

NEPALI Times

#736

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ELAINE WANG YIWEI

Rescue us from our future

Micro-buses and three-wheelers cannot address the mass transit needs of a city of 2.5 million people anymore. Kathmandu Valley needs to invest in a new bus network to meet the demand of a population that will hit 15 million in 30 years. A new project hopes to consolidate bus companies and revamp routes. The iconoclastic former mayor of Bogotá, Enrique Penalosa, says Nepal's advantage ironically is that it is poor, which meant it hasn't had the money to make irreversible mistakes. On a recent trip, he told planners a Bus Rapid Transit is not the best solution, it is the only solution for Kathmandu.

DECENTRALISED PLUNDER EDITORIAL

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buzz

MOOUNTAIN WEEK

PAGE 10-11



kiMff

Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival TIMETABLE

PAGE 9

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DECENTRALISED PLUNDER

Feudal Nepal was a rent-seeking state in the classic sense: rulers profited from the export of human and natural resources without investing in productivity. In this prolonged post-conflict transition to a supposedly 'new' Nepal, rent-seeking has not just persisted but become standard operating procedure.

After the first people's movement of 1990 when Nepal went from being an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one, pro-democracy apparatchiks of the various political parties became the nouveau riche through extraction. After the second people's movement of 2006, the Maoists showed everyone how to become rich through extortion. Both extraction and extortion were just extensions of feudal rent-seeking.

There is cautious optimism about the new investment climate in Nepal after the first visit here by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Foreign investors may not be exactly ecstatic, but there is a stirring of interest. *The Economist* and the *Nikkei Asian Review* recently ran rare pieces on Nepal focused on new investment prospects to exploit Nepal's untouched hydropower reserves.

Yet, as we argued in this space last week, investment in infrastructure without addressing the structural problems of governance will exacerbate inequality, lead to lopsided development, create wastage and harm the environment. This is the same kind of 'resource curse' faced by countries like Nigeria and Angola where immense oil wealth in the



The rent from Nepal's rent-seeking state just went up

absence of democratic institutions ended up institutionalising corruption and rent-seeking.

We already see evidence of Nepal being blighted by the resource curse. There is a long list, but here are just the most recent examples:

- Transmission lines from the private sector Upper Bhote Kosi project supplying 45MW to the national grid were cut by a massive landslide at Jure in Sindhupalchok in August. Efforts to reinstall seven pylons have been obstructed by representatives of four main political parties who want a bigger share in the company (*see page 18*). Power rationing has increased by one hour this winter because Bhote Kosi has been sitting idle. The company has offered 5 per cent of its shares to local politicians, who are demanding between 10-25 per cent. Cadre, some of whom are CA members, are blocking pylon repairs to boost their bargaining position. It would be polite to call this extortion, it is decentralised plunder.

- The same local politicians from the NC, UML, UCPN(M) and RPP-N have also been extorting the Chinese contractor involved in the 102MW Middle Bhote Kosi Project that was supposed to begin construction last year. Although the

politicians have put forward various populist demands like generating local employment, it is actually raw rent-seeking pure and simple. The project already suffered a setback earlier this year after the government sacked managing director Kulman Ghising for being too honest. The Rs 1.3 billion project is supported with a loan from the Employees Provident Fund.

- The World Bank IFC-funded 36.7MW Kabeli A hydropower project in eastern Nepal is in limbo after the corruption watchdog wrote to the Energy Ministry to scrap the license because of delays. It is true that the project had missed the date for financial closure, but that was more because of bureaucratic red-tape. Instead, there are suggestions that the watchdog itself wants to have a slice of the pie in return for giving the project the green light.
- Besides hydropower, telecom, highways and manufacturing are other sectors which government ministers, the bureaucracy and the regulators think they can fleece. Dividend repatriation of international shareholders is blocked by officials who want a cut, permission for expanding mobile networks is tied to kickbacks, there are certain 'demands' to clear VAT refunds, and bribes to customs to clear urgent equipment imports have become so routine it is treated as a given.

The political parties can't seem to agree on the terms of the new constitution, but on extorting investors they stand firmly united, as we have seen on the two Bhote Kosi projects. Diplomats from the US and China have appealed to Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, but he seems to be too feeble to rein in his own cadre. When one company lost the bidding contract for the 140MW Tanahu Project, it planted prominent news stories alleging favouritism delaying the project further.

Not only do these examples discourage potential investors, they provide a disturbing glimpse of the kind of decentralised rent-seeking we will see in a new 'federal' Nepal.

YOUR SAY www.nepaltimes.com

SUPERSTRUCTURE

Great editorial ("Superstructure bottleneck", Editorial, #735). Technology alone is never the answer. Let hydropower not be Nepal's 'Dutch Disease'. Stable politics and accountability should go hand-in-hand with investment in infrastructure otherwise the construction spree will unleash unprecedented corruption which is already starting to happen.

Jens

■ Nepal is a poor country with 28 million people, ranking 46 on 2014 population data. It has no resources of its own to export or for self consumption. Any smart economist can tell this country has no future. It is doomed, don't just blame the politicians.

J Rana

■ It took 60 years for India to get someone to actually even talk about good governance and although Narendra Modi has been having some success with his programs, it has been an uphill battle for him. Nepal on the other hand just seems to be going downhill and gaining speed while at it.

Namah

CONSTITUTION

Anurag Acharya writes ('C' is for constitution, By The Way, #735): 'As the debates open up in the CA, other constituencies including women and the Dalits will also

bargain for their own stakes in the new constitution. At the core of these debates will be greater representation for marginalised communities at all levels of the state'. Let us hope so, for up to now the debates over state restructuring have effectively ignored not just women and Dalits but many other marginalised groups, significantly the poor and disadvantaged who constitute the majority of the population. One way of addressing the issue of representation would be to introduce and extend 'proportional representation', increasing the extent of real devolution is to build the new 'federal' state on a combination of central government and local government at the district level.

David Seddon

■ The title of your write up should have been 'C is for corruption' as our leaders have time and again proved their lack of integrity.

Mahesh

■ Acknowledgement > atonement > forgiveness > collaboration > compromise > consensus > constitution ('Tis the season for U-turns, Damakant Jayshi, #735). There is a process to nation building. Let's start with acknowledging that post-1990 there was a political, social and constitutional problem.

N

SAARC

Nepal should provide citizenship to Bhutanese refugees, after all, they are our brothers and sisters ('An (inter)

national disgrace', David Seddon, #635). Same with Tibetan refugees, although many Tibetans in Nepal hate their host country and can't wait to migrate to the US. But still, those who wish to be Nepali should be accepted as many of them were born and have spent their entire lives here. I feel ashamed at our inept leaders' treatment of refugees.

Arjun Pokharel

■ It's because Nepal gets more funds/aids/grants in the name of Bhutanese refugees, just like an endorsement deal, so, why bother?

Arya Green

■ India has issues with almost all SAARC countries ('Forger SAARC', Pradumna B Rana, #635). Afghanistan is an exception as it has no common land border. Compared to Kashmir all other issues are quite small. But such issues, nevertheless, affect the psyche of the smaller nations and come out handy in fanning discontent.

Armugam

■ These are not communists, they are modern day elites ('Punctuating communism', Ass, #735).

Saroj Bhandari

■ If a doctrine conceived by Marx and Lenin and executed by Stalin couldn't stand, how then can it succeed in Nepal?

AK

■ Should Nepalis stick their heads

in the sand and let their minds continue spinning webs of unhappy communism?

Ross Gurung

■ It means little as they are not really communist when it comes down to it!

Rabi Thapa

JAILED RAPISTS

Thank you for your article on the Bal Mandir and Happy Home cases ('Bal mandir rapist jailed', Sunir Pandey, #735). Both are landmark cases to bring justice and human rights to children. The operator of Happy Home was arrested but sadly the children have been left with the same questionable management. None of the government agencies tasked with child protection have managed their rescue. Hopefully, in the future, there will be a practical monitoring system put in place, funded and implemented for any facility that are housing children. The children have the right to be protected properly.

BE

■ Being a mother of a girl child it boils my blood to read news like this. Shame on the authorities who despite knowing of the assaults didn't care to report.

Prativa

■ Thank you *Nepali Times* for relentlessly pursuing these predators. Sixteen years in jail is too lenient for these monsters.

Radha

Times

THIS WEEK



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA (40 LIKES)

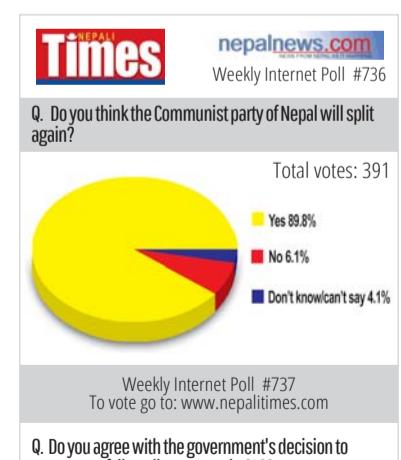
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Japanese tourists pose for a click at Patan on Wednesday.

Most shared on Facebook
Mountain film festival

Most popular on Twitter
Punctuating communism by Ass (33 retweets, 15 favourites)

Most visited online page
Bal Mandir rapists jailed by Sunir Pandey (670 views)

Most commented
Punctuating communism by Ass (17 comments)



Dichotomy in development

A successful politician in Nepal is almost necessarily corrupt

When Transparency International (TI) told us last week that Nepal has always been corrupt, and lately is even more corrupt most Nepalis greeted the revelation with a wide yawn. Tell us something new. It seemed it was only performing its annual ritual, although it is mandated to 'develop and promote practical tools' to reduce corruption.



GUEST COLUMN

Bihari K Shrestha

Nepal went down a whopping 10 points in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) this year, although it must be said that it was being compared to the interim election government of Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi. Alert readers will remember that the technocratic Regmi regime was relatively transparent.

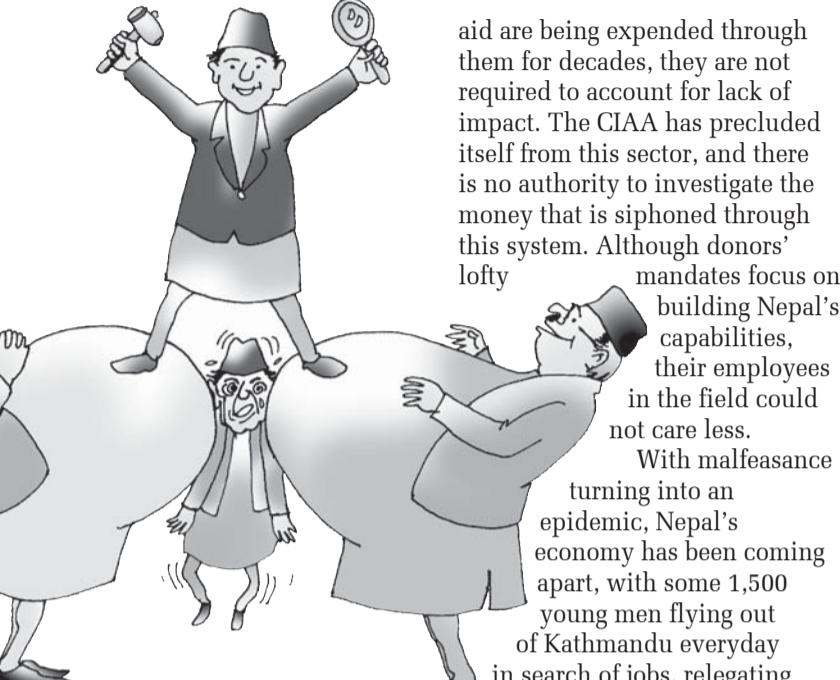
TI's 2014 index was such a non-news that the usually garrulous politicians had no words to express any outrage. The prime minister mumbled something about corruption not just being confined to government, while the corruption

watchdog, CIAA, issued a warning that it was "soon" going to net 1,000 big fish.

The transplantation of the Westminster parliamentary model to Nepal's feudalistic setting is at the core of rampant political corruption. Money politics determines election results, and since most politicians come from the ranks of the feudal elite who have traditionally thrived on extraction of resource from the community without any accountability, they do the same when they get to national government.

The Nepali Congress, which likes to call itself the citadel of democracy in Nepal, recently welcomed back with open arms one of its senior members convicted and jailed for corruption. Since most in the party do not have a different record, there was sympathy expressed that the man was just unlucky to get caught. For all practical purposes, therefore, a successful politician in Nepal remains necessarily a corrupt man in most cases. So no matter how many CIAA catches, there would be many more on the loose.

