



HAPPY DASAIN

Nepali Times takes next week off. There will be no issue on 26 October, and the next hardcopy edition will come out on 2 November. Tune in to www.nepalitimes.com or www.himalkhabar.com in Nepali for updates on the news.

From all of us here at Nepali Times, a Happy Dasain, Id and Chhat.

Times

Weekly Internet Poll # 371

Q. What is your opinion of the activities of the Maoist leadership?

Total votes: 5,386

Highly favourable	8.8%
Favourable	1.2%
OK	1.3%
Negative	11.8%
Extremely negative	80.8%
No idea	1.2%

Weekly Internet Poll # 372. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Compared to last Dasain, what is your feeling about the country?

THE BIG THAW

The mountains are melting

HOT AND COLD: The Imja Glacier in 1956 and again in 2006. As global warming melts the ice, many new glacial lakes have emerged in the Himalaya, posing an unprecedented threat of flashfloods downstream.



FRITZ MULLER/JACK IVES, ICIMOD



GIOVANNI KAPPENBERGER/ALTON C BYERS/ICIMOD

Scientists are still trying to measure the rate of retreat of Himalayan glaciers, but climbers have known for years that the mountains are melting. Glacial retreat, receding snowlines and expanding lakes has become much more rapid since the 1980s. Climbing even

easy peaks like Cho Oyu and Chomolungma has become harder because previously snow-covered ridges are now bare rock. Glaciers like the Imja below Lhotse are shrinking by up to 70m per year. There is now a lake 3 km long where there used to be a frozen glacier 50 years ago. Dozens

of glacial lakes in Nepal and Bhutan are in danger of bursting their banks, and in an earthquake there could be multiple outburst floods on Himalayan rivers. Besides the dangers to human settlement, thinning snow cover in the Himalaya threatens water supplies to rivers like the Yangtze, Mekong, Brahmaputra, Ganges and Indus on which more than a billion people depend. There is a near consensus in the scientific community that global warming is caused mainly

by carbon emissions from human activity and vegetation loss since the start of the industrial age. The world's biggest emitters of carbon dioxide have not signed up to the Kyoto Protocol to cut back on emissions. ●

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New Arrivals

ZARA

THE DESIGN STUDIO

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SUCCESS
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TOES



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DASAIN WISH

If things go on like this, Nepal will have only nuisance value for the international community.

The reason foreigners interfere so much with our politics is because our rulers are such serial delinquents. If they were more united, possessed with some vision for the future, and were committed to the national interest, Gen Mehta wouldn't be ranting away again, European ministers wouldn't be dispensing unsolicited advice and Shyam Saran wouldn't be airdashing to Kathmandu.

At the rate things are going, there is a danger of a catastrophic cascade of events that will unravel the peace process. If that happens we would probably wish the foreigners *would* interfere to rescue us from the brink of chaos. If we want less outside meddling, we better to put our own house in order, and quickly.

The trinity of high priests that have taken it upon themselves to command our destiny (PKD, GPK and MKN) seems chronically incapable of thinking beyond tactical electoral advantage. Political parties everywhere are preoccupied with electoral arithmetic, but our rulers seem bent on delaying or abandoning elections unless they can win big.

This week's haggling behind closed doors between the three bahuns at Baluwatar were deadlocked till deadline. We won't go into gory details, but you can be sure the bargaining was not about protecting the national interest.

A big portion of the blame must go to the Maoists, who keep on changing the rules of the game and going back on past agreements. Everyone understands this is because of their internal contradictions and the dominance of a hardline faction. They've got cold feet about the elections and the leadership fears it can't hold the party together if the party suffers a major defeat in polls.

The UML and NC need to understand this Maoist sense of insecurity and not try to exploit it for partisan advantage. The Maoists are not going back to the jungles, but let's not corner them so much that hardline warlords take up ethno-regional banners and go back to armed struggle. This is not so far-fetched because that is exactly what happened in the tarai with the JTMM.

The NC is also guilty of vacillating on the elections because of its own fears of losing out in a full-proportional system. The prime minister and his home minister have proven themselves to be incapable of ensuring security.

The end result of all this is that a majority of Nepalis are beginning to give up on the politicians in Kathmandu ever getting their act together. After more than 18 months of ceasefire, they are still waiting for an improvement in service delivery, in job creation and relief to victims of conflict and of recent tarai violence. Anything, in fact, that shows we have a government. But failure to do so is spreading cynicism and increasing the influence of foreigners in our polity.

Across Nepal, ordinary people equate long-term peace with elections. The constituent assembly polls would bring closure to this period of unstable transition. It would focus people's minds on what politics should really be about: improving people's lives.

And that is the Dasain wish of all Nepalis.

Nepalis outside Nepal are ashamed about the state of Nepal

Uncertain no more

How does Nepal look from abroad for people of Nepali origin? For some time now, it has been looking like a country cursed with chronic uncertainty.

To be sure, instability is not unique to Nepal. Most countries go through periods of uncertainty. And among

things uncertain.

Extended periods of uncertainty give forces that benefit from it the chance to rise up again. We can see that this is already starting to happen in Nepal, and those who thrive in uncertainty are sure to try to prolong it. If there is one big goal that the Nepali nation has in front of it, it is to end this period of uncertainty. After all, is the country meant for its inhabitants or are the inhabitants meant for the country? If there are no inhabitants there can be no country, there can even be inhabitants without a country. But there can be no citizens without a country.

There are many ways to get out of this cloud of uncertainty, and it seems that the efforts of Nepal's intellectuals and leaders have not been enough. They haven't been able to look beyond their vested interests. They aren't looking beyond their own interests at the national interest as they should be.

Nepalis have always been complacent. We love to predict the future, but not prepare ourselves for it. We regard anyone who criticizes us as an enemy. Even so, the solutions to Nepal's problems must come from

Nepalis themselves. The solution won't fall from the sky, it won't be wafted here from the south or north. It must be from this soil, it must suit Nepal. If not today, then surely tomorrow.

The English praised Nepalis for being "brave Gurkhas" and Nepalis let that get into their heads. They are proud that they were never colonized, but they should be able to see how they are being

ransacked by those same powers. They must try to recognize the new modern avatars of colonialism.

Today, Nepalis outside Nepal see Nepal as a poor, backward country. Just as a son may disown a mother dressed in rags, Nepalis outside Nepal are trying to cut themselves off from Nepal's history, language and culture.

Even if Nepalis can't remove the pahad-madhes gap, the male-female disparity or ethnic discrimination, they must at least try. They must try to overcome their economic, social, educational failures. They must be able to stand on their own feet and not be dependent on outsiders. Only then can Nepalis be truly proud of being Nepalis.

Instead of boasting that this is the country where the Buddha was born, Nepalis should be able to live in peace. Instead of showing off about Mt Everest they should be able to stand above ethnic, linguistics and regional differences.

Nepalis should not panic at such a long wishlist. Obviously, these problems can't be resolved overnight. It needs time, patience, but above all it takes imagination. If Nepalis can imagine a future, it is not difficult to draw up a blueprint. Once there is a blueprint, the house can be built sooner or later.

For a bright future, Nepalis don't need dreams, they need imagination. ●

Tanka Subba is professor of Anthropology at North-eastern Hill University, Shillong, India. This is a translation of the keynote lecture he delivered at the Madan Puraskar Award ceremony on 13 October in Kathmandu.



GUEST COLUMN
Tanka Subba

intellectuals, there is a great deal of uncertainty about uncertainty itself. Some think it gives society a certain tension that brings forth vitality and creativity, it brings imagination and the possibility to begin things anew. Certitude doesn't foster these traits.

But a modern nation state can't flounder in uncertainty for too long. A few months or a year of instability won't do much harm, but if it persists and dominates society uncertainty will breed more uncertainties and becomes self-perpetuating. Not all countries are able to break this vicious cycle, development turns into destruction. This could turn counterproductive even for those who are responsible for keeping



KIRAN PANDAY

LETTERS

NEPALI PAN

I very much appreciate Vijay Lama's article ('Nepali ek haun,' Nepali pan, #370). The political parties are destroying Nepal's future by blaming the king for everything. They are just chanting the slogan of constituent assembly and *ganatantra*. Neither CA nor *ganatantra* is a magic wand for solving all our problems. We need good governance and strong political willpower.

L Karki, New Zealand

● Exactly, Captain sahib. Thanks for your great thoughts. Keep on posting such write ups.

Mira M, Thailand

● I absolutely agree with Capt Vijay Lama. He is dead right in saying that we all should be proud to call ourselves Nepali. It is high time we ignored these arrogant, divide-and-rule type politicians.

Anup Pandey, Kathmandu

● Vijay Lama's article mirrors the futility of contemporary Nepali politics, its practices and dilemma of millions of

Nepali youths, at home and abroad. I am very much impressed by his opinions.

Bhuwaneshor Sharma, email

● I salute Vijay Lama for his article. It carries the real sense of what Nepal and Nepalis should be. It is true that our nation is on the brink of disintegration because of the present political scenario, but I do hope that the political leaders read your article and learn something from it. Thank you once again for your deep sense of nationalism and patriotism toward our motherland.

True Nepali, email

● Please remember that Prashant Tamang is not a Nepali and we are not proud of his win. If you think Nepali is only an ethnicity then Nepal can never be united. Your writing itself sounds racist.

Name withheld, email

POLL VAULT

Your assessment ('Poll vault,' Editorial, #370) is very sombre and realistic. Girija Koirala has proven over and over that he was the worst prime minister Nepal ever

had, but he survived and emerged as the sole political rescuer. The funny thing about us is that we don't hesitate to follow crooked and ineffectual leaders. You commit a crime today and next day people are ready to forgive you. We truly belong to the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

Kishor Kamal, USA

● Economic growth has gone down and industry has almost closed. Why has nobody calculated the economic loss due to the postponement of the elections in terms of monetary value? Who will compensate this loss? Many may say that this is expected in such a transition, but every penny counts.

Name withheld, email

CK LAL

Re: 'Senility and the saviour syndrome' (State of the State, #370).

CK Lal should write something that encourages Nepalis to solve current Nepali problems, not try to show that our problems are Indian, Chinese or American. You are smarter than that, Mr Lal. This current problem can't be solved by a

single party or a single person. It has to come from all Nepalis pulling in the same direction.

Pashupati Neupane, Syangja

DISCRIMI NATION

After reading 'Head to the hills' (#370) my wife, who is Nepali, called Hatiban Resort to enquire about the availability of rooms. She was told only one room was vacant (NRs 1,600 a night) and that too in front of the kitchen. Clearly, she was being discouraged to visit the resort as Nepali tourists apparently make bad business sense. Immediately after her conversation with the resort executive I called up Hatiban in Hindi. I was told rooms were available for IRs 2,500 a night. I asked him to book one with the best view, preferably on the top floor. He wanted IRs 3,000 for the same. Why this discrimination against Nepalis? Charging foreigners more is alright but discouraging Nepali guests by a Nepali establishment is unacceptable. My hunch is that this happens on a larger scale and deserves a full story.

