

# समाचार SAMACHARA

Your Gurkha Welfare Trust newsletter  
Samachara means 'news' in Nepali



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Spring 2023



## VITAL SUPPORT FOR 103-YEAR OLD VETERAN

Gurkha veteran Lal Bahadur Gurung is 103 years old. He is entirely reliant on the support he gets thanks to your generous donations. Not only does he get a pension paid to him by GWT each month, he also gets access to medical care, has a safe and warm place to call home and has constant access to safe, clean drinking water.

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“May you never have to worry or suffer in your life. May you always get enough to eat and never have to go hungry. My blessings to all.”



## A word from our CEO



Thank you to everyone who donated to the last appeal from our Chairman, Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw in November. The General has asked me to extend his personal thanks to you all once more for digging deep and

supporting the cause – especially during times like these.

As I write this, we find ourselves in the middle of ‘construction’ season in Nepal. With an annual monsoon gripping the country from May to September and Hindu and Buddhist festivals dominating much of October and November, it’s between December and April that the construction teams come into their own.

Right now earthquake-resilient homes are having foundations dug, block-work formed and colourful paints applied, ready for handover to vulnerable Gurkha veterans and widows.

For 200 years the Gurkhas have fought for Britain and in no small part they are responsible for the freedoms we now enjoy.

It is so important that we keep that at the forefront of our mind as we seek to support them in their dotage.

Dhanyabad

Al Howard  
CEO, The Gurkha Welfare Trust

## LAL STRUGGLED TO COPE ON HIS OWN

Lal returned to his village in Lamjung, Nepal after being released from the Army in 1946. He lives with his youngest son and daughter in law. His wife passed away over 15 years ago and without help he found it difficult to look after himself. In recent years his hearing and vision has deteriorated. He suffers from back pain and can only walk a short distance.

*“I am ok but I cannot hear properly, people have to talk loudly. My vision is also poor, it’s blurry.”*

Although his speech is slurred, Lal still understands things and is remarkably active for his age. He is able to feed himself and get dressed. His family members cook for him, look after the house and help him with daily tasks.



## SUPPORT FROM GWT IS VITAL

The Gurkha Welfare Trust supports Lal by providing a monthly pension and delivering medical care.

There is no hospital in the village, and it is a three-hour off-road drive to GWT’s nearest Area Welfare Centre (AWC) in Lamjung. As Lal is too old to make the journey, medical staff from the AWC visit him regularly to deliver his medication and carry out a health check-up.

His pension is paid into a bank account, and his son collects it from the bank, about an hour and a half’s walk away.

Lal uses his pension to buy food, clothes and household items. Without it he would struggle to feed himself and keep healthy.

*“I eat everything. Rice, lentils, vegetables, wheat, corn. I am not very fussy about food. I eat whatever is given to me.”*

## A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

Lal’s house was one of many destroyed by the terrible earthquake of 2015.

Fortunately, none of his family was injured, but they were left with nowhere to live.

The GWT stepped in and built him a new earthquake-resilient home. Due to the remote location this was no easy task.

At the time there were no proper roads to the village and it was impossible to reach by vehicle. All the construction materials had to be carried in on foot.

*“During that time, we lived in a tent and shed. Later, after the house was completed, we moved in. I am very happy that GWT built me this house.”*

## A CLEAN WATER SUPPLY

Ten years ago, Lal’s village had no water supply. Villagers had to walk for an hour each way to collect water for cooking, carrying the heavy water pots in Doko baskets on their backs. They used the same water source to bathe and wash clothes.

The Government installed community taps in the village, but with 19

households sharing one tap they had to queue to collect water and it was often unsafe to drink:

*“Sand, leaves, sometimes even frogs... used to enter the pipeline. We had to go to the source from time to time to clean the pipes and fix it.”*

Their lives have changed since a GWT water project piped clean water into the village and installed a tap stand for every household.

*“Now, after GWT built a water tap right at our doorstep it is very convenient. We don’t have to share this water tap with anybody. The water is very clean and nice.”*

*“We use this water to drink, cook, take a bath... We are very happy. We also have one cow and one ox and now we have no problem giving them water.”*

Front page continued...

