The chopper crash left a vacuum in Nepal’s biosphere

LEAVING A LEGACY: From right, Chandra Gurung, country representative WWF-Nepal; Jill Bowling Schlaepfer, director of programs, WWF-UK; Mingma Norbu Sherpa, conservation director, Asia Pacific Program, WWF-US; Narayan Paudel, director-general, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; Damodar Parajuli, acting secretary, State Ministry for Forests and Soil Conservation; Gopal Rai, state minister, Forests and Soil Conservation; Pauli Mustonen, Charge d’Affaires of Finland in Kathmandu.

The handover was carried out by the State Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation Gopal Rai at a ceremony in Taplejung on 22 September. The visiting dignitaries then flew out to Ghunsa to inspect a local group implementing the management, and the helicopter crashed into a mountain at 4,000 m just after takeoff on the flight back. Minister Rai, Chandra Gurung, Mingma Sherpa and Dawa Tshering were among those in the ill-fated helicopter.

The nation also mourns veteran geographer Harka Gurung, senior donor representatives, WWF staffers, several noted government officials and two journalists.

The Ghunsa helicopter crash that killed 24 people wasn’t just a tragic loss of life, it devastated Nepal’s nature conservation movement, setting it back by decades.

Many names on the passenger manifest were builders of Nepal’s model achievements in environment protection over the past decade. Their deaths have left a void that will take a long time to fill. They proved that nature is best protected through grassroots ecotourism activities, and their projects are being replicated in Nepal and across the world.

“These people represented the diversity of expertise, backgrounds, and ethnicities that contributed to Nepal’s conservation successes over the last 30 years. They proved that conservation to work you need strong local participation, and they would have made even more contributions. Their deaths leave a void that will take a long time to fill, particularly in terms of janajati participation and leadership,” says Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, who worked closely with many in the crash over for 25 years in Nepali conservation.

It is a bitter irony that just the previous day, they had all witnessed another landmark in Nepal’s nature conservation history: the handing over management of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) to a local council. The initiative built on the main lesson of Nepal’s conservation success, that the environment can be protected best when local people are involved.

In Kangchenjunga, conservation will now be managed by a council representing dozens of village committees and mothers’ groups. The project is implemented by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation with support from WWF and other donors.

“Tara Sherpa, chairman of the management council had said on Friday in Taplejung, “We are ready to take on this responsibility thanks to support from organisations like WWF.”

Chandra Gurung of WWF-Nepal, himself a pioneer of grassroots conservation in the Annapurnas, had said he was proud to be part of the effort. “This handover will be a positive example for the world of people managing their natural resources, and enable learning on how to make conservation more equitable and sustainable,” he said.

The Kangchenjunga area is a treasure-house of biodiversity with higher rainfall and cloud forests, and WWF has invested $1.5 million in conservation efforts here since 1998. Local management means less pressure on forests and less poaching of wildlife.

“WWF is greatly encouraged by successes like this,” said Mingma Norbu Sherpa of WWF-US. “I’d like to congratulate the government and the people for working through a decade of conflict to reach this pinnacle.”

The Weekly Internet Poll  # 318. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think the arms management formula will work?

The Weekly Internet Poll  # 317

Q. Does US Ambassador Moriarty’s tough stand against the Maoists help or hurt the SPA’s efforts?

Total votes: 3,714

Happy Dasain

The chopper crash left a vacuum in Nepal’s biosphere

Still among us

Tribute p10-12

Remembering friends and colleagues

Nepali Times will take a break next week and return on 13 October.
There are times these past years when we have despaired. As crisis upon crisis has been heaped upon this hapless nation we have wondered aloud if we have been abandoned even by the divine benefactor.

A country already cursed with inequality, injustice and poverty was saddled with a conflict that made it all much worse. Brutality that we had only heard about in the epic wars of our scriptures became the order of the day. Violence begat more violence and often seemed to be an end in itself. It was hard to believe that ordinary family men with children of their own could be capable of such inhumanity.

Climbers were ignored for so long by the state suddenly were at the receiving end of its security agencies. Then our rules massacred each other in a slaughter of mythic proportions. The brother king took over and ruled with an iron fist. And even when democracy was restored and a ceasefire put into place, there is little to celebrate as terror still stalks the land.

We thought we had seen it all, until Saturday’s helicopter crash that wiped out nearly all the country’s top conservationists and many of our well-wishers. One of the few things this country can provide people after 20 years was the outline and experience of our environmental and biodiversity experts. People like Harka Gurung, the authority on Nepal’s human geography, Chandra Gurung who managed the unique and distinctive conservation in the Annapurnas, Tirtha Man Maskey who ensured that Nepal’s national parks were sustainably preserved for future generations, and those whose conservation expertise from Nepal was sought after worldwide.

In a country where there is so little to celebrate, it is a cruel blow to take away the little that stood out. The people who bearded the helicopter in Ghunsa on Saturday morning were all enormously talented, experienced, and dedicated. We owe it to them to continue their work, to innovate and prove by doing that nature conservation and economic progress can go hand in hand.

For every Tirtha Man Maskey let us have a hundred grassroots conservationists on board. For every Mingma Sherpa let us nurture a hundred grassroots conservationists. For every Jordan Chang let us support a hundred grassroots conservationists.

Not though a conservationist in the academic sense of the term, Harka Gurung too died for a cause close to his heart. As a development thinker, Gurung had an abiding interest in establishing mutually beneficial relationships between human beings and their habitat. He returned from a ceremony honoring nature protection to the people of that area.

On first meeting Harka, many found him dull. He never attempted to even appear blunt. He never attempted to even appear。“He was the people of that area. If you ask him if he is a political animal, his former colleagues from Panchayat days did, or display any of the zeal of a neo-egalitarian. Perhaps he found the end he subconsciously cherished.

Jayaprakash Nirupam, which claims to have killed Krishna Charan Shrestha, is in some ways the political progeny of backlash created by the report. Post-1996 Harka Gurung perhaps realised that planning for development personal interest didn’t work for one simple reason: without a political structure to back them up, development regions were castles in the air, hung by a thin thread from the capital. When Harka realised why his ideas weren’t working, he moved on and proposed his second most significant contribution to planning the concept of parallel south-north corridor growth to connect railheads in neighbouring India with processing and production centres of the Nepal tarai and Bihar Madhes.

Harka was dragged into controversy by the politics of demography. In the 1980s, he headed a commission asked to prepare a汁urban population plan for the tarai. The report was as well received, and he was asked to provide the formation of the Sadbhawana Party, Jayaprakash Nirupam, the leader of splinter group of Maoists which claims to have killed Krishna Charan Shrestha, in some ways the political progeny of backlash created by the report. Post-1996 Harka Gurung perhaps realised that planning for development personal interest didn’t work for one simple reason: without a political structure to back them up, development regions were castles in the air, hung by a thin thread from the capital. When Harka realised why his ideas weren’t working, he moved on and proposed his second most significant contribution to planning the concept of parallel south-north corridor growth to connect railheads in neighbouring India with processing and production centres of the Nepal tarai and Bihar Madhes.

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UNEQUAL CITIZENS

CK Lal dismisses the 15 chapters that comprise Unequal Citizens which took four years of research and consultations to compile eight palate sentences. The work is a summary that analyses the outcomes of exclusion and discrimination within Nepal with hard data, starkly revealing the extent of inequality. Such data is essential to begin negotiating a more equitable and inclusive society. The study was designed to amplify the voices of citizens from excluded groups who lack the social and political influence to attract the attention of decision-makers and development workers.

Lal reveals his disdain for and lack of understanding of the entire development dialogue by presenting a pseudo-history that reduces five decades of development to a string of buzzwords. Particularly offensive are the slippings comments he makes about our colleagues, who carried out the bulk of research and writing.

