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## THE EPA

Nepal is on the mend. The Maoist leadership's intention is to give up the bloody 'People's War' and join mainline politics, and they are being engaged by seasoned politicians of the seven-party alliance.

True, the polemics emanating from the Maoist camp have caused concern, and resolution on some matters has been delayed by irresponsible references to an 'October Revolution' and attempts to create fait accompli on issues that should be left to the people's will. Also true is that any slippage would weaken pluralism, democracy, and transparency, for one outcome of the Maoist-SPA negotiations should be that the public gets more, and not fewer, rights and privileges than contained in the 1990 Constitution.

While it's possible to be sceptical about the Maoist intentions, they are believable precisely because they have tried to grab state power by force and achieved failure. When they saw that it did not work, also in the context of a hostile geopolitical environment, they decided at their August 2005 plenum meeting to engage the political parties. That engagement led to the 'People's Movement,' but was endangered by the ham-handed handling of negotiations that led to the June eight-point agreement (which proposed an unrealistic interim constitution process and was dismissive of parliament).

Fortunately, the current discussions between the Maoists and the political parties are marked by sobriety. Both sides know the only way ahead is through laying down of arms and state restructuring. Today the Maoists are showing flexibility on 'arms management' and the parties are willing to discuss restructuring of the state through the constituent assembly process. Thus we now have a rough date, probably late May, for elections to the assembly.

Ups and downs are part of a peace process, and this one has moved steadily forward, alarmist assessments notwithstanding. Once the political package is in agreement, it will be time for the United Nations peacemaking team under the Secretary General's Personal Representative Ian Martin to start work, providing international watch-dogging and standards for arms management, the CA elections and a referendum, should that be the choice.

Fortunately, Martin's team is finally coming together, and it is a fine group of professionals with ground-level knowledge of Nepal and also understanding of international precedents, giving it the political sensibility needed to help steer the country towards lasting peace.

The Maoists need a way to go from being a rebel group to a political party—a member of the eight-party alliance, the EPA. This process will help provide a safe landing not only for the CPN (Maoists) but for Nepali society as a whole. We truly think, as we said, that the country is on the mend.



"Bang! Bang! Bang!" Someone is knocking loudly on the gate.

"Come on down right now," commands a sharp-eyed boy, wagging his index finger.



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Raamesh**

"We're revolutionaries," he introduces himself, "from the Maoist student union. We are raising money for our convention. We are bringing 2.5 million people into Kathmandu. We need your donation."

"All right," I replied, "first explain to me what you understand by 'revolution', then we'll talk about donations."

The boy isn't listening. "If our party hadn't helped, the Jana Andolan would not have been successful, our people's army had surrounded Kathmandu then. We used to be in the villages, now we've brought the struggle to the cities. Villages sacrificed their sons and daughters for the

revolution, now it is time for city-dwellers to make the sacrifice. We have the vision and ability to build this country," he said sounding like an inept tape recorder. "You know ours is a party with more than 13,000 martyrs. It is now our work to bring their dreams to fruition; that is why we need your support."

I try to reason with him: "Those 13,000 people are not your martyrs—they are our martyrs, they were Nepali citizens. Your party was just the medium."

The boy isn't interested. "Tell me how much shall I make the receipt for."

"Five rupees," I say, "that's all I'm giving you. That is what Prachandaji said on television, that all donations are voluntary. I'm just following his instructions."

"You are insulting our party, our convention, our leaders, and cadres and you are insulting our people's democratic republic. We can come after you at any time, you know? We can do anything to you." His angry face, if not his literal words, conveyed this clear message.

"Look, we see your leaders on television everyday now and you are disobeying their instructions. Besides, by terrorising the people you and thousands of others like you are embarrassing your leaders. If you get your people's democratic republic, is this the way you will run it? Are you going to win over the people by seeking their suggestions and letting them lead you, or are you going to terrorise and intimidate them like you do now?"

I look out at the streets, wet from last night's rain, and

continue: "If you are nice to them, the people will ask you to lead them, but if your behaviour and ideals hurt them, no matter how much you paint the place red, it won't make a difference."

Suddenly, the kid mellowed: "What to do, dai, we can't be nice to everyone."

My lecture was going full steam now. "People have doubts about your party, but they also have hopes. But you make or break your party. I suggest you mend your behaviour and not taint your party's image. There are many hard-working, good, self-respecting people in this country. Treat them as such, learn from them. Nepalis are fed up with the status quo, there is a bush fire sweeping the land and it will incinerate the stinking pile of garbage in our society. And from the ashes will rise a new, just, prosperous Nepal so future Nepalis can live with happiness and pride."

The boy has a faraway look on his face and asks: "You have three hundred?"

"Maybe..."

As I climb the stairs, I hear him telling his friend: "He really blasted us, yaar."

I gave them a Rs 500 bill and took back three hundred. "The 200 is my contribution to your cause. If we believe in you we may give you 2,000 or 200,000, two million, two billion. I wasn't angry at you, I was expressing the wishes of the Nepali people. Don't let us down."

Like disciplined students, they leave, lost in thought. ●

Raamesh is a veteran musician and singer of 30-year old hit *Gaun Gaun Basti Basti*. This is a true story and an abridged translation from *Himal Khabarpatrika*. †

# Food for thought

## Much-needed agricultural reforms can't wait for elections

The SPA and the Maoists might delay a resolution for short-term political gains, but neither dares discontinue the peace process. The SPA leaders can't afford to let peace talks fail, for that would allow right-wingers to raise their heads again. Prachanda and his cohorts need an agreement with mainstream parties, or hotheads in the CPN (Maoist) could force them out of the scene.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**C K Lal**

With the complete UN team in Kathmandu, bigwigs on both sides have even less excuse for backtracking. The deadline for constituent assembly elections is set for mid-June next year, and the procedural details must be clearly spelled out by the negotiating teams so the UN experts have clear, consensual terms of reference for their operation.

But the country can't wait for complete resolution of the conflict, a procedure long-drawn by definition. There are vital issues of governance and development that the interim government must begin to address even as the peace chariot trundles along.

Influential sections of society want their preferences to top the government's priority list. For non-resident Nepalis, dual citizenship is more important than the resolution of statelessness of Madhesis. Bank defaulters are more interested in tax-waivers than in loan rescheduling. University teachers on temporary contract must have automatic tenure no matter what it implies for the shaky structure of their sick institution. In this melee of staking claims and counter-claims, farmers are nowhere on the stage. The feeble cry of the largest section of Nepali society is too muted to create an impact at the centre.

Agriculture, the mainstay of Nepali economy, has been utterly neglected by the government and donors for over a decade. Despite conspicuous successes in farming

cash crops such as vegetables, spices, medicinal herbs, and other niche products, the overall performance of the farming sector is rather bleak.

This is almost harvest season in the country's rice bowl, the tarai, but farmers aren't smiling. Grain production hasn't actually declined, but it hasn't kept pace with population growth. Even a country charting a new course must eat to think, and agriculture can't be relegated to a secondary status.

Unbeknown to major players in the political arena, large parts of the country are slated to face an unprecedented food crisis if preventive measures aren't taken immediately. The market mechanism works fine for families kept afloat by remittances. But for everyone else, farm produce needs to be increased to stave off slow starvation.

The solution isn't all that difficult. The gap between potential and actual yield of foodgrains in most of the country is so large that even incremental improvement measures can have a spectacular impact.

Floods, dreaded by urban dwellers for the inundations they cause, are nature's way of replenishing the soil in the tarai. The real challenge is to create irrigation facilities for the dry season. This can be done at relatively low cost with minimum damage to the environment by installing shallow tube-wells recharged around the year with a network of ponds and water tanks.

Over three-quarters of the price of rice in some mountainous regions is to cover the cost of transportation. This is clearly an unsustainable food supply mechanism. Farming in the hills and mountains requires an appropriate produce mix and location-specific seeds. Easy credit, assured minimum price, and guaranteed access to market are common facilities that farmers of the mountains, hills and tarai need alike.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal was trained as an agricultural scientist in the Rampur Campuses. To survive encounters with the Americans in Hetauda, Rampur, and Dhangadhi in the 1970s, you became a wheeler-dealer or a communist. A self-declared emotional person, Dahal chose the latter. If he succeeds in establishing sustainable peace in the country, the excesses of the Maoist cadres under his command will eventually be forgiven, if not forgotten. But if he fails to address the plight of Nepali farmers, he will be guilty of betraying his calling. Ploughshares beckon the gun-wielding chairman. ●



# LETTERS

## STILL AMONG US

I had the opportunity to read all the stories published in the *Nepali Times* about the tragic loss of Nepali conservation experts (Remembering friends and colleagues, #317). But it was your editorial (Still among us) that touched my heart.

