

This edition of *Nepali Times* carries a special focus on Pokhara, which is emerging as the premier destination for domestic tourism. More and more people from Kathmandu are buying retirement homes here to escape the congestion and the chaos of the capital. Pokhara offers mountain views unparalleled in the world, a balmy climate, and adventure sports like paragliding, zip lining, ultra-light flights, and white water rafting. There are three museums and numerous meditation and yoga centres.

PAGE 7-11



BIKRAM RAJ



# The Seti Flood One Year Later

Survivors of the Seti flood piece together their lives after the devastating disaster that killed nearly 70 people. The whole country came to help the families with education, shelter, and clothes. But one year later, many who lived still don't have livelihoods.

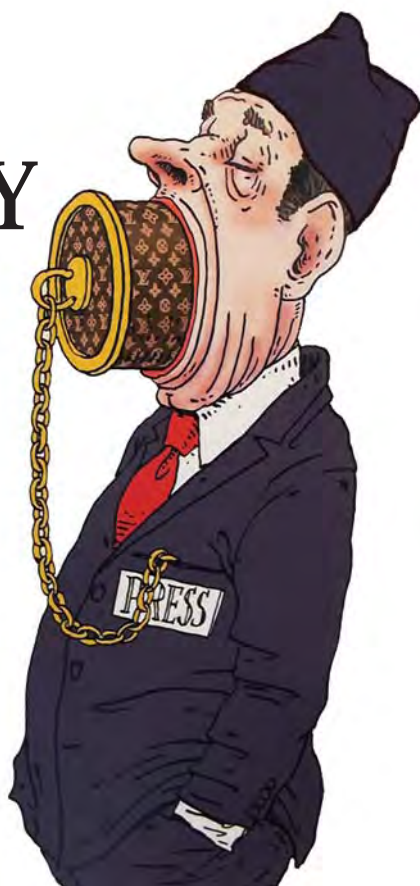
PAGE 6

# 3 MAY PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Friday marks the 20th anniversary of the first World Press Freedom Day. The myths of press freedom are that it is threatened only in repressive states (media in democratic societies are also constricted by commercialisation, censorship laws, and threats) and that journalists only need freedom (actually, they also need responsibility). In Nepal, 33 journalists have been killed since 1993, nine of them during the conflict. None of the murderers have been apprehended or tried. When the police tried to investigate known killers of journalist Dekendra Thapa, the government told them to back off.

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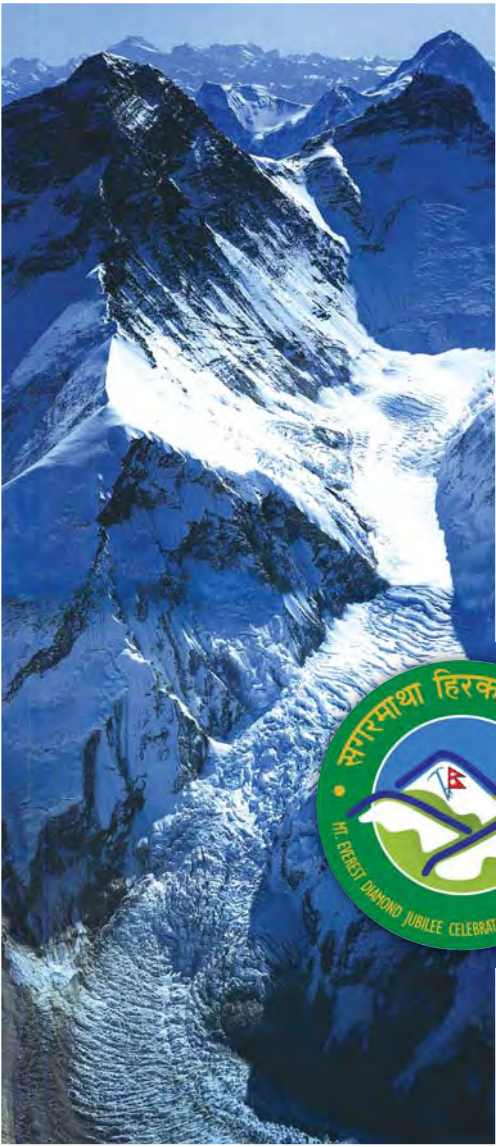
CLASH OF CULTURES

When two groups of mountaineers come to blows on the highest mountain in the world, it is sure to make headlines around the world. The incident got added play because it was a slow news week in Nepal and elsewhere.

Unfortunately for us in Nepal, the news came just as the government was planning a series of celebrations in May to commemorate the anniversaries of the first ascent of Chomolungma by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay 60 years ago and the first traverse 50 years ago by Jim Whittaker and Nawang Gombu.

Both expeditions established the tradition that became the norm in Himalayan mountaineering: the successful partnership between (mainly) western mountaineers and the high-altitude Nepali porters that they hired.

Indeed, the admiration of mountaineers for the legendary endurance and understated determination of these inhabitants of the Khumbu put the Sherpa people and Nepal on the world map. The reputation and respect that the Sherpas have earned is a result of their hard work and sacrifice over the years, as well as their admirers who turned



KOICHI OHMORI

The anniversaries on Chomolungma this month may be a good place to start mending the reputation of Himalayan climbing

benefactors, like Edmund Hillary, Pat Devlin, and many others. The Sagarmatha National Park is a model for eco-tourism and the Khumbu region today has an average per capita income three times higher than the national average.

However, as Frances Klatzel argues (*on page 4*) there was always a simmering tension caused by the clash of cultures between the Sherpas and their employers. Sherpas of different expeditions work together for the benefit of all climbers in a season, while the mainly-western mountaineers have their own personal ambitions to reach the top.

The Sherpas risk their lives every mountaineering season carving a route through the treacherous Khumbu Icefall, fixing

ropes up the Lhotse Face, literally carrying some climbers along the summit ridge to the top, and rescuing those stranded on the Death Zone. And they have resented the cavalier attitude of some climbers who are so consumed by their ambition that they do not respect the mountain and others on it.

What adds a new dimension to this friction is the philosophical difference between commercial expeditions and Alpine-style climbers in the Himalaya. Partly because of the hefty royalties that they have to pay to climb eight thousands in Nepal, expeditions sell slots to clients.

Alpine-style climbers, on the hand are purists, lean and mean climbers who go without oxygen, ropes, or Sherpas, usually on routes no one has done before. It was only a question of time before these styles clashed on a mountain like Everest which has a combination of both types of expeditions. Sure enough, this week there was a riot on the Western Cwm.

There are differing accounts of what happened between Camp II and III on the morning of 27 April. But both versions confirm that besides being a clash of cultures it was also a clash of egos. And it has to be said that the commercialism of Himalayan climbing has had a mercenary effect on what was once about exploration and adventure.

The Nepal government is partly responsible for this: by turning mountaineering into a cash machine and recycling very little of the revenue back to the people of the mountains. The prevailing national mood where right is might, greed is good, and a culture of settling scores through violence also rubbed off on the guides.

Good sense has prevailed, with both sides shaking hands and promising to make up. A lot of damage was done. No one won. Nepal lost. Collectively now, we have to try and restore the reputation of Himalayan climbing. The anniversaries in May is a good place to start.

ON THE WEB  
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FEDERAL EXPRESSION

A lot of wishful thinking on the part of the editor I must say ('Federal expression', Editorial, #653). It's true that Nepalis want "development that is hastened by effective decentralisation and autonomy that redresses the historical lack of say of the marginalised in governance", but how are our moronic leaders and the hotheads in DFID-funded NGOs going to balance those needs? The election campaign is already heating up and leaders are all competing with each other to mix ethnicity with politics. There is no need for federalism, especially of the ethnic kind. But of course, politicians will be politicians and they will insist on stirring the ethnic cauldron by having violent elections for a volatile constituent assembly that will pass a constitution which will dissect Nepal into little pieces.

Govind

MR DAHAL GOES TO DELHI

Pushpa Kamal Dahal has lost the plot ('Mr Dahal goes to Delhi', Kanak Mani Dixit, #653). He is a cheat and compulsive liar. All the doors are closing on him and he wants to make sure that he's still just breathing by polishing the boots of both of our neighbours. We must not forget that this man is responsible for destroying our country.

Nepali

- It looks like Dahal is totally desperate now. He had no business going to India and China,

he doesn't even have the skills to handle our brothers to the north and south properly. These trips just are shortcuts the man is using become an imaginary president of new Nepal.

Upadhyaya

- Can anyone bring Dahal and others to justice for wasting taxpayers' money on useless foreign junkets they make every other month to further their parties' vested interests?

Yepee

- I am no fan of Dahal, but at least he is trying to move ahead unlike the nay-saying chattering classes in Nepal who can only pontificate from their arm chairs.

Julius

- It will be fair to judge Dahal's leadership abilities only if we let him work. Yes, the results he produces are not always pretty, but he at least knows how to find ways to get the job done.

Him Lal

ARMS AND THE MEN

Very well written, balanced, and perceptive article by Trishna Rana on the need for Nepal's security forces to downsize and rethink their goals ('Arms and the men', #653). I hope the chiefs read this piece. But I am afraid that like most other things in Nepal, true institutional reform will take a very long time or a very strong and determined leader on top.

JR

- Excellent issue raised by Trishna. The army is just another institution where the government squanders

public money. Nepal doesn't need an army that big, let alone weapons. Who are we going to war with anyways? There are enough weapons to show around for the parades. The need of the moment is to boost development budget, not security budget.

Saira S

- Although I agree with most of the writer's arguments, I feel the Nepal army is relatively more democratic than our neighbours in the sense that we actually have the freedom to criticise it. I have never seen the Indian army being portrayed negatively in any mainstream Bollywood movie and I am pretty sure the defence and the army have a big hand in suppressing unfavourable voices. Pakistan and Bangladesh are no different when it comes to protecting their armies.

Praa

- Right sizing the army and disbanding the APF cannot and should not happen until the state comes up with a well thought out alternative to absorb those who will be laid off. As it is Nepal has huge youth unemployment, imagine adding tens of thousands more to this list, it's going to be a recipe for unrest. In the short-term at least it makes sense to retain the men and women in the army/APF because it keeps them off the streets and dangerous politics.

R Pant

- Downsizing the Nepali army is a bad idea. Currently the NA provides employment, education,

and healthcare to thousands of young Nepalis and their families from predominantly deprived communities. The Army also contributes to the country's GDP through its international peace keeping missions. Above all, the army has prevented the dictatorial ambitions of some leaders which would not have been possible without its strength. So if anything, we need more soldiers.

D Karki

THE KATHMANDU AIRLIFT

Standing on a sandy plateau, the Kathmandu airport is likely to be significantly affected in case of a major earthquake ('The Kathmandu airlift', Naresh Newar, #653). Access to roads will be even worse off as they pass through unstable mountainous terrain with no immediate repair prospects. For that reason a functioning airport will be of utmost importance even though it comes with its own limitations.

Armugam

- Until today, Nepalis were being told that the airport is the only place safe after an earthquake based on the study carried out by the Building Code Project during the 90s. Now a new study shows that even the airport is vulnerable. We need to evaluate other locations and make people aware.

