki-moon?

Sital

Dahal is a leader who does not believe in what he says and does not say what he believes in. More importantly, he is responsible for dreadful crimes during 13 years of insurgency and does not deserve to be the head of a peaceful mission. Buddhists and Nepalis need to pressurise the Nepal government to sack Dahal from the post of chairman of the Lumbini Development Committee.

Sherpa



Dahal is responsible for the death of 16,000 Nepalis. But he has never said sorry, never expressed remorse and he hasn't said he won't do it again. In fact, he keeps threatening people who don't agree with him that he will go back to the jungle and resume his violent ways. Who are Ban Ki-moon's advisers? They should call off this visit to avoid tarnishing the Secretary-General's image.

Hari Kumar

I am not a Maoist sympathiser, but as a Nepali Buddhist I disagree with Mr Gautam's views. I think this is actually the right time for Ban Ki-moon to visit. The Maoists have given up their arms and whole heartedly entered the democratic process. And the UN too played a vital role in ensuring that Nepal's peace process stays on track. Although it is difficult to predict what their next move will be, the more we engage the Maoists in mainstream

politics and programs of international importance, the better it will be for the country.

Chyangba Bal

I am thoroughly disappointed with Mr Gautam's writing. I was expecting deeper analysis from a person who has had ample international experience, but all he does is attack Dahal's character. We all know that the Maoist party is destroying Nepal's political landscape, but diplomats like Gautam need to come up with more nuanced solutions or suggest better alternatives.

Shyam

As a Japanese, I feel Ban Ki-moon can go to Lumbini any time he wants as a pilgrim. But for him to go there and legitimise a murderer and shake his bloody hands, is not acceptable. The international community and Buddhists around the world should strongly oppose this visit, it sends all the wrong signals. Isn't Ban worried about his reputation?

Junko

Dahal is a murderer who has not yet given up violence, threats and extortion. He was caught lying on video and boasting to his cadres that he had fooled the UN into thinking the Maoists had many more fighters than their actual numbers. How can the Secretary General of the United Nations even be seen hobnobbing with an unrepentant liar and killer like Dahal?

Shakya

NEW AVENUES

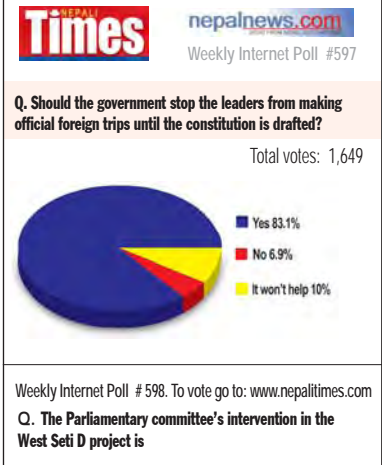
I can explain why Rs 50 billion is sitting idle in bank vaults ('In search of new avenues', Prabhat Bhattarai, #596). I

own a small business in Kathmandu and spend around \$30,000-40,000 every month on telegraphic transfers to import goods. My profit margin stands around 20 per cent. If I take a bank loan, I need to put collateral, and if the bank charges 16 per cent as interest, I'm left with just 4 per cent. So why on earth would I want to risk my house as collateral and work hard on behalf of the bank for such meagre returns? I'd rather invest my own money and not take any loans. If banks really want to turn Rs 50 billion into 100 billion by next year, rates need to come down to acceptable levels.

Harka

Keep up the good work Anusha ('Rescue in the Himalaya', Anusha Udas, #595). I agree air ambulance is a necessity, but without government support or major sponsors, funding is going to be hard. In Australia, the not for profit Flying Doctors is funded by local communities and provides medical services to rural areas. We could replicate it in Nepal.

Raghu



RON CORBEN in PARO

In a world hungry for new and exotic locales, Bhutan has positioned itself as an exclusive and unspoilt destination. But there are worries that the growth in visitor numbers might undermine the culture of the Himalayan kingdom.

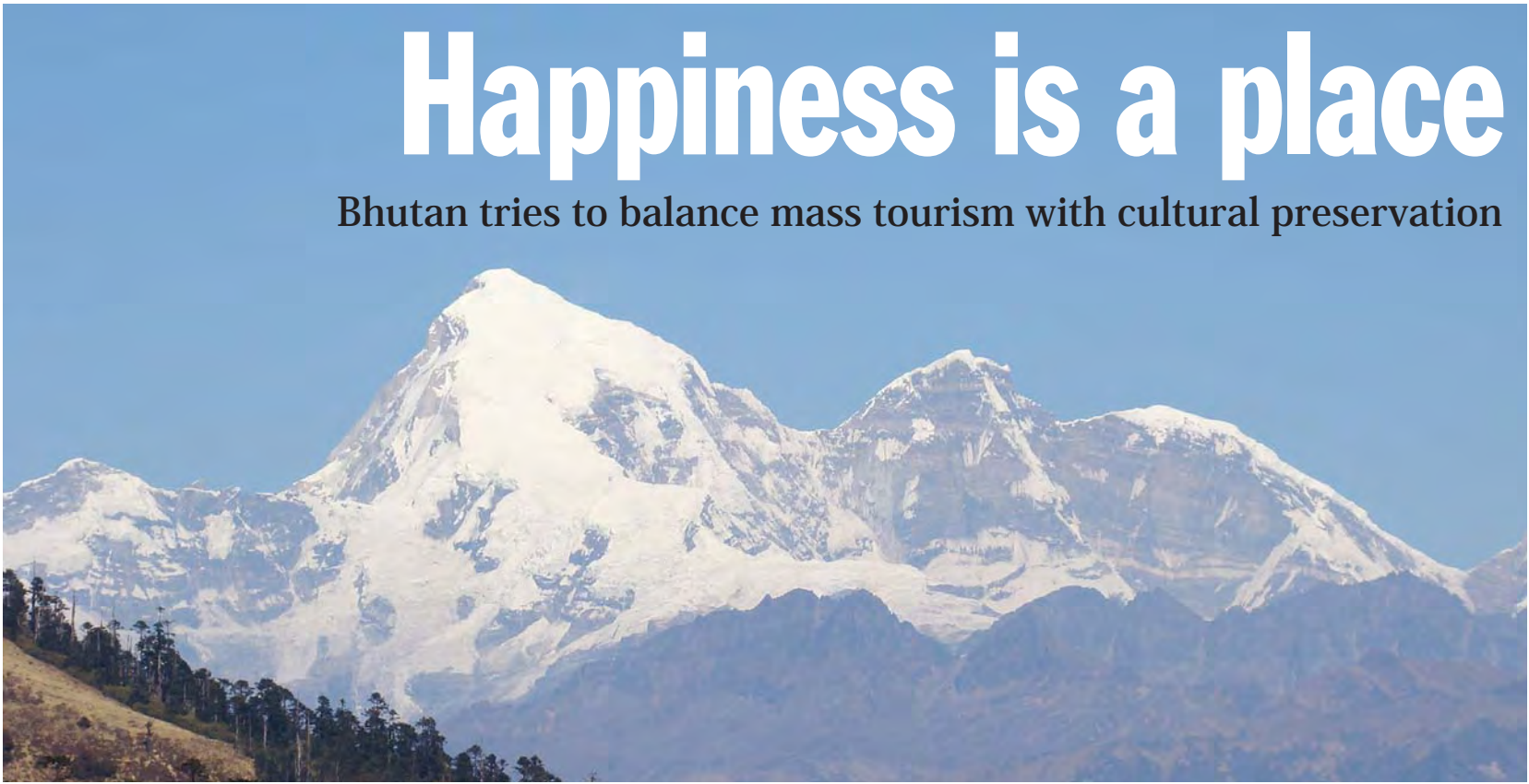
Best known for measuring national development with its Gross National Happiness Index, Bhutan now wants happy tourists to play a larger role in national development. Over the past four decades tourism has followed a policy of 'high value, low volume' visitors. A daily tariff is set at \$250 for each traveller, which is intended to limit the number of tourists but still attract significant foreign exchange.

"We don't want a lot of people at one go," explains Tshering Tobgay, who owns a resort in the Paro Valley, "the policy has avoided the excesses of mass tourism. This is a small country, we don't want a lot of tourism to come in and spoil our culture and heritage like in other countries."

Tourism contributes more than US\$2 million in annual revenue and the government hopes to boost arrivals to 100,000 by 2013. The tourism industry is second only to hydroelectricity sales to India as a foreign exchange earner.

Kesang Wangdi, director general of Bhutan's Tourism Council, says tourism will play a greater role in Bhutan's development in the future. "It is one of our key priorities because of its potential to contribute to more equitable socio-economic development in terms of alleviation of poverty issues and employment generation," says Wangdi.

