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Every 12 years, the chariot of the Red Machhindranath is rebuilt from scratch. On Wednesday, sure enough, it threatened to rain on the rain god's parade as the chariot was pulled out of Bungamati on its journey to Jawalakhel.

PHOTO FEATURE
PAGE 10-11

- Multimedia package with video and photo gallery Makers of Machhindranath

CYNTHIA CHOC



In April 1915, Nepali Gurkha battalions and Allied forces were deployed in the disastrous campaign to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey and threaten Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. **David Seddon** presents the first installment of a series of monthly flashbacks of Gurkha involvement in the First World War during which 20,000 Nepalis were killed.

PAGE 6



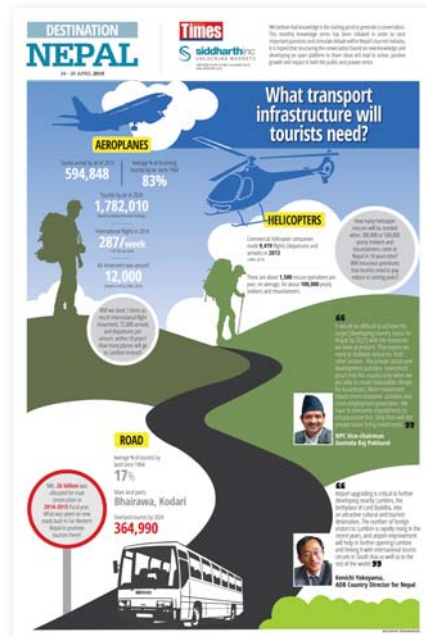
RAJENDRA KARK

Battling neglect and apathy, health workers risked their own lives to save hundreds of patients in the Jajarkot flu outbreak. But instead of lauding them, the mainstream media acted like a lynch mob.

BY **OM ASTHA RAI**

BETWEEN THE LINES
BY **TSERING DOLKER GURUNG**

PAGE 16-17



DESTINATION NEPAL KNOWLEDGE SERIES

April Focus:
Transport infrastructure for tourism

PAGE 19-20



BECAUSE IT IS THERE

This is the year of anniversaries: the 200th year of some of the fiercest battles in 1815 in Kumaon during the Anglo-Nepal war, and the 100th anniversary of the heavy loss of Nepali lives in Gallipoli in 1915. There are also triumphant anniversaries like the 60th of the first ascents of Kangchenjunga and Makalu, two difficult mountains which always tend to be overshadowed by the first Everest climb in 1953. And last week was the tragic first anniversary of the avalanche on the Khumbu Icefall that killed 16 people on 12 April 2014.

In last week’s coverage in this paper of the Everest avalanche, Om Astha Rai pointed out that mountaineering cannot be made completely failsafe. In fact, it is the inherent danger of climbing that pulls people to peaks. Nepal has dozens of the highest mountains in the world where the technical difficulty of climbing is compounded by objective dangers of avalanches and rockfall, which in turn are multiplied by altitude and weather. It is the spirit of adventure that pushes explorers like George Mallory to the limits of the unknown. They don’t philosophise about why they put themselves in harm’s way to climb something that “is there”, they take it as a given.

Most people find mountaineers ‘crazy’ or ‘suicidal’. Who in their right mind would willingly expose themselves to such mortal danger, discomfort and pain? Yet, there are other rules than those made at sea level that govern mountaineering, there is a different



DEEPAK JUNG RANA

morality 8km high on the mountain. The ethics of climbing forces mountaineers to keep their egos in check, look out for others in trouble even if it means risking their own lives, ambition has to take a back seat if they are to return to climb another day. It’s not by chance that the vocabulary of mountaineering is so militaristic: expeditions assault mountains, they need logistics and strategic planning, and like soldiers, climbers put their lives on the line to conquer peaks.

However, it has been clear for some time now that things are not quite what they should be on the world’s highest mountain. The over-commercialisation of the Everest industry, a free-for-all caused by regulatory

The lesson from the Everest tragedy is to spread the benefits of mountaineering to other areas of Nepal and ensure that mountaineering fees go for the welfare of high-altitude workers

failure and bungling in Kathmandu, and the race to the top of the Third Pole has led to dangerous overcrowding on the mountains. Many climbing clients of expeditions have very little technical experience and/or altitude acclimatisation and have to be literally pushed to the top, endangering not just themselves but also fellow climbers.

In 1996 a traffic jam on the summit ridge of Everest caused fatal delays, forcing many climbers to bivouac in a blizzard in the Death Zone. Eight climbers died. In April last year, European climbers going Alpine style had a brawl on the Lhotse Face with Nepali rope-fixers, where the root cause was a clash of civilisations between high-altitude guides who earn their living from

the mountain, and clients who do it for sport.

Last year’s Everest avalanche may have looked initially like a natural disaster, but it was caused by the inherent injustice of Nepali mountaineering today: the most-poorly paid high-altitude porters and route-makers are exposed to the most dangerous parts of the mountains for the longest period. Expeditions now pool a part of their budgets to pay ‘Icefall doctors’ to open up a route through the most dangerous part of the climb to Camp I.

The free-market laws of supply and demand now make the rules on the mountain, not the challenge of pitting human beings against the forces of nature. As climber David Durkan argued last week in this paper, no one wants to stop the Everest expedition industry since it is a source of livelihood for so many, but we should question the disproportionate danger that the porters and guides are forced to put themselves through while being paid the least and getting meagre insurance compensation if they are killed or wounded.

Instead of addressing overcrowding on the South Col route up Everest, this year the Nepal government reduced fees substantially. It needs to correct this, spread the benefits of mountaineering to other areas of Nepal and ensure that a more substantial portion of mountaineering fees go to the welfare of the workers who lay their lives on the line to get clients to the top.

YOUR SAY

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CONSTITUTION

It was Prachanda Baje who had wanted a new constitution, now you opine as if you too had wanted it ('The 2072 constitution', Editorial, #754). You seem to forget what a 'protracted war of attrition' means. If not a Communist Constitution, then naturally the war of attrition will continue. Why should the Maoists subscribe to a democratic constitution when they had taken up arms against it in 1996?

KK Sharma

EVEREST

There needs to be an insurance policy for high altitude workers ('More equity on Everest', Om Astha Rai, #754). Don't put the responsibility of insurance premium payment on the labourer. That needs to be automatic with the signing of the contract.

Namah

■ And we are told labour issues including exploitation and low wages are just political excuses. Let's look below mountains too.

Arpan Shrestha

■ David Durkan's candid opinion on 'Everest Inc' is explicit and revealing ('31 Nepali children lost their fathers', David Durkan, #754). Unfortunately, there seems to be no sense of urgency for reform. Unless workers organise and speak as one, it will be business as usual with expedition companies dominating the

agenda and headlines will be stories of achievement with little recognition of the workers who bear most of the risk.

Norbu Tenzing

■ I wonder if you made it compulsory to climb at least five 7,000m peaks before you had a permit. What impact it would have? Hopefully for the better.

Onetimeteacher

JUSTICE

It may be known as the 'People's War' but in reality it was not the people's war at all ('Just justifying war crimes', Damakant Jayshi, #754). It was a war created by cunning cruel politicians just to gain political power by misusing the trust they gained from the innocent Nepalis. The Maoist party and its leaders are much worse than the Panchayatis, Kangressi or UML. War criminals should be punished by law and victims compensated.

Tashi Lama

■ Yes, totally agree. It might be possible to delay justice, but justice cannot be denied forever. One day the truth will come out.

Poudyal

DOR BAHADUR

I came to learn a lot about my country and social behaviour of Nepalis after reading Dor Bahadur Bista's book *Fatalism and Development* ('Looking for Dor Bahadur', Kunda Dixit, #754). The knowledge I gathered still guides me in understanding Brahmanism,

the caste mentality, feudal mindset and its effect etc. I recommend Nepali youngsters to read his books.

D Chhetri

■ The reviewer of Kesang Tseten's film *Castaway Man* says that Dor Bahadur Bista was tagged anti-national after his book *People of Nepal* came out in 1967. Bista, in fact, returned to Nepal in 1962 without completing his MA in cultural anthropology at SOAS. He joined USAID, started his independent research, established a good relationship with King Mahendra and published *People of Nepal* when King Mahendra was all pervasive and powerful. The book was published by the government and disseminated during the Panchayat. During their international visits King Mahendra and Birendra gifted this book to many heads of state.

The book became a benchmark for Nepali anthropology and contributed to King Mahendra's nationalist project and consolidated the Nepali identity. In the book, Bista acknowledged Mahendra for giving direction to a new Nepal by breaking the shackles of isolationism. Bista's anthropology and Mahendra's politics overlapped.

Bista was equally trusted by King Birendra, and from 1970-75 served His Majesty's Government in various capacities including Consul General in Lhasa and Executive Director of the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS). Bista's *People of Nepal* was by the state and for the state, contrary to

what Kunda Dixit states.

Gaurab KC

■ Nepal's pioneer anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista was last seen in Haridwar-Rishikesh ashrams. He was also rumoured to be in deep study of Karma Yoga. Karma, in fact, is not synonymous with fatalism. Destiny as taught in the Vedanta does not involve an unscientific attitude towards natural laws or a breakdown of faith in human endeavour. It could be that Bista had finally found his higher calling.

Grimalji

SBT

Surya Bahadur Thapa was 36 years old when he became prime minister for the first time ('Surya Bahadur Thapa (1928-2015)', Om Astha Rai, #755). Today the situation is such that the national politics has been monopolised by octogenarians. Nobody in his 30s can even dream of becoming a prime minister anymore.

Truth Speaker

■ Surya B Thapa worked for the welfare of Nepal and people of Nepal. He was a giant among the midgets of Nepali politics. Nepal will miss his leadership badly. May he rest in peace.

Gopal KC

■ Surya Bahadur Thapa may be remembered, but not missed.

A.S Pradhan

THIS WEEK



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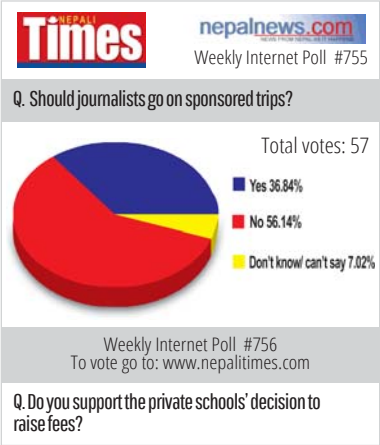
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Most visited online page
Looking for Dor Bahadur Bista by Kunda Dixit (736 views)

Most commented
Led by the young by Sahina Shrestha (20 comments)



The final redemption

The good news is that the constitution has become the only way for senior leaders to ensure a political future for themselves

Sushil Koirala's desperation to buy the opposition at any cost. Having lost immediate hope of reigning in Nepal's political power centre, Dahal will take any deal that can save him from being haunted by the bloody legacy of his 'People's War'. A presidential lollipop will be a bonus he will not refuse, if offered.

Madhesi leaders Bijay Gachhadar and Mahanta Thakur both made their choices clear when they backed the decision to call off street protests and enter negotiations, even as Upendra Yadav and Rajendra Mahato fumed at Dahal's 'opportunism'. While an NC leader merely smiled at my mention of the rumours about Gachhadar's 'return to the fold', my guess is Thakur may be looking to reassert his stature as an elder Madhesi statesman, something that will qualify him for any constitutional position in the future.

It does not take a genius to figure out that the day the constitution is drafted the UML will challenge the NC leadership. It is entirely plausible that the NC could then cobble together a coalition with UCPN(M) and the two Madhesi factions who have 105 seats among them in the legislature parliament. In trying to get the Maoists on board, Koirala and his advisors may be looking even further ahead. A stronger Maoist party could help cut the UML down to size in the next election by dividing the left vote bank. KP Oli is smart enough to understand this, and therefore does not want to share any political dividend with the Maoists.

