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GLACIERWORKS

2009

1921



MAJOR EO WHEELER/ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

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.

Changing climate for climbing

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:

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CLIMBING IN CLIMATE CHANGE	PAGE 7
EVEREST TIMELINE	PAGE 10-11
BOOK REVIEW: PENGUINS ON EVEREST	PAGE 13

Mahindra RODEO RZ

LET'S DO MORE

PERSONAL INFO
name: Shital Moktan
age group: 25 - 27
hobby: Singing, Dancing & Travelling
profession: Singer/Music Arranger/Director

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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 gravely wounded and physically handicapped can’t get jobs and have become a burden for their families. For 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 (on 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, he said. The injustice and exclusion that drove this country to war have not been addressed and



Wars leave a mess, it’s up to the warriors to clean it up when they stop fighting

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 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 up 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 no 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 victims and 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

www.nepalitimes.com

WATCHING THE WATCHDOG

Your editorial manifests a total ignorance about the rules and practices of governance, constitutional provisions of the nation and international practice in this regard (‘Watching the watchdog’, Editorial, #656). The CIAA is empowered to discipline public officials for wrong deeds. As Public Service Commission or other relevant Constitutional bodies have to approve the disciplinary actions, this can, to a certain extent, check CIAA’s arbitrary and vengeful actions, but not fully. The reason is that CIAA can still publish this in its annual report and damage the reputation of the concerned official. In case of false charges of corruption, the Court can finally acquit the convict, but it takes a long time during which the damage to the person will have been done in terms of financial loss, mental and emotional distress, loss of reputation and career-wise losses. There is no provision for compensation for wrong disciplinary actions and/or witch-hunting.

Jainendra Jeevan

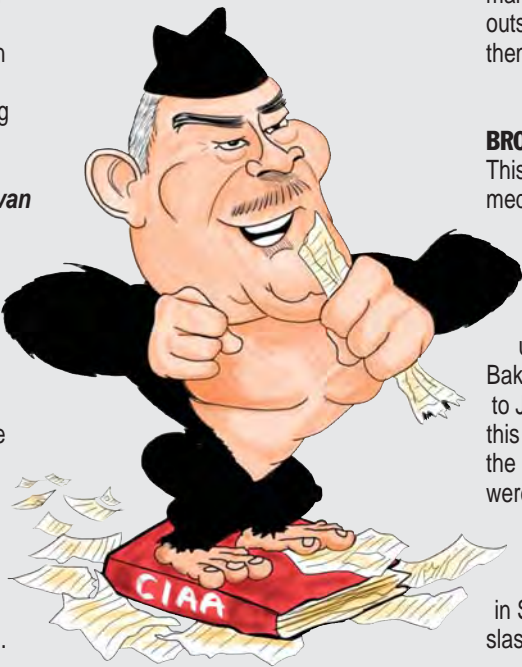
- If we were a corruption and criminality free society, the nomination of a person like Lokman Singh Karki as the head of CIAA would have drawn a huge outcry and it’d be understandable and laudable according to the nature of such a society. However, in a state like Nepal whose voracious appetite for pork barrel politics has always embraced the cunning presence of corrupts, criminals, and incompetents, any protests by few people will remain hullabaloo.

So far, Khil Raj Regmi’s presence as the head of the executive body would remind everyone of how incompetent, corrupt, and criminal the Nepali state is and how impotent the government can be.

Anonymous

- From outside Nepal, it looks like there is little hope in the near future. Parties are corrupt to the brim. How much corrupt the judiciary is, does not need to be explained. Regmi is a part of both now. So what can we expect? The most amazing but disturbing scenario is that donors and civil society leaders have proved to be not much different. Karki has a virtue of being a visible symbol of past and present; that’s all.

Kamal Kishor



DINAKAR CHETTRI

OUT ON A LIMB

It is sad to know how personal greed destroys common cause of generosity for the needy and destitute people in Nepal (‘Out on a limb’, Tsering Dolker and Juanita Malagon, #656). These selfish and narrow minded people behind will suffer consequences in the future.

Tashi Lama

- After reading about how a fake doctor scammed donors and the people of Humla in last week’s *Nepali Times*, here is another case of greedy Nepali social workers not knowing what is good for their own country and people. Hope these crooks rot in hell.

Namche

- This is such a sad story. As a Nepali I feel so ashamed. I believe all the Nepali managers saw was money flowing from outside and they want to control it all by themselves to feed their greed.

AJ

BROOM BRINGS BOOM

This is why I like reading *NT*. Unlike other media which are full of negative news it goes 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 Bakamalang in Palpa 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 Sahalkot and most residents were slash and burn farmers. Now they have

also started cultivating the broom grass (‘amrisha’). Thanks for bringing Jhirubas in the news. You could have also mentioned Redd Barna (the Norwegian 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

- If religion peddling churches have made it to Jhirubas already, don’t expect the lively indigenous culture to survive much longer. Conversion and homogenisation has begun, sadly.

Anonymous

CONTEMPT 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 Acharya, #656). These morons will throw their hands in the air and say ‘we give up’.

Gopes

- That is the problem with Nepali public. They will not throw the whole lot out of power. Just wait and watch if the elections ever takes place.

