The then underground Maoist party had just launched its armed struggle in February 1996, and Rukum-based primary school teacher Nareit Baner was one of the first casualties. The rest of Nepal wasn’t even aware a war had started.

Baner was returning home one evening when he encountered a group of Maoists. They hacked him with kinkuri, chopped off his left arm below the elbow and left him for dead by a river. He had been mistaken for his brother who was a Nepali Congress member. Luckily, Nareit was rescued, and despite the heavy loss of blood, survived. While he was recuperating in a hospital, his brother was hunted down and killed anyway.

We tracked down Nareit Baner last week. He is still teaching above at the same school where the famous photograph of him in class was taken 20 years ago (right). Balancing a text book on his left elbow while teaching a classroom, he is still waiting for government compensation that hasn’t reached this remote town.

The attackers never had to answer for their crime, instead they walk around freely in Musikot. Nareit Baner has not pursued them because he doesn’t expect any justice from an unacting state. The Sarsawal Primary School in Musikot has expanded and will soon house 160 to 170 children.

Twenty years ago, the classroom had a mud floor, dilapidated furniture and a boarded up window. Today, the students have uniforms with ties, the poems are brighter and older students no longer have to go to Surkhet for higher education. Rukum is no longer at war, but the memory of those who lost their lives is still fresh in the hearts of its residents.

Nepal has transitioned from monarchy to republic, but Nareit Baner is exactly where he was two decades ago.

**Read full story pages 14-15**
**HUNGRY GHOSTS**

With former enemies now in the governing coalition, it is up to civil society and the media to remember not to forget wartime atrocities.

In a horrific preview of the terror to come, Maoist rebels chopped off the left hand of primary school teacher Narjir Baset in Rukum in February 1996. Nepal Times tracked down Baset, and found him exactly where he has been for the last 20 years: teaching Grade 3 of Saraswati School in Musikot, still cradling his text book in the stub of his arm. (See page 14-15)

Dekendra Thapa was a well regarded journalist in Dailekh working for Radio Nepal. When the Maoists stopped the water supply to the town in 2004 during a siege, he offered to mediate. But he was disappeared. In 2008, Dekendra Thapa’s body was finally located, exhumed and forensic examination revealed that he had been buried alive after torture. (Story on page 14-15)

Krishna Prasad Adhikari was 17 when he went to visit his mother’s family just afternoon. In 2008, Krishna Prasad died last year and his body is still in the hospital morgue. Ganga Maya is on the 52nd day of her fast to protest when Baburam Bhattarai was prime minister in 2012. Police and Ganga Maya came to Kathmandu to protest stuffing him inside a sack and dragging him when he went to visit his mother’s family just afternoon. (32 shares)

**YOUR SAY**

*Women trafficking*

Thank you for highlighting the fact that the districts that are vulnerable to women trafficking are also the districts with most women migrant workers (Epicycle of trafficking, Om Astha Rai, #824). But the author has failed to touch upon the fact that most women were sold into Indian brothels in the past is not sufficient. The author should have looked at multiple layers of the issue.

Kirti Pradhan

Social workers and community educators must work directly to persuade, educate and convince villagers that they need to give the best education available to their children (‘Hiding hidden wounds’, Shreepatra Shrestha, #824). And best education does not mean an expensive education. They must give their children agricultural or other occupational skills, and facilitate their intellectual, physical and emotional growth with play, conversation and interaction. Sending them away for survival is not good.

Leslie Brown

The fact that Nepal’s President, Speaker of Parliament and Chief Justice are women is in itself a great leap forward (‘Power to women’, Manju Gurung, #824). But this is not sufficient. Even if our Parliament elects a woman as Prime Minister, it will not end the deep-rooted patriarchy. To change it, to and create an equal society, we need to educate girls and invest in their holistic growth. It takes time, but change is surely underway.

Ratha Poudyal

Equality should mean equal opportunity, not equal equity. It is a competitive world out there and one cannot be chosen over the other solely based on gender. Qualification and capability should also come into play.

Sun G

One cannot achieve something just because she/he wields political power handed to them on a platter. The one who hands it wields the power. If a woman wields power through competition rather than for being a woman, she can inspire more women.

Mr Poudel

The Maoists, NC and the UML have no desire to revisit conflict-era atrocities, and are only ready to let each other off the hook. Despite their vicious power struggle, they are all on one side when it comes to transitional justice. They will provide lip service for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Commission on Enforced Disappearances as a sop to the international community, and not really to bring perpetrators to justice.