Although Bhutan's GDP is among the highest in South Asia, one-third of the



RON CORBEN



population is poor. Wangdi says that tourism can support local community development by improving the lives of people in the countryside.

"With the exception of hydropower we don't have any other viable industry. So tourism is getting a lot of attention, but we also have to be careful that too much expectation is not put on tourism to solve all the issues," says Thuji Dorji Nadik, also from the Tourism Council.

Bhutan's latest tourist marketing slogan is 'Happiness Is a Place'. The capital, Thimphu, and Paro are the most important centres for tourism, with the cliff-side Tiger's Nest monastery overlooking the Paro valley a must-see destination.

"There is almost a 'Bhutan myth' that is as much perception as it is reality," says

LOFTY GOAL: Bhutan's holy mountain, Jomolhari from Che Li La pass last month. The country fears litter and overcrowding could take the edge off its pristine image.

Rick Antonson, president of Tourism Vancouver. "A significant challenge for Bhutan will be the pressure from mainstream tourism investors that could tarnish Bhutan's reputation."

With tourism numbers increasing, national carrier Druk Air recently purchased an additional aircraft, adding to its fleet of six. The airline has also launched domestic services, but new infrastructure will be needed to meet rising demands, says resort manager Julie Beattie.

"There's a lot of infrastructure that needs to be built to support 100,000 coming in. You've got to look at that from airport facilities, then hotels," she says, adding that infrastructure must be spread out evenly across the country.

Already worrying signs are emerging of tourism's intrusion into Bhutan's pristine environment, which has 72 percent under forest cover.

"Many tourists told us that

if we don't take care of the trash on the trekking routes or the waste in the cities they won't spend \$250 a day to see this rubbish," say Bhutan's Economics Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk. "So the progress of our tourism industry depends on how well we manage to do the things."

Looking over the snow-capped mountains of Che Li La

Pass, Bhutan Tourism Council guide Phuntsho Gyeltshen, says that preserving Bhutan's culture is vital to the industry's future.

"When people hear about Bhutan they relate to high mountains, the culture and tradition," he says as prayer flags flutter noisily nearby, "we must preserve it."

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WOMANPOWER

Migration should be a choice, not a compulsion

In 1998, the government enforced a ban on Nepali women going to the Gulf for work after news of Kani Sherpa's death in Kuwait following abuse by employers got widespread media attention.

The decision was supposed to protect women and ensure that such tragedies did not happen again. But the ban only helped to make matters worse: more and more women started going to the Gulf through illegal channels, using forged documents and risking even more exploitation at the hands of agents and employers.

After the Foreign Employment Act 2007 was passed, the ban has officially been lifted, and there are no restrictions on women migrant workers going abroad. But the perception of a ban remains, and this has led many women to continue using illegal routes. The Department of Labour estimates there are now more than 200,000 Nepali women working in the Gulf of which only 4 per cent have legal work permits in those countries.

"Brokers are taking

advantage of the information gap and are trafficking women to the Gulf through visit visas," Saru Joshi Shrestha of UN Women told *Nepali Times*. More than 3,200 Nepali women have been intercepted at New Delhi Airport in the last few months after the government requested Indian authorities to stop Nepali women transiting there to go to the Gulf on visitor visas. Immigration officials at New Delhi airport told *Nepali Times* they intercept up to five Nepali women every day on forged passports or visas.

The government has a directive for sending domestic workers to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and UAE to make employers more accountable and reduce abuse. But destinations such as Hong Kong and Lebanon are still illegal, and activists want female labour attaches in countries where there are more than 1,000 Nepali women working.

"It's not that the government hasn't done anything to protect migrant workers, but the efforts are small compared to the scale of the problem," says Padma

Mathema of the National Human Rights Commission.

The agency, Pourakhi, set up by returning Nepali women trained 750 women in organic farming, candle making and handicraft so that they don't have to go back and face abuse. Many are now running small businesses. Most Nepali women say they would stay in Nepal if they could earn just Rs 6,000 more per month, so the long-term solution to migration would be to create jobs within Nepal.

Says Pourakhi's founder, Bijaya Rai: "It is despair that forces women to migrate for work. We should be able to create an environment where migration is a choice and not a compulsion."

Rubeena Mahato

nepalitimes.com

Helping workers abroad, #532



"LUCKY TO BE ALIVE"



Bhagwati BK, left for Kuwait to support her four children and an alcoholic husband. She had knife cuts all over her body, and her employers dumped her at the airport. The Nepali embassy came to her rescue and flew her home. "I am lucky to be alive," she says.

Madhu Biswokarma, left for Saudi Arabia in hopes of a better future but has come back with scars all over her body and face. She was brutally beaten by her employers, who knocked off her teeth, banged her head with pointed heels and cut her with shards of broken glass.

In 2009, **nine Nepali women** committed suicide during a nine month period in Lebanon alone. Returnees brought back horror stories of abuse and exploitation.

But when asked if they would go back, most will say they have no choice and hope they get better employers next time.



Sangita Lama was raped by her recruitment agent in Nepal and was threatened not to tell anyone. When she gave birth to a baby girl in Kuwait, her employer sent her back to Nepal.

Parbati Tamang was tortured by her employers till she agreed to convert to Islam. Upon return from Saudi Arabia, her family refused to accept a Muslim into the house.

(Some names of women have been changed at request.)



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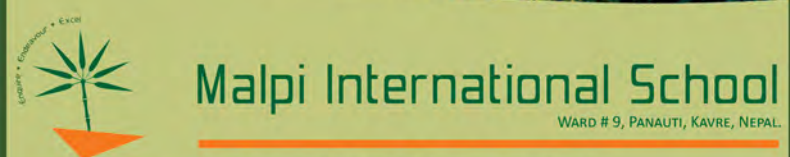
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THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

The only reason Nepal hasn't turned into a failed state is because millions of young people from this country are sending money home from India, the Gulf or Malaysia. The latest World Bank survey shows Nepal's poverty rate has declined, the macro-economic situation looks healthy and remittances are pumping money directly into the countryside.

But the state's apathy towards the welfare of migrant workers is despicable. The rot starts right at the top. Last week a minister sacked the secretary in the Department of Labour who was trying to stop kickbacks and punish fraudulent recruiters.

An increasing number of young Nepali women are now going abroad, and already one-third of migrant workers are estimated to be women.

Most work as domestics, are unregistered and outside the purview of legal and state protection when they face abuse by employers.

At Pourakhi, an organisation set up by returned women migrant workers themselves, there isn't a day that goes by without one raped or battered woman being brought from the airport to the shelter. Most have been so brutally tortured, they return with bruises, broken bones, teeth knocked out, or so emotionally scarred that they are unable to speak.

Others are victims of financial exploitation, made to work 21 hours a day with very little food and in dire conditions. Yet year after year, despite the publicity these stories garner, Nepali women continue to travel to India and the Gulf to work as domestics, caregivers and nurses. It is their blood and sweat that has kept the country afloat, but the state couldn't care less about their welfare.

"We wish the government could stop women from going

To hell and back

Nepali women workers are exploited at home and suffer horrific abuse abroad, but a woman minister sacks an official trying to clean up the Labour Department

to these unsafe places altogether but they are desperate and the government has nothing to offer," Bijaya Rai Shrestha of Pourakhi told me. "The best thing is to ensure that women go through legal channels, because they will go anyway. Undocumented workers are the most vulnerable to exploitation and have problems getting compensation."

It is almost always the same story. Poverty, domestic violence, and a lack of opportunities drive women to approach unscrupulous recruiters. They sell land, or take loans at high interest rates to go to countries of which they know little, with no skills or language. Upon arrival, their passports and visas are confiscated and they are made to work like slaves. Many women come back with babies fathered by employees, hundreds are languishing in jail after being raped, and an unreported number take their own lives as a last refuge.

The government says it lacks resources to control the exploitation of Nepali women by Nepalis themselves. Nepal doesn't have an embassy

or adequate staff in many countries, and diplomats are undermotivated or do not know how to negotiate with Kuwaiti or Saudi officials.

In the last four months, Purna Chandra Bhattarai, the new director general of the Labour Department tried to clean things up. He had sanctioned Rs 40 million in compensation to wronged workers, took action against errant recruiters and refused to register agencies that did not fulfill minimum standards. This was the first time someone tried to do such a thing in a department known for corruption and exploitation. But under pressure from the 'manpower mafia', Labour Minister Sarita Giri unceremoniously removed Bhattarai last week.

There may be few things beyond our control, but the government could easily pressure the minister to leave honest civil servants like Bhattarai alone. It could sign MOUs with safer destinations for domestic workers like Hong Kong and Singapore, train them in household skills and language before they leave, offer

them safeguards and insurance. It could ratify ILO Convention 189 to protect the rights of domestic workers.