But Oli and the UML aren't Koirala's sole problems. The octogenarian may have publicly declared that this is his last stint at the top job, but those close to him have revealed that he is not ready to concede the party leadership immediately. "There is immense pressure on him to contest another term as there are no other candidates that can match the stature of his rival Sher Bahadur Deuba," an NC member close to the party establishment told me this week.

If Koirala can talk Deuba out of the race for party leadership with a promise of government leadership after the Constitution

is drafted, it will save the ailing leader all the hassles. But we have it on a close Koirala confidante, that it is unlikely. So, Koirala's team is gearing up for the showdown. Trouble with the party membership distribution in the districts is only the beginning. It will get uglier.

Sushil Koirala will need to mend old ties and offer sufficient incentive to those on the other side, and even that won't necessarily guarantee him a win since he has rivals within his own clan. Managing the egos and ambitions of senior leaders like Arjun Narshing KC, Ram Chandra

Poudel, Sujata Koirala and Shekher Koirala, who have all been very critical of him, isn't going to be easy.

Oli may have lost faith in Koirala stepping down after the statute is drafted, but prolonging the constitutional deadlock hasn't helped brighten the prime minister's future either. Suddenly, drafting the constitution at the earliest has become the only way for the senior leaders of all major parties to secure their political careers. Isn't that a good news for all of us?  @Anurag_Acharya



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Two weeks ago, we had said in this space that the opposition has run out of options and will have no choice but to return to the negotiation table. It is likely that the Maoist-led opposition will soon attend their first Constituent Assembly meeting, since they boycotted the house in February.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya


Among many other things, politics is also determined by the sum of fears among its protagonists. Pushpa Kamal Dahal's fear of disappearing into political oblivion forced him to unilaterally call off street protests and engage in the ongoing dialogue. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala has his own fears to manage: for any negotiation to succeed, the incentive to cooperate among the protagonists must be greater than that to outplay one another. In a reverse prisoner dilemma, both have wisely chosen to maximise their own gains rather than trying to inflict maximum harm on each other.

This inability to dictate a political course and dipping public support means the Maoists and the Madhesi are forced to engage with the ruling parties. But the government assuring the Maoists of the judicial review on the landmark Supreme Court verdict on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission / Commission on Enforced Disappearances is plain ridiculous. It demonstrates

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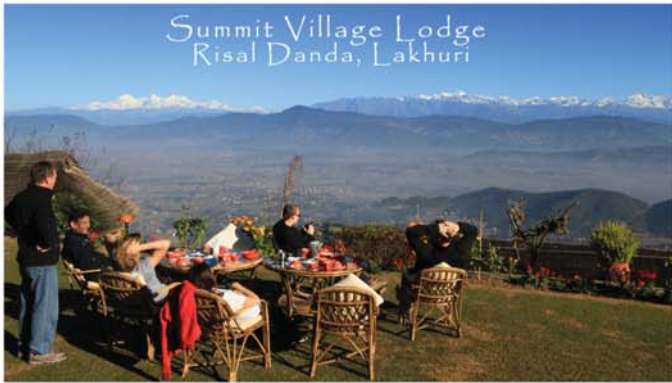
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Out of the darkness

Nepalis need a new Electricity Act more urgently than we need a new constitution

SUJIT ACHARYA

It took Nepal 100 years to generate 700 MW of hydropower, but it took us just 10 years to add 600 MW of diesel generators. Nepal now ranks among the worst countries in the world in transmission leakage, wasting more than a third of the energy in the grid.

The energy sector is in a state of disarray with piecemeal ideas, duplication and too many cooks spoiling the broth. We do not even know what our hydropower, solar, wind or other energy potentials are, and yet we have politicians spouting superlatives every chance they get.

The chronic loadshedding is a vivid proof of the lack of vision, poor management and governance failure. Nepali planners should know that to achieve 1 per cent increase in economic growth energy generation needs to increase by 1.5 per cent.

Nepal's three items of import that are increasing most dramatically are petroleum products, motor vehicles that run on it, and cooking gas. We spend the equivalent of 40 per cent of the annual budget and more than half our foreign currency income buying these three items.

However, if we had focused on renewable energy to drive our transportation, cooking and manufacturing, we'd have to import only minimal petroleum for buses and aviation. That would mean huge savings on our petroleum import bill, which could be invested in developing further infrastructure, boosting growth and cutting our trade deficit. There would not be any more use for Nepal Oil Corporation, and the corruption-bred shortages it spawns.

Electricity in the energy mix would reduce demand for firewood, on which 72 per cent of Nepalis still depend for cooking. On a national level, a shift to renewables would mean that Nepal's political dependence on the outside world would also diminish as we become more



SANJOG MANANDHAR

self-reliant. Our prime ministers would not have to say "the keys are not in our hands" anymore.

The shift must come first in a push for electric public transport, turning petrol pumps throughout the country into fast-charging stations. There must be a policy shift to import only electric vehicles, especially for public transportation. Nissan Motors is collaborating with Bhutan to convert all government vehicles and taxis to battery powered vehicles by 2020, there is no reason Nepal can't do the same.

Generation of cheap electricity would allow households to switch to electric stoves, instead of gas, firewood or kerosene. It may seem like a utopian dream during these times of power cuts, but it is possible to have policies in place to generate and distribute enough electricity. Electricity proliferation can only happen when an effective law capturing this vision is put into place. But the existing Electricity Act is obsolete and defunct. We could even go as far as to say that drafting a new Electricity Act is more important for the welfare of the people than drafting a new constitution.

An Act with attractive incentives to investors would bring in outside equity into energy development. Obstruction of energy infrastructure, extortion and militant unionism could be punishable with tough laws. The Act must begin issuing one unified license on a competitive bidding basis and giving all

clearances to the developer within 12 months through a one window policy. Land acquisition must be abolished and land lease started for run of river projects.

Additionally, while giving better concessions to energy developers than those offered by other nations, stringent penalties for delays in getting financial closure and starting electricity production must be put into place. Local people must get 10 per cent investible shares prior to project construction so they share both potential benefits and risks – but any local person affiliated with political parties or creating disturbances should be excluded. And all the contents of this act should supersede or override the conflicting contents in any other prevalent acts or policies, thereby providing absolute and unequivocal clarity to the direction of Nepal's energy sector.

A federal setup in the new constitution could complicate the construction of large energy projects. Transmission lines should, therefore, be under the jurisdiction of a federal company. Contracts for construction of transmission lines could go to the Nepal Army, just like for highway building.

Formation of multiple state-level distribution companies from both government and private sector must be encouraged to foster competition and improve services. Similarly, a state-level tariff commission should be set up in every federal province. Federal and state power generation and trading companies should be encouraged, and a national energy planning division should keep track of the national energy data. Micro-grids should be encouraged for remote regions.

It is time Nepal emerged from centuries of darkness, and enacting a new Electricity Act would light our way. 🇳🇵

Sujit Acharya is the Chairperson of the Energy Development Council, an umbrella institution for the Nepal's energy sector that is working on a draft of a new Electricity Act.

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS



PROstyle Manhunt

PROstyle has signed a memorandum of understanding with Group of Event Entertainer (GEE) for sponsoring Manhunt International Nepal 2015, which will be held at Army Officers' Club on 13 June. Application deadline for the pageant is 15 May.

Six wheels

CG | Motocorp, the authorised distributor of Suzuki Four Wheelers in Nepal, has introduced its 'Gaadima Bike Payne, Scratch Gari Jhanai Kamaine' offer under which buyers of Suzuki 4 Wheelers will get a guaranteed prize of TVS Wego or TVS Apache. The buyer will also get a scratch ticket to win cash prize up to Rs 75,000.



Surya Golf

Forty one golfers (34 pros and 7 amateurs) took part in the four-day golf tournament sponsored by Surya Nepal at Gokarna Golf Club. Shivaram Shrestha is currently in the lead with Bhuwan (Umesh) Nagarkoti after the third round. In amateur section, Bikash Bogati has been leading since round 1. The winner of the championship will get Rs 95,000. The second and the third winners will receive respectively Rs 60,000 and Rs 44,000.



Fiat's New Year

Life Auto Mobile, the sole distributor of Fiat cars in Nepal, has introduced a New Year's offer that promises to provide the Puncto Evo car at Rs 399,000 only. Customers can also get instant finance facility on the spot to enjoy this scheme.

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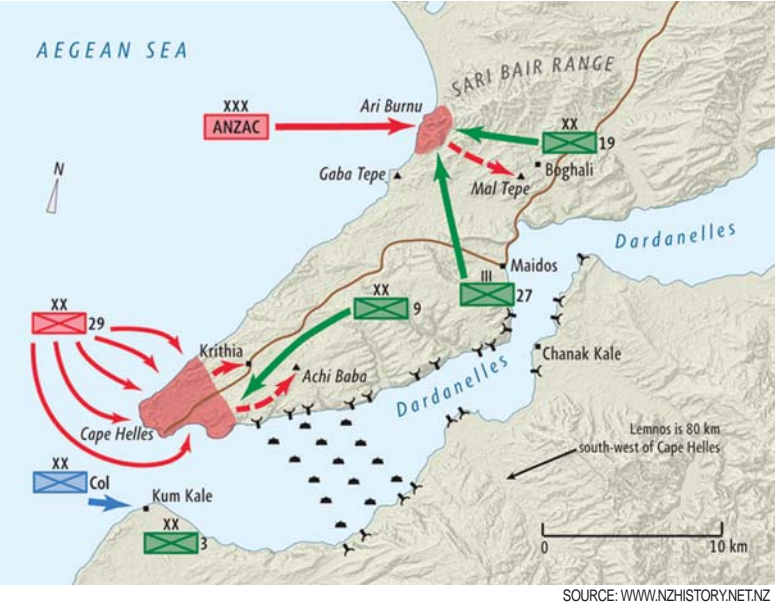
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Gurks vs Turks

DAVID SEDDON

In April 1915, Nepali Gurkha battalions (‘Gurks’) and Allied forces were deployed in what would prove to be a disastrous campaign to take control of the high ground of the Gallipoli peninsula in order to threaten Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. This is the first installment of a series of flashbacks of the involvement of Gurkhas in the First World War.

The First Landings

Late April 1915

By the end of 1914, the war on the Western Front was deadlocked. There were strong arguments for an offensive through the Balkans or even a landing on Germany’s Baltic coast, instead of more costly confrontations in France and Belgium.

These ideas were initially sidelined, but in early 1915 the Russians found themselves threatened by Ottoman forces in the Caucasus and appealed for some relief. The British government, encouraged by Winston Churchill, decided to mount a naval expedition to bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula on the western shore of the Dardanelles, with Constantinople as its objective. The British hoped to link up with the Russians, knock Turkey out of the war and possibly persuade the Balkan states to join the Allies.

The naval attack began on 19 February 1915, but bad weather caused delays and the attack was abandoned after three battleships

were sunk and three others damaged. Military assistance was clearly required, and General Kitchener appointed an old friend from the Boer War, General Sir Ian ‘Johnny’ Hamilton, to command the proposed amphibious operation.

On 12 March, Kitchener told Hamilton: “We are sending a military force to support the fleet at the Dardanelles, and you are to have command. You will be given the 29th Division from the regular British Army, two divisions of Australian and New Zealand troops currently in Egypt, the Royal Naval Division and a French contingent in all, about 70,000 men.” Hamilton and his staff left London that afternoon at 5pm on Friday 13 March by train, crossed the Channel in a destroyer and travelled to Marseilles where the light cruiser Phaeton was waiting.