Even though Nepal Army Col Kumar Lama was acquitted on charges of war-era torture by a UK court, it has established a preconditions that perpetrators can run but they can’t hide.

In the ten years after the conflict ended, there has been lawlessness and ad hocism in governance. The political transition has dragged on because Nepal is ruled by a political cartel made up of the once-warring parties. The immunity from prosecution that they have given themselves is the reason for the impunity in all spheres of national life today. It is the reason for the lack of accountability, for endemic corruption, the erosion of the rule of law and the sinister rise of a parallel state power. When rulers are walking proof of their own laws, what can they do?

The public’s indifference helps the former enemies who now form the state to wash each other’s bloodied hands. It is now up to civil society and the media to ensure that we remember not to forget, to chronicle the carnage and document the war crimes and the families of the murdered and disappeared get the truth and justice they seek.
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The only country spanning two continents, Turkey has long served as a bridge for people travelling from East to West and vice-versa. And its national airlines – Turkish Airlines – with the most destinations of any airlines in the world, has made it easier to connect Nepal with the rest of the world.

From 800 – 500 BC, Byzantium (now Istanbul) was on the border separating the Greek and the Persian empires. During the days of the Silk Route, it was Constantinople where all roads led, not Rome. Keeping up its reputation of being an important junction, Istanbul is still a melting pot for wanderers and travellers alike and with an increase in the mobility of people thanks to a boom in the airline industry it has once again become the hub for layovers, besides being a destination in its own right.

Istanbul’s advantage is its location, which is ideal for layovers short and long. And in an age when direct flights take up to 15 hours, Istanbul’s central location is a blessing. This makes destinations in South America, Australia, North America and the Far East just a one-stop hop away from anywhere else in the world.

Turkish Airlines has been trying to cash in on its geographical location.

Post the construction of Istanbul’s new airport, the airline aims to make travel and transit smoother and more reliable. Currently, Turkish already flies to 293 destinations in 119 countries covering more ground than any airline in the world.

Turkish is the only airline that links Nepal directly to Europe, and although its flights have been reduced to four days a week because of a fall in the number of travellers, a possible repercussion of the coup in Turkey this July and the socio-political upheaval that rocked Nepal this past year. The airlines, however, is hopeful that it will resume daily

Congratulations to our team mate Tshering Pande Bhome on the prestigious "Kumar Khadga Bikram Adventurous Award" for his efforts in Longline rescue and mountaineering in Nepal.

TwentyPct Karma Team
www.tpkarma.com
High fuel price a deterrent

Excerpts from the interview with Harun Bastürk, Vice President of Sales for Asia and Far East Turkish Airlines.

Nepali Times: What are the main issues confronting your Istanbul-Kathmandu connection?

Harun Bastürk: To be honest, the main issue is the aviation fuel price in Kathmandu. Fuel in Kathmandu is very expensive. This definitely affects the financial performance of this route. I don’t remember the exact number we received from fueling, but I know that when you compare the prices to Turkey it’s almost more than double. In all Turkish Airlines’ networks, the fuel cost is 10-20 per cent of the operations on an average, but for Kathmandu it is around 40 per cent.

Do you have plans to resume daily flights between Kathmandu and Istanbul?

The passenger load for Kathmandu is very seasonal. During winters, the passenger flow is higher than during summers. So, I don’t think we will be able to have daily flights during the summers but are aiming to increase the number of flights in our winter schedule.

Any plans to promote Turkey as a destination, and not just as a transit point?

Turkish Airlines mainly carries tourists or exports from the US and Europe who mainly travel during winter. At present the relationship between Turkey and Nepal is limited and it is important to fill this gap. As the national carrier, we want to be in Nepal, we want to be in Kathmandu, to be the bridge.

operations soon.

According to Harun Bastürk, the airline’s Vice President of Sales for Asia and the Far East, nearly 96 per cent of passengers from Kathmandu are transiting Istanbul (see interview). He said the main deterrent in the flights to Nepal was the seasonality in traffic and the high cost of aviation fuel at the airport in Kathmandu. He told the Nepali Times: “Turkish Airlines mainly carries tourists or exports from the US and Europe, who usually travel during winter.”

In 2015, Ataturk Airport in Istanbul, where Turkish Airlines is based, was named the 15th largest Airport in the world providing services to 61.8 million passengers, and was deemed the third busiest airport in Europe with 329 airlines using it for transit and travel facilities.