What is stopping the government from ensuring something as simple as providing workers with contract papers in Nepali? We complain about abuse abroad, but the exploitation starts here. If only the state made sure that the provisions of the Foreign Employment Act are strictly enforced, there would be a huge improvement in the condition of migrant workers.

All migrant workers should be compulsorily given pre-departure orientation, recruiters who charge more than the government's upper limit as service charge or do not fulfill the conditions of work contracts should be punished, Nepali embassies abroad should be more accountable and better able to come to the help of those stranded.

This is the least the government can do for women like Bhagwati (*see box*) who would have never left if they could earn few thousands in the country itself.



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YAK ATTACK

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TYLER MCMAHON in MANANG

Being an avid mountain biker who has lived in Nepal for the past five years, I had to participate in the 6th edition of Yak Attack. This year had the largest international field with professional and experienced recreational riders from all over the world taking part. The race started with four hot and dusty days of back roads from Kathmandu to



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Besi Sahar. Some participants suffered dehydration in the intense heat that accompanied the steep, rocky roads during the long stages. On the fifth stage that marked our entry into the mountains, Besi Sahar to Taal, the first 32 km was an undulating climb on a dusty road. The “reward” as we escaped the heat: 5 km of 100 per cent hike-a-bike, through a steep, rocky, and staircase-

laden trail to the finish, a sign of what was to come. On the 22 km from Taal to Chame the next day, we spent half the time with our bikes on our backs hiking up steep trails, and then we rode through thick mud, loose and rocky trails for the remainder of the journey. To the joy of most riders, the trail from Chame (2,570 m) to Manang (3,540 m) widened and was almost completely



HIKE-A-BIKE: Ajay Pandit Chhetri, 2012 Champion and third time champion, slithering down Thorong La after a tough crossing (left). Yak-Attack featured in recent issue of Mountain Bike UK magazine (above).

bike-able. But participants had to adjust to altitude. The race had already lost three participants due to mechanical, physical and work-related issues before Chame. Stomach problems would claim two more experienced international participants before the mountains were finished. A day of rest and acclimatisation in Manang, was followed by the two toughest stages of the race. Manang to Thorong Phedi (4,450m), while mostly ride-able, was a challenging stage that finished at an elevation of 4,400 m, a height that most of the international competitors had never been to before. The next stage, the Yak Attack signature, was a 4 am start that had all of us carrying

“They had wings”
“The Yak Attack is one of the most challenging races on the international circuit. The course is demanding and requires that riders are fast on their bike, but also good at carrying their bikes and can hike quickly. The range in landscape was one of my favourite aspects of the course with racing on the dusty, hot valley floor to the high alpine snow, rocks, and single track. I wasn’t surprised but was still impressed with the ability of the Nepali riders. They climbed like they had wings. This race has a lot of potential for growth and will attract the type of racers that likes more than just a challenge on the bike. It’ll attract those seeking true adventure.”
- Sonya Looney Topeak Ergon Racing Team

our bikes in the snow up to the top of Thorong La Pass. It was cold, dark, and icy as we made our way to 5,416 m. On the last stretch we were lashed by harsh winds that literally stopped racers in their tracks. While I fared well going up the pass and was in 5th place at the top, the start of the descent on the other side offered another test: a mix of trying to ride, falling, and pushing the bike down 5 km of ice and snow. It included 10 minutes of frozen pain, lying on the snow after a crash. The beautiful stretch from Muktinath to Kagbeni reminded me of what mountain biking is truly about. Only one more, 60 km stage, from Kagbeni to Tatopani remained, mostly flat and downhill. After what we had



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Nepal’s Nightingale

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BHRIKUTI RAI

A nurse’s hard work and determination is helping save the lives of hundreds of women and children

When Yasodha Ojha started working as a nurse in her district in Doti 14 years ago, pregnant women coming to health posts for pre-natal checkups were unheard of. Vaccination centres were empty and hundreds of children were not immunised. Today, the queues outside Ojha’s clinic are so long she can hardly keep up with demand for healthcare in her village of Mahua. On 12 March Ojha was presented with the Nick Simons Award for her relentless work with pregnant women and children in Doti. For the past four years the Kathmandu-based Nick Simons Institute has honoured

healthcare workers in rural Nepal who have overcome financial obstacles and lack of resources to help communities. But Ojha’s journey from a young nurse to successful healthcare professional wasn’t easy. She grew up in a remote part of one of Nepal’s remotest districts. Mahua lies on a hilltop, 29 km from the district headquarter of Dipayal. Despite being poor, Ojha’s parents made sure to send all her four children to school. And although she was married at 16, she was lucky to have an understanding husband who encouraged her to complete her education and become a nurse. In 1997 Ojha travelled to Dipayal where she began her ANM (auxiliary nurse midwife)

been through, this sounded like paradise. Wrong. Around 4:30 am howling winds woke us up and the head wind remained throughout the stage, with wind and sand biting into our eyes and skin. The Tatopaani Hot Springs, cold beer, and the end of the Torq Yak Attack 2012 beckoned.

As a first time participant, the heat was the most challenging. As we reached the mountains, I became stronger and had my best day crossing Thorong La. I was happy with my performance and proud of my Nepali friends who continued to do very well. Congratulations to Ajay Pandit Chhetri for winning the competition, third year in a row and Narayan Gopal Maharjan for coming in second.

Six internationals finished faster than any foreigner had ever completed the race and experienced stage racer, Peter Butt, finished third place, the first international to do so.

Yak Attack is an amazing race and challenges mountain bikers in every way: long stages, long climbs, high altitude, long hike-a-bike, demanding technical descents, and food-related troubles that can make even experienced locals suffer.

This is a race that puts Nepal on the mountain biking map. This year, the number of international competitors (20) outnumbered Nepalis (12) for the first time in the race’s six year history.

Hot off Annapurna, Ajay Pandit Chhetri and Narayan Gopal Maharjan are on their way this week to compete in the Cape Epic in South Africa, the largest stage race in the world. This is a direct result of their success in Yak Attack and the support of past participant John MacGillivray. Ajay also joined the Torq Fitness UK training and racing last summer with help from the organiser, Phil Evans. 🇳🇵

More pictures and video:
<http://nepalsutra.com> 📷

KATHMANDU

NAWAKOT

GORKHA

BESI SAHAR

POKHARA

BENI

TATOPANI

JOMSOM

MUKTINATH

THORONG LA

THORONG PHEDI

MANANG

CHAME

TAAL

ANNAPURNA CIRCUIT

ANNAPURNA SANCTUARY

ROUTE

Day 1:

Kathmandu to Nuwakot Bazaar (45 km, 983 m ascent)

Day 2:

Nuwakot to Dhading Besi (50 km, 1,359 m ascent)

Day 3:

Dhading Besi to Gorkha (56 km, 1,700 m ascent)

Day 4:

Gorkha to Besi Sahar (61 km, 1,121 meter ascent)

Day 5:

Besi Sahar to Taal (2,100 m) (42 km, 1,635 m ascent)

Day 6:

Taal (1700 m) to Chame (2,570 m) (23 km, 1,365 m ascent)

Day 7:

Chame (2570 m) to Manang (3,540 m) (30 km, 1,044 m ascent)

Day 8:

Acclimatisation and Rest

Day 9:

Manang (3,540 m) to Thorong Phedi (4,450 m) (17 km, 980 m ascent)

Day 10:

Thorong Phedi (4,450 m) over Thorong La Pass (5,416 m) to Kagbeni (2,776 m) (28 km 1,000 meter ascent)

Day 11:

Kagbeni (2,776 m) to Tatopaani (1,190 m) (67 km)

Day 12:

Tatopaani to Khanyaghat (Group Ride) (35 km)

YAK ATTACK 2012 Results			
1	Ajay Pandit Chhetri	Nepal	25:15:44
2	Narayan Gopal	Nepal	26:14:12
3	Peter Butt	Australia	27:45:44
4	Mangal Krishna Lama	Nepal	27:46:15
5	Paul Bolla	Australia	29:41:41
6	Dhanjit (Santosh) Rai	Nepal	30:20:09
7	Raj Kumar Shrestha	Nepal	31:35:02
8	Cefin Evans	UK	32:01:33
9	Aayman Tamang	Nepal	32:15:48
10	Keith Green	UK	32:20:28
11	China Bikram Lama	Nepal	32:37:01
12	Tyler McMahon	USA	33:16:19
13	Gareth Jones	UK	33:38:40
14	Sonya Looney	USA	34:43:14
15	Paul Topham	UK	35:07:02
16	Jens Rowold	Denmark	35:17:33
17	Carena Dean	Canada	35:29:44
18	Doug Brain	UK	36:02:56
19	Dawa Sherpa	Nepal	37:53:36
20	Phil Evans	UK	38:11:42
21	Chandra Chhetri	Nepal	40:57:38
22	Thomas Fischer	Germany	42:00:42
23	Kumar Gurung	Nepal	42:47:56
24	Mizuho Fujihara	Japan	43:08:24
25	Neil Cottam	UK	43:28:03
26	Henri Lesewitz	Germany	44:27:49
27	Ajay Narsingh Rana	Nepal	45:07:18
	Jeff Kerkove	USA	Retired
	Craig McGhee	UK	Retired
	Per-Erik Roslund	Sweden	Retired
	Padam Sabenhang	Nepal	Retired
	Peter Dillane	Eire	Retired

She was also instrumental in establishing a 24-hour safe motherhood program at Mahua which has not only benefited women in the village, but also those from surrounding VDCs. Ojha believes that in addition to round the clock service, timely referrals to the district hospital has helped save the lives of hundreds of mothers and their new born.