Besides, politicians have managed to place themselves above the law too in the meantime



when it comes to corruption, especially after 2006 when Nepal turned into a three-party dictatorship. The anti-corruption watchdog has been busy lately nabbing crooks here, there and everywhere, but it doesn't seem to be able to net a single senior politician. Not a single mastermind of national plunder has been caught, making the CIAA itself a laughing stock too

Then, there is the non-government sector with an estimated population of 50,000 NGOs. While vast sums of foreign

aid are being expended through them for decades, they are not required to account for lack of impact. The CIAA has precluded itself from this sector, and there is no authority to investigate the money that is siphoned through this system. Although donors' lofty

mandates focus on building Nepal's capabilities, their employees in the field could not care less.

With malfeasance turning into an epidemic, Nepal's economy has been coming apart, with some 1,500 young men flying out of Kathmandu everyday in search of jobs, relegating the country to survive on remittances increasingly.

However, there is a more reassuring part too to our development narrative. Despite such chronic and pervasive misrule at the macro level, Nepal has developed dramatically in two areas and earned lots of international plaudits for them. First, it had taken Nepal 30 years to destroy most of its forests beginning 1957 when it was nationalised, and only 10 for it to re-grow them beginning 1988 when the forest user groups were devolved the authority to manage the commons.

Similarly, Nepal also rose from the bottom of the heap to the top of the table in world ranking in achieving MDGs in child survival and maternal mortality reduction. This was achieved through devolution of authority to mothers' groups to which the ubiquitous female health volunteers are accountable at the grassroots.

The secret of their success lay in the fact that when the direct beneficiaries themselves, as distinct from VDC members, participate in decision-making it ensures transparency of management and accountability of leaders. Because of these good governance conditions, resources are properly used and development becomes equitable, accelerated and sustainable with little room for misappropriation of funds.

Devolution of authority to the users themselves at the grassroots thus remains a viable antidote against corruption, particularly in rural communities. To minimise corruption where it matters most for people in this predominantly rural country, it is time that both CIAA and TI consider reorienting their mandate so that they go after policy reform in the government that would ensure the people-owned institutions themselves acting as effective bulwark against graft. ☐

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Homes for the homeless

ANN MARTIN
in BAITADI

The drums and cymbals could be heard from across the valley from the road to Patan in Baitadi. The occasion was the visit here by long-time Nepal resident Barbara Adams to inspect one of the model villages she has helped support for landless Dalit families.

Adams decided to set up her Barbara Peace Foundation (BPF) three years ago to help some of the neediest communities in Nepal: Dalit families without land and homes in one of the remotest districts in Nepal.

Thamu Chammudia is a settlement made for 36 'sukumbasi' families. After

providing them with pots and quilts, the foundation bought a parcel of land for each family on which small homes were built. Ownership was in the names of the wives so that the husbands wouldn't gamble away or sell the houses for drinking.

The village is spread along the slopes of a lightly forested hill, with a scenic view of the western Himalaya. The villagers had asked BPF to provide three extra classrooms for the school, and this is the handover ceremony with speeches, garlands and more dancing (*pic, above*).

BPF is serious about making the new settlements self-sufficient and has provided training in organic gardening. Two local people are employed

to help with health issues, training in farming and medicinal herb collection in all three villages.

All this is handled by a Dalit manager who is liaising with government and district officials in Baitadi to establish a health post in Thamu Chammudia, since it is almost a four hour walk to the nearest one. BPF is raising funds before starting construction to ensure staffing and medicines will be in place for years to come.

There is tension between the work of BPF and what the government should be providing as the Dalits fall between the cracks. However, the government seems to have learnt from the BPF work and is now also providing housing for marginalised castes.

In one of her visits here, Adams heard about villagers in Kukudapani who were threatened by landslides and provided new homes for them. Seventeen Dalit families living in the jungles were provided houses in Sittad village. Life is still hard for these families, they need a health post and more school rooms.

Back in Kathmandu, where billions was lavished for the SAARC Summit, the challenge for Adams is to find funds to expand the BPF's work with the Dalits of western Nepal. ☐

Ann Martin is a social worker from the UK.



■ See gallery

Barbara's new beat

Barbara Adams has been living in Nepal for the last 40 years, and is well known for her columns including for this newspaper. Having spent decades trying to bring about positive change through her writing, and despairing of the lack of progress after the conflict, she decided to set up Barbara Peace Foundation.

"I wanted to give something back to Nepal," she says. At first she tried to create a Nepali 'Peace Corps', encouraging young people to volunteer to work in their own country rather than to migrate abroad for jobs. While successful, the project was too expensive to sustain. The BPF now works with Dalits in western Nepal, buying land and setting up self-sustaining communities by giving them self-esteem. The BPF is funded by Adams herself and from donations from friends.

www.barbarapeacefoundation.org

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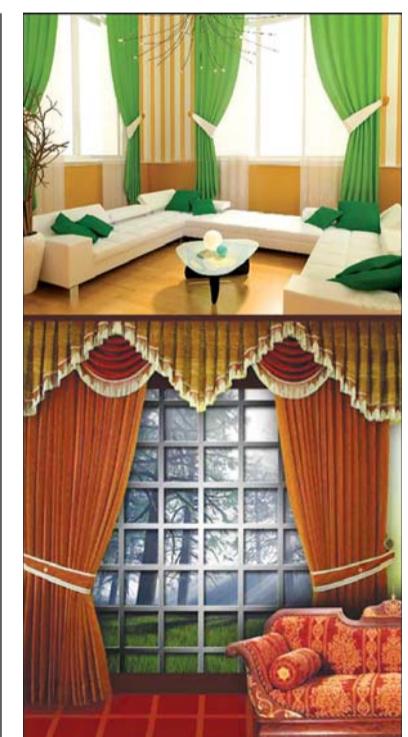
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A 24-year-old Nepali migrant worker has been sentenced for undergoing an abortion in Malaysia, raising questions of the legitimacy of the crime while human right activists are seeking a revision of the case on court.

Bukit Mertajam Sessions Court sentenced Nirmala Thapa (pic), a Nepali woman who worked in a factory in Penang, to a one-year imprisonment on 12 November one month after she was arrested at a clinic in Bukit Mertajam during a routine inspection by the Health Ministry's Private Medical Practice Control Unit (Ukaps) for terminating her six-week pregnancy.

Nirmala was charged under Section 315 of the Penal Code for allegedly undergoing an abortion. Under the section, it is an offence to 'prevent a child from being born alive' or to cause it to die after birth. The offence is punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years, fine or both.

Nirmala was the first woman in Malaysia to be sent to jail for having an abortion. The rareness of the conviction is probably a result of Section 312 of the Penal Code, under which abortion is permitted if a registered medical practitioner is of the view that the continuance of the pregnancy will risk the woman's life or cause injury to her mental or physical health. Section 92 further protects the medical practitioners by specifying that it is not criminal act if the bona fide intention of the service provider was to benefit the woman.

According to the Malaysian Health Ministry abortion is 'the removal of an embryo or foetus from the uterus at a stage of

Nepali woman jailed for abortion in Malaysia



THE STAR

pregnancy when it is incapable of independent survival' which means only the removal of foetus that has reached 500 grams or 22 weeks gestation can be defined as an abortion. In the mean time, Nirmala was only six-week pregnant when she terminated the pregnancy.

Nirmala was first sent to Jawi prison and then moved to the Pokok Sena prison after the verdict, during which she had been in distress, according to Dr Choong Sim Poey of Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia, "We learned that the girl did not even have a translator or a lawyer with her when she was taken to court."

Nirmala's case has drawn the attention of the women's rights and health advocacy group's co-chair, and hence raised the

questions about women's right and how migrant workers are treated in Malaysia.

According to the *Malaysiakini*, Lawyer for Liberty legal coordinator Michelle Yesudas gave a statement this week urging the Chambers to explain its policy on prosecuting women who undergo abortion to avoid claims of inconsistent and selective prosecution against vulnerable migrant women.

However, Attorney-General of the Chambers Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail defended the case by telling *The Star* newspaper: "If we have sufficient evidence to prove an offence has been committed and we are sure of a possible conviction in court, we will prefer charges."

Claire Li Yingxue and Elaine Wang Yiwei

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Etihad's award galore

Etihad Airways was named the 'Best First Class' and 'Best Long Haul Airline Middle-East and Africa' at the AirlineRatings.com 2015 Airline Excellence Awards. The airline was also ranked second among the world's top 10 airlines list.



Nango Express

Nango has opened a new quick service restaurant, Nango Express, in New Road to cater to the people of the busy street. The menu comprises of Nango's fast, popular and good value dishes.



Stain free

Godrej Appliances launched its new generation Godrej Eon U-Sonic Washing Machine in Nepal on 11 December. The new product boasts of stain remover producing Ultrasonic waves.



Honorary title

Managing director of Chaudhary Group, Arun Chaudhary has been appointed Honorary Consular of Hungary to Nepal. He was sworn in as an Honorary Consular to Nepal at a function at Hungarian Embassy in New Delhi on 4 December.



Virtual trek

iTravel launched a new website, www.walkwithyeti.com, which has a user-friendly Virtual Trekking feature that allows users to take virtual tours of various trekking routes along with information, maps and videos.



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ON STAGE:
Studio 7's *The Three Paise Opera* is an adaptation of the German play *The Threepenny Opera* and stars Raymon Das Shrestha (in black) and Sujata Koirala in the leads.



Brecht: Tribute to the guru

Sabine Lehmann of Studio Seven at the Hotel Vajra remains a disciple of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, who challenged Hitler and was persecuted by Joseph McCarthy.

Brecht's enigmatic dramatic style that was dubbed 'epic form', including non-linear script, techniques such as exaggerated acting and sudden turn to song-and-dance, was used to draw attention away from the acting and towards pressing social issues of the day.

Brecht sought to use theatre to purpose as much as to entertain.

Lehman has used her guru's philosophy and technique to create an idiosyncratic stage in Kathmandu at the Naga Theatre of Hotel Vajra. Once a year, she teams up with set designer maestro Ludmila Hungerburger to bring forth production of the wildest imagination imbued with the Brechtian spirit.

Studio Seven's productions are a yogic exercise, untroubled by the need for public relations or publicity, knowing that just

'being there' ultimately makes an impact. There is no knowing how much, but over the years Lehman and Studio Seven have surely influenced the evolution of film and theatre in Kathmandu, as young actors (not necessarily proficient in English) are groomed and sent forth, others to take their place.

Sabine has utilised the Brechtian model in many adaptations over the years including the life story of Milarepa and episodes of the Mahabharat. In this year's production, however,

she has picked up Bertolt Brecht's own *Threepenny Opera*. Staying pretty close to the original, *The Three Paise Opera* departs only to convert the yawning class divide in the original to reflect Nepal's encounter with job migration and manpower agencies. Otherwise, the songs and script remain more or less true to the original, aside from the occasional jab at long-delayed constitution making.

Unlike in some productions in the past, when there have been strong and weak actors, the cast in *The Three Paise Opera* comes

off proficient and confident – one would even say unabashed, as one would expect in a Brechtian production. For the untrained Nepali ear like this writer's, some of the impromptu song renditions may not be fully intelligible the first time around. This may require a second visit to the Naga Theatre, which would be time well spent to catch the little gems that are strewn throughout *The Three Paise Opera*. Kanak Mani Dixit

The Three Paise Opera
A Studio 7 Production

Runs until 14 December, more shows from 19 to 21 December
6.15PM
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Nepal Republic Media



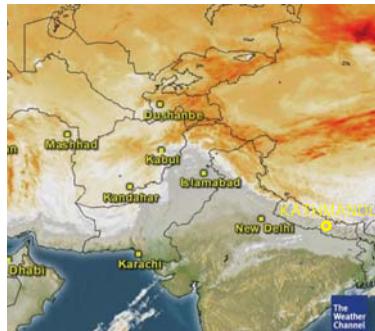
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The slight change in wind direction this week brought cool, dry and clean air from the west, which cleared up the sky. But it also led to a drop in temperature, blanketing Kathmandu in thick fog. Combined with pollutant aerosols in the surface inversion layer. This will continue into the weekend, when we expect the arrival of a low pressure region riding the westerlies. This will bring fast-moving high-level cloud cover and leave a dusting of snow in the higher regions, with possibility of light rain in central-west Nepal.