Despite these impressive statistics, the capacity of the airport is limited.

The airline is getting ready to extend its operations to the new airport, which when completed will have six runways, four terminals, and is expected to serve 150 million passengers a year.

Sahin Sahin in Istanbul

Added destination

National flag carrier Turkish Airlines has added Cluj-Napoca as its third destination in Romania from Istanbul after Bucharest and Constanta in Romania. Flights will operate on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in both directions.

Best for business

Qatar Airways was given the title of ‘Best for Business’ by Conde Nast Traveller Readers at an event held in London recently. The carrier, which flies to more than 70 destinations, was recognised for its services and products.

Drive for education

Sipahi Trading, authorised distributor of Tata Motors in Nepal, announced their ‘Test Drive Campaign for Education’. Tata Motors will display Tiago, Bolt and Tigor at schools across the country. For each test drive, the company will donate Rs 500 to the school.

C’MON GET ACTIVE

100% Mixed Fruit Juice.
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DAY LONG ACTIVENESS.

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How decentralised is federalism?

The current debate is between power centralised in federal capitals and at the local level.
From Western to Eastern classical and fusion, the second edition of Gharana Music Festival has it all

SOMITI BASNET

Over the years, the small room of the world renowned cellist Franz Berendt's house in Shigachi has often come alive with the sound of music. Of late, the room has been hearing an ensemble of Cello, Madal and Suraj to recreate 16th century Spanish music in preparation for an encore of last year's popular Gharana Music Festival in Kathmandu.

Having founded Singhini in 2001, Berendt has been working to promote and preserve Nepal's artists abroad. He has performed in international festivals over the years, the size of the ensemble depending on the kind of music and venue. For this festival, the trio hopes to bridge the gap between Eastern musical instruments and its approach to music with that of 16th century Spanish and 17th century Italian music.

"There is a common root between the ragas that my fellow colleagues practise and renaissance music, and that is what I found interesting and wanted to introduce," said the Baroque music specialist who will be performing with Santosh Prakash Shrestha and Bidur Rajkumar during the festival.

Returning for its second edition after a successful first year, the Gharana Music Festival will spot many other acclaimed musicians. "What we are trying to do is give people a deeper access inside different classical traditions. We're in a place where music education is starting to grow significantly. Both music teachers and students want more genres available for study," said David Linden of the Gharana Music Foundation that hopes to introduce musical traditions from all over the world including Nepal.

The four-day event, 14-18 September, is going to see a host of chamber concerts and music live performances. Like last year, the festival will have a series of workshops and master-classes enabling students to learn from experienced musicians and perform for an enthusiastic audience.

The master classes will be hosted by international and local artists like Berendt, Rupert Boyd, Neelkiran Majhli, Paul Casarile and Sall Subedi on different instruments like the viola, violin, piano, guitar and even the cldgeno.

Linden hopes that the festival, like last year, is one of a kind to not only entertain and educate but also to provide a platform for upcoming musicians. "Folk traditions, in a sense, are getting lost. Though there's education in Eastern classical here, the musicians don't get enough exposure," said Linden who sees hope in bands like Night that fuse modern and traditional instruments to revive such folk traditions.

The band which has experimented with sounds of instruments like the pipa, lute, mandolin and jawuhas has recently received accolades for its first album and recently concluded their trip to the Kangra region to research on the region's endangered traditional instruments, will be coming out with a second album.

"Our aim has always been to look for new sounds and explore the scope of any instrument that we use," said Jason Sunwar of Night who feel such festivals are a step towards making the public aware about the performance art culture and encourage music appreciation.

The new Western style classical Duende String Quartet will also feature in the festival.

"The most important thing about Gharana is to be able to appreciate all forms of music by those from all over the world for their artistic worth and also their cultural worth," said Linden who is looking forward to en enriching and lively second edition.

14th to 18th September, All Events at Hotel Yak & Yeti, Durbar Marg except 4 pm on Saturday at Tanglwood, Tangal


Admission to Tangalwood concert, workshops and masterclasses: Free

For more information: www.gharanamusiconfoundation.org
The experience Nepalis have amassed digging tunnels for Hong Kong’s subway system could be harnessed for hydropower projects back home.