The writers, academics and activists who contributed to the study rank among the finest of Nepalis and the inequality is evident from the extent of inequality. Such data is right on track, Unequal Citizens

Bhartmara Bhai

Much has been made about the iidsappearance of U of my Hat. I find Batskide more grasp, and have not got used to it yet. One columnist whose wit I really miss is your (ex-)columnist Bhartmara Bhai, who successfully guided us to make the right choice with regard to our culinary desires. Even the Maoists have come above-ground, but theirs no sign of Bhartmara Bhai! Find him soon!

Shyamal Shrestha, email

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, the OHCHR report in “Violations” (#316) was wrongly referred to in the first line as a “DHCR report.”

In “Happenings” (#316), the venue of the Surya Classic Encounters event was wrongly identified. The concert took place at Olive Bar and Bistro at Radisson Hotel.

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Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with “LETTERS” in the subject line.

Email: letters nepalitimes.com
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Mail: Letters, Nepal Times, P.O. Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.

GUNS AND VOTES

People like me are beginning to feel that politicians only indulge in unnecessary ordinances and laws. What Nepal is focused on now is when, how, and whether the Maoists ever give up violence. Parliamentarians, cabinet members, and civil society should focus solely on that. The government must take a tough stand against all perpetrators of violence, including the Maoists. Once we take the guns out of the ballot boxes, all other problems will be easy to solve.

Bimal Bastia, New York

REAL NEWS

Your weekly poll showed that more than 57 percent of voters believe the ceasefire will not last beyond Tihar (#315). I believe the number is higher, as there are still people who are undecided. This is because the Maoist rebels’ ceasefire norms are generally being violated. Extortion, intimidation, and even recruiting and training of militia is going on more intensively than earlier, and the general public is under intense psychological pressure. Nepal has little choice but to believe that we are under a Maoist government or anarchy. And we greatly appreciate a newspaper which tries hard to provide a real picture to help safeguard democratic values, despite facing threats.

Prakash Pangeri, email

Siddhartha, email

The inclusion preached in Unequal Citizens (#Development Laboratory, Review by CK Lal, #314) is a donor buzzword that quite different in practice. Distinguished Maheshi scholars work on gender and ethnicity issues, but none are on the study advisory board or committee or research team.

In the study, facts and figures concerning Maheshi are inaccurate. How can all Maheshi, whether Brahmin, or minorities such as Rajput, Baniya, Madhav, Bengali, and Nurang be put in the same foreigner donors think has got used to it yet. One columnist whose wit I really miss is your (ex-)columnist Bhartmara Bhai, who successfully guided us to make the right choice with regard to our culinary desires. Even the Maoists have come above-ground, but theirs no sign of Bhartmara Bhai! Find him soon!

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**Federation**

Ethnic politics cuts both ways

Think what you will, but the debate today over creating a new state structure in Nepal is a direct result of the Maoist uprising. A central question is what a future Nepal should look like, should it be a federation of different states, or continue to function as a centralised nation.

No prizes for guessing what the Maoists want. Two years ago, they introduced the concept of ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government. They have so far created nine ethnic autonomous regions with ethnic autonomous governments. Today, they are pushing hard to institutionalise this structure in the yet-to-be-announced interim constitution.

The UML agrees with a federation, though their concept of it is blurry. The NC leadership is pretty much against a federal state divided along ethnic lines. They are for the decentralisation of power. How they plan to achieve it, we don’t know. The Nepali Sandhawana Party supports a strong federal structure, but its advocacy is limited to creating a unified and autonomous Madhes region.

Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the federation concept, what strikes me is the Maoist proposal. They have carefully carved a federalist precursor to a federal government. They have so far “created” nine ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government. They have so far “created” nine ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government. They have so far “created” nine ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government. They have so far “created” nine ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government. They have so far “created” nine ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government.

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This is a reason, until you consider the regional distribution of all communities, and the nitty-gritty of identity politics.

Only in a few regions does any ethnic community completely outnumber the rest. And even that is by a thin margin which can’t last forever. The Tharus of the Madhiast Tharuwan Autonomous Region are already outnumbered by the Hill tribes, for example.

The other important question is identity. Almost everyone agrees that Nepal’s conflict intensified only after the Maoists tactically co-opted the identity question lurking in everyone’s minds.

If identity is so important for Nepal, how can you give identity to some and exclude others? Won’t that be sowing the seeds of another, perhaps more violent, conflict in the coming years?

Tengines. But they’re playing with fire. And I, for one, can’t see the fire.

In other words, Biswo is saying that an ethnic state will be a demand that we too want an autonomous state?”

**MEANWHILE**

Suman Pradhan

I posed this question recently to “Comrade Biswo,” a Bahun himself and senior military commissar of the Maoist Bethan Brigade. He replied, “A large section of the population may feel a little alienated at first, but we don’t think that will be a big problem.”

Biswo continued. The Bahun-Chhetri castes, which comprise 28.5 percent of the population, yet there is no autonomous state earmarked for them.

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Gained the Bahun-Chhetri castes have been the classical oppressors/exploiters here. But so have the Newar upper castes, the elites of the Magar, Madhesi, Tharu, and other communities. Yet the Maoists plan to give all of them an ethnic autonomous region of their own.

We are going to suffer a backlash for a couple of generations,” says a Bahun friend of mine regrettably. “Then what? Won’t there be a demand that we too want an autonomous state?”

Identity politics has served the Maoists well thus far. But they’re playing with fire. And I, for one, can’t see the fire engines.

**Uneven delivery**

All women are not equal for Nepal’s abortion program

**MARTY LOGAN**

Nearly 60,000 Nepali women have had legal abortions since January 2004. But despite the impressive numbers, there are still huge obstacles to guaranteeing women’s right to safe abortion.

For example, over 10 percent of women who sought abortions at 22 facilities in the country from January to May 2004 were rejected because they were more than 12 weeks pregnant, according to a recent study by the Centre for Research on Environment, Health and Population Activities.

Annual Tarsoor of CREHPA, which produced the National Facility-based Abortion Baseline Study says so many women are turned away because they calculate their date of conception differently than the low does.

Abortion is permissible up to 12 weeks, until 18 weeks if the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest and any time, with a doctor’s consent, if the woman’s health is in danger or the foetus is severely deformed.

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structure, but its advocacy is limited to creating a unified and autonomous Madhes region.

Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the federation concept, what strikes me is the Maoist proposal. They have carefully carved up ethnic autonomous states for all the major ethnic groups in this country. Or so it seems, until you look at the 2001 census.

The census shows that the largest group in this country is still the Bahun-Chhetri castes, which comprise 28.5 percent of the population. Yet, there is no autonomous state earmarked for them.

Nearly one-third of the nation’s population has been deliberately given short shrift as the Maoists intensely woo the other two-thi.

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A

nal Chettri, Chief Justice ‘people’s court’ in Kohalpur listens intently to two villagers argue their cases on a land dispute. Fifteen other people crammed into the small, hot room watch as Chettri sets a one-week deadline for a verdict. “I promise you the decision will not be delayed as in other courts,” he says, a snide reference to state courts that take months, even years to decide on complicated land disputes.

The people’s court is in considerable demand here, because of their speed, largely because it is seen to set a lower burden of proof. Cases thrown out of districts courts, or lost due to inadequate evidence are all brought to the Maoist courts. Plaintiffs, often poor, take legal battles over property, domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse, bigamy, and other social problems to people’s courts.

But equally, people use the Maoist legal option to threaten and intimidate fellow villagers. Verdict on all cases is passed by a single person who does not have a law education or formal legal training, and is often politically motivated. Maoist judges also prefer to try cases related to sympathisers, not unaffiliated civilians.

Chettri, who dropped out of college to join the Maoist movement, disagrees with all of the above. “We provide justice without bias, and our judges are qualified enough due to their 10-year-long involvement in the ‘People’s War,’” he says.