At sea, Hamilton considered the brief instructions he had been given and a few rough notes, together with a textbook on the Ottoman army, written in 1912, and two small guide books. He comments in his Gallipoli Diary ‘that his knowledge of the Dardanelles at this point, as headed towards the eastern Mediterranean, was nil. Of the Turks, nil. Of the strength of his own forces, next to nil.’

As he sailed east, renewed efforts to sweep the Straits of the Dardanelles clear of mines began on 18 March, but several vessels were sunk by gunfire from the Ottoman batteries, while others hit mines. The operation was suspended on 19 March and

cancelled the next day due to weather. The enemy proceeded to strengthen their defences.

On 24 March, Hamilton arrived in Alexandria. He reviewed the situation and came to the conclusion that he was likely to be outnumbered and outgunned. He wrote to Kitchener, requesting more men and more ammunition and asking in particular for the deployment of the 29th Indian Brigade under Major General Vaughan Cox, a request he likened to ‘going up to a tiger and asking for a small slice of venison’.

‘I am very anxious’, he wrote, ‘if possible, to get a brigade of Gurkhas, so as to complete the New Zealand Divisional Organisation with a type of man who will, I am most certain, be most valuable on the Gallipoli peninsula. The scrubby hillsides on the south-west faces of the plateau are just the sort of terrain where these little fellows are at their brilliant best... each little “Gurk” might be worth his full weight in gold at Gallipoli.’

Kitchener eventually agreed, and Lieutenant General Sir John Maxwell, the British Commander in Chief for Egypt, grudgingly handed over the 29th, which he referred to as ‘the Gurkha brigade’. In fact, as originally constituted in October 1914, the brigade consisted of the 14th King George’s Own Ferozepore Sikhs, the 69th Punjabis, the 89th Punjabis and the 1/6th Gurkha rifles. It had sailed from Karachi for Egypt on 2 November 1914 under the command of Brigadier General Cox.

For the next six months it was engaged in the defence of the Suez Canal. Orders were received on 24 April, to embark at Port Said on s.s. Dunluce Castle for the Dardanelles. The ship sailed east

World War I

July 28, 1914- November 11, 1918
More than 200,000 Gurkhas served in the British Army during the First World War, with 20,000 casualties.

Gallipoli Campaign Early 1915
The Allies launch a naval attack to take the Gallipoli Peninsula.

February 19, 1915
Attack abandoned after three battleships are sunk.

March 12, 1915
General Kitchener appoints General Sir Ian ‘Johnny’ Hamilton to command amphibious operation.

March 24, 1915
Hamilton writes to Kitchener requesting deployment of the 29th Indian Brigade.

April 24, 1915
The 29th leaves Port Said for the Dardanelles.

January 9, 1916
The campaign ends with more than 130,000 casualties, including 44,000 Allied soldiers and 87,000 Ottoman soldiers. The Gurkhas recognised for capture of the “Gurkha Bluff” and as the only troops to reach Sari Bair.

with its contingent of Gurkhas and Sikhs, arriving eventually to anchor off Sedd-al-Bahr at 12.30 on 30 April. The troops disembarked and landed in Cape Helles at the beginning of May, five or six days after the invasion of the peninsula had begun.

In the meanwhile, the allied forces of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force — consisting of British and ANZAC (Australian, New Zealand and Canadian) troops, together with a Division of French and North African troops, known as the Corps Expéditionnaire d’Orient -- largely unaware of the substantial numbers of troops manning the defences, prepared to land. The

GURKHAS IN GALLIPOLI: Gurkha soldiers deployed to capture the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915.

landings were initially planned for 23 April, but bad weather caused a two-day postponement and when they did take place, the operation did not go according to plan.

Eventually, by the end of the day on 25 April, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force had succeeded in establishing a beach-head, with the ANZAC at Anzac Cove and the rest of the force on Helles, but at the cost of many thousands of men.

The objective now was the capture of the hills which ran roughly north-south along the main axis of the Gallipoli Peninsula. This was to be achieved by moving up the ravines that extended from the hills down to the sea. Hamilton proposed an approach march, by night, up three of main ravines (Sazli Beit, Chailak and Aghyl). From the heads of these ravines the allies would attack and capture the peaks of Chunuk Bair and Hill Q, and having secured these two, attack Battleship Hill, Baby 700 and Plateau 400 (all of the geographical features considered strategically significant had by now been given names).

In the last few days of April, while the Ottoman forces attacked the ANZACs, the British and French began to advance up the peninsula to where the enemy was holding a line in front of the hill of Achi Baba, around Krithia. In the first battle of Krithia on 28 April, the Allies under Major General Hunter Weston launched their assault with 13,500 men. As darkness descended, they had failed to achieve their objective and suffered some 3,000 dead, wounded or missing. Three days later, Allied casualties numbered at least 6,500 and possibly as many as 8,000, nearly a third of the men engaged.

Nowhere had the progress made been more than 600 yards and the Allied forces remained for the most part on or near the beaches. 🚩

To be continued in #759
'Reinforcements Arrive: Early May 2015.'

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■ Gallipoli Timeline

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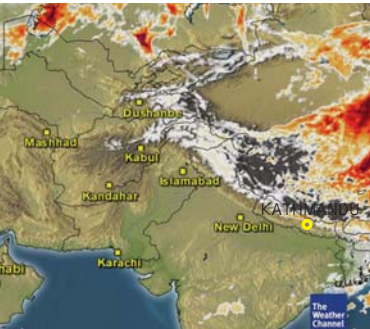
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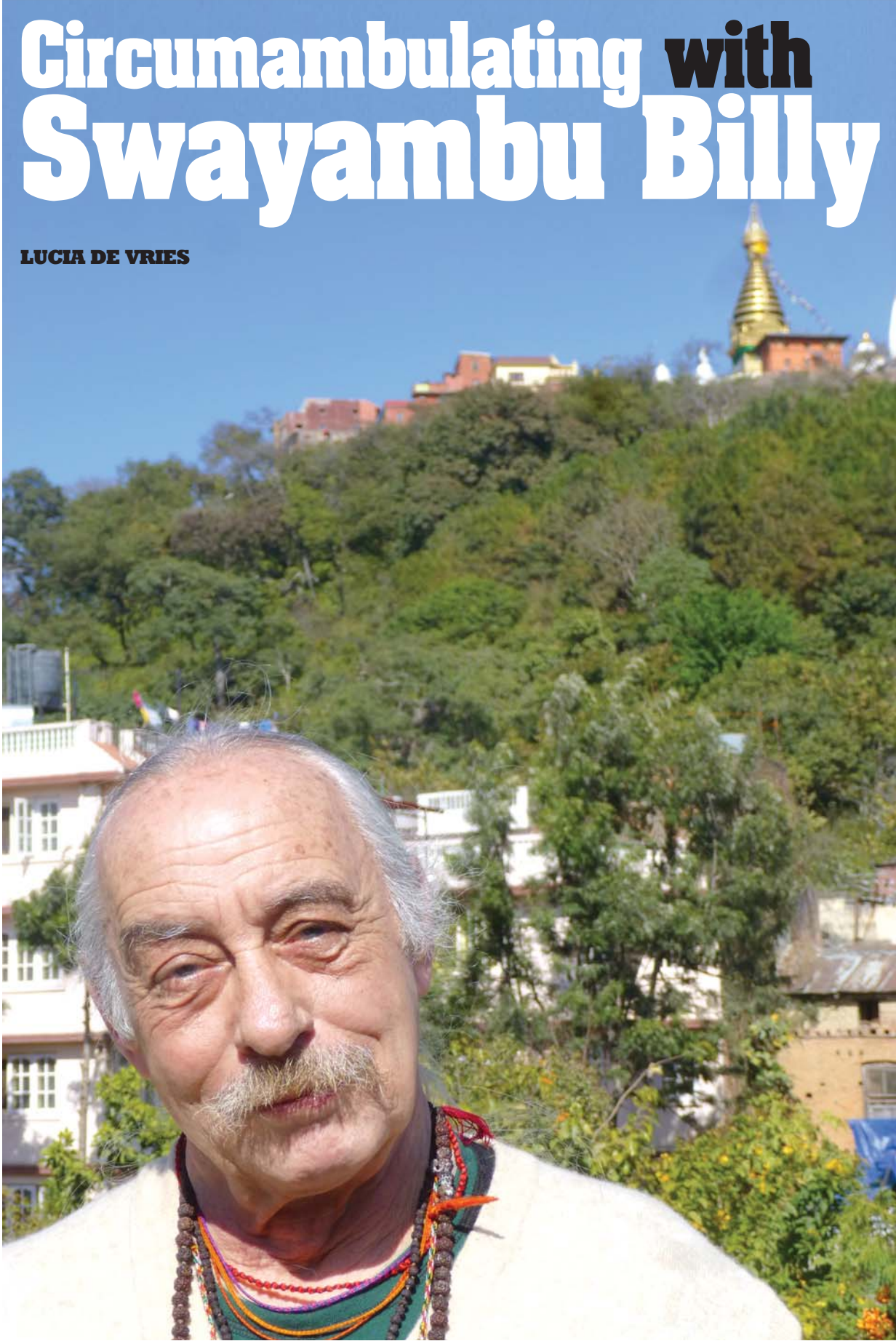


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LUCIA DE VRIES

When yoga teacher William Forbes suffered a serious accident in 1985, some predicted he might never walk again but fate had something else in store for the American iconoclast better known as ‘Swayambu Billy’.

Forbes came to Nepal in 1970, and like many of his contemporaries, took the long road to Kathmandu overland on the hippie trail. The young adventurer flew to Luxembourg, where he bought a Volkswagen van, crashed it in Morocco and continued by local buses, travelling through Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. His wife, Susan Burns followed a few years later.

While studying yoga and meditation, Forbes met renowned teachers like Jiddu, UG Krishnamurti and TKV Desikachar. He also met American poet Ira Cohen, Hettie MacLise (German actress and wife of Velvet Underground Angus MacLise) and Finger Eight Eddie (Legendary guru of Goa hippies).

During a 1985 trekking

accident, he broke a leg in several places and suffered a concussion. Doctors warned him that it would take years to get back on his feet, if ever. So he decided to learn Sanskrit.

A couple of years later, Professor Theodore Riccardi recommended Forbes to translate the ninth-century Sanskrit texts, *Nepala-Mahatmya* and *Himavatkhanda*.

“Slowly but surely the stories behind Kathmandu’s sacred destinations came to life,” Forbes recalls. During the translation of the *Nepala-Mahatmya* Forbes

spring of 1994.

Forbes says, “It was a very special experience. It took almost two weeks to reach all the spots. We started and ended at the Pashupati temple. We were unable to find two places, but located the rest.”

Forbes’ book, with the translations and a map of the pilgrim route (below), was published in 2000, entitled *The Glory of Nepal - A Mythological Guidebook to Kathmandu Valley*. The translator believes that his life has been greatly enriched by the knowledge of Sanskrit



scriptures, and the experience of the pilgrimage. His second book, on the Bagmati River, will come out soon. Based on the *Himavatkhanda*, it describes the origins of the holy river, and includes the Bagmati Tirtha pilgrimage from Chobar to Bagdwara, with its 150 bathing

places.

The Swayambu scholar is presently working on a translation of the *Vaishvanara Purana* about another ancient pilgrimage destination: the area of holy flames burning off natural gas connected to the goddess Jwala, located in Dailekh.

