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of eight Nepali guides were busy fixing ropes and ladders on a new, hopefully safer route up the Khumbu Icefall as heavy unseasonal snowfall engulfed Mt Everest this week (*pic, above*). More than 300 climbers are waiting at Base Camp for the route to be ready and the weather to clear.

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THE 2072 CONSTITUTION

Even for their own self-interest and self-respect, top politicians would do well to end this farce

With the Nepali new year comes new hope that there may finally be some progress on finishing the pending business of writing a new constitution. The public is fed up, and if their opinion still matters, the politicians will do something about it.

We don't want to say that the political parties should finish writing the constitution during 2072, because they may take that to mean they have another year to do it. Nepal's rulers must realise that a political transition cannot go on forever, and even for their own self-interest and self-respect they should now end this farce and allow the country to move ahead.

That will happen when Nepal gets a democratic constitution that doesn't exclude any citizen. Every Nepali must be guaranteed equal access and say in every state institution. It is hard to imagine who would be against that, so it's just a disagreement of how we are going to get there.

The main agenda of the April 2006 pro-democracy movement was peace and development. After that, all main political forces also agreed that this ethnically diverse country could make most rapid

progress by being a federal, secular republic. What the leaders of the main parties have failed to fathom is that their delay in writing the constitution is calling into question the institutionalisation of these agreed guiding principles.

Although for the sake of balance we tend to generalise and lump all political parties together for equal blame on the constitution delay, it is clear that the current obstruction is mainly from the Maoist-led 30 party opposition alliance. It is a blocking action for the sake of it: the losers don't want a constitution that is not made during their watch. Their stand on ethnicity-based federalism may once have been a progressive one, but it has been roundly rejected by the public – the latest in the Baglung by-election in which what remains of the Maoist party got less than 10 per cent of the vote.

Earlier, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal had already got the message from the low turnout of his own cadre at a mass rally he called last month to protest the Supreme Court decision to reject amnesty provisions in the Truth and Reconciliation Bill. Then a three-day nationwide shutdown enforced by the 30-



YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

MIGRATION
Very sad figure for nation development ('Belabouring the obvious', Editorial, #753).

Jagat Limbu

It's weird how we don't even question the obscene amounts of money that manpower agencies charge migrant workers ('Zero cost migration, really?', Om Astha Rai, #753). Stories of families in huge debts and labourers getting swindled have become so common that we barely think twice after reading such stories. I was at the airport when I saw two coffins in the space of an hour, it was heartbreaking and jarring. Migrant labour is going to be the next big problem in Nepal in terms of its economic and sociological impact.

TR

These are mind boggling figures. Imagine the commission on those 2 million plus workers. Any idea what percentage of Nepal's 15-49 group (or any other breakdown) is working abroad?

Rabi

Instead of creating employment in our own country, the leaders are happily sending our brothers and sisters to toil in foreign soil. We need leaders who can make the country a place where all Nepalis can live and fulfill their dreams.

Mahendra BK

Nepalis have to pay to get to their work destination, and once there: they are disrespected, abused, overworked and underpaid. Meanwhile, everyone from manpower agencies, the governments of countries involved, and even the airlines and travel agencies profit from naive countrymen looking to go there.

Bairagi Khukhuri

CONSTITUTION
This view point is one sided: the issue is not about 'Homogenising the Nepali identity in the name of national integrity and fostering nationalism ...', which the author perhaps rightly feels is not a goal to pursue, but it is about the attempt we are seeing in creating divisive political units based on chauvinistic ethnic enclaves - and this is precisely what will divide the nation ('Nearing the goal', Anurag Acharya, #753).

Good to note that there seems to be some sort of near agreement between the political actors. But whatever is agreed to by these political elites needs to be tested in a referendum. The leaders do not have the mandate to impose the constitution on us. A referendum should be given for the people to choose to endorse or not to endorse the constitution. Other countries have done it (for e.g. Kenya), there is no reason why we cannot.

Poudyal

I fear that once the constitution is promulgated, these thugs will go back to doing what they do best: bickering, fault finding, obstructionism, foot dragging, etc. Anything but citizen oriented governance. Now would that be too much to ask for?

Namah

LANDSCAPE OF FEAR
The US and the European countries that swear by international conventions on human rights have an obligation to see that justice is served and that the 'high and mighty who robbed and killed with impunity' during the war be indicted and taken to the International Court of Justice ('Landscape of fear', Foreign Hand, #753).

Poudyal

Curious, did any Maoist leaders visit Europe after the Col Lama episode?

Gaurav Nepali

PRIVILEGED PRESS
Very well written and very true ('Forgive us our press passes', Tsering Dolker Gurung, #753). But the brutish, shameful behaviour is not limited only to the Nepali press. Where does our arrogance come from when we have achieved naught?

Khagendra

Bravo! This type of article with journalists holding a mirror up to themselves was long overdue.

Guest

You are right. I, too, am a journalist and have been on many of these trips where the males (it is always males) act uncouth. But their behaviour is not the issue, right? The issue is whether it is ethical for journalists to accept these all-expense paid trips. Sure, I too am guilty of having accepted such offers and clearly, so are you. When you speak of ethical behaviour, it must apply across the board, no? Otherwise, we are all hypocrites.

Belakoboli

ASS
Meow-badis were always somebody's pets. We need to send them back to their owners or to animal pond centers. This is the result of what happens if they are left to run amok. (Building a better Mao's trap, #753)

Bairagi Khukhuri

CLARIFICATION
In 'Getting away with (almost) anything', #753 the quote attributed to Next Generation Nepal's Martin Punaks was related specifically to donors and volunteers that support orphanages in Nepal. NGN takes no position on the case that the article discusses.

Editor

Times

THIS WEEK

GOPEN RAI (86 LIKES)

Most liked on Facebook
People collect garbage from the Bagmati River during the Bagmati Clean-up Campaign in Thapathali on Saturday.

Most shared on Facebook
Looking for Dor Bahadur Bista
by Kunda Dixit

Most popular on Twitter
Belabouring the obvious, Editorial (171 retweets, 60 favourites)

Most visited online page
Zero cost migration, really?
by Om Astha Rai (821 views)

Most commented
Forgive us our press passes
by Tsering Dolker Gurung (17 comments)

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #754

Q. Will the ban on the use of plastic bags be implemented?

Total votes: 47

■ Yes 48.94%

■ No 44.68%

■ Don't know/ can't say 6.38%

Weekly Internet Poll #755
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should journalists go on sponsored trips?



DEEPENDRA BAURACHARYA

party alliance fizzled out humiliatingly after the first day because of public outrage.

By now the message must have got through to the Maoist hierarchy that their strategy of stoking identity politics and using threats and violence is not working. The Madhesi parties should have also got the message after the 2013 election in which a majority in the Tarai voted for non-Madhesi politicians, proving just how discredited they are. The agenda of a Madhes-only province is not going to fly because it has few takers even in the Madhes.

By now, it looks to the Maoists who waged a war to end class and caste-based discrimination, and the Madhesi parties who wanted respect and autonomy, that ethnicity-based federalism with Madhes-only provinces will not further those aims. And proof of that is the 180 degree turn they have made in the past week.

Even though Chairman Dahal was not listening to the Nepali people, he got the message loud and clear last month during his China visit, and an earful from Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyan Jaishankar in Kathmandu on 2 April. Dahal has returned to the negotiation table demanding assurances that his party will not be prosecuted for war crimes, and that his overseas assets will not be tampered with.

The NC-UML, and especially hardliner KP Oli of the UML, are also under pressure from home and abroad to be more accommodating in negotiations. There are indications that if the disagreements on power sharing, amnesty and money are resolved, the dispute over the allocation of five Tarai districts will not be a stumbling block.

So, there is a new silver lining. Let's all hope that 2072 will be the year of the new constitution.

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Plastic-free new year, not easy

“Only a blanket ban will work, making exceptions will make it impossible to enforce”

SAHINA SHRESTHA

Three days after the government ban on plastic bags went into effect on New Year's Day, it is still freely available in many mom and pop stores, butcher shops, and fruits and vegetable carts around the capital.

A customer at a meat shop in Bag Bazar said he knew about the ban but was unsure how to carry meat in a paper or cotton bag. “It is the shopkeeper's responsibility to ensure the plastic he provides is of the set criteria,” he added.

Ravi Adhikari, a footpath vendor, says, “Adding the cost of cotton bags will make my products more expensive. Customers don't make purchases if the price is high. So unless they bring their own bags or the government provides us with some, we have no option but to use plastic bags.”

Like everything else in this country, the law is meaningless because of the lack of enforcement. Public awareness about the environmental cost of the bags is lacking, and most shoppers are unwilling to forego the convenience.

This is not the first time there has been this ban. In 2013, the Kathmandu Metropolitan

City was forced to withdraw its ban even before it completed its month-long awareness campaign after the Supreme Court passed a stay order filed by the Nepal Plastic Manufacturers' Association (NPMA).