In response to pressure from lawyers and political parties not to interfere in the country’s independent and impartial judiciary system, Prachanda recently ordered his cadres to close down the people’s courts in the core city areas.

As with many Maoist activities, that will be difficult, since the people’s courts are already a fully functional alternative justice system in many rural and some urban areas in this part of the country.

Internally displaced people, who might want to take advantage of the ceasefire and peace process to return home, will be tried at these courts. But they’ll be tried even if they don’t return. “We cannot stop local people from asking us to try cases, so even absent people will be tried and sentenced according to our laws,’ says Sunil of the Bardiya Jana Sarkar.

**Governing for guns**

Out in the far-west, since the peace process started the Maoists have taken over the administration and projects of local government bodies. We were told that most of the appeasement activities are aimed at generating revenue to support the PLA.

Local Maoist offices in rural and core town areas, not DDCs, control everything: business licenses, revenue collection, customs and taxation, development work, transportation, building contracts, river leasing, and much more.

(From 25km west of the district headquarters, we control all areas and this is why we, and not the seven-party government, have the right to govern,) says Suman, a senior official Maoist ‘people’s government’ leader in Guleria.

The development and administration budgets for Bardiya and Banke together are over Rs 21 million annually, and we were told that most of the money will be diverted to strengthen the PLA and its soldiers. The Maoists also control the Rs 1 million local development budgets. They collect custom duties from all but one of the seven Nepal-India border posts in the district, give out bridge and road building contracts, regulate river transport, and collect taxes from vegetable and livestock markets, and forest users.

The message from the local Maoists is clear. “We won’t make the same mistake as the Nepali Congress, which led an armed rebellion against King Mahendra and disarmed even before the peace process was completed,” says Purna Subedi, head in Nepalganj of the Banke Jana Sarkar. “That would be a huge mistake.”

Naresh Newar
Tourism today depends on a variety of factors, from the world economy to carrying capacity defined as the number of airline seats, getting to the destination and the weather-wise the autumn skies clear out to some of the most majestic views of the jungles down south. Besides spring, the wait and watch mode given our history of political uncertainty.

Ideally, the post monsoon autumn season should be a busy one for the tourism industry in Nepal. The three month-long gap before winter sets and covers the Nepal Himalaya with blankets of snow is ideal for every adventure possible from mountaineering and meeting Maoists, to river rafting and riding elephants in the same area as Cho Oyu to mark 50 years of mountaineering expeditions are also going out to virgin peaks like Dome Kang, north of the same area as Cho Oyu to mark 50 years of mountaineering expeditions have already left to climb various peaks, most popular among them being Anna Dablam and Cho Oyu, the latter being the easiest among above 8000m peaks and considered a preparatory peak for those aiming to climb Mt. Everest. It seems everyone has recognised that giving a boost to the tourism industry will set the economic wheel in motion at least until things are resolved for good.

Among various promotional events meant to boost tourism here, Nepal has christened one mountain in the Langtang area in honour of the founder of the Scout movement Lord Baden-Powell, to mark 100 years of scouting in 2007. The peak, 5,690m tall, will be called Baden Powell Scout Peak.

A 14-member group of scouts from South Asia returned from a trek to the peak on Sunday. Two members of the team also made it to the summit. “This year’s trip was only to plan the route and look at the area as no one had been there before. Next year when we start the centenary celebrations we hope to bring Scouts from all over the world,” says team leader Keshav Bohora, who is also an instructor at the Kakani International Scout Training Centre.

Shraw Ram Lamicha, head of Nepal Scouts says several dozen countries have already been contacted and have expressed interest in coming here to climb the mountain next year. There are 28 million scouts worldwide and groups from Australia and Singapore are already organising trips to Nepal to climb the new peak while Scouts in Denmark and Sweden have confirmed that they will make the voyage in the near future.

The season also has bookings for at least 25 peaks on the permitted list but which have not been successfully ascended yet. The Nepal Mountaineering Association and the Japan Workers’ Alpine Federation are organising a joint expedition to Nangpai Gosum (7312m) in the same area as Cho Oyu to mark 50 years of friendship between the countries. Expeditions are also going out to virgin peaks like Four Kang, north of Kanchenjunga and the 6000m high Mt Pangbari in the Manaslu area.
Looking forward to the next 25

Express shipping is both an indicator and driver of a country’s trade and industry health. We spoke to Scott Price, CEO of DHL Express, Asia Pacific on his recent visit to Kathmandu about DHL’s prospects in Nepal.

Nepal Times: How far have you got in Nepal?
Scott Price: Twenty-five years ago, we averaged five shipments a week, or 250 a year. Today we have 115,000 shipments a year and nearly 70 employees. That reflects significant development in Nepal’s economic maturity. We certainly had challenges in the last couple of years, but we haven’t seen a significant downturn despite Nepal’s political situation.

How does Nepal fit in with your overall Asia strategy?
I look after 41 countries in the Asia Pacific. You have the mature economies of Japan, Korea, and Australia. Then you have India and China with significant foreign direct investment and big markets. Now companies want to hedge their bets and there’s increasing support for smaller countries coming together, as trading blocks in the common market.

Innovators, RIP

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The Tarai Janatantrik Mukti Morcha (TJMM) split from the Maoists, demanding an independent tarai. On 23 September, RPP leader Krishna Charan Shrestha was murdered at his home village, Belha in Siraha. The TJMM has taken responsibility for that killing.

Angered by the incident, people from the area have not only killed the TJMM’s Siraha commander Bihari Mahato and rebel Rudal Mahato, but also burnt down the house of two others allegedly involved in the incident.

Shrestha is perhaps the only non-Maoist leader to be killed by the TJMM so far. According to the TJMM, Shrestha was killed because he was involved in economic and social suppression. Although TJMM chairman Jaya Krishna Goit (pictured) has expressed interest in talking to the government, there has been no response from the state. It is understood that the TJMM ordered such a high profile killing because it wanted to draw the government’s attention. However, the government is so busy talking to the Maoists, it can neither talk to the TJMM nor take any action.

Shrestha served as a minister and district vice chairman during the Panchayat era. Although he lived in a Madhesi area, he is said to have good relations with the other villagers. Accusing the government of being unable to provide security, RPP chairman Pashupati Shumsher Rana has asked for Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula to resign immediately.

Shrestha’s death

Interview with former zonal commissioner Surya Bahadur Sen in Jana Aastha, 27 September

Why are you against the monarchy?

The king did not do anything for the Nepali people. If the king does not need the people why should the people keep him? I told the king before, ‘be a king of all the people’, but he could not be. King Gyanendra only wanted to listen to a few Ranas, his ambassadors and hooligans from yesteryear. The king’s time is over and so is the monarchy.

What path should it take?

Everyone, including the king and the political parties, should agree to give the monarchy a peaceful way out. Taking a peaceful path means holding a referendum on the fate of the monarchy. The new constitution should be made based on the people’s decision regarding the monarchy.

Are you demanding this from the king or from the parties?

Both. I have been saying we should have a people’s referendum regarding the monarchy since 2000. I demanded this in my book Mero Kathaharu, published in 2001. The meeting between the Maoists, the CPN-UML, and the NC on 23 September ended with all three parties agreeing to solve the issue through a referendum, which makes me happy.

Is Girija babu trying to save the king?

If the Nepali Congress had trusted the people, they would not have had to make a deal with the king in exchange for security. Girija babu does not trust the people, and the king has betrayed the people’s trust. He has even taken the help of foreigners to save his own skin. There are Indian groups that have stepped up to support the king after he asked them to save him. Ambassador Moriarty’s regular statements are a product of that. Foreigners are asking to keep the present structure so that either a constitutional or a ceremonial monarchy remains. Girija babu has his own vested interest, but so do foreign powers.
Secular Dasain
Editorial in Hanuk, 27 September

Nepal is a multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic country. Parliament proclaimed Nepal a secular state (earlier this year), while the 1990 constitution had defined Nepal as a Hindu country.