In his introduction to the book, Forbes notes: “In these days of global warming, when the pristine Himalayan snows are shrinking, and the sacred rivers and bathing places are becoming polluted and drying up, it is important to encourage people to visit them while they are still there. At the same time, in my small way, I am giving back to Nepal the cultural riches and blessings it has bestowed on me.”

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EVENTS



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25 April, Summit Hotel, Kupondole, 9851023251, 9818233101, (01)5523444, (01)5521810

Up-cycling training,

A workshop to teach volunteers how to present 'upcycling', a form of recycling that creatively turns waste into useful items, to teach school children.

Open 25 individuals, 29 April, 9am to 11am, Clean up Nepal office, Minbhawan, 9841381046, info@cleanupnepal.org.np



Radiant Women,

An exhibition of photographs by Natalie de Oliveira celebrating women fighting against trafficking.

Till 25 April, Manga Hitti, Patan Darbar Square, (01)5011221, buddi.shrestha@pe-nepal.org, www.planete-enfants.org/

Tattoo convention,

The 5th International Nepal tattoo convention.

Rs.200/day or Rs.500 for 3 days.

24 to 26 April, 10am to 8pm, Yak & Yeti Hotel, Darbar Marg,

www.nepaltattooconvention.com

In retrospective,

An exhibition of the works of Nepali draftsman, Birendra Pratap Singh, from 1971 to 2015.

Till 26 April, Nepal Art Council Gallery, Babar Mahal, (01)4218048, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

Pablo,

A solo performance by Najir Husen, which tells the story of a man whose desire can never be fulfilled. Touched, grieved and frightened by his desire, Pablo loses his mind.

27 April, 2pm and 5.30pm, Mandala Theatre, (01)41268130, 9803247787, 9840071934

Tour de Lumbini,

A four-day cycle rally to Lumbini.

1 to 5 May, 9841303867, info@tourdelumbini.org, www.tourdelumbini.org

Etched art,

An exhibition of etchings by recipients of the Australian Himalayan Foundation Art Award Program 2014, Sauranga Darshandhari and Surendra Maharjan.

Till 5 May, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4218048, sthapa@mos.com.np



Objects in the Mirror,

An exhibition of diverse media through which Kurchi Dasgupta tries to decipher her location as an anthropocene vis-a-vis failing states, war and economic inequality.

Inauguration on 2 May at 5pm, exhibition till 9 May, 10am to 6.30pm, City Museum, Darbar Marg, 9808563570, info@thecitymuseum.org, www.thecitymuseum.org



Remembering the Lost sculptures,

A series of photo-realistic paintings by artist Joy Lynn Davis documenting community response to the theft of stone sculptures from Kathmandu Valley, and research about the sites where the sculptures originated.

Till 22 May, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, (01)4220735, swosti@nepalartcouncil.org.np

Women power,

Nine Nepali artists get together for a group exhibition, Kedar Bhakta Mathema.

Till 30 April, Newa Chen Art Gallery, Kulimha, Kobahal, Patan, (01)5533532, www.kalavoice.com



Root Down,

A festival of urban culture with film screenings, live music, skateboarding and free workshops on breakdancing and djing.

12 to 16 May, Alliance française of Kathmandu, Tripureshwar, (01)4241163, rootdownfestival@gmail.com

DINING



Dhokaima Café,

Try Indigenous cocktails at the Rukhmuni Bar.

Patan Dhoka, (01)5522113, dhokaimacafe@yahoo.com



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Brasspackers live,

This eleven piece brass band, all the way from France, is sure to get your body moving and your soul grooving.

24 April, 8pm, Base Camp Arun Thapa Chok, 9841226397, pareskhshrestha@gmail.com

Cool Pool Grind,

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1 to 16 May, 9801014127, events@timrohamro.com, www.timrohamro.com



Jazz celebrations,

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30 April, Patan Darbar Square, 2pm to 5pm, (01)5013554, sunita@katjazz.com.np

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MAKERS OF MACHHINDRANATH

of Newar carpenters who search for, carve and assemble the wooden parts of the Rato Machhindranath chariot. The chariot making skills are passed down through the generations. "I have been involved since I was nine years old," said the 59-year-old Barahi.

The Barahis begin their work as early as December, scouring forests for specific types of timber for different parts of the chariot. The rarest type of wood is *saur*. Coincidentally, *saur* is also needed for the main fixture of the chariot, the *dhombar* — a long wooden trunk on which the person leading the chariot sits.

"Every year it gets harder to find *saur*, I have no idea if there will be enough wood to sustain the festival in the future," said Barahi.

Besides the Barahis, master vinesmen known collectively as the Yewals help to construct the chariot by weaving rope and rattan to secure the wooden structure.

Rameshwor Maharjan is a member of the Yewal Society, and in the week prior to the festival, he and 40 other members scale the 65-feet tall chariot and hang precariously off its wooden edges, working for more than 10 hours a day.

Like the rest involved in the chariot making process, they are not provided with any form of insurance. But Maharjan still turns up every year. "I am proud that I can use my knowledge with ropes to preserve my culture," said Maharjan.

The chariot makers are so dedicated to their work, that even nationwide strikes can't deter them. During the general strike called by the Maoists in April, Dil Kumar Barahi organised a 20-bike group and insisted that the district traffic police escort them to Bungamati temple, where the chariot is constructed, so as to continue working on the structure.

"We cannot delay working on the chariot for even a day, because we have to get it ready in time for the auspicious date," he said.

That date this year was 19 April, when the idol of Rato Machhindranath was placed inside the chariot. Three days later,



ALL PICS: CYNTHIA CHOO



the chariot was hauled from Bungamati and will travel through Bhaishipati, Nakhu, Pulchok, Gabahal, Sundhara, Lagankhel in the next few weeks, before concluding with Bhoto Jatra in Jawalakhel.

Made entirely out of wood, rope and no nails, the brand new wheels of the chariot will be hammered halfway through its journey into Patan, and the rope work will come undone. Yet, the Barahis and Yewals will continue to fix the chariot along the way, and will repeat the process next year.

But Barahi says there might be less Barahis and Yewals turning up next year. "The younger generation find it increasingly difficult to leave their jobs and work on the chariot for little daily allowance," he said.

"There is little money and appreciation for them as compared to working in an office," he added.

He said: "It'll be nice if people knew about us because this is how the culture lives on." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

■ Multimedia package with video and photo gallery Makers of Machhindranath
■ Route map of the chariot festival

CYNTHIA CHOO

Fifty nine-year-old Dil Kumar Barahi comes from a family of carpenters, and owns a workshop in Kuti Saugol, Lalitpur.

However every year for the past 50 years, he closes his shop for two to four months to build the Rato Machhindranath chariot. He is not the only one — all 24 members of the Barahi community do the same to help out with the Rato Machhindranath chariot, which has to be rebuilt from scratch every 12 years.

"It is part of our tradition and responsibility to build the chariot," said Barahi.

The Barahis are a community



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SONG OF THE SEA



Having now seen, and reviewed, four out of the five “Best Animated Feature Films” (barring *The Boxtrolls*) nominated this past season for the Academy Awards, I can safely say that the animated films are on a far superior level than the live action “Best Picture” nominations, depending, of course, on your inclinations; I have always maintained that reviewing is just about opinion and taste.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Song of the Sea was an underdog nominee in the animation category, coming in pretty much under the radar, an Irish production that hardly any

one has seen, especially alongside its heavy hitting competitors like *How to Train Your Dragon 2*, and *Big Hero 6* - which won the award. Like *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* - a film out of the Japanese Studio Ghibli, *Song of the Sea* is a folk tale made unforgettable by its spectacularly beautiful, tear inducing visuals, produced by a relatively small Irish studio named Cartoon Saloon based out of Kilkenny, Ireland and written and directed by Tomm Moore, one of the key people at the Studio.

The makers are keenly attuned to the beautiful and the weird, honing in on all that is captivating and terrifyingly melancholy in Irish folklore. The *Song of the Sea* encapsulates overlapping mythologies, dealing with faeries, selkies, a talking owl, and adds one very dedicated English sheepdog named Cú who pretty much steals the show.

The story itself is simple enough, Conor (voiced by Brendan Gleeson) and his lovely wife Bronagh (Lisa Hannigan) live on a wild little island off the Irish coast, sharing the most tender of relationships, with each other, and their son Ben (David Rawle), who has just adopted Cú, a puppy at the time. Bronagh is expecting their second child, when she mysteriously disappears, leaving behind baby Saoirse (Lucy O’Connell), and a bewildered grief stricken Conor to look after the family.

As Ben grows up resentful of Saoirse, who six years later is still unable to speak, they are looked after by Cú’s watchful presence as both Conor and Ben try to deal with their loss. It is only when Saoirse discovers how to play her mother’s seashell horn that the magic that has always been lying under the surface of this charming film comes fully into the picture (pardon the pun). Suddenly the world of these children and their fluffy loyal dog becomes saturated with women who must leave their children to return to the water in their natural seal forms, men who are turned into stone out of grief, and talking semi-malevolent owls.

This witty, sweet, exquisite film is one that lacks just a little cohesion in its story, not that the children will mind, but it is the adults who will be left dumbstruck by its sheer beauty. 🇮🇪

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■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



HI, HELLO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe chats with Prime Minister Sushil Koirala as they arrive at the venue of the Afro-Asian Summit in Jakarta on Wednesday.



BEAUTY QUEENS: (left to right) Miss Nepal first runner-up Dibyata Vaidya, Miss Nepal Evana Manandhar and second runner-up Medha Koirala at the finale of the Miss Nepal 2015 pageant on Saturday.



WOMEN POWER: Winners of the Celebrating Womanhood Navadevi Awards pose with their trophies at a function on Sunday.



MADE PUBLIC: Dhal Bahadur Khadka, the prime suspect in the murder 18 years ago of Father Thomas Gafney, founder of St Xavier School Social Service Centre was arrested by Police on Tuesday.

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THE NEPAL CHRONICLES

As a student of history, Elizabeth Hawley first came to Kathmandu in 1960 during a tour around Asia. She never left, staying in the same house in Dilli Bazar for the past half-century.

As a journalist, mountaineering archivist, tourism executive, honorary consul for New Zealand, and head of a charity, she has seen it all. Hawley, now 92, served as a correspondent for Reuters and *Time-Life* and had a ringside view of recent history: from the 1960 Mahendra coup, through the Panchayat years, the 1980 referendum, the Indian blockade, the first pro-democracy movement, the conflict, the palace massacre of 2001, the ceasefire, end of the monarchy, and the current transition.

Hawley was like Helen Thomas of UPI, the famous doyenne of the White House foreign correspondent corps. Like Helen Thomas, Liz was always at the important press conferences, and would inevitably ask the toughest questions. And she always had a followup, which made a lot of Nepali ministers very nervous.

Most of the news from Nepal in those days was about mountaineering, and Hawley didn't just cover them for Reuters, she carefully documented every climb. The



BOOKIES: (From left to right at book launch) Bidur Dongol of Vajra Books, editors Lisa Choegyal and Mikel Dunham, American ambassador Peter Bodde, and Elizabeth Hawley.

joke is that a mountaineer hasn't officially summited a Himalayan peak until Liz Hawley says so. Many mountaineers found their post-expedition debriefing in front of Miss Hawley in Kathmandu more challenging than the climb itself.

Through all those years, Hawley wrote meticulous reports for her boss at Tiger Tops, Jim Edwards. While looking through her library one day, the Himalayan historian Mikel Dunham came across the Hawley Files, by chance opened the pages for 1 June, 2001 with notes on the royal massacre and was immediately engrossed. He immediately felt

the book would be an invaluable chronicle of Nepali politics. He got another long-time Nepal resident and Hawley's colleague at Tiger Tops, Lisa Choegyal, to volunteer to pore through and transcribe the notes.