This time, however, things may be different. The NPMA once again demanded a stay order but to everyone's surprise, a joint bench of Justices Sushila Karki and Gopal Parajuli rejected the petition citing public health concerns from plastic bags.

“This came as a boost to our campaign to ban plastic bags and not only reinforced our faith in government, but the judiciary as well,” said Palzom Pradhan of the Himalayan Climate Initiative (HCI), a youth-led environmental group working to ban plastic bags since 2013. HCI's ‘No Thanks! I Carry My Own Bag’ campaign has provided awareness through organised public dance events and promotion of cloth bags.

“The ban is a perfect example of the collaborative effort of the government and the civil society,” said Pradhan.

It has been more than a decade since a government directive required all manufacturers of polythene bags to start phasing out its production. In 2002, the SC ordered the government to enforce the decision, but it was

never implemented

In 2011, the Ministry of Science Technology and Environment came up with Plastic Bags Control and Regulation Directive, which prohibits the import, storage, sale and use of plastic bags less than 20 microns (later amended to 30 microns) and imposed a fine of Rs 500 to 50,000 for manufacturing and using such bags. It was never put to practice.

This time, too, the government backtracked from its earlier decision to put a blanket ban on the use, production, distribution, and import of all types of plastic bags in Kathmandu Valley to state that only bags up to 51X89 cm and below 40 microns will be banned. With this loophole, some say the ban can easily be circumvented.

“The government should put a blanket ban on plastic bags altogether instead of citing numbers like 30 or 40 microns,” says urban planner P S Joshi. “Unless we build the capacity to fully implement the ban, we should not go into numbers.



GOPEN RAI

When you go into numbers, it gets harder to enforce.”

While the government has been pointing at jute and cloth bags as alternatives, the NPMA has been fighting a rearguard action to keep manufacturing and selling plastic bags. It says the ban is being implemented without proper research and long-term planning, considering how half-hearted the government is, the Association is probably right.

More than 300 tons of plastic bags are used all over Nepal every day. Most of them are used once and thrown on the side of the street or into a river. Street cattle are often found dead after ingesting the bags. The non-biodegradable bags stay in the environment for hundreds of years.

Dharan in eastern Nepal announced a ban on plastic bags in 2013 but it has been only partially successful.

Sunil Nepal of Dharan Municipality says the amount of plastic in the garbage has decreased, but plastic bags are still in use.

Basu Dev Baral, a tourism entrepreneur in Dharan says: “Although the drive looked promising in the beginning after an exception was made for butchers, other traders simply followed suit and started using plastic bags again.”

This may be a lesson for Kathmandu: ban the bags completely, don't make exceptions and provide alternatives. 🇳🇵

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सुकेधारा शाखाको समुद्घाटन

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लिनुहोस् बाजेको स्वादिलो परिकारहरूको मज्जा

बैशाख १६ गते
भरतपुर शाखाको समुद्घाटन

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HIMALAYAN CLIMATE INITIATIVE

On 14 April, hundreds of people participated in a rally organised by the ‘No Thanks I Carry My Own Bag’ initiative to celebrate the government ban on plastic bags in Kathmandu. The campaign led by members of Gen Nep-Nation First, a youth development platform initiated by Himalayan Climate Initiative has been working to declare Kathmandu a plastic bag free zone since 2013.

“For a moment we were worried the Supreme Court (SC) would agree to the petition filed by the Nepal Plastic manufacturers’ Association (NPMA) to put a stay order on the ban as they did in the past,” said Palzom Pradhan, campaign coordinator for ‘No

Thanks I Carry My Own Bag’. “But luckily we had the support of environmental lawyers and now the ban has been enforced,” she added.

In December 2013, just two months after its formal launch, the campaign was endorsed by CA members Gagan Thapa and Rabindra Adhikari. A year later the campaign received support from popular faces including banker Anil Shah and former Miss Nepal Malvika Subba, who has been actively promoting the use of cloth bags.

Members of the ‘No Thanks I Carry My Own Bag’ campaign have been actively raising public awareness about the negatives of using plastic. Over 50 institutes are now plastic bag free zones and over 50,000 petitions were

signed in support of banning the polythene bags.

The group is also working with Hamri Bahini to promote the use of cotton, jute and paper bags as affordable alternatives. Hamri Bahini which employs women from underprivileged background has so far sold 130,000 bags.

“Since our research showed that people responded better when they were given incentives, we have been providing discount cards and have introduced a discount bag scheme,” says Pradhan.

The team has sold 3000 discount cards at Rs 10, which can be used in over fifty stores in the valley. They also partnered with stores and business houses to provide discounts to shoppers who bring their own bags.

The campaign has been coordinating with the Parliament’s Environment Protection Committee (EPC) and the Ministry of Science Technology and Environment since September 2014 to enforce the ban and ensure proper implementation. The group has also approached various stakeholders including the Retailers’ Association and the Nepal Police for implementation of the ban.

“As they say a thousand mile journey begins with a single step and this is the first step upon which we hope to achieve future successes,” says Pradhan. *Sahina Shrestha*

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Happy Ford year

Ford has launched its New Year offer-Happy Ford Year 2012 under which customers booking Figo, Classic, Fiesta, EcoSport, Endeavour and Ranger models of Ford during the period will win one of the six sure shot gifts. The offer is valid till 18 April.



Gionee S7

Gionee has officially launched its flagship smartphone, the Gionee Elife S7 in Nepal. The Elife S7 is the slimmest dual-sim phone with a 5.5mm thin design with a body made of aviation-grade alloy. It is powered by 1.7GHz octa-core 64-bit processor and runs on Amigo 3.0 OS and has a 5.2 inch 1080p FHD AMOLED display.

New year price

On the occasion of Nepali New year, Him electronics, the authorised distributor of Samsung in Nepal has launched its Samsung Fresh New Year, Fresh New Prices offer. Under this offer, Samsung is offering reduced prices in all its consumer electronics and home appliance products. The offer is valid till the end of June.



Summer flavour

Real Fruit Juice has announced the ‘Guess the Real Flavour’ campaign for the upcoming summer season. Consumers have to guess the Real flavour through the clues given in Real advertisements

published in various national dailies: type REAL followed by the correct flavor and SMS it to 2010. Participants can win different prizes including the super bumper prize-Fiat Punto Dynamic Car.



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Bar vs Bench

Enough accusations of corruption in the judiciary, time to start investigating them

The Nepal Bar Association (NBA), the umbrella organisation of lawyers, recently declared at its 13th National Conference in Chitwan that there was rampant corruption in judiciary. It said the justices themselves were on the take, and asked the Chief Justice to take action against them.



LEGALESE
Binita Dahal

Soon after, NBA vice-president Tika Ram Bhattarai and the ex-secretary Raman Kumar Shrestha said in an interview to an online news site that they could provide evidence of such corruption. They also added that it wasn't just judges who were rotten: lawyers, journalists and power brokers were all involved in bribery.

The public has come to take any allegation of corruption in high places as commonplace. They aren't surprised that the Supreme Court has also been tarred by the same brush, but this time it was the NBA making the allegation -- a body that is supposed to keep the judiciary accountable.

The personal secretariat of Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Shah then fired off a letter to the NBA asking it to provide evidence to back up its accusation against the apex court. This was unprecedented, the Chief Justice or his office had never before written such a letter to anyone. In fact it was highly irregular for the Supreme Court to do so.

Apparently the justices felt alluded to pressure Chief Justice Shah at a full court meeting to send the letter. One of the Justices told me, on condition of anonymity, that his colleagues argued that if the Chief Justice did not ask for the evidence then it would



seem like they were guilty.

As expected, NBA was not able to provide evidence to Chief Justice of corruption at the Supreme Court -- after all the corrupt don't leave a paper trail. In their written statement,

however, the Bar said they did have evidence but that they would provide it to the Judicial Council or Parliament Hearing Committee.

The NBA's answer also came across as careless and irresponsible. If they have evidence as they had claimed earlier why did they hesitate to share it with Chief Justice, who after all, is also the chairman of Judicial Council? The Chief Justice would have been under pressure to take action.

After the NBA's response, we haven't heard a peep from the Bar. The Chief Justice should have taken it up at the Judicial Council and asked for further evidence by now. The Parliament Hearing Committee which was active during the appointment of Justices has also not taken the NBA letter with the seriousness it deserved.

Every year, Transparency International's report has shown that there is rampant corruption in Judiciary. But no Justices from SC have ever been charged with corruption. The then Justice

Prakash Wasti's five-member committee had also confirmed that there is corruption in Judiciary. A recent national conference of Justices had also made the same statement.

Enough accusations, the time has now come to investigate them. After all, we are talking about the Supreme Court -- and that final provider of justice should not just be making allegations, it should be weeding out the crooks. In fact it is the media that is providing the evidence that the NBA isn't through with stories like the one by Bhrikuti Rai of the Centre for Investigative Journalism and printed in this paper (#753) about the Chief Justice letting off a fake doctor who embezzled money meant for medical care in Humla on bail.