## AN ARMY RECRUIT AT 18

Despite his age, Lal still vividly remembers his Army training.

*“I was 18 years old when I was recruited. I trained for the War but couldn’t fight in it. If I had gone to war, then the enemies would have been killed by my hands or I would have been killed by theirs.”*

*Back then, we had to do a lot of training – we had to learn how to use different guns and we had to know sign language. A person used to go on top of a hill and wave a flag and we had to understand what he was saying from his movement of the flag. They used to create different situations and tell us what we had to do ... if it happened for real.”*





## MUGU MEDICAL CAMP

The Gurkha Welfare Trust provides free medical camps for people living in the most remote communities in Nepal. For many, this is the only medical assistance they receive. Relatively simple procedures such as cataract removals and tooth extractions can make all the difference to those living in discomfort.

In December, we held a medical camp in Mugu, a village in the remote and rugged mountains of north-west Nepal. Our teams worked tirelessly over three days, treating a total of 760 patients, some of whom had journeyed for days to reach the camp.



In the days before the camp was due to start, a landslide washed away the local electricity powerhouse, and staff had to bring in generators to supply the camp with power.

During the camp, our specialist medical staff carried out health check-ups and hearing tests, and provided dental treatment and rehabilitation. We also measured patients for prosthetic limbs which will be fitted at a follow-up fitment camp.



The camp was a great success, and over the three days we:

- Treated 386 patients for ear, nose & throat conditions
- Carried out 200 hearing tests
- Fitted 100 hearing aids
- Made 80 sets of dentures
- Treated 38 rehab patients
- Took measurements for 35 prosthetic limbs

## THANK YOU

We are immensely grateful to everyone who donated in response to our last appeal, helping us to deliver essential financial and medical aid to Gurkha veterans and widows.

We all have unique needs in our most vulnerable years. That's why we have placed personalised care at the centre of our strategy in Nepal.

In addition to providing a pension, we provide a package of care that includes medical grants, mobility aids and extra support at times of extreme hardship.

**"After all they have sacrificed for us, we must be there to provide for our brave Gurkha veterans and widows."**

Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE, Chairman



## MEET THE TEAM: INTERVIEW WITH DR RABINDRA KUMAR GHOLE



"I am quite familiar with the challenges of accessibility for health services in rural Nepal," Rabindra said. "My priority is to always keep in touch with those people who cannot easily access a physician's services."

**Why did you choose to join GWT?**

"While I worked in a remote Nepali village, I realised that older patients needed to be better looked after. In my experience, the least care is given to elderly people. There are not many preventive services specific to them. There aren't many medical experts in this field. The Gurkha Welfare Trust has been dealing with geriatric health for a long time, so I joined the team to address these concerns and help those who struggle and face health issues in old age."

**What do you do on your field visits to see Gurkha veterans and widows?**

"When we visit GWT pensioners, we take a holistic approach. First, we ensure they are not struggling with any financial issues or problems with their home. Then we conduct a comprehensive medical assessment and deliver their medications. The Trust provides lifesaving vaccines to vulnerable pensioners as well.

"It is common for Gurkha veterans and widows to be looked after by family members, so we talk to the family about how to best provide care to their loved ones and give practical advice on basic healthcare.

In some cases, if a pensioner is in critical condition, we ensure they are in touch with specialist doctors. If a patient needs rehabilitation, our Residential Homes have excellent programmes."

**How do you travel to pensioners' homes?**

"We generally travel by 4x4 vehicle and motorbike. If there is no road access to our pensioner's home, we also travel by foot. In the rainy season, my colleagues need to cross flooded rivers by boat to reach remote villages."

**How long does it take to reach your pensioners?**

"Many journeys take up to seven hours, one way."

**What's the most inspiring thing you've heard from a Gurkha veteran or widow?**

"One veteran's wife had breast cancer, and GWT paid for the treatment. He told me, 'She is better now that she is getting the treatment. We don't know what would have happened if you hadn't offered advice and referred her to a proper hospital. Dhanyabad.'"