A Arora, Kathmandu

Bogged down

Parliament and civil society must monitor donor activities

Aid agencies have issued their second undertaking in four years to show fairness and transparency in the most unequal country in Asia. On the face of it, the code of ethics is to be welcomed. However, the proof of the pudding will be in its implementation.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

The Basic Operating Guidelines (BOG) are just that: basic, selected for the least common denominator. ‘Operating guideline’ appears to be the operative noun coined to contain a set of instructions that can be used to help make a decision or form an opinion in difficult situations. The BOGs aren’t binding. Individual donors are free to come up with excuses not to follow some or all the guidelines. No objection can be raised

for their non-observance. In that sense, the BOG is a propaganda tool. Donor activities in Nepal go largely unexamined by civil society and the press. It’s Foucault’s famous formulation at work: money, power and knowledge implicate each other. Those who make opinion here in Kathmandu do so freely, but the extent of their freedom is defined by the knowledge-power nexus at the service of international agencies. Donors have reaffirmed their pledge to ‘operate in all areas of Nepal in transparent and inclusive manner’. The commitment to extend their activities in areas other than tourist destinations and trekking routes is laudable. But transparency? It takes some daring and patience to endure personal humiliation to pass through multiple security checks of the UN Fort at the BICC. Even INGOs today hire multinational security guards that consider every

Nepali visitor to be a potential baddie. But it is the hollow promise of ‘inclusiveness’ that raises eye-brows. Criteria for inclusiveness are personnel and programs, in that order. In the absence of public accountability, programs of international agencies are excessively influenced by people involved at the decision-making level. They are overwhelmingly English-speaking young achievers from upper-middle class families, the kind that has back-slapping familiarity with the centres of legislative, executive, judicial and media power in Kathmandu. Most donors have succeeded in maintaining reasonable gender balance, but few recognise the importance of caste, creed, class or community in giving a sense of inclusion to their workforce. Large white SUVs, jet-setting ways and a wide

lifestyle gap are a part of the neo-colonialism of aid. Waste and extravagance set the lords of poverty apart from the native substrate. The pathologies of foreign assistance such as phantom or boomerang aid (the money that is paid to home-country consultants and suppliers in the name of the recipient state), edifice complex (building for show rather than utility), fix-up deals (providing sinecures to native elites), chasing rainbows (policy canvassing at international fora) and politics of patronage can be seen in Nepal, too. Adopting a BOG is not intended to change this part of the culture. However, the commitment at least shows that signatories are ready to be accountable. This is an opportunity that stakeholders in Nepal must seize. Parliamentary oversight is the best method of ensuring accountability in foreign aid management. Last week the



Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting in Geneva called for more parliamentary supervision of state policies on foreign aid and their implementation. It denounced tied aid and members of the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade agreed that giving a free hand to donors was detrimental to the interests of recipient countries. But, beggars can’t be choosers. One who pays the piper calls the tune. Donors will continue to have their way as long as they don’t face scrutiny from their partners in Nepal’s civil society. ●



Samsnite

Life's a Journey

CHARACTER is all about retaining a strong IDENTITY.

UNAPPRECIATED: Hundreds of female health volunteers meet in Sanphe Bagar to share their experiences. The volunteers are at the frontlines of rural health care in remote parts of Nepal.



NARESH NEWAR

NARESH NEWAR
in DADELDHURA

Nepal's real heroines

Female community health volunteers bring medical care to the weak and sick in remote areas

Nanda Devi Bohara faced an exhausting five-hour walk and then a rough five-hour bus ride to get to the hospital in Dadeldhura with her sick daughter.

In this remote corner of far western Nepal, where doctors are few and far between and medical facilities are almost non-existent, the only reason her child is still alive is the presence in her village of 50-year-old Sarita Chettri, the local female health care volunteer (FHCV).

Chettri, and hundreds like her across the country, are on the frontline in the battle to reduce the 65,000 needless deaths of young children each year who succumb to malnutrition, measles, diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections.

She gave the little girl the medicine needed to keep her pneumonia at bay, and then travelled with her all the way to Dadeldhura's charity-run Team Hospital.

"Thank you for saving my daughter," Bohara told her as the doctor's nebuliser calmed her daughter's rasping breath. Without Chettri, Bohara's daughter would have been at the mercy of well-meaning but largely ineffectual traditional healers.

Volunteers like Chettri receive a very small allowance and 18 days of basic health training. This is often enough for them to counsel and guide parents of sick village children, who can then avoid the tedious and expensive

trip to a hospital hours away.

More than half of Nepal's children younger than five can now be treated for diarrhoea and pneumonia close to home thanks to the volunteers, says a 2007 report by Save the Children (US). But health workers say there is still room for improvement.

"Death among children under five years is common and it's a tragedy that even today we still can't control the mortality," says Kalpana Swar, a volunteer in Dadeldhura.

The number of young deaths rises during the monsoon, when water-borne diseases are widespread. For the volunteers, the job means sometimes having to fight their way through torrential rain and landslides, and being permanently on call, which can put pressure on their family relationships.

"It's a 24-hour job and we can't say no to anyone or we will make enemies," says Rita Sharma from Achham district.

Saraswati Shah has been a volunteer for the last 10 years and has treated hundreds of cases in her village. She feels the government and aid agencies could provide more support, considering the key role FHCVs like her play.

Indra Devi Kunwar, a volunteer for 12 years who often treats 600 villagers in a month, would like to see the government committed to building more local health centres and replacing the volunteers with professional medical staff.

"We do our best to serve the nation and save lives but we cannot continue like this forever," she says. "We need real doctors and qualified medical workers in the local health centres."

Abhinesh Dhital, medical officer at Dadeldhura District Hospital, admits the huge shortage of doctors, qualified nurses, hospitals and medical centres does put pressure on the volunteers, and says their role should be praised.

"Despite all the odds against saving lives, there has been progress and there is optimism of saving more if such community-based efforts are sustained," he says.

More than 95 percent of Nepali children are covered by Vitamin A and immunisation programs, and this is largely due to the contribution of the nationwide network of female health workers. ●

Where there are no doctors

Achham, one of Nepal's poorest districts, has only one hospital for its population of 250,000. There are only 15 health assistants, 40 assistant health workers and eight auxiliary nurses in the whole district.

"The health situation is very worrisome," assistant health worker Pushpa Buda says. "How many lives can a handful of medical workers like me save?"



The meagre medical supplies last barely a month or two, and in the monsoon when infections are endemic they run out of vital medicines. It is not surprising that Achham's child survival rate is the lowest in the

country. The district's health centres rarely have medicines for many of the most common ailments, including worms, urinary tract infections, gastrointestinal and eye infections.

"The shortage of doctors in rural areas has always been a problem and despite the government's efforts to recruit them in the villages, the plan has not worked so far," said Prakash Thapa, a medical officer at the Doti District Hospital.

Out of 500 Nepali doctors joining the workforce annually, less than one-third choose to work in villages. Says Thapa: "There are so many vacancies for doctors in village hospitals but graduate doctors prefer to stay unemployed than work in villages."

Branching out

Ace Development Bank's first branch office opened at Birgunj's Ghantaghar Link Road. Ace Development Bank is the first financial institution to be upgraded from a 'C' class financial institution to a 'B' class national bank. Ace was also recently awarded BOSS Magazine's 'Best Financial Institution' award.



Manjushree

Manjushree Financial Institution is a new finance company located at New Baneswor. With an intial paid up



capital of Rs 70 million, Manjushree aims to reach the paid up capital of Rs 200 million by 2009-10.

Palm top

Signature Whiskey can now be had in a 90ml palm-sized bottle. Designed by London-based Claessens, the smaller bottle is priced at Rs 90 and is available everywhere. Signature Rare Whiskey is marketed by United Spirits Nepal.



Awarded

Swastik Oil Industries has been awarded the NS Quality Award 2007. Swastik manufactures Swastik Soyabean Oil, Ghee, Dhara Health Sunflower Oil. Swastik Oil is a member of the KL Dugar Group of Industries.

Youth savings

Machhapuchchhre Bank's new Youth Savings Account can be opened for a deposit of just Rs 100 at an interest rate of four percent. The account will entitle customers to an ATM card, any branch banking service and free mobile banking.

It's a blog world

Three years ago, I used to read many books, magazines and reports to keep up with what was happening in the fields of economics, public policy and business management. These days, I find that I read fewer books and reports, and spend Saturday mornings catching up with blog feeds on my Google Reader.

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

If you follow blogs maintained by experts who write well and are passionate about sharing what they know with others, you find that their postings are short, insightful and often useful to do one's work better. In free time this Dasain, you may find it worthwhile to visit the following blogs to experiment with what you like, and to see which ones you want to add to your feed reader.

For economics junkies with wide-ranging interests in the arts, cuisine, current affairs and more (a sure-fire recipe for being a distracted PhD student!), **marginalrevolution.com** provides a daily smorgasbord of intellectually stimulating posts and comments in accessible language. Run by polymath Tyler Cowan and Alex Tabarok, professors at George Mason University, this site is the destination if you want to learn why, among others, high brow game theorists were again awarded Nobel Prizes in economics last Monday.

If development economics, as it happens in countries similar to Nepal, is your interest, then you won't go wrong regularly visiting **psdblog.worldbank.org**, which has a collection of postings on how markets have or have not aided the world's poor.

To think about how to turn business ideas into workable processes, I turn to two masters: Guy Kawasaki and Tom Peters. Always entertaining to read, Kawasaki's **blog.guykawasaki.com** is billed as "a practical blog for non-practical people". His postings appeal to



start-up technology entrepreneurs in search of funding. Peters, an ex-McKinsey consultant who shot to fame in the 1980s by co-writing *In Search of Excellence*, relentlessly preaches the mantra of "be distinct or extinct" in **tompeters.com**, where he gives away free wisdom-laden slides.

For advice on how to operate a business better, I find **businesspundit.com** a useful hub of articles, blog rolls and links. With postings on topics such as "How not to run a meeting?" the site is packed with tips for hurried and harried managers.

Given that two of the world's fastest growing economies are located on both sides of us, it'd be short-sighted not to keep tabs on what's happening in those giants. **Indianeconomy.org**, a group blog with a pro-market orientation, gets heated conversations going about India's growth and lack thereof. One thoughtful posting: "Why does India have such terrible politicians?" When it comes to China, links on **chinalawblog.com** give a front-row seat to help understand what it takes to get businesses up and running

in China, not to mention, how to do business with the Chinese.

I also follow blogs on designs. The reason is simple. Competing on price and quality is what everyone does today. But to command a premium, what you produce must also be designed well. And so, to raise my own design IQ, I go through postings on **core77.com/blog**, and try to figure out what makes the products there "gasp worthy".