SB Bisht

MDGS

That is another bogus epithet so NGOs can use to raise more money to buy fancy cars and have meetings in fancy hotels all in name of the poor (‘MDG The next 1000 days’, Joe Hitchon, #656)

Sagar Ruptse

Q OF THE WEEK

What are two things you cannot live without ?

facebook

Samir Pradhan: Petroleum and soap.
Sangam Silpakar: Mobile phone and internet.
Ingrid Chiron: Books and eggs.
Avinet Malla: Love and hate.
Tej Rai: Alcohol and Smart Phone.
Gerda Anita Weise: Good friends and cats.
Sigmund Stengel: Faith, family and friends.
Sudan Rai: A good laugh and a long sleep.
Dhanu Shrestha: Friends and work.

twitter

@saggy_dg: My phone.
@DhanuShrestha: Information and mobile.
@himabista: Laughter and Nepali coffee.
@sigdelsantosh: Freedom of expression and freedom of expression.
@nepalicana: Clothes and food.
@lenatara: Yoga and books.

This week’s Question of the week:

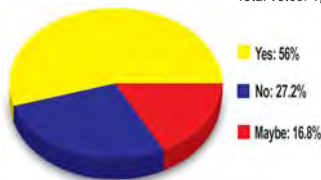
How much time do you spend on Facebook every day?
Go to www.facebook.com/nepalitimes or www.twitter.com/nepalitimes to respond.

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #657

Q. Do you think the Nepali cricket team will qualify for World Cup 2015?



Total votes: 1,123

Weekly Internet Poll # 658. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

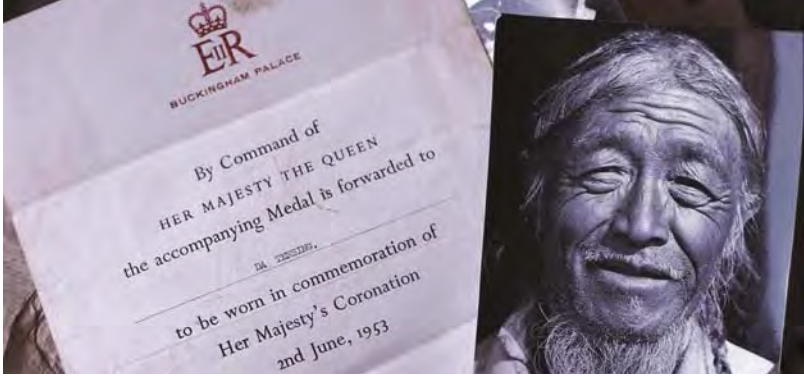
Q. How do you assess Khil Raj Regmi’s two months in office?



The other Tenzing

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 afterglow 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

nepalitimes.com
Gallery of Da Tenzing's memorabilia

A large advertisement for TagHeuer watches. It features a close-up portrait of actor Shah Rukh Khan wearing two TagHeuer Aquaracer watches. The watches have gold and silver metal bracelets and white dials with gold accents. The background is dark and moody. Text on the right side of the image reads "SHAH RUKH KHAN AND HIS AQUARACER". At the bottom, the TagHeuer logo is displayed with the text "TAGHeuer SWISS AVANT-GARDE SINCE 1860". Below the logo, the text "SULUX CENTRE" is prominently displayed, followed by "Hotel Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg Kathmandu, Nepal."

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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.

"It is crowded up there," Hawley said during an interview this week, "I prefer the comforts of my home, sleeping in my bed, eating hot food at my table, 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 work for *Fortune* magazine in New York as a researcher and quit one day to travel around the world. When she got to Kathmandu in 1959, it was still an unpolluted green valley with terrace farms and she never left.

In 1963, she got to report on the first US expedition to Mt Everest for Time-



BIKRAM RAI

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.

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 town in her trusted sky-blue VW Beetle that she bought from Prince Basundhara in 1965, Hawley is busy in her role as the chair of the Himalayan Trust-Nepal which was set up by Edmund Hillary in 1960 to build schools and hospitals in the Khumbu.

"I don't think the first ascent changed Khumbu," says Hawley, "what changed Khumbu was Sir Edmund Hillary."

For someone who has followed the annals of mountaineering so closely, Hawley wasn't surprised with the news about the brawl between Sherpas and western climbers on Everest last month.

"It was a result of badly bruised egos," she says, "the Sherpas felt that they had lost a lot of face after seeing these alpinists who have never used fixed ropes or oxygen in their lives...that got them very angry and they resorted to extreme actions."

The big change in mountaineering has been due to commercialisation in the early 1990s, she says, it gave an easy pass to those who lacked the skills and passion to climb mountains. "People who had never climbed a mountain before started buying slots on Everest expeditions because it would look good on their cv," she says.

Asked if climate change is changing climbing, Hawley gives a characteristically sarcastic reply: "Maybe, but it could also be that the climbers are not as good as they used to be."

A second edition of the book on Liz Hawley, *I'll Call You In Kathmandu*, and a documentary called *Keeper of the Mountains*, are being released next month. Asked if she would ever go back to the United States, Hawley replies matter-of-factly: "I am still here 50 blooming years later. I will retire when I die and I don't have any unfulfilled wishes. I am happy as I am." www.himalayandatabase.com

Follow @Everest1953 for live reenactment of the 1953 ascent of Everest on Twitter

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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, Rampriti Yadav, Hum Gurung, Shailendra 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. Mingma Norbu died

tragically in the Ghunsa 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 Ghunsa, 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 Paudel 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

nepalitimes.com

See blog:
www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit

BIZ BRIEFS

Spreading wings

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.



TURKISH AIRLINES



Vroom vroom

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.

Sleek ride

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.



Hello Amsterdam

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.

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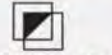
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GEORGE MALLORY



GLACIERWORKS

What will the Himalaya look like in 100 years?

Five-time Everest summiteer and American filmmaker David Breashears helps raise awareness about the consequences of climate change in the Himalaya using science, art, and adventure through his organisation, GlacierWorks. *Nepali Times* caught up with him recently to talk about the latest findings on how fast the mountains are melting.



