ICE TO WATER: The Kyetrak Glacier on the northern slope of Mt Cho Oyu in 1921 and again in 2009. Global warming is causing the Himalayan permafrost to melt at an accelerated rate. Many glacier snouts now have lakes in them, as seen on Kyetrak, posing a threat of flashfloods downstream. While records are being set and broken on climbing Everest this season, the real record is the record melting on the flanks of the world’s highest mountain.

May 29 marks the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. Much has changed on the world’s highest mountain since then, climbing has become commercialised taking away much of the risk and adventure that early explorers faced. But expeditions bring jobs and income to thousands of Nepalis and royalties for Everest alone earn the government Rs 250 million a year. As the Earth warms, Everest is melting, making climbing more difficult.

Nepali Times brings you a special coverage of Everest 60:

- THE OTHER TENZING PAGE 3
- PROFILE OF ELIZABETH HAWLEY PAGE 4
- INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BREASHEARS PAGE 6
- CLIMBING IN CLIMATE CHANGE PAGE 7
- EVEREST TIMELINE PAGE 10-11
- BOOK REVIEW: PENGUINS ON EVEREST PAGE 13
Nepal’s 10-year conflict left 17,000 dead. It is a tragic irony of wars that the relatives of the dead are the lucky ones. The tens of thousands of grievously wounded and physically handicapped can’t get jobs and have become a burden on the state. The relatives of the 1,400 who were disappeared by both sides in the war, the conflict never ended. In the absence of closure, their indefinite bereavement drags on, they relive their grief every moment of every day. Many of the disappeared were the main earners of now destitute families. Even those who got meager compensation from the state have spent it all on food and medicines. It is a rule of thumb that violent conflicts leave a legacy of aggression and hostility in society for three times longer than the war lasts. A whole new generation of Nepalis has to replace today’s adults for the residual violence to completely subside and the loose ends to be tied up.

As health worker Radha Poudel, who has written a book about her experience of the battle of Jumla in 2002 tells us (page 16-17): “We are still in conflict, it’s just that guns are not being used. As long as people are dying of hunger the war is still going on. The underlying reasons for the conflict are still there.”

Poudel saw it all firsthand, but it is close to the view of Norwegian peace theorist Johan Galtung who said earlier this year that Nepal was in a state of ‘negative peace’. Nepalis struggle when it comes to positive non-violence through nation building and addressing the precursors to violence. The injustice and exclusion that drove this country to war have not been addressed and the revolutionaries who misguidedly sought to address them through armed struggle have abandoned the cause.

In an interview, a Maoist guerrilla who joined the movement when he was 13 says he was 13 says he was driven by an idealistic goal of equality and justice. Navin Jirel tells us (page 16-17) he still fervently believes he was doing the right thing by taking arms to liberate an oppressed and rejected people. Jirel has also written a book about his childhood, how he was attracted to the revolution, the disillusionment in the cantonment, and his determination to set things right without the use of violence. “There is still lots to do for the upliftment of my people.” he says. Also in this issue we carry heart-breaking stories of parents who lost their sons and daughters in the conflict. For them, time does not heal.

It doesn’t seem to matter which side did the killing or the disappearance, a mother’s pain is the same. The only difference is that some of the victims were fighting for a cause, while most of the others were caught up in a war being waged in their name and in which they wanted not part.

It should be the state’s role to ease the pain of the families of victims, to help heal. But the Nepali state today is composed of components of the former enemies and both want to forget their atrocities and move on. Ask the families of the disappeared if they are realistic enough to know that under the present circumstances, justice is a mirage.

But they want the truth about what happened to their relatives, why they were killed, who killed them and why. The state refuses meaningful reconciliation and is afraid of the truth. It is up to human rights groups, civil society activists, and the media to document as much as possible until the day of atonement finally comes.

On the web

BROOM BRINGS BOOM
This is why I like reading NT. Unlike other media which are full of negative news it proposes in search of something positive from places few go to. (“Broom brings boom,” Naresh Newar, #656). I was born and brought up in the neighbouring village of Bakaamang in Patan and have travelled to Jhirubas. Back then, in the 1980s this place was at least a day’s walk from the nearest road. Most of the houses were round with thatched roofs, there were villages where people spoke only Magar and did not understand Nepali. The nearest high school was in Sahalot and most residents were slash and burn farmers. They now have also started cultivating the broom grass (amegho). Thanks for bringing Jhirubas in the news. You could have also mentioned Redd Bama (the Nepalese Save the Children Fund), which has been working in the region for more than a decade to improve education, preventive health, and economy.

Sagar Panthi

CONTRETEM OF THE REPUBLIC
How could the timid politicians of Nepal make their own decisions without leaning on neighbouring countries? (“In contempt of the republic,” Anurag Asharya, #656). These morons will throw their hands in the air and say ‘we give up’.

Sagar Rupati

For the last two months, Nepal’s political leaders have, with few exceptions, been mostly silent on the current conflict. This is why I like reading NT. Unlike other media which are full of negative news it proposes in search of something positive from places few go to. (“Broom brings boom,” Naresh Newar, #656). I was born and brought up in the neighbouring village of Bakaamang in Patan and have travelled to Jhirubas. Back then, in the 1980s this place was at least a day’s walk from the nearest road. Most of the houses were round with thatched roofs, there were villages where people spoke only Magar and did not understand Nepali. The nearest high school was in Sahalot and most residents were slash and burn farmers. They now have also started cultivating the broom grass (amegho). Thanks for bringing Jhirubas in the news. You could have also mentioned Redd Bama (the Nepalese Save the Children Fund), which has been working in the region for more than a decade to improve education, preventive health, and economy.

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Sagar Panthi

Q: What are two things you cannot live without?
Facebook. Samer Pradhan: Petroleum and soap.

@QB: My phone. @DH@Earth: Information and mobile. @AsaRahab: Laughter and Nepali coffee. @phapluism: Freedom of expression and freedom of expression. @apnapaani: Clothes and food. @Diptara: Yoga and books.

This week’s Question of the Week: How much time do you spend on Facebook everyday? To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com.
From Khumbu to London, celebrations this week to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest on 29 May 1953 focus on the two summiteers, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, belying the fact that the climb was truly a team effort. While Tenzing was the lead climbing Sherpa, an often-forgotten figure is the sirdar, the foreman of the expedition.

"Has my grandfather been completely forgotten?" asks Tashi Sherpa of Tengboche as he sorts through a bag of old photographs. As the sirdar of the 1953 Everest Expedition, Tashi’s grandfather, Dawa Tenzing of Khumjung, managed the supplies, porters, and logistics. He ensured the safe transport of over seven tons of supplies and equipment from Kathmandu to Khumbu, a journey that took nearly three weeks. The porters were from the spectrum of ethnic peoples of eastern Nepal.