Running a business is only a small slice of life. Being happily productive every day is what probably matters more to people. The site **happiness-project.com** has test-driven both schmaltzy and serious happiness theories, and it offers advice on everything from avoiding office romances to filling up your life with simple acts of happiness.

Finally, for professionals looking for workable suggestions to increase personal productivity at work and home, there's no finer site than **zenhabits.net**.

These are just a few of the blogs I visit. Which are the ones you visit for knowledge, entertainment and practical advice? Please share. ●



For a country wracked by conflict, Nepal has shown surprising progress in child survival and literacy in the past decade. But there is still a long way to go. That is the message of UNICEF's Situation of Children and Women in Nepal survey that looks at key indicators and projects them till 2015, the year by which key development targets worldwide are supposed to be met.

The numbers look daunting:

- Half of Nepal's population of 27 million

Not good enough

Nepal must do much better to meet child welfare targets

- are children below 18
- Nearly 550 mothers out of every 100,000 die at child-birth, one of the highest rates in the world
 - Only 10 percent of deliveries are done in hospital or health post
 - One in every 25 babies born die in the first month of life
 - One in every 15 will not live to be one year old
 - One in every five children of school-going age is not in school
 - Only four out of 10 children complete primary school

With statistics like that, we should have a government that is very worried, but it is so preoccupied with the politics of elections there is very little effort to improve healthcare. That is why experts are worried about reversals even in the modest gains we have seen in the past 10 years.

More worryingly, there has been a huge jump in security-related expenditure (a jump of 15 percent per year since 2003) and much slower growth in health, education and sanitation (11 percent) in the same period. Most of the world's developing countries, including Nepal have committed themselves to meeting the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve poverty, reduce hunger and improve maternal and child health by 2015. Last month, Nepal with Cambodia and several African countries became the "first wave" nations to sign an agreement in London to meet the targets. The initiative was launched by British prime minister Gordon Brown and will commit resources to improve healthcare and retain doctors and nurses in their own countries. If current improvements can be sustained, Nepal is set to meet most MDG

targets. Poverty is likely to be halved by 2015, and hunger also reduced. Maternal mortality, serious as it is, is also on course to be brought down to 100 per 100,000 births in eight years' time. Similarly child mortality is expected to reach 40 per 1,000 live births (from the present 70) by 2015. However, one MDG target that Nepal will likely fail to reach is to ensure universal primary education, says the UNICEF survey. Also, even though targets may be reached taking national averages, the rates for vulnerable groups like janjatis and dalits are improving more slowly. Gender disparities in child survival and education will also remain. For example most of the dropouts from primary schools are girls. The median age for marriage is still only 16.6, meaning child marriages are still prevalent. ● Kunda Dixit

“I stand with the revolution”

Interview with Maoist leader Ram Bahadur Thapa in Nepal, 28 October

By raising demands on the eve of the constituent assembly elections, the Maoists are accused of being against polls. Why are you going against the very agenda you raised?
On a superficial level, it looks like the CPN-M was behind the delay in elections. But if you take a closer look, you'll see that the NC and other parties are the main culprits. Take a look at our demands, and see if they are legitimate or not. The parties are responsible for the election postponement because they refused to budge.

Don't you see that you are endangering the peace process and a return to war?

We have seen that danger. If the government tries to suppress our peaceful revolution with weapons then it will be clear that they have no desire to hold elections or change to a republic. I don't think they'll make such a stupid move. But history has shown that in extreme cases, people do resort to stupidity. So we haven't dismissed that possibility.

In the span of one-and-a-half years, what have you accomplished and what have you lost?

Our recently concluded fifth plenum answers this question. There were forces that tried to isolate us by labelling us terrorists. They have failed. The middle class no longer misunderstands us and we have established international relations. But there have also been losses. We have had trouble making the changes we wanted. We failed to make the people understand many of our agreements. Regressive forces have made use of that. Our weaknesses in madhesi, janjati and republican issues have been exposed.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Are you a hardliner?

No. There are right-wingers, middle-of-the-roaders, and leftist factions in our own party and they are in constant conflict.

So where do you stand among those factions?

We are revolutionaries and I fall into that category. Our party follows the revolutionary code. I am on the side of revolution and if the party line goes against my beliefs, then I will stand with the revolution.

It is said that you have tried to establish yourself against Chairman Prachanda.

That is also part of a conspiracy. I do not surface in public much, and that is my weakness. This rumour has spread because certain factions wish it.

You have said that you do not want a republic like that in Iraq or Sikkim.

We want a Nepali republic, where Nepalis make the decisions. Foreign help will be required, but not foreign direction. If foreigners try to direct us instead of just helping us, it will be an attack on our national integrity.

You have maintained that there is an Indian hand in everything, but we do not see you opposing it.

Our line on India is clear. There are many treaties and agreements with Nepal that need

to be changed. We don't want to ruin our relationship with India, we want to make it better in the future. But our party will oppose India's incorrect actions. Certain factions in India are hatching a conspiracy against the movement of the Nepali people. This is an attack on our independence. The madhesi incidents are also anti-national.

Deadlock

Abhiyan, 5-21 October

Doesn't look like negotiations on elections are going anywhere. The Maoist proposals on a republic and full-proportional elections are not going to be voted by parliament. Pushpa Kamal Dahal is locked in by pressure of radicals within his party and is in no position to be flexible. NC president Girija Prasad Koirala is also under pressure from his party stalwarts and India's green signal to stick to his demands even more strongly. The Indian prime minister's special envoy, Shyam Saran, brought the message that parliament shouldn't be declaring a republic before the vote. India would prefer parliament to announce an interim president to be ratified by the first session of the constituent assembly. But Koirala is nervous about doing that because of the probability of a military coup. Koirala's formula is to declare a German-style proportional representation system and to announce a commitment by parliament on a republic. The fact that the Maoists poured scorn over Saran's proposal after his departure shows just how unpopular it is among them.

Ram Bahadur Thapa says even if there is agreement on one of the two proposals parliament could vote. But even if the UML votes with the Maoists, they will need

internationalfoodfest2007
@BICCnewbaneshwor
november3rd

carnival

plenty for herbivores too

You can have the lettuce while we eat the burger. Just kidding. The food fest will be stocked with enough soulfood to turn a vegan green. And for those who like it rare, this mouthwatering 'meating' is one your molars can't afford to miss!

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the NC votes to get a two-thirds majority.

The UML has also rejected the Maoist demands. There is a sense of urgency because of the Maoist threat to launch a rebellion if it fails to secure the necessary support in parliament for its proposal. If they go back to the streets to declare a republic and a new government, the seven party unity will fall apart and so will the peace process.

The deadlock resulted in the UML calling for an extension of the parliament meeting by two days till Thursday. The radicals in the Maoist party led by Mohan Baidya and Ram Bahadur Thapa have given leader Dahal little room for manoeuvre. “At this rate, there will be no agreement even by Thursday,” according to an analyst.

Fear of China

Sanghu, 15 October

Shyam Sharan spent his 48-hour visit saying different things to different political parties and leaders. Sharan chose to say whatever was most favourable to whichever party he talked to, and that is one reason he had to return empty handed this time, say analysts. Sources do say, however, that Sharan managed to bring up the issue of China’s growing influence in Nepal with everyone from Prime Minister Girija Koirala to Maoist Chairman Prachanda.

He also expressed the Indian government’s unease at China’s posting of 200,000 soldiers along the northern Nepal-China border, says a Maoist source. China posted the soldiers during the time of the royal regime. There are 100,000 of them along the Khasa border, 50,000 along Taplejung’s Olangchunggola border and 50,000 along the Mugu border.

Sharan also expressed dissatisfaction at the growing contact between the Maoists and



MIN BAJRACHARYA

China and also the prime minister’s comments about getting petrol from China.

Nepali politicians responded to this by pointing out India’s forces at Kalapani and the thousands of soldiers posted along the southern Nepali border for ‘border security’.

Inept

Arun Narsingh KC in *Dristi*, 16 October

The suspension of elections is an unfortunate event but instead of rectifying mistakes, the parties are too busy blaming each other. The reasons for failure to hold elections can’t be found by accusations but by realizing their own weaknesses.

The Nepali Congress unification was supposed to emotionally unite party workers but that failed miserably. We unified the party but that proved to be only artificial. NC’s internal difficulties are the reason why the nation’s politics has failed to find a way out.

We cannot always run our party on an ad hoc basis. For how long can we continue working like this? We can’t always move on with 50 workers in each district and 79 central committee members.

The government has already proved to be a total failure. If it wants to govern a modern society, its foremost responsibility is to provide security to both lives and property.

But there is absolute

lawlessness. The government has totally shut its eyes towards the illegal activities carried out in the name of the YCL. Impunity and anarchy are rampant.

The government has failed to protect journalists, industrialists and many others. It has even failed to do anything in the capital, and is doing much worse in the tarai.

Children get abducted every day. The terror of Maoist extortion continues. Teachers, civil servants, and journalists are being abducted and killed. The home minister is a national embarrassment, he has even stopped feeling ashamed.

Royal Maoists

Deshantar, 14 October


At a time when India is trying to tighten bonds between the political parties and the Maoists and facilitate the peace process, China seems to be trying to distance the parties from the Maoists. Sources say that China, keeping in mind Nepal’s sovereignty and integrity, is trying to bring together the palace and the Maoists. Maoist hardliners Mohan Baidya, CP Gajurel and Ram Bahadur Thapa have been used by China, say sources. Two weeks ago, the Maoist politicians and Chinese envoys met at a hotel. Since then, the Maoists have been interacting with royalists and the army. Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara has even met former royalist minister Prakash Koirala.



Cyclone: Uncertainty
Ballot: Constituent assembly
Pieces of paper in hand: Vote

नेपाल Nepal, 28 October

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The decision of monarchy should be made through people’s mandate ”

Indian prime minister’s special envoy Shyam Sharan in *Himal Khabar*, 12 October

Talk talk

Naya Patrika, 14 October

नेपाल पत्रिका

Minister for peace and reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel has spent nearly 59 of his 187 days in his job holding talks with various groups with political demands. So far only four of 59 negotiations have been fruitful and tens of millions of rupees have been wasted:

Group	Number of sessions
Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities	9
Women Security Pressure Group	2
Inter-party Women’s Alliance	1
Nepal Federation of Disadvantaged Group	1
Nepal Civil Servants Union, Nepal Civil Servant	2
Association and Nepal National Employees Association	2
Madhesi People’s Rights Forum	6
Chure-Bhawar United Society	5
Federal Democratic National Alliances	3
Tarai Jantantrik Mukti Morcha (Goit)	2
Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Jwala Singh)	2
Dalit Workers and Peasants Party	1
Madhesi Agriculutural Workers Family	2
National Federation of Disabled-Nepal	3
Ganatantrik Rastriya Madhesi Morcha	1
Federal Democratic Republic Joint Struggle Committee	1
Nepal Intellectual Muslim Organisation	1
Maithili Democratic Society	1
Nepal Madhes Development Centre	1
Association of People’s Revolution Wounded and Warriors	1
Nepal Indigenous Victims Association	1
Association for Nepal Khas Society Uplifment	1
Dalit Citizens Society	1
Maithal Federation Nepal	1
Nepal Janta Dal	1
Janmukti Party	1
Ex Army Association	1
Tarai Cobra Group	1
Women’s Power Centre	1

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People in war

JOHN S SHILSHI in BIRGANJ

When I read in a Birganj newspaper that the 'A People War' photo exhibition tour was being put up at the Birganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry I wasn't really that interested.