Mahesh Nakarmi

- Better late than never with the plans for the airport. We are a big zero when it comes to disaster preparedness.

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Q OF THE WEEK

What's your dream job ?

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Prabin Sapkota: Rule over corruption.  
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Ankit Ghyampeman Pokharel: King of the world.  
Aneil Tripathy: Write for Nepali Times.  
Bobin Shrestha: Photographer or software engineer.  
Jivesh Jha: Successful journalist.  
Chautari Ma Gaff: Editor at New York Times.  
Narbahadur Pun: Start a business in Nepal.

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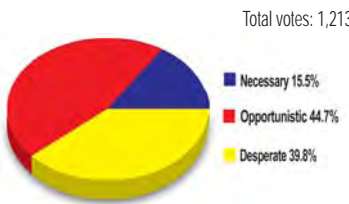
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This week's Question of the Week: 'What do you dislike about Nepal?'  
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Q. What do you make of Pushpa Kamal Dahal's recent visit to China?



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Q. How do you rate Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to India?



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# Best of a bad lot

Pushpa Kamal Dahal came across in Delhi as a leader patiently waiting for history to run its course



GUEST COLUMN  
Ajaz Ashraf

Traditional political heavyweights in Kathmandu were wringing their hands in dismay at this week's visit of Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to India wondering why New Delhi believes in this incorrigibly cynical and unreliable leader who exploits Nepal's instability to chart his way to power.

At the nub of these speculations is the question: why did Dahal visit India, even as Nepal prepares painstakingly for another election for an assembly to draft a new constitution? But here in Delhi this week, many wanted to know where are the NC and UML? Why aren't they also winging their way to Delhi?

Indeed, to New Delhi, Dahal came as a leader confident of his future and his place in Kathmandu's rather crowded political firmament. Not only did he meet Indian leaders and officials, he gave interviews to



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

the media and attended public functions, not hesitating to articulate his ideas or trumpeting his own metamorphosis from a guerrilla leader to a politician willing to adhere to the principles of multiparty democracy. He seemed a leader patiently waiting for history to run its course.

Dahal sure has changed since he first came here as Nepal's newly-elected prime minister in 2008. He was then a figure

of romance in India, having emerged from the jungle to spearhead a movement against King Gyanendra, who abdicated the throne under popular pressure. In the general election that followed, Dahal proved the pundits wrong as he led his party to bag the largest chunk of seats in the election. The media in New Delhi was smitten by him, tracking and reporting his movement in the capital in breathless prose.

The halo of romance around him, however, soon disappeared as Delhi looked upon him as a politician willing to cut deals to remain in power. Worse, the warmth between him and Delhi ebbed, and then quickly degenerated over the issue of civilian control of the army. Though this principle is upheld in every democracy, India was wary of supporting his decision to sack the army chief as it believed he wished to erode the Nepali Army as a counterpoise to his armed cadres. Dahal, too, hurled barbs back at Delhi.

This week's visit was a chance for both sides to recalibrate ties and rebuild bridges. Dahal had been planning the trip to India, claiming he wanted to undertake it before he flew to Beijing. Through such pronouncement, he perhaps wished to secure early dates for his visit. It's a measure of New Delhi's confidence in its Nepal policy that Dahal's visit here did not precede his Chinese sojourn.

To reconnect with New Delhi, Dahal went out of his way to convey that he is a pragmatist. At a public function, the Maoist chairman renewed his commitment to multiparty democracy and spoke of his

economic vision in which India was to play a significant role. More importantly, he affirmed that his party would not indulge in anti-India rhetoric or call it the Expansionist Force, a description he blamed on the mindset of his erstwhile comrade, Mohan Baidya 'Kiran'.

Many in India and Nepal warn New Delhi: don't believe this chameleon. But that quality isn't Dahal's alone. Second, as foreign policy wonks in Delhi see it, the UCPN (M) will still emerge from the next election as Nepal's No 1 party.

New Delhi believes Dahal is ahead of the political game in embracing the idea of ethnicity-based federalism, he is best positioned to form a broad-based coalition government post-election and consequently reflect the rising aspirations democracy usually triggers.

Delhi says it has no favourites in Nepal, but it must adjust to changing times and predict the future from its readings of the present. No doubt, the historic relationship between New Delhi and the NC still rekindles nostalgia. Yet, the NC and UML don't appear to be nimble-footed enough to adjust to the new political reality of Nepal and unable to arrest their shrinking social base.

The subtext of Dahal's visit to Delhi was as much about the increasing marginalisation of older parties as it was about his confidence in the role history will, once again, ask him to play. [ashrafajaz3@gmail.com](mailto:ashrafajaz3@gmail.com)

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# Mountain fight

Everest rage is a result of the clash of two distinct climbing styles in the Himalaya and was bound to happen sooner or later

KUNDA DIXIT

On the month that Nepal is preparing to mark the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of the world’s highest mountain by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Sherpa, the news of a gangland-style fight on Mt Everest has come as a disturbing reminder of how much climbing has changed. The partnership between Hillary and Tenzing marked the beginning of a long tradition of teamwork between Sherpas and their mountaineer employers who valued their stamina, endurance, and sure-footedness at high altitude. But the undercurrent of resentment between the ‘sahibs’ and their hired porter-guides had been growing. It reached boiling point last Saturday on the Western Cwm. The incident on 27 April on the Lhotse Face below Camp 3 has shaken the climbing fraternity, and divided the tourism fraternity into distinct camps depending on whose version of events they believe more. But the bottomline is that the publicity has hurt the reputation of both sides in the mountain fight. It has also drawn attention to the over-commercialisation of the Everest industry that got international attention after the book and film *Into Thin Air* by



Jon Krakauer about the death of 12 climbers in 1996. The clash is between purists in mountaineering who say that the pioneering spirit of exploration and adventure has been eroded by large commercial expedition-style assaults on the mountain. Expedition climbing provides seasonal employment for thousands of Sherpas. The fistfight this week between Sherpas and three noted climbers has been jokingly called the highest brawl in history, and got worldwide attention in media, blogs, and social networks. Jonathan Griffith from Britain, Ueli Steck from Switzerland, and Simone Moro from Italy climb Alpine-style which means they do not use Sherpas, and climb in small groups without oxygen or ropes on some of the world’s most difficult faces. Moro climbed Shishapangma

South (8008m) without oxygen in 27 hours in 1996, using skis in the descent from 7100m. It was during his winter ascent of Annapurna South Face that his climbing companions Anatoli Boukreev and Dimitri Sobolev were killed in an avalanche. Steck climbed the difficult north face of Eiger when he was 18, and is reputedly one of the three best alpinists in Europe. He was part of the daring but futile rescue in 2008 of Spanish climber Iñaki Ochoa de Olza at nearly 8,000m on Annapurna. This week, Steck sustained facial injuries from a rock thrown at him and Moro survived a knife attack that hit his belt when a group of 100 Sherpas attacked their tents at Camp 2, according to Jonathan Griffith of *The Guardian*, “There was a 50-minute period where we all thought we were going to get stoned to death,” he said. Earlier that day there had



**ENDURING PARTNERSHIP:** This year marks the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay (left). Despite the fight on the mountain between Eruopean climbers and Sherpas at Camp 2 this week, climbing the world’s highest mountain will still need the teamwork of both sides.

been an altercation on the Lhotse Face where Sherpas from different expeditions were fixing ropes. The trio were climbing freely and had to traverse the rope at one particularly exposed spot on the slope. The Sherpas say the three alpinists continued climbing even after being asked not to, and at one point they met near the rope. Moro is said to have hurled expletives in Nepali at the Sherpas, and threatened them on an open walkie-talkie. Back at Camp 2, it got physical. Says a Namche-based businessman, echoing a popular sentiment there: “The western media as usual is lapping up the blogs by these three guys and the Sherpas haven’t had a chance to tell their side of the story.” On Monday at Base Camp, Moro and his team and the Sherpas had a meeting in which both sides acknowledged their mistakes and promised not to repeat it. The three have abandoned their climb. Garrett Madison, a five-time Everest summiteer and guide wrote the first objective account of the fight in a blog on *Outside Online* saying: ‘In climbing Mt Everest all the teams collaborate in working together to ultimately achieve a mutual goal ... and the Sherpas are a major part of this goal. I sincerely hope that this incident does not damage how the Sherpas perceive the foreigners who come to climb on their mountain.’

## Speaking for the Sherpas

FRANCES KLATZEL

The news this week of the high-altitude dispute between elite European climbers and Sherpa employees of climbing expeditions highlights the differing expectations and world views when they are in juxtaposition on a steep and icy mountainside. With modern mountaineering, the term ‘sherpa’ has come to mean Himalayan men working on expeditions in the Himalaya. But the capital ‘S’ Sherpas are an ethnic people whose culture is steeped in philosophical and practical traditions that helped them survive in scattered high mountain hamlets.

From the Sherpa perspective, mountaineering is a risky livelihood to fill the family coffers. In some villages, nearly every family has lost someone on an expedition. Still, mountaineering attracts numerous young men and a few women for the income and, occasionally, for the fame. While helping others achieve their dreams, sherpas working in the icefall or to place fixed lines take this responsibility very seriously. A key issue seems to be that the Sherpas are working to fix lines for the general safety of all on the mountain, while these Europeans are pushing for their



very individual goals. These are different cultural mindsets. In Sherpa villages, traditional community norms and rules regulate everything from the collection of fuel wood and leaf-litter, to the movement of the yak herds, to the performance of cultural rituals and festivals. Sherpas, especially in the villages, are brought up to respect these norms and rules, called “Dhi,” which aims to protect crops, forests, and community rituals for the common welfare of the settlement. The Dhi are vital for survival in the harsh high-altitude environment. In a way, the verbal agreement among the expeditions that no one would climb on the face while the Sherpas were fixing the lines is like a Dhi, proclaimed for the common good.

Although no one seems to have been able to interview the Sherpas involved yet since they are busy fixing lines, it would seem that they expected the climbers would abide by terms that they might perceive as unbreakable Dhi. The Sherpas may be conformists in this regard, but it prepared them for the rigours of cross-Himalayan trade, agriculture on the edge of the inhabitable, and mountaineering expeditions. When confronted with the European sense of individual achievement, were the actions of the three climbers an affront on the Sherpa sense of community and responsibility for the common good?



Frances Klatzel is the author of *Gaiety of Spirit: the Sherpas of Everest*.

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# Insurance scams hit helicopter rescue

A potentially damaging investigative report in the latest issue of *Summit* magazine published by the British Mountaineering Council has drawn attention to insurance scams for helicopter rescue of trekkers in Nepal.

Written by climber-journalist, Ed Douglas, the article goes into gory details of trekking agents and their clients frauding insurance companies, overcharging for genuine rescues, and even getting insurance companies to pay for a 'fast ride' back to Kathmandu when they get bored by forging health certificates to show they were sick enough to need evacuation.

As the number of helicopter companies in Nepal proliferates, there is cut-throat competition among them to get a larger market share. The performance of helicopters have also improved and it is now possible to pluck climbers off mountains at altitudes of 7,000m as happened on Annapurna in 2010 when an Ecureuil B3 helicopter rescued three climbers.