SONIA AWALE
in HONG KONG

Thirty metres below Hong Kong Island, a gigantic drill burrows through the rocks to build an extension of the South Island Line of the territory’s subway network. Controlling the Tunnel Boring Machine in the humid heat deep underground is a Nepali crew led by tunnel construction veteran Jham Bahadur Gurung. Gurung is one of those British Gurkha descendant spouses to work in Hong Kong’s booming construction industry. But with new hydropower projects in the pipeline back home, many hope that Nepal can use their experience in the state-of-the-art drilling technology.

“I hear about new hydropower projects in Nepal and we talk about working back home. If not anything else, I can at least share my experience in tunnel constructions,” says Gurung, who is the pilot of the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) and is an expert in the precision techniques required. Construction has long been a preferred occupation of most Nepalis living in Hong Kong, and thousands are working on tunnels, as engineers operating TBM, or as labourers in drilling and blasting. There are plenty of jobs because Hong Kong has five major subway extensions and railway projects underway, simultaneously.

“Nepali workers are experts in the field of tunnel construction,” explains Dambar KC, a researcher of the Nepali community in Hong Kong. “Tunnel Boring Machines are a new concept in Nepal and the best Nepali TBM pilots are here in Hong Kong.”

Gurung has spent 16 years building tunnels and his expertise is much sought after in Hong Kong. He now has offers from Chinese-supported hydropower projects in Nepal that need people with his knowledge of the field. “I think the main reason they have approached me is because of my skills, but also because I can communicate better between contractors and locals as I speak both English and Nepali,” said Gurung, a political science graduate.

Communication is often a big problem between engineers and labourers as well as between managers and locals in hydropower projects in Nepal, and Hong Kong-based tunnel engineers would be a perfect fit. There are several big hydropower projects in Nepal in which Chinese investors are involved. In April, the investment board of Nepal cleared China Three Gorges Corporation (CTC) $1.6 billion to develop the West Seti hydropower project, which is expected to generate 750MW when completed in 2022.

The Chinese are also involved in the Bheri-Babai Diversion Multipurpose Project in Surkhet whose aim is to transfer trans-boundary water through a 12 km long and 4.2 m wide tunnel from Bheri to Babai in western Nepal to irrigate 51,000 hectares of farms in Bajke and Bardia while generating 48MW power. The project is expected to use the TBM.

The China Overseas Engineering Company (COVEC) had approached Hong Kong-based Nepali operators like Jham Bahadur Gurung. All new hydropower projects need tunnel construction technology. Projects in Nepal have long employed the drill and blast method. The 26km Melamchi tunnel is using TBM for the first time.
MEN AT WORK: Hem Bahadur Gurung poses for a photograph this week in front of the tunnel boring machine he pilots. (Left)

Nepal workers poring in a tunnel they are working on in Hong Kong.

“I had been talking to the director of COVEC and it would have been great if I could have explored this opportunity,” said Gurung, “but in the end they didn’t hire me because they thought I was too expensive.”

Shyam Ingmann, an engineer at the Vinci Construction Grants Project and previously a lecturer at Kathmandu Engineering College, says some Nepalis would be willing to work for slightly less in Nepal because of the contribution they get from contributing to the development of the home country. A Nepali tunnel operator earns up to US$8,000 in Hong Kong, and workers also enjoy generous insurance and injury compensation. Shyam Ingmann said: “If I’m paid 60 per cent of what I earn here, I won’t mind working on projects in Nepal. But less than that might not work.”

Not everyone is an enthusiastic Bhawani Limbu, who comes from a family of British Gurkha soldiers, tried to work as a tunnel expert in Nepal, but he was so turned off by the politics and nepotism, he decided to leave.

“TBM is an extensive process, used especially in urban areas where you cannot use blasting techniques,” says Nepali TBM engineer in Hong Kong, Shyam Ingnam. “In Nepal, it will undoubtedly more efficient and safe.”

Construction and transportation costs make Tunnel Boring Machines more expensive than the drill and blast method, but the minimal disturbances it causes to the rock strata and the tunnel wall, reduce tunnel lining costs. The machine can dig up to 60 m of tunnel space per day and can bore anything from hard rock to sand, making it a sound alternative to the traditional drill and blast method.

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A NEW TECHNOLOGY

The Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) has been long used to excavate tunnels for railway and hydroelectric projects, and is being used to dig the 276km Mekong scheme tunnel.

TBM is an extensive process, used especially in urban areas where you cannot use blasting techniques,” says Nepali TBM engineer in Hong Kong, Shyam Ingnam. “In Nepal, it will undoubtedly be more efficient and safe.”