I had seen exhibitions here before, and they all lacked the professional touch. I was also blasé because similar exhibitions of photographs of conflict in Kashmir and the Indian northeast I had found disappointingly selective.

Human rights groups highlighted atrocities committed by the state, and those put up by state functionaries displayed images of militant atrocities. Photo exhibitions, therefore, seemed to serve a propaganda purpose rather than to tell the stories of human tragedy.

But my reluctant visit to 'A People War' sprang a few surprises. First of all, I was struck by the long queue of people patiently lining up outside the venue. It took me ten minutes to get in, and there was total silence inside the hall which was filled to capacity.

Nepa-laya had done a good job in selecting the photographs from the book, *A People War*. Each told the story of how ten years of violent conflict in Nepal had brutalised society. The exhibition was carefully balanced, and left no scope for recrimination or revenge. The emphasis was on how conflict affects civilians the most, and it depicted images of sorrow but also resilience and the inner strength of people caught up in war.

Everyone was reading every caption and lingering over the pictures. As we inched along, I was instantly struck by a photograph that showed three dead goats and an elderly farmer, their bodies torn apart by a bomb dropped from a helicopter. The picture forced us to ponder and compare the value of human life and the lives of animals.

Further on, there was a photograph of a woman caressing the body of her policeman husband who lay among many dead scattered on a blood-soaked field. My inner self asked a silent but difficult question: was she unlucky to be there, or lucky to be able to say a final farewell? I took refuge in a presumptuous thought and silently comforted myself by supposing that they did not have children.

More corpses, this time of policemen in the back of a pickup at Pokhara airport. The bodies were dumped like municipality workers dispose of carcasses. The photo revealed the level of engagement during the conflict, how even usually ceremony-bound security forces didn't find time to arrange basic coffins for their departed colleagues.



CHANDRA SHEKHAR KARKI

A photo exhibition tour that strengthened the Nepali voice for peace

The pictures of grief of those who lost relatives were unbearable to look at, and there were few dry eyes among the visitors. From Tulsī Basnet and her little son mourning her husband's death, to the faces of helpless children whose civilian parents were killed in a crossfire, to Anupa Rai, the female guerrilla holding her new-born baby, a child watching her mother wash her blood-stained shopfront in Beni, a woman standing amidst the remains of her charred home set on fire by vigilantes.

Then there were pictures of hope, of strength and the triumph of the human spirit. A boy clambers up a goalpost in Tansen, and beyond it is an army bunker and a landmined perimeter. A photo of a man trying to convince his young gun-wielding guerrilla nephew to come home to his parents, showed intimacy but also how the war tore families apart.

There were pictures of children happy to be home, children jumping up at school assembly. Irrespective of conditions in the war zone, their youthful exuberance gives us hope about the ability of children to bounce back.

Then there are the symbolic, swords-into-ploughshares type of photographs: a guerrilla strumming a guitar instead of holding an SLR. A combatant ploughing the field with a .303 slung over his shoulders.

Like many in Birganj who saw 'A People War', I was touched beyond words. This was one of the best-told stories of conflict I have ever seen. It visibly moved everyone who was there and strengthened the voice of the silent majority who are for peace and who have understood the futility of violence. ●



KUNDA DIXIT

Tarai churning

Connecting the dots to make sense of madhesi politics is becoming much harder

Madhesi leaders share a strange relationship—they fight amongst themselves and fragment, yet co-operate on issues. Mainstream or armed, national or local, they are all in touch with each other. Local factors are more important than pan-Madhes issues in many cases. No alliance is static. The line between politics and crime is blurred, and caste remains the central determinant in political choices.



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

Not a single madhesi moderate force is now committed to the electoral process. Upendra Yadav found an excuse after the postponement of polls to walk out from his deal. The NSP-Mahato has announced an agitation after the EC and SC refused to recognise it as the legitimate NSP. Both these groups are vulnerable to Indian pressure and a NC-MJF-NSP alliance is still possible. But their present move has complicated politics and reflects something deeper: any estrangement with Kathmandu opens up the space to question the legitimacy of the entire political system.

Rajendra Mahato and his aides suspect that the prime minister instructed the CEC not to award his faction the original party status, with the motive of weakening the madhesi forces. They are thinking of beginning a movement demanding a commitment to a regional parliament and regional prime minister in the tarai before

the CA polls.

The madhesi armed groups are thrilled. Apart from the king and army, if the poll postponement benefits anyone, it is them. And with above-ground parties revising their strategy, the rebels have the upper hand. Both Goit and Jwala Singh have assured the parties of behind-the-scenes support in case they decide to go ahead with any agitation. Their problem is that all of them have a severe resource crunch.

Underground politics is evolving as rapidly. The most recent split in the Goit faction was led by Pawan aka Prahlād Giri, a Parsa leader who was with the UML and then turned royalist. Some local Raxaul leaders encouraged this split because they were disappointed with Goit's uncompromising stance on secession as well as building a united front with other madhesi forces. They would like to see an alliance between Pawan, Jwala, and the MJF dissident faction. Jwala Singh has been steadily increasing his numbers and has managed to avert splits by giving his district units a high degree of autonomy as long as it shares the loot with the central leader.

But while both Goit and Jwala hate each other, their district level units have been co-operating in planning joint political action and even extortion. There is constant communication between their district leaders along with those of both factions of MJF.

Caste remains central to underground and mainstream politics. The MJF split had more

to do with the Yadav non-Yadav divide than policy differences. A dissident leader says, "Those who stayed with Upendra are Yadavs and the rest came with us. That is natural." The divide has become stark on the ground. A Biswas faction activist in Birganj pulled this writer away from a local journalist, saying he was a Yadav and would provide misleading information.

But this does not mean all Yadavs get along. Upendra and Goit share an acrimonious relationship because both are Yadavs from adjacent districts and know only one can make it big. Instead, Upendra and Jwala shared a closer relationship, at least until the MJF leader signed the deal.

Jwala is a dalit, and wants to engineer a dalit-brahman alliance in the Mayawati style. His district commanders are mostly upper caste but his understanding and commitment to such an alliance and whether it is feasible in the Tarai's context is questionable. Madhesi brahmins are happy with the movement but are not keen on greater democratisation within because of their limited population share. Most dalits know that madhesi high castes remain their primary oppressors. At the same time though, they do identify themselves as madhesi dalits rather than seeking a new independent identity.

In this almost incomprehensible madhes maze, the only certainty is there will be more confusion and disorder. Polarisation will continue and alliances will emerge and collapse. ●

Himalayan meltdown

Mountaineers worry about glacier retreat in the Himalaya



MAGIC HIGHWAY: These ice towers on the Rongbuk Galcier on the north side of Chomolungma were twice as big 20 years ago. The Khumbu Icefall on the southside of the mountain (below) has also become easier to traverse because the seracs are smaller.

BILLI BIERLING

BILLI BIERLING

Global climate change is affecting the Himalaya much faster than previously thought, and mountaineers have been the first to notice the changes: more frequent avalanches, more crevasses and exposed rock faces where there used to be snowfields.

Cho Oyu and Chomolungma used to be considered the easiest of the eight-thousanders to climb, but have become more difficult in the past 25 years.

“There are certainly more crevasses than there used to be on Cho Oyu and climbers have to take a new steeper route than before,” says Phil Crampton, who has been leading expeditions to Cho Oyo and Chomolungma for the past seven years.

Mike Roberts, a mountain guide from New Zealand, has also seen changes on the mountain: “I think the upper section of Cho Oyo is getting steeper and more difficult, and expeditions will have to start putting ropes there.”

At 8,201m, Cho Oyu is the sixth highest mountain in the world, and this year hasn’t been kind to mountaineers. Normally the success rate on the mountain is relatively higher than other mountains, but this year most expeditions had to turn back due to bad weather.

Mountaineers have also noticed a change in weather patterns, with more frequent late monsoon storms. Russell Brice, a guide from New Zealand, says:

“Even though the last two monsoon seasons were very heavy, there was hardly any deposit of snow on Cho Oyu.”

Sections that were snow and ice when George Mallory and Andrew Irvine climbed the north face of Mt Everest in 1923 are now mostly bare rock. In fact, this was probably one reason Mallory body was found two years ago because the ice melted, exposing the body. (See also: ‘Is climate change changing climbing?’ , *Nepali Times* #268)

New Zealander Russell Brice first went to the Tibetan side of Chomolungma 20 years ago, and he thinks that the mountain has become drier. “In 1988 I was climbing on green ice to gain access to the northeast ridge, today it is shingle scree,” he says. The route to the North Col at 7,000 m has also become more difficult as two or three crevasses now block the way.

On the area leading up to the bottom of the col there are now small lakes and ice slush rivers forming during the spring season, says Brice. The ice walls of the ‘Magic Highway’ leading to Advanced Base Camp are now half the size of what they used to be 20 years ago. On the Nepal side, Chomolungma has also changed dramatically since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first climbed it in 1953.

“When my colleague Guy Cotter first guided an expedition to Everest the Hillary Step was completely covered in snow and ice...in 2004 it was just rock,” says Mike Roberts, who has led expeditions to Everest since 2002. “The entire stretch from the south summit to the true summit

is now pure rock.”

But both Roberts and Brice think that the Khumbu Icefall has actually become safer in the past few years. This could be because of ‘Icefall Doctors’ (Sherpas who fix ropes and the ladders) or due to global warming.

Says Brice: “The ice fall is probably moving faster now than it did about 20 years ago, and now it is not as steep, so I think that there is less serac fall.”

Pumori and Ama Dablam, on the other hand, have become more treacherous. A few years ago Pumori was considered one of the easiest 7,000-metre peaks but that has changed.

Giampietro Verza, an Italian mountain guide who knows Ama Dablam well, says the mountain is no longer what it used to be since a huge block of ice broke away just above Camp 3 and swept six climbers to their deaths last November.

“This spring there was hardly any snow on Ama Dablam, and climbers had to manoeuvre over rock in places that are normally an easy walk on snow,” says Verza, “the mountain has become much more technical in the past few years.”