**"Another pensioner once said to me, 'When you arrive, I feel like I will be able to live longer.'"**





## JOHNNY FENN TAKES ON EPIC TREK ACROSS NEPAL



### GWT Ambassador Johnny Fenn kickstarted 2023 with an epic adventure: walking the entire length of Nepal.

He set off in early January, heading out from Nepal's western border on a journey that will see him walking for around four months. His route is taking him through rugged mountain terrain, across rivers with suspended bridges, and along steep mountain tracks far from civilisation.

Johnny anticipates the journey, which could cover up to 1,400 miles and include 60 miles of vertical ascent, will take him roughly 16 weeks. He aims to raise £18,000, with the proceeds being divided equally between The Gurkha Welfare Trust and Hello World.

*"The GWT has been, for years, the lifeline that allows impoverished ex-Gurkhas to live their lives with dignity. It's an incredible charity absolutely bringing real comfort to those in the hills."*

While preparing for the journey, Johnny told us he planned to live like a porter, with no home comforts and basic meals of rice, lentil dal and vegetables.

*"I will be accompanied by two porters that I have known for years, and who are also both excited to see the whole of Nepal,"* Johnny said. *"We will eat simple rice 'dal bhat' throughout; no meat, and just water and tea."*

*"I have 112 days to complete this, and if you have ever trekked in the hills of Nepal, you'll know it's a tough ask."*

Johnny has been involved with Nepal and the Gurkhas for many years.

He is a former British Army Officer and served 16 of his 25 years with the Brigade of Gurkhas. His Gurkha service took him to East Timor and Iraq, before being posted back to the UK as Deputy Chief of Staff for the Brigade of Gurkhas. On promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, Johnny was appointed British Military Advisor to ECOWAS in Nigeria, then took up the role of Field Director of The Gurkha Welfare Trust in Pokhara, Nepal.

He is now a professional photographer and explorer, and has travelled the globe on photographic adventures. Since becoming a photographer, Johnny has returned to Nepal at least once every year.

During his walk, Johnny will be visiting some of our Area Welfare Centres and projects across the country. For parts of his trek he will be joined by other supporters and special guests, including our Ambassador Hari Budha Magar.

Keep up to date with Johnny's progress and track his live location via our website: [www.gwt.org.uk/walking-nepal](http://www.gwt.org.uk/walking-nepal)



## A SAFE WAY TO LEARN

**Our schools' programme builds, repairs and improves schools in remote regions of Nepal and in turn provides access to education and a better future for Nepali children.**

In this financial year we will refurbish 74 schools, build extensions for 18 schools, and complete two 'major' school projects where the schools will be extensively rebuilt and improved.

This year one of the schools selected for the latter category is Shree Singhapur Pashupati Secondary School, located in Phidim in the east of Nepal.

There are around 500 students at the school (across both primary and secondary years), most of whom walk an average of between one and two hours to reach the school each day.

Originally constructed in 1960, the school's buildings are in a dangerous condition through subsidence and cracking and in desperate need of an upgrade.

It's no small task. The build will take place over a matter of months overseen by our expert team and with all buildings constructed to an earthquake-resilient standard.



Bhim Kumari Bhandari is the school Principal. She explains why the building works are so needed:

*"The main problem we are currently facing is lack of classrooms and a proper fence surrounding the school compound because the school is right next to a highway and its very dangerous for the students. During lunch break, the students go out and there has been some accidents."*

*"Another problem we have is the heat coming from the CGI roof also makes it difficult for students to study. We don't have a proper building in some blocks and there are chances of water entering the classroom when there is heavy rainfall."*

Bhuwani Prasad Lingden, a former rural municipality chairman and social worker, submitted the successful

proposal for the new build to The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

*"I knew about GWT before. There are many retired and serving British Army from my village. Even my younger brother served in the British Army. So, those ex-Gurkha soldiers were really involved in community work. They used to help build schools, bridges, water projects etc... so, I was very fascinated and curious about the work they did."*



Once finished, the project will have achieved the following:

- 10 new classrooms located in a new double-storey building
- A new stand-alone library, science & computer block

- Six new gender-separate accessible toilets
- A comprehensive repair to the existing toilet
- Enhancements to the school's water supply

- Furniture for the new library
- 100 new metal framed and wooden planked combo benches
- Soft furnishings
- A new incinerator
- A new perimeter fence





## TEAM VIGILANCE REACH EVEREST BASE CAMP!



Last autumn the 'Bromptons to Basecamp' team took on a mammoth challenge in aid of The Gurkha Welfare Trust. The team of two, Seb and Ed, cycled from Kathmandu to Everest Base Camp on specially adapted Brompton bikes.