Dawa Tenzing (also known as Da Tenzing) was over 40 in 1953 and was already a veteran of several Himalayan expeditions. Having gone from Khumbu to Darjeeling in search of work as a young man, Da Tenzing had memories of the disappearance of Mallory and Irvine on the north side of Everest in 1924. Between 1952–63 Da Tenzing was on several expeditions: reaching the South Col twice in both 1952 and 1953. He was sirdar of the 1955 Kangchenjunga expedition and again went twice to the South Col with the American expedition of 1963.

In the aftermath of the 1953 expedition, the British Alpine Club had made Da Tenzin an honorary lifetime member and despite his remote address all alpine club mail duly arrived at Tengboche. In a dusty old cardboard box he had kept brochures for anything from crampons to electric kettles and letters and photographs from the previous generation of climbers, including those of John Hunt, with whom he had managed the 1953 expedition, and others from George Lowe to Reinhold Messner.

Da Tenzing spent his last years hobbling around Tengboche monastery as best he could with complete Buddhist devotion. According to the Royal Geographic Society, he had ‘earned respect for his character and his performance as climber and sirdar, and affection for his wicked sense of humour’. Da Tenzing died in 1985.

Frances Klatzel in Tengboche

These Will Be Gone Monsooner Than Later.

Some of our very best gear is now on sale at our flagship store in Kathmandu. But hurry, you won’t be the only one wanting to soak up these savings. (And as always, S.A.G. Members will be given an additional 10% off)
The Himalayan record-keeper

At 90, Liz Hawley is still chronicling climbing expeditions, a work she started with the first American Everest expedition in 1963

Tsering Dolker Gurung

The joke in climbing circles is that if Liz Hawley hasn’t certified that you climbed a Himalayan peak then you haven’t climbed it. Actually, it’s not a joke.

At 90, the top chronicler of Himalayan mountaineering has such a formidable reputation in mountaineering circles, that she is admired and feared in equal measure. Her meticulous archives of climbing information from the last 55 years and her search-engine brain makes her verdict on a climb final.

Hawley who has documented nearly every expedition that has ever climbed in the Nepal Himalaya since the 1960s, has never set foot on a mountain herself. The spring and autumn climbing seasons are her busiest period. From a large network of contacts at trekking agencies, airlines, hotels, and the Ministry, she keeps track of who’s coming and when. The interviews are in hotel gardens and lobbies and are usually so gruelling that mountaineers call them ‘The Second Summit’ because of Miss Hawley’s intense grilling. The information then goes into digital files of the Himalayan Database, a company she started with a friend.

As the Kathmandu-based correspondent for Reuters, she also had to follow the politics. Most western diplomats relied on her insider knowledge of goings-on in the royal palace and government.

Hawley was on the same plane as BP Koirala when he was returning from Bangkok after treatment. “I spent the entire flight writing the story for Reuters and kept checking with BP and Girija to make sure I got all my facts correct,” she recalls, “later that evening, I got a call saying BP had died. It was a sad moment, because he was one of the few remarkable men that we have in Nepal and one political leader who stuck to his beliefs.” The story made it to the front page of the New York Times.

When she’s not busy driving around in my car, eating hot food at my table, and sleeping in my bed, I prefer the comforts of my home and driving around in my car.”

And home for the past 55 years has been a bungalow in a quiet compound tucked away inside the hustle and bustle of Dillibajar. Hawley used to compile expeditions the same way she compiled them in her trusted sky-blue VW Beetle.

In 1963, she got to report on the first US expedition to Mt Everest for Time-Life and Reuters. Since most of the news from Nepal in those days was about mountaineering, she started interviewing climbers before and after expeditions. Those records are now a treasure trove of mountaineering history. Miss Hawley, as the climbing fraternity knows her, continues to interview, record, and document expeditions the same way she did six decades ago.

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After Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed Mt Everest in 1953, Tenzing became a household word in New Zealand and Hillary became a household word in Nepal. Hillary is well known for his support for the development of Khumbu with schools and hospitals for the Sherpa people.

A person less well known in Nepal and New Zealand, but whose contribution to the conservation movement in Nepal is perhaps even greater, is Pat Devlin, professor at Lincoln University near Christchurch which has trained Nepal’s best known environmentalists, biologists, and social scientists. Lincoln’s cooperation with Nepal started after the first ascent of Mt Everest 60 years ago and is still going strong thanks to teachers like Devlin. Hundreds of his Nepali students respect Devlin and reverently call him ‘Pat Guru’. His students since 1970 include conservationists Mingma Norbu, Ang Rita, Lakpa Norbu, Rampati Yadav, Hum Gurung, Shalendra Thakali, and dozens of others. Many of them went on to be involved in the establishment of the Sagarmatha National Park in 1976, and the eco-tourism model that helped sustain it. Minga Norbu died tragically in the Ghana helicopter crash in 2008 that also killed 24 other officials and senior environmentalists. A fund set up in Mingma’s name sends two Nepali students every year to Lincoln to study conservation science. Chandra Gurung the founder of the Annapurna Area Conservation Project who also died at Ghana, was another of Devlin’s close friends and colleagues.

Devlin recently visited his beloved Nepal and was welcomed warmly by Lincoln alumni at the Garden Restaurant in Boudha (pic, left) run by another of his students, Ang Phuri Sherpa. The Secretary of the Ministry of Forests, Krishna C Pavel and also a Lincoln graduate, presented Devlin with an appreciation plaque. Said Devlin: “Some of our Nepali graduates in senior positions in protected area and tourism management have already retired and others are due to follow … so Lincoln’s next challenge will be to see how their expertise can be channeled to in-country training.”

Kunda Dixit

In a major boost to travel and tourism, Turkish Airlines announced this week that it will be linking Kathmandu directly to Istanbul and beyond from September. This will be the only direct flight to Europe from Kathmandu and marks the return of major international carriers to Nepal after Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, and Transavia discontinued services in the past 15 years.

“This is good for Nepal’s connectivity to the world because Turkish Airlines can now link Kathmandu with 250 destinations worldwide from our Istanbul hub,” said regional General Manager, Adnan Aykac. “We will be the brand ambassador for Nepal’s tourism.”

Turkish will start with four flights a week with departures from Kathmandu at 8.45 AM on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays with the widebody Airbus 330-300 aircraft. The flight will arrive in Istanbul at 1:40pm and passengers can connect to flights to North America, Europe, and Africa. “As the only European carrier operating to and from Kathmandu, we will have the advantage with the added benefits of our huge network,” said Adnan Aykac.

Ncell, one of the fastest growing mobile service providers of the country, provided security and logistics equipment to Nepal Police. Ncell CEO Osman Turan handed over 20 motorcycles and safety helmets to Nepal Police along with 11 computer sets and 11,000 traffic bands to Traffic Police. The support aims to strengthen Nepal Police’s capacity to deliver better services, says Ncell.