FRIDAY 20° 4° SATURDAY 20° 5° SUNDAY 16° 8°

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CLIMATE RIDERS: Linda Fransen
on the Tibetan Plateau.
Fransen in Nepal just after crossing
the Tibetan border (below).



A LOT RIDING ON CLIMATE

American couple bicycles across Asia to learn about how climate change is affecting people

As a journalist and researcher who had worked on climate change for several years, David Kroodsma wanted to raise awareness about the issue. In 2005, he rode his bicycle 34,000km from California to Argentina and told the story in his book, *The Bicycle Diaries*.

This whetted his appetite to ride across Asia, where fossil fuel use is growing and many regions are running out of fresh water. Newly wed, David and wife Lindsey Fransen started their Ride for Climate journey from Istanbul in May 2014 for their honeymoon, and have already traversed eight countries. After spending two and half months in China, the couple crossed the Himalaya from Tibet to Nepal last week.

"We can address global warming with data or storytelling," says David. "For our travel in Asia we chose the second option." David and Lindsey meet locals and ask them how climate change is impacting on their lives. "We have been surprised to see that half of the interviewees were aware of climate change, although the knowledge was less than in South America," David says. The interviews are filmed and the couple plan to make a documentary film on their

Asian journey.

"Coming from USA, I don't think I'm the right messenger about climate change as we have a lot to do back home," says David candidly.

David and Lindsey have been overwhelmed by the hospitality and generosity of the people they have met along the way. "People are generous everywhere, but in Asia we have experienced aggressive hospitality," he laughs, but admits that the most difficult part of crossing borders in Asia is the paperwork.

A lot has been happening in Asia on climate issues while they have been riding through it. China and the United States signed an agreement last month under which Beijing will cap carbon emission by 2030 and the US will reduce its emission reduction targets by half. However, the news from India is not so good, the country has announced an aggressive plan to promote coal for energy and has rolled back environmental restrictions to spur economic growth.

David Kroodsma is a data journalist, and although he enjoys the opportunity to interact with people with on-the-ground interviews, he knows its limits. Indeed,



this second trip was important for David as he had previously researched on transboundary water issues in South Asia. "After analysing data, I wanted to explore the situation myself," he says.

To observe the changes in Nepal, Lindsey and David are going for a one-week trek (without bicycles) interviewing local people about the impact of global warming. "We hadn't planned to stay long in Nepal," he says, "but we love this country."

After Nepal, the duo are bicycling on to India, Bangladesh and Burma. After riding thousands of kilometres across Asia, David has become more optimistic, not less, about the environment. "International negotiations are important as I've noticed that countries like China and Turkey try to reduce their impact on the environment," he says.

He has also been reassured to notice the positive response of people for his cause. He says: "When you cross countries on a bicycle, people easily feel sympathy for you."

Claire Li Yingxue and Stéphane Huët

nepalitimes.com

- Interactive story map
- Gallery

HONDA
The Power of Dreams

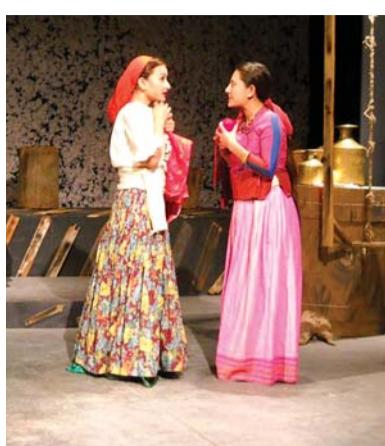


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EVENTS

**Yerma,**

A folk musical tragedy by the great Spanish poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca gets a Nepali adaptation. Rs 200 (adults)/ Rs 100 (students). Till 21 December (Mondays off), 5pm onwards; 13 & 20 December, 1pm onwards, The Village Theatre, Lajimpat, (01)4001089, oneworldtheatre.np@gmail.com

Holding up the sky,

A short film about the journey of the Seven Summits Women's team. 13 December, 3.30pm, Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF), QFX Kumari Hall, Kamalpokhari

**Mountain film fest,**

Seventy films from 20 countries will be screened at the 12th Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival this year. 11 to 15 December, QFX Kumari, Kamalpokhari, www.kimff.org

Nature and eternity,

A showcase of Pramila Bajracharya's paintings of abstract and semi-abstract figures and landscapes. Till 16 January, 11am to 5.30pm, Park Gallery, Pulchowk

Along Ganga,

'Walking Along Ganga', a series of miniatures and pen-and-ink sketches by Jimmy Thapa. Galleria Ishine, Kupondole

Tokyo to Kathmandu,

Recollections in print of artist Kabi Raj Lama's artistic and spiritual quest from Tokyo to Kathmandu. Till 15 December, 11am to 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited

Mithila exhibit,

Traditional Mithila art made by women of Janakpur on exhibit. 12 to 23 December, 10am to 6pm, Taragaon Museum, Hyatt Regency, Boudha

Photography workshop,

A photography workshop for all aspiring photographers - hobbyists, non-professionals and beginners.

18 to 29 December, 7 to 9am, SCC Kathmandu, Kupondole, www.facebook.com/scc.kathmandu

Cinemandu,

Screening of critically acclaimed Nepali feature film, *Talakjung vs Tulke*. Free entry, 12 December, 3pm, Nepal-Bharat Library, New Road gate

**Three paisa opera,**

An adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera*, a play with dark humour in which all values on the fairground, stripped of their pretensions, unravel.

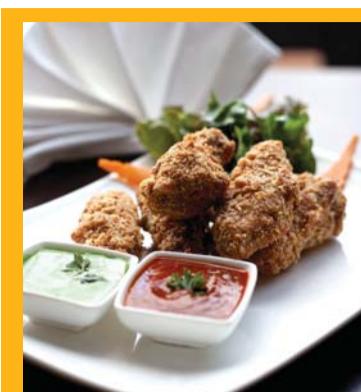
12 to 14 December and 19 to 21 December, Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra, Swayambhu

Particle fever,

Watch this film that gives you a front row seat to a significant and inspiring scientific breakthrough – the Large Hadron Collider.

Free entry, 20 December, 2 to 4.30pm, Embassy Restaurant, for reservations: (01)4424040, 9802024040

DINING

**Embassy,**

Positioned on Lajimpat's embassy-laden lane but away from the hustle and bustle of the main road, this restaurant has a menu with Nepali, Indian, Italian, Thai and Japanese dishes. *Lajimpat*

Christmas Eve,

Celebrate Christmas eve with a candle-light Christmas dinner, special pastries and free chocolates and cookies. 24 December, Hotel Shangri La, Lajimpat

Mulchowk,

The blend of culinary expertise and charms of a bygone era. *Babarmahal*

Pre-Christmas dinner,

Enjoy a dinner party with a special Christmas turkey dinner and live music. 18 December, 6.30pm onwards, New Orleans Cafe, Thamel, (01)4700736

Chez Caroline,

Authentic ambience, exquisite food, glorious sunshine and more. 9am to 10pm, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070

Music Fest,

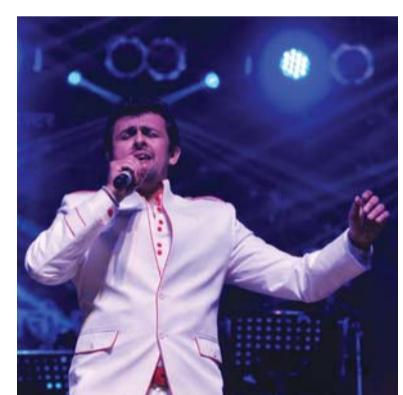
A culture and music festival with performances by Nepali and international bands like Peshkar, Girish Khatiwada Abhaya and the Steam Injuns, Albatross, and Mukti and Revival. 12 December, 10am onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap, www.nepalmusicfestival.org

Fusion fiesta,

The Autorickshaw trio from Canada and Moksha from Norway and Nepal will offer a unique combination of Nordic Jazz, Eastern ragas, funk and folk music. 12 December, 7.30pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel

Rusty Nails,

A charity concert by 1974 AD for children with Glaucoma. 13 December, 7pm onwards, City Museum Kathmandu, Darbar Marg

**Purplefest,**

Popular Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam will be performing with Nepali singers Sugam Pokharel, Yama Buddha. Indian comedian Kapil Sharma and other Nepali comedians will also join in on the fun. 13 December, 3 to 7pm, Dasrath Stadium, www.ncell.com.np/purplefest

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पक्का उपहार

Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival Screening Schedule

11 December

Screening of top 10 films from the short film competition "The Generation Green", 3pm, Kumari Hall A
Nowhere to Call Home: A Tibetan in Beijing 77', dir. Jocelyn Ford, 5pm, Kumari Hall A
On the Edge 46', dir. Sohal Kamali / Aleksander Dario Nilsen , 2pm, Kumari Hall B
1805-A Town's Tale 29', dir. Walter Bednarik, 2pm, Kumari Hall B
Si-o-se Pal 82', dir. Henrik Peschel, 3.30pm, Kumari Hall B
Panel Discussion "Co-relation between Cinema and Literature" moderated by film critic Yangesh. Panellist: playwright and actor Khagendra Lamichhane, novelist Nayan Raj Pandey and director Yadav Kumar Bhattacharai, 5pm, Kumari Hall B, Free entry



Punite Ko Pangro (Punte's Wheel) 13' dir. Sachin Ghimire, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Ananda 11' dir. Kate Stryker, 3.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Holding Up the Sky 56' dir. James Giambrone/ Russ Pariseau, 3.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Lifelines 15' dir. Jane Dyson/ Ross Harrison, 5pm, Kumari Hall A
Sons of Africa 57' dir. James Becket, 5pm, Kumari Hall A
The Carbon Rush 52' dir. Amy Miller, 11.30am, Kumari Hall B
Sharukhsucht das Glück (Sharukh on the Road to Happiness) 25' dir. Andre Hormann, 11.30am, Kumari Hall B
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow 11' dir. Sunchild eco club members, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall B
Bon in Dolpo 53' dir. Andrea Heckman, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall B
W di Walter 63' dir. Paola Nessi, 3pm, Kumari Hall B
Ligne de vie (Life Line) 52' dir. Jean Daniel Lagant, 4.30pm, Kumari Hall B
In the Lap of Ganga 23', dir. Sudhir Singh, 4.30pm, Kumari Hall B

12 December

Snow Leopard Scouts 17', dir. Pradip Pokhrel, 11am, Kumari Hall A (In person)



Flying High-The Quest for Everest 52', dir. Christian Schmidt, 11am, Kumari Hall A
Le petit blond avec un mouton blanc (The Little Blond Boy with a White Sheep) 8', dir. Eloi Henrion, 1pm, Kumari Hall A
Ax (Photo) 3' dir. Mashaallah Mohammadi, 1pm, Kumari Hall A
Balloona Laguna 6' 35", dir. Matisse Gonzalez, 1pm, Kumari Hall A
Wind 3', dir. Robert Lobel, 1pm, Kumari Hall A
Deja-Moo 9', dir. Stefan Muller, 1pm, Kumari Hall A

13 December

Sunakali 45' dir. Bhojraj Bhat, 11am, Kumari Hall A
Maanish Harayeko Suchana 5' dir. Sweekar Shahn/ Meelan, Nepal, 11am, Kumari Hall A
Pawan 10' dir. Laxcha Bantawa, 11am, Kumari Hall A
Kyar Kyar Pankha 12' dir. Pasang Dawa Sherpa/ Sumit Bhatta, 11am, Kumari Hall A
Delhi Dreams 35' dir. Ramesh Khadka, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Kranti Jari Chha 11' dir. Sandeep Gurung, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall A
A Thousand Dreams 3' dir. Ankit KC, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Butte Joma (Tripped Red Skirt) 14' dir. Kala Sangroula, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall A



Punte Ko Pangro (Punte's Wheel) 13' dir. Sachin Ghimire, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Ananda 11' dir. Kate Stryker, 3.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Holding Up the Sky 56' dir. James Giambrone/ Russ Pariseau, 3.30pm, Kumari Hall A
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Ligne de vie (Life Line) 52' dir. Jean Daniel Lagant, 4.30pm, Kumari Hall B
In the Lap of Ganga 23', dir. Sudhir Singh, 4.30pm, Kumari Hall B

14 December

Les Jours de Tarap (Days of Tarap) 95' dir. Herve Tiberghien, 11am, Kumari Hall A
Quiz "Know Your Himal" Master Kunda Dixit, Editor at *Nepali Times*, 1pm, Kumari Hall A, Free entry