Although there was a significant rise in the number of locals seeking healthcare, the women were still reluctant to give birth at the hospital because of the cost. However, the government’s decision to provide free delivery has changed that.

Ojha is busy at the health post throughout the year. “Except for two hours on the day of Dasain, I am always here,” she says crediting her husband and her staff for being supportive.

She is content with the work her team has accomplished so far and

attributes its success to the commitment of the people involved and says, “Had it not been for the loyal and dedicated team, the safe motherhood programs would not have been as successful.”

While Ojha is happy about the Nick simon's Institute award, she says what is much more encouraging for her is the special place she has found among the locals.

She explains, “I am very close to the people I treat, and everyone who comes to seek treatment here are like family. And knowing that my work has touched the lives of so many people inspires me to work harder each day.”

The women of Doti have immense respect for Ojha and tell her, “We come here because of you. We have complete faith in you.” 🇳🇵 www.nsi.edu.np

nepalitimes.com

The gift of life, #291

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काम सानो ठुलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै रङ र जात पनि हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

नेपाल सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग

EVENTS



LAST THURSDAYS, gain knowledge on entrepreneurial opportunities with Rajendra Khetan and attend a networking session afterwards. *March 29, 4.30 pm to 7.30 pm, DECC hall, United World Trade Center, Tripureshwar*

Corporate Mask Party, enjoy a night of fantasy, mystery and romance. *23 March, 5pm onwards, Vintage Café and Pub, Durbarmarg, 9849046268*



BUCHANAN HAMILTON EXHIBITION, celebrate 200 years of biodiversity research in Nepal. *24 March to 1 April, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited*

Earth Hour, be part of WWF's global initiative spanning 135 countries and millions of people to cut down energy consumption by turning off your lights for an hour. *31 March, 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm, worldwide*

Anusara Yoga Workshop, learn and practice yoga with the internationally renowned teacher Jonas Westring. *23 March, 5 pm to 7.30 pm, 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath, info@pranamaya-yoga.com*

Resting Stops, don't miss the exhibitions, slam poetry and musical performances. *24 March, 5.30 pm onwards, KCAC, Patan Museum*

MUSIC



IDES OF MARCH, support the 'underground' music scene of Nepal with the annual concert featuring bands like Severe Dementia, Antim Graham and Jindabaad. *31 March, 1pm to 8pm, Bhrikuti Mandap Fun Park*

Kutumba Playing for Heritage II, Kutumba will be travelling across Nepal generating awareness on preservation and protection of local heritage. *Until 15 April*

1974 AD Concert, catch an exclusive concert by the famous 1974 AD. *Rs 200, 28 March, 7.30 pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel*



NEPFEST MARCH, bringing together all the metal heads with performances by Antim Graham, X-Mantra, Kalodin, Garudh, The Exorcist, Disintergrated, Fractiucals. *24 March, 1 pm onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap. Call 9841277757*

Baja Gaja, playing live every Tuesday. *7.30 pm onwards at Moksh, Pulchowk, Call 5526212*

DINING

Tama, enjoy delicious khaja and taas set, and a host of other Indian and Nepali snacks at a reasonable price. *Gairidhara.*



THE OLIVE GARDEN, now offering a revamped dinner menu from March 14 onwards with various trout dishes. *Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat*



COMFORT ZONE, expansive restobar with a decent range of cocktails and barbeque meals. *Thamel*

Rox Restaurant, enjoy Sunday Pranzo at Rox Restaurant. *12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, 4491234*



HIM THAI RESTAURANT AND BAR, for authentic Thai cuisines in town. *Lazimpat, 4418683*

Dragon Café, enjoy momos, sizzlers and vegetable coins at the most reasonable prices. *Kumaripati*

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. *Khichapokhari and Basantapur, Call 4256655*



NEW TUSHITA RESTAURANT, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on their Penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. *Lazimpat, 44432957*



CAFEREENA, the extensive menu has something for everyone. Try their famous chips chilly. *Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg*

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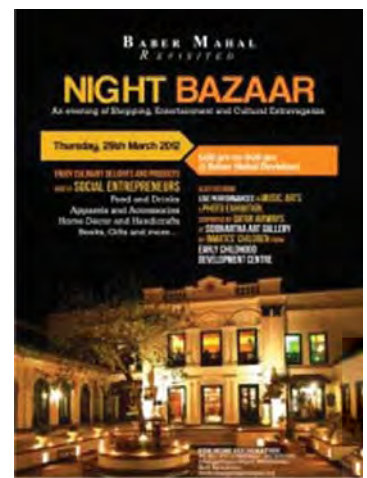
Baber Mahal Revisited Night Bazaar

Baber Mahal Revisited is now opening its door after dark on the last Thursday of each month. Guests can enjoy an evening of shopping, entertainment and cultural extravaganza in the picturesque setting of a beautifully lit palace. The night bazaar will offer an array of products and services, ranging from creative home décor, apparels, accessories, handicrafts, books, gifts, culinary delights and more, made by social entrepreneurs of Nepal.

The first night bazaar will be 29 March from 5- 9pm and will feature 19 unique exhibitors:

- **Kirtipur Hosiery Industry:** Knitted toys, keyrings, women and baby apparels made by the women of Kirtipur
- **Janakpur Women's Development Centre:** Range of products with Mithila Art handmade and painted by the under privileged and marginalised women from the region.
- **Business Service Centre (BSC) for Empowerment:** Apparels, accessories, handcrafted candles, incense, flower stall
- **Children and Youth First (CYF):** Arts and crafts and recycled products
- **Designer students from Lord Buddha Education Foundation:** Recycled bags, baby apparels and accessories made of scrap materials
- **Quixote's Cove:** Children's books (Published by: Usborne, Scholastic, IPDA) and adult fiction and non-fiction selection
- **Aastha Old Age Home (AOAH):** Handmade corn husk sukul mattresses
- **Nepal Knotcraft Centre:** Hand woven baskets and mats using eco-friendly materials by women from various ethnicities.
- **Inclusion Empowerment Centre (Run by the visually impaired):** Braille T-shirts
- **Ekadeshma (Tales of Nepali Craft):** One-of-a kind funky prints in all natural tees, and an interesting collection of handmade nepali crafts.
- **Jodi Arden:** Women's apparels, handmade bags and jewellery.
- **Insight Living:** Handmade sustainable home wares
- **Newa Decor:** Wooden candle stands, mirrors and Newari arts and crafts, supporting the livelihood of traditional Newari craftsmen
- **Seeing Hands Nepal:** Therapeutic massage experience like never before, provided by a team of professional visually impaired masseurs
- **Cafe Brown Sugar (run by ex-drug users):** Cakes and Muffins
- **Momos and More:** Momos
- **Pipal Bot Lifestyle:** Traditional Tibetan Chang, Khapsey (Tibetan cookies) and Laphing (traditional Tibetan savoury dish)
- **The Village Cafe:** Traditional Newari Cuisine prepared by home based workers

Organised by: ChangeFusion Nepal in association with: Baber Mahal Revisited, BSC, NBI and Give2Asia (The Asia Foundation)
<https://www.facebook.com/BMRNightBazaar>





Café SOMA, enjoy scrumptious brunch and indulge in crepes with sugar and lemon. *Jhamsikhel*

Dhokaima Cafe, exquisite atmosphere, friendly service, cozy bar, a place to see and be seen at. *Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113*



STATION BBQ, try the table top grills for self-cooked barbeque or order mutton skewers and pork chops. *Jhamsikhel*

Pyongyang Okryu-Gwan, for the rare taste of North Korean cuisine and hospitality. *Durbar Marg*

Café Du Temple, famous for its delicious food, warm ambience and a beautiful roof top view. *Patan Durbar Square, 5527127*



ALFRESCO, for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. *Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999*



SAL'S PIZZA, almost round, almost cheap, always delicious, try out the cheesiest pizzas in town. *Lazimpat, behind Jazz Upstairs*

GETAWAYS



CHITWAN SAFARI TOUR, exciting wildlife safari in the Chitwan National Park at Rs 49990. *Call Ace travels at 4411830*

Holiday at Grand Norling Hotel, Gokarna. *One night and two days at Rs 4500 and two nights and three days at Rs 7000. Call 447948*

Fulbari Resort, enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks and dinners. *Rs 6500 per person for 2 nights and 3 days, Call 4461918, 4462248*

7th Annual Sundance Music Festival, join the live musical extravaganza with bands like Joint Family, Soul Train Featuring Rainer Pusch (Germany), The Acoustics (Shanti Music), Himalayan Connection, and DJ Phuchhey. *Rs 3500, 24 to 25 March, The Last Resort, Call 4701247/ 4700525 for bookings*



GHT Day 65

Apa Sherpa and his team reached Beni of Myagdi district (arrow, above) on the 65th day of their Climate Smart Celebrity Trek. The 21-time Everest summiteer (seen right with flag) is on an epic four-month 1,600 km traverse of Nepal from east to west. Sherpa and his team were felicitated by locals at a press meet organised in the Red Cross Office of Beni.