Nepali Times: How did GlacierWorks start?
David Breashears: When I went to Everest as part of a documentary for the PBS series Frontline in 2007, I took along a black-and-white photograph taken in 1921 by George Mallory. It showed the ice-encrusted north face of Everest and below it the great river of ice known as the Main Rongbuk Glacier, flowing in a sweeping, S-shaped curve down a broad,

stony valley.
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 in 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 some regions of the greater Himalaya are quite dramatic and in others they are harder to discern. This has to do with

YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW: George Mallory's iconic picture of the Rongbuk Glacier on the north side of Everest taken in 1921 (left) and David Breashears' photograph taken in 2007 showing how much the glacier has shrunk. There has been even more melting in the last six years.
variations in precipitation and different weather patterns. For instance mountains in north-west Karakoram like K2 receive most of their snow in the winter from a westerly flow. That snow much more readily compacts into ice than regions in the eastern Himalaya, near Everest and Kangchenjunga, which receive their snowfall in the summer during the monsoon and when it's much warmer. However, there needs to be much more ground research to better understand these transformations and what they mean for the future.

What can Nepal 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 look like in 100 years. We hope others will return to this spot, just like Norman Dyhrenfurth and I have done, and continue building a photographic record so that we will be better able to predict what the glacier will look like in the future.
www.glacierworks.org

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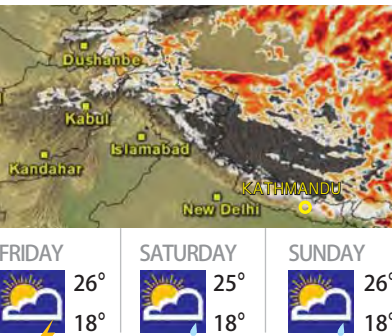
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The good news is that the pre-monsoon has been unusually active, bringing in moisture that rises up the Himalaya to condense and fall as precipitation. On Monday there was 55 mm of rain in Kathmandu Valley in a six-hour period. The bad news is that in years when the pre-monsoon has been unusually active, the real monsoon has been weak. Indian meteorologists predict based on computer simulations that the monsoon will arrive on schedule on June 1 on the Kerala coast. Let's hope they're right. Kathmandu will see squalls and storms into the weekend.



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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 they got to the top. But as the Earth warmed up due to climate change in the last 60 years, the Hillary Step today is mostly crumbling rock.

“The Hillary Step and the traverse to it from the South Summit were almost entirely snow climbs with very little exposed rock,” says David Breashears, American climber and filmmaker. “Now our crampons scrape and scratch across hundreds of feet of exposed rock and the snow arête that Hillary climbed no longer exists.”

Breashears, who has been documenting the effect of climate change on the Himalayan permafrost through before and after pictures, says he has seen changes even during the five times that he has climbed Everest. (*see interview, overleaf*).

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, clothing, tents and even human remains. Asian Trekking in Kathmandu began initiatives in 2008 to deal with the trash. Ang 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 to understand how climate change will ultimately affect the water stored in the mountains as ice.



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HONDA

EVENTS



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*

Strobist Photography workshop, take out your DSLRs and explore the studio world with Ganga Sagar Rai. *Rs 5000, 28 to 31 May, 7 to 9.30am, Folio Magazine - Studio, Dhalko, (01)4244348*



SAWASDEE, enjoy all things Thai from food to performances to products at the Thai festival. *Free entrance, 25 May, 11am to 4pm, Garden. Himalaya Hotel, Kupondol, (01)5523900*

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*

Writing Nepal, a short story competition by La.Lit Magazine, here's your opportunity to get published and win cash prizes. *Deadline 25 May, LA.Lit. www.lalitmag.com*

8th Israeli Film Festival, watch six beautiful Israeli films about youth and relationship between children and parents. Collect your free passes from the Embassy of Israel or Russian Culture Centre, *Runs till 24 May, 1pm onwards, The Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari, (01)4411811/4413419*

When Art Evolves, a presentation on the visible and invisible transformation of modern art in Nepal by curator/artist/writer Saroj Bajracharya. *26 May, 4.30pm, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307, Sign up at parkgallery@wlink.com.np*

The British School and Circus Kathmandu, a photo exhibition of projects by students. *Runs till 31 May, Image Ark Gallery, Kulimha tole, Patan, (01)5006665*

Italian Food and Film Festival, watch famous Italian movies while feasting on authentic Italian food. *Rs 950, Runs till 28 May, 6 pm onwards, Black Pepper Cafe and Pub, Jhamsikhel, Patan*

Nepal in Pictures, showcase your photography skills in this nation-wide photo competition organised by Photo Journalist Club Nepal and get a chance to win cash prizes. *Deadline 15 June, 9851056865, www.pjclub.com.np*

Sequential Dissonance, an exhibition of paintings by Mekha Bahadur Limbu Subba. *Runs till 30 May, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal 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, himalmag.com/blogs/blog/2013/03/29/short-story-competition/*

Little Einsteins, sixty different science projects from sixty different schools. *30 May to 1 June, Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition hall, Kathmandu*

Free hit, watch the Indian Premier League every day. *8pm, Bagaicha Restaurant, Jawalakhel, (01)5548148*

DINING

Alice restaurant, step in for scrumptious Thakali, Chinese, Continental and Japanese cuisine. *Gairidhara, (01)4429207*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, bide your time in the free wi-fi zone as you enjoy wood fired pizzas, home-made pastas and Tibetan gyakok, *Boudha, 9841484408*



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



DEGAA RESTO LOUNGE, for mouth watering Newari and Indian cuisine. *Kumariptaji, (01)5008679*

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

Cafe Hessed, for those with a sweet tooth, offers a delicious range of cupcakes and doughnuts, order a drink for free wi-fi. *Jhamsikhel*