Chandra and Mingma were my conservation gurus. I worked with them in the Annapurna and they inspired me in my PhD work on examining why community-based conservation is so successful in Nepal. The void they left will not be easily filled. They designed and implemented the project as directors and trained many grassroots conservation workers to raise awareness about conservation, making it a way of life for the people of the region.

Through their efforts they have made ACAP a practical learning university for conservation and their visionary conservation ideas have been adopted beyond the country's borders. Today ACAP serves as a model project for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in developing countries, and together with the Kangchenjunga handover make Nepal a global leader in achieving sustainable conservation objectives. They showed the global conservation community that local communities' participation and their role in conservation are vital to safeguard the world's most precious resource, biodiversity. Nepali conservation community is still in shock, too stunned to think beyond the tragic loss of their seniors.

Two decades ago, they planted the seeds of community-based conservation in the Annapurna, they nurtured the project and made it flourish in the buffer zones of national parks and reserves and eventually dedicated themselves to Kangchenjunga.

**Hum Bahadur Gurung, Australia**

● You have written a moving and heart-wrenching (Still among us, #317), yet somehow positive piece about a real tragedy.

**Mirpos, email**

● Unlike most of Kathmandu's elite, I didn't know any of the people we lost in Ghunsa last month. But I wept at the waste when I read the carefully-written tributes. What a litany of sorrow and caring Friends and colleagues (#317) was. I was impressed by the care evident in your coverage, and by your editorial. It takes restraint not to slide from grief into cheap exploitation of emotion, and not to write hagiographies, but genuine tributes. Well done.

**Sarita Thapa-Hill, email**

## WING AND PRAYER

Soma Sen (Wing and Prayer, #317) is absolutely right in saying it is too early to draw conclusions on the crash. The jury is still out, so to speak. Has the information from the cockpit voice

recorder and flight data recorder been analysed? It takes weeks, if not months, to conduct a proper air crash investigation.

Despite all this, we've had experts' passing judgement on the cause of the crash. Some said it was pilot error, others bad weather and difficult terrain, and a few have even gone as far as saying the pilots were flying under pressure from their VIP passengers.

To compound all this, we now have a judge heading the investigating committee. In what way can someone with his background help an air crash investigation other than providing legal advice? It is logical to have legal advisers on air crash investigation committees, but to have one as a chairperson is beyond my realm of understanding.

**Subodh, email**

## FULL DISCLOSURE

We are not surprised by Comrade Baburam's latest revelation, that India was a key actor in the inking of the 12-point pact between them and the seven-party alliance in New Delhi. What was an allegation has been substantiated today. Now, our grey safari-clad republicans need to disclose other understandings and secrets of history, such as who funded them in their so-called People's War, who supplied the arms, who provided their top-brass with a safe haven for most of the past 12 years, who planned their strategic attacks, who trained their combatants, who

of the rebellion every time negotiations don't go their way, and their armed militia terrorise the countryside.

Is it really possible to hold fair elections and a referendum on the constitution of Nepal under such conditions? Furthermore, changing the constitution of a country should not be a matter of a simple majority; most countries demand a qualified majority of two-thirds, or several referendums separated by general elections. Otherwise, electoral results are easily tampered with.

Isn't enough to just ask whether Nepal should be a monarchy or not. Without such a valid alternative, the real ballot questions could very well be:

Would you want

- a) a powerless apolitical head of state, and a government responsible to a parliament elected by the people?
- b) a despot responsible only to his own party, whose power rests with militia, and whose name is most likely Prachanda?

**Lars G, email**

● The Maoists have replicated the Pol Pot style of extortion, torture, and murder of Nepali civilians, and this they call loktantra. Maoists openly go to people's houses in the cities to extort and loot money. And the shameless Home Minister is a mute spectator, leaving the helpless civilians to defend themselves.



SAGAR SHRESTHA

their dead co-fighters were who were beheaded after battles, and so on.

Don't get nervous, comrades! The people have the unconfirmed answers to these questions. You just need to confirm them. Big Brother won't mind because you both are very close to succeeding in your political mission. But a word of warning after all you are our brothers and sisters; remember that Prabhakaran had open meetings in India in the early phase of their war, but then had to fight the very neighbours who mentored the Tigers, when they decided to change sides and join hands with the Sri Lankan army with sophisticated hardware and logistics.

Our culturally similar neighbours must also not forget that a fire on the side is likely to transmit heat all around if fuelled for long.

**Pradeepta S, Mumbai**

## ARMED AND DANGEROUS

It is interesting to read pundits seeing royalist conspiracies behind every bush. Meanwhile, the Maoists threaten a flare-up

It is time for the citizens of the Valley and elsewhere in the country to defend their right to live, even if it means taking up arms. The Maoists must be brought to book for all the atrocities they continue to commit.

**Suyocha, email**

## MAINSTREAMING MAOISTS

The inclusion of Maoist leaders in the interim government cannot but be welcomed, provided, as the prime minister has been insisting, the Maoist arms are managed. When they are in government, the would-be Maoist ministers will be overseeing the Nepal Army and there can't be two adversarial armies in the country.

There need be no hurdle to that because the basics have already been agreed to, and the UN representatives are there. To look after arms management, there should be a military advisory body consisting of retired army officers who have served in UN peacekeeping missions, together with serving army officers and Maoist representatives. This

body should also be charged with the task of planning the future of the Nepal Army with possible induction of the Maoist militia.

**Ishwari Pradhan, email**

## BASIC VALUES

You make a genuine observation about the responsibility of the foreign missions in Nepal (Cantonment commitment, #316). At this critical juncture, ambassadors who do not understand the roots of the problem and diplomatic norms should keep their mouth shut. Their ad hoc comments will only weaken the ongoing peace effort between the government and the Maoists. Right now we need mediation that will bring about a solution, not confrontation. People do not wish to let slip the democracy now within our reach.

No matter what sacrifices the seven-party alliance and the Maoists have to make, we need a positive result from the peace talks. Foreigners could derail the process by taking sides or imposing conditions. Unfortunately, we have a weak and old prime minister whose past record includes nepotism and corruption. We also know little about Prachanda, so far seen as a leader of a group which has terrorised the people with intimidation.

In the land where the Buddha was born, the path of forgiveness and reconciliation is the best approach to achieving peace and prosperity in Nepal.

**Tuladhar, email**

## PERMANENT SEAT

Under my hat, Backside, All Sides can't a person wish for some semblance of permanence in these unpredictable will-o'-wisp times? If you got tired with your weekly hat change then you could have just made do with caps. And what's with the ass and backside and all? Oh, well.

**V Kharel, email**

● Your last issue was excellent, particularly the memorial section on the 23 September helicopter crash. However, I think that your new back page is very hard to understand, and have spent many hours wondering what you are trying to accomplish by printing such nonsense. Under My Hat was silly, but now this is just confusing for us ordinary Nepali readers. Please consider using such an important space for serious issues of interest to the people.

**Sailesh Bista, Kuleshwor**

## LETTERS

*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 letter to the editor in the subject line.

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# No-fly season

Don't challenge the Himalayan monsoon

Air accidents don't have a season. They can, and do, occur just about anytime and anyplace. In Nepal though, most air crashes over the last 15 years have occurred in the rainy season.

Recall the disasters of 1992 when a Thai jet and a PIA jet crashed into the mountains surrounding Kathmandu during the monsoon, killing all onboard. Or the RNAC crash in July 2000 near Dhangadhi that killed 25 people. Or the Shangri-La Air Twin Otter crash of August 2002 which took 18 lives. Or the May 2004 Yeti Air accident in Lukla in which three crew members died. The list goes on and on.

Now add to that last month's helicopter crash in Taplejung, which snuffed out 24 lives. All the new-fangled technology such as GPS, GWPS, EGWPS, with which the copter was reportedly equipped could not save it from slamming into the mountainside.



MEANWHILE  
Suman Pradhan

The immediate lesson of the Taplejung crash is this: no technology can rule out disasters in poor weather conditions, especially in the Himalayas. It can minimise the

frequency of crashes, but not stop them. In some cases, technology actually contributes to accidents by giving rise to a false sense of security.

After covering aviation and air disasters in Nepal for over a decade, I have a simple rule: don't fly in the monsoon, especially in the mountains. It's not worth the risk. Go by bus or pony, hike, trek, or postpone your program. The litany of air crashes in the monsoon is now too long to be a fluke.