Tata Motors has launched its new hatchback Tata Vista D90 in Nepal. Powered by Quadrajet diesel engine, with Variable Geometry Turbocharger (VGT) technology, touch screen multimedia system, and advanced safety features.

Etihad Airways, national airline of United Arab Emirates has started daily flights to Amsterdam from Abu Dhabi and has commenced partnership with the Dutch national carrier KLM.
I sat in the exact spot where Mallory had snapped this iconic picture and was stunned by the changes I saw in the landscape. The wide river of ice had retreated more than half a mile, leaving a field of separated ice pinnacles melting into the rocky ground. In the distance, the ice streams on Everest's flank also had shrunk, exposing more of the mountain's dark face.

This was when I understood the actual magnitude of what climate change was doing to the mountains and I wanted to start a dialogue about what is happening in Himalaya.

I decided to use match photography to bear witness to the rapid warming of the Himalaya and the retreat of its glaciers. We have a collection of compelling and fascinating images, which come primarily from the extensive archive of the Royal Geographical Society in London. Using match photography, people can look at images from the past and present and ask questions: what happened, what led to these changes, and what will the future of the mountains look like?

How has climbing Everest changed over the years?

Those of us who have climbed Everest for the past 33 years have seen the changes taking place under our own feet. For instance, the Hillary Step at 8760m and the traverse to it from the South Summit were almost entirely snow climbs with very little exposed rock. Now our crampons scrape and scratch across hundreds of feet of exposed rock and the snow arête that Hillary climbed no longer exists. The route is entirely on rock and many feet to the left. We’re seeing the same changes as the glacier melts at 6500m: the garbage disposed into the glacier’s crevasses over 60 years is now being exposed because of glacial melt.

Is the Himalaya melting faster than we originally thought?

I’m not a scientist, but from my personal observation the changes in the landscape in Himalaya are quite dramatic. Some regions of the greater Himalaya are melting at a much faster rate than we originally thought.

How can Nepalis do?

Nepal has an extremely tiny carbon footprint and contributes very little to greenhouse gases. However, there is much that can be done in terms of adaptation and creating policies and education initiatives to deal with the anticipated impacts of warming in this region.

What will your famous panorama photograph of Everest (see page 10-11) look like if it is shot 100 years from now from the same spot?

As you know earlier this month we surpassed 400 ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. If this global trend continues, there will be considerably less snow and ice on the mountain and the glacier will be in a much less stable state. But the truth is that we don’t know what it will mean for the future.

What will the Himalaya look like in 100 years?

What can Nepalis do?

Nepal Times: How did GlacierWorks start?

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What will the Himalaya look like in 100 years?
Climbing in climate change

Global warming is melting Mt Everest, making mountaineering more dangerous

BHRIKUTI RAI

When Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed Mt Everest 60 years ago, the summit ridge used to be almost entirely snow and ice. The Khumbu Glacier used to be much longer and thicker than it is today.

The vertical section on the South-east Ridge just below the summit called the Hillary Step (pictured) represented the last obstacle for mountaineers before the Hillary Step today is mostly crumbling rock.

As Nepal marks the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest, and making it to the summit becomes almost routine, the thrill of exploration has turned to worry about what we are doing to the planet. As with the Arctic Ice Cap and Greenland, the Third Pole (as the Himalaya is known) is also melting dramatically.

This year's spring climbing season on Mt Everest has witnessed even more records being broken. The first Saudi and Pakistani woman to get to the top, the first Arab Sheikh on the summit, the first person with no hands to climb, the first Nepali actress on top, and even the highest ever brawl in the world.

However, the real record is the record melting on the flanks of the world's highest mountain. By all accounts, the melting ice has exposed rock outcrops making climbs more dangerous. It has also made it more scary as the corpses of dead climbers emerge from the thawing ice. In the spring of 2011, Apa Sherpa set foot on the summit of Mt Everest for the 21st time breaking his own record. He says: "In the years from my first ascent in 1990, I have seen the snow cover melting. Where there used to be ice slopes, there is now only rocks." Earlier this month, carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere hit the highest level in 4 million years at 400 parts per million (ppm). A new study has shown that the glaciers that come down from Mt Everest have lost 13 per cent of their ice in the last 50 years.

Historically, during the age of first ascents in the 1950s, climbers preferred the spring on eight thousanders because the temperatures were higher and there would be less wind. But as climbing gear and clothing improved, many mountaineers switched to the less-crowded autumn season despite the jet stream’s hurricane-force winds on the summit. Now, because of the shift in monsoonal patterns it seems climbers prefer spring again.

Apa Sherpa who retired from climbing in 2011 is worried about climbers who will now have to make the trip to the top amid unstable weather along a rocky path. "There are more frequent avalanches, more crevasses and exposed rock faces where there used to be snowfields," says Apa.

The accelerated melting in the mountain is exposing all kinds of mountaineering debris: oxygen tanks, camping equipment, clothing, tents and even human remains. Asian Trekking in Kathmandu began initiatives in 2008 to deal with the trash. Apa Tshering Sherpa, chairman of Asian Trekking who made it only till 8,000 meter in 1977 says, "Despite better equipment and technically sound climbers, the unpredictable weather now changes the game at the top.""Although the ice in the Himalaya is a source of major rivers in Asia and about 1.5 billion people depend on it, there have been very few comprehensive studies carried out to understand how climate change will ultimately affect the water stored in the mountains as ice.
BUDDHA JAYANTI, celebrate the anniversary of the enlightened one, visit Swoyambhu, Boudha or the numerous monasteries around town to offer your prayers for peace or head down to Bhaktapur Durbar Square in the evening for a deepawali program. 25 May

When Art Evolves, a presentation on the visible and invisible transformation of modern art in Nepal by curator and writer Saroj Bajracharya. 26 May, 4 pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522309, Sign up at parkgallery@wink.com.np

The British School and Circus Kathmandu, a photo exhibition of projects by students. Runs till 31 May, Image Ark Gallery, Kollima Tale, Patan, (01)506666

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Regional fair, for a glimpse at the culture of mid and far western regions of Nepal. There are delicacies to be savored and photos and documentaries to be enjoyed. 24 to 26 May, Kathmandu


Sequential Dissonance, an exhibition of paintings by Meilha Bahadur Limbu Subba. Runs till 30 May, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Bambahal Revisited.

Cash your writing, a short story competition on the changing faces of social interaction in the age of social media. Deadline 31 May, Himal SouthAsian, deadline@himal.com

Little Einsteins, sixty different science projects from sixty different schools. 30 May to 1 June, Bhaktapur Mandap Exhibition Hall, Kathmandu

Free Hit, watch the Indian Premier League every day, 8pm, Dhaka Cafe, Jawalakhel, (01)5528148

CAFE CHEENO, comfortable and elegant, Cafe Cheeno is the perfect place to have a cup of coffee and chat with friends. Patan Dhoka

Alice restaurant, step in for scrumptious Thai, Chinese, Continental and Japanese cuisine. Gandhara, (01)4449233

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, hide your time in the free wifi zone as you enjoy wood fired pizzas, home-made pastas and Tibetan gyakok, Boudha, 9942494907

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BURBERRY, the British luxury fashion house, will open its first store in Nepal on 31 May in Mall of Asia.