Border Patrol 14' dir. Peter Baumann, 3pm, Kumari Hall A
Porcelana (Porcelain) 12' dir. Betzabe Garcia, Mexico, 3pm, Kumari Hall A
Dan - Poung (Maple Leaf) 10' dir. So Jae-Ick, 3pm, Kumari Hall A
Rogi Sankhya 666 Ani Aru Haru (Patient no.666 & Others) 9' dir. Triben Rai, 3pm, Kumari Hall A

Savitri 13' dir. Sujit Bidari, 3pm, Kumari Hall A
The Contagious Apparitions of Dambarey Dendrite 18' dir. PoojaGurung/ Bibhushan Basnet, 3pm, Kumari Hall A
Inframundo (Underworld) 9' dir. Ana Mary Ramos, 3pm, Kumari Hall B
Welcome to Bavaria 11', directed by Matthias Kobmehl, 5pm, Kumari Hall B
Talking to the Air: The Horses of the Last Forbidden Kingdom 60' dir. Sophie Dia Pegrum, 5pm, Kumari Hall A
Sound of the Void 14' dir. Marten Persiel, 11.30am, Kumari Hall B
Nine-Story Mountain 57' dir. Augusta Thomson, 11.30am, Kumari Hall B
Bajo el ultimo techo (Under the Last Roof) 12' dir. Edgar A. Romero, 2pm, Kumari Hall B
Mountains and Molehills 59' dir. Sandra Wollner, 2pm, Kumari Hall B
Dal Profondo (From the Depths) 72' dir. Valentina Pedicini, 3.30pm, Kumari Hall B
Klang der Stille (Sound of Silence) 5' dir. Adrian Goiginger, 5pm, Kumari Kumari Hall B
Into the Empty Quarter 52' dir. Black Diamond, 5pm, Kumari Hall B

15 December, Kumari Hall

Tama Gaun (The Copper Village) 89' dir. DipeshKharel/ FrodeStoraas, 11am, Kumari Hall A
3 Shamans (3 Shamans) 79' dir. Aurore Laurent/ Adrien Viel, 2pm, Kumari Hall A
Special Screening/ Awards Ceremony, 4.30pm, Hall A, invitation only
Gringo Trails 80' dir. Pegi Vail, 4.30pm, Kumari Hall A
Atempa: Suenos a Orillas del Rio (Atempa: Dreams by the River) 86', dir. Edson Caballero Trujillo, 11.30am, Kumari Hall B
Alberiche Camminano (Trees that Walk) 59' dir. Mattia Colombo, 1.30pm, Kumari Hall B
Shoes from Trieste 11' dir. Gregor Bozic, 3pm, Kumari Hall B
The Cave Connection 52' dir. Niko Jager, 3pm, Kumari Hall B

15 December, Russian Cultural Centre

Ice Fall 4' dir. Joseph Arredy, 11.30am, Hall A
Pericolo Verticale (Vertical Danger) 52' dir. Simone Gandolfo, 11.30am, Hall A
Espes 14' dir. Tanit Fernandez/ Isaac Rodriguez, 1pm, Hall A
Lives on a String 51' dir. Manoj Pandey, 1pm, Hall A (In Person)
The Story of Gosainkunda 12' dir. Martushka Fromest, 2.30pm, Hall A
Nanda Devi Raj Jat Yatra 6' dir. Martushka Fromest/ Raju Pushola/ Mukesh Khugsa, 2.30pm, Hall A
The Refugees of Shangri La 56' dir. Doria Bramante/ Markus Weinfurter, 2.30pm, Hall A
Book Discussion – Mountaineer and writer Dave Durkan talks about his book *Penguins on Everest* and the critical issues surrounding mountaineering in Nepal, 10am, Hall B, Free Entry
A talk by Italian filmmaker and cameraperson Paola Nessi about experiences working in conflict and challenging situations globally, 11.30am, Hall B, Free Entry

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After Everest and K2, Sherpa women set sights on **Kangchenjunga**

TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

When Maya Sherpa, Pasang Lhamu Sherpa, and Dawa Yangzum Sherpa told friends they wanted to climb K2, the world's second-highest mountain, many tried to talk them out of it. Although all three had already climbed Mt Everest, K2 was much more dangerous.

The most frequently asked questions were: Why would you want to put your lives at risk? Why do you want to go to Pakistan, aren't there enough mountains in Nepal?

But, the three were determined. As trekking and climbing guides, they had often heard K2 referred to as 'the killer mountain' - one in every four people haven't come back down alive. Six of the 86 killed on K2 have been Nepalis.

The other reason the three Nepali women wanted to do K2 was because only 18 of the 376 people who have climbed K2 have been female. And theirs would be the first all-women expedition on the mountain.

Despite lack of government support (one common question from officials was "K2? Where is that?") the team took up the cause of spreading awareness about climate change and in June 2014 headed off to Pakistan. "They told us in our faces we won't make it past Base Camp," says Maya Sherpa describing the shabby treatment from officials who have never left their desks in Kathmandu.

The Ministry of Tourism had promised to contribute Rs 500,000 to the K2 expedition which the girls are yet to receive. "Every time we go there, they say they have lost our application," says Pasang Lhamu Sherpa. "More than the actual climbing, fundraising was more difficult."

The group raised most of the required money for the K2 expedition from individual donors, friends, families. The NMA (Nepal Mountaineering Association), ICIMOD and



trekking companies also helped, but the team still owes the expedition company Rs 2 million.

When the women of the Women for Change Expedition unfurled the Nepali double triangle on the 8,611m summit of K2 on the afternoon of 26 July, they also became the first Nepali women on the mountain.

Despite their achievement, the three climbers are finding it difficult to garner support from the government for their next goal: to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Kangchenjunga, the world's third highest mountain, by climbing it next spring.

One reason could be that they are women, but the three also do not have right connections in the corridors of power in

Kathmandu. All three are self-made climbers who have gained the height they have through sheer hard work. Pasang Lhamu is from Solu Khumbu, but Maya is from Okhaldunga and Dawa is from Dolakha - districts not generally associated with Sherpa people.

"The initial plan was to climb Kangchenjunga straight after K2 but we now realise until and unless the government provides us help, it will be a long wait before we achieve our goal of climbing all three highest peaks in the world," says Maya.

The women also don't want to ask their friends, family and associates again knowing most of them had contributed as much as they could for K2. Going on a personal expedition also means losing out on a season's earnings for these working guides who are so busy during the climbing season, they rarely meet.

All three are married, Maya has a four-year-old daughter, and all three have full support from their families. However, Dawa says: "On K2 we often wondered how we were going to face each other's families if one of us didn't make it through."

When not working on mountains, the three are involved with the Himalayan Women Welfare Society (HWS) which arranges trekking trips for young Nepalis, and uses the money for health and education for mountain communities.

"Most of the young Nepalis have zero knowledge about their mountains," says Maya. "We want to focus on tours through which youngsters get to explore Nepal's mountains."

nepalitimes.com

- Ketis on K2, #718
- Conquering the world, #721



Number 7

The Seven Summits Women's team is heading for its expedition to Mt Vinson Massif in Antarctica this week to become the first all-women group to have climbed all the top seven highest peaks in seven continents.

Team members include Shailee Basnet, Pujan Acharya, Maya Gurung, Asha Kumari Singh, Nimdoma Sherpa, Pema Diki Sherpa, and Chunu Shrestha, who met in 2008 as part of the First Inclusive Women Sagarmatha Expedition. After their successful Everest summit, the women became good friends and kept in touch. In 2009, they started the Everest Women Seven Summits Eco-Action.

"We didn't want to go back to our normal lives. We wanted to fulfill bigger dreams and inspire people," Shailee told *Nepali Times* of the team's motivation to climb all the top seven highest mountains in the world.

Starting 2010, the team has climbed the six highest peaks in six continents: Mt Kosciuszko in Australia, and

Mt Elbrus in Russia in 2010, Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania in March, 2013, South America's Mt Aconcagua in March, 2014, and Mt Denali in Alaska earlier this year.

The story of their journey has now been turned into a film directed by James Giambrone and Russ Pariseau, called *Holding up the Sky*. The crew followed the team through their Mt Kilimanjaro adventure, where three African women including South African actress Hlubi Mboya (*pic, right*) joined the seven summits women team. The film records the team's preparation for their climb, their trip to the summit of the mountain and their school visits where they give presentations about the inspiring journey.

Holding up the Sky will be screened at this year's Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival.

Holding up the Sky
13 December, 3.30PM
Kumari Hall, Kamalpokhari

DEVAKI BISTA



MISSION K2: Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, Maya Sherpa, and Pasang Lhamu Sherpa at the K2 Base Camp. Dawa at the summit (left).

THE LONG GAME

Mt Everest is a license to print money for Nepal's economy, but it needs honour and trust

As I wrote in a previous column ('The gate, #731) if you want to grow, to develop and improve in life or business then 'feedback', or advice, can be a big help. The most important advice is that which you most don't want to hear, but how do you improve if no one tells you what is wrong? So as the outsider looking in, let me tell you about the 'long game'.

I came to Nepal for the first time in 1983 to climb Manaslu. I liked it so I came back, not for Manaslu but for Nepal and its people. In 1988 I returned to climb Everest and



OUTSIDE IN

Ted Atkins

again in 2001. I was still in the UK Royal Air Force then and thought this was my whole life because I loved it so much. Back then, there were not as many people or teams on the mountain so I got to know everyone. We pulled together to make it all work. My team contributed. We had brought ropes to fix on the mountain, but this work was done by others so we gave our rope to them. We shared equipment and when I left, I sold some of my gear to other teams. The deals were done with handshakes, good deals that were fair and we were all happy with.

I had not imagined that 15 years later, the same people would be my best customers when I started selling the Topout oxygen masks that I later invented. I could not have guessed back then what Everest had in mind for me, how she would change my life as she has changed so many others. That I would leave the job I loved, and the security of regular good wage to run my own company and work in Nepal.

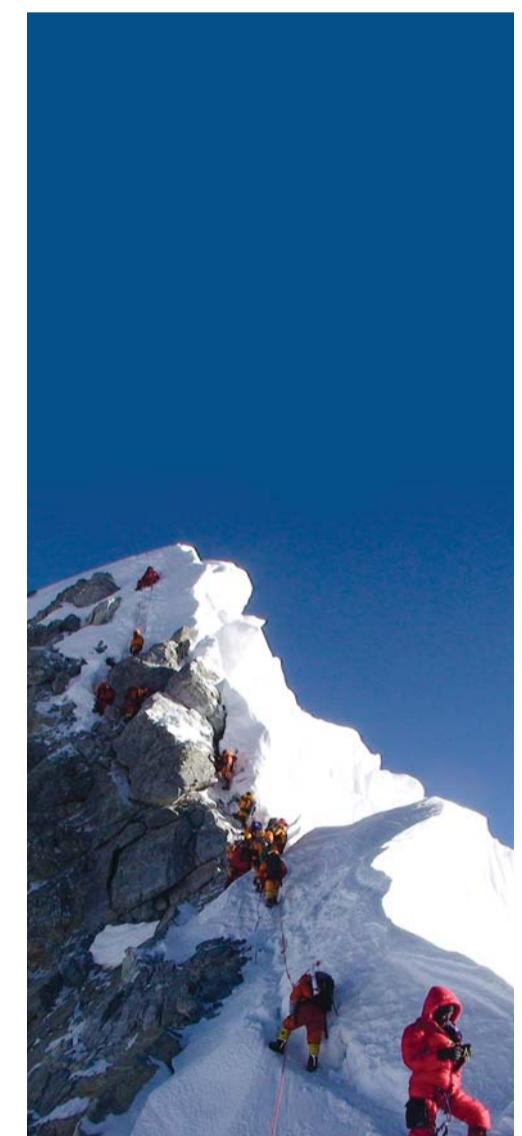
I need not have worried. What I did not know was that success was almost assured.

Why? Because people already trusted me. They remembered 15 years back to 2001 to a person who did what he said he would do. They forgave me some initial mistakes because they knew I would fix them.

When I needed an office I spoke with Dawa Steven at Asian Trekking about locating with them who said yes instantly. He explained that he had watched my company (every company is the man) grow. Dawa said basically I did "what it says on the box". I delivered, and he wanted to work with people like that.

That is what I mean by the 'long game'. I am sorry, but Nepal is not always a good player. Here it is '\$5 on Monday instead of investing and taking \$50 on Friday'.