Seb and Ed are the CEO and COO of the GWT's Platinum Business Club Member, Vigilance – leading security experts. Having previously supported a school build, this time around they were raising funds for a vital water project in Nepal.

### INSPIRED BY GURKHAS

The duo were inspired to take on this challenge after spending many years working alongside colleagues who are retired Gurkhas.

"Vigilance is cycling to Everest to fundraise for The Gurkha Welfare Trust because ex-Gurkhas' lives shouldn't be an uphill struggle," Seb said.

Seb and Ed put in extensive training in preparation for their Everest cycle. They knew it would not just be a physical challenge, they would also have to carry out emergency repairs on the go.

"Training is well and truly underway, and we're pushing ourselves and the bikes hard," said Seb after a practice ride in Wales. "We learned lots along the way about getting and keeping our brilliant little Bromptons going; much of the time painfully slowly uphill. We also enjoyed some pretty spectacular scenery, with plenty of bemused bystanders in the Welsh Marches!"

### A TOUGH JOURNEY

The team reached Everest Base Camp on Friday 21st October after an incredible journey, completing their challenge in just 14 days.

They made amazing progress given the difficulty of the terrain and weather. During the journey Ed and Seb faced some tough cycling

conditions: rough paths, steep hills, muddy roads and landslides. Not to mention the hazards of sharing a narrow path with herds of yaks, goats and mules!

At times they had to strip the bikes back to the bare necessities in order to carry them across streams or over suspended foot bridges. On the final day the pair tackled the steep rocky track leading up to Basecamp, a challenge for anyone on foot, and even more so for Seb and Ed carrying their bikes on their backs!



### AWESOME EFFORT

Ed's comment on the penultimate day says it all: "We've got to be the highest cyclists in the world at the moment! One day from base camp and still riding. We are on the penultimate climb of the day, it's hard work but every step we get closer. It's an awesome effort... really chuffed!"

Despite the hardships of the journey the beautiful mountain scenery kept their spirits up, and they kept us entertained via their daily video blog.



### FUNDING A VITAL WATER PROJECT IN NEPAL

Seb and Ed's Everest adventure raised over £18,000 to fund a water project in the district of Jajarkot. The project will pipe in a clean water supply and install tap stands for every household, as well as educating villagers on how to maintain their water system and improve health and hygiene practices.

You can watch the team's video blog here: [www.gwt.org.uk/bromptons-to-basecamp](http://www.gwt.org.uk/bromptons-to-basecamp)



### UPCOMING EVENTS & CHALLENGES

#### LONDON LANDMARKS HALF MARATHON

**2 April 2023**

Take in London's most famous landmarks in this iconic race through the city... with entertainment thrown in!

#### BRIGHTON MARATHON

**2 April 2023**

Join 12,000 runners for a race through Brighton's vibrant city centre and along the glorious seafront.

#### MANCHESTER MARATHON

**16 April 2023**

The second largest marathon in the UK, a hugely popular race with huge crowds to cheer you through the finish.

#### LONDON MARATHON

**23 April 2023**

Join us to cheer on the GWT's incredible team of runners!

#### RIDE LONDON

**28 May 2023**

A unique opportunity to ride 100 miles on traffic-free roads through the heart of London and Essex.

#### THE DOKO CHALLENGE 2023

Run in the footsteps of the Gurkhas! Join our annual race and run or walk 5km with a weighted Doko basket.

**NORTH - ROUNDHAY PARK 21 May 2023**

**SOUTH - WIMBLEDON COMMON 11 June 2023**

Find out more: [www.gwt.org.uk/events](http://www.gwt.org.uk/events) | 01722 323955 | [events@gwt.org.uk](mailto:events@gwt.org.uk)





AN ACT OF BRAVERY

In November 1965, at just 26 years old, Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu acted with bravery and valour on the battlefield during the Borneo Confrontation. Serving in the 2nd Battalion of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, Rambahadur rescued two of his men while under intense enemy fire. After securing their safety he returned to the attack to fight valiantly against enemy soldiers.