LAZY GRINGO, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. *Jawalakhel, (01)2210527*



THE YELLOW HOUSE, enjoy sumptuous breakfast prepared with organically source ingredients and the freshest bread this side of town. *Sanepa, (01)5522078*



MIKE'S BREAKFAST, huge breakfasts and an endless supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this cafe, popular among tourists and locals alike. *Naxal, (01)4424303*

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MUSIC



REMINISCING BOB DYLAN, celebrate the 72nd birthday of the legendary singer with a musical journey. *Rs 1599, 24 May, 7.30 to 9.30pm, Hotel Summit, Kupondole, (01)5521810*

FOLIO.MUSIC.SESSION, bang your head to the live music parade by Visan N the Groovers. *31 May, 6pm, Peri Peri Restaurant, Jhamsikhel*

What the funk, we r soul'd out, dance to the beats of this reggae band, every Tuesday, 7.30 pm onwards, *Rs 250, Moksh, Jhamsikhel*

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

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. *Gaurighat, lakeside, Pokhara, (61)463722*

DHULIKHEL MOUNTAIN RESORT, announces summer bonanza offer. Stay at this lovely establishment for a discounted rate. *Dhulikhel, (01)4420774/4420776, reservations@dmrnepal.com*

Shivapuri Cottage, escape the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and enjoy peace, tranquility, good food, and fresh air. *Rs 3,500 per person per night inclusive of dinner and breakfast. Budhanilkantha, 9841371927*

Last Resort, canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping – test your limits at the Last Resort. *Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247*

EVEREST EVENTS



TOUR DE LUMBINI, pedal for peace, celebrate the birthday of Lord Buddha on your bike as you pedal from Kathmandu to Lumbini. *23 to 25 May, https://www.facebook.com/events/183141221827605/*



THE VAST UNKNOWN, an extraordinary tale of men and mountains- America's first ascent of Mt. Everest, an illustrated program with Broughton Coburn. *Rs 500, 26 May, 6pm, Indigo Gallery, Naxal, (01)4413580*

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 summiteers *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 10am, Nepal Tourism Board and Basantapur*

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

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

EVEREST TRIVIA



Are you an Everest aficionado? Nepali 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 Nepali Times and a red NT cap. Log on to <https://www.facebook.com/nepalitimes?fref=ts> to enter the contest.

Send your answers to juanita@nepalitimes.com

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1953

Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed Everest on 29 May, 1953. They reached the summit after a gruelling climb up the South-east ridge. They were part of the ninth British expedition to Everest, led by John Hunt.



1960

First ascent from the North-face by a Chinese expedition. The route was first made famous by George Mallory and Andrew Irvin 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.



1966

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.



1975

Hillary's daughters and wife killed in a plane crash in Kathmandu. They were on their way to Phaplu where Hillary was helping build a school.



1993

Pasang Lhamu Sherpa became the first Nepali woman to reach the top of Everest. This was her fourth attempt but she died while descending.



1996

The deadliest single year in Everest history. Fifteen people died trying to reach the summit in a storm. It also became the subject of the best-selling book *Into Thin Air* by John Krakauer, one of the climbers who made it back.



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, climbed Everest for the second time. 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 (5364m) and finishes at Namche Bazaar (3446m). The measured distance of the course is 42.195 km over rough mountain trails.



1975

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.



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.



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. 🇳🇵

PRICE TAG

This season Nepal made Rs 250 million in royalty alone from 30 teams and 335 foreign mountaineers climbing Mt Everest from the south side. The permit fee varies from season to season, the route taken and the number of members in the team. For example a seven member team on the normal South Col route in spring would have to pay \$70,000 whereas a seven member expedition on any other route in spring would pay \$50,000. If an expedition has more than seven members, it has to pay \$10,000 per climber extra.



GLACIERWORKS

2005

French pilot Didier Delsalle 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 fist-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



For 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 changing the Hollywood formula (for the better), that *Star Trek* is an origin story chronicling the childhood and recruitment of Captain James T Kirk (played by Chris Pine) to Star Fleet and his subsequent meetings with the people who are to become the

backbone of his team on his ship (the beloved and hardy ‘Enterprise’): ‘Scotty’ (Simon Pegg) the chief engineer, ‘Bones’ (Karl Urban) the ship’s doctor, Sulu (John Cho) the third officer, Uhura (Zoe Saldana) the communications officer, and of course, Spock (played by both Zachary Quinto and the original Leonard Nimoy in a plot complication that boggles the mind but is highly enjoyable.

While that film lay the groundwork to establish these new faces playing old characters, this new film has confidently picked up on the core ethos of *Star Trek* by beginning with an intense action sequence where Bones and Kirk are trying to escape from an alien civilisation that they are actually trying to save by neutralising a volcano that is about to destroy their planet. In the course of trying to save the planet, Spock becomes trapped on the volcano and Kirk makes a decision to allow the primitive aliens to see the Enterprise in order to save his best friend.

As a result of these choices, the Enterprise is taken away from Kirk for violating the Prime Directive of

Star Fleet 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 torpedo’s 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, responsibility, and above all a cosmic code where being a good human (well, in this case a citizen of this universe) means doing the right thing and, above all, respecting the life of other civilisations.

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 that 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. 🇳🇵

[nepalitimes.com](#)

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GIZMO by YANTRICK

Don't worry, just drink

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 day long hike 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’s 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 fastest 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 lightweight and compact 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 in up to 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. In just 90 seconds you get a litre 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 6,700 should be a part of every backpacker’s gear. The US-imported purifiers can be found at 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. 🇳🇵

Yantrick’s 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.