Speaking on the occasion, Apa Sherpa said, "Glacial lakes are getting bigger as the mountains melt, we have to protect downstream valleys from the threat of climate change." He also requested Annapurna Area Conservation Project (ACAP) to involve locals while making policies which impact the daily lives of people living in Annapurna region.

The purpose of the Climate Smart Celebrity Trek is to highlight the impacts of cimate change in the Himalaya and promote the Great Himalayan Trail as a tourism product. The trail starts from Taplejung in the east and ends in Darchula in western Nepal.

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SOMEPLACE ELSE



Alchemy

As far as Italian goes, Alchemy takes the consolation prize for an attempt at authenticity. The two-and-a-half-year-old bistro with upstairs seating juts off a hotel in Thamel and would be better dubbed a pasteria than pizzeria.

Pizza at Alchemy, though intact, is not its forte. The options are standard, but customisable pizzas are not readily afforded.

Its speciality, the Pizza Quatro Stagioni (Rs 425), is a sizable pie of ham, mushrooms, olives and artichoke topped separately in four parts. The

dough itself is light and crispy but void of any lasting flavour and is more akin to unleavened bread, matza or a plain fateer. The mozzarella and the tomato sauce are scant, and though the sectioned toppings present an aesthetic layout, the quatro stagioni leaves an unsatisfying experience.

But don't brush them off just yet. Alchemy strains a Spaghetti alla Puttanesca (Rs 385) al dente mingled in a spicy tomato sauce, anchovies, olives, capers, garlic, parsley and E.V.O.O. (extra virgin olive oil). Traces of anchovy were faint but the dish

overall was top notch. Complimentary bread to mop up the plate is sadly absent.

The Ravioli with traditional meat sauce (Rs 385) is just shy of impeccable. The ragù is rich and the cheese, though not quite ricotta as advertised, is creamy. Spinach, also advertised, was missing from the stuffing.

Alchemy may have taken some shortcuts in its mains but for dessert, it cuts no corners. You can try the homemade rum raisin gelato among other flavours (Rs 100/110 cone or

cup). But here is my suggestion: upon entering the restaurant, it is best to go ahead and order a slice of Tiramisu (Rs 200), yielding proper time to thaw the 'pick-me-up' layers of cake, coffee and cream. Or if you're running late, order the cake with a shot of hot espresso and then douse the cake with no shame. Sure, there are no ladyfingers or mascarpone. But after a bite of arguably the best rendition of tiramisu you'll find within reach, all is forgiven. 🇳🇵

Marco Pollo

Come down the lane from Kathmandu Guesthouse towards Chetrapati, turn right at the end and check-in at the Hotel Family Home



The Lincoln Lawyer:



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Aside from the slightly banal and unfortunately alliterated title, there is very little wrong with *The Lincoln Lawyer*. The film is a typical crime drama/lawyer-procedural hybrid and in some ways it is strange that it is so good considering that there is no real twist in the way that movies like *Primal Fear*, with Richard Gere and Edward Norton, promise and build up to. It is also very much worth mentioning that this very accomplished film is made by a relatively unknown Brad Furman who, just eleven years ago, was “assistant” to Julia Roberts in *Erin Brokovich* and *The Mexican*. (note: don’t bother watching *The Mexican*).

It is the tremendously talented and very “unstarry” cast that makes the film so memorable via its characters. Even the usually annoying Matthew McConaughey with his unfortunate tan and surfer dude persona is perfect as the wheeling dealing Mick Haller, a crime lawyer with a heart of gold and a reassuring southern accent. Haller is making his way through life defending the scum of California: drug dealers, hookers, petty thieves etc. He makes his way from case to case in his Lincoln Town Car (which is his mobile office) driven by a cool driver and side-kick called Earl.

One day he gets a tip-off from a bail bondsman Val Valenzuela (played by a wonderfully shifty John Leguizamo) that a rich kid is in prison accused of beating and attempting

to rape a prostitute, and that this case might be the jack-pot he’s been waiting for. The rich kid turns out to be Louis Roulet (played by the baby-faced Ryan Phillippe) and he is the kind of trust-fund baby with the cool as a cucumber mother and a host of family lawyers. Somehow, it turns out, Roulet had read of Mick Haller’s smooth tactics and insists on hiring him to defend him at the trial.

As Haller starts to investigate, certain disconcerting details begin to emerge. Roulet has insisted from the very beginning that he is utterly innocent, and his explanation of how he got himself into this situation is so absurd that Haller begins to think it might just be true. Slowly though, as Frank Levin (a marvelously bearded William H. Macy) Haller’s investigator starts to dig into the case, a few troubling details surface. Roulet’s knife is the knife found at the scene, and Haller is troubled that Louis has lied about its existence. As the case starts to unfold Haller is struck one day, as he is pouring over the crime scene details, at the unusual bruises on the face of the attacked prostitute. She has only been beaten, very severely, but only on the left side of the face. Something clicks in his head – a few years ago, he had defended a certain Jesus Martinez (Michael Pena), now in San Quentin prison for life, against a similar case -same bruises on the prostitute, except this time she had been raped and knifed to death. Martinez, too, had sworn that he was innocent.

As the film progresses one is struck by the fact that every character in this film has a fully rounded personality, and is there for a reason. Even the seemingly random gang of Hell’s Angels that Haller defends for their various misdemeanours, and the alcoholic prostitute with a smart mouth come full circle in the story in an immensely satisfying way.

It is rare that such a typically genre film transcends its narrow boundaries and is able to really grip and entertain the viewer without being a sensationalising, overly violent version of itself. Brad Furman’s film is very much worth watching, and one wonders and hopes that his next film will be at least as good. 🇳🇵

All DVDs reviewed in this column are available in the writer’s favourite DVD store:
Music and Expression, Thamel, Phone # 014700092

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

Diarrhea at the summit



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

When an article entitled *Diarrhea at the Summit* appeared in a medical journal, some doctors thought it was about climbers having diarrhoea on top of Mt Everest. However, the article was about a summit meeting of diarrhoea in travellers. Still many involved in wilderness medicine felt the title was relevant for Nepal.

It is said that when western travellers and trekkers return home from Nepal, there are two questions that are asked in quick succession for which the answers are usually “yes”. Did you have a good time, and did you get sick? Sick usually means having the runs (Delhi belly, Montezuma’s revenge are other colorful terms, although for the victim these may not be very funny).

Diarrhea at the summit is a relevant topic in this spring trekking and climbing

season because many trekkers and climbers on the way to the summit will suffer from gastroenteritis, another more scientific term for diarrhoea. Many of these trekkers are fully compliant with the precautions which need to be taken in order to avoid diarrhoea. These measures include frequent hand-washing with soap and water or using the alcohol-based, hand-cleaning solution, drinking only boiled or reliable



bottled water, eating steaming, hot food and generally avoiding raw salad. But these measures may not be enough.

Food handlers who will be involved in the preparation and serving also need to adhere to these stringent guidelines. Indeed, the decline in the rate of travellers’ diarrhoea

in countries like Nepal may have plateaued. One explanation is that the traveller is doing all he or she can for prevention, but for the decrease in diarrhoea rates to be sustained, food handlers too may need to take proper precautions including storage and refrigeration of food supplies. With rampant power cuts in Nepal, adequate refrigeration will continue to be a problem, especially in Kathmandu where the traveller may need to spend a few days to make arrangements for the climb or trek.

Helicopter rescues are often necessary for travellers with severe gastroenteritis on the trail. Many a climbers’ dream of summiting has remained unfulfilled because diarrhoea is so severe and uncomfortable that the climb has to be abandoned.