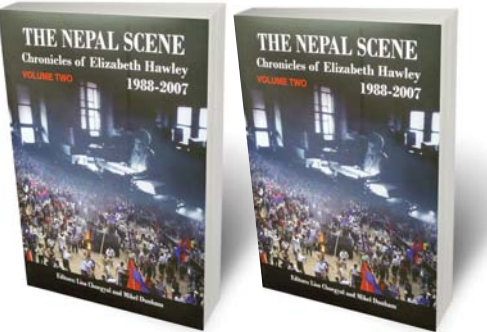
The results are two thick volumes of text more than 2,000 pages long, which will serve as an important reference tool for journalists, academics, diplomats and the donor community in Nepal. The text is scrupulously based on verified facts, there are no rumours, gossip, speculation, or a political bias here. However, it is not a collection of dry dispatches, between the

lines one catches a glimpse of Hawley's commitment to democracy, freedom and social justice.

Dunham and Choegyal have taken the trouble to make the volumes user-friendly with an index, a glossary of terms and acronyms. This is not a book one reads cover to cover (although you could also do that) but to refer to for facts, dates, and the circumstances of historical events in Nepal in the past 28 years.

In wire service journalism they tell you to stick to the Who, What Where When. Liz Hawley's *The Nepal Scene* has answers to all those questions. The price tag is worth it, and especially so because proceeds will go to the charity, Himalayan Trust.

Kunda Dixit



The Nepal Scene
Chronicles of Elizabeth Hawley, 1988-2007
 Volumes 1 and 2
 Editors: Lisa Choegyal and Mikel Dunham
 Vajra Books 2015
 ISBN 978-9937-623-40-7
 Price: Rs 8,000



In a small alleyway, a stone's throw from the Patan Kumari house lies a hole-in-the-wall eatery that serves up gratifying Newari grub.

The eatery does not have a proper name but locals affectionately call it 'bhauju ko ghar' or bhauju's house. The 'bhauju' running the place is Rita Maharjan, a petite housewife who whisks around the cramped eatery with ease, serving up plates of delicious aanda chiura (egg with beaten rice).

Aanda chiura (Rs 65) is by far the most popular dish the eatery serves. Locals gulp down this simple dish by the plates and after my first try I think I understand why: the beaten rice, fried with egg is crispy, salty and loaded with spices. It was the perfect comfort food.

Fried with onions and served

Bhauju House

piping hot, it is difficult to stop digging into a plate of aanda chiura. A word of caution though -- the dish might sound more like a snack, but it is surprisingly filling.

In addition, the dish goes extremely well with a glass of chyang (rice wine). The 'bhauju' house serves homemade chyang for only Rs 10 a glass. Customers who come in a group can order a jug at Rs 65.

The aanda chiura and chyang pairing is a sure-fire combination that will make the trip to the dimly



PICS: KENJI KWOK

lit eatery worthwhile.

If you are in for a filling meal, order the Buff Chilli (Rs 85). The slices of buff meat fried together with dried chilli can be a little chewy, but crispy at the same time. The hint of heat makes the dish even more appetising.

Adventurous diners can try the raw buffalo meat (Rs 80)

instead. The raw buffalo meat is mixed together with coriander, and comes with a squeeze of lime juice, giving it a refreshing taste.

Vegetarians can opt for the aloo tama (Rs 25), a potato and bamboo shoot dish served in a hot and sour broth. This dish also provides a nice contrast from the dry and salty dishes like aanda

chiura and buff chilli.

Using simple ingredients, and serving up no more than four types of dishes, have kept the 'bhauju' eatery running for more than 19 years. In that period, the eatery has garnered its own legion of regulars and has also gained popularity with locals in the area.

The reputation of the eatery might have grown, but its physical space has -- amusingly -- shrunk. "We used to be a big eatery but we started leasing out part of the stall's space to workshops," said Maharjan.

Right now, the eatery can barely fit 30 people and according to locals, if you arrive after 6.30pm, chances are that it will be hard to find a seat.

But perhaps it is the charm of a small, back alley eatery that attracts loyal customers. It is unpretentious, cheap and serves up sinful but delicious foods.

Unlike Honacha, which is over-hyped, the 'bhauju' house is a hole-in-the-wall eatery that might possibly be Patan's best-kept foodie secret.

Cynthia Choo

How to get there: Bhauju house is a small eatery on the left of the alley beside Kumari Party Palace in Gabahal.

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Never settle

Hi all,
Very few people know exactly what they want to do with their lives, most people settle with what seems to be more convenient. Others,



ASK ANJANA ANYTHING

Anjana Rajbhandary

instead of giving in to social norm, choose to follow their gut/heart/instinct: they might not be there yet but they are most likely on their way to find it. I believe you should

follow your heart, pursue true happiness, find an opportunity in every setback and never give up. When you find the right job/ career/ partner you will just know because somewhere deep within, you always knew.

Hey Anjana
I have always wanted to become someone important but I also do not want to work so hard that I don't have a life. I also feel I am interested in so many things. I think my biggest problem is that I do not believe in myself. In school and college, I didn't work too hard but I always did well. I also got my master's degree and I am working as a banker,

the money is good but I hate the job. The only thing that keeps me going is that I love math but once I took a public speaking class and really liked it. I feel it is important to be articulate in the management profession. Is it about soul searching? I really do not know what is right for me?
- SO

AR: It is very common to not know what you want to do with your life - we're always trying to figure things out. You just have to trust that it will work out but you have to make the effort. Achieving big dreams comes with inevitable obstacles. See every barrier as a

chance to do better. It is hard to predict what your future career will be like, but it does not mean we do not try.

The truth is, the path to success and happiness is not easy- people will fail, and have rough times but you should have a goal in mind and work towards it. Do not lose faith. Do you want to look back and see you stayed at a job you hated for years? Do something to change your situation. Take the risk (while using your common sense) - sometimes not taking the risk is the biggest risk of all. We all know what we love to do.

Your instincts already know what you want, so instead of

suppressing it- go explore and every step will bring you closer to the right one. It will take time, maybe days or years but it will come to you. The question is, can you wait? Don't waste your life on anything less than what you are worth. You may not know what you want now, but you will always know what you do not want.

Finding the right career is like finding your perfect partner, you can either settle with what others suggest or think is right, or you can keep looking till you find what you really deserve. Cliché but you will know when you find the right one. Don't settle. Good luck. 🍀

Anjana is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician and has four years of experience in adult mental health in Maine, USA.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

MORE THAN TIME

After Apple first introduced the concept of wearing the iPod Nano on our wrists, consumers started anxiously waiting for the world's most valuable company to launch its own smartwatch to match up with Pebble and other Android models. Wearable technologies today should deliver seamless compatibility with our other electronic devices, including the ability to do everything our smartphones already do and more.

At first glance, the new Apple Watch appears to have lived up to our expectations - allowing you to send and receive messages, calls, and mail right from your wrist. Heart-rate sensors along with built-in native apps to monitor your health and fitness, and turn-by-



turn navigation using Google Maps and haptic feedback so you do not have to keep checking your watch. Its tap and sketch messaging capabilities using the Force Touch feature also makes this a very fun gadget to have, but perhaps only if your friend has one too to receive your messages.

However, early hands-on reports revealed a rather steep learning curve for new users, which is very uncharacteristic of Apple's products. For the first time, there is an online guided tour in order to familiarise new users with the controls on the Apple Watch, even before any of the 2.3 million pre-orders are shipped.



Most of the features work as advertised, but heavy usage of the device takes a toll on its surprisingly short battery life. Ironically the only thing you can do in order for the battery to last a few days is to check the time only without using other features.

This also means you have another gadget to worry about charging before you head to bed, in addition to your tablet, laptop and smartphone - more of a hassle than the convenience that smart devices should be providing.

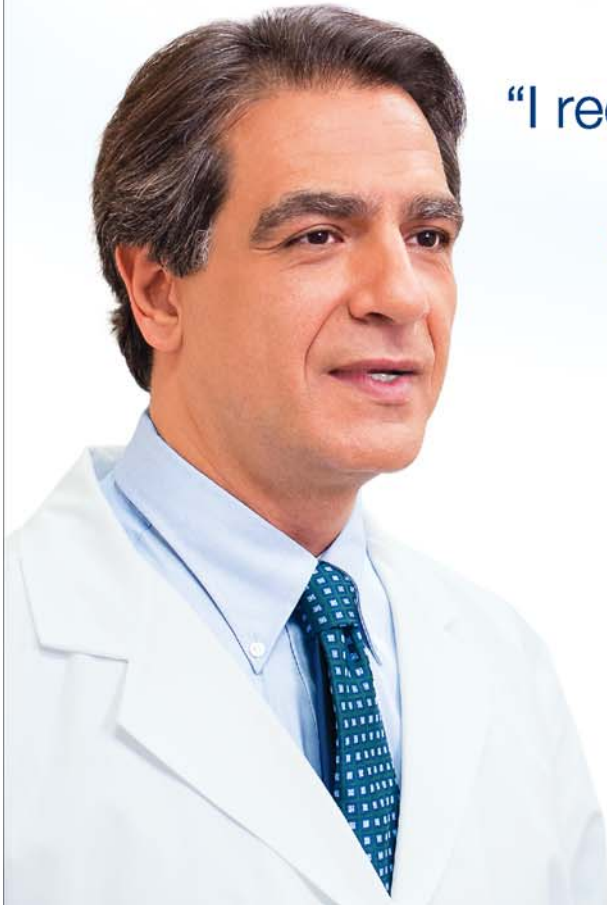
What is still consistent with other Apple products though is the team's meticulous



attention to detail. The special alloys used in manufacturing the different beautifully designed Apple Watches is evidence of its high level of craftsmanship and engineering. The array of straps and types of Apple Watch - Normal, Sport, and Edition series - also makes it highly customisable. 🍀



YANTRICK'S VERDICT: With its costly price tag and features that will ultimately fail without a good battery life, it does make one wonder if we are really in need of a smartwatch.

The Apple Watch goes on sale on 24 April but Nepal might have to wait a little longer.




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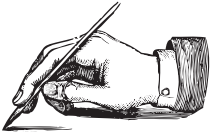
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Pointless Activity (Revolutionary)

When it comes to whipping up the masses to perform meaningless tasks nobody compares with the Maoists.

The Nepali New Year 2072 found your columnist wondering where this country might be if the last two decades weren't lost to war and posturing by a gang of hustlers who still hold the country hostage. The recent banda, pointless as ever, reminds us of countless wasted days that turned into wasted years spent distracting the people with mindless pursuits.



MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

Most ideologies, whether religious or political, encourage a certain amount of pointless activity to reinforce loyalty and distract from their failings, politicians from all parties try to divert attention from their incompetence. But credit where credit's due: when it comes to whipping up the masses to perform meaningless tasks nobody compares with the Maoists.

Remember when the party mobilised thousands in digging trenches to save the country from invasion by Indian imperialists? The civil war itself was the most disastrous pointless activity in Nepal's history: 17,000 dead, a society traumatised and the economy in ruins just so the Maoists could get a seat at the feeding trough that passes for government around here.

With peace came militant unionism, spouting ridiculous demands that shut



DIMAKAR CHETTRI

factories nation-wide. What was the point of all that, except perhaps to create a pool of disgruntled unemployed to use for the endless parade of pointless demonstrations?

History shows where our comrades got their technique. Nobody beats Mao Zedong when it comes to mobilising millions, usually with devastating results. During the Great Leap Forward Mao ordered 'backyard furnaces' to produce steel in every village. Pots, pans and farming tools were requisitioned and melted in a feverish display of loyalty to the Chairman. To fire the furnaces turning useful implements into

worthless pig iron China was deforested on a massive scale, leading to catastrophic flooding. Even after Mao visited an actual steel mill and realised the process wasn't as simple as melting woks and pitchforks he refused to halt the campaign, being more concerned about maintaining revolutionary zeal than the impending famine.