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RE VIEW

THE EVEREST INDUSTRY

For an insider look at what is happening to the sport of mountaineering in the Himalaya, 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 suit the climber's safety standards.

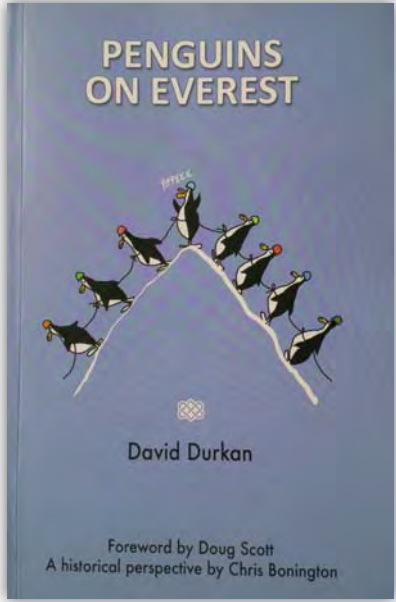
'Climbing Everest had moved away from

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 jumarring 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



Penguins on Everest
by David Durkan
Swami Kailash Publications, 2012
186 pages
www.mountain-people.org
durkandavid@gmail.com

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 (*Annapurna*) 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 understand, protect and practice the innate values of mountaineering. 
Kunda Dixit



SOMEPLACE ELSE

This 30-year-old establishment named after a fictional mountain is a legend in its own right. Climbing heroes Sir Edmund Hillary and Reinhold Hessner are known to have enjoyed a bite and more at this bar cum resto frequented mainly by climbers and trekkers. Hundreds have etched memories of their journey on wooden planks shaped like yeti footsteps that decorate this spacious three-floored venue from ceilings to walls. Lunch or dinner is on the house for those who have made it to the top of the world. And how does the staff know if you are not lying to claim fame and free food? Whenever in doubt they ring up Elizabeth Hawley (see Page 4), the



PICS: TSERING DOLKER

unofficial Everest expert.

The menu at Rum Doodle is a mix of continental, Indian and Nepali, but the meals are relatively expensive and service isn't quite as exemplary as expected. A

regular steak here costs Rs 750 (plus the customary 10 per cent and 13 per cent). After walking the entire way from Ratnapark to Jyatha in the heat, fruit lassi (Rs 130) sounded perfect. The popular yogurt-based drink was in a word dissatisfying. The 'fruit' in the lassi was missing and it wasn't as chilled as we would have preferred on a scorching summer.

After the initial let down, we learnt our lesson and restrained from being too adventurous with our lunch orders. For starters, we chose tomato and


Rum Doodle



another. The salami, ham, and sausage pizza (Rs 390) was the best bet. The eight inch wood-fired pizza with generous toppings of the three meats was too large even for two people with a trekker's appetite. A perfect bar food, it went

well with a glass of beer and disappeared slice by slice from the plate as we enjoyed a game of IPL on the TV. Rum Doodle is a Mecca for climbing enthusiasts where they get to brush shoulders with their heroes but for the rest of us, it is just another joint in town that doesn't quite live up to its hype. 
Tsering Dolker

well with a glass of beer and disappeared slice by slice from the plate as we enjoyed a game of IPL on the TV.

Rum Doodle is a Mecca for climbing enthusiasts where they get to brush shoulders with their heroes but for the rest of us, it is just another joint in town that doesn't quite live up to its hype. 
Tsering Dolker

How to get there: As you walk to Thamel, turn left towards the road leading to Jyatha. Rum Doodle is located on the right inside a lane, few metres away from the turning.





Everest fever



DHNAVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

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 professions; but physically they may perceive themselves as wanting. What could be better for the morale than an Everest feather on their caps? 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 summiteer 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. 🇳🇵

HAPPENINGS

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BIKRAM RAI

UNITED WE STAND: Pashupati Sumsheer Rana (left) lights a candle with newly elected president Surya Bahadur Thapa marking the unity of the Rashtriya Janashakti Party and Rashtrita Prajatantra Party in Bhrikutimandap on Sunday.



NEPAL ARMY

SNOW MEN: The second joint team of the Nepal-India Army makes its way to the summit of Mt Everest on Sunday.



CINDREY LIU

FERTILE SOIL: A farmer ploughs his field after a night of heavy showers in Pame, Pokhara, on Sunday.

READERS' PHOTO



ANKITA POUDYAL

PICK ME: A vendor arranges products in her souvenir kiosk in Kathmandu.



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LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

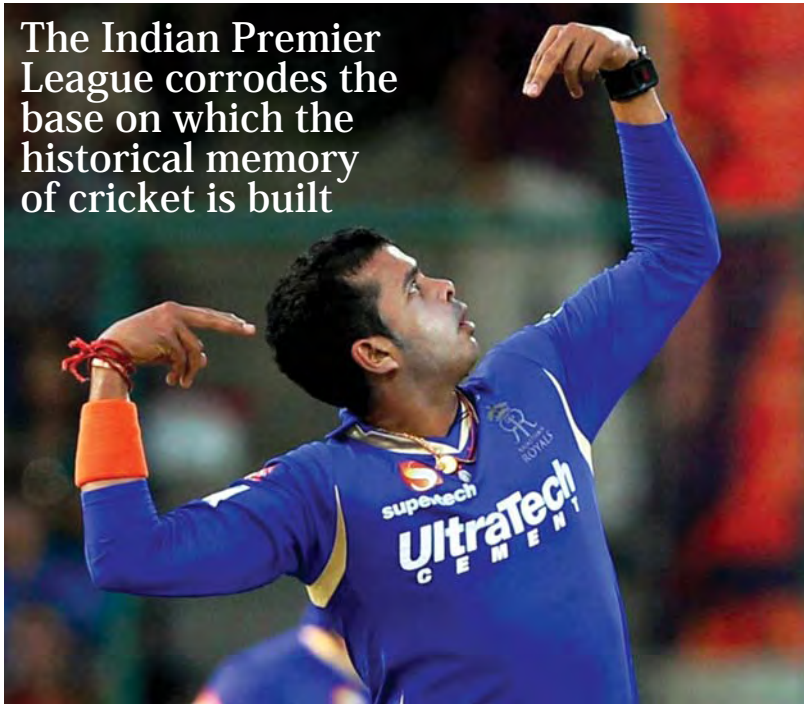
There has been a conspiracy of silence around the Indian Premier League (IPL) even though most people know that the very way it is structured could encourage corruption in cricket. So it is hypocritical of us to howl in horror at the charges of spot-fixing against S Sreesanth (*pic, right*) and two other 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 flurry of Twenty20.