The most important improvement would be for the traveller to go home and say “yes, I had a good time”, and “no, I did not fall sick”. 🇳🇵

WEEKEND WEATHER

The westerly disturbance that brought in moisture into Nepal’s midhills didn’t bring much rain, but it infused enough moisture for the afternoon convection systems to get going over the mountains. The rains doused some of the huge forest fires raging in Bhojpur and Dolakha and was welcome news for the spring corn crop. The system also brought in some unseasonably cold temperatures, about 4 degrees below normal for this time of year. The weekend will start out sunny, but there will be afternoon buildup with windy conditions throughout Nepal. Passengers on domestic flights will witness bumpy rides even when the air is clear.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
24-07	24-07	25-09



BIKRAM RAI

GOAL! DPR Korea’s Jang Song-hyok strikes the penalty goal that gave the country a 2-1 win over Turkmenistan in the final match of the AFC Challenge Cup played at Dasrath Stadium on Monday evening.



RED RIBBON: Patrons of Ullens School, Baron Guy Ullens and Myriam Ullens, inaugurating the Ullens Kindergarten in Lalitpur last week.



BIKRAM RAI

POWER SHOWER: A tourist enjoys an elephant shower in Rapti River, at Sauraha, Chitwan, on Sunday.



BIKRAM RAI

NEW RIDE: President of United Traders Syndicate, Suraj Vaidya, unveiling the new Toyota Avanza in Kathmandu on Wednesday. Keys were handed over to the first five customers on the occasion.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

This week marks the second death anniversary of Girija Prasad Koirala. Leaders from across the political spectrum, including his erstwhile arch enemies the Maoists, agree that they could do with his anchoring role in today's fluid politics.

Love him or hate him, and there were many who did so in equal measure, GPK left a vacuum that has been hard to fill. Frustrated and disappointed about their inability to strike a compromise, today's leaders really mean it when they rue Koirala's absence.

We are coming up to another constitutional deadline and despite some progress on the peace process, things are pretty much stuck again. All main parties say they are not willing to give in on the 'national interest' and have stuck to their guns. At least GP would have had a cunning plan, but there isn't a single statesmanlike figure among the main parties who commands the authority to make others listen. Even with Dahal, who comes closest, there is mistrust and manipulation.

The protracted political stalemate is taking its toll on ordinary people. On Sunday, Ramita Chaudhary from Bara district strangled her two children and then committed suicide. Ramita and her husband, both daily wage earners, were struggling to feed their children while paying off their accumulating debt. Ramita has freed her husband Mukti,



ANURAG ACHARYA

whose name ironically also means freedom, from at least one debt.

There isn't a day that goes by without mothers throwing babies off bridges and jumping off themselves, wives hanging themselves, young men selling off their kidneys, or patients jumping off hospital roofs because they can't afford dialysis treatment. These are not law and order problems, these are acts of violence that are tearing apart our social fabric which in turn are direct consequences of political deadlock that has affected governance, development, service delivery, economic growth and job creation.

An Asian Development Bank report released this week says rising inflation in South

A hungry revolution

When politics takes centre stage for too long, the state is dehumanised

Asia has pushed over 35 million people below the poverty line. The region is now tailing in the human development index alongside sub-Saharan Africa. The lack of jobs and inflation in food price is making it increasingly difficult for many to provide for their families.

So everyday 1,000 Nepalis fly out of Kathmandu airport for jobs in the Gulf and Malaysia. Thousands more cross the border to India on foot, as they have done for generations. Some manage to send back a portion of their savings, others either make it back in wheelchairs, in body bags or in coma. In the past three years, nearly 1,400 Nepali migrant workers

have lost their lives in the Gulf and Malaysia alone, and the figure would be higher if India is included.

It has become commonplace now to demean politicians and be cynical about democracy. But only the agency of politics can ensure structural changes needed to reduce inequality, institutionalise aspirations of the marginalised and harness our full human resource potential.

But when politics takes centre stage for too long, the state loses its human face. Political headlines grab our attention every day with ever more gloomy news, and the national debate focuses disproportionately on the power struggles drowning out stories of unfolding personal tragedies. Hopes about a better tomorrow

does not satisfy today's hunger.

If the state has 20 million to fund an extravagant and meaningless 'peace expedition' to Mt Everest, it can certainly begin investing that money in a social safety net and planning to put into place a national health insurance scheme.

Nepal may meet its MDG targets by 2015, but more than half its citizens will still lack quality health care and affordable quality education. Thousands of children will continue to be denied opportunities for better lives.

If a family distressed by debt is unable to reach out to the state for help, the state has an obligation to find a way to reach out to them. We don't need to wait for a new constitution to do this. 🇳🇵



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The common good

ORA KWO in DAILEKH

Under the global goal of Education for All (EFA) to train teachers to improve the quality of public basic education I had the privilege to glimpse the work of a unique project in Nepal's Dailekh district as an international adjudicator for the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize this year.

The award is sponsored by the ruling family of Dubai, and contributes to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by rewarding, supporting and disseminating outstanding teacher-related practices in developing countries and marginalised communities.

The Dailekh School Project (DSP) was unanimously identified for the shortlist, and this month picked as one of the three winners. We were attracted by the claim that the well-off in Nepal are subsidising the education of the under-privileged in an organised and sustainable manner that alleviates some of the financial and quality constraints faced by the government.

The Dailekh project is an outreach program of the Rato Bangala Foundation (RBF) which is based on a commitment to transform schools into joyful, child-friendly community institutions. RBF teachers and parents share a belief that bringing quality education to the people of Dailekh will contribute to the goal of Education for All.

Dailekh is reached after a flight to Nepalgunj and then an eight hour rough jeep ride through the mountains. I was initially speechless with awe about the world that was so different from my own. We observed children in classrooms, and listened to trainers of the 10 month certification program for teachers, their trainees, and personnel in the District Education Office and VDCs.

Back in Kathmandu we had a meeting with a dozen members of Nepal's educated elite who helped plan and advise the Dailekh project. They spoke inspiringly about the importance of quality education and social justice, and we visited Rato Bangala School where training of educators parallels the schooling of children.



An ambitious public-private partnership helps spread the benefits of education for all in a remote district in Nepal

Everywhere I went in Nepal I saw dedicated educators and engaged partnerships. I felt their ownership of responsibilities, resourcefulness, synergy, and impact. My adjudicating role was to validate the claims, but I actually saw much more than had been articulated.

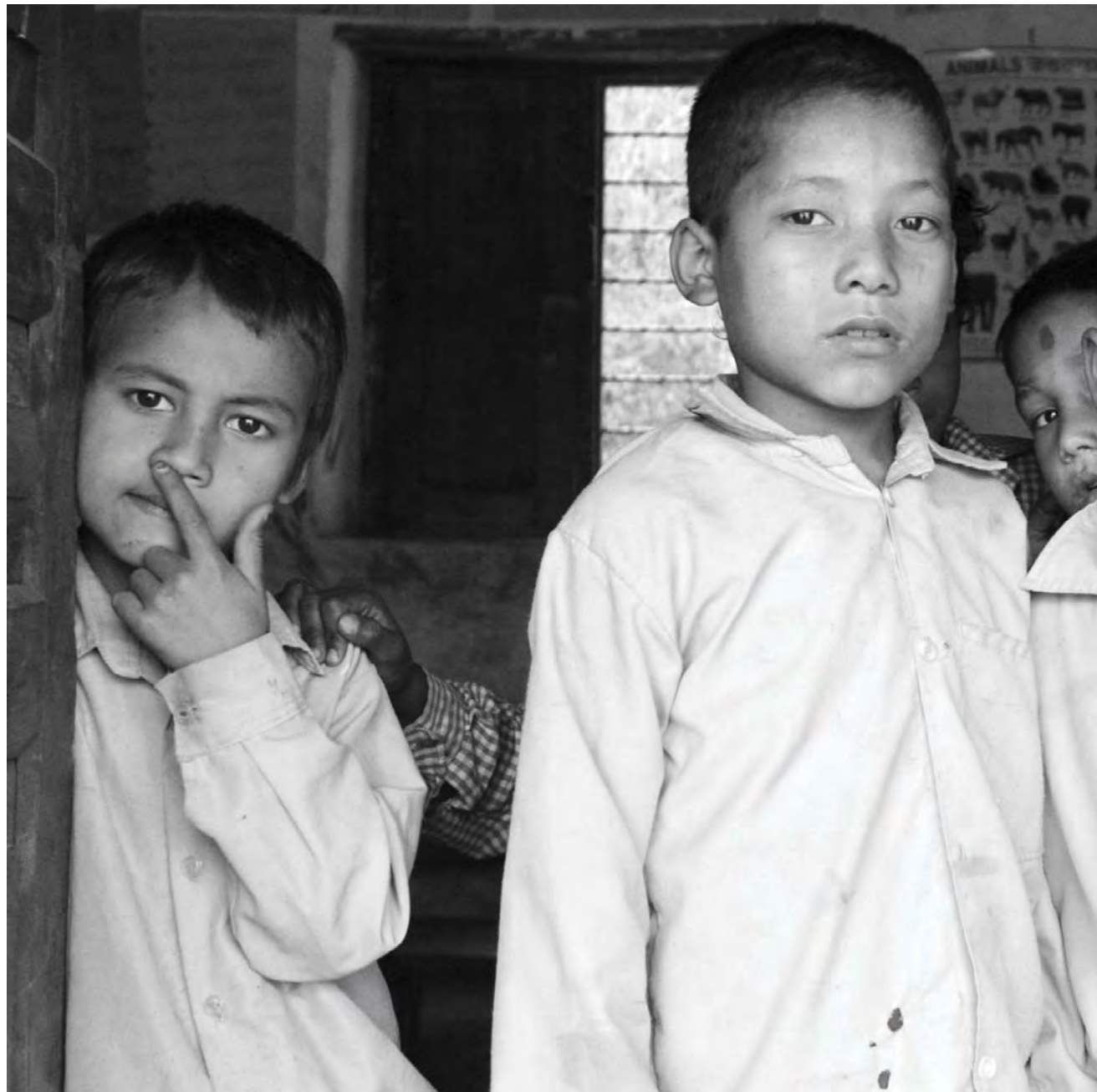
With the lived reality of a widening gap in education standards, the future of Nepali children will remain bleak if nothing is done. We want a model that improves the standard of education for the largest number of children with effective and cost-efficient inputs, making every stakeholder feel like a real partner and contributor.