However, corruption, weak regulation, and impunity have tempted many to make underhand deals to cash in on trekking insurance. The article, titled *Dial-a-flight* quotes a helicopter pilot in Nepal who says the industry is rife with kickbacks. "If the client gets sick, that is a good thing for the trekking companies. A client paying \$1,500 for a trek in the Everest region if he gets sick may be paid \$2-3,000 from the rescue helicopter."

More than helicopter companies, the article quotes insiders as saying that it is the travel and trekking agents and private hospitals who make money out of the estimated 1,500 helicopter rescues in Nepal every year. Nepal is the second most expensive after the United States for a helicopter rescue, it is even more costly than getting rescued in Antarctica or Switzerland. As insurance companies get scammed, they raise the premium and this is passed down to genuinely sick people.

A doctor in Kathmandu is quoted in the article as saying that only 20 per cent of patients medevaced to Kathmandu for acute mountain sickness actually needed it.

The article concludes: "With millions of dollars in commissions up for grabs, it is hardly surprising that Nepal's private helicopter sector has attracted middlemen looking for a slice."

[www.thebmc.co.uk/cats/all/summit\\_magazine](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/cats/all/summit_magazine)



## CON AIR

*Summit* magazine of the British Mountaineering Council found evidence of five main ways trek middlemen in Nepal cheat insurance companies:

### 1 Unnecessary evacuations

Trekkers persuaded they need treatment when they don't. Hospitals and helicopter companies are sometimes in cahoots.

### 2 Fast rides down

Trekkers who get bored, can buy fake documents to prove they needed to be choppered out.

### 3 Overcharging rescues

An insurance-covered rescue flight often flies in cargo from Kathmandu, and extra seats on the flight are sold for cash on the spot.

### 4 Charging twice for the same rescue

Two trekkers were evacuated from Manaslu on the same rescue flight, the local agent billed the insurance company \$5,000 for two evacuations.

### 5 Pre-scheduling rescue flights into trekking itineraries

Having fake doctors' certificates ready for trek members to claim insurance for being helicoptered out so they don't have to walk back down the same valley.

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# The Seti settles

One year after the Seti flood, victims learn to cope

CINDREY LIU in KASKI

It was Saturday morning of 5 May last year and many picnickers from Pokhara had come to the hot springs at Sardi Khola for a dip. Chahana Pun, 13, her family, and neighbours were also by the riverside.

Suddenly there was a roar from the north, the Seti River had turned into a brown wall of mud, boulders, and tree trunks. Chahana's parents and baby brother were washed away and only she and her elder brother Amrit survived.

One year on, 20-year-old Amrit still doesn't have a job. Chahana was taken in by a local school and given free education. "I feel sad remembering my parents and little brother, but I am happy in my new school and I don't have to worry about anything," she told us.

This was before the monsoon, so the sudden flood took villagers and tourists by complete surprise. It is now known that the flood was caused by a rockfall that broke off Annapurna IV, triggering an ice avalanche that roared down the Seti River (see box). The flood killed at least 63 people, three of them Ukrainian tourists. Twenty-one families lost their homes. Farms, bridges, roads, powerlines, and water pipes were swept away.

Five days after the flood, Jaya Ram Poudel of the non-profit L Angel School in Lamachour visited Kharapani, the village ravaged by the flood. Chahana was offered free education, as were Amar Tamang, 7, and Fal Bahadur Tamang, 5 who lost their mother. Soon after the flood, their father had remarried and abandoned them.

"If we did not help them, they would have ended up on the streets or become child workers," Jaya Ram explained. Relief and offers of help



**SURVIVORS:** Chahana Pun and her brother, Amrit, in a *Nepali Times* story last year holding up pictures of their parents and little brother who were killed in the flood. One year later, Chahana (below, right) is getting free schooling with orphan brothers, Amar and Fal.



CINDREY LIU

poured in from across Nepal. The government and the local community sprung into action, to provide up to Rs 100,000 for the family of every deceased, Rs 10,000 for every orphan, and offered shelter and education for the families affected.

"The flood was completely unexpected, but the government and private sector responded very quickly," Kaski CDO, Yadabraj Koirala, told *Nepali Times* on Tuesday. Indeed, compared to the slow response to other disasters, Seti has become a model for effective relief and rehabilitation.

While the government's response was commendable,

it was the contribution of the surrounding communities and Pokhara that was most impressive. More than 26 groups, including youth clubs, mother groups, cooperatives, and hotel associations pitched in to help.

Reporters from Radio Annapurna FM in Pokhara were among the first at the scene of the flood and their station started the Annapurna Relief Fund and broadcast an appeal. Listeners pledged Rs 6.4 million and part of it was distributed to those who had family members missing, since the government's cash grants only went to those whose bodies were found. The rest of the money was used to house nine families whose homes had been washed away.

The Samudayik Sewa Kendra, a joint drive of police and residents of Kaski, raised money and distributed it to 46 children who lost family members in the flood. "Children are the weakest and need the most support from the community," explained Sita Gurung, of the community group, which is going to continue its support as the children grow up.

While homes have been built and money distributed, livelihoods have not. Those who were resettled are grateful for their new homes, but they have no jobs, no livestock and farms, and are struggling to survive. Says 55-year-old Man Bahadur Pun: "We are thankful for the houses, but it is worrying that there is never enough food."

What would help would be to repair the bridge across the Seti so they can go back to their land, and skills training so they can earn money.

For those who lived through last year's terrifying flood on the Seti, the challenge now is to live from day to day. 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
Seti's orphans, #614

## Eyewitness of disaster

Capt Alexander Maximov was flying his small blue single-engine Aeroprakt up the Seti River with a tourist passenger on the second sightseeing flight of the day on 5 May 2012. There were puffs of white clouds above the Annapurnas. Then he noticed something strange, a mass of billowing brown cloud rising above the headwaters of the Seti below Annapurna 4 (pic, right).

As he turned south to head back to Pokhara, he noticed that the Seti River below him wasn't its usual white colour, but swollen and brown. Putting two-and-two together, Maximov knew it was a flashflood and immediately radioed Pokhara airport that "a big water" was coming down the Seti. The air traffic controller alerted security agencies and FM stations. If there hadn't been that half-hour pre-warning, many more people may have died that day.

Maximov's wingtip camera that was recording the flight has now become part of the vital record of the event that has allowed geologists and glaciologists to analyse the flood. The conclusion is that a large chunk of the rock face and ice cornice on the 7,525m high Annapurna IV gave way, falling 2,000m onto an ice shelf below, triggering an avalanche that plunged into the Seti gorge. Before and after images from NASA's Landsat also show



AVIA CLUB NEPAL

the entire Seti basin covered with dust as the estimated 22 million cubic metres of rock pulverised. The rockfall wasn't caused by an earthquake, but triggered a seismic event that was strong enough to register at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in the US.

Kunda Dixit

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
Kunda Dixit's blogs:  
Eye in the sky  
Lessons of Seti  
Watch Capt Maximov's videos of dust cloud 🇳🇵



The mercury is now consistently crossing the 30 Celsius mark and which quite normal this time of year because of the haze this week we haven't noticed that afternoon storms have dumped copious amounts of snow down to 4,000 m in the Central Himalaya. A high pressure area pervades northern India this week, but by Saturday the moisture blowing in on the westerlies will rise because of convection and topography to unleash some dramatic thunderstorms along the hills. the plains will be dry and hot hot hot.



Blessed with natural beauty and constantly reinventing itself, the lake city continues to attract people from all over the world

**P**okhara has long been a favourite destination among Nepalis and international travellers alike. Some come here to unwind after an arduous trek around Annapurna and others for the adrenaline rush in a city that is now a famed destination on the international adventure sports map. Many dream of eventually settling down in the lake city after retirement.

With a sweeping panorama from Dhaulagiri in the west to Himalchuli in the east, the emerald green of Phewa Lake, and adventures to keep you occupied for weeks, Pokhara provides the perfect foil to the dusty, concrete jungle of Kathmandu. The air is fresh and clean, there's little rush to get to places, people are laidback and friendly. No wonder 400,000 tourists make a trip here every year. And what has been particularly pleasing is the town's increasing popularity among Nepalis.

"There is something about Pokhara that makes me want to keep coming back," says Kiran Krishna Shrestha of Nepalaya. "I would love to spend my old age here, a place with a view of the lakeside or the mountain range would be great."



The steady growth in tourist numbers has encouraged investments in the town which used to remain closed for six months during off-season. In the last three years alone, three luxury resorts have opened up with investments crossing well over Rs 600 million. With an international airport in the plans, Pokhara will be linked to regional hubs like New Delhi, Singapore and catalyse the growth of the whole of central Nepal in the next few years.

"I love being in nature and when I grow old it would be great to live here, waking up at sunrise and enjoying the view of snow-capped Machhapuchhre," says Sarita Rana, a primary school teacher in Kathmandu who is a regular visitor to Pokhara, "the land here is fertile, maybe I will start my own little farm." 🍷🍷





EVENTS



**HIMALAYAN OUTDOOR FESTIVAL**, run, cycle, rapple, climb, and buzz through ziplines at the 2nd annual outdoor festival in Kathmandu. 3 to 5 May, Hattiban Resort, [www.himalayanoutdoorfestival.com](http://www.himalayanoutdoorfestival.com)

**Wheel-a-hoops**, wheelchair basketball training to promote and improve physical, mental, emotional, and social strength of persons with disabilities. 10 to 12 May, 10am to 4pm, Covered Hall, Tripureswor, 9801082797

**Think, eat, save**, 200 million people could be fed with the amount of food wasted in Europe. Vote for bloggers who are actively urging the public to shift from conspicuous eating to conscious eating. [www.unep.org/wed/blog-competition/bloggers/](http://www.unep.org/wed/blog-competition/bloggers/), #WED2013

**Ukus mukus**, an exhibition of drawings, prints, and multimedia by artists Kanchan Burathoki and Palistha Kakshapati depicting the drudgery of everyday life in Kathmandu. Runs till 12 May, 10.30am to 6pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307

**A country in verse**, gather round to hear your contemporaries wax poetic on Nepal and Nepalianness. 4 May, 4 to 6.30pm, Mahabir's Centre for Nepal Connection, Thamel

**Everest cycling marathon**, cyclists Avi Cohen and Daniel Moores are riding across the Tibetan plateau from Lhasa to Kathmandu as they raise funds to help impoverished communities in Nepal. Contribute at [www.indiegogo.com/projects/everest-cycling-marathon-for-a-just-world](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/everest-cycling-marathon-for-a-just-world)



**FREE HIT**, watch the Indian Premier League every day. 3pm, Bagaicha Restaurant, Jawalakhel, (01)5548148

**Graphic voices**, an exhibition of graphic artist Dan Archer's work chronicling the lives of trafficking survivors. Runs till 14 May, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark Gallery, Kulimha Tol, Patan



**TARGET ARENA**, get up to 50 per cent discount at the new paintball battle grounds. 27 April to 4 May, 8am to 7pm, Sanepa, 9851106850

**Anubhutee**, an exhibition of paintings of eight Nepali female artists. Runs till 4 May, 10am to 5pm, Newa Chhen, Kulimha Tol, Patan Darbar Square