There are more tribal and indigenous communities in Nepal than Hindus, and they have their own distinct languages, religions, and cultures. Besides them, Nepal also has Muslims and Buddhists. The tribal and indigenous communities who form the majority of the population are non-Hindus.

But Prithbi Narayan Shah wanted to create a “true Hindu land” in Nepal and started converting the indigenous peoples to Hinduism by expanding the borders of Gorkha. The Shah dynasty forced indigenous communities to accept Brahmanistic Hinduism, and has ruled Nepal for over 200 years with the backup of Hindu religion. This is why puritans, regressionists, and royalists oppose the secularisation of Nepal. The biggest loser from secularism is the monarchy, which declares itself an incarnation of Vishnu and has ruled Nepal for over 200 years with the backup of Hindu religion. Puritans oppose the secularisation of Nepal.

Thus, the government has failed to provide security to the Nepali people. “The Maoists do not need reasons to kill anyone,” says Subodh Pyakuryal. “They recently killed a widow need reasons to kill anyone, as the Maoists are using threats and violence to get things done.”

Rights wronged
Samaya, 28 October

Five months after the ceasefire, the Maoists are continuing with murder, pressure, extortion, taxation, and abduction. It looks like the government can’t stop the violence and mayhem. Since 25 April, the Maoists have killed 19 and the state has killed nine.

Nepalis who were hopeful that the new political situation would finally make way for peace have lost hope. The Maoists and the state have both violated the ceasefire code of conduct.

Human rights activist Krishna Pahadi says, “Although the Maoists have entered mainstream politics, their character has not changed, and the state has done nothing to remedy the situation.”

However, their attempts will prove fruitless in the face of puritans, regressionists, and royalists who oppose the proclamation. They have even tried to create caste wars in the name of religion. However, their attempts will prove fruitless in the face of people power. After the reinstatement of democracy in Nepal it is essential that secularism be implemented correctly.

Dasain is now used to promote consumerism and force indigenous communities to accept a Hindu identity. The festival is a burden to the poor, subsistence farmers, and daily wage earners. The government should now treat all religions, cultures and languages equally.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Brother, I am like a crow lost in the fog. You are older than me. Please teach me how to run the ministry.”

Minister for Land Reform and Management Prabhu Narayan Chaudhary speaking with Minister for Agriculture Mahanta Thakur, Nepal Samacharpatra, 22 September

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS
A helicopter hits a mountaineer, and wipes out an entire pantheon of Nepal's best and brightest, who believed in returning the commons to the people. These professionals, who, along with some equally committed foreign friends were returning to Kathmandu having handed over the management of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area to the local inhabitants. They were the gift of the central Himalaya, of Nepal, to the world. Each was a life full of creativity, courage, and Himalayan exhilaration, and will be remembered decades hence for how they helped define Nepal's future on the foundation of natural science, geography, and respect for people. Seated in that helicopter was Harka Gurung, the Nepali who introduced Nepal to Nepalis. He was born in 1938 fast by the Ngadi Khola in upper Lamjung. Growing up at a time when Kathmandu Valley was €œepeli, he decided to reject the ancestral call of Gurkha warriorship, and chose instead the path of scholarship. He ran away barefoot to Kathmandu, where he joined Darbar High School. Then he was onward to elain chhokar schools in India, an IA back at Tr Chandra College, a Bachelors from Palna University and a PhD on the geography of Pahara Valley from Edinburgh University in 1965.

That was a time, so soon after the eclipse of the Ranas, when Nepal of dethrony were near-irrelevant on the national scene. Those outside the country, descendants of migrants, were able to rise to the level of their genius; within Nepal, however, Kathmandus automatic glass ceiling allowed no exception. It was by dint of his personality and steely determination, his rigor and love of learning, that Dr Gurung became a one-man role model and pillar of strength for the rest of emerging Nepal. His first calling was geography, but Dr Gurung was a multi-tasking multi-disciplinarian who delved into planning, demography, art (under Bal Krishna Sama), history (of mountaineering, hill migration, Gurkha recruitment), economists, most recently, transparency in governance. He was once Minister of Tourism, in the middle of the Panchayat era, and we have never had someone in that position who better understood the country's cultural and natural wealth. Over the past decades, amidst the tide of righteous ethnic assertion, Dr Gurung was an exemplar, himself intensely concerned about overturning the national legacy of exclusion.

And so in viewing the still image of Gurung that allowed him not to be bowed by possibility of controversy. In 1983, he was piloted for a report on migration that suggested regulation of the southern border. Last year, ICIMOD published a detailed monograph with four decades worth of photographic evidence from his native Lamjung. In it, Dr Gurung tried to debunk the notion of Himalayan degradation, which seeks to place the blame for downstream sitting and flooding at the doorstep of the mid山上 country and its supposed biomass profiteering. Ever the genial contrarian, Dr Gurung scoffed at the tradition, powered by the myth that it was a holy mountain, of not allowing mountaineers on Machhapuchre. He maintained that there was no evidence the Gurung herders inhabiting its base in fact removed Machhapuchre. A student of mountaineering history, he suggested that the first climbers of Nepal were not the Sherpas but Gurkha lehars, starting with Keshi Budhathoki and Harkabir Thapa in the Swiss Alps in 1844. Dr Gurung believed in the power of statistics to reveal and thereby help improve the human condition, and so his latest immersion was in producing the book Nepal: Atlas and Statistics. A large-format work in preparation for three full years, it entered the printer's days before the author and editor left for Ghunsa at the base of Kangchenjunga. Himal Books, the publishers, was proud to be a grand sponsor by Dr Gurung ahead of the Dasa break. It will now have to be done in absentia. Author of the widely-acclaimed Vignettes of Nepal! (1985), amid more than a dozen equally gripping and authoritative works, Dr Gurung's life cannot be encapsulated other than through vignettes. One of his most prized possessions was a set of black-and-white photographs following the march of the Himalayan raptara, taken from a Pilatus Porter flight that he took across the 500-mile spine of Nepal.

When it came to christen scores of the country's peaks so that they did not all get named by western climbers and cartographers, and alternatively to save them from the fate of mere numericals, it was Dr Gurung who was handed the task. That was also how Peak 29, towering above home in upper Lamjung, became Ngadi Chuli. Across the Nepal Himalaya, thus Harka Gurung left his personal stamp on the chultu, and it was his land that Meherali Mody pointed to me as a collection of houses up the slope to the left. He said, 'That one, with the kitchen smoke, is the house of Gurung. It is by him that I was introduced and beheld Ngadi that I prefer to remember Dr Gurung.'

Karan Man Dixit

**Friends and colleagues**

Late Saturday afternoon the phone rang, with news of an accident in Nepal's capital where Sherpas on board the helicopter was calling to make sure it wasn't me. I switched on the television, and immediately playing the network's top story, and made a sound alarm, and that those on board were safe. There were far too many names on the passenger list who were my friends and professional colleagues for over 30 years, each with hopes, aspirations, and opportunities ahead. They were pillars of Nepal's much needed conservation efforts, and pivotal at this point in our environmental history. As hours, then days, ticked by incessent rain, our worst fears were confirmed. I traveled to Kangchenjunga in August 1994 to carry out a study and its feasibility for protected area status. Like a Buddhist mountain deity, the area displayed both peaceful and wrathful manifestations. On a clear Sunday afternoon, the beauty of the ancient forests and gushing waterfalls, interspersed with lush grasslands and agricultural settlements was unparalleled. Still, the impossibly rugged terrain and heavy monsoon rains can quickly turn this hidden paradise into a ferocious landscape of thunder clouds, rain, and monsoon rains can quickly turn this hidden paradise into a ferocious landscape of thunder clouds, rain, and monsoon rains can quickly turn this hidden paradise into a ferocious landscape of thunder clouds, rain, and monsoon rains can quickly turn this hidden paradise into a ferocious landscape of thunder clouds, rain, and monsoon rains can quickly turn this hidden paradise into a ferocious landscape of thunder clouds, rain, and....