The Bar and the Bench are in a perpetual state of war, and that is nothing new. In 2008, the president of the NBA, Biswa Kant Mainali made the statement that the post of Justices is a license to corruption. The full court had decided to seize his advocate license for six months. But after lawyers took to the streets, the decision was revoked.

The NBA and the Supreme Court are both there to dispense justice. There are always two parties involved in corruption: the giver and the taker. So we can't ignore those who are bribing the judges either.

It is already too late to expose corruption in the judiciary, and restore people's trust in an impartial justice system. Both the Bar and the Bench from their side have to work together to take action against the corrupt in their midst. Otherwise, it will be interpreted that they themselves are afraid that the issue will negatively affect them.

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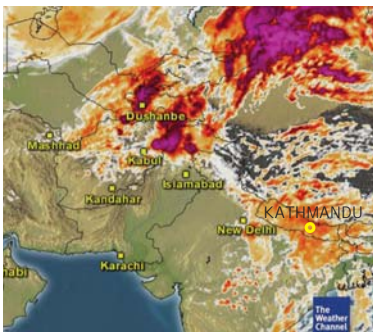
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The extensive low pressure system over northern India gave us a wet and cloudy new year. The snowfall in the higher reaches was up to 30cm. It is normal to have spring storms, but the level of precipitation can be called "unseasonal". Linger moisture from this week's rains will trigger afternoon cloud buildup and thunderstorms across the midhills Friday and Saturday. Things should start getting sunnier on Sunday, which will also raise the maximum temperature up to 27 or so.

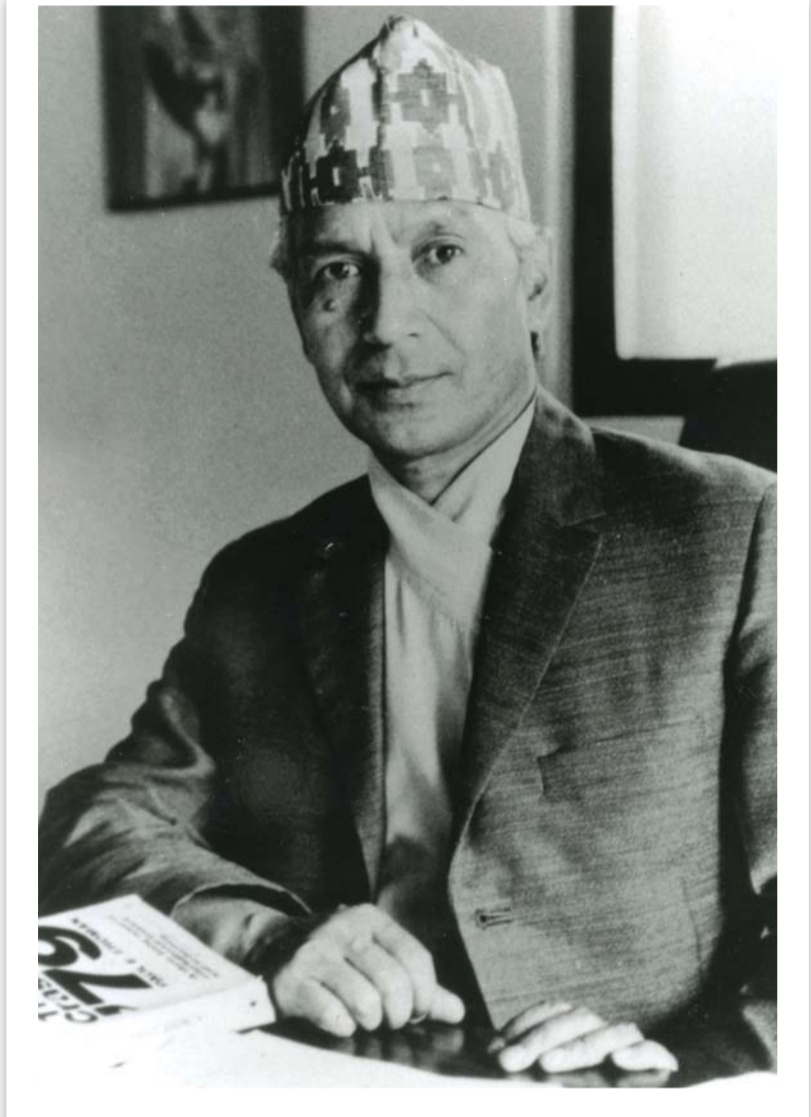
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KUNDA DIXIT

In 1995, Nepal's pioneer anthropologist and crusader against the caste system vanished without a trace. As with many such mysterious disappearances, there have been conspiracy theories but no plausible explanation. And no sign of the man.

Now, documentary maker Kesang Tseten has tried to piece together clues from Bista's early years in a Chhetri family in Kathmandu, his fieldwork as an anthropologist, his work in Jumla which brought him in direct confrontation with the locals, and then retracing Bista's last steps in January 1995. Tseten has retrieved archival audio and film, interviewed family, friends and contemporaries for a gripping cinematic portrayal of the man.

Tseten tells the story through Bista's friend and colleague, Basanta Thapa, the former editor

of *Himal* magazine. Thapa starts and ends in the holy Indian town of Haridwar showing a faded black and white picture of Bista to sadhus in a futile attempt to find him. Haridwar was where he was rumoured to be last seen.

The young Dor Bahadur was a rebel, we find out, and had serious disagreements with his father about Brahmanical rituals. But he kept his outrage in check to conform to his family status. It was only after his first book, *People of Nepal* came out in 1967 and he was tagged as an 'anti-national' that he became radicalised.

He rallied against Brahmanism, seeing it as the root of Nepal's underdevelopment. The seeds of his book *Fatalism and Development* (pic) began germinating in his mind, and Bista admits in an interview with American anthropologist Jim Fisher that he knew the book would be controversial. In fact, he says it was his intention to provoke a debate and shake

LOOKING FOR DOR BAHADUR BISTA

Kesang Tseten's new documentary investigates the disappearance of Nepal's foremost anthropologist 20 years ago

things up.

His thesis was that 'Brahmanical brainwashing' made most Nepalis fatalistic, they accepted their status because they were told it was pre-ordained in a previous life or by a divine power. The caste system thus destroyed the initiative in citizens to carve out their own destiny.

Needless to say, such beliefs brought Bista in direct confrontation with members of his own family, the royal palace (for saying that Nepal's kings were descendants of Magars) and upper caste elders in Jumla where he retreated in 1991 to build a model caste-free commune in the village of Chaudabisa.

Tseten travels with Thapa to what remains of the Karnali Institute in Jumla. This is where Bista wanted to put his theories into practice to prove that eliminating the caste hierarchy could help a community develop. He was soon the victim of a vicious slander campaign in culturally conservative Jumla. There was a backlash against his attempt, for instance, to stop the custom of 'jari' payment when a local inter-caste couple eloped.

Despite his dogged work in remote Chaudabisa and his popularity among poor villagers, Bista made enemies in Khalanga Bazar. He had taken in an intelligent young local woman under his wing, educating her with the hope of giving her a future. His enemies seized upon this, publishing in a local paper that he was having an affair with her. It was a week later that Bista flew down to Nepalganj, got his friend's grandson to meet him in Kohalpur with his passport and camera, changed his mind about taking those items, and got on a bus to



Chisapani and was never seen again.

We won't be giving anything away when we say that Tseten doesn't find Dor Bahadur Bista. But there are hints: Bista's last words to his friend's grandson, "One is born alone and dies alone." A long shot of the windy cliffs near Chisapani bridge.'

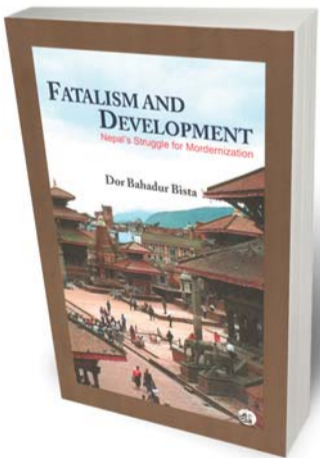
The cinematic craft is classic Kesang Tseten. The director lets the story unfold through interviews, locales and talking heads of a cross-section of Nepalis describing how the caste system

affects their everyday lives. Bista disappeared before the conflict began in 1996, a revolution to end ethnic discrimination. The film shows us Bista's sparse room in Jumla, and we learn the heavy irony of how the Maoists trashed it and burnt all his books.

The caste system has eroded since the last two decades, but there are still incidents like the one of a Dalit youth who could not put up with a Janajati girl, forsaking him because of his low caste, and poured acid on her face.

Tseten shows us an archival clip of Bista burying a time capsule in a Jumla school in 1994 with instructions to open it in 100 years. What does it say? We will have to wait another 80 years to find out. 🇳🇵

Castaway Man
Shunyata Films, 2015
Directed by Kesang Tseten
1 hr 22 min



nepalitimes.com

- Dor Bahadur Alive, #2
- For stills of Castaway Man

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THE CIRCUS OF HOPE

Trafficked children grow up to be world class performers in Circus Kathmandu

NARESH NEWAR

When she was nine years old, Saraswati Adhikari was trafficked to India by a trusted family friend from Hetauda, and trained to do acrobatics in a Kerala-based travelling circus. She never went to school, was married at 14 and had three children by the time she was 18.