**PRANAMAYA YOGA**, glean the nuances of classical Indian philosophy from Sati. Rs 24,000, 6 to 8 May, Neydo Monastery Resort, Pharping, 9802045484, [www.pranamaya-yoga.com](http://www.pranamaya-yoga.com)

**The god of carnage**, all civility recedes into corners in this play as two middle-class couples from Kathmandu attempt to mediate their sons' fight. Rs 800, 4 to 19 May, Fridays to Sundays, 7.15pm, Studio 7, Hotel Vajra, (01)4271545, [info@hotelvajra.com](mailto:info@hotelvajra.com)

**Chhaproma**, a new trilogy of short films that explores the personal relationships in post-insurgency Nepal. Rs 100, 4 May, 3pm, Rato Ghar, Rabi Bhawan, 9841442228

**Typography sessions**, learn how to use fonts more effectively in your creative projects. 4 May, 3 to 5pm, Sattya Media Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)5523486, [collective@sattya.org](mailto:collective@sattya.org)



**REDISCOVERING THE LEGEND**, a talk on art collector Narottam Das Shrestha's collection of historical Nepal paintings. 5 May, 5pm, Himalayan Bank, Kamaladi, 9851011086

**KU IT meet**, brainstorm on how to use information and communication technology to make our lives easier. 4 to 5 May, 9am to 6pm, Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel, (11)661399



**KATHMANDU BIKE FESTIVAL**, bike stunts, tattoo parlours, live music, good food, and an inter-school cross-country championship for bike lovers. 4 May, 12.30pm, Gyanodaya School, Sanepa

DINING

**Boomerang Restaurant & German Bakery**, an expansive garden situated close to the lake makes this one of the best places to dine. Try the in-house Boomerang specials. Lakeside, Pokhara, 061-462978

**Busy Bee**, head over for live rock and pop performances in English, Nepali, and Hindi. Indulge in beer and pizzas to while the night away in good fashion. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Byanjan Grill**, its open patio is a great place to sit, enjoy a book, take in the view, and gorge on delicious cuisine when the hunger kicks in. Barahi Chok, Lakeside-6, Pokhara, 061-466271



**CAFE CONCERTO PIZZERIA**, step in for a fine assortment of pastries, coffee, and Italian food. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Oxygen Lounge Bar**, for a relaxed ambience and acoustic music. Rosemary chicken with mashed potatoes is a hit among patrons. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Dragon Chinese Restaurant**, try the Kung Pao Pork if alone and the Mai Cao if with company. Lakeside, Pokhara

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**NEW EVEREST STEAK HOUSE,** has a whole menu of steaks to choose from, so don't think you'll get off easy with 'steak khane'. The friendly interior is ideal for famished trekkers and families to feast in style. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

**Moonlight restaurant,** serving a mix of India, Italian, Mexican, and Chinese food, with a beautiful rooftop terrace for a bird's eye view of Lakeside. Their Lemon meringue pie is legendary. *Lakeside, Pokhara.*

**Mailee Bhancha Ghar,** famed for their authentic Thakali cuisine, Mailee is the place to go when Nepali food is what you want. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



**SALT & PEPPER,** its chicken salt and pepper and lemon fish are delicious. There is a coffee lounge, a patio overlooking the Phewa lake, and a well-stocked bar. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

## MUSIC



**SHASTRIYA SANGEET,** dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music every new moon night. *9 May, 4pm, Ram Mandir, Battisputali*



**SUMMER FEST,** 12 hours of loud music to defy the sweltering advent of summer. *4 May, 8am to 8pm, Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap*

**Earthwatch,** live music over dinner every Friday. *Rs 1,299, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, (01)4375280*

**Live at Cafe 32,** live music and delicious food every Friday. *6pm onwards, Café 32, Battisputali, (01)4244231*

## GETAWAYS

**Temple Tree Resort and Spa,** a peaceful place to unwind, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna, it'll be hard to leave the premises once you enter. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara (061)465819*

**Fulbari Resort,** enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks, and dinners. *Phulbari, Pokhara, (061)432451, (01)4461918/2248*

**Pokhara Grande,** a swimming pool to escape from the tropic heat, a massage parlour and spa to loosen up and a gymnasium to release stress—great options all around. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

**Water Front Resort,** birdwatching, paragliding, horse riding, mountain biking, boating: all that you can ask for at this eco friendly resort. *Sedi Height, Lakeside, (061)466370, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*



**HOTEL BARAHI,** enjoy a great view of Phewa lake, cultural shows, or indulge in the scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery on the hotel premises. *Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)460617/463526*

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# Where guests are gods

The latest addition to Lakeside's sprawling hotel-scape, Atithi Resort & Spa is luxury at its best. A 10 minute stroll from the bustling city centre, the resort is a quiet sanctuary, perfect for anyone looking for a relaxing stay.

Expertly fusing Nepali tradition with modern amenities, Atithi Resort is beautifully designed and has great aesthetic appeal. Only a month into operation, the resort has managed to create a name for itself as being one of the best luxury hotels in town.

The rooms are spacious, comfortable, and inviting. Richly furnished with beautiful wild rosewood, it offers all the modern facilities imaginable- LED television, individual temperature controlled unit, a private balcony, free wi-fi, mini-fridge and a lovely en-suite bathroom.

One of the best spots in the resort, the W-shaped pool, right in front of the restaurant, with its artificial fountains, is gorgeous to look at. It's a wonderful place to chill in the sun with your book or have lunch with friends. However, I

suggest taking a dip at night, when the lights are switched on and the whole place transforms into a beautiful treat. If you want to loosen your muscles after a difficult trek, there is a Spa right next to the pool.

Whether you want to reconfirm your flight or need help with directions, the friendly staff at Atithi are more than happy to attend to your needs. And they are likely to get busier in the next few months as the resort expands to 51 rooms with a new organic garden and meditation centre.

Starting at \$170 per night, a stay here is a little heavy on the pockets, but the resort will make every paise you spent worth it.

But be warned, if you don't make

a conscious effort to venture into the city, you might just end up spending your entire holiday within the walls of this resort.

**Atithi Resort & Spa**  
Shanti Patan, Lakeside, Pokhara  
(061)466760/ (01)4002077  
www.atithiresort.com



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# POPULAR POI

## Zippering away



If you have already felt the thrill of paragliding, bungee jumped with the Bhote Koshi beneath you, and even lowered yourself by careening down a waterfall, then here is one more adventure to add to your list. On the north of Sarangkot, 15km from Lakeside, is the country's first and only zip line launch site.

After being strapped on a seat which is attached onto the cable, you will find yourself whizzing past the raging Seti River with the wind gushing in your face. As

you inch closer to Hemja in less than two minutes, the magnetic breaking system brings the seat to a halt. It is advisable to listen to the safety instructions properly to avoid a bumpy landing. Constructed by Highground adventures, Zip Flyer Nepal has been in operation for almost a year now during which more than 3,000 people have experienced the thrilling 2,000 feet drop from Sarangkot to Hemja at speeds of over 140km per hour.

"Our equipment was designed and fitted by an American company named Zip-flyer," says Santosh Shrestha of Highground Adventures and adds, "they also trained our staff and the test rides have all been successful." 🇳🇵

Bhrikuti Rai

[www.highgroundnepal.com](http://www.highgroundnepal.com)

Rs 3,890 for Nepalis, Rs 5,890 for others, 10 per cent discount for students, 25 per cent discount for a group of five or more

## Remembering the brave ones

Highly informative and thought-provoking, the Gurkha Memorial Museum is a great alternative to the mysticism and adventure Pokhara is well known for. Perfect for an afternoon indoors, it does great justice in honouring the Gurkhas, known as the world's bravest soldiers.



The museum boasts three storeys of galleries replete with photographs, displays, and descriptions of Gurkha paraphernalia. While the first storey showcases the riveting history of the soldiers from their humble beginnings in 1815 through their many action-packed campaigns including the First World War, the Second World War, and the Gulf War, the second honours each of the famous Gurkha infantry regiments. The flag of each regiment hangs proudly over the respective exhibit which details the customs, traditions, and practices, providing an insight into the military life.

The third storey belongs to the Gurkha specialists. It has displays dedicated to each group such as the engineers, signals, and transport regiments and also exhibits on the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, the Gurkha Contingent of the Singapore Police Force, the Gurkha Independent Parachute Company, the Gurkha Military Police, and the Gurkha Dog Company. The top floor is a library which may be accessed with a small fee.

While walking through the gallery, one is accompanied by sounds of horses galloping, troops marching and other battle sounds, providing a highly atmospheric experience as one traces the lives of the amazing Gurkha soldiers.

There is also a souvenir shop on the ground level if you are in the mood for some shopping. Everything from regimental plaques to books, postcards

and even service khukuris, can be found here. All proceeds from the sale of these items go towards the upkeep of this wonderful museum. 🇳🇵

Yeoh Lai Lin

**Gurkha Memorial Museum**  
In front of British Gurkha's Pokhara Camp  
(061) 441762/441763  
[www.gurkhamuseum.org.np](http://www.gurkhamuseum.org.np)

Open every day from 8am to 4.30pm  
Nepalis: Rs 20, SAARC countries: Rs 80,  
Others: Rs 150

## Bird's eye view

"Run, run as fast as you can, and no matter what you do, don't stop until your pilot tells you to."

You do as the instructor tells you to, pedalling madly down the grassy slope. And sure enough, we have lift off. The paraglider dips a bit before picking up speed and rising into the air. Nothing prepares you for the actual feeling of flying. There you are, dangling above Phewa Lake 1,500m below, and the city of Pokhara sprawled out beneath your feet. You clutch tightly onto the safety harness as the pilot tugs at the control cables, soaring with the updraft as the altimeter beeps.

Everything looks different from above: the contoured rice terraces etched to the hillsides, cars and people way down below like insects, and clusters of buildings that look unimaginably tiny. And to the north, the incredibly high icy ramparts of the Annapurnas.

If you are scared of heights, or of flying, look at it this way: paragliding is the least of three evils with the other two being bungee jumping and skydiving. After a brief take-off run downhill, you have the reassuring feeling of the parachute wing holding you aloft and guided by an experienced pilot. It is leisurely and relaxed,

with lots of time to admire the scenery and the sensation of flying.

The pilot heads off to where the eagles and hawks are soaring because the birds intuitively know where the thermals are. This is a 'bird's eye view' in more ways than one. It is the combination of adventure and scenery that makes Pokhara a prime destination in the world for paragliding. The glistening surface of Phewa comes up to meet you and before you know it the paraglider flares and all four feet of the pilot and passenger once more touch the ground softly.



At the feet of Machhapuchhre overlooking the Annapurna range, sits the International Mountaineering Museum (IIM), dedicated to the mountain people, the mountains of the world, and mountaineering.

The Hall of Mountain People showcases the social and cultural life of Thakalis and Tamangs, as well as people from around

## Meet the m

the world. Complete with photographs and traditional costumes, the exhibition provides a deeper insight into their lives. A video room also screens documentaries of the mountain people and compares the Alpine inhabitants of both Europe and Nepal.

The Hall of Mountains of the World is next, displaying the history, geographical information, and flora and fauna of Nepal's mountains alongside other mountains of the world. Rock hounds will enjoy the geological section featuring rock samples that were part of the mountain range's formation. Diverse samples of flora and fauna are displayed in photographs and stuffed replicas.