Mina Baracharya

Conservation Area in Arun Valley is a reality. In recent years he worked hard to ensure the Sagarmatha National Park upgrades its management system through participatory planning processes. As chief ecologist of the DNPWC, he was especially concerned with ensuring that national parks be vigorously protected in these uncertain times. Narayan did not drink or smoke. He was calm and fair in dealing with the only ones anyone ever thought he was rude were a result of frequent mix-ups with his identical twin. He was always polite and encouraging to co-workers, and when he became director-general, some even questioned how someone so nice could govern such a difficult apparatus. But Narayan handled his post with calm assurance, never becoming caught up in the status of his position, and always leaving tidies from his staff and outsiders. For many he was a good role model.

Lakshman Prasad Paudel was recently promoted to director-general at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), a hard-earned achievement for a career bureaucrat in the conservation field for over 30 years who studied forestry and had a Master's in Natural Resource Economics. Narayan and I served together in the same department for many years. He was leader of the team that made the Makalu-Barun National Park and

Dr Gurung, a tribute

Kiran Pandey

Gurung. It is by that wisp of smoke in his beloved Ngadi that I was introduced and beheld Ngadi that I prefer to remember Dr Gurung.
A great motivator

I had heard much about Dawa Tsering Sherpa while working for WWF-Nepal, but only met him on 23 April 2003 in Lelepi. He had just completed a Ph.D. in the UK and was working for WWF Nepal. I was very impressed by his knowledge, capacity, and authority. He was a great motivator who always did as much as his knowledge, capacity, and authority would allow. He was a keen outdoor sportsman and liked climbing, skiing and even water sports. Coming from the mountains, swimming was one of his favourite sports. Mingma went from being a barefoot Khumbu child to a prolific author, with several books on medicinal plants to his credit. He is survived by his wife, four daughters, and two sons, and will be sorely missed. I met 20 years at her WWF Nepal office and was recently a charge of the Foreign Aid Division before becoming assistant secretary of the ministry. She is survived by her husband, four daughters, and a son.

Minister Gopal Rai, Mina Rai

Minister Gopal Rai, State Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation, was a simple man who had a good sense of humour. Down-to-earth and frank, he was admired by local journalists. I remember when we were in Nepalgunj and he wanted to see the local bajar. His security guard radiated for security, but Rai preferred to travel without it. He usually travelled alone, but on this trip called his wife from the airport at the last minute and asked her to accompany him. Mina Rai was a traditional Nepali homemaker. She was meticulous about taking care of her children and home. This was the first time ever that she accompanied her husband on an official trip. The Rais are survived by one son and four daughters.

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Dr Damodar Parajuli, a senior official at the Department of Forests, he served in District Forest Officer over the years. He was director-general of the Forest Department, and was recently a charge of the Foreign Aid Division before becoming assistant secretary of the Ministry. He is survived by his wife, four daughters, and a son.

Sarad Kumar Rai was born in 1965 in Lohkot, a career forester with the Department of Forests. He served in District Forest Offices in many districts of the country. He is survived by his wife Kabita and two sons, and will be sorely missed.

Lalhpa Norbu Sherpa

The Taran Arc Landscape Project, I replied. I hope the WWF staff will be able to carry on Chandraís legacy, dreams, and pride. He will be missed by the Gurung community and his family and by conservation as a whole.

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Hemraj Bhandari

In the 15 months that Hemraj Bhandari worked as a reporter and news editor at Nepal Television, he always found himself in a niche for himself as one of NTV’s most diligent and inquisitive staff. Efficient and professional, Hemraj loved doing in-depth reports on development, environmental, and public concern issues. Hemraj was a well-educated, bilingual reporter, and used his work to push for better education and health programs, especially in the mid- and far-western regions. Hemraj was born in the remote village of Ghodagolin in Rolpa in 1979, and won a prestigious scholarship to Budhanikhanka School. Hemraj was also a good speaker and leader, and was a valuable member of the Society of Ex-Budhanikhanka Student Association, actively involved in their free health camps. Always conscious of his roots, Hemraj also worked hard to generate funds for the SEBS scholarship program. Hemraj was passionate, determined, and innovative when it came to his work. Just two weeks ago, he had rushed in at 8PM to cover the pre-launch of the picture book A People War to be translated and published in Finnish. He wanted to do what he could to reach as many people as possible within and beyond Nepal. Pauli wanted to do what he could to ensure Nepal’s forests were conserved as those in Finland.

Hemraj was survived by his wife and two children.

Jennifer Headley

Jennifer Headley joined WWF-WUK in August 2003 as program officer for the Himalaya/South Asia Programme, where she worked to promote conservation programs tackling global threats such as climate change through business and government advocacy strategies.

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Bijan Acharya

Bijan was born in Tanahaun district into a family of poets, besides being a successful businessman, he would also work to raise social and political consciousness in his home district of Taplejung. As a recent president of the Taplejung Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Mechi zonal representative, Shrestha was also executive member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and always emphasised unity. Shrestha was involved in exporting tea and other local produce from Taplejung to the Indian market. Vijaya Shrestha leaves behind a wife and two children.

Sunil Singh

NTV cameraman Sunil Prasad Singh was born in Sariha 31 years ago, and joined Nepal Television to man studio cameras in 1997. He worked at the Kohalpur regional transmission centre for several years and then flew to the central office. Dedicated, quiet, and very warm, Singh had won various awards for his work. He had only started working as a news cameraman two months ago.

Sunil is survived by his wife and two daughters, who are now facing a serious crisis. Sunil’s wife is an Indian citizen, and as their marriage was not registered, his daughters do not have citizenship either, and the family are not entitled to insurance claims.

Sunil’s colleagues at NTV will remember him as being very committed, and will miss his contributions greatly.

Vijaya Shrestha

Vijaya Shrestha was a rare individual, besides being a successful businessman, he would also work to raise social and political consciousness in his home district of Taplejung. As a recent president of the Taplejung Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Mechi zonal representative, Shrestha was also executive member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and always emphasised unity. Shrestha was involved in exporting tea and other local produce from Taplejung to the Indian market. Vijaya Shrestha leaves behind a wife and two children.

Nepali Times

Cheers, Paul

A few days before he left for his ill-fated trip, Paul Mustonen, the Finnish Charge d’Affaires in Kathmandu, was arranging a concert by Kavas at his residence. We scheduled it for 24 September, after his return from Taplejung. The concert will never happen.

Paul was much more than a diplomat. He was a quiet, humble man who worked at something good for Nepal and Nepalais, but would never take credit for good results. He loved music and came to every Nepathya and Paleti show possible.

Paul had great plans, and they always reflected Nepal’s desires. He wanted to see all Nepali children going to school. He wanted Palpasa CMF to be translated and published in Finnish. He wanted the picture book Kunda Dixit put together, A People War, and the images in it, to reach as many people as possible within and beyond Nepal. Paul wanted to do what he could to ensure Nepal’s forests were conserved as those in Finland.

Paul wanted to go back to Peru, where he had served before. He loved music, food, and never refused a drink. Above all, Paul was filled with love for life and a sense of purpose. Music has lost a good listener and Nepal, an ever better friend.

Kiran Krishna Shrestha
A trickle of hope

We went to help flood victims, and realised the problems went far deeper

GANGAPUR, BANKE—Most of us, myself included, rarely leave our hometowns or see much of Nepal. So when we decided to set up a temporary health camp in the flood-affected areas, we knew we’d be experiencing something different.