Ama Dablam at 6,812m is one of the most challenging and popular mountains in the Himalaya, but this spring none of the 14 teams climbing it via the normal southwest ridge succeeded: the first time since 1996 that nobody reached the top via the normal route in one season. The Ama Dablam glacier itself has retreated more than 500 metres in the past 50 years. ●



KOICHIRO OHMORI

Why climate change can't be stopped

Too little, too late

PAUL J SAUNDERS and VAUGHAN TUREKIAN

These days you hear a lot of well-intentioned talk about how to stop global warming.

You'll hear about how certain mechanisms, cap-and-trade systems for greenhouse gas emissions, carbon taxes, and research and development plans for new energy technologies, can fit into some sort of global emissions reduction agreement to stop climate change.

Many of these ideas will be innovative and necessary, some of them will be poorly thought out. But one thing binds them together: they all come much too late.

For understandable reasons, environmental advocates don't like to concede this point. Eager to force deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, many of them hype the consequences of climate change—in some cases, well beyond what is supported by the facts—to build political support.

Climate change is already happening, with greenhouse gas emissions as a significant driver of this change. New emissions limits in the United States and other major emitters such as Europe's key economies and Japan may slow the processes driving these events.

But the mounting scientific evidence, coupled along with economic and political realities, increasingly suggests that humanity's opportunity to prevent, stop, or reverse the long-term impacts of climate change has slipped away.

Given the scale and complexity of modern economies and the time required for new technologies to displace older ones, only a stunning technological breakthrough will allow for reductions in emissions that are sufficiently deep to stop climate change. Stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at 550 parts per million, twice pre-industrial levels—a level at which most believe there is already a higher probability of major climate disruptions—would require stopping the global growth in emissions by 2020 and reducing emissions by 2.5 percent per year after that. The longer it takes to stop the growth in emissions, the deeper the eventual cuts need to be.

Without a technological or economic miracle, it would take a political miracle to reach an international agreement that would mandate the necessary emissions cuts to reverse the momentum behind our evolving global climate system. But once again, realities get in the way. The US Congress is too divided to pass legislation sufficiently tough to make a major difference.

The international political environment also makes truly significant emissions cuts very unlikely. In 2010, developing countries will emit nearly 20 percent more CO₂ emissions than developed countries. Indeed, only in China (and perhaps India) would emissions limits or cuts make more of a difference than in the United States.

By one estimate, China has already surpassed America in emissions to become the world's leader and, with sustained high growth rates, will open the gap even further. In fact, if China grows at 8 percent for the next nine years, its economy will double in size, and its greenhouse gas emissions can be expected roughly to double as well.

Moreover, as China's economy expands, it is turning increasingly to carbon-laden coal for electricity. And although China's energy intensity (energy consumed per unit of economic output) has decreased by nearly five percent per year for the last two decades as a result of greater efficiency, it is still nearly seven times that of the United States. At this rate, China's growth trajectory could add the equivalent pollution of another present-day United States to the climate system in a little more than a decade.

Dollar for dollar, the most efficient way to cut global greenhouse gas emissions would be, in theory, to invest hundreds of billions of dollars to improve China's energy efficiency. But Congress would never support such an approach. More broadly, how long will voters in Europe and Japan, which have done the most to limit emissions, be prepared to make sacrifices for the global climate if they believe they are alone in doing so?

Policy makers in the United States and elsewhere must start hedging their bets and prepare us to live in a warmer world. This emphatically does not mean giving up on efforts to slow climate change. Nor should it suggest that the task of adaptation will be easy or cheap.

The scientific community will need to do a much better job of predicting climate impacts at a regional and local scale. Governments will need to support this process, to collect and assess the information that results, and develop their own plans. Riding out the consequences of a warming world will be difficult, and we need to prepare now. ● (FP)

Paul J Saunders is executive director of the Nixon Center and associate publisher of The National Interest. Vaughan Turekian is chief international officer at the American Association for the Advancement of Science and has a PhD in atmospheric geochemistry.



1956

FRITZ MULLER/JACK IVES, ICIMOD



2006



2007





GIOVANNI KAPPENBERGER/ALTON C BYERS, ICIMOD



GOVINDA JOSHI/ICIMOD



An inconvenient peace prize

The future of polar bears is not as important as feeding the world's hungry

This year's Nobel Peace Prize justly rewards the thousands of scientists of the United Nations Climate Change Panel (the IPCC). These scientists are engaged in excellent, painstaking work that establishes exactly what the world should expect from climate change.

The other award winner, former US Vice President Al Gore, has spent much more time telling us what to fear. While the IPCC's



CLIMATE CLIMAX
Bjørn Lomborg

estimates and conclusions are grounded in careful study, Gore doesn't seem to be similarly restrained.

Gore told the world in his Academy Award-winning movie (recently labeled "one-sided" and containing "scientific errors" by a British judge) to expect 20-foot sea-level rises over this century. He ignores the findings of his Nobel co-winners, the IPCC, who conclude that sea levels will rise between only a half-foot and two feet over this century, with their best expectation being about one foot.

Likewise, Gore agonizes over the accelerated melting of ice in Greenland and what it means for the planet, but overlooks the IPCC's conclusion that, if sustained, the current rate of melting would add just three inches to the sea level rise by the end of the century. Gore also takes no notice of research showing that Greenland's temperatures were higher in

1941 than they are today.

Gore also frets about the future of polar bears. He claims they are drowning as their icy habitat disappears. However, the only scientific study showing any such thing indicates that four polar bears drowned because of a storm.

The IPCC has magnanimously declared that it would have been happy if Gore had received the Nobel Peace prize alone. I am glad that he did not, and that the IPCC's work has rightfully been acknowledged.

Gore has helped the world to worry. Unfortunately, our attention is diverted from where it matters. Climate change is not the only problem facing the globe. Gore concentrates above all else on his call for world leaders to cut CO₂ emissions, yet there are other policies that would do much more for the planet. Over the coming century, developing nations will be increasingly dependent on food imports from developed countries. This is not primarily a result of global warming, but a consequence of more people and less arable land in the developing world.

The number of hungry people depends much less on climate than on demographics and income. Extremely expensive cuts in carbon emissions could mean more malnourished people. If our goal is to fight malnutrition, policies like getting nutrients to those who need them are 5,000 times more effective at saving lives than spending billions of dollars cutting carbon emissions.

Likewise, global warming will

probably slightly increase malaria, but CO₂ reductions will be far less effective at fighting this disease than mosquito nets and medication, which can cheaply save 850,000 lives every year. By contrast, the expensive Kyoto Protocol will prevent just 1,400 deaths from malaria each year.

While we worry about the far-off effects of climate change, we do nothing to deal with issues facing the planet today. This year, malnutrition will kill almost four million people. Three million lives will be lost to HIV/AIDS. Two and a half million people will die because of indoor and outdoor air pollution. A lack of micronutrients and clean drinking water will claim two million lives each.

With attention and money in scarce supply, what matters is that we first tackle the problems with the best solutions, doing the most good throughout the century. If we focus on solving today's problems, we will leave communities strengthened, economies more vibrant, and infrastructures more robust. This will enable these societies to deal much better with future problems – including global warming. Committing to massive cuts in carbon emissions will leave future generations poorer and less able to adapt to challenges. ●
(Project Syndicate)

Bjørn Lomborg is the organizer of Copenhagen Consensus, adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School, and author of *Cool It* and *The Skeptical Environmentalist*.

Receding glaciers

The Imja Glacier below Lhotse is the fastest receding glacier in Nepal, and is melting at 70 m a year as seen in these pictures taken in 1956, 2006 and 2007 (above, left).

The melting has created huge lakes on Imja Glacier which are expanding alarmingly, and scientists are concerned there will be catastrophic glacial lake outburst floods in future that could kill thousands of people downstream.

The Kathmandu-based mountain research institute, ICIMOD, estimates that the Khumbu Glacier is also retreating at an average of 20m per year. The length of the glacier has shrunk from 12,040m in the 1960s to 11,200m in 2001 and Everest Base Camp has actually dropped from 5,320m to 5,280m since Hillary and Tenzing first set

up camp there. All these glaciers are seen in this NASA photograph of Chomolungma taken in 2000 from the Space Shuttle (left).

Global average temperatures are rising at 0.6 degree a year, and scientists say snowlines especially of mountain regions close to the equator are most affected. But scientists at ICIMOD which monitors the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region says there isn't enough proof that receding snowlines are directly the result of climate change.

"It is still too early to say," says ICIMOD glaciologist Pradeep Mool, "but if present trends continue most valley glaciers will have disappeared by 2050." ●

Billi Bierling

Global warning

How melting ice and snow will affect the Himalaya

The Himalaya is the water tower for over one billion people. Three of the region's greatest rivers, the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra start close to Mansarovar. From their sources in eastern Tibet, the Yangtze flows to the East China Sea, the Mekong goes down to Vietnam, the Irrawady and Salween flow down through Burma to the Bay of Bengal.

What happens to the snow and ice in the Himalaya will determine the future of agriculture in countries downstream, influence the growth of cities and the future of hydropower dams.

'Disappearance of glaciers will have major consequences on water resources, especially in regions such as the Himalaya-Hindu Kush, the Andes, the Rockies and the European Alps where many dry-season river flows depend on glacier meltwater,' warns the UN Environment Program in a recently released book, *Global Outlook for Ice & Snow*.

Anecdotal evidence from the Himalaya about glaciers receding dramatically even within one generation is backed up by evidence that global glacial retreat in the past 100 years, and especially since the 1980s, is related to global warming.

Global Outlook for Ice & Snow examines the dynamic interlinkages between polar ice, ice on land, permafrost and glaciers and how they are being affected by global climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which shared this week's Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, in its Fourth Assessment Report concluded that most of the global warming over the past 50 years is due to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

That should have clinched the issue, but there are still skeptics. The trouble is, by the time we know for sure whether climate change is a result of human carbon emissions or not it will be too late to do anything about it.

The UNEP book is full of fascinating facts, trends and predictions. For example, the North American Arctic is warming twice as fast as any other region on the planet. Antarctica is not warming as fast, but may pick up by the end of the century. Mean snow cover in North America is declining at 1.3 percent a year, this means less sunlight is reflected and there is positive feedback to global warming.

In its section on the Himalaya, the book notes that there has been a doubling of glacial retreat in the Himalaya since the 1970s.

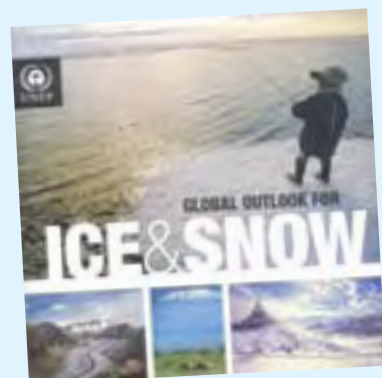
Even if global temperatures rise by only one degree by 2100, which is the optimistic low scenario, scientists estimate that Himalayan glaciers will decline by 43 percent. If global temperatures rise by six percent (pessimistic high scenario) then Himalayan glaciers would shrink by 83 percent.