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Since there are no trained TBM pilots and operators in Nepal, COVEC is looking at two options: either employ a team of Hong Kong-Nepali TBM experts or hire Gurung in a higher position. "Skilled Nepali workers from the subway tunnels in Hong Kong would be of great advantage to us," said Suniti Shrestha of Hydro China Corporation, which is building the 102MW Upper Trishuli II. However, there is the question of whether Nepalis with the same experience will be paid less than their international counterparts. In that case, Nepali technicians say, they’d rather work in Hong Kong where they can easily earn 10 times more than what they would in Nepal.
Indra Jatra, an evening of traditional dances and music with Tihar Puja at Basantapur.

Art Market, for all things Nepali, visit the weekend’s art market at Madhubala Nepal specialty. Also visit the live music at 10 September, 7 to 8 pm, The Yellow House, Sawayana, Jhapa, 071-5558899.

Urban pop wear, a unique runway show of urban pop art and fashion wear by Bijay Gauram in collaboration with Art, 9 September, 7 to 8 pm, Siriraj, Datar, Bodh, 071-4446555.

Street fun, stroll along the streets of Jumla near for food, fun and live music by some of your favorite bands as part of the Jumla Street Festival.

Fashion photography, learn the tricks and trade of fashion photography with Sunay Ka in a three-day workshop. Prizes will be given to the best.

Art exhibition, attend the exhibition by German contemporary visual artist Lena Kaserer, organised by Arturo. All are welcome and visit to Subashini Art Gallery, 9 to 17 September, Ashadu, Swayambhunath, 01-4233577.

Ride to Khokana, contribute to restoring Nepal’s cultural heritage by participating in a cycle ride program from Kathmandu to Khokana, organised by Khokana Reconstruction and Renovation Committee.

Monochrome mandalas, learn the art of making mandala with Sunita Shrestha’s As Collective.

Alfresco, for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights.

The Well Will Not Last Forever, Over-pumping will deplete ground water, but rainwater harvesting is sustainable.

Start Being Environment Positive, Choose the smarter way - choose rainwater harvesting.

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

Miss Motivation, Kripa Joshi.

Events.

Dining.

Music.

Getaway.

Arjuna’s Dilemma, marks your calendar for the staging of the opera Arjuna’s Dilemma, based on the Bhagavad Gita, by One World Theatre. 3 to 11 September, 7pm onwards, Patan Museum, Poonar Shekar Square, Ticket: Rs 750, 500 (students). For reservations: 0131047448.

Digital design, participate in a three-day long digital art and design workshop led by UK graphic designer Matthew Magnus. 14 to 16 September, 9am to 12 pm, Khellos Culture Nepal, Fees: Rs 3000, Rs 500 (students).

Bajeko Sekuwa, enjoy the Sekuwa served with a side of beef, fish, and chicken. Don’t forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich.

Barista Latte, the newest addition to the Valley’s European inspired coffee cafe culture serves excellent coffee and late, don’t forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich.

Gharana Music Festival, mark your calendars for the second edition of the international classical music festival organised by the Gharana Music Foundation. Read more on Page 2.

Kutumba Live, tap along the beat of soul-stirring music, as Kutumba performs live, 16 September, 7pm onwards, Patan Museum.

Gharana Music Festival.

Little Italy, go vegetarian at this new Italian food chain and don’t forget to end your meal with the chef’s specials, the chocolate bomb.

Black Pepper Cafe & Pub, displaying Indian and Chinese cuisines in a traditional style, vibrant.

Ciney Gurung Live, Fine dining with Ciney Gurung serving drinks and food. Rs 2,000 nett per person. Every Friday, 7pm onwards, Shambala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, 01-4419599.

Open mic night, grill the mic and sing your heart out at the House of Music every Tuesday.

Hotel Barahi, enjoy a great view of the houses like cultural show, or indulge in scrumptious pastries from springs and showers.

Hotel Shambala, take the weekend off and lounge by the gorgeous infinity pool located on the hotel’s rooftop.

Atithi Resort, a perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food for your choice.

Hotel Shambala, a perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food for your choice. Shambala, Lalitpur, 01-4650160, 01-4650167, info@atithiresort.com
The world’s best whitewater

I remember the first time I tried some white-water action in 2009. A little scared, I chose to sit at the very end of the boat, which unfortunately, turned around when the ride started, putting me at the helm. Today, I can’t think of choosing to sit anywhere but right in the midst of the sheer thrill of it and the responsibility of leadership that comes with the position. Braving the raging waters of Upper Bhotekosi, Sunkan, Trisuli, and Marsyangdi, I have come a long way since my nervous rafting days.