Adhikari and other Nepali children had to practice with their troupes and were often beaten and poorly fed. They were never paid. After she was rescued five years ago, Adhikari returned to Nepal and today, aged 23, works as a professional artist in Circus Kathmandu.

"I don't want people to see us as victims but as role models by focusing on our strengths," she told *Nepali Times* this week as she packed for her troupe's tour of Australia later this month.

Adhikari and her fellow artists have worked hard to perfect their routines and become world class circus performers. Circus Kathmandu has staged international events where the artists have become brand

ambassadors for Nepal, wowing audiences with not just acrobatics but also with their incredible stories of struggle and survival.

After they were rescued, Adhikari and her mates came back to Nepal to an uncertain future in a shelter. They had minimal prospects, lived far from their parents, had no citizenship certificates and lacked income.

"Today, we have passports, live in rented apartments and have our own money to support our families," says 27-year old Jamuna Tamang (pic, right), a deft rope artist.

Tamang was trafficked from Hetauda when she was only 12, and wants to become an activist against child-trafficking and travel across Nepal. At some point she also wants to return to her old company in India and teach her former employers that circuses can be run professionally and ethically.

Adhikari and Tamang were circus slaves in India during their childhood. Today, they are confident young women with a vision of preventing others like them from falling victims to traffickers.

They credit their self-assurance to Circus Kathmandu founders Sky Neal and Robyn Simpson, who are



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MARK ROBINSON



PICS: CIRCUS KATHMANDU



MARK ROBINSON

CIRCUS KATHMANDU: (left to right) Jamuna Tamang, 27, who was sold to a circus in India when she was just 12, wants to become an activist against child trafficking.

Founded by Sky Neal and Robyn Simpson, Circus Kathmandu is the first project of its kind in the world, helping support a group to move from being vulnerable young adults to successful, empowered artists and anti-trafficking advocates.

Besides performing in Nepal, Circus Kathmandu has performed at international venues including Norway, Dubai and at the Glastonbury Festival in the UK. Their tour of Australia starts this month.

Rajan Baswal, 23, is the group's high pole climber.

Circus Kathmandu performers with their Hula Hoop act.

themselves international circus artists.

"When I first came to Nepal four years ago with a trapeze and a camera, I had no idea how much my life was going to change," Neal told *Nepali Times* from London. The duo started Circus Kathmandu at a time when attitudes towards circuses were negative, but working with trafficked circus

children rescued from India made the project unique.

Simpson recalls how the girls were very excited to go back to what they were good at doing. Circus Kathmandu is the first project of its kind in the world, helping support a group in an uplifting story of a journey from being vulnerable young adults to successful, empowered artists and anti-trafficking advocates.

"There was a camaraderie that came from us all being circus girls, that I think helped them trust us and to start seeing their lives differently", Simpson explained.


Rajan Baswal, a 23-year-old high pole climber also turned his life around. "I'm not ashamed to talk about my past because today I am very successful," says Baswal, originally from Butwal and was a drug addict at 12.

For Circus Kathmandu, long-term sustainability is a priority and they hired two young Nepali professionals to develop indigenous management skills. "Their determination is so strong that I have seen an amazing change in these young adults," says Sam Jabour, the circus'

development director.

Besides being professional performers, members of the circus are also social reformers. The circus has become an important part of helping the most disadvantaged and stigmatised young people turn their lives around. "Circus connects or reconnects people with an inner strength, resilience," says Simpson.

Circus Kathmandu was spurred to act after seeing how young women rescued from the clutches of traffickers were stigmatised and how they lost out on education and a livelihood.

"Nepal has so many talented and creative people, it makes sense to try different approaches," says Simpson. And Circus Kathmandu is living proof of restoring a sense of self-worth for young men and women who never had a childhood. 

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- Watch video of Circus Kathmandu performance: 
- A faraway rescue, #571
- Nepal's circus champs, #575

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In the coming months, with the announcement of Hillary Clinton's second run for the democratic nomination and eventual presidential candidacy, the United States will be scrutinised by the world that sees



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

the country's internal and external politics through the lens of its foreign policy.

From the outside looking in, it is easy to critique America's

unique brand of self-determinism, or, to use the loftiest of terms, that idea of "manifest destiny", a now historically problematic phrase that was coined as the nation was trying to define itself. The romantic notion that the US was wide open for everyone who wanted to come, conquer, and create a new, free world, capitalising on the riches of the vast continent that stretched from sea to shining sea, is one that still brings people streaming to the US.

If you have never lived in the US - one can easily laugh at the proud way in which the country and its citizens see themselves. Yet, having had the benefit of an American liberal arts education on the East Coast, in a small

pastoral campus in Western Massachusetts, I can understand the yearning to buy into the kind of longing, and that endless possibility that the American countryside can open up in one's mind.

This infinite possibility is exactly why *Wild*, the film, produced by and starring Reese Witherspoon (as Cheryl Strayed), and based on Strayed's bestselling memoir *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* is such a successful film.

While the idea that a burnt-out woman, mourning the loss of her mother, fighting heroin addiction, recovering from a recent divorce, and trying to mend relations with an estranged brother, can be saved by hiking 1,100 miles on the Pacific Crest Trail (which runs an astonishing 2,663 miles from Mexico to the Canadian border) is uniquely of the American New Age, the film is saved by Witherspoon's incredibly compelling, vulnerable, and humourous performance, grounded by a great adaptation written by none other than Nick Hornby, and some unerring direction by Jean-Marc Vallée. Then there's the overarching idea that America, the land itself, offers that very ability to redeem and remake oneself, through an intense engagement with the varying, epic landscapes, and ultimately the power of the harsh but essential beauty of nature. 🇺🇸

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HAPPENINGS



KUMAR SHRESTHA / RSS

WELCOME: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala exchanges greetings with visiting State Secretary of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Morten Høglund, at Baluwatar on Wednesday.



RSS

PLASTIC FREE: Deputy Prime Minister Prakash Man Singh (*third from left*) leads a rally to promote the declaration of Kathmandu as a plastic free zone.



SUDHIRA SHAH

LET'S ROCK: Nepathya frontman Amrit Gurung at the band's concert in Sydney on Saturday. The folk-rock band is on its second tour of Australia.



QATAR AIRWAYS

GIVING BACK: CNN Hero and founder of Early Childhood Development Centre Pushpa Basnet thanks the attendees at the Qatar Airways' 'Giving reasons to smile' event last week. The charity event was organised in support of Basnet's Butterfly Homes.

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BHAIDEGAH RESTORATION

Like many other great monuments of the Kathmandu Valley, the Bhaidegah Temple in Patan was destroyed in the Great Earthquake of 1934. Built in 1678 by Patan's Chautaria, (prime minister) Bhara Bhaiya, the Bhaidegah Temple was the largest Shiva temple in Mangal Bazar.

After 1934, the temple was rebuilt in a stucco Moghul-style instead of its original three-tiered pagoda architecture to protect the Shiva lingam inside.

In 2011, a group of Nepalis established the non-profit Sanskritik Sampada Samrakshan Samuha (Cultural Heritage Conservation Group/CHCG) and started the Bhaidegah Rebuilding Project to restore



KENJI KWOK

the temple to its original form. The total amount required for the project was estimated at \$475,000 of which \$300,000 was pledged as a grant from the Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu.

This week, the group held a low-key installation of one of the four carved wooden doors to be used as part of the restored Bhaidegah Temple during the

Nepal visit of Norwegian State Secretary Morten Høglund.

The door made of sal wood was introduced to the public by eminent cultural historian and chair of CHCG, Satya Mohan Joshi, and Minister Høglund in the Stone Gate Courtyard of Patan Darbar Square.

The door was carved by artisans of Bhaktapur who worked on it for six months

WORKING TOGETHER: Cultural historian Satya Mohan Joshi and Norwegian State Secretary Morten Høglund at the unveiling of a wooden door to be used as part of the restored Bhaidegah Temple in Patan.

and depicts Shiva and Parvati on it. Rohit Ranjitkar, conservation architect with CHCG, said: "It is very important to correct some of the improper restoration that was done after the earthquake, and it says a lot that it has taken nearly 80 years for the temple to be restored to its pre-1934 splendour."

Kanak Mani Dixit, vice-chair of CHCG said that Henry Ambrose Oldfield's 1853 water colour showed that Bhaidegah was one of the most beautifully carved temples in the Valley.

Joshi, who was 13 during the 1934 earthquake, spoke about the intricacy of the woodcarvings on the original temple. "I precisely remember each detail of the temple before the earthquake," he told the gathering at the inauguration.

Minister Høglund said he was proud of Norway's association with the project: "Seeing this outstanding carving, I look forward to coming back to Nepal when the restoration of Bhaidegah Temple is complete." Stéphane Huët

A mere 30-minute drive from the city, Gokarna Forest Resort offers a quiet respite from the tumult of Kathmandu. The hotel has four restaurants, and this time we chose to dine at 8848Mt Bar & Patio.