Reduction of snow cover is already having a dramatic effect on water resources. Mountain snow contributes to water supplies for one-sixth of the world's population. As rivers run dry in the dry season, there will be widespread human misery and perhaps water wars.

The book has a dire warning for the Himalaya: 'The result of glacier loss is not only a direct threat to lives, but also carries great risks of poverty, reduced trade and economic decline. This poses major political, environmental and social challenge in the coming decades.'

So, what is to be done? The book cites the IPCC's conclusion: 'Greenhouse gases must stop increasing and start decreasing no later than 15-25 years from now.' Economists have said this can be done without a decline in living standards. But do the world's main carbon emitters (the US, China, India) have the political will to do so? ●

Nina Pradhan



Global Outlook for Ice & Snow
UNEP, Nairobi 2007



BILLI BIERLING

Jamming in thin air

If you are at Kala Pattar next week, drop in on the world's highest charity rock concert

More than 40 trekkers, including musicians, cancer survivors and hardcore mountaineers have descended on the Khumbu to begin what could be the highest gig on earth to raise money for cancer research.

On 21 October six musicians from the United States, Britain and Australia will be jamming at the top of Kala Pattar (5,545m) as long as their lungs can take it. The group behind this breathtaking event, the Love Hope Strength Foundation, was set up by two-time cancer survivor Mike Peters of British band The Alarm and fellow cancer survivor, James Chippendale from the US.

Chippendale, 39, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukaemia in 2000 and given a 50 percent chance of survival. For two years he was isolated and confined to a hospital bed and his home before his immune system was strong enough to go outside without a mask.

"The cancer has given me a whole new outlook on life and I

would not change a thing. However, sometimes it is almost painful because I take on other people's pain," Chippendale told us.

In 2006 Peters and Chippendale founded the organisation to help other sufferers survive the disease. "I want to make sure all people have the same chance that I had, every person dying of cancer is one too many for me," Chippendale said on his first-ever visit to Nepal.

The idea to stage the highest rock concert on earth started off with the pair dreaming about going to see Chomolungma up close. "It was a pipe dream at first but when we talked about it properly we thought that we could actually raise some money for a cancer centre in Nepal," Chippendale adds.

As help was desperately needed in Nepal they decided to support the Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital in building clinic infrastructure with the much-needed equipment and funding. "We have had so much support from fans, musicians, our

sponsors and the trekkers themselves. Artists are very supportive when it comes to good causes," Chippendale said.

Two years ago a group of British musicians already set the record by playing a gig at Kala Pattar, however, they were jamming about 20 metres below the very top of the mountain across the Khumbu Glacier from Chomolungma.

"We spoke to Oz Bayldon, the organiser of the 2005 gig, and he said they had left some leeway for someone else to break their record and he was happy for us to do so," Chippendale said.

So, if you happen to be in the Everest region over Dasain do drop in for free as Mike Peters of The Alarm, Slim Jim Phantom of The Stray Cats, Cy Curnin and Jamie West-Oram of The Fixx, Glenn Tillbrook of Squeeze and Nick Harper (*pictured above*) will not charge for their breathtaking performance. On 29 October the groups will stage a grand finale at Durbar Square in Kathmandu. ●

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Prashant Tamang’s fame eclipsed a talented and modest Amit Paul

The other guy

ELIZABETH J GIBSON
in SHILLONG

Amit Paul’s modest home in Shillong is festooned with posters, banners and cards. One of them on the gate in an orange magic marker says simply: ‘Amit’s House’.

One month after this sprightly 24-year-old Bengali from Meghalaya came second in the Indian Idol the euphoria over the event that gripped the Indian northeast has subsided a bit, but Amit is still mobbed everywhere he goes in his hometown.

Last week, Amit was here to give a big thank you concert for the benefit of all those who texted to try to make him win.

Amit is a better singer than a speech-giver, and he read nervously from a piece of paper. Coming from a region with diverse autonomy-minded ethnic groups speeches have to be carefully worded.

But it was when he started singing that the mainly young and mainly female crowd went wild all over again. Amit’s father is from Meghalaya, his mother from Assam, and the family considers itself to be Bengali Hindu.

“Amit has been singing from age three and is self-made, he never got any voice training,” says Amit’s father Deepak Paul. After Indian idol catapulted him to fame, the Meghalaya government bestowed on him the title of ‘Brand Ambassador of the State of Meghalaya for Peace, Communal Harmony and Excellence’.

Amit took time to speak to us after his concert and came across as a modest and mature young man who is comfortable with the fame that has come with the singing contest and hasn’t let the hype get into his head.

“When I came home I was amazed,” he said, “it was mind-blowing actually to see people supporting me so much.” Even as we spoke to him, there were crowds thronging the Paul house and stretching for about two blocks in either direction.

“I’ve seen hard times, very hard times,” he said, “but I dream a lot. Some people say dreaming is bad, but I dreamt that someday I would do something big. Dreaming is good.”

Despite his dreams, this is a realistic young man. “I don’t know how much I’ll be able to bring peace,” he said. “I just want people to understand each other’s feelings. They should stop fighting and help each other.”

Now as an Ambassador of Peace, Communal Harmony and Excellence, Amit faces the dual challenge of responding to dreams for autonomy of India’s northeast



VOTE FOR AMIT: Banners urging people to SMS Amit Paul to victory are still standing in Shillong. Amit’s parents and grandmother, pose for a picture (above).



PICS: ELIZABETH J GIBSON

with the larger Indian state.

When told his profile was being printed in a Kathmandu newspaper, Amit said he loves Nepali folk songs. “It’s my favourite type of music and I’ll try to see if I can record Nepali numbers in future,” he adds.

Amit admits he doesn’t follow Nepali politics that closely, but hopes that Nepal will get over its present troubles. He and Prashant get along well, and Amit became popular when he also sang a Nepali song at a concert. He says he wants to work with Prashant to bring the message of peace through music to a broader audience.

Amit Paul holds a contract with Sony and intends to enter a career in Mumbai as a playback singer in Bollywood. He will be visiting Nepal later this month. ●

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1. We are in Nepal to contribute to improvement in the quality of life of the people of Nepal. Our assistance focuses on reducing poverty, meeting basic needs and enabling communities to become self-sufficient.
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Next time you chomp on



The carnivore carnival

The proof that Dasain is around the corner is the sight of four or five goats riding the top luggage carrier of a microbus. The carnivore carnival is here and livestock don't stand a chance. Goats, buffaloes, chicken, sheep, and ducks. None will be spared this season as Nepalis binge for ten days on meat.

The *khasi*, like the buffaloes, arrive from the tarai by truckloads. Mountain goats (*chyangra*) from our other friendly neighbour in the north. The Kalanki Khasi Market is at full capacity. Due to the instability in the tarai there is a severe shortage of goats which has pushed prices up.

The shortage of goats is being compensated for by a chicken glut. The birds are transported to market in pickups or even five fowls dangling

from either side of a motorcycle. A single truck can carry more than a hundred, in rows of twenty each, one on top of the other, trapped in wire-mesh cages. The ones on the bottom row are the lowest in the pecking order and they are covered in droppings.

Pretty soon, it will be off with their heads at temples, sidewalks, backyards and picnic spots throughout the country. The debate about animal sacrifice and open slaughter will probably never be resolved. There are those who argue for humane slaughter by knocking the animal unconscious before killing it. But it is difficult to say who is civilised and who is not based on the method of slaughter.

Perhaps the only civilised people are vegetarians. ●



PRANAYA SJB RANA

The back of the truck opens, its dazed occupants slowly emerge in single file down a straight wooden plank. Their eyes are glazed and legs jittery. Some seem glad to just stretch their legs.

The journey from Birganj has been eight hours of misery for the passengers. It's standing room only, wedged with 50 others in the back of a Tata truck. Through the constant roaring of the truck, bouncing through potholes drivers are too lazy to avoid, and the incessant lurching from the stop-start traffic. There is no toilet break, no food stop.

At one depot at Khumaltar

alone, 25 of these trucks arrive every month. There are dozens of similar drop off points in the Valley. The buffaloes are downloaded at river banks or abandoned factory premises, allowed to graze and fatten a bit and then slaughtered. When the Valley's population was still low, demand was met by local buffaloes. But more and more of the buffaloes now are imported from India, where they are not eaten.

"If they're big buffaloes, we can fit in around 30," says Shekh Atikur, a truck driver. "For the smaller ones, up to 70 can be squeezed in." Atikur brings in about 10 truckloads each month, but exonerates

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PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

himself from any responsibility for the way they are treated.

“It is the people high up who load them up like that,” he says. “We drivers have nothing to do with it. I’ve only had a maximum of three die on a single trip.”

Gafara Ansari, a dealer who has been transporting buffaloes to Kathmandu from Birganj for the past 25 years, appears less harsh-hearted. “We let them off to graze if there’s a traffic jam,” he says. “Even animals need their fresh air.”

Ansari claims a profit of just Rs 200 per buffalo, with prices ranging from Rs 3,000-25,000 according to size. He complains that there is no place to unload

them in the city. “Everyone wants to eat them but no one wants to see them,” he says. In the past, he has used deserted factories or sites beside the city’s rivers. Now he is offloading them in Khumaltar.

There is no limit to age or size, with even young calves and females eligible for slaughter. The young ones are the simplest to kill. The smaller they are, the easier it is for the butcher to decapitate them cleanly. The bigger ones are bludgeoned to death. The butcher repeatedly smashes their forehead with a heavy hammer until they die. The calves are put on a spit and roasted, skin and all, over a fire. The older ones are hacked into

more manageable pieces before the cuts are sold. Buff is the most popular meat for momos, and apparently the cooks aren’t very particular about what they buy.

“As long as the meat is minced, no one cares what it includes,” says Dipen Khadka, my local butcher. “I’ve ground almost every part of the buffalo, excluding the hooves, horns and the bigger bones. Every other part has gone into one of those momos.”

A large, well-fleshed buffalo ambled up, it had a red splotch on its forehead, a mark of ownership and a death sentence. In a few hours this animal would be meat. ●

Scapegoats

We celebrate Dasain by appeasing the goddess Kali so that she will chase away the demons and bring us health, wealth and victory. After all, this is a festival of the triumph of good over evil.

This is also the festival of blood-letting as thousands upon thousands of goats, sheep, buffaloes, chickens and ducks are cruelly slaughtered on our streets and temples. Our idols are made of stone, but they drip with the blood of our fellow beings.

It is now time to think about what this means in a festival that celebrates the victory of good. Why are we exhibiting such cruelty, and how does this reflect on our society? If we are indeed human beings, why can’t we learn to be a little more humane during a national festival? A society that treats animals so brutally will also be brutal towards fellow humans.