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**EVEREST EVENTS**

**EVEREST CONFERENCE,** May 26, Khumjung

**HERITAGE MARATHON,** from Kathmandu Durbar Square to Patan Durbar Square in association with Journalist Association for Tourism, May 28, Nepal

**MEDAL CEREMONY,** an event to confer diamond jubilee medals to 40 record holding Everest summiters May 29, Narayanhiti Palace Museum

**GEOGRAPHICAL,** a special issue to be launched by Royal Geographical Society.

**CIVIC FELICITATION,** procession from Nepal Tourism Board to Basantapur Durbar square with participation of family members of Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary followed by a felicitation ceremony for prominent civil society leaders. 29 May, 7 to 10 am, Nepal Tourism Board and Basantapur

**EXHIBITION,** photo and philatelic exhibition on Mt Everest. 27 May, Nepal Tourism Board

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**EVEREST CONFERENCE**

Precedes the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest with top guests from all over the world. The conference and the accompanying gala dinner are being organized by Nepal Tourism Board, in partnership with the Royal Geographical Society.

**HERITAGE MARATHON**

A heritage marathon from Kathmandu Durbar Square to Patan Durbar Square, to commemorate the 72nd birthday of the legendary singer with a musical journey.

**MEDAL CEREMONY**

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**EVEREST TRIVIA**

Are you an Everest aficionado? Nepal Times is testing your knowledge of the highest mountain in the world on the occasion of the 60th anniversary this week of the first ascent of Mt Everest. The first participant who gets most of the 10 correct answers will win a six month subscription of Nepal Times and a red NT cap. Log on to https://www.facebook.com/nepaltimes to enter the contest.

Send your answers to juanita@nepalitimes.com

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**GETAWAYS**

- **Glacier Hotel**, a lovely place to stay complete with a waterfront terrace, free wi-fi, children’s playground, and probably the best spa in town.
- **Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**, announces summer bonanza offer. Stay at this lovely establishment for a discounted rate.
- **Shivapuri Cottage**, escape the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and enjoy peace, tranquility, good food, and fresh air.
- **Last Resort**, canyoning, biking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping – test your limits at the Last Resort.
- **Temple Tree Resort and Spa**,
- **CIVIC FELICITATION**, procession from Nepal Tourism Board to Basantapur Durbar square with participation of family members of Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary followed by a felicitation ceremony for prominent civil society leaders.
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**EVEREST MARATHON**

The globally acclaimed highest marathon- Tenzing-Hillary Everest marathon is back with its 11th edition. And this time around it has gotten not only bigger but more extreme.

The 42.195 km marathon starts from the Everest Base Camp (5364m) and finishes at Namche Bazaar (3446m). Introduced this year, the 60 km ultra marathon begins from Upper Pyangboche (4,010 m) and concludes at Namche bazaar. Athletes from 17 countries will participate in an open marathon (men/women) and there will be a separate race for foreigners — open half marathon.

The organisers are also launching an Eco Expedition concept, called ECCR (Everest Climb, Clean & Run). The campaign will be led by Indian Expedition Team under the leadership of veteran Indian mountaineer Somit Joshi.

The winner and runner up will be awarded with cash prize of Rs 100,000 and 75,000 respectively.

Date: 29 May

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1960
First ascent from the North face by a Chinese expedition. The route was first made famous by George Mallory and Andrew Irvine in 1924 who were last seen at around 8300 metres on the mountain.

1961
Edmund Hillary founded Khumjung school, the first one in the Khumbu region. Hillary’s Himalayan Trust built dozens of schools and health posts.

1964
The Everest region got a boost when Edmund Hillary converted potato fields near a small village called Lukla into the famous airstrip with its inclined runway. It was renamed Tenzing-Hillary airport in 2008.

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Khunde Hospital was established. The hospital built by Edmund Hillary’s Himalayan Trust with assistance from the New Zealand government is still the only hospital that operates all year round in Khumbu.

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1996
Tenzing’s son, Jamling Tenzing Norgay, followed in his father’s footsteps and climbed Everest. Norgay went on to write Touching My Father’s Soul, a book documenting his experiences on the summit attempt.

2001
Sixteen-year-old Temba Tsheri Sherpa became the youngest climber ever to scale the summit. The record was later broken by thirteen-year-old Jordan Romero when he scaled Everest in 2010.

2003
Jamling and Peter Hillary, the sons of Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary climbed the summit to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the climb of their fathers.

2003
First Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon. It starts from Everest Base Camp (5,364m) and finishes at Namche Bazaar (3,446m). The measured distance of the course is 42.195 km over rough mountain trails.
Ever since Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary climbed Mt Everest on 29 May 1953, a lot has changed on the world’s highest mountain. The 60th anniversary of the climb coincides with the announcement this month that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has crossed the 400ppm mark, one-third more than at the start of the Industrial Revolution. Burning fossil fuels and pumping the carbon into the atmosphere has warmed the planet, leading to erratic weather patterns, more intense storms, sea level rise and the melting of the polar ice caps. The Himalayan mountains are melting three times faster than the poles. This panorama of Mt Everest by American filmmaker and climber David Breashears may look scenic, but is an apocalyptic image of glacial retreat.

In the decades after he climbed Everest, Hillary kept returning to Nepal to help with education and health projects. The Sagarmatha National Park became a model for eco-tourism. The per capita income of the Khumbu is now four times the national average. There has also been a dramatic change in mountaineering, with more and more commercial expeditions generating employment for Sherpas.

Junko Tabei of Japan became the first woman to reach the summit. Tabei went on to climb all the seven highest mountains in the world, finishing her seven summits in 1991.

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1976
Sagarmatha National Park was established. Covering an area of 124,400 hectares in the Solukhumbu district, the park is home to several rare animal species such as the snow leopard and the red panda. It was recognised by UNESCO as a world heritage site in 1979.

1978
First ascent without bottled oxygen by Reinhold Messner. The Italian used the southeast ridge route and was accompanied by Peter Habeler of Austria. He later climbed Everest in 1980.

1985
Dig Tsho glacial lake near Thame burst and the flood rushed 90km down the Dudh Kosi killing 12 people and destroying Namche Bazar’s hydropower plant.

1989
Tengboche monastery was destroyed by fire in 1989. The largest monastery in the region was earlier destroyed by an earthquake in 1934. The monastery was restored with the help of volunteers and international assistance.

1990
Peter Hillary followed in his father’s footsteps and climbed Everest. Peter also went on to climb the highest mountains in all the seven continents.

2005
French pilot Didier Debelle set the world record for the highest ever landing and takeoff in 2005. Despite the controversy over the landing, Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) recognised the record.