The topographical extreme that gives Nepal the highest mountains in the world and some of the most spectacular scenery also endows the country with the wildest rivers for whitewater rafting. Having experienced the thrill of rafting in Nepal only, I don’t know what it is like elsewhere in the world. Which is why I asked the opinion of one of the world’s best-known river conservationists, Megh Ale.

“We have the world’s best white waters for rafting,” Megh said with the air of finality, as if the debate was closed. “Did you know that Dobhi just spent millions of dollars to build an artificial river to create whitewater-like rapids? But we got it all for free—a gift from nature.”

I take Megh’s word for it, and from what I have seen of Himalayan rivers I can vouch with some surety that white-water rafting here is truly an out-of-this-world experience.

So much more than just a sport

For the casual observer looking down at rafters on the Trisuli from the Pokhara highway, rafting may look like a bunch of hyperactive people clad in colourful gear screaming fun and fear down a fast-flowing river. While it is all that, rafting is so much more than just an adventure sport. Rafting is team-work that demands synchronicity by those on-board.

Technical finesse is the responsibility of the guide, but team members’ assistance is equally important. There is hedging, both with those on the raft and with nature. And while the rapids keep the adrenaline high, it is the ice-cold snow-fed water waves, the scenic green ridges that run alongside and the gorges on either side that truly makes the river rendezvous an exciting and memorable experience.

Hydropower versus Tourism

There is an ongoing debate on weather Nepal’s whitewater are best used for whitewater adventures to generate electricity for a country plagued by power cuts. Megh Ale, President of the Nepal River Conservation Trust, passionately believes that some rivers should be left pristine.

“Extracting electricity seems like a really important remedy right now, but in the long run, destroying the free flow of rivers with social, ecological, religious and aesthetic significance will only hurt the country,” he argues.

“The Modi, Bhotekosi, Tamur and Karnali deserve to be left to their free-flowing natural state, that will likely bring river-based employments and higher economic return than a hydropower plant may rake in. Damming damages a river, and damages to nature are irreversible.”

Packing up for a rafting spree

A wet suit (your own or provided by the company), you can ride in wear regular clothes, but wearing a swimsuit underneath is a good choice since rafting involves swimming and diving up to your shoulders. Never, ever, ever drink anything else besides water. Water-resistant cameras. Most rafting companies provide helmets with go-pro mounts.

Be safe

No matter how many times you may have gone white-water rafting, it is always important to follow safety instructions. Strike a friendly rapport with your river guide and he will be more open to share extra information and all hurdles to your ride — the overturning of the raft or sneaking (but safely) throwing out some members into the river. More is known to all on board that rating is safe and fun, because a nervous crew could sour the experience.

Ask your guide to stop at interesting cliffs, jumping spots along the river.
Cinema is about sleight of hand. For those who’ve never been on a set, it’s hard to imagine how much is manipulated, from perspectives and spaces, to the absolute lack of continuity as we imagine it, with shots shot in order of efficiency with no regard whatsoever to actual story lines.

It is, therefore, always enjoyable to see cinema used to celebrate that inherent magic trick with films like ‘Now You See Me’ (2013) - a delightful, totally tongue in cheek, romp that tips its hat to cinema’s trickery and uses the added dimension to present viewers with illusions that induce shock and awe.

With such a success, a sequel was inevitable but unfortunately, also, a hard act to follow. Even with a cast like Mark Ruffalo, Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg, Morgan Freeman, and Michael Caine, the film falls flat, partly due to the fact that there is no real story here, just a confused rehash of plot elements that made the first film memorable.

The essence of the story lies in the outrageous antics of the "Horsmen" who are a group of talented magicians bent on exposing the worst criminals around the world, corporate conspirators like Bertie Madoff who have lied and stolen from people without any qualms, in their quest to bring these people down, they often break the law, stealing from banks and other institutions only to give away their hoard - a la Robin Hood.

There are many twists in the first film that continue into the second one so I will not provide you with a detailed breakdown of who is who, nor a summary of bad guys vs. good guys for fear of giving away the many games at play even in this inferior sequel. The plot is an utter jumble, and most of the time, you will find yourself rolling your eyes at the utter inane dialogue. However, for the fans of the first film, and the people who understand the sweat behind the prestidigitation that cinema requires, there are a couple of absolutely fabulous, magical even, set pieces that are worth watching.