It could be that our martial ancestors, while unifying the country and fighting invaders, had to harden their hearts. It may be a part of our tradition that the khukuri wielded in the battlefields first had to



NEPALI PAN
Tritha B Shrestha

draw the blood of sacrificial animals. During the Malvinas war, the British Army used the Gurkhal reputation for fierceness with the khukuri to defeat the Argentinians.

Our enemies today are not demons. It is superstition, fatalism, poverty and social inequity that plagues our society. We will defeat and overcome these ills by being more humane and caring ourselves, by showing civilized behaviour. Decapitating a bleating buffalo or goat should not be the symbol of the Nepali civilisation.

Rage is a human trait. Rage leads to cruelty. But it is not a human attribute to enjoy brutality. Yet, in Mugu 32 years ago I witnessed the most cruel custom of rubbing chillies and salt on a goat’s skin. The spectators cheered as the goats writhed and leapt in agony, and finally they bit the goat’s skin until its entrails spilled out. There was a loud cheer as the goat was then dragged off to be killed at the temple. While watching this spectacle in horror, I asked myself are these human beings or are they hyenas? What kind of people take pleasure in such cruelty?



DAMBER K SHRESTHA

It is morally wrong to torture fellow creatures, to do so in the name of religion is a sin

In Khokana of Lalitpur there is a similar sacrifice ritual in which a goat is thrown into a pond while participants jump in to tear the animal apart with their bare hands and teeth. In Bhaktapur pigs are skinned alive and their chests opened, and the living heart yanked out. The screaming mercifully dies, while its still-beating heart is offered to the temple amidst loud music.

At Dasain, buffaloes are slaughtered by their hundreds in Nepal’s momo capital of Kathmandu. The sidewalks and gutters of Kot run red with buffalo blood. Even Hindus from other countries are shocked by the bloodletting in Nepal.

For the buffaloes, when the end comes, it is a relief. They have been tortured by the transportation from India and the tarai towns to Kathmandu packed in livestock trucks. They are tethered with ropes that go through their nostrils, they foam at the mouth, and I have seen them actually shed tears of pain from their deep blue eyes. Their skins is lacerated by friction against the sides of the truck.

To eat meat we have to kill animals. But why do we have to inflict such pain before we do so? This is not just inhuman, it is also against the law in many countries. Animals, be they beasts of burden, pets, dairy animals or livestock for meat have to be treated humanely. Nepal also now needs to enact such laws.

It is morally wrong to torture fellow creatures, but to do so in the name of religion is a sin. The government should set an example by stopping official sacrifices. Temples should follow by banning cruel slaughter on their premises. By sacrificing animals in front of cars, trucks, buses, even aircraft, we are promoting a culture of violence.

Let us set a precedence for non-violence by stopping cruel animal sacrifices and slaughter in the New Nepal. ●

Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha, PhD, is a noted botanist and this year’s winner of the Jagadamba Shri Award for using literature to popularise science in Nepal.

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Futile neutrality

Excessive timidity is eroding UNMIN's credibility

ANALYSIS by **SIDDHI SUBEDI**

Whenver UNMIN comes up in conversations these days, it is accompanied by derisive comments and gestures.

The mission's high visibility (the takeover of one of Kathmandu's grandest buildings for its office, its host of cars, jeeps, helicopters and planes that have become a constant feature of the Nepali landscape regardless of bandas or fuel shortages) contributes to the illusion that it was a force far more powerful than any indigenous political party or institution.

With such disjuncture between UNMIN's apparent virility and actual incapacity, it was inevitable that disillusionment would set in. Much of this, of course, is hardly UNMIN's fault, it is inherent in the very structure of UN missions and has been seen earlier in East Timor, Cambodia and elsewhere. With its abundance of resources but a mandate limited to the monitoring of arms and armies and the provision of 'support' to the constituent assembly election and peace process, the heightened expectations and disappointment could have been foreseen.

UNMIN adopts a very narrow interpretation of its mandate. It is true that its support for elections and Nepal's peace process is chiefly of a technical nature. As it can only make political interventions in the capacity of mediator, it has to maintain strict neutrality. But neutrality does not mean there is a complete moral equivalence between all parties at all times.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

There are occasions when one party is clearly more responsible than others for creating obstructions in the peace process, and it is UNMIN's responsibility to clearly state and put pressure on those who are particularly intransigent. Unfortunately, UNMIN is so cautious not to offend anyone that it has adopted a spurious definition of neutrality: one that apportions equal responsibility to all parties at all times, no matter what the circumstances.

When the Maoists decided not to participate in elections held according to a mixed electoral system and began pressing for the immediate declaration of a republic, it was UNMIN's responsibility to clearly state that this was a severe breach of prior commitments and should have brought pressure to bear. Instead, it remained silent on these crucial issues, stating merely that these were for the Nepali people to decide.

Throughout the past months, UNMIN has instead focused chiefly on the much less controversial issue of the government's refusal to implement the agreements it had signed with the Maoists in the past: regarding the future of Maoist combatants, living conditions in the cantonments and discussion on Security Sector Reform. The lack of progress on these issues, UNMIN's argument goes, led the Maoists to mistrust their coalition partners and then to quit government and refuse to participate in the scheduled elections. It is therefore the major parties in government, the NC in particular, that are responsible for the electoral delay.

Now that elections have been indefinitely postponed, UNMIN (and western nations and institutions that collectively call themselves the 'international community') hold that it is currently more important to deepen and strengthen the peace process and to 'create conditions for a credible election'—as if there is all the time in the world to create these conditions. As if it isn't of the utmost necessity to hold elections as soon as possible in order to ensure that elections do happen at all and forces against polls aren't allowed to disrupt the process.

Its excessive timidity in the face of a crisis is bound to further erode UNMIN's credibility in the eyes of the Nepali people and contribute to the impression that the Maoists can use it to further their own political ends. If it continues to interpret its already restricted mandate so narrowly, UNMIN will become increasingly irrelevant even if it stays beyond January. ●



PICS: RAMESWOR BOHARA

BACK TO WHERE THEY BELONG: Refugees in Nepalganj last week on their way to a bus station to go home for Dasain, for the first time in ten years. Children born in refugee camps (below) also wait for the bus to Jumla, a home they have never seen.

Homeward-bound

Villagers displaced by war head home for dasain

RAMESWOR BOHARA
in NEPALGANJ

For the first time in a decade, Akal Bahadur Shahi will be able to celebrate dasain in his own home in the remote Kalikakhetu village of Jumla.

Eight years ago, local Maoist cadres forced him to leave his village and told him never to return. Homeless and impoverished, Shahi's family became nomads moving to Nepalganj, then to Surkhet and eventually to India in search of poorly-paid jobs.

"Hopefully, this misery will not happen again to us," says Shahi, who is excited to be bringing his six-year-old son Bimal home for the first time.

Another villager, Sairup Shahi, is also heading home. The Maoists drove his family out

seven years ago because his brother was a NC worker.

"All the time, we were so desperate to celebrate dasain in our own home and finally we can do that," explains Sairup Shahi, breathing a sigh of relief as he gets into the bus to Jumla.

Mainkala Shahi is nervous about the treatment he and his family will receive when they turn up in their old village, from where they were barred eight years ago.

"The Maoists have asked us to return home now and have promised us to live in peace," he says, but he remains worried.

"Let's hope that we will not have to again leave our village for the same political reasons," says Deep Bahadur Shahi, leader of the displaced Jumlis, who have been assisted in their journey home by INSEC, Save the

Children Norway and the Nepal Red Cross Society.

Deep Shahi and the others do not know if they will get their old property back. The Maoists who threw them out all those years ago redistributed their land and livestock to other villagers, who may now be reluctant to return them to their previous owners.

The UN and aid agencies estimate nearly 200,000 people were displaced by the conflict. Most have yet to return home. But with dasain approaching more than 1,500 people have gone home to their villages in Jumla, Mugu, Kalikot, Bajura, Dailekh and Jajarkot, and most of them have settled back into their old lives without difficulty. The once all-pervasive climate of fear has faded, and in some cases Maoist volunteers have helped the returnees get settled.

Compared with dasain last year, the displaced villagers now have far greater confidence that the Maoists will no longer terrorise them. In recent days, huge crowds of people could be seen near the Nepalganj-Rupediya border area fighting and shoving to get a seat on buses heading to the Midwestern hills. They are excited to be going home, but their biggest wish for dasain is for there to be elections which could ensure lasting peace and bring an end to the current political uncertainty. Some still fear the war might start again after dasain. ●



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Outsourced toons

Hollywood dreams could soon come true for Nepal’s film animators

Almost everyone has seen the *Lion King*, but not everyone knows there was a Nepali involved in its animation. Among the many who worked on bringing Simba to life was Kathmandu native, Kiran Joshi (pictured, below) a visual effects supervisor at the US entertainment giant, Walt Disney. With a background in computer software, Joshi first entered the animation field more than 15 years ago, working as a graphics software developer for Disney. He also was on the team that developed the animation system used for *Beauty and the Beast*, which went on to be nominated for Best Picture at the 1992 Academy Awards.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

At Disney, Joshi’s interests evolved from software engineering to animation. Working with all those artists and animators, he couldn’t help but join in. Soon he found he had a knack for it, and subsequently worked on the animation of films including the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Atlantis: the Lost Empire*, and most recently, *Rapunzel*. As a world-class animator, Joshi was soon looking to branch out. He set up his own animation company called Pink Slip Productions, and is now looking to tap animation talent in his hometown of Kathmandu. With outfits like Pentasoft, Transcube and the Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics teaching animation software such as 3ds Max, the animation scene in Nepal is growing. South Asia has great animation potential. India and the Philippines are already starting to animate for Disney and Dreamworks. Artists and animators are less expensive to hire, and outsourcing is gathering momentum. The Philippines has now become a major source of Japanese animation, especially of the popular manga-influenced ‘animé’ output. “And why not?” says Joshi. “Most of those interested are young and talented, and willing to work for much less than those in the west.” At first, he thought of outsourcing to India but thought he should give something back to

the land of his birth. After a few visits, he joined forces with Mercantile which could provide his animation studio with both software and computer hardware. “There is a lot of talent here,” Joshi says, “but most work individually, animating here and there for a few rupees. What we need to do is get them together so we can make animation of an international standard.” And that is exactly what Joshi’s Incessant Rain studios will do. Incessant Rain, on the top floor of the Ace Bank in Naxal, already has a team of 16 animators, most of them young and highly talented. The company is on the lookout for more animators, and plans to have about 25-40 people by December to produce world-class animation within a year. “The problem here will be getting everyone to work in a team,” he says, “animation is a collaborative effort, there is no one person who takes all the credit.” Joshi will share his time between Pink Slip Productions in the US, which will handle the creative content, and Incessant Rain in Nepal, which will handle all animation. “I’m counting on my contacts in the industry to get us quality work, and I’m betting all I’ve got on Nepal,” Joshi confides. “With any luck, we should be able to see Nepali animation on the big screen in the coming three or four years.” ● *Pranaya SJB Rana*

Speechless

If you’re not depressed these days you aren’t patriotic

A stute readers may have noticed the Hand’s absence from these pages of late. Some might have wondered what could possibly silence such an opinionated meddler, while lively imaginations undoubtedly jumped to the conclusion your columnist was abducted and tortured by the YCL, an assumption all too logical these days. Others would have surmised the absurdity of recent politics defies commentary. Who wouldn’t be rendered speechless by the latest treachery that culminated in elections being cancelled for the second time this year? Why dignify such deceit and duplicity with rational observation and analysis? So far, my alias has saved me from the wrath of ideologues and it was purely in the interest of sanity-maintenance that the Hand took a sabbatical from paying attention to current events. Leaving town helped, saving me the trouble of reading about Maoist union members trashing printing presses.



MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

This morbidly fascinating muse of charting the nation’s self-destruction has become increasingly hazardous to health, inciting melancholia, ennui, binges and hangovers.

Ultimately, raging against the fools wrecking this country is akin to banging one’s head against the wall: it feels damn good to stop. Alas, the muse is endlessly intricate and intriguing, inevitably luring us back into the fray for another round whether we like it or not. One lesson we’ve learned the hard way from the on-going national collapse is that no matter how bad the situation gets it can always get worse. Whenever logic interferes, dictating Nepal has hit rock bottom and the long-awaited recovery must finally begin, our leaders sabotage the process in their single-minded pursuit of self-interest.

The current catalogue of dismal set-backs began months ago when we noticed the Maoists had no intention of abiding by the peace agreement, the government had no way of holding them to it, and the UN didn’t have a clue as to who they were dealing with. The Politburo simply shifted the war’s venue to the valley, changed the acronym PLA to YCL, and set up Prachanda’s cousin, KP Sitaula, as Home Minister and chief apologist. The comrades’ recent withdrawal from government and scuttling of the same election they initially insisted upon has stunned the nation. The lack of good faith in dealing with the other parties and population at large proves Maoist engagement with parliamentary democracy is a hapless charade to buy time at best, a nefarious ploy to seize totalitarian power at worst, or both. As preparations for the CA elections were well underway, millions believed an historic opportunity was finally theirs and keenly looked forward to casting their vote. The Maoist about-face, due solely to the fact they were sure to be massively rejected at the polls, killed this chance along with the hopes of an entire kingdom cum republic.



KIRAN PANDAY

The fact many Nepalis fatalistically accept such betrayal of their aspirations is equally discouraging. Expectations for the future are at all-time lows and concern for personal survival, the law of the jungle, now dominates life. No-one seems to think the situation is going to get better anytime soon; after being let down so often the best most can imagine is more of the same. As the incidence of kidnapping, extortion, and ‘physical action’ (i.e. arbitrary beatings by mis-guided youths) escalates so goes anxiety and fear. Many valley residents consider the situation more insecure and dangerous now than during the war. With stress levels at record highs, ‘depression’ is a word that has entered the Nepali language. Unknown until recently, it’s now an epidemic. If you’re not depressed these days you aren’t patriotic. As things fall apart in ways we never thought possible one wonders when to give up wishing for anything at all. If the simple desire for stability and rule-of-law is denied us maybe now’s the time to join a cult, retreat from the world of greedy politicians, and start chanting mantras. Compared to dwelling on the failure of our political class to get anything right this sounds attractive, and if it takes another decade to sort this mess out then donning a robe, funny hat, and a foolish grin ASAP makes eminent sense. In the meantime, with Dasain upon us, let’s forget all this nonsense, embrace the traditional pursuit of happiness, and concentrate on family, friends and goats. As we celebrate Ma Durga’s legendary victory over the forces of evil let’s hope she hears our prayers and somehow comes to our rescue sometime soon. ●

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Buddhahoods** an exhibition of photography by Daniel Collins, 13 October onwards, 2-6PM at the Saturday Café, Boudhanath Stupa. 2073157
- ❖ **Soshana** an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Soshana, on occasion of the 20th anniversary of Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, until 20 October, 11AM-6PM. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Rugby World Cup** final live at K-too! Beer and Steakhouse, Thamel at midnight, 20 October. 470043
- ❖ **Dasain Swing Festival** at the Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal, 10AM-6PM, for all of Dasain. 4425340
- ❖ **Grand Badhe Festival** part of Destination Manang, 25-28 October, at Manang Village. 4423643
- ❖ **Bingo nights** at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM every Monday. 2337201
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Jazz at Jatra** every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Café and Bar, Thamel. .
- ❖ **Ciney Gurung** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Nauratha** special vegetarian dinner at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Vegetarian alternative** for all of Dasain, Stupa View restaurant and café, Boudha Stupa. 4480262
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** Hyatt's BBQ brunch with live jazz music at the Rox Garden, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **Italian barbeque lunch** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Saturdays, 12.30-3.30PM, Rs 300 plus taxes. 4273999
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks, and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel, 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **BBQ, chilled beer, cocktails** and live music at the Kausi Restaurant and Bar, Darbar Marg, 6218490
- ❖ **BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill** Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, every Friday 6.30 PM, Rs 899 nett.
- ❖ **Cocktails and jazz** with the JCS Quartet and a choice of cocktails at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika's. 4479448
- ❖ **Lajawaab** curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Café Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Shangri-La's pasta, pizza, pie, and pool** a special swimming package with a complimentary beer, Rs 650 nett per person, every Saturday and Sunday at Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Rediscover fine Italian cuisine** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, all new exciting menu. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dasain package** at the Dhulikhel lodge, Rs 2,100 per couple with complimentary snacks, dinner, accommodation and breakfast. 4222389
- ❖ **Hotel Trek-O-Tel, Pokhara** Rs 1,200 for accommodation and breakfast. Reservation available c/o Ambassador Hotel. 061-528996, 4410432
- ❖ **Fulbari Resort and Spa, Pokhara** Rs 10,999 for Nepali double, \$219 for expat double, two days and three nights package, including transportation from the airport, welcome drinks, tennis and swimming, discounts on food and beverages.
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawa Ma** at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot, Rs 3,400 for double, includes one night accommodation, dinner, breakfast and shuttle service. 6680080
- ❖ **Tiger Tops Karnali** \$299 nett per person for two nights and three days, includes accommodation, all meals, wildlife activities and transportation to and from Nepalgarj.

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

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Don't know where that one came from. The system that we see in this satellite radar image composite taken on Tuesday morning shows a mighty system covering central Nepal. We don't mind admitting we don't know where it came from. It wasn't supposed to be there. But the late monsoon is a period when the dying monsoon plays a tug-o-war with resurgent westerly, and this one is probably due to the convergence of cold northwesterly wind colliding with moist warm Bay winds. But it should clear up by Friday to give us a sunny (and breezy) Dasain, ideal for kite-flying.



रेडियो सगरमाथा

एफएम १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज

नेपाली रेडियो

नेपाली आवाज

हालचाल

राजा खबर सञ्चार पत्रालय

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प्रिष्ठान: ८ वडा, ११ वडा

अध्यक्ष: १ वडा, ४ वडा

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CPN-M

LOOK HERE, NOW: Shyam Saran, Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's special envoy to Nepal, at a two-hour meeting with Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and ideologue Baburam Bhattarai at the Dahal residence in Nayabajar on 10 October.



KIRAN PANDAY

BABY BOOMERS: Protesters march to parliament on 12 October to put pressure on legislators to decide on electoral procedures.



RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM

EID MUBARAK: Nepali Muslims pray at the Jama Masjid in Jamal on Sunday.



KIRAN PANDAY

HUMAN TANDOORIS: Nepali bodybuilders display their pects at the 11th Dharmashri Body-building Competition at the Nepal Academy last week.

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Gobarment of Nepal

It is when Comrade Pasang starts wearing a tie that you know it is only a question of time before the Maoists complete their transformation into a mainstream **bourgeois** party.

Perhaps that was the intention behind Gen Wilhelmsen taking Nanda Kishor and Gen Shiva Ram on a junket to Stavanger so they could let their hair down, as it were, and sort out some of the cantonment issues. One problem Jan Erik may have to take up immediately with his Russian UNMIN pilots is to get them to stop flying their MI-8s too low over the camps because the chopper wash is blowing off the flimsy Maoist tarp tents.

On a more serious note, where is the Security Sector Reform going, huh? Despite some hush-hush meetings between the generals and the comrades in past months, it looks like the Nepal Army has flatly refused to integrate guerrillas into the national army. Pity. Where would you get such a splendid bunch of battle-hardened soldiers?

Now that kingji has sent out hand-delivered Dasain greetings, can his Dasain address to the nation be far behind? It may be asking too much and it would be totally out of character, but saying sorry would help. We're getting rid of one king, but we've replaced him with **Three Emperors**. The way this triumvirate of bajes are carrying on, even this loktantricked Ass is nostalgic for the good old days when we just had one royalty to deal with. The way His Majesty Girjau was granting audience to NRNs at his Crown Princess' bash at the Annapurna with perfunctory namastes from his bejeweled hand, it was difficult to tell which one was Napoleon and which Farmer Jones.

Girjau in his old age is not just getting short of breath, he is also getting short-tempered. Earlier he gave Peace Minister Poudel a **tongue-lashing** in the cabinet. Then he publicly blew a gasket in front of his centralized committee and tv cameras by telling his trusted adviser, Amareshbabu, to bugger off. "You're nobody," he thundered as the cameras rolled, "you're not to speak to anyone." The reason was Amaresh telling Bhusan on *Fireside* the previous day that he had such good connections he could fix anything. Who needs to bug Koirala's bedroom if you have **Mr Fixit** here?

Was the prime minister sending a message to India during the Shyam Saran visit through his public outburst at Amaresh? Is that why he also went to First Daughter house to meet the Chinese ambassador while Saran was still at the airport and get Sujata to leak that to the press? What's cooking at Mandikatar anyway? And how come a supposedly-republican daddy is so cosy with his supposedly-monarchist daughter? The Ass wonders if NOC and NAC are being parceled out.

Whatever Shyam told the Three Emperors, it has certainly worked like magic given the way the triumvirate conducted marathon meetings all week to end their deadlock on electoral procedures. The two-hour meeting at Awesome's pistachio-coloured Nayabajar Durbar got so heated that **passersby** outside could hear the raised voices. The Fierce One tried to strike a relaxed pose by sitting crosslegged on his sofa, but Comrade Red Banner looked like he had been spanked.

Ask not what you can do for your country, ask what your country can do for you. That seems to be the mission statement of the unimaginatively acronymed **NRN**. They wanted free long-term visas for their retirement, now they want dual citizenship. People of Nepali origin should decide once and for all where they want to stay. Not that it counts, but the Ass' advice to the Gobarment of Nepal is to pay more attention to resident Nepalis than to non-residents.



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