Speed is anathema to memory, requiring as it does a degree of slowness, a lingering over on 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, T20 aborts the process that creates memory. Its speed, unlike that of a

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



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 contending teams.

Worse, the rules of T20 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 each 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 feeding the skilful

with juicy half-volleys at a friendly pace. It entertains the neo-cricket crowds, 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 deliberately delivered 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 bring to us a 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. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

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For the parents of the victims, the war never ended

Ten years later, it doesn't seem to matter which side killed them. Whether they were disappeared by the Army, or tortured and killed by the Maoists, the un-ending grief of the parents they left behind is the same. The only difference seems to be that some were killed because they were fighting for a cause and others were innocent civilians who had nothing to do with the conflict. Nearly 17,000 Nepalis were killed in the ten-year war that began in February 1996 and 1,400 are still missing. Most of them were young men.

Kajal Khatun was eight years old, she was travelling from Kathmandu to Birganj with her uncle when the Maoists torched their bus in Bhandar of Chitwan in February 2002. "She would have been 19," says Kajal's mother **Rajita**, wiping her eyes, but she has no tears left. Kajal's father **Haider** used to be a tailor and is now jobless. The family received no



compensation. Surprisingly, neither Haider nor Rajita harbour any sense of revenge. "If the Maoists mend their ways, we might even vote for them. But it doesn't look like they will," says Haider.

Sharada Shrestha was always smiling and because she sang well, was popular in the village even among non-Maoists. She was a member of the rebel cultural group in Chitwan and was travelling to Palpa in June 2004, when she was captured by the Army, and her body dumped into the Seti. Sharada's father, **Narayan**, is 74 and tried to tell himself



his daughter died for the country's future. But he is no longer so sure. "So many Nepalis died for their country, let's hope they don't have to die anymore," he says. All that **Mana Kumari BK** has now are her two grandchildren. Her son, Barun, was killed by the Army in 2003 and they buried him behind her home in Morang. The family migrated to Pune in India, but didn't like it there. Mana Kumari's husband died last year and now she takes care of her grandchildren from the money Barun's wife sends from the Gulf. "They should have killed me instead," says



Mana Kumari, "those who killed my son are now rich. Wish I could meet them and tell them what they did to us." **Kailashwati 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. Kailashwati 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

No peace after

KUNDA DIXIT

Navin Jirel
Navin Jirel was just 12 when his mother died. Dad was a civil servant, and away often, so his brother and sister were sent off to an orphanage. Navin had to go and live with his uncle in Sindhupalchok. He didn't like it there and tried to get back to school in Jiri where his friends were, but he didn't get admitted. He met a neighbour who was a Maoist and was treated with the kind of affection and respect he never got from relatives. Out of despair and frustration, he decided to join the Maoists, but they said he was too young. He persevered and within a year had taken military training and served as a battlefield messenger in the attack on Salleri in November 2002. They had given him a pistol and in the heat of battle he remembers getting so carried away he fired off a round into the air. He was reprimanded for



shooting from behind the lines. "I wasn't afraid at all, it was all every exciting and fun," Navin recalls. The boy was such a dedicated whole-timer that the comrades promoted him over older fighters. At first they resented it, but seeing what a born warrior he was, they admiringly called him 'Phuchhe Commander'. "Finally I got friendship and a sense of belonging and I found it enjoyable," Navin recalls. After that, Navin took part in the attacks on Bhakunde Besi, Sindhuli, Bandipur, and Siraha. By age 18 he was such an effective guerrilla that he was in a select commando force. "I was addicted to war," Navin now recalls, "during the ceasefire periods, I used to miss the sound of gunfire and wanted desperately to get back into action."

Radha Poudel
As a young girl in Chitwan, whenever Radha Poudel



complained about not having new shoes or pencils, she remembers her father telling her that children in Jumla didn't even have enough to eat. When she grew up, Radha became an anaesthesiologist at Bharatpur Hospital and applied for a more senior position. There were only two openings: a relatively easy job in Rupendehi, or the hardships of Jumla. Without hesitation, she chose to go to Jumla. Her father, who had worked in Jumla previously, tried to make her change her mind. It is dangerous,

he said, there is a war going on and life is hard in the remote mountains. But Radha reminded her father that it was he who had inspired her to go to Jumla and do something for the people there. When she got to Jumla in 2001, Radha could not sleep at night seeing how mothers died at child-birth and children toiling as porters. It was a fluke she wasn't born there, she thought, and she was troubled by the low esteem with which the rest of Nepal looked at Jumlis. They didn't know that the highest rice-grown in the world is

in Jumla, the people struggle against overwhelming odds just to survive. Radha got a job with a safe motherhood project supported by DFID and immediately set out to the remoter parts of the district to care for women even though it was a war zone. The security forces and the Maoists both looked at Radha with suspicion and thought she was an enemy spy. There were rumours that the district capital would be attacked any day by the Maoists and people would sleep with all their clothes on so they could make a



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 Sohanlal, but now say it may have been a case of mistaken identity.