The bar is spacious, offering a nice view of the hotel gardens. Although casual, the interior decoration could have been cosier to correspond with the overall grandiose architecture of the resort.

8848Mt Bar & Patio has a wide offering of cuisines but before eating though, try the refreshing Florida mocktail, (Rs 400) a mix of orange, pineapple, mango juices and grenadine syrup, which is perfect for hot days.

The first dish we had was the baked Rainbow Trout (Rs 1450) with spinach rice, honey glazed carrot, peas and caper butter sauce. Sourced from a local farm, the fish was fresh and well-cooked. Combined with the tastes of honey and butter, it went very well with the vegetables.

We continued with the spinach and walnut pie (Rs 600), served with fries and salad. This rightly roasted puff pastry had a delicate texture. But the spinach and baked

cheese over it tasted a bit bland.

The lettuce was from the hotel's garden. Although the chef mentioned that he had tried to make healthier recipes, the salad served with frozen chips lacked the freshness factor. In response, the chef explained that Nepali potatoes were simply not rich enough in starch to make good French fries.

The grilled tenderloin steak

(Rs 650), lightly peppery was our third dish. The meat imported from Dubai was cooked medium-well and very tender. For the side dish, there were tasty pumpkin sticks accompanied by French beans and fried potatoes. This was a simple yet, really pleasant combination.

Our favourite dish was the pork chop (Rs 1800). It was cooked to perfection with a homemade mustard sauce drizzled upon it to sublimate its taste. The pork

was served with mashed potatoes subtly mixed with green apple - an unexpected combination, which was surprising to the taste buds.

In addition, all the dishes were plated beautifully.

To finish the meal, we had two desserts. The first was an apple pie with ice cream on top (Rs 525). The pastry was smooth and the apple filling was delicious. We were however disappointed with the chocolate mousse (Rs 450). It was not creamy enough and we felt the

price was too steep for what was on the plate.

8848Mt Bar & Patio offers simple bistro cuisine but with a touch of originality that will surely make dining there an interesting and enjoyable experience. Stéphane Huët

How to get there: The Gokarna Forest Resort is a 10km drive from Kathmandu's airport and is located inside the Gokarna Forest Reserve in Thali.



PICS: OPHELIE BELIN

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ASK ANJANA ANYTHING
Anjana Rajbhandary

solving abilities, experience and skills, and achievements to make themselves stand out from the crowd. You just have to 'sell yourself' by focusing on your strengths, and being honest about

your weaknesses and show how you are improving yourself. An ideal is to find out what you like to do, and get someone to pay you for doing it. Job interviews are like first dates. Good impressions count. Awkwardness can occur. Outcomes are unpredictable. (Then there is nepotism.)
Do email me your questions to askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com

Dear Anjana,
I have been looking for a new job and gone on a lot of interviews but have not been hired. I feel like I come across as a confident professional, although occasionally I ramble on too long in my answers, which I'm working on. Going on

interview after interview but never getting hired is starting to damage my self esteem. Do you have any advice on how to nail the interview and get the job offer, and also how to keep my confidence up while hunting for work?
Rachel

AR: First of all I would like to congratulate you for getting selected for interviews because in this competitive world, even getting an interview is a big deal. Interviews are not natural so it helps to practice answering typical interview questions. Rambling is the most common interview blunder because either people get nervous or they like to

hear what they are saying instead of answering the question. Be mindful to be concise, listen to the whole question carefully before answering. Think before you answer.

It's smart to research the company and the employer so you can ask the right questions and that also shows you have done your homework. Make sure to bring your portfolio, extra copies of resume, a pen and notebook to take notes. Get there a few minutes early. Breathe and stay calm. Always helps to make good eye contact, don't stare, and listen.

You are trying to stand out from the mob for the same position, so try to relate the job

to your accomplishments. Keep your answers short and to the point. Have faith in yourself, take every interview that did not work out as a practice towards your dream job. Remind yourself that not acing an interview is not an indication of your career or self-worth. Practice, practice, practice. Never give up on yourself. Be assertive: not overconfident or too modest.

At last, follow up by sending a thank you note or email to the potential employer or interviewer within 24 hours and include anything important (but briefly) that you may have forgotten during the interview. Do the best you can and the rest is up to luck and fate. Good luck. 🍀

Anjana Rajbhandary is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician and has four years of experience in adult mental health. @AnjyRajy

GIZMO by YANTRICK



SMART REFRIGERATORS

When it comes to household appliances, I am always on the lookout for durability, both in terms of its build quality and features so it lasts a few years at least. The GL-B2H2RPHG is one of the newest refrigerators from LG with the promise of a 10-year warranty, as well as the New Smart Inverter Compressor that ushers in a list of other useful features.

The New Smart Inverter Compressor is capable of determining the actual demand of cooling required based on the quantity of food in the refrigerator, allowing it to efficiently regulate its cooling capacity and saving up to 36 per cent energy. It also helps keep the appliance at the optimum internal temperature, maintaining the freshness of fruits and vegetables up to seven days. LG has also managed to reduce the vibrations in

the New Smart Inverter Compressor, resulting in 30 per cent less noise compared to other refrigerators.


The GL-B2H2RPHG comes in two new colours – Marine Paradise and Scarlet Paradise – which will add a refreshing look to your kitchen with its floral design on the doors, though you can still choose from the other models that offer the standard Platinum Silver or Shiny Steel look to suit your household. The 255-litre refrigerator includes a transparent interior and a Double Twist Ice Tray so you do not have to worry about running out of ice for your guests.

You might also want to consider the other refrigerators from LG's line-up that are equipped with the new Power Cut EverCool Technology, which ensures that the temperature of the refrigerator is maintained even when

the power goes off. LG does this effectively by transferring cold air throughout the refrigerator, as well as using additional plates and pipes that are cooled by refrigerant gas. In the event of a power cut, the freshness of food can be preserved for seven hours in the refrigerator section (seven times longer cooling retention than conventional refrigerators) and 10 hours for the freezer section – an essential feature to have in Nepal.


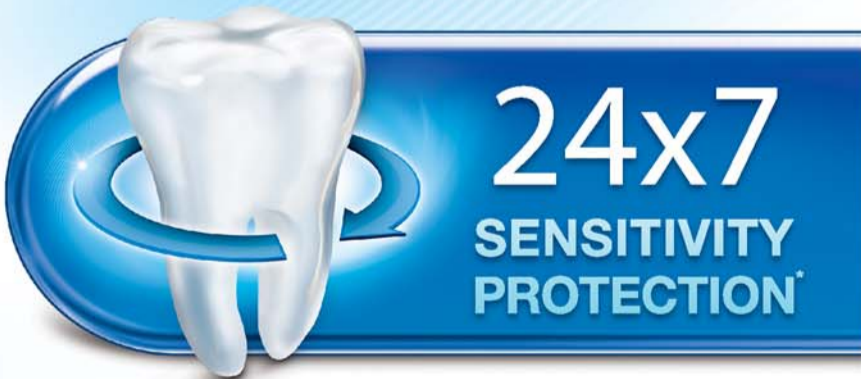
The design of LG's new range of refrigerators stays committed to their eco-friendly initiative, by reducing the use of hazardous materials and emitting less carbon dioxide into the environment. 🍀


YANTRICK'S VERDICT: LG's new range of refrigerators are packed with energy efficient features and comes with a 10-year warranty.



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MORE EQUITY ON EVEREST

A few things have changed but much remains the same for Nepali high altitude workers

OM ASTHA RAI

Heavy unseasonal snowfall engulfed Mt Everest this week as a team of eight Nepali guides fixed ropes and ladders on a new, hopefully safer route up the Khumbu Icefall. More than 300 climbers from 35 expeditions are waiting at Base Camp for the route to be ready and the weather to clear.