Everest is a huge part of Nepal's economy, it is literally a license to print money. A permit now costs \$11,000 per person and climbers get nothing for this money other than their name on a piece of paper. Hope I am wrong, but I can predict that at this price the treasury will make less money than they did last year when it was \$10,000. The mountaineering community is still waiting for positive confirmation that the permits they paid for this year for expeditions that were cancelled due to the avalanche on 18 April will be honoured in future. 'Honour' is central to the long game.



What can Nepal do to play the long game so it is trusted and able to make money? In business speak we call it 'added value' - that what we can do to make a deal more attractive. The more difficult or uncomfortable something is the less likely we are to want to do it. Like standing in a visa queue for one hour and fifteen minutes with the wrong form or to be told when you get to the front of the queue that you are on the wrong queue. Then you can go and wait for two more hours for your luggage. Sorry, not a good start and your client has not even got to their hotel yet. You may not want to hear the feedback, but from the outside in that is how it is. ☑

Ted Atkins is a former RAF engineer and now partner and owner of four international companies. Outside In is his exclusive monthly column for Nepali Times on mountaineering and tourism.



The Hundred-Foot Journey

What would life be without a few guilty pleasures? Mine this week was *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, a film by the prolific Swedish director Lasse Hallström, who in the past has made the hugely enjoyable *Cider House Rules* (1999),



MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

Chocolat (2000), and my personal favourite *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011).

This year, with *The Hundred-Foot Journey* Hallström continues in the tradition of *Chocolat*, making a film about how the love of food can overcome many boundaries, in particular, the fear of the outsider.

Both films are set in charming little French villages that harbour suspicion against anyone who hasn't lived in the vicinity for generations.

In the case of *Chocolat* it is Juliette Binoche's character Vianne Rocher, a wandering chocolate maker with a magic touch, who is initially ostracised from the closed off community. In *The Hundred-Foot Journey* the stigma is much more troubling, for it is a Muslim family out of Mumbai, seeking asylum in Europe after their restaurant gets burnt down in a riot, that faces the startled, wary eyes of a seemingly idyllic town.

Papa Kadam (the wonderful Om Puri) is the head of a family of five amongst which one, Hassan (Manish Dayal), is one of the most talented cooks of his generation. Trained to cook traditional Indian recipes by his mother (played by

Juhi Chawla) who died in the fire, it is on his skills that the Kadam family confidently rests their hopes. When the brakes of their ancient van fail just next to the said French village, Papa Kadam decides to settle there, unilaterally making a decision on behalf of the family when he sees a "For Sale" sign in front of a charming but rundown restaurant.

Unfortunately, this restaurant is exactly a hundred feet away from "Le Saule Pleureur" ("The Weeping Willow") - a restaurant with one Michelin star (three stars signaling the zenith of culinary excellence) owned by the widowed Madame Mallory (the brilliant and feisty Helen Mirren) who has it in for the Kadam family the moment they step foot in the village.

As the Kadams open "Maison Mumbai" war breaks out between Papa Kadam and Madam Mallory as they fight over fresh produce, noise pollution, and even the vaccination of live poultry. The film's light-hearted moments are punctuated with real concerns over racism, and while some of these issues are glossed over, the makers' intentions and ethics are in the right place.

The film's real charm, though, rests in the chemistry between Om Puri and Helen Mirren, veterans of their field who have perfected the art of having a twinkle in their eye even while dealing with difficult material. You will fall in love with these crotchety characters; their sparring is what makes the film extraordinary. ☺

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■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



DEVAKI BISTA

ALL YOURS: Constitutional, Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee Chair Baburam Bhattarai presents the committee's report to CA Chair Subas Nembang on Friday.



DEVAKI BISTA

CATCH THEM: CIAA Chief Lokman Singh Karki and Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal at an International Anti-Corruption Day event on Tuesday.



KAMAL RAYAMJHI/RSS

SACRED TIES: Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Ranjit Rae poses for camera after planting a sapling of a bodhi tree at Mayadevi temple in Lumbini on Wednesday.



RSS

MY SAY: Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam speaks at a program organised by Nepal Police to mark CID Day on Wednesday.

Stunning paintings that demonstrate the vibrancy and artistic range of the Maithili tradition will be on pre-Christmas exhibition and sale at The Taragaon Museum at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The artists belong to the Janakpur Women's Development Centre (JWDC), a cooperative established in 1989 by Claire Burkett, an American artist and philanthropist.

JWDC has five production groups of women painting pictures, producing papier-mâché objects and mirrors, screen-printing, sewing and producing ceramics. The Centre offers local women in Janakpur an opportunity to be creative, and to earn an income, giving value to their work and to their own sense of achievement and worth.

The paintings and other objects are rooted in traditions which Maithili women have passed down through generations. Traditionally, Maithili women would paint designs of elephants and peacocks (signifying prosperity) and other animals on the mud walls of their houses during weddings and festivals. In the monsoon, the paintings fade or wash away. This ephemeral art is the basis of the artistic work of the women of the Centre today.

After the involvement of Claire Burkett and a grant from the Ella Lyman Cabot Trust, a talented group of women were selected to transfer their wall designs to paper. They came from their villages to the Centre where collectively, without losing their originality, developed skills in composition as well as in the use of colour and line.

After experimenting, the paints were rendered on Nepali handmade lokta paper



Maithili art on exhibit

which has the rough texture of mud walls. After trying pens and sticks, and experimenting with their own dyes and pigments mixed with milk, the women found that acrylic paint worked best on Nepali paper and could be used as spontaneously as the home-made dyes applied to house walls and decided on using brushes.

Both the form and medium known today as 'Janakpur painting' was created by JWDC. A strong core of women, most of them illiterate started working together to produce works of art to express their

individuality and shared common religious and cultural themes.

They loved coming to the Centre and working in a comfortable and supportive environment with other women of diverse social backgrounds, free from the constraints of the village and home. As they work they sing Maithili songs and tell tales of Hindu Gods and paint scenes from the Ramayana – notably the marriage of Ram and Sita which is celebrated annually in Janakpur.

Many women enjoy painting the Maithili tale of Anjur, in which a new bride is made to

do impossible tasks by her jealous sisters-in-law, and each time is helped by sympathetic birds or snakes. They often mix other images with Anjur's tale, and Gods appear in scenes of family planning. The women have also made paintings promoting Vitamin A, the right to vote, safe sex and saying no to drugs. This spontaneous mixing of themes is a reflection of the real world of Janakpur artists today.

Visitors are struck by the commitment of the women artists, and by the quality of the work they produce. However, sales are limited due to lack of advertising and distance from more lucrative markets in Kathmandu and abroad. Competition from others imitating their work is also undermining their income.

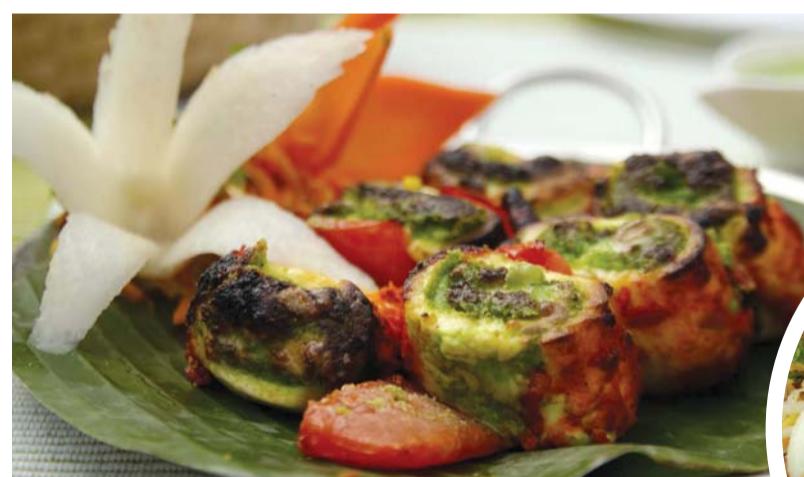
The pre-Christmas exhibition at The Tara Gaon Museum is sponsored by Crisis Recovery International (CRI) which helps poor women establish viable and sustainable income generating projects in Nepal and elsewhere.

David Seddon in Janakpur

Maithili Art Exhibition
The Taragaon Museum
12 to 23 December
10AM to 6PM
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Boudha
(01)449 1234

nepalitimes.com
Watch their youtube presentation

Aalishan



(both of which do not feature on the current menu but will be introduced in the restaurant's new menu to be launched from new year).

Both the grilled dishes induced mouth watering sensations at the table on arrival and thankfully, the flavours fared as well as its presentation. The Lahori Kebab is chicken meat shaped as egg and stuffed with real yolk and cheese. When dipped into the mint sauce,



PICS: ELAINE WANG YIWEI

and eaten with an onion circle, the flavours just burst in your mouth. The charcoaled taste of the meat and the freshness of the mint complement each other so perfectly, it took all our will to resist from ordering another plate. The Saudi Kebab is minced vegetable wrapped in cheese. This one has a smooth taste which is equally delicious.



For our mains we ordered Chicken Chettinad (Rs 425), Daal Makhani (Rs 275) with tandoori roti (Rs 75) and Sotiyani Biryani (Rs 525).

If you like spicy food, Chicken Chettinad is for you. The chicken

cooked with black peppercorns, curry leaves, and red chilli, in a curry style has a strong flavour, tastes like India if you will excuse the cliché.

Aalishan's Daal Makhani has a nice, creamy texture, which many of the other restaurants lack. It is perfect for those who like Indian, but cannot handle spicy curries.

The Sotiyani Biryani smelled absolutely divine and tasted all the more better. Aalishan is generous with their portions and it was no different for biryani, a mountain of rice and not the spatula patted flat bed of rice presented as biryani here. Although visitors may find the place a bit expensive as compared to other Indian establishments that dot the capital, forking out extra hundred rupees is worth the quality of the food and service. Bring your family, friends and enjoy a hearty meal of some of the best Indian food in town.

Claire Li Yingxue
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Superbugs

In a hospital the death of a patient is usually accounted to the severity of a disease. Even for a clinician who has been practicing for years, the concept



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

of a "superbug" causing life-threatening problems is sometimes hard to comprehend.

However, the emergence of superbugs- antibiotic resistance organisms- that are holding their ground against the usual antibiotics is now a reality in South Asia. The antibiotics have remained the same and the bugs have found ways to evade

even the strongest of them. In fact many of our intensive care units are using what are termed 'last resort' antibiotics such as carbapenems and polymixin to treat patients.

Many of us including doctors believe that pharmaceutical companies will continue to research and produce antibiotics that will effectively take care of even the most dangerous infections. But the reality is that most pharmaceutical companies are spending their money in researching drugs for chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease and cancer and the investments in antibiotics are at an all time low.

Recent news stories and editorials in the western media have made it increasingly clear that South Asia is a prime area for superbugs to thrive in. Easily



obtained over-the-counter antibiotics, overcrowding, lack of toilets and untreated sewage lead to infection and usage of antibiotics. Recent studies have also shed light on how mothers may be acting as carriers in transmitting these superbugs to their children. In this sense newborn babies with weak immune systems are especially vulnerable.

A study conducted in New Delhi showed that widespread use of antibiotics in chicken feed resulted in antibiotic residue in chicken products. These residual antibiotics found in animal products when consumed, may lead to antibiotic resistance in humans. A similar study is now being conducted in Nepal by motivated veterinarians and there is every chance that chickens in

our country have just as much antibiotic residue as in India.

Many developed countries now have laws to curb the practice of adding antibiotics to animal feed to avoid antibiotic resistance in people. Indiscriminate, sub therapeutic use of antibiotics for animal growth promotion must be stopped by governments. If India takes the lead in this venture, it will probably be easier for smaller countries in the sub-continent like Nepal to follow suit, because its pharmaceutical commerce is closely linked with India.

Antibiotics are often termed as 'miracle drugs' and are perhaps the most important discovery that changed human lives. In many parts of the world (including ours) many patients continue to die due to lack of proper access to these life-saving drugs. But it is the ubiquitous infections due to poor sanitation and often unnecessary and overuse of antibiotics that are enabling these superbugs to be a killer amongst us. ☺

GIZMO by YANTRICK

The perfect mix

Samsung is well-known for its smartphones and tablets, but the Korean company is also a producer of digital and DSLR cameras. But, it has yet to make its presence felt in this particular market.

Its NX series however has been more successful than others owing to affordable prices and easy-to-use features.

After launching NX20 in 2012, Samsung released the NX30 in February this year. Bigger than its predecessor and boasting more powerful lenses, this mirror-less camera looks more like a DSLR. It also weighs slightly more (only 375g without the lens) but still, its ergonomic shape makes it much handier



compared to other DSLR cameras.