Arjun Chaudhary wanted to be a doctor, his sister Ramkali was a teacher in Ghorahi of Dang. Their illiterate parents, **Ram Prasad and Tulasa**, had great hopes 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 Sabitri Adhikari chant prayers all day in an ashram in Devghat of Chitwan, just to take their minds off the tragedy of war. Their elder son, Dharmendra, was killed in action in Chisapani of Bardiya in 2004. Soon

after, the Maoists captured and killed their unarmed 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 Devghat. 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 turn out the way he wanted. There are thousands of grieving mothers like me all over Nepal." 🇳🇵

With reporting by Bachhu BK in Dhangadi, Tufan Neupane in Nepalganj, Gajendra Bohra in Ghorahi, Sabita Shrestha in Narayangad, Bimmi Sharma in Birganj, Kamal Rimal in Biratnagar, Sita Mademba in Dharan and Gopal Gartaula in Birtamod.

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

war

A former Maoist guerrilla and a health worker write compelling accounts of what they lived through during the conflict



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, *Bhisani 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

THOSE WERE THE DAYS: Radha Poudel (centre, left) with village elders in a remote part of Jumla in 2002.

Navin Jirel (left, above) welcomes Pushpa Kamal Dahal at Kamidanda in Kavre during the conflict.

darkness and finds a bowl with liquid and drinks it only to find it was urine. He gets shot, and is rushed to a hospital across the border in Darbhanga.

Indian Police is on the lookout for wounded Nepali Maoists and he makes a harrowing three-day journey on foot back to the Nepal border,

changing the bandages on his shoulder and injecting himself with painkillers and antibiotics along the way. Even after that he takes part in the battle of Chautara and Thukarpa where he is nearly killed all over again.

Ironically, Navin's worst memories are not of the war or of being wounded, but of the listless four years in the cantonment with ebbing morale and searing doubts about what it was all for. Students came to the cantonments to write theses on the Maoist guerrillas and after giving lots of interviews Navin thought he should write his own book instead of telling a selective story second-hand.

hitting the ceiling and walls. The army's helicopters hovered overhead, dropping mortar bombs, while the Maoists and the army exchanged fierce 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, *Khalanga ma Hamala* (Attack on Khalanga).

Radha stayed on in Jumla and got the Women Peacemaker

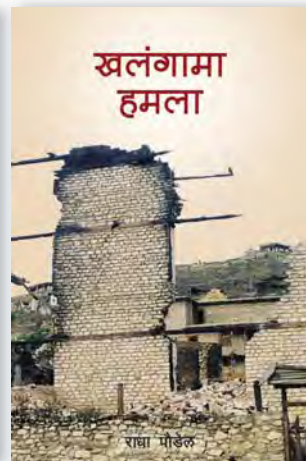
Award last year for her selfless work in rural Nepal during the conflict. She says the end of the war hasn't meant the country is at peace.

"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 royalty from *Khalanga 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. 🇳🇵

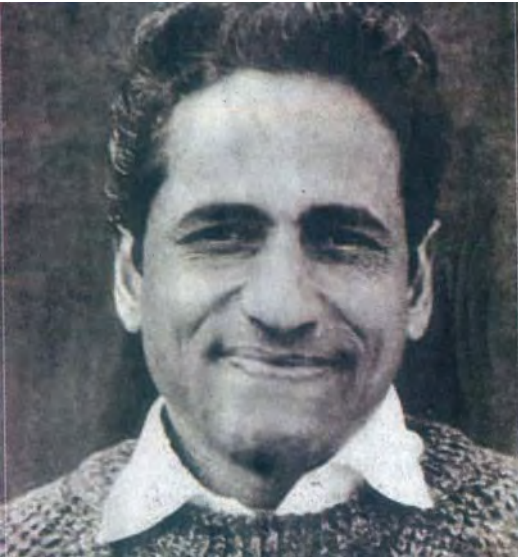


Sir, I miss you

Baburam Bhattarai in *Annapurna Post*, 18 May

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

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 Lamjung 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 issuing Nepali citizenship to Verghese sir's children who were born and brought up here and are working in the country. I'll have to see what can be done in this matter.

When the comprehensive peace agreement was signed and our party entered mainstream politics, sir came to visit me personally in Kathmandu. We were supposed to meet in February but he was unable to come as his wife had fallen ill. When I told him I would pay him a visit, he said he would come to Baluwatar. Unfortunately, I could not fulfil his wish of seeing me in Baluwatar.



Right here waiting

Pardesi ko pratiksha, *BBC Service*, 20 May

BBC
नेपाली

Every day there is a long queue outside the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) in Tinkune as hundreds of workers wait to obtain their final permission letter. According to the department, around 1,500 Nepalis fly out of Kathmandu to India, the Gulf, South Korea, Malaysia, US, and Europe in search of work. But this data does not account for the thousands who leave without authorisation.

Thirty-year-old Sita Tamang from Rasuwa is at Tinkune with her her husband who returned from Saudi Arabia after working there for more than two years and is planning to go back. She says: "He is going so far away, I will miss him and worry about what he is doing. When he is out of the country friends and relatives also look down upon me."

Aladin Adab, 21, came home to Mahottari after three grueling years in Saudi Arabia. But newlywed Adab is in a hurry to leave because he wants to repay the loans he took for his home and wedding. "I told my wife I will come back in four years and call her regularly, but she is not happy, neither are my family members. But I have no other option," he admits.