"I didn't think I was going to be shot," Rambahadur said in an interview with The Mirror. "All I cared about was rescuing my friends."

For his actions that day, Queen Elizabeth II awarded Rambahadur with the Victoria Cross at Buckingham Palace in 1966.

Later in his career, Rambahadur reached the rank of Captain and was appointed Member of the Victorian Order (MVO) in 1984 for his service as a Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officer (QGOO).

Just four years after Rambahadur received the Victoria Cross, The Gurkha Welfare Trust's founders pledged to help a great number of Gurkha veterans and their

dependants who were living in poverty in Nepal. The Trust's first ever public appeal featured Rambahadur, urging the British public to give generously to the Gurkha veterans who sacrificed so much for our country.

Today Rambahadur is the last living Gurkha VC recipient. He resides in Nepal, where we provide him with medical care via home visits and our world-class health facilities.

Rambahadur still strongly supports our work with his fellow veterans and Gurkha communities, and we were honoured to name our second Residential Home in Dharan after him. In 2019, Rambahadur joined residents from our two Residential Homes on a visit to Kathmandu, where he said:

"I feel very happy to be able to meet my brothers and sisters from the Residential Homes here in Kathmandu. I hope we continue to get the opportunity meet again. I have been to the home in Dharan which has been named after me. Everyone there is happy. They are in good health and have high morale. I would like to thank the staff who have taken good care of the residents and helped them live longer."

Over the years Rambahadur has made visits to the United Kingdom for special occasions. In November 2014 he arrived in England to attend Remembrance services and visit our head office in Salisbury to hear about The Trust's latest developments.

Observing the war memorial outside our headquarters, Rambahadur said, "It is important to remember the sacrifice that these soldiers and many others made for us, just as we must remember the soldiers who have returned [to Nepal] and need our help today."



A MUCH BELOVED HERO

In 2015, Rambahadur returned to England again to attend the G200 Pageant Celebration, which marked 200 years of Gurkhas serving in the British Army. It was a grand event, with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles, and other members of the Royal Family in attendance.

A member of our team took this photo of Rambahadur for this year's Remembrance, to mark the 57th Anniversary of Serikin Day and the award of his VC. Adorned in medals and malas, he remains a much-beloved hero both in Nepal and the UK.



The Gurkha Museum hosts a podcast called 'Gharma Sunnu', which is Nepali for 'listen at home.' You can hear the riveting full story of how Rambahadur earned his Victoria Cross on The Gurkha Museum's website: [thegurkhamuseum.co.uk](http://thegurkhamuseum.co.uk)

Photos credit The Gurkha Museum & The Gurkha Welfare Trust



By choosing to leave a gift in their Will, generous supporters are demonstrating a commitment to the Gurkhas that endures for generations.

These wonderful gestures have a lasting impact on our vital work in Nepal, where we deliver essential financial and medical aid to Gurkha veterans and widows and work with local communities to provide access to clean water and education.

Gurkha veteran Jitbahadur Gurung is 101 years old and one of the Trust's pensioners. He is a proud former soldier who enlisted in the British Army in 1940 and served in India, Singapore and Malaysia. In 1942 he was captured and suffered brutal conditions as a prisoner of war until 1945. After the war, he returned to his remote village in the district of Syangja in western Nepal. The village is difficult to reach by road, and is often inaccessible during monsoon season.

Jitbahadur's pension from The Gurkha Welfare Trust is £93.55 a month. It helps him buy the essentials of life – food and clothing. He is cared for

by his eldest son, Gandhoj, who says that without the slippers Jitbahadur bought recently with his pension, his father would be walking bare foot. The Trust has also built an outside toilet for Jitbahadur and as part of the winter support provided, he has received woolly hats, a blanket, thermos flask, and most recently, a rice cooker. All essential items for the cold harsh winters.

Some years ago, the Trust completed a project to bring safe and clean drinking water to Jitbahadur's village. The village Drinking Water Committee maintains a fund to cover minor repairs and maintenance which means that the villagers are still benefitting from safe and fresh drinking water some 25 years later.