Because the image quality is in the same league as other new generation cameras of the same range, NX30 has to be evaluated upon its functions and options.

The camera menu is simple and important settings such as Exposure Value (EV) or aperture are laid out logically. As with many of the new DSLR and mirror-less cameras, the NX30 has a touch screen which makes the navigation and fixing settings a lot quicker. The flip-out screen makes it perfect for shooting videos in different angles. Surprisingly, the viewfinder is also extendable, but this is not much of a use.

Even with its high ISO (up to 25,600), the newborn of the NX series is average in low light. It shows just a bit of noise though. NX30 has a rapid frame rate of 9 fps which is ideal for shooting sports.

The most notable feature of the NX30 is its auto exposure lock (AEL) that captures the

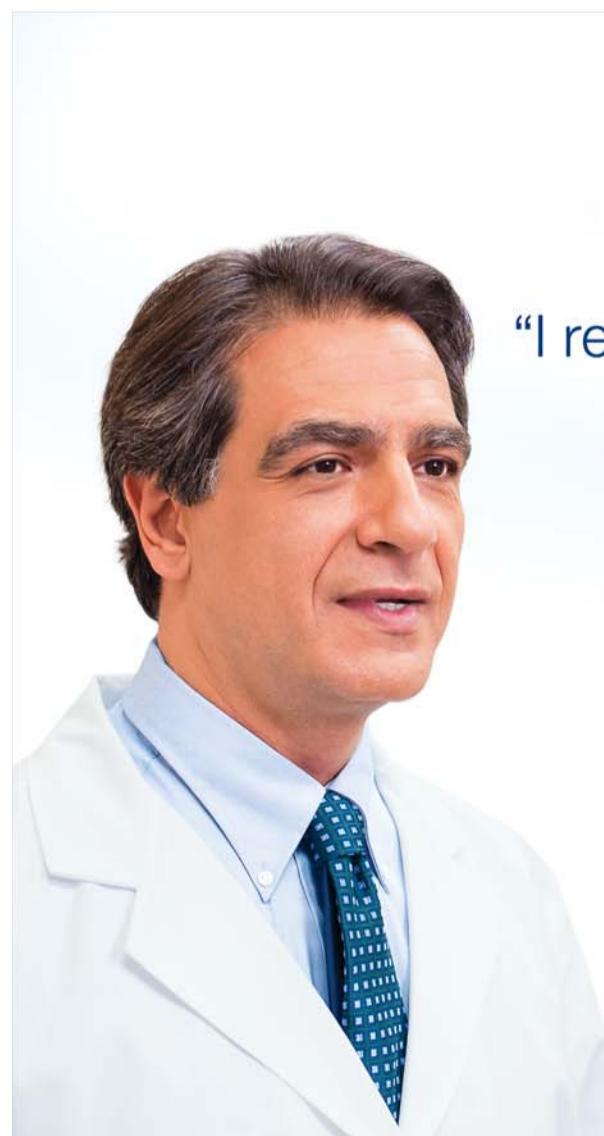
background of landscapes or silhouette in their actual colour.

The Wi-Fi connection in the camera makes it easy to share the pictures on a computer. They can even be sent via email (limited to seven pictures per sending). The Micro HDMI port of NX30 enables streaming of full HD videos on large-screen monitors.

The weak point of the camera is its battery life. NX30 hardly resists three hundred shots when the battery is fully charged. Also, Samsung has developed its own format of RAW which is the SRW extension. It was a real struggle looking for a software that could convert SRW pictures to JPEG – even the Samsung RAW Converter 4 did not work.

NX30 is priced at Rs 109,990. ☺

Yantrick's Verdict: NX30 is a good prosumer camera and will interest photographers looking to let go of their compacts for a more sophisticated camera.

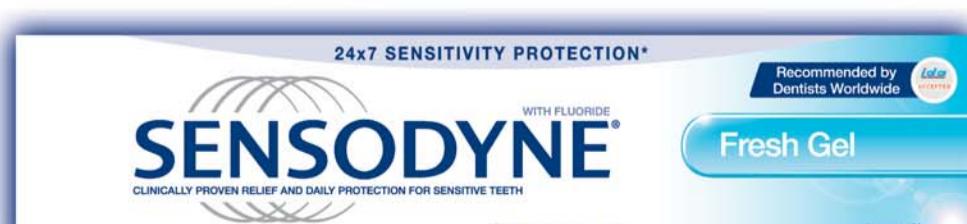


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Revisiting peacekeeping

LYNDAL ROWLANDS

Finding ways to better integrate the two arms of U.N. Peace Operations – Special Political Missions and Peacekeeping Operations – will be one of the priorities for a new review panel headed by Nobel Peace Laureate and former president of Timor-Leste José Ramos-Horta.

The review panel will look at how combined U.N. Peace Operations can respond to demands from the international community for increased responsiveness and effectiveness.

In light of recent reports of incomplete or untruthful reporting from U.N. Peace Operations, such as the investigation into an alleged mass rape in Tabit, Sudan, another pressing issue for the panel will be transparency and accountability.

In an interview with *IPS*, Ramos-Horta explained that the review was not a fact-finding mission but that serious events that happen on the ground “illustrate the need for serious thinking and changes, in the whole of the peacekeeping and political missions.”

“The U.N. cannot be seen to shy away from reporting to the powers that be what happens on the ground. Because in not doing so we add to impunity,” he said.

The 14-member Panel on Peace Operations was announced

on 31 October by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and quickly drew criticism for only having three female panel members. An additional three female panel members were later included.

The low representation of women on the panel was considered incongruous with the U.N.’s public talk about greater participation from women in its peacebuilding activities.

Ramos-Horta told *IPS* last week “it is acknowledged that there is significant discrepancy, and as I understand there are well-placed, well-argued criticisms in regard to this imbalance.”

Ramos-Horta said that utmost in the thinking of the panel will be the protection of women and children and the role of women in dialogue and peace agreements.

One of the new panel members is Radhika Coomaraswamy, a former Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

Ramos-Horta told *IPS* that the panel will work closely with U.N. Women and will listen to civil society and representative women’s groups more so in regions where they suffer the brunt of conflicts.

That the panel is also missing members from countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Sudan, where seemingly intractable conflicts have caused significant challenges for U.N. Peacekeeping in recent years, is another area for concern.

Consultation with

representatives from countries at the receiving end of peace operations could help to identify new ways to control these conflicts that in some cases seem out of control.

Ramos-Horta said that one of the reasons that difficult conflicts have continued is in part due to a lack of local leadership and cooperation from local governments. For this reason, more consultation with representatives from these countries may be strategically wise.

But it is likely the panel will feel that it is more pressed to focus on consulting with the governments of major troop and fund contributing countries, as well as the African Union and the NATO as the two other sources of multilateral peacekeepers.

During the interview, Ramos-Horta also discussed the absence of a standing army or training camp for U.N. peacekeepers that would be ready to respond when

crises erupt.

Ramos-Horta said that his own country of Timor-Leste had to turn to bilateral support in 2006, because the U.N. was unable to provide immediate assistance when violence re-ignited.

However, although a standing army may be able to bring conflicts under control faster through a faster response time, it would undoubtedly also provide new challenges in terms of financing.

Although one role of the panel will be to review peace operations in light of the changing nature of conflict, Ramos-Horta had a measured view of modern conflict.

He said it was important not to forget the horrors of past wars, such as the killing fields of Cambodia or the Iran-Iraq War.

Indeed, notwithstanding the complexity and severity of contemporary conflicts such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria, the average number

of people killed by war each year has decreased since the end of the Cold War.

Over this same period, the scale of U.N. Peace Operations has increased.

Ramos-Horta said that there are now greater expectations on the international community to act quickly in response to conflict.

“Civil society has more access to information and demand action from governments, that’s why you see today much greater demand and pressure on the international community to act,” he said.

One way of making Peace Operations more efficient is to also look at conflict prevention measures.

To this end, Ramos-Horta said that one of the aims of the review will be to look at how to better finance the Special Political Missions, the arm of U.N. Peace Operations that aims to reduce the need for peacekeepers by stemming conflicts at their source.

Currently the funding available to Special Political Missions, of which there are currently 11 worldwide, is limited.

While peacekeeping has its own separate, ballooning, budget that currently stands at seven billion dollars for the 2014-15 financial year, the secretary general has to find funds for the Special Political Missions from the already cash-strapped U.N. General Budget.

At the end of the day, the limited financial capacity of the U.N. to do the work the international community expects of it may be the greatest priority for the panel, despite the other practical considerations it will have to make. 

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NEEDED: POLITICAL WILL



Plans are afoot to modernise and streamline Kathmandu's disorderly urban transportation system



PICS: ELAINE WANG YIWEI

ELVIN L SHRESTHA

The SAARC Summit may have been an opportunity to spruce up Kathmandu's urban transportation system, but we missed the bus on that one.

Not only did the capital grind to a halt for four days, but after the Summit, roads newly paved at enormous expense did little to prevent the return of massive traffic jams. It showed that micro-buses and small three-wheelers cannot address the mass transit needs of a city of 2.5 million people anymore.

"The present public transport is inadequate and inappropriate for the size of the city," says Dhruba Raj Regmi, a consultant with the Kathmandu Sustainable

Urban Transport Project supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "We are working on restructuring bus routes with terminals, to make them more reliable and improve the service."

Unreliable and congested vehicles have forced commuters to rely on two-wheelers and cars which in turn exacerbate the traffic crisis, increasing pollution, and adding to the country's fuel bill.

Transit experts say Kathmandu needs to at least double its existing public transport capacity to meet the demand of a rising population. The road-widening campaign started by Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai in 2012 unblocked the city's main arteries, but experts say it is not a sustainable solution.

"It was a good start, but had it been

Rescuing Kathmandu

KUNDA DIXIT

"An advanced city is not where the poor use cars, it's where even the rich move around in public buses"

The former mayor of the Colombian capital Enrique Penalosa looked around Kathmandu on a recent trip, and saw many of the same problems of haphazard urbanisation that he tried to solve in Bogotá ten years ago.

Nepal's urban population will triple in the next 30 years, requiring five times more space for housing, roads and workplaces. The number of vehicles on the roads in Kathmandu will grow even faster. Where will they all fit?

Penalosa, who is now an urban transport consultant, pointed to the unplanned growth around New Baneshwor without proper roads and parks, and warned: "In ten years this will be much more congested, it will be utter chaos."

Yet, he said, it is still not too late for Kathmandu. "Nepal's advantage is late urbanisation, you have to dare to be

different."

At a recent talk to Nepal's urban planners, road engineers and transportation officials Penalosa said Nepal's advantage ironically was that it was poor, which meant it hasn't had the money to make irreversible mistakes.

"By the time I became mayor of Bogotá, it was already too late to save the city," said the former mayor who lost the 2007 election for a second term because he had stepped on the toes of too many vested interest groups opposing his emphasis on public transport.

The main challenge for Kathmandu is to plan for a city of 10 million in 30 years so that everyone benefits. The free market does not work in real estate because greed takes precedence over urban planning. A strong municipality needs to implement the concept of eminent domain to buy space for

systematic expansion.

"It's not a technical problem, it is a political one," explained Penalosa, "you have to take an ideological decision about whether you want to be Amsterdam or Houston. Are you going to build a city for cars or for people?"

In a democratic city, the sidewalk is a more important part of transport infrastructure than roads, efficient public transport is more important than cars. Parks are more important than parking lots.

"An advanced city is not a place where the poor move about in cars, rather it's where even the rich use public transportation," is one of Penalosa's famous sound bites. Another one: "A bus with 100 people has the same right as 100 cars, so a bus stuck in a traffic jam is unjust."

As mayor, Penalosa revamped Bogotá's public transport by bringing 35,000 private

FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

planned with a public transportation system in mind it would have been more effective," explained Regmi.

Kathmandu sees 3.4 million person/trips a day, nearly half the people commute on foot, there are 5,300 public transport vehicles owned by 1,000 private operators plying on 200 routes. These disparate and uncoordinated services need to be streamlined for which there needs to be the political will and the managerial capacity to run an efficient public transport utility.

"Assisting in building urban infrastructure and amenities remains one of the top priority areas of ADB's assistance strategy for Nepal," says the ADB's representative in Nepal, Kenichi Yokoyama. "How well urban development is planned and implemented will have critical implications as to how fast the economy can grow while making people happy about their living environment."