At another level, the project can set an example in Nepal that service begins at home and at an early age. There must be a part of the self that watches out for others, especially among the privileged. The curriculum at Rato Bangala School has an in-built service component, students from affluent families experience the worth of working for a common goal and the common good.

The Dailekh project provides opportunities for parents to help out, and for the students to live in a village where they get life-changing experiences. When education is a privilege for some, but not all, what the educated do with their education matters a lot. In Dailekh, one of the poorest district of Nepal, material resources for education cannot compare with those in well-developed societies. Yet the hope of Education For All has been brought alive here by the collective leadership force: there is no single hero, and no competition for recognition.

The partners are not short of challenges, yet there seems to be enough power for continual strides forward. Obstacles are just seen as signposts for the winding journey. The project has created music that cannot stop. 🇳🇵

Ora Kwo is Associate Professor at the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Education and was an international adjudicator of the UNESCO Hamdan Prize.
www.rbf.org.np



PICS: ANKUR NEUPANE

Model partnership

Private school in Kathmandu uses part of its fees to help with teacher training and upgrades for government schools in Dailekh

STUTI SHARMA and DUKSANGH DOLMA SHERPA in DAILEKH

During the war, Dailekh was in the frontline: classrooms had turned into barracks, school grounds served as helipads for gunships. Teachers and students faced constant threats of violence from state security and the rebel army.

Today one of Nepal's least literate districts is rebuilding its educational base through a unique partnership in which an elite school in Kathmandu uses part of its fees to fund the training of teachers in government schools of one of Nepal's poorest districts.

In the past three years the Rato Bangala Foundation has been training primary level teachers on innovative methods and fostering critical thinking skills in students, and has trained over 2,000 teachers in

523 government schools in the district.

Former teacher trainee Karna Bahadur Shahi is impressed with the progress so far and told *Nepali Times*, "Improvements are incremental, but schools in Dailekh have come a long way."

Besides training teachers, senior students from Rato Bangala School also spend a month teaching children English and other subjects ahead of the SLC exams at Janata Higher Secondary School, Janata Primary School, Deep Shishu Primary School and Sri Narayan Primary School in Dailekh.

"It took a few days for the students to feel comfortable with us. But they were really smart and grasped the lessons very quickly," said Atul Adhikari, an intern who taught in Dailekh this year, "we applied the same

methods our teachers used with us in school which proved to be effective and they seemed to enjoy it."

However, the difficulties of teaching in rural Nepal became apparent within the first week of the program when teachers' unions affiliated to two political parties declared a nationwide closure of schools because their demands for benefits and salaries were not met by the government.

In addition to political instability, students in rural Dailekh are up against jarring poverty which means attendance is low and the dropout rate is high. Many families still can't send their children to schools because they are needed in the fields or have to help with household chores. Schools are forced to adjust



their hours and teachers readily send students home if they have other responsibilities. Despite setbacks, the children are eager to get to their classrooms and some hike up to two hours each day roundtrip from home to school, while teachers work with limited resources to make their learning experience more enriching.

Shanta Dixit of the Rato Bangala Foundation is hopeful that Dailekh will have a higher quality of education. “The project will continue for another two and a half years,” she says, “and by that time we will have more facilities like libraries and laboratories and make Dailekh’s school system stronger.”

RECOGNISED

The Rato Bangala Foundation has been awarded the 2012 UNESCO-Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers alongside the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences Schools Enrichment Centre in South Africa and the Banco del Libro in Venezuela. The \$270,000 prize is given every two years and divided between the three winners. The award ceremony will be held on 24 April in Dubai in the presence of the UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova. Rato Bangala Foundation says it will plough the money into extending its Dailekh School Project.



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Stop plotting

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 19 March

नयाँ पत्रिका

Marred by problems and controversies, the Bhattarai government finds itself at the most difficult crossroad. While NC and UML leaders are holding secret meetings and scheming to topple the government, a faction of the Maoist party is also trying to bring down Bhattarai by joining forces with KP Oli and Ram Chandra Poudel. The NC and UML have much to gain if the current government falls, but it is difficult to understand why certain Maoist leaders also joined the campaign?

The Maoists and Madhesi parties have been agents of change and a NC-UML partnership is unlikely to be any more progressive than the current set up. Moreover, if this government is simply replaced by another majority government, instead of a national unity government the entire campaign will be of no use. The games being played to remove Bhattarai from power will not only affect the Maoists, but will push the entire country into uncertainty.

Since we only have two months remaining, our main priority should be to conclude the peace process and write the constitution. Regardless of which party heads the government, inability to meet these priorities will make everyone's journey more difficult. There are no more legal provision left to extend the CA and the Nepali people will not allow further delays. On the other hand, making the country parliament-less by scrapping an elected body is also unconstitutional. It's time we realised that the life of the CA is of greater concern now, than the life of the present government.



BIKRAM RAI

Dashed hopes

Sarojraj Adhikari, *Kantipur*
20 March

कान्तिपुर

After his successful tenure as the finance minister in the previous Maoist government, everyone had high expectations from Baburam Bhattarai when he was elected as prime minister last August. However, the recent turn of events have raised serious doubts over his leadership abilities. The list of incidents that have tarnished his 'clean' image is long:

March 18: Health Minister Saroj Kumar Yadav gets intoxicated and misbehaves at a hospital. The same day, secretaries from different ministries threaten to tender a collective resignation citing unnecessary pressures from the ministers.
March 16: The government decides to grant 2 million rupees to the Everest expedition team led by Maoist Chairman Pushpa

Kamal Dahal's son Prakash and nominates PM Bhattarai's daughter Manusi as a member of Cricket Association of Nepal.

March 14: Irrigation Minister misbehaves with Secretary Brinda Hada.

March 13: Government staff clash at Home Ministry following the controversial transfer issue.

March 6: Tourism Minister Lokendra Bista is arrested by immigration officers at Abu Dhabi Airport for travelling without a visa to Germany.

February 27: Government decides to withdraw cases against 367 people involved in serious crimes.

February 21: Communication Minister Jayprakash Gupta is imprisoned over corruption charges.

February 19: Government does not celebrate Democracy Day.

January 26: Government validates decisions made by the 'people's court' on lands captured during the conflict. The Supreme Court puts a stay order on the decision.

January 19: After an initial increase in October 10, there is yet another hike in petroleum price.

January 8: Home Ministry decides to grant citizenship to children based on ancestry. The Supreme Court issues a stay

order.

December 27: Health Secretary Sudha Sharma resigns over differences with Minister Rajendra Mahato.

December 20: China postpones Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Nepal citing 'internal reasons'. Government decides to mass recruit 3,000 Madhesi in to the Nepal Army, but the Supreme Court issues a stay order.

December 4: Education Secretary Shanker Poudel resigns after the illegal transfer of officers.

November 13: The number of ministers in the cabinet reaches 49. Bhattarai says he doesn't recognise all of them.