It may surprise you to learn that around 25% of the Trust's income comes from legacies. By leaving The Gurkha Welfare Trust a gift in your Will, your last donation will help us support Gurkha veterans like Jitbahadur and their widows with pensions and healthcare; it will also help their children and grandchildren access an education and clean water.



If you would like more information, please contact Carolyn Derryman, our Legacy Co-ordinator, on 01722 343110 or [carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk](mailto:carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk). Carolyn would be delighted to send our guide to leaving a gift in your Will, or you can download it from our website:

[www.gwt.org.uk/legacy](http://www.gwt.org.uk/legacy)

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE GURKHAS

We've put together our top 5 phrases to learn in Nepali. You can hear the pronunciation of all of these on our website at [www.gwt.org.uk/nepali](http://www.gwt.org.uk/nepali)

1. Namaste = Hello/Greetings

When to use "namaste": when greeting others  
Pronunciation: Na-mas-tay

2. Dhanyabād = Thank you

When to use "dhanyabād": when thanking others  
Pronunciation: Dan-yah-bad

3. Maaph garnuhos =excuse me/sorry

When to use "maaph garnuhos": it is primarily used when apologising, but it can occasionally be used when trying to make your way through somewhere crowded or to get somebody's attention.

Pronunciation: Maff gar-nuu-hos

4. Pheri bhetaunla = Good Bye

When to use "pheri bhetaunla": when saying farewell  
Pronunciation: Feh-ry vet-on-laa

5. Didi, Dai, Bhai and Bahini = sister/brother

When to use: Not only would you use these when speaking to a sibling, you can also use these pronouns when speaking to a friend to make them feel like a part of your family.

Translation:	Pronunciation:
Didi: Older sister	Didi: Dee-dee
Dai: Older brother	Dai: Daa-i
Bahini: Younger sister	Bahini: Ba-hee-nee
Bhai: Younger brother	Bhai: Vaa-i



Dhanyabād!



## CHILLI & SPICE RECIPE CLUB

Bring the taste of Nepal straight to your kitchen with a selection of delicious recipes for Gurkha curries, savoury dishes and sweet treats.

Donate with a one-off payment of just £25 to receive a welcome pack full of goodies and a new recipe emailed to you every month for 12 months.

Join at: [www.gwt.org.uk/recipe-club](http://www.gwt.org.uk/recipe-club)



## GWT ANNUAL RAFFLE

Look out for the return of our annual raffle, launching on Monday 30 January 2023. Last year our top prize was tea at the Ritz with our Vice Patron Joanna Lumley, and the raffle raised a phenomenal £13,460.

Tickets cost £5 each - on sale from Monday 30 January - Friday 3 March

[www.gwt.org.uk/raffle2023](http://www.gwt.org.uk/raffle2023)

## THE DOKO CHALLENGE

Run in the footsteps of “the Bravest of the Brave”!

Our Doko challenge is based on the traditional race faced by Gurkha Army recruits in Nepal - a 5km uphill run carrying a weighted Doko basket. You can find out just how tough this is by trying it out yourself!

You choose your basket weight of 5kg, 10kg or 15kg, and can walk, jog or run the course. Aim to beat last year's winning time of 19:30 or put a team together and take a more leisurely approach with time to enjoy the scenery. Either way you will deserve the medal and cheers awaiting you at the finish line.



The Doko Challenge North  
Roundhay Park, Leeds - Sunday 21 May 2023

The Doko Challenge South  
Wimbledon Common, London - Sunday 11 June 2023



Register now at [www.gwt.org.uk/doko](http://www.gwt.org.uk/doko)

## THE BRIGADE OF GURKHAS PHOTO COMPETITION

At the end of last year the Brigade held their annual photo competition, open to serving Gurkha soldiers and veterans. This year saw a range of images and video covering everything from soldiers on Exercise to dogs and rock climbing. You can view all the entries at [www.gurkhabde.com](http://www.gurkhabde.com).

The 2022 winners were:

- 1st place – Corporal Raju Tamang (Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming)
- 2nd place – Sergeant Dipak Rai (Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment)
- 3rd place – Major Norfield (The Second Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles)



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Photos credit The Brigade of Gurkhas