The ADB project hopes to revamp public transport in Kathmandu with new infrastructure, traffic management, pedestrian-friendly roads and air quality monitoring.

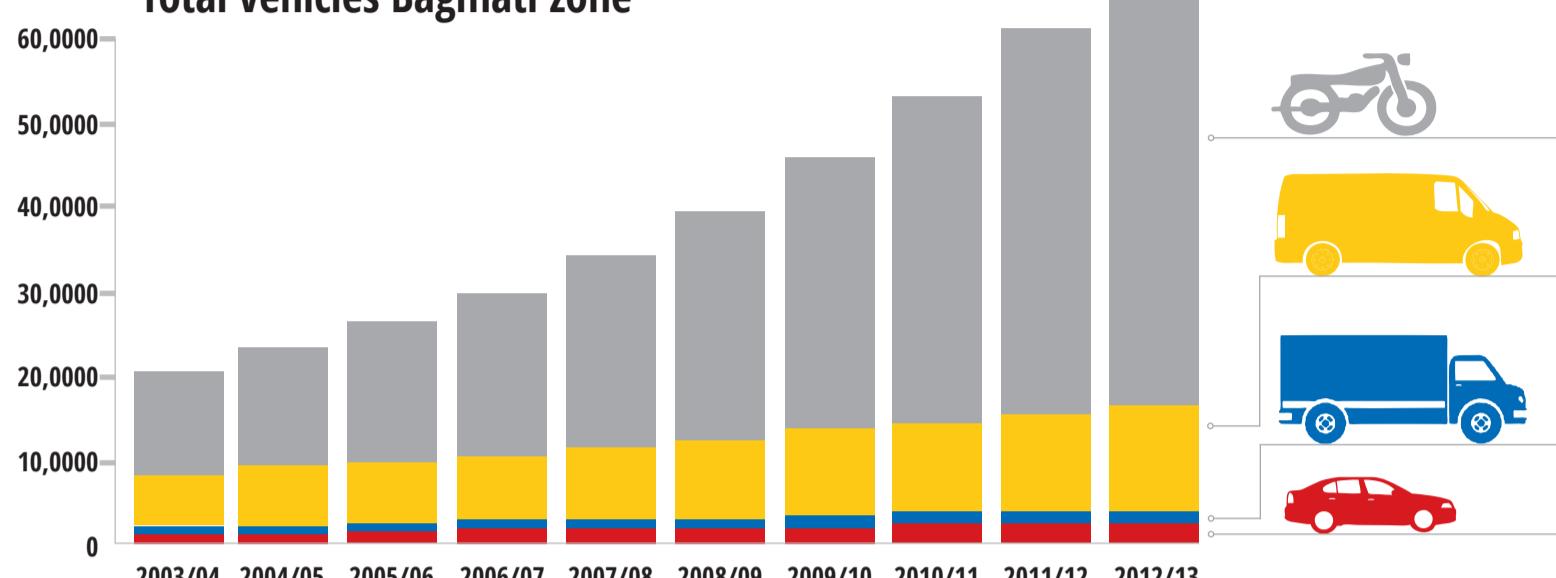
"Restructuring existing bus routes is one of the main objectives of the project," says Regmi, "we plan to have eight primary, 16 secondary and 42 tertiary routes so that no part of the city will be more than 600m from a bus stop."

The plan is to assign large, 12-m buses on the arterial routes, smaller buses in the secondary routes which will be connected by the tertiary feeder routes (*see map*). The project plans to deploy battery-powered buses on a pilot route from Gwarko via Mangal Bajar to Balkhu with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The project also plans to improve traffic management at 32 junctions and other traffic bottlenecks, refine 15 km of sidewalks to improve the walking environment and monitor air pollution levels.

One of the biggest hurdles for the ADB project will not be technical, but a managerial and political one to consolidate current operators into one urban transport cooperative in which the present owners will have shares. Regmi admits that this will be a challenge, but

Total vehicles Bagmati zone



says other cities like Bogota (*see adjoining report*) have done it. "Major decisions like routes, time shifts and pricing can then be more regulated, drivers and conductors can be paid a fair wage and commuters will benefit," Regmi says.

Says Yokoyama: "The project implementation has recently picked up, we hope that this will contribute to building a strong consensus on the vision

and concrete blueprint for the future Kathmandu."

The recent revival of Sajha Yatayat has shown that this can be done if there is the political will. Sajha's network can be upgraded with a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, a bus-based public transport system that assigns large capacity vehicles on designated routes and priority lanes. Its costs are significantly less than those

of underground metro networks, and experience from Jakarta, Ahmedabad and Curitiba in Brazil are proof that this works.

An underground metro system would be ideal, but they are prohibitively expensive to build, operate and maintain. Says Regmi: "For now, a BRT is the best option. We blame our predecessors for bad planning, but let's not forget that we may be blamed after 30 years for doing nothing."

Proposed Primary Bus Route Network

- Interchange
- Terminal
- Bus stop



from its future



PEDALING TO POWER: Enrique Penalosa on a bicycle in a stretch of the 300 km of bicycle lanes he built in the Colombian capital when he was mayor.

bus owners into a new company that operated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) called TransMilenio in exclusive lanes that today moves nearly 2 million passengers a day.

"For a city like Kathmandu BRT is not the best solution, it is the only solution," Penalosa said, adding that wider roads and more parking space do not solve traffic problems. The idea should be to restrict parking and provide public transport. "Parking is not a constitution right," said Penalosa, "who says someone in a car has more right to road space?"

The Kathmandu office of the Asian Development Bank, which organised Penalosa's meeting with city planners, is assisting the Kathmandu Sustainable Urban

Transport project with a \$10 million grant to develop an efficient public transport system and roads with pedestrian space that preserve heritage values.

Said the ADB's Kenichi Yokoyama: "With the limited space Kathmandu has, relying on private vehicles is not practical, desirable, or sustainable."

Penalosa is also an avid promoter of bicycles, and turned parts of Bogotá into a pedestrian and pedal paradise with his Cicloruta concept of a 300km network of bicycle highways. He said: "A healthy city is where a child can ride around safely in a bicycle."

Dekendra's murderers sentenced

himalkhabar.com, 7 December

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

The Dailekh District Court on Sunday sentenced five accused of the torture and murder of journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa in 2004 for periods between one-and-a-half and two years in a landmark case that could set a precedent for other war-era crimes.

Forensic examination of Thapa's body showed he had been buried alive, and the prosecution had demanded life sentences. Two of those sentenced today will be released since they have already spent their terms in detention.

Human rights activists were apalled that the sentence was so light, and said it was disproportionate to the seriousness of the crime. They had lobbied for the case to be tried after the Maoist prime minister Baburam Bhattarai ordered police in 2012 to discontinue investigation into the case.

Among those sentenced for two years were Nirak Bahadur Gharti, Harilal Pun and Jaya Bahadur Shahi. In addition Lakshiram Gharti Magar and Bir Bahadur KC got one-and-a-half and one year respectively. Four other accused, Bam Bahadur Khadka, Keshab Khadka, Bam Bahadur ("Mukti") Khadka and Bhaktiram Lamichane, are still at large.

In June 2004, the Maoists blocked the pipe that brought water to the district capital, and Dekendra Thapa and other journalists walked to the Maoist-controlled area to try to persuade them to open it. Instead, they were kidnapped by the rebels, and while the others were released, Dekendra was detained.

A month later, eyewitness reports started coming in about the Maoists torturing him by hanging him upside down and beating him until he died. The Maoists put up posters claiming responsibility for killing him. Dekendra's wife Laxmi lobbied hard and got forensic experts to find and exhume his body after the conflict ended in 2006. When they found the body, his mouth was wide open, his left leg and right elbow were broken. He had been buried alive.

Fast forward to 2012: police inspector Binod Sharma had kept the investigation open and finally arrested four of those accused of Dekendra's torture and murder. One of them was Lachhiram Gharti, who confessed to the torture and asked to be detained because he was wracked by guilt.

By this time, Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai had become prime minister in Kathmandu, and got his



handpicked Attorney General Mukti Pradhan to call off the investigation. Prosecuting the guilty would have set a precedent for the investigation of other war crimes. Senior Maoists leaders are implicated in other cases, including the torture and murder of Krishna Adhikari, whose father Nanda Prasad Adhikari died in September demanding justice for his son.

Back in Dailekh, key witnesses in the prosecution of Dekendra's killers had all retracted their testimonies one by one. Chandra Bahadur Gharti had told investigators that on 11 August 2004, he and Man Bahadur Sunparai heard screaming at the Nepal Rastriya Primary School and went to find out what was happening. "We saw Lachhiram Gharti and eight others beating journalist Dekendra Thapa with sticks. When Dekendra couldn't speak anymore, we saw them drag him to Lachhiram's house," reads Gharti's testimony.

However, Chandra Bahadur later made the following deposition at the District Court: "I was away working in India when the event happened, and returned only four or five months later. I don't know who killed Dekendra, where or how." Another witness, Amrita Sunakharai, had told the same investigator: "A Maoist named Bam Bahadur Khadka alias Mukti, Lachhiram and others had kidnapped journalist Dekendra Thapa and kept him in our house. After questioning, they took him towards Dwari, and I later heard that they killed and buried him." But Sunakharai withdrew her statement and told the court recently: "I don't know Dekendra Raj Thapa, I don't know where, when and how his death occurred. I don't know if the accused killed him, the accused should not be punished."

Other government witnesses, including Jamuna Thapa, Sashiram Gharti, Man Bahadur Sutparai and Devi Lal Gharti had also withdrawn statements, considerably weakening the case against the accused.

Prakash Adhikari, a Dailekh based journalist who covered the investigation for the past 10 years, says: "Maoist leaders had gathered all the witnesses from Naumule, Dwari and Baluwatar in a hotel in the district capital, forcing the accused to retract their statements."

Lawyer Basanta Gautam, who has been representing Dekendra, also confirms that witnesses withdrew the case because of threats. Lawyer Govinda Bandi says the reason witnesses have retracted their testimonies after threats is because of the lack of witness protection laws.



Rs 6.3 billion extortion

Bikash Thapa in *Annapurna Post*, 5 December

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

The main political parties in Sindhupalchok have, through their local leaders, asked for Rs 6.3 billion worth of shares for free from Upper Bhote Kosi Hydropower Project whose main investors are Nepalis. In order to force the project to agree to gift them the shares, the parties have obstructed the repairs of

four transmission pylons of the 45MW Bhote Kosi plant that were destroyed in the Jure landslide in August.

The parties are demanding 35 per cent share in the new project which would be worth Rs 7 billion in the share market, but for which the company gets only Rs 700 million at Rs 100 per share. Bhote Kosi Hydropower CEO Narendra Prajapati said: "We are willing to give 5 per cent to the locals but

they want to get rich overnight by buying shares worth Rs 7 billion at Rs 700 million."

Since electricity could not be generated for 144 days since the landslide, the project has already suffered a loss of Rs 1.2 billion. FNCCI Chairman Pradeep Pandey says that the complete shutdown of the hydropower plant by the locals has portrayed Nepal as an investment unfriendly destination to potential foreign investors. He says that the hydropower should be allowed to function uninterrupted in accordance to the agreements made with the government in the past. Consumers are having to face additional one and half hours of load shedding due to the delays in repairing the pylons.

President of the UCPN (Maoist) for Sindhupalchok, Madhav Sapkota, claims that locals are protesting for their fair share of a local natural resource.

The Ministry of Energy has chosen to stay away from this debacle, citing it as a political matter. Secretary at the Ministry of Energy Rajendra Kishore Kshetri says he is not in a position to intervene on this matter, as members of the legislature parliament are also involved in the agitation.



Syndicate

नागरिक

Dewen in *Nagarik*, 11 December

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"The 'Big Fish' involved in corruption will be punished in appropriate time."

CIAA Chief Commissioner Lokman Singh Karki at an Anti-corruption event, *pahilopost.com*, 9 December

Nepalis helping Nepalis

Dambar Krishna Shrestha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 7-13 December

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Young Nepalis in UK have got together to assist older migrants who do not speak English with official paperwork, and to overcome culture-shock. The group, calling itself Helping You, brings together elderly Gurkha veterans whose children haven't yet been able to join them to help with the challenges of living in Britain. Many of the couples are lonely, and crave for Nepali-speaking company which is why Helping You takes them on walks in the countryside every Sunday and organises picnics and get-togethers.