It's true that improved technology and navigational aids have made all-weather flying routine in Nepal, bringing once remote and cut-off destinations into contact with the outside world. But the number of flights have also led to an increase in the accident rate.

The official investigation committee looking into the Taplejung crash will probably find the reasons for the disaster, but we may never know what led the pilot to fly in such bad weather. What led him to take risks on a day when most other pilots would have called the flight off? It wouldn't have flown in that weather, one pilot told me recently, with the benefit of hindsight.

Was the Shree Air crew under corporate pressure to return to Kathmandu? Did the pilot come under inadvertent pressure to fly from some of the illustrious passengers? Or was the pilot foolhardy enough to want to test his skills in zero visibility conditions? If any meaningful lessons are to come out from this disaster, figuring out what motivated the pilot's decision is essential.

The probe committee should look into the role of technology. If the chopper was indeed equipped with all the latest gizmos, did it lull the pilots into a false sense of security?

Technology can do wonders, but it also encourages flyers to take unnecessary risks. At the very least, pilots get so used to it that they sometimes ignore the obvious. Both the 1992 crashes resulted from human errors stemming from a momentary inability to correctly read or calibrate crucial flight instruments. These shortcomings convinced the Japan government to install radar at TIA airport, primarily to verify the altitude, location and direction reported by pilots.

The committee should also focus on interpersonal relationships between the cockpit crew. According to one domestic airline pilot, cockpit communications in Nepal is poor because the pilot in command usually ignores advice from the junior pilot. 'We are all required to undergo Cockpit Resource Management training aimed at building good communications in the cockpit, but its lessons are quickly forgotten,' says the pilot.

Did the Shree Air co-pilot or navigator issue any warnings to the pilot before taking off? And if so, why did the pilot ignore these warnings?

In January 1995 an RNAC Twin Otter plunged right off the runway's northern edge in Kathmandu, killing the pilot and several passengers. It was later discovered that both the pilots were of similar rank. As the plane was rolling on the runway, the co-pilot had wanted to abort the take-off but the pilot continued with it anyway. The confusion resulted in the crash. ●

# Halving poverty by 2015

Kim Hak-Su is the Bangkok-based executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP). *Nepali Times* interviewed Kim in Kathmandu this week, where he attended the South Asia Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Forum. The goals include halving poverty by 2015. The South Asia MDG Forum met here to develop a roadmap to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.



KIRAN PANDAY

**Nepali Times: What does the MDG Forum hope to achieve?**

**Kim Hak-Su:** This Forum provides an opportunity for stakeholders from eight South Asian countries to evaluate their progress towards meeting the MDGs, the challenges they face, and the actions needed in the short-to medium-term future to meet the 2015 deadline.

The participants—who represent governments, civil society, media, and academia in their home countries—will develop an action plan listing the immediate steps necessary for South Asian countries to move forward with MDGs.

But this time, I am disappointed to see that only one government level official, just your finance minister, out of eight countries has attended the Forum. This shows that we must do more to solicit more high-level participation.

**And how do you plan to do that?**

UN agencies must certainly step up their awareness campaigns and the lessons learned here should be kept in mind during the other upcoming sub-regional forums, like the Southeast Asian Forum coming up in December in Hanoi.

**Does achieving MDG targets mean a country is relatively problem-free?**

If a country met the targets it would mean it had taken the basic steps to reduce poverty and address crucial development challenges. The UN believes the MDGs are the minimum requirements for a country to move towards progressive development. The MDGs are not the answer to all development problems, but a good blueprint for moving forward.

**How does Nepal's progress on MDGs compare with other South Asian countries?**

No developing country in the world is on track for all of the 2015 targets. Nepal too is on track for some, but off track for others.

Nepal has reduced the number of people with income under \$1 per day, an indicator of 'extreme

poverty', and increased the number of students enrolled in primary education and ensured these enrolments include girls and boys. Nepal is also progressing well in reducing deaths in children below the age of five.

However, like other South Asian countries, Nepal is not doing so well on reducing infant mortality. I hope the Forum will allow the Nepali delegation to gather lessons from other countries on how to redress this situation.

**Do you agree with donors who say the conflict is the biggest obstacle to development?**

Investing in MDGs, even when countries are facing security difficulties, can improve the situation. Studies show that when basic development needs are met—such as a reasonable level of income, food security, and access to basic health care—security issues can be addressed more effectively.

The MDGs are a long term plan, an investment for the future. National or international security issues, which are often temporary, should not stop our efforts to fight poverty and other goals.

**How do you rate the UN's role here in achieving the MDGs?**

Nepal has made progress since 2000. For example, between 1996 and 2004 Nepal reduced the percentage of people living below \$1 a day from 34.4 to 24.1 percent. However, progress needs to be stepped up to meet the 2015 deadline. Like other countries in the region, Nepal needs to strengthen its institutional capacity to deliver accessible services to the poor, vulnerable, and marginalised groups.

There is a need for strengthened regional cooperation so countries like Nepal can learn from the good MDG practices of other South Asian countries. I'm proud of the work we in UNESCAP, and the tri-partite initiative with UNDP and ADB, have been doing to assist countries in meeting the MDGs.



# Looking Phelps-wards

## Valuable lessons from the economics Nobel laureate

Last Monday in Stockholm, Sweden’s Central Bank announced that it would award this year’s Nobel economics prize to Edmund Phelps. That same day in Kathmandu, the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) announced that it would shut down all businesses across Nepal on Monday, 16 October.



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
**Ashutosh Tiwari**

Phelps completed much of his ground-breaking work in the 60s. His core insight—that “imperfect information and imperfect knowledge, with their consequent complications,” affect macroeconomic results—is to economics what, well, gravity is to physics. In the 90s, Phelps turned his attention to issues that could be of immediate interest to countries like Nepal. He looked at the transitional economies of Europe, and teased out factors that help raise a country’s economic performance. In doing so, he has shown

how some key market-friendly relationships affect one another. Phelps is not a market fundamentalist. He grew up during the Great Depression. He has written against George W Bush’s tax cuts that favour the rich, showed how state subsidies help firms to hire additional workers, and critiqued his own profession for neglecting issues concerning social justice. Phelps defines high economic performance as a state in which there is high productivity and high employment. For such performance, he outlines two conditions: that there be jobs that “enlist the minds of employees, engage them in problem solving—leading them to discover some of their talents and expanding their abilities”, and that employees see such jobs “embedded in a stimulating workplace, with new problems to solve, harder tasks to be mastered, and added abilities to strive for.” This combination of challenging jobs and motivated employees, with its attendant influence on employment and productivity, is what Phelps says makes up a country’s “economic dynamism”.



What raises a country’s economic dynamism? Phelps cites the role of institutions. What matters for dynamism, he says, is how an economy’s rules of the game are defined and played out. It’s not enough, he says, as some socialist-leaning European countries display, to have a general rule of law that safeguards, say, private property or places conditions on who gets hired and fired at a firm. A country’s economic dynamism is slowed by the absence of specific, yet flexible, institutions—“company law and corporate governance, the population’s preparation

for business life, the development of the stock market”, and lower barriers to entry to do business. What does that tell us about raising Nepal’s economic dynamism, especially in light of the FNCCI’s protest program? Four things: First, a high economic performance matters urgently for Nepal. This is so basic an idea that it gets routinely ignored. It’s as if those who lead us happily view the rise of a remittance economy as an excuse not to engage in any serious thinking about Nepal’s economic performance. Second, our politicians need to view high employment and productivity rates as issues that will keep them in power, no matter who gets to govern from Singha Darbar. Third, Nepali defenders of free enterprise need to further argue publicly that making it easier for all sorts of private sector businesses to function in Nepal provides the best antidote to unemployment and poverty. And finally, the terms of our national economic debates need to be recast not to look at ways to restrict, but to understand how institutions or rules help Nepali business owners, employees and customers to thrive together. Applying the findings of Phelps’s recent real-world research is a way for us to look forward to an economically dynamic Nepal in times ahead. ●

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# A dalit is born

Sudha Khakurel in Kantipur, 29 September

I, Brahmin by accident of birth  
What crime did I commit?  
Although I am not called dalit  
Poverty has ground me down  
I have no access to education  
And health care is denied me.

My father spoke himself hoarse  
Consecrating for a godan of one rupee  
Even then he did not complain  
When called mean names like itapare!  
He simply laughed it off.

But today my self-esteem  
Has taken me far from my father  
I cannot act any longer as my father did

What will my son's future be?  
Even though I get no special favours  
I am considered privileged  
My peer, a minister's son is Sarki  
Is today classed as dalit  
Another, a Newar sahu's daughter  
Has now become janajati.