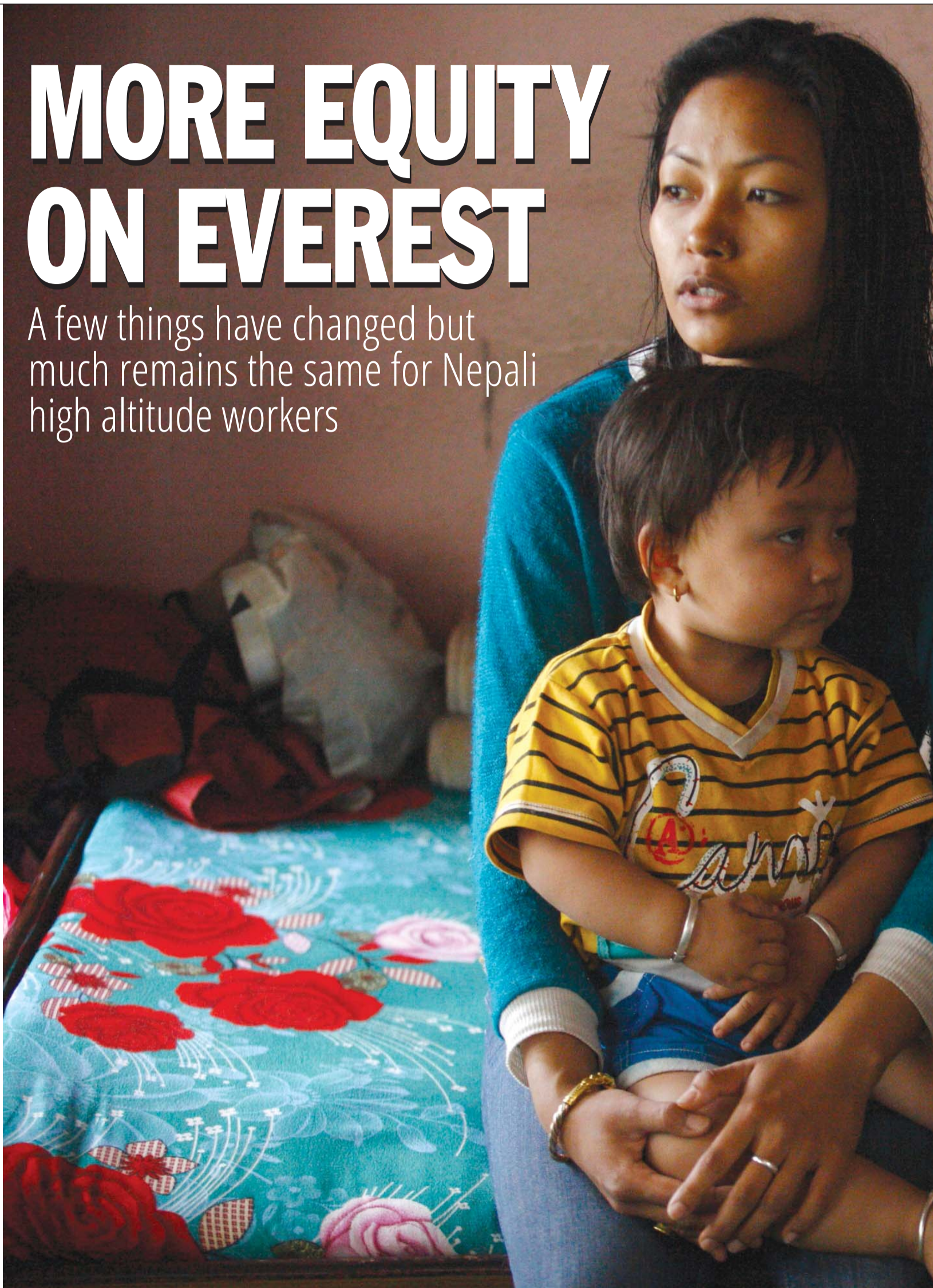
The 'Icefall Doctors', as they are called, are doing the most dangerous part of the Everest climb: spending long periods on a treacherous, moving glacier exposed to avalanches from the West Shoulder. Last year, one such avalanche on 18 April killed 16 Nepali guides, only 13 of the bodies were retrieved.

"Had it not snowed heavily, some climbers would have already reached Camp 1 to acclimatise, but we are working to repair the damage caused by the snow," said Lama Kaji Sherpa of the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee, which is part of the team that opens the icefall route.

As the mountaineering community prepares to mark the first anniversary of the Everest avalanche tragedy last year, the Nepali guides have gone back to what they have to do for a living – risking their lives to fix ropes, ladders and ferrying rich western clients to the top.

Few things have changed but much remains the same on Everest. Devastated by the deaths of their friends and the magnitude of the tragedy, the mostly-Sherpa guides last year refused to go up, forcing the cancellation of all expeditions. They demanded for more safety and compensation for the families.

The government agreed to increase their life insurance amount to Rs 1.5 million and medical insurance to



31 Nepali children

DAVID DURKAN

That should have been the headline last year after the Everest avalanche killed 16 Nepali climbers

The tragedy on the Everest Icefall on April last year was followed by mountaineers screaming foul-play because they could not climb Mt Everest. They criticised the 'Sherpas' for refusing to climb, and the tourist expedition industry complained about lost business and money.

Both figures are correct: 16 men died and 31 children lost their fathers, but there should have been a third number: 50. There were 50 Nepali high altitude 'workers' in a known high-risk avalanche area with no western guides or mountaineers.

It would have been too embarrassing for the Nepal government, Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal Mountaineering Association, Trekking Agents Association of Nepal and the Expedition Operators Association to admit why those 50 were exposing themselves to such danger. That fact would also

have been embarrassing for the 'agents' who sell package tours to Everest abroad and for expedition leaders and guides who slept safely at Base Camp as the tragedy unfolded.

The government appointed a Board of Inquiry comprising of representatives from the very same organisations noted above. No other country would appoint a group with such economic vested interest to evaluate an accident of such magnitude. These members evaluated themselves.

It is this 'cartel' that fostered, managed, promoted and befitted

from an industry with few (if any) ethical or professional control mechanisms. A medieval industry, driven by incompetence, greed and short-term self-interest.

The clients are the rich pampered 'mountaineers' who sleep in five-star lodges or drink kaffee latte in luxury tents in Base Camp waiting for the rope and ladder road to be constructed all the way from the base to the summit. Often incompetent and unfit individuals, lacking mental ability to tackle the demands of functioning at high altitude.

STILL MISSING: Menuka Gurung, wife of Ash Bahadur Gurung, one of the 16 guides who was killed in last year's Everest avalanche, with her children at home in Thamel. Gurung's body remains undiscovered along with two others.



GOPEN RAI

New records

When the brief summit window opens toward the middle of May this year, some new records may be made and some broken on Mt Everest.



Octogenarian ex-Gurkha soldier Min Bahadur Sherchan (*pic, above*), 84, is again preparing to be the oldest person to climb the world's highest peak, a title that he lost to Japanese climber Yuichiro Miura, 80, in 2013. In this long-running duel, Sherchan had claimed

the title that was held by Miura since 2003 in 2008.

Sherchan trains by walking up and down the staircase of his three-storey house with a load of 25 kgs on his back at least 20 times a day, and his guide Shiva Sapkota is confident Sherchan can climb the mountain if the weather is all right.

Another Nepali climber wants to become the fastest person up and down Everest. Leela Bahadur Basnet aims to be on top within 10 days of leaving Kathmandu and returning in the same period.

Song Kyung-Tae aims to be the first visually-impaired South Korean to summit Everest. Nepali woman climber Chhurim Sherpa is set to take the late Australian cricketer Phillip Hughes' bat and jersey to the top.

While dozens of expeditions have already made their way to Everest, no single expedition has yet asked for a permit to climb Kanchenjunga, which marks the 60th anniversary of its first ascent on 25 May, informs officials at Department of Tourism. Same is the case with Makalu with only three expeditions having left so far to climb the fifth highest mountain in the world which also marks the 60th anniversary of its first ascent on 15 May.

Rs 400,000. It has also made it mandatory for expeditions to bear the cost of rescue helicopters for all members, including their guides, porters and support staff.

"Mountaineering guides and porters had always demanded better insurance and arrangement of rescue helicopters, but it was never heeded," says Santa Bir Lama of the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA).

As per its commitment made to Sherpas last season, the government is now creating a fund using five per cent of mountaineering fees to be spent in Solukhumbu district which will be used to support mountaineers and their families in case of future deaths and injuries on the mountain.

Diwash Pokharel of the Everest Summiters Association says the tragedy did lead to reform. "It highlighted the issue of Sherpas and created pressure on the government as well as expedition companies to do more for their risky work."

However, despite the attention to insurance and compensation, the disproportionate risk that the 300 high altitude workers employed every year face on Everest has not diminished. The least-paid workers are still doing the most

arduous and dangerous work on the mountain.

The new route up the middle of the Khumbu Icefall skirts the edge that was exposed to avalanches, but it still has the risk of serac collapses. The workers also spend more time fixing ladders to span crevasses and to get over huge vertical blocks of ice which are more numerous than in the old route.

Tsering Tenzing is overseeing the team of Icefall Doctors at Base Camp this year. He says: "We are still a bit scared, I tell them to relax and not to worry. In reality, no Everest route is safe."

Climbing Everest always had inherent dangers. The only problem is that Nepali high altitude workers face disproportionately more risk than their climbing clients. Pemba Gyalje Sherpa of the Nepal National Mountain Guides Association, the 41-year-old veteran who made the heroic rescue of fellow-climbers on K2 in 2008, says many clients treat their guides as servants, not as fellow expedition members.

He says: "Sherpas are putting themselves in harm's way more than their affluent clients. There must be more equity, respect and trust on the mountain." 🇳🇵

lost their fathers

There are two questions about last year's avalanche: Who built the Icefall road, and why did the route up the icefall go so close to an obvious potential avalanche area?

The 'Icefall Doctors' built the road. They are not professional mountaineers, but local experienced mountain 'workers' paid by expeditions even before their clients have left their home country. They choose the quickest way of least resistance, not the safest.