Last year alone, 400,000 workers left the country (not counting India) and the number continues to swell. Women make up about three per cent of the total number of those opting for foreign employment. Nepali citizens are allowed to work in 109 countries around the world. And while India receives a huge number of migrant workers, data is largely missing. But what is not in doubt is the role played by remittances in propping up the country's economy.

"There are different reasons why Nepalis seek employment outside the country. Some are tempted by the lifestyles of their friends and families who live abroad while others are ashamed to work in Nepal. There are also those who feel like that they are not fully utilising their skills by working here. Another group has a hard time finding jobs in the country and then there are women with difficult family lives who want to escape," explains Binod KC, head of DoFE.

Go between

Dhruba Adhikari, *Rajdhani*, 21 May

राजधानी

As Makwanpur becomes a transit point for drug trafficking, drug rings are increasingly using children as decoys because juveniles cannot be arrested. 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, Ratomate, Karra, and Churiyamai area. Some of those who were detained were younger than 10. According to the public defender of the district court of Makwanpur Koshaleswor Gyawali, traffickers give children Rs 500 to 1,500 for carrying drugs. Since children cannot be 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 syringes 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.

नेपाल Rabinra in *Nepal*, 19 May

NEPALI TWEETS

Pramod Neupane
सगरमाथाको उचाइ कम भएकोले जसले ति घडी राख्छन् क्यारे । हाम्रो महान् पाटीले तुरुन्तै यो भन्दा अग्लो हिमाल पत्ता लागेर कसैले घट्टन नसक्ने बनाइदिन्छ ।
Looks like Everest isn't tall enough, everyone is reaching the top. Our great party will soon discover a mountain that is taller making it impossible for anyone to scale it.

Ananta Koirala
सगरमाथा टेण्ड भयो रे आज । भरे उन्सव मनाउनु पर्छ ।
:-) हाम्रो गरिवी स्वास्ती घट्ने भो, सुशासन हुने भो, संविधान ति आजै बन्ने भो अब ।
Sagarmatha is trending on Twitter, let's celebrate. Now poverty will end, there'll be good governance, and the constitution will be written.

सिक्कारु केटी
मोरंगवाट गिरिजाप्रसादपछि अब संभावना भएको कोही नेता छ भने रेखा थापा हो मोरंगे चेली
After GP Koirala, Rekha Thapa is the only person from Morang who has the potential to make it big in national politics.

Sabdachitra
५ वटा स्यान्ता डलको अवैध सम्पत्ति थाहा पाइयो । करिब ५०० वटा ठूला राजनीतिक डलको अवैध सम्पत्ति कहिले थाहा पाइएला ? तिनका नाममा कहिले पूर्जा काटिएला ?
I wonder when we will find out about the wealth amassed by 500 hot shot political dons.

WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #14

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 12 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week's result of interviews about Khil Raj Regmi led government:

What is the main responsibility of the present government?
Hold elections: **80.2%**
Don't know: **12.6%**
Carry day to day activities: **6.7%**
Don't want to say: **0.5%**

How would you rate the two months of Khil Raj Regmi led government?
Average: **48.4%**
Worse than before: **30.5%**
Don't know: **11.2%**
Better than before: **9.1%**
Don't want to say: **0.8%**

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ I am ready to pick up arms if the need arises. ”

Rekha Thapa, actress and member of UCPN (M), *Janadesh*, 21 May

Syndicated federation

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



GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha

Nepal is the oldest nation state in South Asia and has existed as an integrated country for two-and-half centuries. Now, our politicians supported by misguided foreign backers, want to disintegrate it. Politicians have used federalism to rabble rouse and stoke communal tensions, but what is much worse is that they aren't even serious about political devolution: federalism is just a buzzword to camouflage their drive for centralised power.

As chair of the State Restructuring Committee in the ex-CA, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal wooed seven UML members to his side by agreeing to their individual demands for Sherpa and Mithila provinces. He then backed a model of 14 ethnicity-based federal provinces through majority voting that departed from the practice of consensus-based decision-making.

Dahal outsmarted NC members of the panel who were rooting for a non-ethnic seven province model, but the committee decision exposed the frivolous need to score political points that had become the hallmark of the sensitive issue of constitution writing.

In Dahal's recent visit to Beijing, Chinese leaders are said to have reiterated their misgivings over ethnicity-

based federalism and chided him for supporting it. He then went on to India where he was advised to back a potentially less divisive model of language-based federalism. 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 how divisive ethnic politics could destabilise Nepal? 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 Nepalis rue 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 bell the cat. Rural Nepal that makes up 85 per cent of population is saturated by two highly inclusive community organisations: Community Forest User Groups numbering

18,000 and at least 100,000 Mothers' Groups that include nearly all rural households in the country.

If the political parties are serious about elections, they should ask these organisations if they would like to see the country broken up into federal provinces and gauge the public mood. Local people whose views have not been distorted by external funding are more honest and forthcoming with their real opinions. Poll after poll has shown that they have serious misgivings about

federalism – especially of the ethnic variety. If the response to federalism is 'no', then there is no need to repeat past mistakes and elect a new CA. We can just have direct parliamentary elections to amend the Interim Constitution, institute true political devolution, and move ahead. But few politicians (except perhaps Chitra Bahadur KC) have the courage to call it like it is. 🇳🇵

Bihari K Shrestha is an anthropologist and is a retired civil servant.



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Climbing Mt Neverest

Transcripts recently declassified under the Freedom of Information Act finally give us a historical perspective on the first ascent of Mt Neverest 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 off 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 buggar 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: Yup, 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.





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