I do have the right to live as an equal  
Don't take away my rights  
There are no dalits here  
Only legions who suffer.

Light the beacon of education  
Give access to health for all  
Make a society with no differences  
Don't let another dalit be born.

## Code breach

Kantipur, 11 October

Maoists have taken control of a school in Sunsari district and are using it as barracks for their army, in violation of the ceasefire code of conduct. News received from Khanar VDC says that Maoists took over the Sharada Higher Secondary School without any authorisation on Monday. The Maoists have said they will remain in the compound until the holiday is over, after the Chatth festival. According to a Maoist worker, Hemant, 25 cadres are currently based there, and additional militia are expected soon.

The Maoists agree that, as principal Subarna Thapa says, they took over the building without permission.

Maoists have also taken over the Holyland International Boarding School in Chitwan district's Chainpur VDC. The

school has been closed for almost three years. The Basu Smriti Brigade Third Division has established a temporary camp in the school compound.

In Dharan, 22-year-old Akash Agrawal was abducted by Maoists. According to family sources, the Maoists bundled him into a taxi and disappeared down the railway line in Dharan.

In Baitadi, policeman Narbahadur Chand has been in 'custody' since Dasain. Chand, who is posted at Baitdai prison, was taken away the day after Tika.

In Salyan district's Tribeni VDC, Laxman Shrestha was taken into 'custody' after being accused of eloping with a married woman.

In Taplejung district's Khebang VDC, villagers managed to free 27 locals detained by the Maoists, but former VDC chairman Khadag Prasad Tamling and his brothers Sancha Bahadur and Himal Dhawaj Tamling are still in Maoist custody.

## Royal right

Janadharana, 12 October

At a time when the SPA-led government and the Maoists are discussing the future of the monarchy, 47 independent politicians have released a statement in favour of the monarchy demanding that the peace talks be led by the king. The statement begins: 'This scared earth of Nepal cannot bear to watch the weakening of the monarch who has borne the historic responsibility and given it warm guidance.'

Independent political leaders like Radheshyam Thapa, Dinbahadur Aryal, Dharmaraj Giri, Haribahadur Basnet, Kamansingh Basnet, Golche Sarki, and Dhanendra Bahadur Basnet signed the statement.

They state that the king's 24 April proclamation was a fulfilment of a historic responsibility to safeguard the sovereignty of the state, the unity of the Nepali people, and the betterment of the country, and that it did not stem from personal aspirations. 'Any step that aims to disrupt the cordial relations between the king and the people, the united force of the people, and the historic establishment of the monarchy will not be beneficial to the country and the people,' the statement adds.



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## MPs peeved

Nepal Samacharpatra, 12 October

Members of Parliament have accused the government of dishonouring the House of Representatives. They said that though it was the government’s duty to inform parliament about issues of national importance while the House is in session, the government is now acting as if there were no parliament. MPs are asking why the prime minister is not in attendance at the House, though his health is already back on track.

The MPs complained that they were finding out about unresolved issues such as arms management through the media and not through official channels, and said that if there were no referendum on the fate of the monarchy, they would see it as a conspiracy to keep the monarchy.

MP Raghu Panta of the CPN-UML cited the example of Italy, where the issue of having a monarchy was resolved through a referendum after there were complications during the process of writing the interim constitution. He also said the decision to hold elections to a constituent assembly by next year was not new, reminding the House that the current government has already allocated a budget to hold the election by next year.

## Summit satire

Jana Aastha, 11 October

Everyone may have wished the summit talks between the SPA-led government and the Maoists that began on Sunday would succeed, but few actually believed they would. Fewer still could have thought that there would be a break on Monday. The proposal

came from Pushpa Dahal himself, but was meant satirically, as he suggested that the SPA needed a break to consult with foreign powers and the palace. On Sunday, after saying his piece, the prime minister went to bed, complaining of tiredness. NC (D) chairman Sher Bahadur Deuba kept going out and coming in and talking on his cell phone. When asked for his opinion Deuba just said, “Whatever Girjababu says we feel the same.”

It looked as if the two Congresses were on the same side, and opposed to the other parties. The Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party, and the left fronts complained that the Congress and the CPN-UML were paying too much attention to royalists and others who had no role in the people’s movements and sidelining those who had contributed to it.



Nepal, 15 October

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Take these issues home, sleep over them, wake up the next morning and ask India what to do. Don’t forget to ask America. Also ask Britain, and the EU. Even ask the palace, because you cannot decide by yourself.”

Pushpa Kamal Dahal mocking SPA leaders in *Jana Aastha*, after the first day’s summit talks ended inconclusively on Sunday, 8 October.

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# Clown t

## Smiling ambassadors try healing



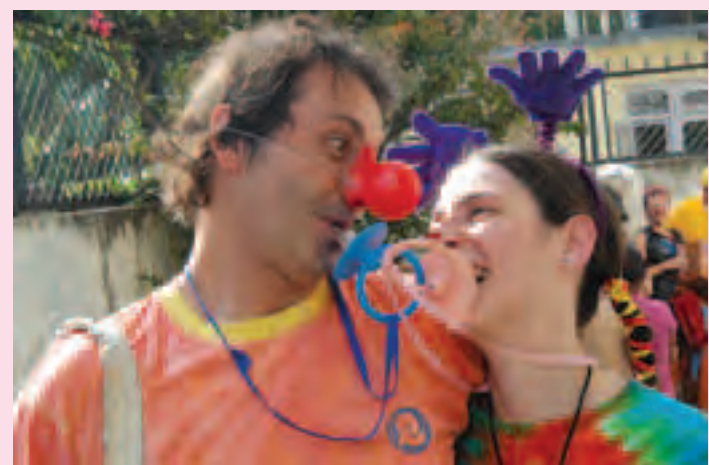
### SOPHIA TAMOT

A woman in a shirt patterned with smileys signals to a man wearing oversized pyjamas. Their mischievous eyes meet, and as their red noses squish against each other, they fill their cheeks with air. This draws great guffaws from the small crowd gathered on the street around them.

You've probably seen this group of funnily dressed people with red noses and a mish-mash of accents entertaining children and the elderly on the streets of Kathmandu this past week. They call themselves "smiling ambassadors," but many say they should instead be described as 'clown doctors'. They are currently in Nepal on one of the 'healing through humour' missions that take them around the world.

"We are all not professional clowns. We just want to bring joy and love where suffering is dominant," says an animated Ginevra Sanguigno. Sanguigno is founder of the group Clown One Italia. A theatre artist and teacher back home, she was encouraged to start the non-profit group after her meeting with Patch Adams in 1994. Adams is an American clown and doctor who founded a holistic medical centre and became famous after the eponymous 1998 movie based on his life starring Robin Williams.

"Patch taught us that you don't need special skills to make people happy, just the intention to spread love. And that is exactly what we are doing here—spreading the message of love and peace," says Sanguigno. Accompanying her are 11 clowns from Italy, Cambodia, and Japan who are here for two weeks and will be visiting orphanages,



## Clown for love

Vania Calzavara, 30, was studying to become a diplomat but she gave that up to do something decidedly undiplomatic—be a clown and promote clowning around. Calzavara decided to work with her boyfriend, Fabio Sorgato, 40, who runs voluntary clownery workshops in Thiene, Italy.

"For me, being with the person you love is far more important than a great career," she says. Seeing the joy Fabio spread among people, she also became a clown. "Four times a week, we visit hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes and prisons and make people laugh," adds Calzavara.

But life for the couple is not always funny. Calzavara works ten hours a day managing a local bakery in Thiene. She earns just about enough for the both of them. "I saved 3500 euros so Fabio and I could come to Nepal. We are also celebrating his birthday here," smiles Calzavara.

Does the almost-diplomat plan on being a clown all her life? "Yes," she shoots right back. "Money is not everything. Once you know how not to waste money, a little is enough."



# therapy

## g through humour

shelters, hospices, schools, and hospitals in Kathmandu and Pokhara run by organisations as diverse as CWIN, Sahara, Shanti Sewa Griha, Bal Mandir, Saathi, Dalit Welfare Organisation, Prayas Cooperative, and Maiti Nepal.

The group's focus is mainly on young girls and women who have been victims of violence, and who have been rescued and rehabilitated. While visiting the girls in various shelters, they hope to even train a few and sponsor them on the next Clown One Italia mission.

The group is also laying the groundwork to sponsor ten dalit girls to attend school for ten years. "This is our pilot project and we will start with the villages near and around Boudha because the school is located there," says Italo Bertolasi, organiser of the trip, who first came to Nepal 35 years ago and has since studied the work of jhakris. "I have studied the traditional way of healing, we now will mix it with the untraditional way (clowning)," he says.