2008
First ever sky diving near Everest in 2008. A trio of British adventurers became the first to take the plunge from above the world’s highest peak.

2009
Nepal government held a cabinet meeting at Kalapathar to draw international attention to the effects of climate change in the Himalaya.

2010
3G network reached Everest. Ncell, a mobile phone operator set up the world’s highest third generation mobile network installing eight 3G base stations along the route to Everest base camp.

2011
Apa Sherpa climbed the summit 21 times and announced retirement from Everest expeditions. He has been working to draw attention to the impact of climate change in the Himalaya.

2013
The first fight near Camp 3 between Sherpas and three world renowned Alpine-style climbers broke out in April. It shook the mountaineering world, and divided the tourism fraternity into distinct camps depending on whose version of events they believe more.
Star Trek Into Darkness

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everyone who has loved the adventure and romance of Star Trek in the past, this latest installment will not disappoint. The beauty and mysteries of space, the final frontier, are celebrated, as they always have been in the series and in the previous eleven feature films that have been extrapolated from the hugely popular long running television show.

Star Trek Into Darkness is actually a sequel to the reboot of Star Trek that came out in 2009. Directed by the very talented JJ Abrams, a sci-fi savant that is both Zachary Quinto and the third officer, Uhura (Zoe Saldana) the communications officer, and of course, Spock (played by Karl Urban) the engineer, ‘Bones’ (Karl Urban) the ship’s doctor, Sulu (John Cho) the third officer, Uhura (Zoe Saldana) the communications officer, and above all a cosmic code where being a good human is possible saving you from more serious consequences than just an upset stomach. In just go seconds you get a little of clean puriﬁed water.

Although the device will set you back by few thousand rupees, it can be used to purify a large amount of water so you could share the cost among friends or co-trekkers. The gadget is also durable (waterproof as well as functional after a few knocks), which is an important consideration during a trek when an unexpected fall could occur at any moment.

The SteriPen brand has several different devices to choose from like the Freedom, Classic, and Journey in varying price range. The Traveller version which costs Rs 6700 should be a part of every hiker’s gear. The Urgent Water Puriﬁcation System (UWPS), the Extreme Mountaineer Trekking Mart in Thamel (close to Kathmandu Guesthouse) so make sure to grab one before setting off on your next big adventure. Verdict: The SteriPen puriﬁer ticks all the boxes for a serious hiker, being lightweight, compact and easy to use. Its versatility and convenience make it well worth the price.

The lightweight and compact SteriPen water puriﬁer is the best answer to getting safe drinking water while in the wild. Whether you are on a long hiking trip, up one of Nepal’s scenic trails or a month long trek to the top of the world, water is your best friend. But bottled water is not always available especially if you are travelling through remote trails and carrying ﬁve heavy Nalgene bottles is just impractical. Some hikers use water puriﬁcation tablets, however those can be costly and if you happen to buy cheap knockoff brands, they can do more harm than good. And nothing spoils a good hike more than falling ill and drinking untreated water is the ﬁnest way to do just that. Other than hiring a porter to lug around a water tank on his back, what other option do you have? The SteriPen water puriﬁer is just the answer. It’s small enough to ﬁt into a backpack and extremely simple to use. Snap a few lithium batteries onto the device, suspend it up in a litre of water, and push the button. The ultraviolet light emitted by the device kills off harmful organisms in the water like Salmonella and even the Hepatitis virus, possibly saving you from more serious consequences than just an upset stomach.

Watch trailer.

Star Trek code and Kirk is furious at Spock for very properly ﬁling an ofﬁcial report on the incident. This is the classic conﬂict at the heart of the friendship between these two very different characters – the impulsive Kirk and the logical Spock.

Enter, the great Benedict Cumberbatch as Commander John Harrison, reportedly a valuable agent gone rogue who blows up a section of Star Fleet in London. When Harrison decamps to Kronos, the Klingon home world, Kirk is reinstated to seek him out and destroy him with the help of 72 new long range photon torpedoes designed speciﬁcally in anticipation of the encroaching conﬂict with the bellicose Klingons.

As Kirk struggles with his crew who are appalled at the directive to kill Harrison without a fair trial, the true strengths of this ﬁlm become apparent. Not only is Star Trek Into Darkness a vividly imagined and riveting action movie, it is also a ﬁlm that asks the right questions, about morality, reason and faith, and above all a cosmic code where being a good human is possible, and all the characters that we know and love are played extraordinarily well by these young new actors with passion and ﬁery zeal.

The dialogue is fast, witty, and to the point. The sequences set in space are jaw dropping, fully justifying the use of 3D, and all the characters who we know and love are played extraordinarily well by these young new actors with passion and ﬁery zeal.

As Kirk and his team grapple with betrayal and the frightening, cold intelligence of Cumberbatch’s character, we are treated to a story where all the characters are given their due, and as usual the Enterprise (very much a character in her own right) saves the day. When she rises out of the sky all battered but still alive you can’t help but want to stand on your seat and cheer.

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Don’t worry, just drink
For an insider look at what is happening to the sport of mountaineering in the Himalayas, especially on the world’s highest mountain, David Durkan’s quirky new book *Penguins on Everest* may be the place to start.

Durkan is a Welsh climber who lives in Norway and has been to Nepal 35 times in the last 30 years. He used to be the editor of Mountain Magazine, and founded the charity, Mountain People. *Penguins on Everest* is a frontal assault on the commercialisation of mountaineering and how this has turned Everest Pvt Ltd into a product to be bought and sold like any other commodity.

The book is full of mocking references to ‘the trade route’ up Everest, the ‘climbing theme park’, ‘instant ego-expeditions’ which are like ‘geriatric golf courses of mountaineering’ and follow the ‘package holiday expedition model’. No wonder, the Everest expedition industry sees free Alpine-style climbing as ‘irresponsible and indefensible’ because it puts mountaineers in danger. Durkan’s argument is that mountaineering should be all about exploring the unknown and confronting dangers without reducing the mountain to the backbone of expedition-style climbing.

This 30-year-old establishment named after a fictional mountain is a legend in its own right. Climbing heroes Sir Edmund Hillary and Reinhold Messner are known to have enjoyed a bit and more at this bar cum restro frequented mainly by climbers and trekkers. Hundreds have etched memories of their journey on wooden planks located on the right inside a lane, leading to Jyatha. Rum Doodle is situated on the right inside a lane, turning left towards the road leading to Jyatha. Rum Doodle is located on the right inside a lane, a few metres away from the turning.