The final hall, the Hall of Mountain



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# POKHARA

A favourite destination among tourists both at home and abroad, Pokhara has a lot to offer in terms of adventure, sightseeing, and cultural exploration

The industry has taken off, with as many paragliding companies and on any given morning there can be as many as 25 colourful paragliders soaring above Sarangkot. It is a must-try and costs about Rs 7,500 for a 20-30 minute tandem flight, the tandem flight lasting about half-an-hour. Prices increase for varying types and lengths of flights. A set of photographs and a video of your experience can also be bought for Rs 1,400 but you may also take your own

camera and photos if you dare. If you are prone to motion sickness, remember to take your pills beforehand. 🇳🇵

Yeoh Lai Lin

WHO TO FLY WITH:  
Mountain Hawk Aero Sports Club  
(061)694838, 9846347768  
mountainhawkasc@gmail.com  
www.mhasc.com  
www.paraglideyunan.com



## Mountains

Activities is dedicated to adventure junkies. All kinds of equipment and adventure gear needed to scale mountains are on display here. Great mountaineers from Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay to French expedition team leader Maurice Herzog have been given a place of honour.

Before leaving the museum, visitors stroll through the Hall of Associates' Exhibition dedicated to the preservation of the mountain people's culture and environment. There is also a traditional Buddhist Lakhang prayer room near the exit for those who wish to offer prayers. Also worth a look is The Living Museum outside the main building showcasing the social and

cultural life of Nepal's indigenous population.

Whether you are an anthropologist, adventure-junkie, geography geek or just curious about mountains in general, IMM is fun for everyone!

Set aside an entire day for a proper visit as the museum is huge, but don't take too long as the gift shop closes a little earlier than the museum. Also, try to plan a visit around the load shedding schedule as the premises gets dark when the lights are out. 🇳🇵

Yeoh Lai Lin

International Mountaineering Museum  
Ratopahiro, Pokhara  
(061)460742/460343  
www.internationalmountainmuseum.org

Open every day 9am-5pm  
Nepalis: Rs 50, Students: Rs 35, SAARC countries: Rs 100, Others: Rs 300

## Soothing the soul

Tucked on a quiet hillside overlooking Phewa lake, Ganden Yiga Chozin Buddhist Meditation and Retreat Centre was built in 1993 as a sanctuary for people to learn Tibetan Buddhism, meditate, and transform their minds and hearts for others' benefit.

The weekend course on Buddhist philosophy with meditation and hatha yoga is one of the most sought after programs at the centre. Taught by Buddhist monks and nuns, this course takes place in the Gompa Room, a traditional Buddhist setting with full length windows overlooking the picturesque lake.

The centre is part of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), a worldwide organisation of over 100 Buddhist centres and activities directed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. According to the all-accepting doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, the retreat welcomes people from all religions



and is a testimony of the harmony that exists among the diverse people of Nepal. 🇳🇵  
Yeoh Lai Lin

Ganden Yiga Chozin Buddhist  
Meditation and Retreat Centre  
Lakeside road, Pokhara  
(061)462923  
www.pokharabuddhistcentre.com

## Long way to the top

Sisters Lucky, Dicky, and Nicky Chhetri, who were managing a lodge and restaurant in Pokhara, had heard enough harrowing accounts about harassment faced by female trekkers at the hands of their male guides. So in 1998 they decided to start a trekking agency run exclusively by women for female travellers. However, their journey was an uphill battle where they had to overcome immense social obstacles.

"It might have been jealousy or just the fact that we were women, we faced a lot of problems when we first started out," recalls Nicky the youngest of the three, "our neighbours even reported us to the police saying we were abusing women in the name of empowerment"

In the past 15 years, their company, 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking, has trained more than 1,700 Nepali women from disadvantaged communities to work as guides from the Annapurna circuit to Bhutan. Trainees take a month long class before they set out to the field under supervision. After spending five months in the field, they are promoted to assistants. After completing the course, the women have a choice of either staying on and working for the company or using their skills elsewhere. "We knew the only way to change the status of women in Nepal is by providing them education and employment,"

says Nicky.

The trekking company is part of a larger initiative managed by the Chhetri sisters, Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN), which also conducts community development training in the less developed regions of west Nepal. EWN has established a midwife scholarship fund and runs a children's home at the trekking centre in Pokhara.

3 Sisters has won several awards, including the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Award



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**MUST SEE**  
**Sophia Pande**

Steven Soderbergh is one of the most prolific directors of our time. A smooth, modern filmmaker, he has experimented from genre to genre, making films as diverse as the mainstream *Oceans Eleven*, *Twelve and Thirteen* films (2001, 2004, 2007), to the classic indie *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (1989), and most lately *Magic Mike* (previously reviewed in this column) about young male strippers. At the heart of Soderbergh's films is a willingness to experiment within the boundaries of conventional filmmaking, making him, in other words, a maverick of the conventional



filmmaking scene in Hollywood.

*Contagion*, which came out in 2011, is an excellent example of Soderbergh's style. Written by Scott Z Burns, with whom he often collaborates, the film is an incredibly well written thriller about a flu virus that mutates and causes a worldwide pandemic.

*Contagion*, in keeping with all of Soderbergh's other films, is shot by the director himself under the pseudonym 'Peter Andrews'. In this particular case he used the RED MX digital camera, a cutting edge camera that he favoured greatly at the time because of its realistic image.

Soderbergh and Burns' research was also very thorough. Wanting to recreate a feasible pattern of a spreading flu virus, the two spoke to various experts across the world to determine if what they were trying to depict could actually happen. Frighteningly, almost all the experts agreed that at some point in the near future, one of the current viruses (H1N1, SARS) would almost certainly mutate into a fast spreading killer.

The story starts with Gwyneth Paltrow as Beth Emhoff, a travelling executive whom we first see at an airport, coughing and sneezing as she

finishes a beer at the bar. This is Day 2 of the epidemic. Emhoff is the index patient - the origin of the mutated flu virus called MEV-1. She has just been on a plane from Macao to Minneapolis, transiting in Chicago.

What follows is a frightening, but incredibly skillful montage of a virus's trajectory. Not only is it airborne, but it also spreads from surface to surface as sick people touch door handles, escalators, shake hands etc.

As the virus spreads across the globe, various key characters struggle to contain it, research it, and provide a vaccination for it. Marion Cotillard plays Dr Lenora Orantes, a French doctor who is dispatched to Macao to identify the virus's origins. Meanwhile, on the North American continent, Dr Ellis Cheaver (Laurence Fishburne), and Dr Erin Mears (Kate Winslet) race against time to set up protocol to try and contain the disease just as Dr Ally Hextall (the always brilliant Jennifer Ehle) struggles to find a vaccine.

It is testament to Burns' excellent script that all of these disparate characters come alive, each with their own distinctive personalities, all of them struggling with their own fears and morality systems. Undeniably, all of these people are great actors, but in a film such as this it is easy to lose the plot and meander into over-hyped drama rather than sticking with the humanity inherent in the story.

As people struggle with the terror of such an epidemic, social order is disrupted and we see human kind at their best and their worst, leaving us, the viewers, totally rapt, but also with important questions. At the event of a neo apocalypse, how would you behave? Who would you save first? Would you loot in order to feed your family? Would you leak classified information if you were in a position to do so, in order to save your nearest and dearest? Perhaps, it is time to seriously ask oneself such questions, and meanwhile, start stocking lots of potable water in the case of such a disaster.

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

Watch trailer

**GIZMO by YANTRICK**

# Experience Z

The experience began with the X, improved with the Y, and now Sony Xperia's latest model Z has become the official competitor to Apple in the smartphone market.

The first thing one notices about the Xperia Z is its size. Five inches measured diagonally, the screen is big enough to comfortably watch a video on. Perfect for those lengthy bus journeys where your phone is all that stands between you and utter boredom. However, unlike some phones that are too big to fit in your side pocket, Z is just the right size and slips in easy.

The finish is sleek and glossy and aesthetically very pleasing. It comes in black, white, and purple. A minor bugbear is that it's very easy to smudge the phone with fingerprints, so investing in a screen protector is advised.

The phone comes pre-installed with the Android Jellybean 4.1.2 operating system, although you can download the new 4.2 OS if you want. There are a few apps to get you started, such as one that will give you the title of any song once the phone 'hears' it. Additional apps are up for purchase through a handy icon.

For amateur photographers, the Xperia Z boasts a 13-megapixel camera (facing outwards) and another 3-megapixel camera to take reverse shots. The pictures taken look amazing, with full colour and sharpness regardless of lighting



conditions. Videos also look good on the phone, with a maximum resolution of 1,080p in high definition. Coupled with the Walkman app for your music needs, you will never lack for entertainment as long as you bring your phone along. The handy also comes with a complementary set of noise-cancelling earphones.

One unique feature that sets Xperia Z apart from other phones is that it is water and dust resistant. Special caps protect your phone's headphones and SD card ports. You can literally dunk the set in water or hold it up in a sandstorm and it will work just fine. Finally, a phone that can take care of itself.

With 16GB worth of memory (and an additional 32GB if you purchase a SD card), Xperia Z has enough staying power to serve as your number one mobile option for a few good years. Despite an eyebrow raising price tag of Rs 61, 000, Z is definitely worth the investment if you're shopping around for a smartphone. Available at Sony Centre in Jawalakhel at the ground floor of the World Link building.

**Yantrick's verdict: efficient, elegant, and well-designed, Z is the best smart phone available at this price range.**

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# Click, click



Inspired by Pokhara's stunning landscape and armed with her Art School background, 22-year-old Georgina Foster from the UK started Pokhara Photography in 2012 to train young photographers in the region and encourage them to explore it as a career. *Nepali Times* caught up with the entrepreneur in her office at Lakeside.

**Nepali Times:** How did Pokhara Photography begin?

**Georgina Foster:** When I first came to Pokhara in 2009 for my three month photography project at Pokhara Aged Shelter, I was disappointed to see that there was no art scene here. In London, I had always been surrounded by opportunities to explore the arts. Here, I met a lot of people interested in arts, but they had no place to develop their skills or explore their interests. I started Pokhara Photography so that emerging photographers in the city have a platform to start out from.

**Do you think there is scope for photography in Pokhara?**

Young people in Pokhara who are interested

in photography hesitate to take it up as a profession because they think there is no future. But I don't agree, I feel there is a lot of potential as well as money in this field. Unfortunately, all the resources and money in the region have been poured into tourism and no one wants to invest in the art industry.

**Tell us about Pokhara Photography's work.**

At PP we encourage budding talents as well as provide them with opportunities to earn. We conduct lots of workshops and training to develop skills. I have also started a database of photographers and am currently trying to find placements for them. PP also runs two social enterprises- Creative Designs comprising of young photographers, which offers designing services to businesses and companies around the city and Pokhara Photography tours which aims to give young cameramen and women the guidance and experience they need to improve their skills. We started working in September and have trained over 200 photographers so far, we still need to reach out to more people but this is something that will happen over time.