November 8: The prime minister appeals to the president to grant amnesty to lawmaker Balkrishna Dhungel who was sentenced to life imprisonment

October 21: The government signs a BIPPA deal with India. Bhattarai says the agreement is a gamble.

September 26: Defence Minister Saradsingh Bhandari claims that 22 districts in the Terai might secede. An arrest warrant is issued against Land Reform Minister Prabhu Shah by Birgunj Police for murder allegations. The prime minister suspends both ministers on October 19.



बम्पर उपहार

एक जनालाई काठमाडौं नयाँ बानेश्वर नजिक वागमती अपार्टमेन्टमा २ बेडरुम अपार्टमेन्ट



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हरेक क्षण

हरेक ग्राहकले पाउनुहुनेछ हात खाली नजाने स्ट्यान्ड कूपन भित्र लाखौंका उपहार



हामी आउँदैछौं तपाईंको घरदैलोमा फेरि एक पटक

रजिष्टर गर्नका लागि CIR टाइप गरी ५२२५ मा एस.एम.एस. गर्नुहोला। यो सेवा नेपाल टेलिकममा मात्र उपलब्ध छ।

नोट : वार्षिक ग्राहक यी सबै योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
अर्धवार्षिक ग्राहक बम्परबाहेक अन्य योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
त्रैमासिक ग्राहक भने हरेक दिन र हरेक क्षण योजनामा मात्र सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
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Window: State coffer
Cylinder: Lumbini, Mt Everest, Peace (Gobbling) Expedition
अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 17 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“The cancellation of Ban Ki-moon’s visit may have made some happy and others sad, but it has lowered Nepal’s international prestige.”

Former Nepali Ambassador to UN Jayaraj Acharya quoted in *Kantipur Daily*, March 22.



Naya Janadisha, 20 March
जनदिशा

Five years since the Gaur massacre in which 27 Maoist cadres were brutally burnt alive, stabbed with spears and crushed to death with rocks, the murderers are still walking free. And despite being in government for most of the time since 2006, the Maoist party has not made any attempt to bring

Partners in crime

the guilty to justice. After the incident, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal had visited Gaur and vowed to punish the culprits and compensate the victims, but he failed to deliver on his promises even when he was the head of state. The Maoists had set up a probe committee led by politburo member Chandradev Khanal ‘Baldev’ which identified CA members Baban Singh, Upendra Yadav and Ramma Debi from MJF as the perpetrators. Ram Kumar Sharma, the other accused,

went on to join the UCPN (Maoist) party and is currently a Central Committee member. Jogendra Prasad Jaiswal, father of Ramakanta Jaiswal of Pothiya VDC who was among those killed on the fateful day expressed his frustration, “Instead of putting the criminals behind bars, the Maoists welcomed them into their party.” The masterminds behind the crime are now leading the Madhes campaign and the ones who were supposed to deliver justice are close allies of the murderers.

Competition for compensation

Benup Bhattarai in *Nepal*, 25 March

नेपाल

10 years ago, Maoists accused Phaguram Chaudhari of being an army informant and killed him. Since that day Chaudhari’s wife, Ramkrishni has been struggling to raise her four children. Although the government announced compensation worth Rs 300,000 for families affected by the conflict, Ramkrishni found out about this provision only after other victims in the village told her. While she was getting together the required documents, her brother-in-law took advantage of her illiteracy, tricked her and took half the compensation amount.

“It took months to prepare my citizenship card, marriage registration certificate, police report and other documents,” she recalls, “but my brother-in law presented himself as the rightful family member and claimed half the money.”

When Ramkrishni discovered that her brother-in-law had forged documents and siphoned part of the reimbursement, she asked for help from her neighbours and relatives. Even though he had agreed to return the money a long time ago, Ramkrishni has lost hope by now.

Shanti Chaudhari who lost her husband in a mine explosion shares a similar story. She says she received only half of the declared amount while her brother-in-law took the other half and adds that relations with her family have turned sour over the past few months.



RSS

The state introduced the compensation package to help families and victims of war, but many are now fighting over it. For instance, Bhakili bought a small plot of land in the district headquarter with the government money, but her brother-in-law is claiming the land. Another widow Dhanadebi Chaudhari says her brother-in-law took away Rs 25,000 and her husband’s family regularly threaten her. “I have had to suffer a lot because of my lack of education. Even after I got hold of my citizenship, my brother-in-law made it very difficult for me to get paid. But the money is compensation for my husband’s death and it rightfully belongs to me,” she explains.

Mother of all exams

Krishna Malla in *Dainik Patra*, 21 March

दैनिक पत्रा

Twenty-year-old Dil Kumari Oli began her SLC journey on Monday alongside 310 students at Kanti High School in Butwal. However, unlike the other test takers, Dil Kumari has to balance her one month old son on her lap and is the only nursing mother in the exam hall. Fortunately, she has been allowed to bring her fifth grader niece to help take care of the baby. Oli who is originally from Shidari in Argakhanchi is the wife of a former Maoist guerrilla, and completed up to Grade 8 from Sagarm Secondary School in Dang. Currently she is studying at the open school run jointly by the Educational Human Resource Development Centre and the District Education Office in Rupandehi. Other unconventional test takers include a woman in Rukum who went into labour at the start of the exam, delivered a baby boy and returned half an hour later to finish her exam in Takshera. At another exam centre in Nayagad of Rukum Kabita BK gave birth to a daughter during her SLC exam.

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A lot of you have taken the Ass aside at parties this week to ask for my take on the whether it is true that PM BRB told the cabinet he had saved the national treasury Rs 10 million by giving Prakash ("The Son Also Rises") Dahal only Rs 20 million, when he had asked for Rs 30 million to climb Mt Everest. Sonny Boy went crying to Daddy when the deal fell through and said: "They won't give me money, so bad they are." **Awesome Dad**, being a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist knows his communism, and realises that the only way to defend the revolution is to only trust the fruits of one's loins, even if they are spoilt brats. Which is why the far-sighted Great Leader has positioned the Dear Leader as next in line in the dynasty. He accompanied the Lumbini team of Comrade Avalokiteswore and Comrade Minendra to New York last year at state expense. Everywhere else he is Dad's Computer Operator-cum-Body Guard.



Good thing the prime minister cancelled the grant to Awesome, Jr. There were already Baddies lining up to ask for Rs 1 million to climb Pulchoki to save the constitution. One lunatic even claimed he needed **1 arab** to go to the moon in order to save the peace process.



Actually, Comrade Sonny-Come-Lately is rather internet savvy and has been the lead architect in mobilising social media against Daddy's rivals within the party and without, including Comrade Pompa and

Comrade Cloudy. But despite this, he couldn't take the flak that the Everest funding fiasco generated on his status page last week, and committed Facebook suicide. But before deactivating his account, he had one last go at his critics, accusing them ominously of being part of a

conspiracy to undermine Dad's ambition to lead Nepal to glory. He also put on a brave face, and said he had "rejected" the measly 20 million that Baburam had given him. Anyway, the team flew off to Lukla this week and **Comrade Fabulous** has given his son 5 millions pocket money from party coffers, and said he will "manage" the rest from "other sources". Guess that will mean some of us will be getting letters from the official villa at **Large Implant** to mandatorily volunteer moola for the expedition. The team is aiming to reach the summit on 27 May, the exact deadline for the constitution, and if they can't make it they plan to ask for an extension to the spring climbing season. If some team members lose their pinkies to frostbite, then the Ass' guess is that they will demand 10 million compensation for every martyred finger and toe.



The PM Ram Babu is suddenly hurling fulsome praise at the Nepal Army, saying it has been playing a "positive role" in the integration process. As PM, he seems to have finally realised that throughout history this country has always been under de facto military rule. All but forgotten in all this mutual admiration between Balu Water and NAHQ is that the army

blatantly defied the PM's order to re-open to traffic the Maiti Ghar to Bhadrakali access road that the military usurped during the war, citing security. The prime minister is credited with demolishing half the city to widen roads, but it looks like even he had to surrender to the army's wishes. He must have figured he has bigger fish to fry, and may not want to push the army too hard when he needs the brass to be generous on the induction criteria for the 6,500 **ladakoos** in the new Directorate.



Meanwhile, it is a mystery to everyone why the Army High Command has chosen this particular time in the nation's history to conduct anti-aircraft exercises throughout the country. Is an invasion imminent? If so, from which direction? Is that the air raid siren? NOTAMs have been issued for domestic flights to avoid flying over the army's test firing ranges. One such target practice area is Surya Binayak, which as many of you know is right on approach to Kathmandu airport. Given the sharpshooting capabilities of our Chinese-made ack-ack batteries, the Ass has his fingers and toes crossed that the army will not bring down a domestic flight to Biratnagar with friendly fire.



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