The first successful British expedition on Everest in 1953 was already a harbinger of the trend. It was originally supposed to be led by explorer and climber, Eric Shipton, but such was the importance of the climb to British prestige, and the logistics of a large national expedition was so similar to a military operation, that ex-army man, John Hunt, got to lead it. The first ascent was called a ‘victory’, Everest was finally ‘vanquished’ and ‘conquered’. Even as a boy, Durkan was inspired by early explorer-climbers like Heinrich Harrer (*Seven Years in Tibet*) and Maurice Herzog (*Mera*), who went up unknown mountains climbing in literally uncharted territory. The book devotes a whole chapter to Herzog and his adventures on Annapurna. Perhaps the golden age of mountaineering is gone forever, but Durkan makes an impassioned plea to the young to protect and practice the innate values of mountaineering.

Climbing Everest had moved away from

climbing and exploration towards individual gratification and glorification...to be a first of something,” he writes.

On the back cover flap of the book is a picture taken on the North Face of Everest a few years ago in which a long line of climbers is jamming up a fixed rope. None of the mountaineers has an ice axe, which leads Durkan to conclude that they are not ‘climbing’ but ‘ascending’. The ‘Everest tourists’ remind Durkan of penguins, hence the title of the book, with an apology to penguins ‘who may feel slighted’.

Penguins on Everest is an idiosyncratic, disjointed and polemical memoir, and its stream-of-consciousness style with frequent personalized digressions may be infuriating to many readers, even those who agree with the author. Durkan makes no apologies for being judgemental about the devaluation of mountaineering, and has got like-minded Himalayan climber Doug Scott to write a fittingly hard-hitting preface in which he laments that ‘the very soul of mountaineering is under siege’. How can those climbing on fixed ropes to pre-fixed camps worthy of being called mountaineers?

The evolution of the Everest industry has impacted on the Sherpas, who form the backbone of expedition-style climbing and depend on it for their livelihood. The tectonic stress between the two styles of climbing has been building up in the 60 years since Hillary and Tenzing’s first ascent, and erupted on the Western Cwm last month when Sherpas and three free climbers from Europe clashed.

The first successful British expedition on Everest in 1953 was already a harbinger of the trend. It was originally supposed to be led by explorer and climber, Eric Shipton, but such was the importance of the climb to British prestige, and the logistics of a large national expedition was so similar to a military operation, that ex-army man, John Hunt, got to lead it. The first ascent was called a ‘victory’, Everest was finally ‘vanquished’ and ‘conquered’. Even as a boy, Durkan was inspired by early explorer-climbers like Heinrich Harrer (*Seven Years in Tibet*) and Maurice Herzog (*Mera*), who went up unknown mountains climbing in literally uncharted territory. The book devotes a whole chapter to Herzog and his adventures on Annapurna. Perhaps the golden age of mountaineering is gone forever, but Durkan makes an impassioned plea to the young to protect and practice the innate values of mountaineering.

Kunda Dixit
Everest fever

The onset of spring signals the start of a veritable onslaught on Everest. Gone are the days when climbing was limited to explorers and adventurers, the likes of Eric Shipton, Ed Hillary, Doug Scott, and Tenzing Sherpa. Now many climbers who aim to conquer Everest are ‘office workers’ affluent enough to use the services of a commercial guide to help them up the mountain.

Delving into the psychology of this new breed of climbers reveals much about human nature. Many climb out of interest and a sense of excitement. Others, however, may want to climb because of a midlife crisis. Intellectually, they may have peaked in their profession; but physically they may perceive themselves as wanting. What could be better for the morale than an Everest feather on their cap? Except these days, every Tom, Dick and Harry (and Jane and Kanchi Maya) also appear to have done everest.

Today’s climbers may not always have adequate time either. Indeed, some years ago, an elderly Japanese team (all the members of the expedition were over 55 and were senior board members) decided that they wanted to climb Everest as quickly as possible, without acclimatising the old-fashioned way. So they brought plenty of oxygen cylinders and used supplemental oxygen right from Base Camp. They successfully ascended the mountain in just over three weeks and reported back to work in Japan a week after their climb!

The acclimatisation period, which may take about two months, demands patience. Acclimatisation means allowing the body’s physiological functions to adapt to the decreased oxygen level (hypoxia) of high-altitude terrain. So climbers have to wait it out in the inhospitable Everest Base Camp or higher to acclimatise to altitude over six to eight weeks before they finally make their bid for the summit.

As Peter Hackett, altitude illness expert and Everest summiter says, “People can live for months at 6,000m, weeks at 7,000m but only days at 8,000m.” Heading to the potential ‘death zone’ of 8,000m you’re well-advised to understand that at that altitude, the human body is unable to acclimatise further. Good luck to those who’ve caught Everest summit fever this spring.
It’s not cricket

The Indian Premier League corrodes the base on which the historical memory of cricket is built

There has been a conspiracy of silence around the Indian Premier League (IPL) even though most people know that the very way it is structured could encourage corruption in cricket. So it is hypocritical of us to howl in horror at the charges of spot-fixing against S Sreesanth (pic, right) and two other cricketers.

Forget, for the moment, morality. Let’s focus on the design of the IPL tournament. It is anti-memory, undermining the very process through which we sift and slot happenings for remembering them in the future. No doubt, IPL is memory-proof, partially because of the fury of Twenty20.

Speed is anathema to memory, requiring as it does a degree of slowness, a lingering over a piece of sublime, thrilling action. It is also true that we linger over those moments which are unique, in contrast to the relative ordinariness of other frames constituting a match, whether football or cricket.

However, Twenty20 aborts the process that creates memory. Its speed, unlike that of a football match, is artificial, manufactured through a mutilating abbreviation of the sport and invention of new rules. It consequently corrodes the base on which the historical memory of the sport is erected, quite unlike, say, football, where the rapidity of the game depends on the skills of contesting teams.

Worse, the rules of Twenty20 encourage repetition, for instance, field restrictions induce players to score runs in typically the same manner. Even improvisations become routine as others imitate and perfect such skills over time. Thus, even an extraordinary innings comprises strokes similar to every other.

The IPL has only aggravated the problems arising from the routine and repetitive aspects of Twenty20. For one, the rule restricting a team from fielding more than four foreigners brings into play several domestic-level players who are mostly mediocre. This rule was initially hailed for encouraging indigenous talent. We are now wiser: we know domestic players are lambs marked for slaughter, for festing the skilful with juicy half-volleys at a friendly pace. It entertains the neo-crowd, whose sense of cricket history is dim, but it also turns a prolonged stroke-play repetitive and routine and, therefore, anti-memory.

More significantly, IPL is a tournament in which two matches are played almost daily, over two long months, turning the cricket on display into a blur, a potent antidote to remembering and doomed to be forgotten. Routine, repetition, and mediocrity together constitute cricket’s black hole into which IPL matches disappear. The tournament requires black holes because it needs audiences for another two matches the following day.

IPL’s overkill lies at the roots of its corruption. In a long drawn-out league, you know well, a loss here and there doesn’t matter. A format dependent on risks taken – in the strokes played, cheeky singles run, and inexplicable bowling changes – provides a dubious dismissal or a shockingly poor over a justifiable context. A no-ball delivered deliberately can always be redeemed in another match the day after.