**How difficult has it been starting a new venture in a foreign country?**

It definitely isn't easy running a company and that too in a foreign land with limited funding. But I am someone who believes that through

hard work, talent, passion, and dedication, people can achieve anything they set their minds on. If you never take risks, you never achieve. Without this attitude, I wouldn't be here today.

**Are you happy with the response that PP has generated?**

It's only been nine months since we started and the response has been very positive so far. I work with very talented and honest people in the city that are not only my students but also my friends. It has been wonderful to see them grow into good photographers. There are a few skeptics, but overall I am very happy with the progress we have made.

**Where do you see PP in the future?**

I plan to open a permanent photo gallery in two years where we will host regular exhibitions and conduct training. Once PP has established itself, I will hand over the responsibilities to a reliable and capable team that I have worked with and trained for over two years and return to England.

Srijana Chok, Pokhara

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geroginafoster@pokharaphotography.com

www.pokharaphotography.com

## Sarangkot Fordays



SOMEPLACE ELSE

There is more to Sarangkot than its breathtaking landscape and paragliding. Behind the hype of its famous sunrise view of Machhapuchhre, it is a village which faces real social issues. Inequality among castes and ethnic groups are still pervasive, posing a challenge for the development and growth of this hilltop town.

The lack of jobs has forced villagers to leave and seek employment down in Pokhara, in Kathmandu or overseas. Many parents cannot afford to send their children to school, so enrolment rates are low. Tourism can be the great equaliser, creating jobs and providing opportunities for the underprivileged and that is exactly

what one restaurant is doing in Sarangkot.

Sarangkot Fordays Restaurant is a breakfast place with a difference. It has a prime view of the Annapurnas, but it is not just any restaurant, sharing a special relationship with the local community, promoting sustainable development, and ecotourism. Fordays is a health drink manufacturer in Japan and this is part of its corporate social responsibility project to raise funds to run the nearby Bishnu Secondary School. Of all the great places to eat in Pokhara, at Fordays you also feel great about helping out.

Try the Sarangkot Breakfast - (juice, toast, croissant with jam, butter, honey, and fresh eggs cooked to order with Sarangkot coffee or tea, Rs 500) or a good old American breakfast (choice of chilled juice or seasonal fresh fruit, porridge or cornflakes served with cold or hot milk, fresh eggs cooked to order with ham, bacon or sausages,



POKHARA PACKAGE

toast, croissant, muffin, Sarangkot coffee and tea, Rs 700). Also on the ala carte menu are popular breakfast items such as juices (Rs 200), cereals (Rs 350), cornflakes with milk (Rs 250), muesli with curd and fruit (Rs 250), fresh eggs cooked to order (Rs 175) or an omelette (mushroom, chicken, ham mixed or oriental with ham, bacon or sausages, Rs 275).

The food is simple but hearty. Everyone enjoys a fried breakfast



PICS: YEOH LAI LIN

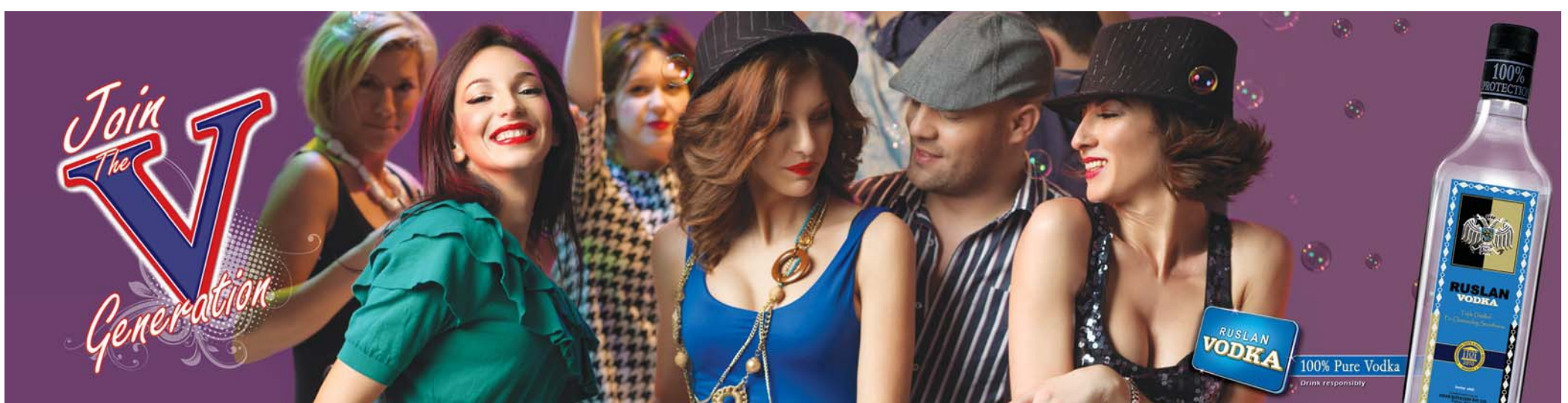
now and then, washed down with a tall glass of fresh juice, and a fragrant cup of tea or coffee. However, the icing on the cake has to be the view from the restaurant, offering a spectacular panoramic sweep of the Annapurna range at daybreak. It is a perfect way to start the day, especially if you would like to avoid jostling with the hordes of tourists and people who scatter themselves across the village at dawn. If you are early and lucky enough, get a table on the balcony and watch the sunrise unravel before your very eyes,

the darkness slowly giving way to lighter and lighter shades of lavender, pink, then gold on the snows above.

These are, by far, the best seats in the house. If you aren't an early riser, fret not, Fordays is open till 2pm and you can saunter over for a leisurely lunch as well. Sarangkot also offers spectacular sunset views. 🌅

Yeoh Lai Lin

*How to get there: right on the Sarangkot hill, half an hour away from Lakeside, Pokhara.*





# Creaking joints



**DHNAVANTARI**  
**Buddha Basnyat, MD**

A 60-year-old woman came to our clinic complaining of pain in her right knee that had lasted more than two months and got worse every time she walked. She had a medical history of obesity and hypertension. Another patient, a 51-year-old man without any other medical problems, also suffered from chronic pain in both knees for months. Both had been taking 'brufen' without much relief.

The two patients have osteoarthritis of the knee, a condition where the cartilage degenerates due to 'wear and tear' of the joints. Not surprisingly, the single most important risk factor is age. A young joint has protective mechanisms to preserve the cartilage matrix even with excessive stress. But as people cross 50, articular cartilage starts to gradually get damaged. While those who injure their joints during youth have a strong predisposition to osteoarthritis later on in life, obesity is another common cause.

Osteoarthritis is so prevalent in Nepal that internists and rheumatologists (joint doctors) see numerous patients every week at their clinics. In general




this particular kind of arthritis is diagnosed clinically and does not usually require advanced imaging techniques like CT scan or magnetic resonance imaging.

Since osteoarthritis is a mechanical problem (as opposed to an inflammation), non-pharmacological therapy is the first recommended treatment. Avoiding activities that cause pain

to the joints (no running if there is pain while jogging), strengthening and conditioning adjacent muscles to the joint, and using canes to lessen the joint load can sometimes even reverse the initial cartilage damage.

As obesity becomes an epidemic in Kathmandu and other urban areas, maintaining a healthy weight is also paramount to avoiding osteoarthritis because each extra kilo increases the load across the weight bearing joint several times. Obesity appears to play major role in osteoarthritis of the hand as well

(where there is hardly any weight bearing) suggesting that obesity has both a mechanical and metabolic mechanism of action. For over-weight osteoarthritis patients, shedding those spare kilos should be the primary goal. Surgical therapy with joint replacement with prosthesis may be required in severe cases of osteoarthritis. 

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INDIAN EMBASSY

**LONG TIME NO SEE:** Chairman of UCPN (M) Pushpa Kamal Dahal greets Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the PM's Office in New Delhi on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

**RED SEA:** Cadre of CPN-M participate in a rally at New Road on Wednesday afternoon to mark International Labour day.



TRISHNA RANA

**ACING IT:** Students from Khumjung Secondary School in Solukhumbu enjoy a game of volleyball during their lunch break on Monday.

## READERS' PHOTO



NARAYAN LAMICHANE

**TWO JOBS:** A filmmaker shoots footage of a slum area near the banks of the Bagmati while a fruit vendor goes to work.



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### ECO FAIR DETAILS:

**Date:** 5 to 7 June 2013  
**Venue:** Nepal Academy Premises  
Kamaladi, Kathmandu  
**Time:** 1000 Hrs until 1800 Hrs



# Muddling through

For Nepal to move ahead institutions must replace individuals as the focus of political practice



GUEST COLUMN

George Varughese

Nepal has been in a state of transition since the 1950s. A brief romance then with democracy ended in three decades of single-party, autocratic rule. Since the restoration of multiparty, democratic politics just over 20 years ago we have had 20 prime ministers, a decade-long civil war, and an abortive constitutional development process. No elected government has ever completed a full term, and last month the fifth chief executive in as many years was sworn in.

The indicators of Nepal's developmental progress are mixed: there are significant successes in health and education, the macro-economy is stable and remittances are high. Investment is low, but there is no obvious economic crisis to spur political action. Though impunity and corruption are rising, the country has not descended into anarchy. While elected local government has been absent for more than a decade, modest levels of public goods and services are available. The country is at a political impasse but seems to be muddling through; a suboptimal equilibrium, perhaps, that is difficult to graduate from.

How corrosive and costly are the effects of this most recent, elongated transition for Nepal? How much of the damage is reversible in the near and medium term? What keeps Nepal's progress at an

impasse? A part of this crisis is the character of the Nepali political party. Following the first People's Movement, the settlement in 1990-91 was for multiparty politics, whereby popular aspirations and citizen interests would be represented by parties who would govern via parliamentary democracy. Instead, individuals governed and still do. Some have served at least twice if not more times as prime minister. The problem of the undemocratic nature of political parties and their demonstrated lack of belief and investment in democratic practice within themselves did not change even after a second People's Movement in 2006.

There is also a critical lack of trust among political actors. Commitments made by powerful political figures are no longer considered credible. While the nostalgia for a credible strongman is occasionally evident, more worrisome is the crisis of confidence and trust in political parties and in politics.

On the one hand, parties have shown that they struggle to change. Take their current ineptitude in dealing with identity movements within and outside their parties, or the suppression of dissenting voices and the trivialisation of second and third-tier leadership opinion. The parties have fragmented, making it even more costly to achieve common understanding and build coalitions in future.

Professionals and the rest of the middle class are disengaged from politics and are now either name-calling or launching movements of anti-politics. This narrow understanding of politics and political practice

does not get us any closer to a governance arrangement that is of, for, and by the Nepali people. In addition to ignoring political party reform we are guilty of allowing or hastening the decay of critical formal and informal democratic institutions and practices.

We must pay attention to, for example, the National Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Investigation into Abuse of Authority, the proposed Commissions for Truth and Reconciliation and for Disappearances, associations of government bodies, the community groups that manage schools, forests, irrigation, and so on. These are just some examples where constant institutional strengthening and innovation by both state and society ultimately matters.

A country that was feudal and has been patriarchal for decades was first promised democracy, but subjected to rapacious party politics that did not deliver. A nation that was then torn apart by an insurgency that promised an end to discrimination, marginalisation, and inequality, now struggles to manage a hundred different voices.