Taking pointless to new heights, Mao exhorted the masses to kill sparrows in the Four Pests Campaign. Millions of villagers banged drums until birds dropped from the sky, dead from exhaustion. Suddenly without predators, a plague of locusts appeared and ate all the crops, whatever

was left couldn't be harvested for lack of tools. All this epic scale pointless activity created the Great Famine (1958-62) in which some 35-45 million Chinese perished. As a grand finale, he launched the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), quite possibly the most insane pointless activity in human history.

Though the scale is vastly different there is something eerily familiar in such tactics. Throughout Nepal's conflict and beyond, countless campaigns were inflicted on society only to fade into oblivion, proving them pointless. The Maoist ban of Bollywood films was a personal favourite (the Hand invites readers to send in their faves) as cadres forcibly shut cassette shops to purge Nepal of insidious Indian pop culture. Without Bollywood our politicians were the only jokers left onstage, perhaps the campaigns' secret purpose was to eliminate the competition and be the only show in town.

Land seizure campaigns were another populist charade that went nowhere, considering all properties were eventually returned to the owners and many people still remain landless. Then along came the puritanical anti-alcohol campaign, ridding entire districts of booze. This concept never stood a chance, one could argue such pointless activity drove many to drink even more.

The Hrithik Roshan riot in 2001, named after a Bollywood actor who (maybe) made a rude comment, gets my vote as the tackiest activity. Mobs targeted Indian owned businesses in an ugly outburst of racist xenophobia, whipped up and manipulated by Maoist agents

provocateurs. Similar was the orchestrated reaction to the shocking murder of Nepali workers in Iraq, manpower agencies were trashed and Kathmandu's mosques shamelessly vandalised, all driven by a violent rabble that appeared out of nowhere and vanished just as quickly.

The annual shut-down campaigns against private schools were not only pointless but tragic, depriving innocent students of their right to an education. And we all wish we could forget the mindless destruction of infrastructure, for a solid decade the comrades were kept busy wrecking footbridges, health-posts and electricity lines, a pointless activity the country has yet to recover from.

One of the most forgettable campaigns of all was for something called Civilian Supremacy, launched after PM Awesome resigned because he failed to oust the army chief. Sadly, the forever delayed constitution has degenerated into yet another activity that can only be labeled pointless, especially since Nepal already had a constitution. The most inclusive assembly in history showed promise until it was blocked at every turn by the same old coterie of Brahmin ideologues, squabbling behind closed doors.

The country has suffered greatly to achieve very little, and one can't help but suspect it was all a sham to keep the people off-balance while the leaders enriched themselves. In the late 1990s Nepal's growth rate was over 7 per cent a year; the prosperity that never materialised because of all this nonsense would have freed millions more from poverty than any war, constitution or other ideologically driven gimmick ever has.



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OM ASTHA RAI

Inside a cabin of the isolation ward at Shahid Sukraraj Tropical Hospital in Kathmandu, a frail young man has been lying in bed for the last five days.

Ram Krishna Giri, 23, was admitted after being infected with swine flu while treating patients in the remote village of Paink in Jajarkot that was at the epicentre of a deadly flu outbreak three weeks ago, which has killed 26 people so far.

Giri had arrived at the sub-health post in Paink just two months ago, and immediately found himself overwhelmed with flu cases. He treated at least 1,000 patients before being infected himself.

“When I look back, I feel an immense sense of satisfaction that we managed to save so many lives,” he says, “there is nothing more fulfilling for a health worker than seeing a smile on the patient you cured.”

Giri is still weak, is on intravenous feed, and cannot even sit up, but is determined to go back to Jajarkot as soon as he is fit. There are four other health workers at the post in Paink where the epidemic started after a 20-year-old woman died of flu-like symptoms on 1 April.

A few days later, a three-member team led by physician Dipak Pun reached Paink on foot to support Giri and together they worked 18 hours a day treating 1,200 patients. When Giri fell ill, he was rushed to Khalanga on a horse, then taken to Nepalganj on a jeep from where he was flown to Kathmandu.

“At one point there were so many patients that there was no space inside the sub-health post. We treated patients in the verandah and worked late into the night burning firewood to keep the cold away,” Giri told us in a feeble voice.

The challenge was to reach patients who were too weak to be taken to the sub-health post. Bir Bahadur Chhetri, 60, died in Paink after suffering fever and headache for days. His 18-year-old son, Prakash, had also fallen sick and was not able to walk to the sub-health post. Giri walked one hour to their house, but himself fell ill along the way as he was climbing a steep trail.

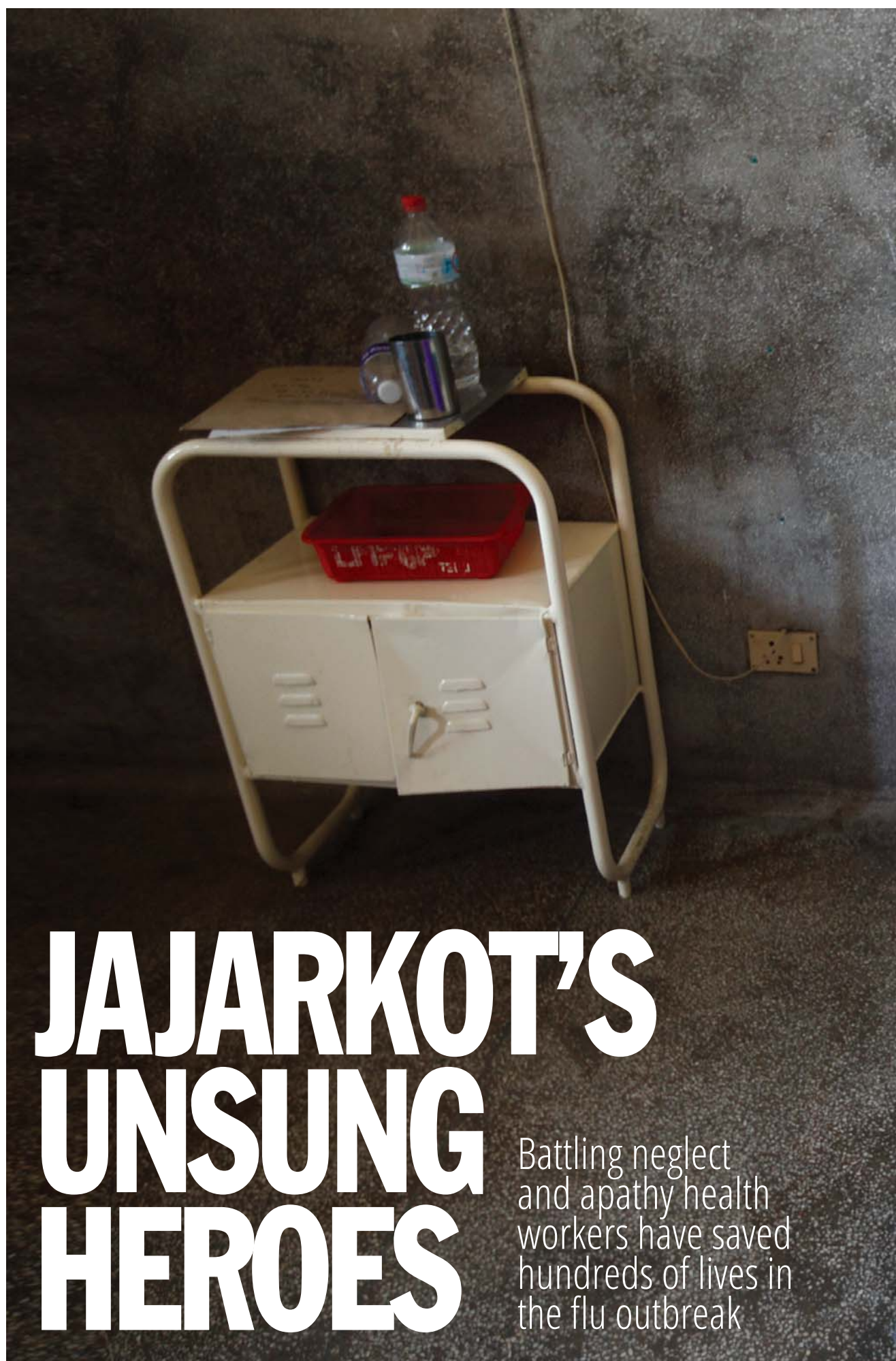
“I had not slept enough for more than a week and was feeling exhausted,” he recalls, “I had been weakened by overwork.”

Amidst widespread criticism in the media of the government’s perceived failure to tackle the Jajarkot epidemic, the contribution of health workers like Giri has been overlooked.

“It’s true the government was slow to react to the epidemic, and a lot of the help was too little too late,” Jajarkot CA member Rajeev Shah told *Nepali Times*, “but there were huge logistical and other challenges.”

District health officer Pun also worked tirelessly despite showing some symptoms of flu himself, while treating hundreds. “In the eight days I spent at Paink, not a single patient died in the health post,” he told us by phone from the Jajarkot capital on Wednesday. “Yes, the government could have reacted faster, but we could not have done more given the limited resources we had.” (See interview, page 18)

The uproar over the government’s failure has also discouraged health workers toiling day and night to save people’s lives in Jajarkot.



JAJARKOT'S UNSUNG HEROES

Battling neglect and apathy health workers have saved hundreds of lives in the flu outbreak

Running with the

Three weeks after an outbreak of influenza in Jajarkot, news about the movement of maverick doctor, Govinda KC in the district made it to front pages of most Nepali daily newspapers this week.



BETWEEN THE LINES

Tsering Dolker Gurung

A photo of the doctor’s arrival at Nepalganj airport from where he was to drive to Jajarkot on Monday was widely shared on social media, with many journalists labeling him a ‘hero’, and belittling the government’s response so far.

The hunger-striking doctor has our

deepest respect for his tireless effort to reform the medical education system. KC went to Jajarkot despite being advised by his physicians not to, due to health issues related to his 11-day hunger strike this month.

However, the spotlight on KC put the work of dozens of other local doctors and health workers in Jajarkot in the shadows, who have been there since day one. They have been working in appalling conditions with shortages of everything, yet they have saved countless lives.

One of them is assistant health worker Ram Krishna Giri, who personally treated over 1,200 patients at Paink village before getting infected with swine flu himself. Giri was brought to Teku’s Shahid Sukraraj Tropical Hospital this week, where his condition is stable.

“We have a dedicated team, which has been working tirelessly to treat as many people as possible,” Giri told *Nepali*

Times from his hospital bed on Tuesday (above). Paink is one of the worst-affected villages in Jajarkot, and the health post there has eight personnel treating patients round-the-clock. Not surprisingly, Giri and his colleagues have never made it to the front pages of the Kathmandu papers.

Instead, the coverage has centred around the government’s inefficiency, apathy and neglect. It’s true that the Health Ministry could have done more, much faster. But given the remoteness of the area, the state of governance in the country, and the nature of the epidemic, the health professionals at Ground Zero did a commendable job in limiting the fatalities.

Yet, rather than lauding that effort, the media acted like a lynch mob to discredit health workers. Instead of informing the people about the disease and presenting the facts on the ground, Kathmandu

To suggest that the state has remained a mere spectator in Jajarkot is not just wrong, it is selective reporting



GOPEN RAI



RAJENDRA KARKI

IN ISOLATION: Health worker Ram Krishna Giri (*left*) treated hundreds of patients before he himself was infected with swine flu. He is now recuperating at a hospital in Kathmandu.