Add to this the fact that we were never expected to take IPL seriously, billed as it had always been as ‘cricketainment.’ Persistent rumours about fixing in the IPL had been treated, until this week, as item numbers. It is apposite that the IPL should have spawned a scandal at the time the nation’s political class is reeling under corruption charges. Cricketers don’t live outside the social system, making it inevitable that the bug of corruption would bite the players, more so as owners of IPL teams are no paragons of virtue.

The Rajasthan Royals, to which the three players belong, has been served six notices for violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). Subrata Roy, owner of Pune Warriors, has been accused of routing funds of dubious origin into two of his companies. You have Vijay Mallya, owner of Royal Challengers Bangalore, whose financial profligacy has led to the grounding of his Kingfisher Airline. Waywardness constitutes the default of the surreal world of IPL.

The ultimate prize for hypocrisy, though, should go to the media. There was always the whiff of corruption arising from the IPL but we blithely ignored it, hoping our praise for IPL would outstrip the percentage of advertisement revenue spent on it.

With the trio accused of fixing, we will now talk of new prescriptions, other than the structural flaws of IPL. Tomorrow will herald a new beginning for the IPL, as if it never had a past.

ashrafajaz@gmail.com

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United by lifelong grief

For the parents of the victims, the war never ended

Mama Kumari, “those who killed my son are now rich. Wish I could meet them and tell them what they did to us.” Kaushalwati Yadav was proud of her son, Sohanlal, who was respected in the entire community for his generosity. The Maoists took him away while they were having dinner. Kaushalwati watched as they hacked his legs with an axe and slashed his neck with a khukuri. He was rushed to hospital, but didn’t survive. When they returned from the funeral...
they found the Maoists had blasted their home and captured their land. Kailashwati still looks at her son’s picture several times a day. “His soul would rest in peace if his murderers were brought to justice,” she says. The Maoists admitted they executed a high-ranking party leader who had been killed by the Army. And when a high-ranking political leader was killed by the Army. And when a high-ranking political leader had joined the Maoists. Ram Prasad, was a great teacher in a high-ranking political leader. Ram Prasad and Tulasa Ghorahi of Dang. Their illiterate parents, had great affection for their children but didn’t know they had joined the Maoists. Ramkali was killed by the Army. And when a letter came from the party that Arjun had become a ‘martyr’, they didn’t know what the word meant. They rejoiced, thinking he had graduated. Then the Army came and detained and tortured Ram Prasad for being a father of Maoists. Ramkali used to tell her mother, “I am not just your daughter, I am the nation’s daughter.” Ram Prasad and Tulasa have constructed a chautari in the memory of their son and daughter, and now say they sacrificed their lives in vain. Chetnath and Sahibiri Adhikari chant prayers all day in an ashram in Dewghat of Chitwan, just to take their minds off the tragedy of war. Their elder son, Dharmendra, was killed in action in Chitapani of Bardiya in 2004. Soon after, the Maoists captured and killed their unnamed younger son, Krishna, when he had come home on leave. They knew Krishna’s killers and saw them walk around the village every day, and couldn’t take it any longer. They left their home in Bardiya and came to Dewghat. All they want now is information on where Krishna’s body is so they can give him a proper funeral. Laxmi Awasthi’s oldest son, Sharad, was thoughtful and responsible. He was in college in Mahendranagar when he joined the Maoists. Laxmi didn’t know for two years. He used to come home and tell her: “I am fighting for other mothers like you.” Sharad was killed in the battle of Kalikot in 2004. Laxmi looks at Sharad’s picture and says: “People are all equal, there are no rich or poor he used to say. But it didn’t matter the way he wanted. There are thousands of grieving mothers like me all over Nepal.”

With reporting by Bachhu BK in Dhangadi, Tulan Neupane in Nepalgunj, Gajendra Bohra in Ghorahi, Sadhia Shrestha in Narayangad, Bimmi Sharma in Birganj, Kamal Rimal in Birganj, Sita Mademba in Chhanar and Gopal Gartaula in Biratnagar.

For a more complete coverage of this story in Nepal, go to:
www.timesnepal.com

quick getaway. In the morning the people of Jumla would congratulate each other just for surviving another night without being killed.

Now, Navin Jirel and Radha Poudel have both written about their conflict experiences. Their books were launched simultaneously on Thursday by nepa-laya publishers.

Jirel’s book, Bhisan Dinharu (Ferocious Days), is divided into three auto-biographical sections: childhood, battles, and life in the cantonment. Although the book is about the violence and brutality of conflict, it is also about lost innocence, about how war becomes an end in itself, and how the momentum of the revolution sweeps everyone along in its path.

Navin speaks matter-of-factly about killing and nearly getting killed, the exhilaration at the end of a battle, the sweet taste of victory, and the sorrow of losing close friends. There are excruciating details of how in the attack on Siraha, Navin finds he is one of the few still alive in his unit after a falling electricity pylon electrocutes his remaining comrades.

Thirsty, he gropes in the dust to find water. He will now be involved in social work in Jiri, work on a museum there. He says: “There is still lots to do for the upbuilding of my people.”

After the battle of Jumla, Radha started writing down everything she remembered about the 13 terrifying hours during the fierce Maoist attack on Jumla on the night of 14 November 2002. The CDO, DSP, and dozens of army and police were killed, and no one knows how many Maoists died. Radha first just hid under her quilt, thinking it would protect her. She rejoiced, thinking…

Gunfire in the street below. She peeped out of the window to see captured policemen being beheaded like goats.

She went to hide in her landlady’s room, but a neighbouring house caught fire and they were trapped between the smoke and the gunfire outside. Radha thought this was the end, but somehow survived the night and lived to write her book. Khallanga ma Hamala (Attack on Khallanga).

Radha stayed on in Jumla and got the Women Peacemaker Award last year for her selfless work in rural Nepal during the conflict.

She says the end of the war hasn’t meant the country is at peace.

“We are still in conflict, it’s just that guns are not being used, as long as people are dying of hunger the war is still going on. The underlying reasons for the conflict are still there.”

Radha’s first manuscript was lost and she wrote the book all over again from memory. It is important to document what happened, she thinks, so that future generations of Nepalis understand and value genuine peace.

Radha says she will plough the royalties from Khallanga ma Hamala to her group, Action Works Nepal, which works in Jumla, Kalikot, and Achham to help Karnali people to stand on their own feet.
Baburam Bhattarai in Annapurna Post, 18 May

Sir, I miss you

I am deeply shocked by the sudden demise of my school teacher Verghese Thomas who was a father figure to me and made a huge impact on my life. Verghese sir taught us Mathematics from grade seven to ten at Amar Jyoti High School in Luitel, Gorkha and helped build a strong foundation for years to come. I still remember how sir included a unitary method question in one of the exams even though the topic wasn’t part of our syllabus. When I scored 100 on the same paper he told me he had made that question to trick me and was happy that I was able to find the right solution.