When the floods devastated Banke and Bardiya, Godavari Alumni Association and West-East Youth Volunteer Organisation Nepal, a recently established NGO, decided at an emergency meeting to send medical relief to the worst-affected areas. I, along with 17 other young volunteers and 10 medical doctors, some fresh from school, eagerly volunteered.

We left on 11 September, bombarded with warnings about landslides and highway closures, as well as fears of dacoits, Maoists, and political unrest. It took us 20 hours to reach Nepalganj instead of the usual 12 because of traffic jams caused by landslides, detours, and a flat tyre.

From Nepalganj we got on another bus, crossed the Rapti on a boat shared with bicycles and two dozen other people. A half-finished bridge stood silently across the river. On the other side, we loaded our supplies into three waiting bullock carts and literally set off into the unknown.

As darkness fell we found ourselves walking through the jungle, passing the occasional village and struggling to keep everyone together. We reached Gangapur after midnight, and were welcomed by a few sleepy policemen stationed at the local government health post to assist with relief efforts. Tired, hungry, and thirsty, we slept on a cement rooftop under the starry tarai night.

The local health post was large, with two buildings. The two-storied front building had been converted into living quarters for the policemen, and the five rooms of the single-storied back one were to be our health camp by day, its roof our beds by night.

By 8AM a steady influx of people started arriving at our camp. By afternoon, the crowd was so large that even the police couldn’t control it. Local unarmed Maoist cadres helped manage the crowd of the many surprises was seeing them work together with the police, for all the world as if everyone was on the same side.

Over the course of the day, our doctors saw about 1,700 people from four surrounding VDCs. While registering patients, examining them, and dispensing drugs, one of our biggest problem in this Awadhispeaking area was the language barrier. It was difficult making sure they understood instructions about medicine dosages and timings. Several of them didn’t know their age, or had trouble describing their medical problems. Many of the children were acutely malnourished, and the adults often asked for something to make them strong. Poverty and poor hygiene were also rampant, and those were problems that had been around long before the flood.

A villager, echoing what others including the police and the Maoists had already told us, said, “This is the first time any organisation has come to our aid in such a large scale, bringing doctors and medicines along.”

Despite the heat and communication problems, when the camp ended after 10 hours, the doctors had examined everyone they could, with many people vowing to return or tell others to come.

The next day when we woke up on the rooftop to the rising sun and the green fields, we immediately started packing and loading our remaining supplies into a tractor, the best vehicle for the terrain. As we started moving, villagers followed us asking us not to leave, telling us that we had to do more. Some even tried to block the road in places. Our hearts went out to them, but we simply didn’t have enough time or supplies to help everybody.

Our experience had brought us face to face with the stark reality of our country. The underlying poverty and underdevelopment we had all heard about but never really seen hit us hard. We may not have made huge changes in the lives of the people we helped, but we did what we could.

DESPAIR AND HOPE: Over 36 hours of continuous rain flooded Banke and Bardiya in the first week of September (left). Volunteer doctors treating flood victims in Gangapur

NATURAL PAN
Sadeep Shah
Abhishek Thapa
When Bishal Bazaar opened in the 1980s, it quickly became the stuff of urban legends—the size, the variety and, of course, the escalator.

Today’s Kathmandu are decidedly more blasé about the mega shopping experience, and understandably so considering the number of new shopping mall, complexes and department stores that have mushroomed across the Valley. These behemoth structures stand as a tribute to Kathmandu’s commitment to consumerism, and each seems even larger and more inclusive than the rest—like the United World Trade Centre currently under construction in Tripureswor being a prime example.

Gone are the days spent hopping from Darbar Marg to New Road and then to Ason for a full Dasain shop. For the time conscious, things have never been so easy. Even so, it still pays to shop around for the best shopping centre—and that’s where Nepali Times helps you out.

THE BLUEBIRD EXPERIENCE

Two decades after its first department store opened in Tripureswor, the Bluebird franchise has expanded to include another branch in Lajimpat, and is now completing its flagship store’s transition into a bonafide mall.

When the waning fortunes of the tourism industry forced the Bluestar Hotel to close 11 months ago, it provided an opportunity that the Bluebird franchise took advantage of. The hotel’s space, located in the heart of Kathmandu, was an ideal location for a new shopping mall.

The Bluebird Mall is a shining example of Kathmandu’s commitment to consumerism. Its location in the heart of the city makes it easily accessible to shoppers from all over the Valley. The mall is home to a wide variety of stores, offering everything from clothing and accessories to electronics and home goods.

But the Bluebird Mall is not just about shopping. It also includes a food court, providing a place for shoppers to grab a quick bite or enjoy a sit-down meal. The mall’s modern design and comfortable seating make it a great place to spend an afternoon.

In addition to the Bluebird Mall, Kathmandu has a number of other shopping malls and complexes. The United World Trade Centre, currently under construction in Tripureswor, is one of the newest and largest of these. It is set to open in the near future and is expected to be a major draw for shoppers in the area.

Overall, Kathmandu’s commitment to consumerism is evident in the many shopping options available to residents and tourists alike. Whether you’re looking for a quick shopping trip or a full day of retail therapy, Kathmandu has something for everyone.
The interior has been done up in a similar style to department stores abroad, and the shops carry everything from perfume, watches, sportswear, lingerie, and luggage to various brands like Addidas, Bossini, Levi’s, and Reebok. The mall also houses Kathmandu’s first clothing outlets of Baleno, Dapper, Crimsoone, Koutons, Women’s Wear, and Duke. There are also Indian brands like Peter England, Raymond, Woodland, Park Avenue, and Excalibur while local brands are Flinte and John Players. Plum, a lingerie store that sells brands like Kya, Wavilly, Anne Bra, Sabina and Jockey has opened its second outlet here and so has Top Class, a leading fashion store for women.

The food court, which includes restaurants like Bawarchi, Road House Café and Hunan, is set to open between Dasain and Tihar. The mall will also introduce valet parking after Tihar.

Opening hours: 10AM to 8PM everyday
Special offers: 10 percent discount on all garments, 5-40 percent discount on American Tourister luggage, 1.5 litres of Pepsi free for every food purchase above Rs 2,000, 600ml Pepsi free for every food purchase above Rs 1,000 until Tihar
For a privilege card: Accumulate bills worth Rs 12,000 from any Bluebird stores and get discounts all year round
Other attractions: Children’s crèche Punkie Universe and Furniture Land, which is offering a 10 percent discount on all furniture until 25 October
Parking: Available for 73 cars and 60 motorcycles

SALEWAYS

The Saleways Department Store in Pulchok is actually a branch of the Saleways in Pokhara, which started 14 years ago. Following the success of the two Pokhara stores, it opened in Kathmandu in 2004, swiftly gaining loyal customers because of its pricing and impeccable service.

While Boudha seems a bit out of the way for most city residents’ grocery needs, many have found the trek worth it since Gemini Grocery opened in 1991. Today there’s a second branch in Jawalakhel which opened in 2002, but true fans will still go to the massive new department store complex in Boudha. They sell a vast range of Teflon coated products and are the only department store with a separate freezer unit for frozen products. If you’re looking for pure, unadulterated mustard oil, head to Gemini.

Opening hours: 8AM to 8PM
Special offers: Up to 40 percent discount on all garments until Tihar
For a privilege card: Regular customers eligible.

Other attractions: A bakery and a fresh fruits and vegetable shop
Parking: 25 cars

NAMASTE

Currently part of the former Hotel Narayani complex in Pulchok, Namaste Department store now covers a staggering 17,000 sq feet. Namaste started its first store 15 years ago in Jawalakhel and relocated to Pulchok in 2004, and also has another branch in Maharajganj. It’s a must-visit for discerning drinkers, as it has over 3,000 kinds of liquor and boasts one of the best selections of wine in town, meticulously organised by category, year and country. A small kiosk between the stairways acts as a book corner, ideal for the reluctant shopping companion who prefers to leaf through the magazines and novels.