"We may look stupid, but in this costume, you can be very powerful," Bertolasi adds. The group says that they use the power of ridicule to poke fun at figures of fear, such as men with guns. "In Afghanistan, a female

clown tried to paint a red nose on a mujahideen who was carrying a gun. And what did he do? He ran away while the women and children all laughed," chuckles Bertolasi.

The members of Clown One Italia are clowns here, but back home they practise all kinds of professions—they are counsellors, artists, actors, and physiotherapists. They share a common goal, to hear sick children laugh, and see lonely old people smile. They are all volunteers, and some have used up their entire savings to come make Nepalis smile.

"We try to get funds for all our trips, but sometimes we don't have enough for everyone in the group," explains Sanguigno. Even when they do, there's just enough to cover airfares. In Nepal, their accommodation and logistics is sponsored by Apeiron, an Italian organisation that works to uplift poor and disadvantaged women and children.

"Nepalis are cheerful people despite their suffering. But the war has left many people displaced and bitter. We are here to remind them that they should not forget to smile because only that can give them the courage to go on," says Sanguigno. ●

UPSIDE DOWN: Clowns amuse the children at CWIN shelter at Rabi Bhawan on Wednesday



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

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# Abused on both sides

Tibetan refugees are also mistreated by Nepali border guards

MARTY LOGAN

So many Tibetan refugees have been fleeing to India via Nepal for so long that their crossing is accepted as something normal until a day like 30 September, when a group of 70 would-be refugees was fired at by Chinese border guards while trying to cross into Nepal over the Nangpa La in the Cho Oyu region (pictured, file photo).

They started shooting and we ran. It was around 8AM. There were 15 small children aged 8-10, only one escaped and the rest were arrested, a monk from Tibet's Gyamda county told website phayul.com.

I think the soldiers fired for about 15 minutes, he added. They were shouting, probably warning us, but I did not hear them as I was terrified, I just heard gunshots passing my ears. The nun was with us and she was shot and a boy from Kandze was shot in the leg.

The monk and 40 others who fled arrived in Kathmandu late Monday accompanied by an official from the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees.

The nun, a 17-year-old according to phayul.com, died in the incident. Climbers at Cho Oyu advance base camp reported seeing as many as eight people killed, but these reports are unconfirmed.

Although such shootings are relatively rare, abuse of Tibetan refugees is common, much of it at the hands of Nepali border guards, says a new report.

Two years ago, researchers interviewed 50 refugees staying at the refugee reception centre in Kathmandu about their trips from Tibet to the capital. On average they travelled 34 days, both by foot and by bus. Most carried little food for fear of arousing suspicion and had to go hungry for days or resort to begging when their supplies ran out, says the report. "Dangerous Journey: Documenting the Experience of Tibetan Refugees", published in the November issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Although two refugees caught by Chinese border guards experienced the most severe treatment, 'one of the findings of most concern in our study was the treatment of refugees by the Nepali border guards. We documented beatings, torture, and sexual assaults at gunpoint,' says the report.

Three women 'were separated from their groups and, despite attempts to escape, were captured. The women were taken to an outside area where a group of six guards disrobed them and sexually assaulted them at gunpoint,' adds the document.

All of the refugees who met Nepali border guards were threatened with refoulement (being forcibly returned to China). Others ran into Maoists. They 'experienced extortion or detainment. When they were able to pay the required amounts to the rebels, they received Maoist passes and were allowed to proceed,' says the report, whose authors include Edward J Mills, of McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada.

'The longterm impacts of such dangerous circumstances are having a large impact on the physical and mental suffering of refugees,' he told us via email.

The report recommends that the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala start providing care programs for all refugees, not only political asylum seekers, including special programs for children. ●



JAMIE MCGUINNESS/PROJECT HIMALAYA

# Race for

JB PUN

The restoration of democracy in April has prompted Nepal's plethora of ethnic, regional and linguistic groups to press for self-determination and autonomy. But political scientists warn that identity-based federalism may lead to fragmentation and perhaps even ethno-separatist conflict in future.

The Maoists, who felt sidelined by the restoration of parliament and the pace at which it passed dramatic legislations since April, have tried to remain relevant by strongly pushing for autonomous ethnic regions. Even non-Maoist indigenous organisations, ethnic minorities and marginalised groups have found common cause with the rebels.

Together, they tried unsuccessfully to push elements of ethnic regionalism into the draft interim constitution, and various groups struggling for indigenous autonomy have been holding public meetings calling for radical state restructuring along ethnic lines.

But neither the Maoists nor the various ethnic-based groups seem to be clear about how ethnic regionalism will work in practice in a country with such racial and caste heterogeneity within districts and regions.

For instance, when the Chepang Union held its conference in Chitwan in July it said it wanted 'self-determination with ethnic autonomy' in the 29 VDCs where an estimated 52,000 Chepangs live in Chitwan, Gorkha,



MIN BAJRACHARYA

# Faulty feeding

Ignorance fuels malnutrition in the western tarai

SUMAN PRADHAN in BANKE and KANCHANPUR

This picture (right) was not taken in Africa, but at a nutritional centre in Nepalganj. It shows four-month-old Samjhana Chaudhary, who was brought here for treatment of severe malnutrition. There were 16 other such children at the centre when we visited recently.

In the western tarai districts, there is a silent malnutrition and wasting epidemic brewing. Health workers say the cause is not lack of food but faulty feeding habits and lack of awareness.

"Mothers here don't know how to feed their children. They only give them rice and milk, which deprives the kids of protein and other essential nutrients," says Punam Singh Adhikari, who



SUMAN PRADHAN



# identity

## Ethnic-based federal autonomy may open up another can of worms

Dhading and Makwanpur. But some of these are districts are also claimed by the Tamang Autonomous Region.

Similarly, there are misgivings among the Tharu and other tarai communities about the Maoist Autonomous Madhes region that would encompass the entire tarai from east to west. Even the use of the word Madhes has generated debate among the tarai communities. Madhya desh is the area between Ganga and Jamuna rivers and over time, the people from this region started being referred to as Madhesis, which does not indicate any ‘national’ or ‘ethnic identity’, says Khem Narayan Chaudhary, president of the Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha. In fact a Maoist-breakaway faction called the Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha is already fighting both the Maoists and the state, and assassinated RPP MP Krishna Charan Shrestha just before Dasain.

The ethnic regions carved out by the Maoists for the Gurungs, Magars, and Kirats also overlap, and autonomy could lay the seed of unprecedented inter-ethnic conflict in future, experts say. The communal riots that followed the massacre of 12 Nepali workers in Iraq in September 2004 proved that ethnic violence can easily be stoked.

In fact, in many of the regions set aside for particular ethnicities,

those groups are themselves minorities. Magars, Tharus, Tamang, Newar and Gurungs each have majorities in only one district each within their regions, for instance.

In an interview before he was killed in the helicopter crash last month, ethnicity expert Harka Gurung told us: “It’s not enough to say ‘Limbuwan’ or ‘Tamuwan’. You have to decide where to demarcate the borders of these regions. So you can have endless debates for political reasons about whether these divisions are ethnic or geographic, but the key question is whether these regions can be truly autonomous.”

There is no denying that successive governments in Nepal ever since unification have refused to devolve power. There was extreme marginalisation of certain ethnic and caste groups, and centuries of neglect of remote regions and exploitation of tarai resources by feudal rulers in Kathmandu.

Some, like political scientist Krishna Bhattachan, believe that ethnic autonomy should not be seen as synonymous with separatism. “If you offer genuine autonomy it won’t bring separatism, in fact it will prevent it” he says.

The sudden upsurge in demands for ethnic autonomy after the collapse of the royal regime is partly political



KIRAN PANDAY

**WARNING: Various janjati organisations demonstrate outside Singha Darbar on 31 May to caution the government to pay serious attention to indigenous rights.**

posturing by various identity-based groups. Political parties have also been tempted by ethnic populism and are trying to take advantage while the Maoists are using the ethnic card as a bargaining chip. All this could be dangerous, analysts say, because it threatens to turn Nepal’s class war into a caste war.

There is near-unanimity among academics and politicians that some form of federalism is needed to correct historic Kathmandu-centric governance.

But the question is whether a future federal structure should be demarcated along ethnic lines or by regions. At the moment, the voices of those calling for non-

ethnic autonomous regions are muted. Yet, true regional autonomy would kill two birds with one stone: guaranteeing political devolution while giving proportional representation to marginalised groups.