Verghese sir, who was originally from Kerala, made a great contribution to the education of youth from Gorkha as well as Lantung and Tanahu and was responsible for nurturing talents like Upendra Devkota. After serving as headmaster at Amar Jyoti for several years he went on to teach at Pokhara’s Gandaki Boarding school where he even became campus chief.

As soon as I heard about Verghese sir’s death, I knew we had to do something to honour him. I have been in touch with Dr Laxmi Devkota, president of Amar Jyoti Alumni Association and other members to discuss plans for a memorial program. Many have sent me suggestions on twitter as well. Some have recommended sending me suggestions on twitter as well. Some have recommended

Go betweens

As Makwanpur becomes a transit point for drug trafficking, drug rings are increasingly using children as decoys because juveniles cannot be attached. Instead, police hand over children to parents and guardians after giving them a warning. Since 2009 only six cases have been filed in the juvenile bench for drug trafficking and this year there has been only a single case. Last month, the District Police Office in Makwanpur caught nine children from Hetauda bus park, Ram mandir chok, Patan, Kanti, and Churumaya area. Some of those who were detained were younger than 10. According to the public defender of the district court of Makwanpur Koshalsewor Gyawali, traffickers give children Rs 500 to 1,500 for carrying drugs. Since children cannot arrested or locked up and the only option is to rehabilitate them at home, cases like these are on the rise says Gyawali. According to locals, marijuana and opium produced in Makwanpur are trafficked to India and other drugs and syrines are trafficked to various cities in the country through this southern hub.

If Madan Bhandari was alive, the country wouldn’t be in such a mess.

You are alive, but nothing is different.

Rabindra in Nepal, 19 May
Syndicated federation

Nepal is needlessly being pushed to federalise because discredited political leaders need a face-saving agenda

Nepal is the oldest nation state in South Asia and has existed as an integrated country for two-and-a-half centuries. Now, our politicians supported by misguided foreign backers, want to disintegrate it. Politicians have used federalism to muddle rouse and stoke communal tensions, but what is much worse is that they aren’t even serious about political decentralisation. Suddenly, the decibel level for ethnicity-based federalism has gone down. The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) which saw its Western funding dry up is now headed by a young novice from the smaller Kumal ethnic constituency. Kumal defeated a much more radical Maoist-backed candidate. Could it be that all this is a result of the deep doubts that our big neighbours have about this agenda? Could it be that they aren’t even serious about political decentralisation? If so, it proves once more that our neighbours seem to be more concerned for our welfare than our own populist politicians.

The indigenous personalities who were breathing fire and brimstone while being beneficiaries of Western funding have suddenly abandoned NEFIN in droves. Let’s face it: federalising the country and doing so along ethnic lines was never the demand of the Nepali people. In a normal democracy, that majority opinion would have been put to a referendum. While a majority of Nepal’s rae the demise of the CA, they are glad it was dissolved before it could pass a constitution that would effectively break the country up into little pieces. Ethnicity-based federalism was a strategy adopted by the Maoists to drive a wedge between the government and people during the war, as well as to help their recruitment of young fighters. After the ceasefire in 2006, this agenda was force-fed to other parties which had lost their support base. Had the NC and UML been convinced about the need for federalism, they would have proposed it back in 1990. Ethnic autonomy was the core of the Maoist proposal for federalising the country. This meant carving out the country into provinces defined by ethnicity a la Mao Zedong and Josef Stalin: a model that China is not so enamoured with anymore and which ultimately led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

There is no rationale anymore for Nepal to be federalised. Effective devolution of political power to the districts through genuine decentralisation will be the least disruptive and catalyse development. But try telling that to the political parties and their discredited leaders. The Maoists and the other parties that followed the federalisation bandwagon cannot do a U-turn without losing face, so it is a question of who has the courage to call it as it is. Had the NC and UML put it back into the intergovernmental committee at the time, this situation would not have happened. Now, the NC and UML are saying it is too late.

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Transcripts recently declassified under the Freedom of Information Act finally give us a historical perspective on the first ascent of Mt Everest 60 years ago and lay to rest the big question of who got to the top first: Hillary or Tenzing.

It is well documented that after he came down from the mountain, Ed Hillary told George Lowe: "Well, George, we knocked the bastard off." Sir Ed sure swore like a sailor, but what is less well known is that the Royal Geographical Society has a transcript of his conversation with Tenzing as the two approached the summit on 29 May 1953. The following content is rated ‘R’, parental discretion is advised and we will request all unaccompanied minors at this point to run along outside and play on the swing for the duration of this column:

**TENZING:** (Muffled, through oxygen mask) Sir, wake up sir. Tea ready.

**HILLARY:** Black, no sugar. Let’s knock the virginity of this @#$% mountain first.

**TENZING:** Here we are at the Grade Six bit of vertical rock on the South Ridge, sah’b, we’ll need to rope up and I’ll cut some steps. Can we name this the Tenzing Step?

**HILLARY:** Sorry, man, I hereby name this bugger the Hillary Step after myself.

**TENZING:** Oh. OK.

**HILLARY:** Here we are at the South Summit, Tenzing, why don’t you rustle up some rum and coke while I try to establish the highest ever urinal in human history… that is if I can open my %$#@ zipper.

**TENZING:** I’d check the wind direction first if I were you. Oops, too late.

**HILLARY:** Billions of blistering barnacles! The $%$#@ it freezes solid as soon as it comes out, I’ll have to keep breaking off the yellow icicles as I relieve myself over the Tibetan Plateau.

**TENZING:** You realise, don’t you sir, that we are making history here?

**HILLARY:** Y up, 60 years from now I’ll be on a New Zealand $5 note and on the cover of the %$#+& National Geographic. You go on ahead, Tenzing. I’ll take a little nap right here.

**TENZING:** No, no, it’s getting late, we’re nearly there, sah’b. Here, let me carry you.

(Tenzing heaves Hillary on his shoulders, stands on the summit of Mt Everest, see pic above.)

This secret transcript clearly proves that while Tenzing was indeed first to set foot on top, Hillary by virtue of being on his shoulder actually reached a higher altitude above mean sea level. The two were wildly feted as they came off the mountain. Hillary kept on muttering something about knocking the sonofabitch off, while the Nepali government commissioned Dharma Raj Thapa to compose a famous folk song which goes: "Our famous Tenzing Sherpa, got to the top, carrying that weakling Hillary on his shoulder."

Slight problem: Tenzing promptly decided he was an Indian national after all. It took Kathmandu 50 years to finally overcome bureaucratic hurdles to award honorary Nepali citizenship to Hillary in honour of his ability to swear like a native. Sir Ed had all the rights and privileges of a Nepali citizen which meant he had to apply in New Delhi for an Australian visa. But at least he could fly to Lukla for one-third the tourist fare.