Then, along come the porters who carry the equipment day after day up the Icefall to set up

and stock the camps. These workers are not always well equipped or well trained, nor are they compensated meagerly in relation to the work and risk involved. Poor leadership and inadequate insurance is the norm. They work under conditions experienced mountaineers would deem unacceptable and illegal in the countries the 'clients' come from.

And they pay a stiff price for their poverty: 104 Nepalis have died on Everest since 1922.

The 'elite guides' (western and Nepali) and paying 'clients'

are only exposed to danger for short periods. They sit in safety, taking performance enhancing drugs and training on 'safe peaks', before they make a mad-rush through the Icefall to reach their tents and oxygen-depots. Masks give them a 70 per cent oxygen saturation at 8000m. They return home self-proclaimed heroes, to hold lectures, make films and write books. Yes, they suffer and they die, but anyone can suffer or die, especially the unfit and incompetent.

In December 2014 I presented to the Secretary of Tourism and to 70 representatives from the

industry 24 possible changes. One obvious suggestion was to reduce the number of expeditions and individuals allowed on Mt Everest at a given time. As expected, the Ministry did the exact opposite, reducing the fees to encourage even more traffic probably influenced by powerful business interests.

No one wants to stop the Everest expedition industry, but we should question its lack of integrity and lack of vision. There are 140 virgin mountains in Nepal, innumerable ones that have only one climb on

them. Real mountaineers around the world wish to visit Nepal and climb, but today's 'model' has become too expensive. Yet the Everest package lacks substance and soul.

Edmund Hillary was, and I assume Tenzing would be, disgusted by today's scene. It is time to put back the: 'why' we climb, that leads to 'how' we climb. Time to stop embracing the meaningless: 'What' we climb. 🇳🇵

David Durkan is a traveller, mountaineer and author of the book, Penguins on Everest. durkandavid@gmail.com

Cleaning up the Bagmati



Interview with Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal who led the 22-month long Bagmati Clean-up campaign.
Setopati, 13 April

सेतोपाटी

Setopati: Can you tell us how the clean-up campaign started?
Leela Mani Paudyal: The campaign began on 29 January 2012 with a cleaning drive from Singha Darbar to Baneshwor. The then Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai was himself involved and took part in cleaning the Bagmati River. The plan was to mobilise over a million volunteers including retirees, students and youth in various sectors throughout the country. But with the change in government, the campaign took a back seat.

What brought along the revival of the campaign?
I was visited by representatives from few organisations who informed me about 500 volunteers from India wanting to come

to Nepal to clean the Bagmati River. I then felt that it was our responsibility to clean up the mess we created. So I spoke to Secretary of Urban Development, Kishor Thapa, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development and the chief of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), and started the campaign on the foundation day of Ministry of Urban Development.

How does it feel to complete 100 weeks of the campaign?
This campaign shows that when both the government and the non-government sectors work together, we can achieve our goal.

What are the achievements of the 100 weeks?
We collected 5,000 metric tons of waste from Bagmati and its tributaries. We have cleaned banks and are planning to make gardens in 12 places. We have handed over the responsibility of cleaning and managing the banks to locals in five other places. More importantly, we have laid down sewers in various locations including Pashupati, Tilganga and Manahara.

How much money did the government spend on the campaign?
The government has not spent a rupee on this project. This is not a government project although various committees have been

helping with the needed materials.

How many people have been involved in the campaign till date?
We estimate over 300,000 people have been involved in cleaning the river over the 100 weeks.

Will the campaign ever be a success if people don't stop throwing garbage in Bagmati?
We have been continuously saying that awareness among people is a must for this campaign to succeed. Waste can be easily managed if people follow the 3Rs- Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. 70 per cent of the waste comes out from households and out of the remaining 30 per cent, 20 per cent can be reused. The day we reduce the amount of waste coming out of every household is the day when we will not have to worry about its management.

Isn't it true that Bagmati cannot be cleaned without cleaning the tributaries first?
We have started cleaning the tributaries too. The local authorities have started laying sewers in Dhobikhola and works to start laying sewers on both sides of Bishnumati is also underway. The government plans to finish laying drains and sewers in all of the tributaries.

How long will it take for Bagmati to return to its previous state?
It is human to want instant results but that is not possible in reality. We have to work together for a long time in order to undo the pollution of 40 years. This is not a project that has a start and a finish date, we have to continue working.

Will you still be involved with the campaign after you retire in four months?
My retirement will not make a difference to my work. Whether or not I remain the chief secretary, I will continue working for Bagmati.

What are your plans after retiring?
I will remain in the campaign as a volunteer.

Will you be working only for the Bagmati Clean-up Campaign?
I want to work in awareness building and alleviation of people's problems. A lot needs to be done in the sectors of public transportation system, migrant workers and violence against women. I would like to work on these issues. Let's see what happens.



Just got back from the Bagmati clean-up campaign.

नागरिक

Rabin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 13 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Drafting a democratic constitution will be a true tribute to late Surya Bahadur Thapa.”

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala quoted in *setopati.com*, 16 April

From sockballs to volleyballs

Tularam Pandey and Khimu K.C., *Nepal*, 12 April

नेपाल



Sixteen-year-old Jarma Malla of Kalikot who began playing volleyball with a sock stuffed with grass is now a member of Nepal's national volleyball team. Malla was a seventh grader at Kalika Secondary School when she led her team to victory in the district-level President's Cup.

The following year, she was selected for the mid-western regional team and last year she made it as a national player.
“Now that the SLC exams have ended, I can fully concentrate on the game,” says Malla, who had to juggle schoolwork and volleyball for the past four years.
Malla is proud of having led her regional team to several victories. Her team won the regional championship in Nepalganj and came in second at a national competition held in Kathmandu.
“I don't know when I got addicted to the game but now I want to make a career of it,” says Malla who has participated in four regional-level and two national-level competitions.
Although she is happy to be representing the nation, Malla feels that the National Sports Council is not doing enough to promote players from rural areas. “They only come looking for players right before the competitions. We are then made to compete with the police and army teams without proper training,” says Malla.
“Even when we have the confidence to do something, we cannot perform well due to lack of opportunities and regular trainings,” she adds.
She has won the best player award in four regional competitions and plans to move to Kathmandu for to play more volleyball.

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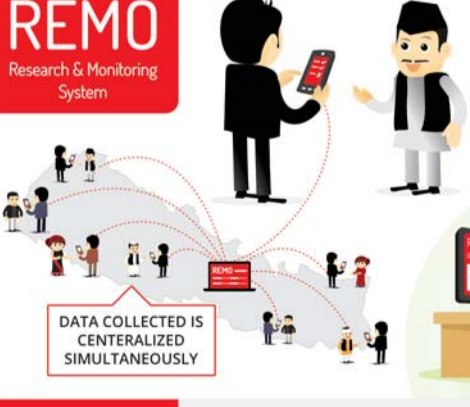
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OM ASTHA RAI

Veteran politician Surya Bahadur Thapa who became Nepal’s Prime Minister a record five times, serving three kings, passed away in New Delhi on Wednesday night after an operation. He was 88.

Thapa was the mentor leader of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and was appointed prime minister in 1963 by King Mahendra two years after sending an elected prime minister to jail after a coup. Thapa was made prime minister again four times (1965-1969, 1979-1983, 1997-1998 and 2003-2004).

Although many analysts have used historical hindsight to criticise Thapa for being a staunch defender of the autocratic Panchayat System, and especially his role in selling off forests to fund the royalist campaign in the 1980 referendum, Thapa was a decisive pragmatist. He was also not afraid to speak his mind, sometimes against the palace establishment and unnamed “underground cliques” who exercised power in the name of the king. He was impeached in 1983, and it was rumoured that Prince Gyanendra was behind his ouster.

Thapa later served as prime minister under King Gyanendra after he started his ‘creeping coup’ to sideline parliament and the political parties in 2003-2004. He was a sharp political analyst, and was seen as a veteran leader that everyone trusted to be a mediator.

Thapa could be a ruthless politician when he wanted to. He put his own friend Bishwo Bandhu Thapa in jail for meeting BP Koirala and unseated his political rival Lokendra Bahadur Chand in 1997.