Physician Moritz Tlagemann (*above*) of the Chaurjhari Hospital examining a patient at Archhane in Jajarkot on Monday.

Health worker Bibhant Shah said the relentless negative coverage in the media has thoroughly demoralised many working in Jajarkot like him. When he reached Paink, the outbreak had been contained, so he walked to Dhime, where there were no doctors. “But some Kathmandu media reported that I had fled Paink and left people to die,” he said by phone, adding that the Kathmandu media exaggerated the extent of the outbreak. Even so, he credits newspapers for highlighting the epidemic and forcing the government to act.

As of 21 April, 25 deaths had been reported in Archhane, Paink, Sakala, Pajaru, Talegaun and Nayakwada VDCs of Jajarkot district. Not all the fatalities were a result of H1N1 influenza, commonly known as swine flu.

Krishna Khatri, epidemiologist in the Jajarkot public health office, told us: “Only four deaths were caused by swine flu. Others were either newborns or the elderly already suffering from asthma, high blood pressure and tuberculosis.”

Doctors are investigating if there might be other causes behind the Jajarkot outbreak. But samples of saliva and blood collected from the worst-affected villages of Jajarkot have tested negative for other water-borne and vector-borne diseases, including typhoid.

“No virus other than swine flu has been detected in Jajarkot,” says Baburam Marasini at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division in Kathmandu. “But more than swine flu, it is low immunity caused by poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy and lack of sanitation that led to the fatalities in Jajarkot.”

Given this, public experts say, the Jajarkot outbreak appears to be more of a failure of state structure than the result of late response by government authorities.

What raised the death toll was that Jajarkot has very few roads, the population is spread out over the rugged mountains, and the sick have to be carried to health posts or the one single hospital in Khalanga. 🇳🇵

JAJARKOT

KATHMANDU

herd



newspapers tried to outdo each other with sensational and exaggerated headlines. It spread panic, disheartened service providers, and buried the truth.

Yes, the Health Ministry should have immediately set up a rapid response team, learning from the Jajarkot cholera outbreak in 2009 that killed more than 200 people in the district. This would have meant that the flu virus could have been identified earlier and a decrease in number of fatalities.

But to suggest that the state has remained a mere spectator is not just wrong, it is selective reporting. The media was on a political agenda-setting mode and reporters had to bend their coverage to suit the slant that editors in Kathmandu needed.

Two days after the epidemic was confirmed by the Department of Epidemiology and Disease Control, Health Minister Khagaraj Adhikari flew to Jajarkot

on 12 April with CA members from the district and a team of doctors. Since then, 13 doctors from Nepal Army, Armed Police Force, and Nepal Medical Association are in Jajarkot to augment the health posts.

Journalists in a democracy are taught to play the ‘adversarial role’ and to ‘afflict the comfortable’, but that can’t be done by sacrificing facts. Government bashing is staple fare for many journalists, and it often needs to be bashed, but there cannot be a knee-jerk reaction when the facts point in the other direction.

An outbreak like this needs much more specialised knowledge of epidemiology, about how influenza struck those whose immunity had already been suppressed by malnutrition, TB, chronic diarrhoea or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). But that seems to be asking too much of Nepal’s over-politicised mainstream generalists. 🇳🇵

@Chenreeyang

“Spread awareness, not panic.”

Interview with Jajarkot-based physician
Dipak Pun in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 18 April

Himal Khabarpatrika: How is the situation in Paink?

Dipak Pun: Compared to two weeks ago, the situation at Paink has improved by 80 per cent. We have a team of eight health workers who has been toiling round-the-clock. However, the epidemic is still spreading to other villages. Currently, Talegaun VDC has the most number of patients infected with H1N1.

What’s the main reason for the outbreak?

We found that a lot of patients first went to see faith healers and shamans rather than visiting health clinics. Lack of awareness among the public, problems in hygiene, weak health, inaccessibility to health services, contaminated water reduced their immunity when they were exposed to the virus.

What preventive measures can we adopt?

It’s important to avoid crowds and maintain a distance while speaking to others. Try not to shake hands or share



RAJENDRA KARKI

hugs. Also, wearing a mask and increasing the intake of fluids is important. Get a check up when you have a cough or cold.

Did the state neglect Jajarkot?

That’s not exactly true. We have been receiving medicines, but if the infection had been identified sooner so many lives wouldn’t have been lost. The sub-health post at Paink didn’t have a lab, and we made one after reaching there. We also called health workers from neighbouring districts. None of the patients we treated lost their lives.

What should the government do next?

A sense of panic has gripped villagers after the disease was confirmed to be swine flu. The state now needs to be more careful and alert. We need to spread the message of prevention and awareness, not terror. Swine flu can be treated. Also, it is time for the government to send a new batch of health workers to relieve those who have been working tirelessly for the past few weeks. As preventive measures, health workers and medicines should also be sent to places where there have been no infections so far.



Off to admit our son in a school.

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 17 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ Criticise me as much as you want, but don’t demoralise the health workers toiling day and night in the field. ”



Health Minister Khagraj Adhikari in *onlinekhabar.com*, 21 April, responding to questions about the government’s role in controlling the Jajarkot flu outbreak.

Sabina’s world

Himal Khabarpatrika, 19-25 April



Sabina Shrestha first flew on a plane when she was 11, and she has been obsessed with flying ever since. Today, at age 35 and mother of a daughter, she is Nepal’s first

female instructor pilot with Yeti Airlines and her ambition is to fly Aribus 330s or Boeing 777s one day.

“Even back then I wondered how such a huge and heavy metal thing flew in the sky,” Shrestha told us from the cockpit of a BA Jetstream 41 twin turboprop at Kathmandu



Airport recently after getting her instructor pilot license. “Flying has just remained a passion ever since.”

Shrestha graduated from Siddhartha Banasthali School and took flying lessons in Texas, getting her instructor pilot rating after winning a scholarship from ‘Ninety Nines’, an organisation of women pilots in America.

Shrestha started out flying Twin Otters to Nepal’s remote and tricky airfields in the mountains. She is used to the surprise of passengers, even foreigners, who are not used to seeing a woman pilot in Nepal, even though there are nearly 20 of them. She says Nepal is one of the most challenging places to fly because of the terrain and weather, and a pilot with experience flying in the Himalaya can fly anywhere in the world.

“My mother always motivated me to follow my passion for flying,” Shrestha said, “if others were to get support like me from their families there would be a lot more women pilots in Nepal.” If Shrestha’s young daughter also wants to be a pilot, we can be sure she would not stop her either.

Sajana

Donor pull out

Kantipur, 23 April



Four donors have discontinued support for the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF), objecting to a legal provision that allows the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to grant amnesty for perpetrators of grave human rights violations during the conflict.

The UK, Switzerland, Norway and Denmark have refused to provide financial support for the second-phase of the (NPTF) saying the Act that was passed last year to form the TRC and the Commission to Investigate Enforced Disappearances (CIED) violates international laws and is against United Nations policies.

At the NPTF board meeting on Wednesday, only the European Union (EU) and USAID signed an agreement to keep up their support of the NPTF’s second-phase programs.

After the Maoists signed a peace accord with the government in 2006, the four countries had been supporting Nepal’s peace process and

reconstruction of physical infrastructure damaged during the war. They had also been lobbying against amnesty for human rights violators. But the bill was passed with amnesty provisions, and the countries decided to pull out of the NPTF.

The NPTF has so far spent more than Rs 23 billion, 40 per cent of which was contributed by donor countries. But Rs 100 million of the budget for the Fund’s first-phase activities have not yet been spent, and there is pressure on the government to use this money only for holding local body elections.

The amnesty provision in the TRC Bill was criticised by conflict victims and international human rights organisations, but these concerns were unheeded when the bill was passed and the TRC and the CIED formed. Although the Supreme Court has ruled that perpetrators of grave human rights violations cannot be pardoned, the controversial TRC provisions have not been revised. Six Maoist parties recently regrouped to fight what they say is a ‘conspiracy to sabotage peace process’ by prosecuting war crimes.

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DESTINATION NEPAL

24 - 30 APRIL 2015

We believe that knowledge is the starting point to generate a conversation. This monthly knowledge series has been initiated in order to raise important questions and stimulate debate within Nepal's tourism industry. It is hoped that structuring the conversation based on new knowledge and developing an open platform to share ideas will lead to action, positive growth and impact in both the public and private sector.

What transport infrastructure will tourists need?

AEROPLANES

Tourist arrival by air in 2013

594,848

Average % of incoming tourists by air since 1964

83%

Tourists by air in 2024

1,782,010

(Based on National Tourism Strategy)

International flights in 2014

287/week

(14,924 per year)

Air movement was around

12,000

arrivals in 2013 (CAAN, 2014)

Will we need 3 times as much international flight movement, 72,000 arrivals and departures per annum, within 10 years? How many planes will go to Lumbini instead?



HELICOPTERS

Commercial helicopter companies made **9,419** flights (departures and arrivals) in **2013**

(CAAN, 2014)

There are about **1,500** rescue operations per year, on average, for about **100,000** yearly trekkers and mountaineers.

How many helicopter rescues will be needed when 300,000 or 500,000 yearly trekkers and mountaineers come to Nepal in 10 years time? Will insurance premiums that tourists need to pay reduce in coming years?

“

It would be difficult to achieve the target [developing country status for Nepal by 2022] with the resources we have at present. That means we need to mobilize resources from other sectors - the private sector and development partners. Investment pours into the country only when we are able to create favourable climate for businesses. More investment means more economic activities and more employment generation. We have to overcome impediments to infrastructure first. Only then will the private sector bring investments.”



**NPC Vice-chairman
Govinda Raj Pokharel**

ROAD

Average % of tourists by land since 1964:

17%

Main land ports:

Bhairawa, Kodari

Overland tourists by 2024

364,990

NRs. **26 billion** was allocated for road construction in **2014-2015** fiscal year. What was spent on new roads built in Far Western Nepal to promote tourism there?



“

Airport upgrading is critical to further developing nearby Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, into an attractive cultural and tourism destination. The number of foreign visitors to Lumbini is rapidly rising in the recent years, and airport improvement will help in further opening Lumbini and linking it with international tourist circuits in South Asia as well as to the rest of the world.”



**Kenichi Yokoyama,
ADB Country Director for Nepal**

Where to fly to?

Tribhuvan International Airport recently shut down for four days from March 4-7, just at the beginning of the spring trekking season. An estimated 80,000 people were stranded at TIA and inbound airports. Would an international company handling management of TIA have provided better services to the thousands of affected tourists and migrant workers?

The Gautam Buddha Aiport in Bhairawa is being expanded. In 2012, the airport had 4,172 total flight movements and 118,367 passengers. The airport is 15 km from the Lumbini heritage site. If it is to serve as a regional international airport and attract 760,000 passengers annually by 2030 what area impacts will it have on the Lumbini Heritage area with the expansion of economic activity and reduction in air quality? (CAAN, 2013)

More like them?