Bahun-Chhetris have dominated the political process, but still account for more than 50 percent of the population in 18 districts and more than 20 percent in 62 districts. Regional federalism would be fair to everyone, some experts feel, without swinging to the other extreme and sowing the seeds of future conflict by creating new exclusions.

A more-inclusive politics

will, however, first need the political parties to have greater internal diversity. The Nepali Congress and UML are both dominated by so called high-caste figures and even the top Maoist leadership doesn’t reflect ethnic or gender diversity.

Krishna Khanal, professor of political science at Tribhuban University, is convinced that given Nepal’s ethnic and linguistic diversity ethnic-based federalism would be a mistake. A better way would be to set up a federal structure for regional autonomy that would guarantee ethnic representation. He adds: “This way you don’t risk communal conflict, and you provide indigenous groups with the chance to govern. The issue should be equity, not race politics.”

Such a structure could be based on King Birendra’s five ‘development regions’, which could serve as federal units for regional governance. The indigenous and marginalised groups would have a say within these autonomous regions and also be present in a future federal parliament under proportional representation mechanisms.

Nepal’s past experience shows that whenever governance has been takeaway from Kathmandu to the districts and the grassroots, it has worked better. So future federal structures have a better chance of ensuring accountability and good governance by giving hitherto neglected groups a say in the decision-making process.

“It is past exclusion in the political process that has given rise to this demand for ethnic autonomy,” explains geographer Pitambar Sharma, “it is certain we now need federalism. But it should be geographical federalism, not ethnic-based federalism and these federal units should have a mechanism to give indigenous groups fair representation.” ●

works at the centre.

The Nepalganj nutritional centre, funded by the Nepal Youth Opportunity Foundation (NYOF) and jointly managed by the Banke District Hospital and Saathi, a women’s charity, is the only one of its kind in western Nepal. It treats hundreds of malnourished children from Banke and surrounding districts. But most importantly, the centre also teaches mothers that judicious use of common food is the best defence against malnutrition.

“Mothers are surprised that their babies still waste away even though they feed them rice and ghee,” says nurse Saraswati Acharya. “It takes a while for them to learn that the kids need protein which can be had in common food such as legumes and meat.”

A malnourished child presents with severe wasting, low weight, has sunken eyes, pale skin and discoloured hair. The child almost certainly dies if left untreated, even though the treatment is simple, and prevention is even simpler. All it requires, say health workers, is a little awareness among the parents that children need not



**A PICTURE OF HEALTH: A well-fed baby in Manang**

just rice and milk but also greens and protein.

The dietary habits of locals in far-western Kanchanpur district are of particular concern. “In my 15 years here, I have been appalled at the eating habits of the locals,” says Dr Subhesh Kayastha, superintendent of the Mahendranagar Zonal Hospital in Kanchanpur district. “They only eat rice and potatoes. That’s the only thing they grow here, even though the land is vast and fertile.”

Lack of a balanced diet, proper

sanitation and care make Kanchanpur an appalling district for children’s health. A recent assessment study by UNICEF in Kanchanpur found that ‘21 percent of children are afflicted with wasting, an indicator of acute general malnutrition.’ The study further found that the prevalence rate is almost twice the national average found in the Demographic Health Survey conducted in 2001.

“It’s not because families can’t feed their children,” says Nursing Inspector at the Mahendranagar hospital Indudhir Paudyal. “There is enough food that most parents can afford, but lack of a balanced diet is causing this problem.”

There is hope on the horizon. Just as in Banke, the NYOF is funding a nutritional centre in Kanchanpur too. A new building is being erected at the zonal hospital to treat the children. “We will be providing both treatment as well as awareness programs for mothers,” says Som Paneru, NYOF’s executive director. “If we can only educate the mothers that the normal food they eat is good enough for children, then we will have half won the battle against malnutrition.” ●

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# Collateral damage



## Economic sanctions would harm North Koreans, and help Kim Jong-Il

North Korea is the fourth, possibly fifth, state to reject the 1970 non-proliferation treaty and proceed towards a nuclear arsenal. The others are India, Pakistan, Israel, and perhaps Iran. That makes five states in the old nuclear club



**ANALYSIS**  
**Simon Jenkins**

(America, Russia, Britain, France and China) and five in the new one. The appropriate relationship, diplomatic, military and moral, between the two clubs is now a world obsession.

The big five have had nuclear weapons for half a century and continue to dishonour the treaty's second pillar on disarmament. Of the others, Israel, India and

Pakistan are regarded as vaguely reliable, Iran a headache, and North Korea a nightmare. The treaty itself is hypocritical, policed by those states whose security it confirms.

Building and delivering a nuclear bomb is a massive industrial and military exercise. North Korea appears to possess both the wherewithal to build a working bomb and the missiles to deliver it—effective nuclear capability.

The west does not see India or Pakistan as threats. Iran's ruling elite is devious and self-promoting but not mad or craving war. North Korea is different. It is reasonable to ask why Britain and America went to war in the wrong country—Iraq—in 2003. It is also reasonable to wonder whether the present crisis might have been

avoided had George Bush continued Clinton's mild engagement policy instead of opting for belligerence and rhetoric.

If preventing Kim from acquiring a bomb was a legitimate goal of UN policy, so must be removing it in advance of deployment. Asking, demanding, bribing, and threatening have all failed. There is no way of stopping a determined state, even destitute North Korea, from doing what it wants.

The stupidest policy would be economic sanctions. This impoverishes peoples while rendering their rulers ever more embattled and paranoid. Nothing props up dictatorship like economic siege. Ask Castro, Qaddafi, Saddam, and the ayatollahs. The North Koreans are

poor beyond the power of economic squeeze, and China devastating the country by cutting its power would merely generate starvation and mass migration. Sanctions are cowards' wars, cruel and counterproductive. Anyway, here they are too late.

Perhaps the world must get used to a new generation of nuclear states. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, estimates that some 40 countries are on the brink of being able to make nuclear bombs. As we live with 10, perhaps we must live with 40, struggling to reduce

tension, minimise risk, and help guard against accidents.

But if this relaxed view is not viable in North Korea's case, there is only one sensible alternative. Sophisticated air power has a role in the 'coercive diplomacy' of non-proliferation. Israel used it effectively against Iraq's nuclear plant in 1981, and the US repeated it with Operation Desert Fox in 1998. If Kim is the unstable menace he appears, his bomb-making capacity and missile sites should be removed at once with Tomahawk missiles. Fewer people would die that way than with any other pre-emptive response. ●

## The world according to Kim Jong-il

This is how the Korean Central News Agency reported the blast, and some of Monday's other top stories.

### DPRK Successfully Conducts Underground Nuclear Test

The field of scientific research in the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] successfully conducted an underground nuclear test under secure conditions on October 9, Juche 95 (2006) at a stirring time when all the people of the country are making a great leap forward in the building of a great prosperous powerful socialist nation.

It has been confirmed that there was no such danger of radioactive emission in the course of the nuclear test as it was carried out under a scientific consideration and careful calculation.

The nuclear test was conducted with indigenous wisdom and technology 100 percent. It marks a historic event as it greatly encouraged and pleased the KPA and people that have wished to have powerful self-reliant defence capability.

It will contribute to defending the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the area around it.

### Commemorative Stamps Issued

Commemorative stamps have been brought out in the DPRK on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Down-with-Imperialism Union (DIU). In order to open up a new way for revolution in the darkest period of the Japanese imperialists' colonial rule over Korea, President Kim Il-Sung formed a revolutionary vanguard organisation to conduct the anti-Japanese national liberation struggle in reliance upon popular masses with a correct fighting program and organised the DIU on October 17, Juche 15 (1926).

### Nepalese Library Delegation Arrives

A delegation of Kim Il-Sung-Kim Jong-Il Library of Nepal headed by its Director Narayan Prasad Sapkota arrived here Sunday.

### Floral Basket to Kim Jong-il

General Secretary Kim Jong-il received a floral basket from the family of Zhang Weihua, an anti-Japanese revolutionary martyr, on the occasion of the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea. *(The Guardian)*

# Risky rescues

## Attacking aid agency workers deprives the neediest

For those who work to save the world's sick and wounded, this summer was among the worst of times. Too many days began with desperate calls from field colleagues, telling us still more humanitarian workers have been ambushed, kidnapped or killed while working.