“We also have the best electronic appliances in town,” says Jeewan Sakya, Namaste’s managing director. Sakya knows how to keep his customers happy as the client list has jumped over 8,000.

Opening hours: 8.30 AM to 8PM everyday
Special offers: 5-50 percent discount up to 2 October.

For a privilege card: Buy goods worth Rs 2,000, earn 400 mileage points and become eligible for a Dasain upaghan.

Other attractions: A separate bakery and a grocery inside the premises
Parking: 15-20 cars
Along with the Craters, the lunar landscape is composed of darker and brighter areas. The brighter areas are the highlands, or Terrae, and the darker plains are called Maria, or seas. (They are not actually seas, but were wrongly identified as such by Galileo in 1610 when he was mapping the lunar surface.) With just binoculars, you can enjoy viewing Mare Cisium, Mare Imbrium, Orontes Fracassorum, Mare Serenitatis, etc. The ‘chest of the rabbit’ is the Mare Tranquillitatis (Sea of Tranquility) where the Apollo 11 landed in 1969. Regarding stars, at sunset, the Great Summer Triangle (Vega–Deneb–Altair) is still overhead. Other prominent constellations to the north are the Square of Pegasus and Andromeda. Train your binoculars towards Andromeda to identify the Great Galaxy M31 (The Andromeda Galaxy). Variable Stars change in brightness with time. October is a good time to look for Mira, a super-giant variable star in the constellation of Cetus, the Whale. This star is more than 100 times as large as our own Sun and pretty close to us too, a mere 95 light-years away. Spend some time this month trying to find Mira and seeing how its brightness changes over time. Don’t miss the occlusion of Pleiades (Seven-Sisters) by the Moon on 9 October, when the Moon will pass directly in front of the famous star cluster. Other highlights for October: The Sun is in the constellation of Virgo throughout October, moving into Libra at the very end of the month.

Mercury sets about 45 minutes after the Sun on 1 October, but each evening it moves farther from the sunset until it reaches its greatest eastern elongation on the 17 October. Catch this opportunity to view Mercury with your binoculars. Venus, which has been hard to see for some weeks now, will finally disappear behind the Sun (superior conjunction) on 27 October. We’ll have to wait until late November to see the brilliant Evening Star again. Mars is also hidden behind the Sun this month. The Red Planet is at conjunction on 23 October to become a morning object. Jupiter may still be just visible, immediately after sunset, looking like a bright star very low in the south-western sky. We’ll certainly lose sight of it by the end of the month.

Saturn in Leo, is the only naked-eye planet on view this month after midnight. Meteors: The Draconids are a brief one-day storm lasting on 9 October! The Orionids start around the 15 October and peak on the 21st, with a rate of about 25 meteors per hour. The Taurids begin at the end of the month to peak in early November.

Kedar Badu

D asain is a great time for amateur astronomers, with clear skies and free time. Most of the planets are behind the Sun now, so it’s a chance to concentrate on the Craters of the Moon and some wonderful stars. Look at the Moon in the night sky, and you can see the battered surface formed by colliding asteroids and craters some three billion years ago. The impact craters on its surface are so large, they can easily be seen through a small telescope. Training your binoculars on the Moon and the Variable Star Mira adds to the festive mood.

The Craters of the Moon and the Variable Star Mira add to the festive mood.
The jazz peace

Grooving with Surya Classic Jazzmandu

Each individual adds their own twist, giving the festival a dynamic profile that keeps listeners coming back for more. Even the artists never really know what to expect at Jazzmandu. Jazz-funk musician Andy Grosskopf, a newcomer to Kathmandu with Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 says, “I’m very interested in getting to know other cultures and ways of life!” Navin Chinetti, drummer and vocalist of Cadenza, still gets emails from international acts from previous years—and many from outfits that want to play—waxing euphoric about what they fancifully call ‘jazz in the Himalayas’. It’s not just about the music at Jazzmandu, but also about how the music and the city meld. The concert of Cokarna play off the sense of space and to the mountains behind, while Jazz at Patan is always a fusion of the best of all worlds.

Even the musicians from Nepal are remarkably diverse. Gandharba musicians have played at a previous festival, and this year Kutumba, a folk-fusion band, and Stupa, a rock-jazz combo will also make an appearance. As always, Cadenza remain a star attraction. Along with their lineup, their style has changed from the straight-ahead, sometimes noodly sound of five years ago, to improvisation-focused Afro-Cuban traditions. Chinetti, who holds Cadenza together, says, “Nepal’s best musicians have played for Cadenza, and when they leave, they’re even better. We merge styles from all over the world and blend them. That’s what makes this so challenging, and fun.”

One of the reasons there is so much crossover music is to spread the jazz bug. The dance grooves serve as a sort of gateway drug for the real thing. As Chinetti explains, “Jazz used to be considered music that old people listen to while lounging around. Now you can feel the excitement, energy, talent, and sophistication. It’s simple, yet complicated.”

SHREYA MUKHERJEE

Kathmandu jazz pioneers Cadenza sure know how to make an impression—their performance at the 4th Palmer Street Jazz Festival in Townsville, Australia in 2000 impressed everyone from jazz greats Don Burrows and the All-Stars to coordinator Neal Sellars’ daughter Susan, who packed up to come work on a smaller festival right here in the Valley. The first Jazzmandu two years later, featuring Burrows and Afro-Dizzi Act, took the city by storm. Today the event is a regular fixture of the city’s cultural calendar, this year running as Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 from 11-18 October.

Besides Cadenza, this year’s artists include The Remi Abram Quartet, Andy Grosskopf, El David Burgos, Francois Carrière, Judy Lewis, Latin Jazz All Stars, Norwegian Musos, and Stupa. They come together with lofty ideals of playing for peace. Like jazz, they say, peace has no boundaries. Jazzmandu certainly seems to transcend nationality, with past acts including artists from Australia, Denmark, the US, Berain, and India. We’ve heard big band, free jazz, classical Indian-jazz fusion, and a lot of funk-ed-up, danceable crossover music.

Upstairs Jam featuring The Remi Abram Quartet/Cadenza & Friends, 7.30 PM onwards on Wednesday, 11 October at the Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Rs 300.

Free Jazz: A spontaneous warm up jam open to all, with Jazzmandu musicians at Darbar Square, Basantapur, 4-5PM, Thursday 12 October.

Sokarna Jazz Bashar featuring Nepali and international performers in a blend of cultural folk, classical and jazz music, 8PM onwards at the Sokarna Forest Golf Resort on Friday, 13 October, Rs 500. Free shuttles available.

Peace Parade: Music for peace down the streets of Lajimpat, with jazz musicians, dancers, folk musicians, panche kaneus and Buddhist monks. 11.30 AM & 12.30 PM, starting from Upstairs Jazz Bar on Saturday, 14 October.

Red Hot Latin Jazz: Afro-Caribbean and South American rhythms on Saturday, 14 October from 7.30 PM onwards at Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat, Rs 300.

Jazz Movies: Featuring The Miles Davis Story and Calle 54, 6.30 PM onwards at Surya Classic Jazzmandu Bar for Rs 100 on Sunday, 15 October.

Valley Jam with Francois Carrière, Andreas Hessen Schei and Hilde Marie Kjersem at 1905, Kantipath. 6.30 PM onwards on Sunday, 15 October for Rs 300.

Jazz at Patan Nepal classical music fuses with international jazz and south Indian sounds on Monday 16 October. 6.30 PM on at Patan Museum Square for Rs 999.

All-Star Fever at Hotel Shangri-la, Sunday 17 October. The ultimate jam, with Jazzmandu musicians getting together after their individual sets for a high-energy jam. Rs 500. 5PM onwards, includes an exhibition of Jazzmandu photographs.

Jazz for the Next Generation: Musicians share their stories and experiences with young jazz lovers at Nepal Music Centre, 11AM-7PM on Wednesday, 18 October.