The answer in rebuilding societies usually lies in the deliberate efforts of the state, its representatives, and its friends in providing leadership, articulating vision and a clear sense of direction, in redressing grievances and injustices, and in reducing the trust deficit among their peoples and with the state. This has to become the focus of those within and outside government, sooner rather than later.

There is also a lack of clarity of purpose and direction to politics. It is just not clear where we are headed and this is not because the leaders and elites really know either. Politics is not representative of popular aspirations, individual leaders have undermined the very institutions that matter, and myriad groups and coalitions and movements (vertically and horizontally across society) have disengaged from the idea that politics matters most to economic and social life.

A new idea of politics is required in order to transition Nepal towards stable, plural, representative, and accountable governance arrangements. For this to happen, first and foremost, institutions must replace individuals as the focus of political practice, both by parties and by society. Perhaps the current hiatus will spur thought and action in that direction. 

*George Varughese has lived and worked in Nepal for more than 25 years.*



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# Building for tomorrow

## Traditional mud and wood buildings can give ‘futuristic architecture’ a whole new meaning

CINDREY LIU

Nepal has a rich tradition of buildings made out of local materials such as mud, bamboo, and straw. The famous Basantapur Darbar and Singha Darbar are prime examples of mud, brick, and mortar buildings which have survived the test of time.

These traditional materials, which were cheaper, more ecological, and safer during earthquakes are giving way to concrete. As the road network spreads to rural areas, concrete is replacing traditional building materials even in the districts.

“Because of our education system, we try to copy everything from the West,” explains Nripal Adhikary of the Adobe and Bamboo Research Institute (ABARI). “We have an amazing history of vernacular architecture, but it is not considered glamorous enough. There is an inferiority complex of our own materials.”

The media, especially television, also propagates the myth that only cement houses are durable. Another reason is the loss of relevant skills

in handling local materials. Construction techniques were not documented and properly passed down, leading to poorly built houses that did not last long. Bamboo houses used to be naturally protected from insects by fireplace smoke, but as smoke-free stoves became popular, bamboo needs to be treated before construction.

Although concrete is essential for high-rises and needs proper design, most cement homes are neither sustainable nor environment friendly. Nepal imports 70 per cent of its cement from India and its manufacture has a huge carbon footprint, the structures are energy-intensive because they are cold in winter and hot in summer.

“Because construction techniques do not meet the required standards, we end up with very poor quality buildings that will not be safe in an earthquake,” says Aruna Paul, country representative of Habitat for Humanity Nepal.

Fortunately, a new breed of engineers are pushing the concept of sustainable architecture. Habitat and ABARI aim to build a million

**GLORIOUS MUD:** Unbaked bricks and mud plaster give this row of houses in Palpa (top) a pleasing look in harmony with its surroundings. The buildings are also safer and more climate-friendly.

houses in Nepal by 2020 using mud, sun-dried bricks, straw, and bamboo. Aruna Paul is glad most customers, even in urban areas, don’t need to be convinced any more to use local materials as they are now demanded by the people. After the Saptakosi River flood displaced more than 60,000 Nepalis in 2008, the disaster relief program helped build bamboo and mud houses.

ABARI’s Nripal Adhikary sums it up: “We should not take from our future generations to build for ourselves now.”

A recent Sustainable Mountain Architecture exhibition at the Pulchok Campus featured three projects of Dutch architect Anne Feenstra: the Kargyak Learning Centre in Ladakh, the House With the Dancing Windows in Afghanistan, and the insulation of houses in Sikkim by re-using waste material (see page 17).

An empty plastic bottle seems

useless to most people, but it can be used to make a mountain home more habitable. Reusing waste materials was one of the many solutions presented at the exhibition.

“Nepal is an amazingly beautiful country and we have to be careful to keep it that way, these examples show us what is possible in Nepal,” says Feenstra. Reusing plastic bottles, cardboard, rubber slippers, and tetrapacks to seal roofs, ceilings, walls, doors, and windows of houses in Sikkim could be easily replicated in the mountains of Nepal. When homes were insulated in Sikkim, less firewood was needed for heating and that saved the habitat of the red panda.

However, Feenstra’s co-designer, Mariyam Zakiah, warns against the ‘copy-paste’ method of replicating without considering suitability. She said: “A building should be designed responding to the climate, local context, and most importantly the people it is designed for.”

Feenstra hopes Nepali students will go beyond aesthetics to also look at the reason for design. The House with Dancing Windows in Afghanistan, for example, is designed to give a contemporary edge with glass panels at the bottom so more sunlight can enter to heat the building.

Sophiya Gurung, a fourth year architecture student at Pulchok was excited: “We have seen a completely new way to design buildings here.”



**Bamboo**

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# Afghan experience

In 2010, a flash flood hit northern Afghanistan and damaged a 165-year-old public bath house, Hammam Khist-i-Kopruk. *Life of an Afghan Hammam* explores how the local community led by Dutch architect Anne Feenstra worked to revive an old architectural tradition to restore the building and the culture associated with it.

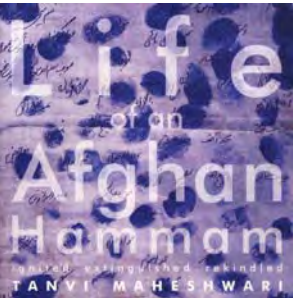
This superbly produced book records the flood, the damage, and the painstaking restoration. Written by Indian architect Tanvi Maheswari, it is passionately penned and superbly illustrated in which one can sense the author's dedication for preservation and restoration in a difficult conflict environment.

The book looks at the whole history of bath houses, and traces it back to Roman times and Greek influences. The technique of building the baths is faithfully revived, local materials and skills were used.

Bricks, lime plaster, cut stones were hard to come by, but there was plenty of cement and steel. The project is a lesson in sustainable architecture and how cumulative knowledge can be used to restore historical sites and also yield lessons for modern day designs.

This is an eco-conscious technique that has important lessons for Nepal as well so that the designs for our schools and public spaces are sensitive to local climate conditions. This book doesn't have all the answers, but its message needs to be propagated not just in rural Nepal and Afghanistan, but also into those who mindlessly copy western energy-intensive structures in our cities in the name of modernity.

*Life of an Afghan Hammam* is being launched in New Delhi's Habitat Centre, Gulmohur Hall at 7pm on Friday, 3 May. Open to all.



*Life of an Afghan Hammam*  
*ignited extinguished rekindled*

by Tanvi Maheswari  
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Calling all Radio Play Writers

British Council Nepal is holding a series of workshops and competitions to support creativity in the arts

**1. BBC Worldwide Radio Play Writing Workshop (29 May)**  
Win the chance to have your play recorded and aired on the BBC World Service and win a trip to London.

Criteria for application:

- Short bio-data
- Synopsis of a play for six characters, for a length of 53 minutes
- Synopsis to be no more than 400 words.

**2. British Council Nepal 15 minutes Radio Play Writing Workshop (30 May)**  
Win the chance to have your play recorded and aired on Nepali radio.

Criteria for application:

- Short bio-data
- Synopsis of a play for four characters, for a length of 15 minutes
- Synopsis to be no more than 200 words.

**3. Intermediate Radio Play Workshop (31 May)**  
Criteria for application:

- Open to participants of last year's workshop and to experienced writers working in radio
- Short bio-data
- Submit a scene or scenes prior to the workshop, to be discussed within the class environment as part of the workshop

**4. One-to-One Surgeries**  
For anyone wanting 30 minutes in private to discuss their work with the renowned writer and director from the UK, Andrew Rajan.

Criteria for application:

- Short bio-data
- Synopsis, completed plays, or ideas and early structure or character choices before a script exists that you want to discuss

Capacity for each workshop is only 20 seats. Registration on first come first served basis and registration fee for each workshop is NPR 3000/workshop, which is to be paid after being shortlisted.

While applying for the workshop, please specify the workshop type and send in the required documents by e-mail to [general.enquiry@britishcouncil.org.np](mailto:general.enquiry@britishcouncil.org.np).

• Registraion for the workshop closes by 5:00 PM, 13 May 2013.

• Registration for British Council Nepal 15 minutes Radio Play Writing Competition closes by 5:00 PM, 31 July 2013.

Visit our website [www.britishcouncil.org/nepal](http://www.britishcouncil.org/nepal) for details on the workshops and competition.

Partner: EQUAL ACCESS



# Leaving nightmares behind

Dambar Krishna Shrestha, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 28 April - 4 May

As the Maoist insurgency reached its peak in the early 2000s, the rebels took their recruitment drives to new lows. Not satisfied with combing entire villages for susceptible youngsters to recruit into the PLA, area commanders emptied schools and marched thousands of students into training camps.

Some survived the ordeal, while others were not so fortunate. Among those who lived to tell their tales, the scars of abuse run deep. Walking from Kolti in Bajura to Talcha in Mugu, this correspondent met three former abductees and child soldiers who are keen to move ahead from their nightmarish past in the rebel army.

28-year-old Dhan Bahadur Thapa was one of the 18 students abducted from Lokpriya Higher Secondary School, Mugu, in 2004. For an entire year, Dhan Bahadur was prohibited from keeping in contact with his family. Under the leadership of Prabhakar, area commander of the far-west, DB fought in 14 battles and even used LPGs in rebel attacks on Khara, Masuriya, Rambhapur, Bheripul, and Pili.

“We would have been killed had we not fought. My wife and parents were weeping back home, but I had no choice,” reveals DB.

While he recovered from injury sustained during an attack on Khara, DB returned home after a temporary ceasefire was announced in August 2005. It was too dangerous to stay on after the truce ended, so DB fled to India. After working for two years in Champawat in Uttarakhand, he returned with modest savings of Rs 96,000 and started a retail business in Surkhet. Now he owns a retail shop and a local eatery in Mugu and also trades mules to supplement his income. He admits his decision to leave

the PLA was the correct one, “Who knows where I would have ended up if I had continued fighting.”



Unlike DB, 22-year-old Ubjan Baniya of Srikot, Mugu, was stuck in the rebel army for seven years until he was allowed to voluntarily retire in January this year. After quitting, Ubjan promptly threw away his fatigues and boots into the Bheri River as he returned home from Surkhet. He invested the Rs 500,000 he received as compensation in a retail store and restaurant in Mugu. But no amount of money can buy back his childhood and the education he lost out on.

Ubjan was just 15 when he and four of his classmates were forcefully recruited by the Maoists. He holds the party responsible not only for disrupting the education of thousands of young men and women, but also for failing to live up to the promises of the revolution. “We were taken out of schools and ended up being tagged as ‘fighters’ forever, while the leaders have now become wealthy and own palaces in the city,” says Ubjan.



26-year-old Bhim Raj Giri of Kolti, Bajura, did not last more than three years in the Maoist army. Nine years ago, when Bhim was in grade 6, the Maoists carried him off to the jungles because a distant uncle of his happened to be a police constable on duty at the district headquarters in Martadi. After they beat him up relentlessly and threatened to kill him, accusing him of spying, Bhim ran off to Mumbai and worked as a kitchen help.