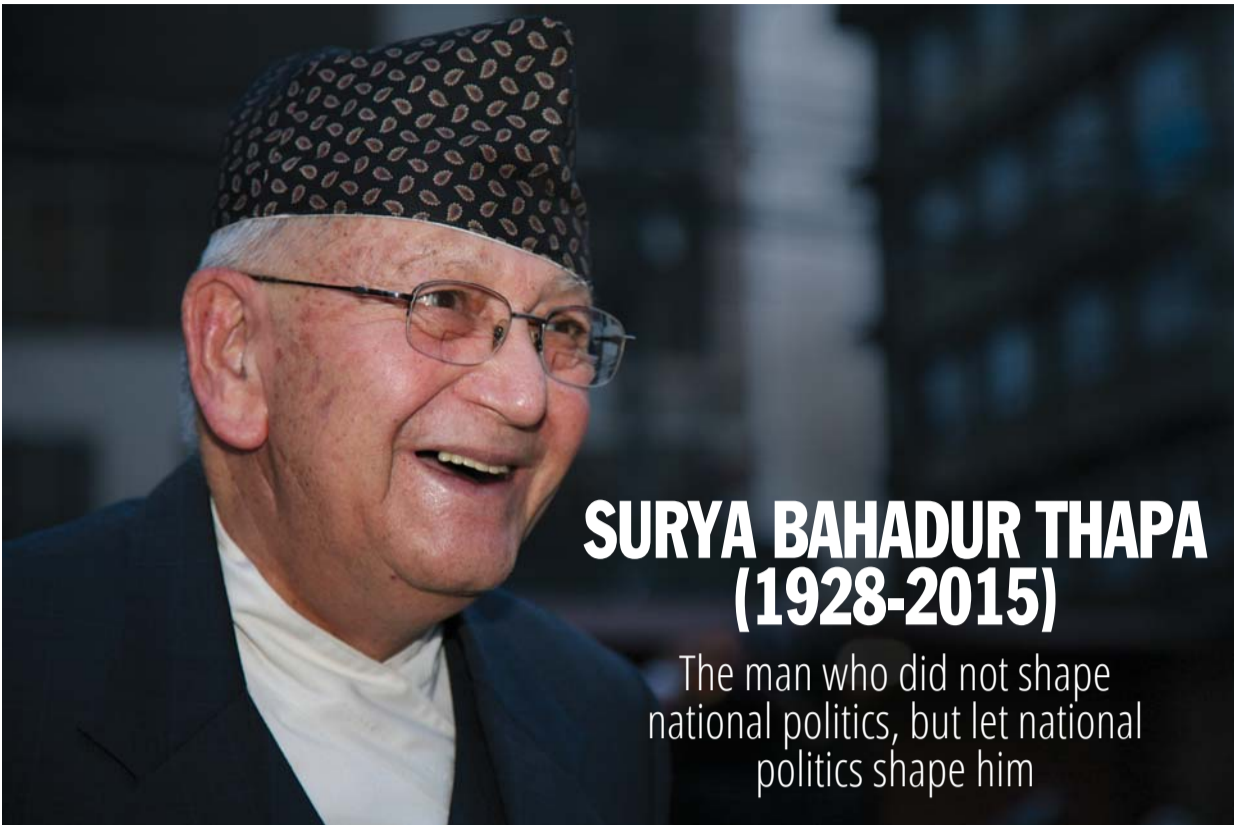
Ever since the young man from Muga in Dhankuta was handpicked by King Mahendra to chair his Advisory Council in 1959, Thapa was always at the center of Nepali politics. Whether during the Panchayat System or after the restoration of multi-party democracy, he was a pivotal political player.

After Nepal was declared a republic in 2008, he did not get a chance to become Prime Minister but chaired the Constituent Assembly (CA) sessions by virtue of being its eldest member.

Thapa was Mahendra’s confidante and remained loyal to the royal palace throughout his life. It is said that Mahendra, before his death, had advised his son Birendra to consult Thapa during any political crisis. But after Mahendra’s demise, Thapa shared a bitter-sweet relation with the palace, demanded changes in the Panchayat System and was even jailed for his role in pushing reforms.

“He always believed that the source of power was people and stood against Narayanhi’s intervention in Singha Darbar,” said RPP leader Prakash Chandra Lohani, who is close to Thapa’s rival Lokendra Bahadur Chand. “That was why he was sometimes tormented by the palace. In a way, he contributed a great deal to democratisation of governance.

Despite being a key political



SURYA BAHADUR THAPA (1928-2015)

The man who did not shape national politics, but let national politics shape him

MANI RATNA BAJRACHAYA

figure, Thapa did not shape national politics, but national political shaped him. He adapted adeptly to any political system that Nepal took on: absolute monarchy, constitutional democracy, or a return to autocracy.

Journalist Kedar Sharma, who had been working closely with Thapa on his memoir for the past three years says Thapa always knew which way the wind was blowing, but did not allow it to blow him off course.

Perhaps because of this very quality, Thapa always remained relevant to Nepali politics. Thapa’s Panchayat-era political rival Tulasi Giri vanished after the first pro-democracy movement of 1990, came back after Gyanendra

Shah seized power in 2005, and vanished again after the second pro-democracy uprising of April 2006. But Thapa was always around through thick or thin, like a political fixture.

Thapa was active right till the end, hosting a meeting of top leaders of four political parties last month to find a compromise on the constitution, and what he could do to help break the political impasse.

“He was always alert and full of energy,” Sharma recalls about their many hours together working on the book. “His mind was sharp, he remembered everything from the past, and knew exactly what was going on in present-day politics.”

Lohani, who has worked with Thapa since the Panchayat era, wishes Thapa had played a greater role in ending the political deadlock. “He was one leader everyone respected and listened to, he has left a great void.”

Thapa had undergone surgery in his stomach at Medanta Hospital in New Delhi last week, and was recovering well when he suddenly complained of respiratory problems and was put on a ventilator. Doctors pronounced him dead at 10:44 pm on Wednesday. He will be cremated at Pashupati on Friday.

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AD or BS?

As we plunge headlong into the year 2072 BS, it is time for us as a nation to take stock of the past year and look forward to more of the same pointlessness in the coming one. In hindsight, it seems ridiculous, almost comical, how we blundered around aimlessly going to work every day last year when we could have announced nationwide shutdowns.

On the occasion of the new year, therefore, we pay tribute to the political myopia and official narrow-mindedness that has made Nepal what it is today. No point being disheartened, folks, however low a country sinks, however chaotic the past year, as the Carpenters put it so eloquently, “tomorrow will always be brighter than today and yesterday all our troubles seemed so far away”. Or was it the Beatles?

One never knows during these uncertain times how long we in the fourth estate will be allowed to vent our frustrations in broad daylight before the

govt says enough is enough and curbs our freedom of expressionism. So, to protect every citizen's right to know, we media persons have to defend and uphold our own right to get things totally wrong. We may not like what is going on around us, we may not agree with everything that is being said, but the constitution gives us the right to make things up as we go along.

Luckily we are all professionals here and we stick to our journalistic code of ethics, and consider that lying is ok as long as we don't do it on purpose. That makes life much easier and allows columns like these, which would be banned in any civilised country. Anyway, as a brief recap we print below a few items of news that did not see the light of day in 2071 because of space constraints:

Bomb Found and Lost at TIA

A plastic explosive that French police secretly planted inside an unsuspecting passenger's suitcase in Paris last week to test airport security has been located in the baggage of a passenger arriving at Tribhuvan Antinational Airport Thursday morning, unusually unreliable sources said.

The bundle of explosives, which French sniffer dogs could not detect at Charles de Gaulle was ferreted out by Bhalu, the mongrel who has made TIA's

international apron his home and is often seen pre-inspecting incoming luggage for interesting tidbits.

“Yes, I can confirm that we have unconfirmed reports that Bhalu found the bomb, took it to an undisclosed location,” the head of airport police told reporters, requesting anonymity, “he may have mistaken it for a sausage and shared it with friends.” A Code Red dog-bomb alert has been put out in the capital.

NOC Employees Strike for Expensive Gas

Employees of the state-owned Nepal Oil Corruption (NOC) went on an indefinite strike Monday demanding a steep hike in petroleum prices.

“How can we make our ends meet and provide for our families if gasoline is so cheap,” asked an employee who was gheraoing the corporation's premises by gham tapoing in the lawn. The All-Nepal Federation of Adulterating Gas Stations (Revolting) also joined the strike to create a manmade shortage demanding that the government hike falling petroleum prices by 50 per cent. “Just because oil prices drop in the world market doesn't mean Nepal must follow suit, we are a sovereign country and should set our own prices,” said one oil baron.

Cowdung Supplies Sufficient: Govt

Responding to panic-buying by desperate citizens, GONe has assured all and sundry that Nepal's strategic

stockpile of cowdung patties are enough to meet the nation's demand for the coming fiscal year.

Faced with a severe shortage of LPG cylinders, the public has reverted to dried cowdung, a traditional fuel. Kitchens of five star hotels have switched to buffalo droppings, and pizza parlours specialising in wood-fired pizzas are now offering dung-fired double-topping pepperonis.

“Thanks to the generous contribution of Nepal's cattle population, our cowdung supplies are enough to meet any exigencies,” said the Minister of Animal Husbandry and Bullshit.

Jhusil Da to Stay On

The Nepali Congress Central Committee meeting today decided unanimously to allow Jhusil Da to stand in the forthcoming Nepali Kangres Party Convention for President for the Tenth Term until he is 112 years old.

“He is going to stand but in consideration of his advanced years, we are going to allow him to sit,” said his niece, Sujata Koirala, herself not a spring chicken.

Mr Koirala had earlier promised that he would step down as Primordial Minister “the minute the constitution is written in 2072”. It now looks like he won't have to step down at all because he meant 2072 AD.



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