Jomson and Lukla are two airports other than Kathmandu and Pokhara that make a good income beyond their budget allocations. What can other rural airports learn from these two airports to attract private airlines? Can Simikot Airport in Humla become a hub for those headed to Kailash? (CAAN, 2013)

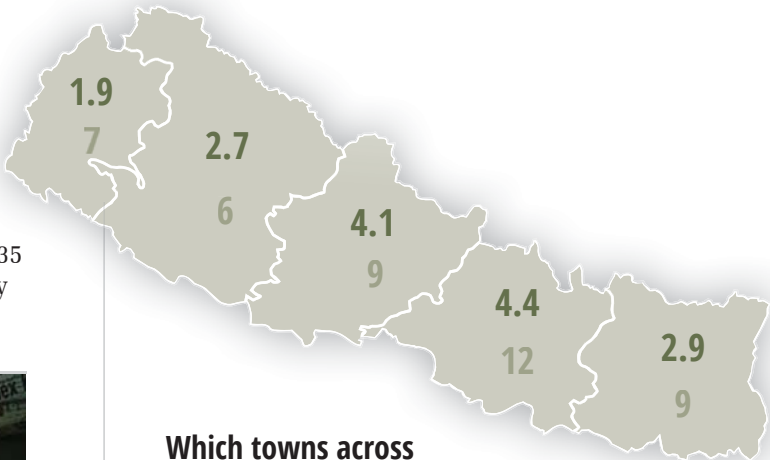
Let's take a road-trip!

Since 1963, approximately 17% of tourists coming to Nepal have come overland. In 2013, almost 95% of those tourists came via Kodari (Chinese border), and Bhairawa (Indian border). Over the last 10 years, more than 30 % of these land tourists, on average, were same day visitors. Many that come to Lumbini on day long trips do not even get registered in official statistics. (NTS, 2013)

New routes for land entry could improve the economies of other regions. A new bridge over the Mahakali River in Far West Nepal for the Pancheshwor Multipurpose Project could improve trade and tourism in the region. Work is also under way to link Rasuwagadi to Kerung, a Chinese town 35 km from the border. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway may extend till Kerung by 2020.

Will they be used?

New and improved roads may encourage tourism and other economic activities. But if the roads are going to be closed with bandhs, why build them in the first place? Tourists would prefer walking in green trails than black-topped ones, wouldn't they?



Which towns across Nepal are easier to travel in?

- Urban road density in development region (km/km²)
- Road density (km/100 km²)

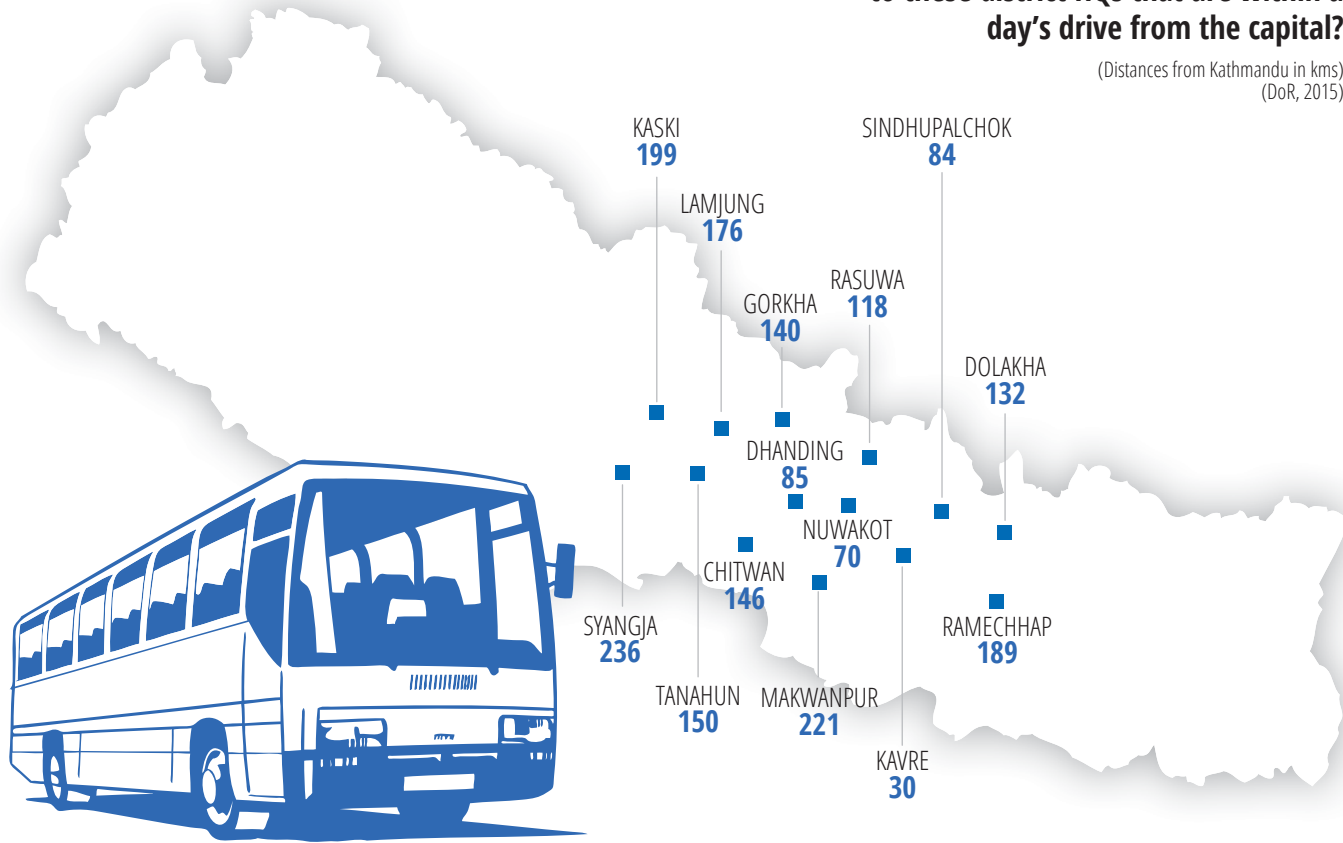


Who pays?

Impaired trekkers, from an accident or medical issues, can today be airlifted straight to Kathmandu by chartered helicopters. These evacuations can cost around \$2,000-5,000, depending on distance from Kathmandu and altitude. Travellers are therefore encouraged to buy insurance. But, as more commercial helicopter companies find it profitable to airlift distressed trekkers, what role will local health posts play in disaster response? How will the expanding commercial helicopter industry complement future disaster response systems?

Can we take tourists in Kathmandu to these district HQs that are within a day's drive from the capital?

(Distances from Kathmandu in kms)
(DoR, 2015)





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ALL PICS: MUKUNDA BOGATI



LAND ROVER COUNTRY

Mukunda Bogati in *Nepal*, 19 April

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places which are inaccessible in other vehicles.

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Designed in 1948 in Britain and modelled after US-made

jeeps, Land Rovers were initially a status symbol and featured in James Bond movies. But in rural Nepal, these vintage vehicles are primarily used by rural commuters along new rough and tumble feeder roads.

Grishma Subba of the East Nepal Taxi Association, says: "Land Rovers are

reliable because they can easily move up and down hills as on roads in the plains."

Subba says Land Rovers have also boosted eastern Nepal's agro-economy by helping transport produce to market from rural farms. As many as 56 Land Rovers operate in Ilam district alone.

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Guide to urban wildlife

The discovery this week in Humla of a species of wild yak thought to be extinct has brought new hope to scientists that biodiversity in the Himalaya is alive and kicking, so we can all sit back, relax and have a pleasant flight, remembering to keep our seatbelts loosely fastened at all times while the constitution is being drafted.

Earlier this year, a Pallas Cat that everyone thought had gone the way of the Dodo was found lurking behind the Annapurnas, leading us to believe that not everyone in Nepal has won a DV lottery yet. Speaking of which, the Wild Ass that once roamed the Roof of the World in large herds are, according to latest scientific research, still merrily making collective asses of themselves. All this goes to prove that news about the demise of donkeys is wildly exaggerated.

Before Nepal's became renowned across the world as the highest per capita consumers of instant noodles (Sponsor's announcement: "Each pack of ByeBye Noodles comes with a free Maserati") we used to be known for the diversity of our rare flora and fauna. I am glad to report that going by the incredible numbers of plastic-wrapped gladioli bouquet that were gifted to Prime Minister Jhusil Da before he boarded his plane for Jakarta this week, our floras are doing just fine, thank you so very much. It's Kathmandu's street fauna we are worried about. Good thing the street between Thapathali and Teku has been declared a national park to protect our ungulates, primates, canines, felines and bovines.

In fact, the most encouraging revival of wildlife in Nepal in the past decade has been within the Ring Road. Carnivores that were hitherto found only in fossilised remains from the Pleistocene once more prowl the corridors of power in the Jurassic Park of Singha Darbar. Invertebrates now populate Balu Water. Pre-historic reptiles from our erstwhile Animal Kingdom are again hatching from eggs and slithering about in the Consternation Assembly. There are even occasional reports of man-eater politicians turning to cannibalism which means everything is hunky-dory in the boondocks.

But how many of us, sitting here in Kathmandu, answer to the call of the nature? How much do we actually value the wild? Will we ever know we're looking at a Greater Himalayan Red-vented Twit when we see one? Will we be able to pick out through our binoculars a sabre-toothed ex-gorilla in Paris Danda? How about the Woolly Mammoths inside various quasi-gobblement corporations? Can we identify the exact species of rodent that scurries past the security x-ray in the departure concourse of the Tremendous International Airport? Are we up to date with the micro-fauna within our own gastrointestinal tracts, or are we just content with shooting the breeze, as it were, pretending that no one will notice?

It is time we recognised the dramatic strides Nepal has taken in wildlife conservation, and in order to make it easier for us to find our way around Kathmandu's concrete jungle and identify its animal denizens, we offer below a useful quick-reference guide for wildlife enthusiasts:



his domain by spitting red

Grey Langur (Sanskrit name: *Bandar seri bhagawan*): Handsome and clever, solitary and without scruples, spends much time not wearing underpants, foraging for juicy contracts. Believes in give and take, and generously shares the loot. Diet: rarely observed eating anything other than paan and will mark the perimeter of juice in the office urinal.

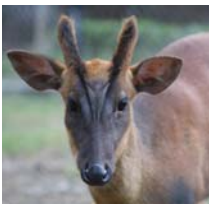


Red Panda (Latin name: *Habre nepalensis rosso*): Shy and reclusive, resides on the forest canopy with occasional forays down to the undergrowth to dig for subterranean tubers. Once thought to be nearly extinct, this left-leaning squirrel is making a comeback on Twitter. Range: Cyberspace.



goods. Known locally as "khaobadi".

Wild Bore (Maoist name: *Sus extortionum*): Once thought to be extinct, but making presence felt again across the midhills and in the Kathmandu Valley rim. Raids farmers' crops at harvest time, can deliver speeches that last hours if allowed to. Diet: cement, new airport contracts, real estate, electronic consumer



push comes to shove will

Barking Deer (Nom de guerre: *Cervidae woofwoof politicus*): Garrulous, and has a loud hooting call to magnify its stature. Mobile and mischievous, commonly found addressing large gatherings of half-asleep invitees, gathers in herds at election time. Diet: Voracious appetite, can be destructive to shrubs and trees, but if



County. Habitat: Constituent Assembly, Parliamentary sub-committees, VDCs and DDCs.

Red Herring (Mandarin name: *Pisces maozedangeria*): Omnivore that roams in schools and adheres to a strict moral code that includes being a scavenging bottom-feeder with strong jaws, often hunts at night and is famed for its whooping, blood-curdling cry similar to one emitted by extinct sub-species in Fengyang



can be vicious if disturbed. Diet: copious amounts of tea between naps, dry instant noodles (with free Maserati).

Sloth bear (Government-sanctioned name: *Ursidae soporificus*): Indolent and sluggish, sleeps during the day with head on desk at Singha Darbar, burping in his sleep, emitting distinctive body odour. Approach with care, can be vicious if disturbed. Diet: copious amounts of tea between naps, dry instant noodles (with free Maserati).



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI



NEWS: Dr KC goes for health check up.



NEWS: PM Koirala goes for health check up.



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