**OPINION**  
**Jan Egeland**

By extension, these assaults potentially sever the lifeline of hope that unarmed aid workers provide to millions of desperate, destitute families in Darfur, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

In August, 17 humanitarian aid workers in Sri Lanka from Action Against Hunger were shot in execution-style killings. Two more aid workers were killed in Sri Lanka: 19 deaths in one month alone. Violent incidents in Darfur increased more than 100 percent in the first seven months of 2006 as compared to the same period last year, further jeopardising the world's largest relief operation.

In Afghanistan, 27 aid workers have died this year to date, while 31 were killed the year before. Add to this the dozens of other aid workers killed, kidnapped or

attacked in Somalia, Iraq, Chechnya, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and elsewhere over the last three years, and the tragedy of these crimes becomes still more stark. Those who seek to alleviate man's inhumanity to man have become its victims.

Attacks against humanitarians have occurred against the backdrop of deteriorating security, impunity for

perpetrators and an increasingly politicised environment for aid work. In each case, aid workers, armed only with their principles, paid with their lives to uphold the ethos of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality that defines the humanitarian movement.

Under the Geneva Conventions, both civilians caught in armed conflict and aid workers seeking to assist them are to be protected from harm. UN Security Council Resolution 1502 and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court both affirm that intentionally attacking a humanitarian aid worker could constitute a war crime.

Despite these proclamations, humanitarian aid workers are still targeted, with the local staff of NGOs by far the most

frequent victims. When humanitarian staff or operations are targeted, aid agencies often have no choice but to suspend or downscale their operations. The result: an aid lifeline to millions is potentially severed. Attacking an aid worker undermines the fundamental right of all civilians on the front lines of violence or disaster to receive assistance. Safe, unimpeded access is essential, as it is impossible to be a safe, remote, long-distance humanitarian.

Proximity entails risks—but this is the price we must pay to access those in greatest need. Today, in numerous conflicts around the world, aid workers' ability to help millions of civilians who urgently need it is curtailed by the threat of armed attacks or bureaucratic obstacles imposed by warring parties.

That suffering civilians have the right to impartial assistance is an unassailable principle. We need a neutral and impartial humanitarianism—neutral, in name, deed and perception. Local communities need to know humanitarian workers are there for one purpose: to alleviate suffering through outreach of lifesaving assistance based on need alone.

Aid workers enjoy no ironclad guarantees of safety. Security does not come from armed security officers, or by withdrawing from the front lines of suffering. We must continue to build trust with local communities by demonstrating through word and deed that humanitarianism is entirely separate from political or military agendas. We need a humanitarianism that is by and for all humanity. ●





# The stage is set



ANUP PRAKASH



## A week of jazz in the Valley

The musicians at the Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 are a hard lot to spot and chat with. Several will arrive mere hours before they go on stage, others sport heavy accents ranging from French to Cuban. But when the festival began on Wednesday, with the Upstairs Jazz Bar packed to the rafters, it was the music doing the talking and telling Kathmandu that there is a lot to look forward to this week.

Despite Wednesday's session being an intimate, unassuming affair, it showcased a whole range of talents, with local jazz trailblazers Cadenza getting things moving along with Remi Abram and Claudio Celada of the Remi Abram Quartet, and David Burgos. Besides the home-grown Cadenza, Kutumba, Stupa, and Sukarma, only Afro Dizzi Act's Nick Aggs has done the Kathmandu jazz route before, which means nine fresh new acts to look out for. There are 11 events in total, running until 18 October. Here is *Nepali Times*'s who's who of the visiting acts at Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006.

**The Remi Abram Quartet**  
Fronted by charismatic saxophonist Remi Abram, the French quartet have an impressive track record and two CDs. Pianist Claudio Celada, drummer Ulrich Ederh, bassist Philippe Guiraud, and Abram all have noteworthy solo careers, and have been playing together since 2000. Their music is rooted in bebop, hard-bop, and Caribbean Jazz, and they perform mainly in Europe and the Caribbean.

**Andy Grosskopf**  
A saxophonist, flautist, and composer, the German Andy Grosskopf isn't afraid to experiment. Besides his jazz-rock group Scrooge, he is also a part of trance.ition, which mixes dance, jazz, funk and oriental rhythms. His latest project, Nyle, works with singer Miles Griffith to create dance-funk-jazz. Exactly what mixture of his vast range of influences and talents Grosskopf is going to display here remains to be seen.

**TR Dhandapany Ensemble**  
Master percussionist TR Dhandapany has over 40 years of musical experience and only one performance in Kathmandu, the 16 October Jazz at Patan show, where he will build on South Indian rhythms to create fusion jazz with his ensemble of seven musicians and Cadenza.

**David Burgos**  
Billed as 'El Davidí' on the Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 schedule, 26-year-old David Burgos' passion for music started in his native Venezuela, as percussion lessons were quickly followed by trumpet lessons at age 13. Growing up in Venezuela and Florida, he excelled at music, winning several awards. He plays at European jazz festivals and works in South Florida on numerous musical projects.

**François Carrier Trio**  
Canadian alto sax player François Carrier is a tireless improviser, and his spontaneity and energy have moved his trio into the realm

of jazz legends. Carrier told *Nepali Times* that at Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006, he'll play the François Carrier kind of jazz. I don't really like labelling anything but I can tell you that all the music will be improvised.

**Two On the Horizon: Judy Lewis & Orr Didi**  
After an illustrious 18-year career as a classical pianist, Judy Lewis has in the last eight years earned international acclaim as Israel's leading jazz artist. With four albums to her name, she now teams up with 18-year-old Israeli guitar virtuoso Orr Didi, who is blind, creating a unique mix of

rock energy and acoustic jazz.

**The Latin Jazz All Stars**  
The Latin Jazz All Stars includes Puerto Rican Jorge Castro on tenor sax, Yunió Cabrera from Cuba on bass, Colombian pianist Eddie Martinez, and Steve Berrios on drums. Each of the artists has an impressive solo record, and together they are a considerable force in the Latin jazz scene.

**Nick Aggs & Afro Dizzi Act**  
Nick Aggs played in the first Jazzmandu in 2001 as part of the Australian funk-jazz group Afro Dizzi Act. Six years later, the group's saxophonist and

percussionist is back on his own, following Afro Dizzi Act's new album *Welcome Speech*.

**Andreas Hessen Schei and Hilde Marie Kjersem**  
Norwegian jazz vocalist Hilde Marie Kjersem teams up with countryman Andreas Hessen Schei for Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006. Kjersem's musical career began at 14, and now, at age 25, she is already working on her third album. Schei worked with her on 2004's *Red Shoes Diary*, and has played around the world with bands like Jaga Jazzist, Tub Quartet, Bertine Zetlitz, and Shining. *Jemima Sherpa*



JEMIMA SHERPA

**JAZZING IT UP:** At the first Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 event at Lajimpat's Upstairs Jazz Bar, (top) Cadenza band members (r-l) Rajat Rai, Navin Chhettri, Pravin Chhettri, and Samir Chhettri are joined by Remi Abram Quartet's Claudio Celada on the piano and (bottom, l-r) Remi Abram, Mariano Abello and David Burgos.





ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Green Apple** exhibition by Saroj Kushwaha till 19 October at Bandana Art Gallery, Lajimpat (below Gallery Nine).
- ❖ **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 Paint** by Chirag Bangdel at Imago Dei Café Gallery, 9AM-9PM. 4442464
- ❖ **Exhibition** of paintings, sculptures at Tantra Resturant, Thamel featuring Juju Kaji Mahajan, Anil Mahajan, Uday Karmachrya and more. 4218565

EVENTS

- ❖ **Rotary Festival** fun, food and festivities including displays, magic and cultural shows at the Malla Hotel Garden, Lainchaur, 13-15 October, Rs 50
- ❖ **Japanese Day** displays of Ikebana, Bonsai, Japanese dolls and more, 14 October, 10.30 AM-10PM, Rs 500 at the Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal
- ❖ **Fulfillment in your Relationship** life oriented topics and group discussions with life-therapists Nina Lange and Ludwig Zaccaro, 15 October, at German Info and Culture Centre, Thamel. 4700835
- ❖ **Children's Day** music by children, bagpipers, face painting, magicians and more, 15 October, 12PM to sunset at the Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal†
- ❖ **Transcendental Meditation Program** at Self Awakening Centre from 16-19 October. 4256618
- ❖ **Fire in the Monastery** a play by Abhi Subedi, directed by Sunil Pokhrel and presented by Gurukul, 17 October, 7PM, Rs 300 at the Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal
- ❖ **Laxmi Puja** 21 October
- ❖ **Bhai Tika** 24 October
- ❖ **Festive Fiesta** post-Tihar celebrations at Liquid Lounge, 27 October, 7PM. 9851046604
- ❖ **Salsa Classes** at the Radisson Hotel, 6PM. 4411818
- ❖ **Tai-Chi, Qi-Qong and Hatha Yoga** at the Self Awakening Centre, Baber Mahal Revisited, call to sign up. 4256618