Films are like dreams flattened onto a screen, with a handful of curious mechanism of editors, cables, grips, electricians, camera people, costume-set designers, and directors that seek to make themselves invisible to serve the spectator. Making a film, even a mediocre one, is hard work, and while this does not excuse the habits of a bad film-maker, sometimes, very rarely, it is enough that a few scenes can redeem a labour of love. “Now You See Me 2” is a classic example, a film of folly that still succeeded in making $324 million (to date) against a $90 million budget because a few moments of it has the power to hold people rapt.

nepalitimes.com
“We will address Govinda KC’s demands”

If the Prime Minister’s speech and the letter sent to India is discussed in parliament, there should be discussions on Govinda KC’s demands too. It will be difficult to restore people’s faith in the parliament if issues of public importance are not taken up. Opinions, both for and against an issue can be taken up but only if they are allowed to be raised in parliament.

There seems to be undue interference on the part of the CIAA in the Medical Council. What do you propose to do about that?

Implementing the Medical Education Act and appointing eligible officiatis following a proper criteria will be done immediately. This is necessary to stop irregularities and ille logs by illegally adding seats in medical colleges and admitting Nepali students as foreigners.

Can we say that the issues raised by Dr. KC will be the basis of your working plan?

I do not want to confine myself to that, but Govinda KC has demanded improvements in medical education. I hope to make broader changes. I plan to leave the ministry only after establishing proper norms.

How will you solve the problem of health care for the poor?

It will take some time to supply medicines regularly to health centers and health posts. Our ministry has already taken up the task to improve the supply of medicines by streamlining procurement and distribution.

Ginger politics

Citing the increasing use of pesticides, India has banned ginger export from Nepal just a week before Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is scheduled to visit New Delhi. This can’t be a coincidence because India has repeatedly caused trouble in bilateral trade in the past whenever a high-level visit is planned from Nepal to India. A large amount of ginger is rating in godowns and farmers in Itahari, Panauti, Taplejung and other areas of the eastern region are facing a financial crisis because of the crisis. Nepal is the third largest producer of ginger in the world after China and India. All ginger produced in Nepal is exported to India after receiving the domestic demand.

Nepal’s ginger is considered to be of higher quality and Indian agriculture experts have consistently lamented it. But what could be the reason behind the ban in ginger export just days prior to Prime Minister Dahal’s visit to India?

India has been creating obstacles on the export of Nepali products whenever the volume shows an increase, and always before a high-level visit, possibly as a bargaining chip.

When Nepal Pashmina exports boomed in the Western and Indian markets in the 1990s, India increased 16 per cent additional charges just two weeks before the Nepal-India inter-governmental committee meeting was scheduled. The meeting is considered important to resolve bilateral economic disputes between the two countries even today. Nepal was planning to raise problems related to pharmaceutical exports at that time.

Petroleum is another product on which India has leverage. India imposed hefty duties and went against the petroleum import agreement with Indian prime minister Shri Manmohan Singh in 2004. The review of the 1993 Extraction Treaty, Upper Karnali, and Buddha and Rasuwa-Makwanpur pipeline agreements were conditions put forward by India while Nepal was planning to raise the issue of transit access to Bangladesh.

Dahal is leaving for India in a week and easy ginger export will be the top priority now, not the other issue that Nepal was planning to raise.

The government’s silence on pesticide contamination has legitimized the Indian ban. There is nothing new in the ginger ban, India is doing what it has always done: mix trade with politics.
NARJIT SIR
A school teacher whose hand was cut off by Maoists 20 years ago has another generation of students as pupils

PRABIR DADEL
in RUKUM

In February 1996, one week after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba ignored an ultimatum by the Maoist ideologue Subaram Bhattanai, a group of insurgents led by Barsha Man Pan raided a police post in Holeri of Rolpa with a vintage rifle and knives.

The Maoist tactics in the first years of the conflict was to terrorise the population into submission, attacking police posts and government offices to reduce the presence of the state.

The Deuba government treated the violence as an ordinary law and order problem and underestimated the Maoists.

In the remote district of Rukum, which in those days was not connected by road, the Maoists decided to execute Deuchar Baner, a VDC leader from the Nepali Congress.

However, they mistook Narjit Baner for his older brother Deuchar, and attacked him instead.