When he came back during vacations, Bhim found that the Nepal Army was hiring. He applied, got selected, and then fought the same war from the other side. “So many of my friends were killed in Mahendranagar, Dhangadhi, Tikapur, and Masuriya,” says Bhim ruefully. “After all, even the Maoist soldiers were Nepalis.”

Like Ubjan and Dhan Bahadur, Bhim was forced to sacrifice his education for the war. He quit the national army in 2006 and returned to Mumbai where he trained as a cook. He is currently in Bajura on vacation and plans to go back to Mumbai soon to build a new life.

“Tens of thousands of young Nepalis were forced to sacrifice their dreams of a bright future because of the Maoist war,” says Bhim. “I pray that future generations never have to witness or take part in such violence.”

# Bad habits

Ram Prasad Neupane, *Naya Patrika*, 30 April

गर्यो पत्रिका

A survey conducted by Saath Saath project in Palpa, Nawalparasi, Kapilbastu, and Bara districts from August to October 2012 has revealed some surprising, unsafe sex habits. The female respondents were wives of men employed abroad and the males had returned home from foreign employment.

Out of 700 women whose husbands were abroad, only 15 per cent said they used contraceptives – condoms, quarterly injections, and Norplant – on a regular basis. 43 per cent of 328 women whose husbands were home on leave admitted to using condoms. And what is perhaps most shocking is that 20 per cent of female respondents from Kapilbastu whose husbands were employed abroad had never heard of condoms. Out of the remaining 80 per cent, only 17 admitted to using it.

According to the research, men admitted to having up to four types of partners – wives, sex workers, girlfriends, and ‘other’ women. 79 per cent of the men abroad said they used condoms during intercourse with sex workers, while 20 per cent of them said they used condoms most of the time, and seven per cent said they had never used condoms. Experts agree that this latter demographic is highly likely to be carriers of sexually transmitted diseases. Also, most of the men interviewed said they almost never used condoms with their wives.

Four per cent of the men who are employed overseas used a condom every time they had sex, 18 per cent said used it ‘often’, while 73 per cent said they never used a condom. When asked why they used a condom, 83 per cent replied they used condoms for family planning, while two per cent said they used it to prevent contracting AIDS.

The survey published on 28 April states that 53 per cent of men from the four districts were employed in the Gulf region, 18 per cent in Malaysia, 28 per cent in India and one per cent in other countries.

## NEPALI TWEETS

विलाम्बर  
दुइटा र: 'भुक्ने कुकुरले टाँक्दैले को सब भन्दा राम्रो उदाहरण !!'  
Twitter: The best example of 'barking dogs seldom bite'!

समाट शर्मा  
DV नपरेपछि राष्ट्रियता मेरो नशा नशामा बढदै छ।  
#डिभी पिडील  
After being denied DV, nationalism runs in my veins. #DV rejects

दिपक गाउँले  
पत्रकार यिस्टि बर्गमा पढेछन। यिनिहरु मजदुर हुनन। मजदुर भए त आज भइ दिवस मनाउन जान्थे होलान। ६-६ मदिना सम्म तलब नलिक्ने कसरी बाँच्न सक्थे ?  
Journalists belong to a special category, they are not workers. If they were, maybe they would celebrate Labour Day. Instead they have figured how to stay alive without getting paid for six months.

Saurav Dhakal  
बजारमा चिनीया लसुन र भारतिय केराको प्रभाव बढयो। #Prachanda #nepal  
The markets are now under the influence of Chinese garlic and Indian bananas. #Prachanda #nepal

## WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #11

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 14 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week's result of interviews about CPN-M's stance against general elections:

1. What do you think about Mohan Baidya's opposition to Regmi's government holding polls?  
Not right 66.6%  
Right 18%  
Don't know 13.7%  
Won't say 1.7%
2. How should the CPN-M be cajoled into taking part in elections?  
Roundtable talks 38.1%  
Inclusion into advisory political mechanism 30.2%  
Revoke amendments and retire government 20.6%
3. Do you think Baidya's party can disrupt polls as it has been claiming?  
No 40.2%  
Yes 36.8%  
Don't know 21.1%



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नेपाल Rabindra, Nepal, 29 April

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Let’s get rid of this hollow nationalism. From now on, we must stop blaming India for everything. ”

UCPN (M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal after returning from Delhi, Rajdhani, 2 May



# Misinformed, misunderstood

Nepal's federalism debate is unnecessarily trivialised with extreme arguments



BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

The demand for identity-based federalism reached its tipping point in May last year when hundreds of thousands took to the streets in Kathmandu and across the Madhes.

It was the disagreement over how many and what kind of federal states Nepal should have that obstructed the completion of the new constitution. Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved on the night of 28 May and elections were announced. The debate has since been shelved, the streets are quiet, but the battle for the narrative continues.

In op-ed pages and social networks, there is extreme polarisation of views. Cyberspace is replete with vitriolic racial slurs from both sides of the debate. On the surface, it may look like a political battle between the NC and UML against the Maoists, Madhesi Morcha, and Janajati groups. But there is a social underbelly to this conflict where class and caste have become intertwined.

The dominant discourse portrays the demand for identity as a divisive agenda imposed by outsiders to ignite ethnic tensions in Nepal. Their advocates in the political parties, media, and civil society use the term 'identity' and 'ethnicity' interchangeably to warn us that recognising either will lead Nepal into ethnic fragmentation.

This is a distortion of a well-defined concept that was pre-agreed upon by all political parties in the erstwhile State Restructuring Commission's conceptual report three years ago. 'The future states must be carved on the basis of identity and economic viability, with special impetus on identity defined as ethnic, linguistic, cultural, regional, historical,' reads the report.

The demand for a Madhes Pradesh in the Tarai has been particularly divisive. The official position of the Madhesi Morcha, partner in the last coalition, has been for an economically viable two-state Madhes Pradesh. This is a climb-down for the Front which had earlier pushed for a single Madhes state.

Still, a section of the media blamed the Madhesis for conspiring to 'Sikkimise' Nepal, some intellectuals seemed concerned about the economic viability of a two-Madhes model. Economist Bhogendra Jha, who was part of the seven-member State Restructuring Commission told me recently that the two-state model is not just economically



NT ARCHIVE

viable, but has a good balance of agricultural, forest, and industrial resources. "Those who question it may have

political motivations, but there is no economic basis for being against it," Jha explained.

The growing ethnophobia in

the country has been bolstered by reported reservations in Beijing and New Delhi conveyed to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal in the past weeks. He tried to explain that federalism would not destabilise Nepal, but seems to have returned chastised. Polls have shown many Nepalis to be against ethnicity-based federalism. The main fear seems to be that a federal state named after a particular community will make others second-class citizens.

But Nepal's demographic mosaic does not allow any community to be dominant in any proposed state. Besides, in the absence of front rights, there will be no legal or constitutional basis for obtaining such preferential treatment. Naming a geographic territory after particular communities will be nothing more than a gesture of

acknowledging their rich history and culture in the region. But even this need not be mandatory and can be put to vote in those future state assemblies.

It is time Nepal redefined nationalism as multi-ethnic diversity and not a monolithic national identity paradigm with one language, dress, and culture. The mainstream view of Madhesi nationalism as being opposed to Nepali nationalism, simply because it rejects pre-determined categories of a Nepali identity also flies in the face of this aspiring inclusive republic.

Nepalis have so far lived together peacefully, but that should not be mistaken for harmony. Underneath, there is anger and resentment of a monolithic state apparatus dominated by a few who refuse to devolve. These grievances cannot be wished away. 🇳🇵

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# Sagarmatha Summer Slam

For a guy who once threatened to invade India, the sight of the Awesome One groveling and apologising in Delhi was a sight to behold. Indian babudom and media couldn't get enough of Lotus Flower when he visited Delhi in 2008, they hung to his every word and poured adulation upon him. Tables turned and PKD became persona-non-grateful. It has taken four long years for the Chairman's roar to become a meow. Still, Comprador Dahal declared himself a great success at ping pong diplomacy.

ॐ

Soon after landing in Delhi, Pushpa Kamal Dalal called on the BJP leadership and assured them that although he is a devout atheist, he admires all the gods of the Hindu pantheon and that Nepal would remain a Hindu state. Wot? Then in a meeting, where aides were on the sides taking notes, he assured counterparts that he had made a huge mistake by thumbing his nose at India. He now realised that it was impossible to move



THE HIMALAYAN TIMES

ahead without taking Bharat into confidence. Give the guy credit for spitting it out, but what kind of national leader says that to the rulers of another country even if it is true? And whenever the subject of attacks on Indian businesses, obstruction to hydro projects came up, PKD passed on all the blame to Kiran Guru.

ॐ

Remember Comrade Bagman, the chap who was taped in flagrante asking a contractor on the phone for 500 million to buy members of the CA and Lainchour leaked the conversation to the media? Well, guess who goes to Dilli with Pro-Chandra and sits in

meetings Brave Krishna himself? What kind of handle do his handlers have on him, we wonder. The Chairman dresses well and has a weakness for expensive watches, but someone

should give Comrade Sita wardrobe advice. OK, we don't have a national dress for women (even for men, for that matter) but what's with that lurid kurta?

ॐ

Everyone knows by now that Awesome deserves an Oscar or two for his ability to look at you straight in the eye, smile, and lie right through his teeth. This enviable ability to tell his interlocutors what they want to hear buys the Chairman time because there are plenty of naïve firanghis who believe him, but sooner or later the lies are bound to catch up.

ॐ

The reason PKD impressed folks in Beijing and Delhi is not because of his charisma, but the lack of anyone else in Nepal with that quality. Apparently Jhusil has been invited by both North and South, but has refused to go because he just doesn't trust himself not to give it all away. Besides, they won't understand a word he is saying. Our neighbours seem to have exchanged notes and decided that there isn't anyone else who can hold it all together. That message got thru to the Chairman, who was rather chuffed to declare himself the "pillar of national unity to replace the monarchy".

ॐ

Jhusil Da should sack his travel agent who couldn't even get him a ticket to Nepalganj on Buddha or Yeti because the flights were packed. The least his office could have done was bump off someone with a confirmed ticket, if they couldn't (like the Baddies) charter their own plane. So Jhusil accepted Awesome's offer to hitch a ride on his

Jetstream. The Kangresis better get someone else to lead their party because at this rate Jhusil Da may just absent-mindedly address a Maoist election rally.

ॐ

So the Department of Detours has decided to take maximum advantage of the publicity generated by the highest ever fistfight in the world history by making Nepal the venue for gangland style mobster tourism. Since Nepal is already a major trafficking hub, MICE could get a boost by enticing the Yakuza, Triads, the Dawood Gang, and other kickass badboys to Nepal for their annual strategy sessions. Some suggestions:

- Sagarmatha Summer Slam (Open Mt Everest beyond 31 May for human traffickers, money launderers, and contract killers, and let them have it out on the South Col)
- Monsoon Manaslu Mania (Conference of Asia-Pacific Traders in Wildlife Contraband under SAFTA)
- Yarsagumba Summit (World's first trade fair in caterpillar fungus aphrodisiac bringing together suppliers, illegal traders, retailers, and users)
- Band Bash (South Asian Conference of hartal organisers to exchange notes on the latest techniques to bring countries to a halt)



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