Helping You started with 11 young Nepalis seven months ago, and has now grown to 500 members all over UK. One of the founders, 21-year-old Lekhraj Limbu, says: "Many Nepalis can't seem to rise above their ethnic or caste groups even here in UK, we are trying to transcend that and address the common problems that all Nepalis face."

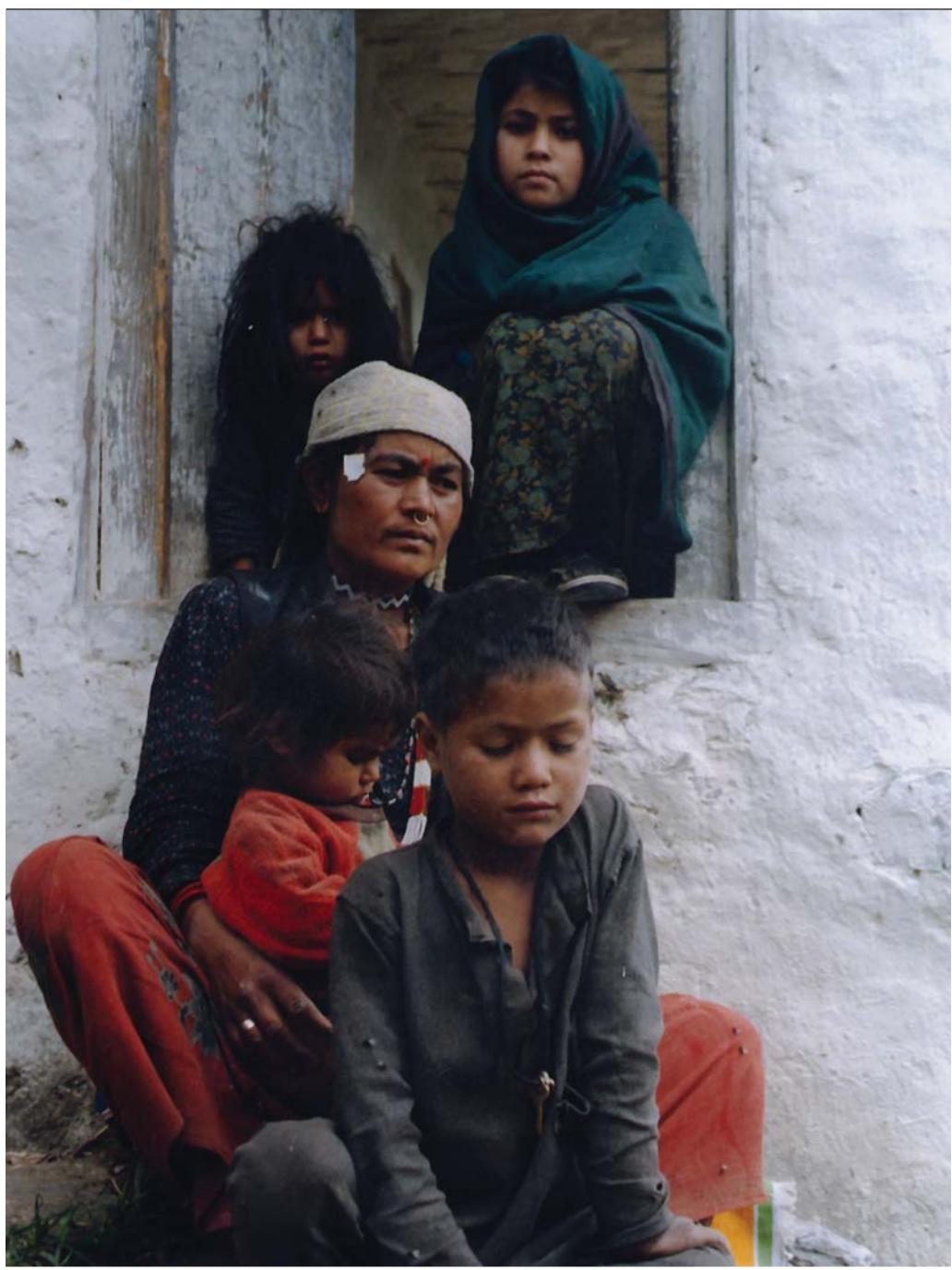


CAN I HELP YOU? Puja Pun (right) is among 500 Nepalis who give up their Sundays assisting other Nepali migrants adjust to life in Britain.

The need is growing as more and more retirees from the British Army arrive in Britain, some of them veterans of the Falklands conflict, and even the Borneo and Malaya campaigns. Many have difficulty negotiating the National Health Service bureaucracy in hospitals, and in the markets to buy everyday needs.

Helping You has as its motto 'show by doing, not talking', and is also trying to inculcate a sense of responsibility among Nepali youth, some of whom have got into drugs and crime by helping in fundraising drives for distributing warm clothes for Nepalis back home.

Meruna Magar, 20, is studying sociology in college but finds time on Sundays to help out. "Being part of Helping You gives me a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that I don't get elsewhere," Magar told us. Sunita Ale is an anthropology student and Nilima Thapa chairman of the youth wing of the Gurkha Welfare Society, both say Helping You is an outlet for young Nepalis to feel responsible to their motherland.



MOHAN MAINALI

MOHAN MAINALI

I don't know Roshan Rai, who lives in London, and neither does he know me. Still, he sent me a Facebook message a few years ago asking if I was the Mohan Mainali who had taken pictures of Sani and Kamanmaya Praja of Jogimara and made a documentary about them. I said I was, and he got to include pictures of Sani and Kamanmaya in his website, 'Ayo Gorkhali'.

The reason he was interested in the story was because his father, retired British Gurkha officer Mani Prasad Rai and his Welsh friend Martin Powell, had been helping conflict survivors in Jogimara after seeing my photographs in *Himal Khabarpatrika* and *Nepali Times* in February 2002.

Many other Nepalis living abroad and international organisations based in Nepal also chipped in to help. My documentary, *The Living of Jogimara* produced by the

Centre for Investigative Journalism was also one of the outcomes.

In November 2001, 20 construction workers from Jogimara of Dhading district were working on an airport in Kotbada of Kalikot, 400 km away in western Nepal. Seventeen of them were among the 36 killed by the army who mistook them for Maoist guerrillas involved in the attack on Mangalsen. Sani and Kamanmaya were 17 and with babies when they were widowed.

Many of us in the media and documentary film-makers are disheartened when no one notices our coverage. We are encouraged when there is impact. *The Living of Jogimara* was shown in many places, and everywhere that it was screened, audiences were emotionally moved. I used to be glad that the film could get the story of the grief of the survivors across. But after every screening there would inevitably be one question that forced me to



WIDOWS AT 17: The husbands of Kamanmaya and Sani Praja (above) from Jogimara were among 36 construction workers killed in Kalikot district in 2002. Five years later, aged 22, Sani Praja looks much older than her age. Pune (in front, left) with his family after his father was among eight people killed by the Army in Bajura in 2004.

ponder about the nature of my work: "So, you made a film about the survivors, but how do you plan to help them?" Meaning, a documentary-maker's work doesn't stop with the film production, it is also their responsibility to help those affected.

Which is why it made me very happy to hear about individuals on the other side of the world who have been so affected by the documentary that they have reached out to help the survivors of Jogimara. Roshan Rai has kept in touch, and his latest message

was, 'My father has delivered the last consignment of help to Jogimara, and Martin plans to continue helping the school there.'

My next documentary, *Pune's Trousers* was about the attack by the Army on a house in Pandusen of Bajura district. Pune's father and seven other villagers were killed by soldiers on patrol in 2004. I was in Bajura to report on the food shortage there, and it was completely by chance that I arrived in Pandusen a few hours after the incident.

After his father was killed, Pune lived with his mother, two elder brothers and three sisters. But Pune's brother Prem dropped out of school to earn money for the family. He was trying to borrow Rs 130

for Pune's school fee when I met him a few years later. Pune had patched his torn trousers in many places, but when it couldn't be repaired anymore he stopped going to school. His family couldn't afford to buy him another pair of trousers. Pune's other brother Mana worked in a canteen and saved up food every day to take home for his siblings. Unable to bear the hardship any longer, he committed suicide. He was just 20.

In one of my visits, Pune's mother had told me: "You just take pictures of us, and show the world how we live. You tell us to educate our children. Is that all? Don't you also have to help us send the children to school?" I heard later she married again, and the children had to take care of themselves.

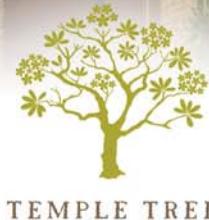
It wasn't just Pune, the children of all the eight people killed that day in Pandusen needed help with education. Some organisations wanted to help, but needed documents to prove that the men were killed. There was no such evidence available during the conflict.

Since then, I have often asked myself that if I can't help people like Mana and Pune, what is the point in doing stories or making documentaries about them? Is the job of a journalist only to write for the sake of writing, or is it also to reform society, and trigger an impact?"

It would have been enough if my story had helped stop Mana from killing himself. But even that was too much to ask for. ☑

nepalitimes.com

- Unfriendly fire, #106
- Vanished without trace, #415
- "I weep at night", #364
- Watch documentary, Jogimara ka Jhundaharu



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Botox in the buttocks

I wish us Asses were as concerned about maintaining our youthful good looks as human beings are. The quest for human perfection is as old as humanity itself. Ever since early cave-dwelling, mastodon-munching humans discovered that squeezing prehistoric blackheads was not just a delightful way for time pass under the winter sun, but also resulted in a glowing and unblemished skin tone, mankind has shown that as a species it likes to keep itself well-groomed.

And thank god for that. If humans of the male persuasion did not care about outward appearances, the advertising industry would not be able to flog facial creams for he-men and us in the media would go belly up. Which means men would still be wild, armpit-reeking hunter-gatherers, clad only in antelope hide Y-front undies, moving in large herds from home to orifice and back every day.



This is why, fast-forwarding to the present day, we are all excited about the fact that after its roaring success in the People's Republic of China, the 100% Natural Botanical Bust Enhancement System is being introduced in Nepal for the first time to address the concerns of mammary-challenged commuters of voting age and above on whom gravity is taking its toll.

(We'll be right back after these messages: "Sag No More! Call us for a free trial. No Pills. No Surgery. No Injections. No Side-effects. Seeing is Believing.") There are already hundreds of happy customers, and we recently interviewed one of them for this program: "I was always dissatisfied with my chest, but after I tried 100% Botanical Bust Enhancement, I got great boobs. Even my wife thinks I look like Sylvester Stallone."

And that is not all, the beauty industry is now aiming

below the belt. A drug that was developed to reduce muscle spasms has been found to have anti-cellulite properties, and has just been given approval by Nepal's Federal Hard Drugs Administration. (Advertisorial: "Inject Botox onto your buttocks and get rid of ugly wrinkles fast.") Elsewhere in this post-SAARC metropolis of ours, septuagenarian politicians got useful tips from President Rajapaksa and are all lining up for a nip and a tuck to augment their public persona.

So, you see, our leaders don't have to wait anymore for evolution to give them a body they are proud to call their own. They don't have to wait a million years to mutate into Alpha Males. With the new technologies at our disposal, we can take destiny into our own hands and metamorphose into anyone we would like to be.

Which brings us to some of the plastic surgery options now available in Nepal for indecisive decision-makers who want a total remake of their physical infrastructure:

■ **Keep Up With the Arms Race.** Two hands are not enough to efficiently carry out underhand deals. Install two extra arms to your thorax region so that you can rake kickbacks in faster, since the government might change so time is of the essence. Extra fingers and greasy palms optional.

■ **Tummy Augmentation.** Tired of being kicked around by people who think you have integrity? Add bulk and fullness to your frame with a special Size 40 Silicon Tyre Implant in your abdomen. Be the envy of your peers, let your belly spill out of your belt. Give yourself that Prosperous Civil Servant Silhouette that is essential to be taken seriously, rise up the bureaucracy and perhaps even be inducted into the CIAA.

■ **Give yourself teeth.** With inflation, it is important to protect the value of your ill-gotten wealth. Invest in gold teeth, visit your friendly neighbourhood dentist today before the CIAA announces a ceiling on the number of gold-plated teeth an average household is allowed to possess: 26, of which 6 incisors, 4 canines, 6 pre-molars and 10 molars. We don't yet know whether the Maoists have invested in gold teeth, but the RPP-N definitely wants its crown back.

■ **Brain Enlargement.** With new laser surgery it is now possible to expand the average cranium and graft brain tissue implants from donors. Money back guarantee if you aren't visibly smarter in 30 days, and free blackhead removal for all public officials availing of this promo.



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