Narjit Baner was a primary school teacher in the Pokhara VDC of Rukum, one hour's walk from the district capital of Musakot. On 24 February 1996, he was returning home at dusk when Maoist guerrillas cornered him, and slashed him with khukuris. His left hand was chopped off at the wrist and he was dropped into the river and left to die.

An hour later, villagers found him and took him to a local health post. They were not equipped to treat him. The following day, the Maoists stopped him and his rescuers, who were on their way to Musakot and fled when the police arrived. He was later airlifted to Kathmandu for months of treatment.

Meanwhile, back in Rukum, the Maoists did eventually get his brother Deuchar and hacked him to death. Narjit was uncomfortable to conceive working in the same village, and was transferred to Saraswati Primary School in Musakot.

Twenty years after Baner became one of the first victims of the conflict in Rukum, and 10 years since the ceasefire, Maoist Chair Prachanda who ordered the execution of political opponents is Prime Minister again. And ironically, the coalition is backed by his erstwhile mortal enemy Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Meanwhile, Bhattanai who drafted the manifesto of the uprising has quit the Maoists and his party's new manifesto doesn't even have the word 'communist' in it. Fru who commanded the first Maoist attack in Holeri is a mainstream politician who masteredmind the ousters of the former Prime Minister KP Oli two months ago.

Back in Rukum, Narjit Bason still works as a teacher at a school that runs classes up to Grade 10. He is 54, but the sever injuries inflicted on him during the Maoist attack have begun to take its toll on his health.

He rests a book on the stub of his left hand while teaching, but cannot stand for long because both of his legs were injured and still bear the scars of deep shrapnel wounds.

"I don't want to dwell on what happened to me," says Baner. "But the pain makes forgetting that terrifying night difficult."
Sarswati School

After his left hand was hacked off by the Maoists at the start of the war in February 1996, Nairi Basnet was transferred to Sarswati Primary School in Musakot, the district capital of Rukum.

The students who were teaching when the now-famous photograph of him was taken 20 years ago may themselves be parents of the students he is teaching in the picture taken last week in the same classroom.

Sarswati School was upgraded from primary to lower secondary in 2001 and secondary in 2012. The school has since been renovated, the displaced furniture has been replaced and the students are smarter in skirts and ties. But the old classroom where Nairi Basnet was photographed in 1996 has been replaced by a new two-storey concrete building with another four-room structure completed last year. All together 359 students, including 189 girls, from Musakot and nearby villages study there.

The school has an energetic principal, Kumbha Singh Thapa, who aims to upgrade the school to high school. “If we improve our infrastructure, our students will not have to study elsewhere after the tenth grade,” he says.

As for Nairi Basnet, he is happy enough to be able to teach new students in a new classroom, erecting his right arm on the stub of his left arm.

Basnet was a popular and smart teacher. Although a primary teacher, he used to take classes up to Grade 8, even after losing his left hand. But now, he only takes classes up to Grade 3. “The wounds have kept me from moving ahead,” he says.

One of Basnet’s two sons has migrated to Saudi Arabia for work, and his daughter passed SLC exams last year, and he is struggling to pay for her higher education. He has not received financial assistance promised to war victims because he can walk, and is categorised as ‘a partial victim’.

In Musakot, every now and then, Basnet bumps into local Maoist leaders who attacked him. He has never asked them why they tried to kill him. “But if I ever meet Prachanda, I will not let him go without an explanation,” he says.

In faraway Kathmandu, the Maoists are back in power again, but Basnet says he has no hope from them: “They left me to die, how can they repay me for what they did to my life?”

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Nepal Times

alleged murderers, defying orders from Attorney General Mukti Pradhan who had been appointed by the Maoist Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai. Pradhan tried to pressure Sharma to call off the investigation, and he paid a price for refusing — he was denied a promotion by the Maoist government.

In December 2014, the Dailekh District Court convicted Niran Babadur Ghati, Harital Pul, Jaya Babadur Shachi, Lakshman Ghati Magar and Bir Babadur KC for Dekendra’s murder. They were only sentenced up to two years in jail, even though the public prosecutors had demanded life imprisonment. Four other accused are still at large. “So far, just those who were carrying out the orders have been punished, and even that is not enough for what they did to my father,” she says.

Nutan goes to a nearby shrine to light lamps every 11 August -- the day her father is thought to have been buried alive. She says: “I don’t think my father’s soul is at peace, he is still running away and that is why he often appears in my dreams. I pray that he finds peace.”

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