Upstairs Jam: Jazzmandu artists get together for a final gig on Wednesday, 18 October at Upstairs Jazz Bar, 7.30 PM onwards for Rs 300.

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EXHIBITIONS
- "Women in Nature" by Erina Tamrakar till 20 October at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- "Aloha Namaste Sacred Places, Sacred Animal" paintings by Wicki Van De Veer till 20 October at Siddhartha Art Gallery
- Figures in Print by Chirag Bangdel at Imago Dei CE Gallery. 9AM-9PM. 4442464

EVENTS
- Fulpati 29 September
- Tika 2 October
- Classical Nepali Concert coordinated by Sanita Mahra, 8 October, 6.30 PM, Rs. 500 at the Garden of Dreams
- The Jazz Affair a fundraiser for Shaktipac Cancer Hospital Diagnostic Centre, 11 October, 8 PM, Rs. 2,000 at the Garden of Dreams
- Japanese Day displays of Ikebana, Bonsai, Japanese dolls and more, 14 October, 10.30 AM-10PM, Rs 500 at the Garden of Dreams
- Fire in the Monastery a play by Abhi Subedi, directed by Surej Pokhrel and presented by Gurusukh, 17 October, 7PM, Rs 300 at the Garden of Dreams
- Salsa Classes at the Radisson Hotel, 6PM, pre-register at the hotel reception. 4411818
- Tai-Chi, Qi-Qong and Hatha Yoga at the Self Awakening Centre, Baber Mahal Revisited, call to sign up. 4256618

MUSIC
- Dawata Gyanalo at the Paketi Series, 28 and 29 September, 5.30 PM, nepa-ya Ra sallas 5552839
- Dwarikas Oktoberfest a fusion of food and music at Dwarikas, 29 September, Rs 850
- Jazz Affair at the opening of the Garden of Dreams, Saskia Lario to perform, 11 October, Rs 2,000. 4465000
- Surya Classic Jazz Mandu 2006 11-11 October
- Open Mic Night at VaVa Cafe, Thamel every Friday, 8PM

DINING
- Mezza and Margaritas at Dwarikas Fusion, every Wednesday at 6.30 PM, Rs 555. 4479448
- Seven Sensations at Hotel Yaki & Yeti, cocktails and snacks. 4249899
- Thakali Lunch special price, everyday at Moksh. 5526212
- Scrumptious wood fired pizzas at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel 4262768 and Pulkheh 5521755
- A Sweet Taste of Life at La Dolce Vita, authentic Italian cuisine. 4700812
- Season of Freshness at Shambala Garden Cafe, Shangri-la Hotel, happy hours 12-7 PM. 4412999
- Creations from the Clay Oven at Stupa View Restaurant, Boudha Stupa, 4480262
- Monsoon Madness Wine Festival enjoy wines from four continents at Kilroyís of Kathmandu. 4250440
- Wet & Wild Summer Splash!swimming and lunch, or overnight stay with breakfast and swimming, Godavari Village Resort. 5560875
- Weekend Brunch at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234

GETAWAYS
- Explore Bandipur with Kutumba at River Side Springs Resort, 6-7 October, Rs 3,000, book now. 5521690
- Sherpa Dasain trek in the Helambu region, five days from 30 September. 4412508
- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge open for Dasain Tihar reservations. 4361500
- Nature Retreat at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
- Escape Kathmandu at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 8841371927
- Escape to Godavari Village Resort, 29 September, Rs 850 at ViaVia Cafe, Thamel every Friday, 8PM
- Stay with breakfast and swimming, Godavari Village Resort. 5560875
- Weekend Brunch at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com by Erina Tamrakar till 20 October at Siddhartha Art Gallery.
A whole generation of Nepalis have probably picked up their music tastes from Hits FM’s executive director, Jeevan Shrestha. He got his enthusiasm from the hopefuls who drifted through the streets of Jhocchen while he was growing up, bringing with them the sounds of Bob Dylan, Led Zeppelin, and the rest. A decade ago, when Hits FM was leading Kathmandu’s FM revolution, the start-up library came largely from Jeevan’s personal collection. Most of the albums still haven’t made their way back to him.

After working in tourism and hospitality and spending years in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe, Jeevan’s foray into radio in 1996 was largely trial and error. “Sonny Shrestha (managing director then) and I had to think hard about what people wanted, plan our programming around that, and try to make time well spent, as ten years later, Hits FM 91.2 is thriving, as the only commercial radio station with a 24-hour focus on music and entertainment,” he says.

It hasn’t all been song and games though. With state-run Radio Nepal as their only predecessor, building up a radio advertising industry was just as challenging as gauging listenership and training staff. Using their ear for what sells and making a wise decision to invest in production music, Jeevan and the Hits FM team have created many of Nepal’s most memorable—and successful—radio advertising campaigns.

For clients ranging from local banks and restaurants to international companies like Mazda, Honda, and TIME magazine, Jeevan is usually personally responsible for the concepts and scripting of ads. He enjoys playing with words, coming up with taglines and slogans like Mercantile’s “the time has come” and the slurred “junsukai bar, Rum Doodle Bar”. Although he doesn’t host programs himself, he does do ads, and his distinctive, gravelly voice has become as well-known as those of his presenters. Often, it’s what advertisers insist on. “Despite increasing competition from new FM stations and Nepali TV, Jeevan is confident that the station, which makes a trio of ten-year-olds with his twin sons, is on the right track. The prestigious Closeup-Hits FM Music Awards and a city clamouring for quality entertainment will only help. To get more listeners, says Jeevan, “You just have to be good at what you do.”
Dasain scapegoat

Given the times, and since we are squeezed for space here this week, let’s get right down to brass-tacks and look at alternative ways to celebrate Dasain.

Statistics show that Nepalis will consume 75 percent of their annual intake of animal protein during the coming week. There must be a similar breakdown for alcohol consumption as well. Dasain is about binging, and proof is the overpowering aroma emanating from the Bagmati in its immediate aftermath.

So this Dasain, let’s try to do things differently. A sample survey around the office came up with the following ideas:

- Turn vegetarian (if it is difficult, take a tour of the Goat, Sheep and Poultry Concentration Camp at Balkhu, the Haven for Free-ranging Rangos in Khumaltar or Dakhshinkali Temple on Saturday morning to observe the animals as they attain martyrdom and regain paradise).
- Refuse to buy any new clothes and shoes. In fact, donate all your new ones and get into your old pants. That is if you can still fit into them.
- Boycott all fashion shows, auto marts, consumer electronic sale bonanzas, and lotteries that tie your subscription to this paper to a wall clock or microwave oven.
- Be selective, don’t visit relatives you don’t like.
- Get the hell out of Nepal, go to Goa. Better still, emigrate.
- If anyone tells you to ‘go fly a kite’ smack him on the nose.
- Drink yourself silly so you’ll be judged unfit for paplu sessions.

Since Dasain is a clan festival, our semi-overground comrades seem to have reinforced their belief in revolution by keeping it within the family. In the grand tradition of communist utopias like North Korea, they are passing the revolutionary spirit from The Great Leader to The Dear Leader. Our own awe-inspiring Chairman is turning his progeny into a protégé. The son is also rising in the rest of the politburo.

But on intra-party relationships the party has drawn the line. The dapper Commander of the Eastern Div, Comrade Badal and his comrade-at-arms, Comrade Pampha were rapped on the knuckles over some over-comradely behaviour in the past. But Maoist marriages are in full swing as the rank and file use the ceasefire period to tie the nuptial knots of holy matrimony en masse. ‘Donations’ are now known by their nom de guerre: wedding gifts.

The party liaison office at Kopundole recently had glittering lights cascading down from roof terrace as a party party was in full swing. At this rate by this time next year there should be an underground baby boom.