MUSIC

- ❖ **Moksh Live** presents musician night with Stupa at Moksh, 13 October, Rs 150. 5526212
- ❖ **Jazzmandu** at 1905 Kantipath featuring Francois Carrier Trio (Canada), Hilde Marie Kjersem and Andreas Hessen Schei (Norway), 15 October, 6PM, Rs 300. 4215068
- ❖ **Sarad** an evening of music, performance by Irish Band, Salil on the Didgeridoo and finale Trikaal, 6PM, Rs 500
- ❖ **Aavaas** performs at Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal on 20 October at 6.30 PM, Rs.500. 5552839
- ❖ **Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006** till 18 October
- ❖ **Musical Evening** a special concert by an Indian percussion ensemble led by T.R. Dhandapany - Laya Gaana Madhur Lahari, 19 October
- ❖ **Open Mic Night** at ViaVia Café, Thamel every Friday, 8PM

DINING

- ❖ **Harvest Moon** Chinese food festival at Hotel de l'Annapurna till 14 October
- ❖ **Mezza and Margaritas** at Dwarika's Fusion, every Wednesday at 5.30 PM, Rs 555. 4479448
- ❖ **Seven Sensations** at Hotel Yak & Yeti, cocktails and snacks. 4248999
- ❖ **Scrumptious** woodfired pizzas at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel 4262768 and Pulchok 5521755
- ❖ **A Sweet Taste of Life** at La Dolce Vita, authentic Italian cuisine. 4700612
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash†**swimming and lunch, or overnight stay with breakfast and swimming, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** open for reservations. 4361500
- ❖ **Nature Retreat** at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Escape to Godavari Village Resort,**†an overnight stay package†with breakfast & swimming. 5560675

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com



YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



Quest Entertainment

In a new documentary after the success of *Bhedako Oon Jasto*, the team follows *Sa-Karnali through Dolpo*, documenting Nepathyaís Amrit Gurung, director Bhusan Dahal and Thinle (of *Caravan* fame) into the heart of the remote Dolpa region music video. The 52-minute documentary shows the making of Nepathayaís *Sa Karnali* music video.

Call 4442220 for show timings at **Jai Nepal** [www.jainepal.com](http://www.jainepal.com)



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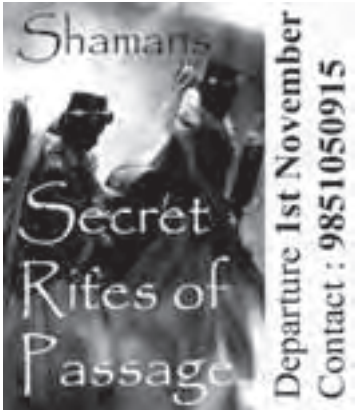
NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



October may be the second driest month of the year, but nothing this year has been quite what it should be. The sudden heavy downpours in the last week were a local phenomenon, set off by a low pressure centre in Tibet. There are still some prominent patches of cloud that signal rainy spells through the weekend. Thursday morning's satellite picture does show a storm moving in north from the Bay of Bengal, but it is unlikely to reach Nepal and the overcast skies have little to do with it. Tihar will likely be as bone-dry as we need it to be for fireworks. The nights are getting positively fresh and the days will be wonderfully sunny, but not hot.

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नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो । यहाँका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेसामा आधारित छन् । कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको फन्डै ४० प्रतिशत हिस्सा अहिले पनि कृषि क्षेत्रले नै ओगटेको छ । सिङ्गो मुलुकको आर्थिक, सामाजिक मेरुदण्डको रूपमा रहेको कृषिक्षेत्र उपेक्षित हुनु हुँदैन । कृषकहरू देशका वास्तविक नायक हुन् । उनीहरूलाई सम्मान र कदर गर्नुपर्छ । कृषकहरूले पनि आफ्नो पसिनामाथि विश्वास गर्नुपर्छ । नयाँ नयाँ कृषि प्रणाली अवलम्बन गर्नुपर्छ । पढ्दैमा खेती गर्नु नहुने होइन । फन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत कृषकको खाचो छ । त्यसैले कृषि पेसालाई आदर गरौं, कृषकलाई सम्मान गरौं ।

नेपाल सरकार  
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय  
सूचना विभाग





**JUSTICE:** Paragon School teachers and staff of Nepal Rastra Bank stage a demonstration demanding immediate action against the killers of eight-year-old Bibek Sharma Luitel, who was found dead on the banks of Dhubikhola, Chabahal on 30 September. The demonstration blocked traffic in Maitighar for over an hour on Wednesday.



**WITH THIS GUN, I THEE WED:** Nine Maoist couples tied the knot with the blessings of the party in Chitwan last Saturday, solemnising the union with a ritual exchange of weapons. In attendance at the ceremony were comrades from the Basu Smriti Brigade Third Division. The quests currently live in a school in Chainpur VDC.



**JAZZ DREAMS:** Dutch trumpet player Saskia Laroo (centre) performs during the Jazz Affair, part of the opening of the Garden of Dreams. She is accompanied by (*l-r*) Warren Byrd, Ronald Wright, and Virgil Stelk.



**I SMELL SOMETHING FISHY:** A young boy proudly displays the catch of the day by the Rapti river in Sauraha last Saturday.





# The edifice complex

On those slow lazy days after Dasain when you don't feel like working, you may want to browse Google Earth and check out all the new embassies coming up in our fair capital. Our mole tells us that what we see of the **Stalinsque façade** of the new American embassy is just the tip of the iceberg: it apparently goes down five stories. Wonder why they need all those basements.

And it won't be all work and no play for American dips who have the misfortune to be assigned to this hardship post: Phora is being refurbished. Yay! And the fringe benefit for Nepalis is that the magnanimous yanks have yielded US territory to widen the road and sidewalk outside the palace.

And that is what we hope the Norwegians will do as they start demolishing their current embassy building in Kopundole to build a bigger one in its place. Please, can you **widen the road** from Pulchok up to the embassy while you are at it? We know Patan Sub-metropolis or whatever it's called will never get around to it in the next 100 years.

Up the road a bit, the Swiss are in negotiation with a certain former finance minister to buy the Ekanta Kuna premises that they have rented ever since that neighbourhood was **still ekanta**. The price tag is so high, apparently even the Swiss can't afford it.

The Indians and Chinese are not sitting idly by. The Indians are tearing down their Dak Bungalow in Lajimpat and the Chinese are back in Naxal at their swanky new premises. In the early 1970s, they used to say that Indian **Naxalites** got their name from the location of Mao's embassy in Kathmandu. Must have great feng shui.



While the cessation of hostilities between Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie have dominated international peace talks over the last week, Nepali leaders have shunned the spotlight of a spectacular resolution, instead taking their time to really **chew things over**. It seems the summit talks took a bizarrely literal and literary turn, taking the proverbial worries about putting food in our mouths and our money where our mouths are very seriously indeed. Apparently caterers had put out a spread fit for a king—or president, as the case may be. But there was, shall we say, unequal distribution of these gustatory assets. The Sunday talks ended without any concrete developments possibly because the desserts were lousy.

Still the **Baluwatar Bhojanalaya Bonanza** did cause a miniature economic revival around the PM's residence, as an ocean of photographers, reporters, demonstrators and the simply curious created a classic supply-demand case study by cleaning out local shops and eateries of food, cigarettes, and soft drinks.



Still, Sunday being the first workday after Dasain, it's unlikely that anyone keeled over as a result of abject hunger. There were more than a few **newly-refilled spare tyres** around in the midriff of prominent Nepalis, although The Awesome One himself had the toned look of a man with a few morning walks under his belt. Some of our own colleagues had the foresight to use Dasain to stock up for the long haul taking their cue from our very own CP, who wisely avoided the dangers of flying by being a **tad too portly** for a Dhading-Pokhara chopper trip with his parents.



As the Ass dutifully reported in a previous instalment on this space, there is no letup in the mass marriages of Maoists among themselves. They're all getting wedded as if there is no tomorrow. Is there something they know that we don't? By the way, just wondering, how do these avowedly atheist revolutionaries tie the knot? Okay, so they **swap weapons**. But do they also swear by the red book? Do they carry their SLRs like some of us carried khukuris in our patukas while riding a horse in the old days? Apparently, jantis are de rigueur, and the wedding of nine young Maoists in Chitwan last week was part of the new **'make love not war'** campaign.



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