

NEPALI Times

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BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY:
Dentistry student
Sunaina Palikhe and
hotel management
student Monita Pun
trekking in Dhamphus
amidst a spectacular
backdrop of
Machapuchre on
Saturday.

KIRAN PANDAY

'Tis the season

Clear skies, fabulous mountain views, festivals, smiles. Those characteristics of the Dasain-Tihar holidays make the autumn season popular for tourism and trekking.

With the peace process on track, elections over and a new government in place, visitor arrivals have picked up. Hotel rooms and airline tickets are scarce. But there are still places to go in this vast country that are off the beaten track, like Upper Dolakha (p 8-9). Nepali Times has compiled all its travel writeups over the past eight years into a Special Destination package. See: www.nepalitimes.com.np/special/travel_nepal.php

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HAPPY HOLIDAY

Nepali Times wishes all its readers and partners a happy Dasain, Chhat, Eid.

Because of the holidays, there will be no issue of Nepali Times on 10 October. The next hardcopy edition of this paper will come out on 17 October. Log on to www.nepalitimes.com for regular news updates.

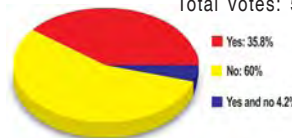
Nepali Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 420

Q. Was the finance minister right to cut the budget for festivals?

Total votes: 5,089



Weekly Internet Poll # 421. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you expect next year's Dasain-Tihar to be better than this year's?

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TIME IS RUNNING OUT

The most frustrating thing about the pre-Dasain political mood in Kathmandu is the utter lack of urgency.

Since he was sworn in five weeks ago, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been in Nepal for just eight days. Last week, a dozen cabinet members were in various parts of the world. Now, we go into the lethargic Dasain-Tihar break.

What will it take to inject a sense of urgency in our elected rulers about pressing domestic issues? When will they start focussing on the people's immediate needs and stop disrupting Assembly proceedings so that it can get on with the work of constitution-building?

On Tuesday, the Constituent Assembly went into a 20-day Dasain recess. Four months after the CA was installed, the legislature is still bogged down in politics over the draft of the Rules and Procedures. There are four main challenges ahead:

- gaps in governance and delivery
- stability and keeping the peace process on track
- safeguarding freedoms during the transition
- drafting the constitution

The most urgent issue is to ensure law and order, relief and service delivery. The coalition government needs to show that it is a government that cares for the welfare of the people. That alone will give it legitimacy, not the electoral victory in April.

Good governance will also ensure the stability that is needed for economic growth, which in turn will keep the peace process on track. Instability, discord and youth vigilantism threaten law and order. The proposed integration of the armies can only happen in an atmosphere of political consensus.

Recent statements by the Maoists have raised fresh doubts about their commitment to democracy and press freedom. This ambivalence is dangerous. The Maoists need to clearly and publicly renounce violence once and for all and reassert their commitment to pluralism and democracy.

Only when these conditions are fulfilled will there be the right conditions to work undisturbed on drafting the new constitution. There is no need now to go out onto the streets. Issues must be discussed and thrashed out in the assembly chambers. You can't write a new constitution while cremating tyres.

We have traditionally let Pashupatinath take care of things, but there is a limit to what even Pashupatinath can do if we don't make a serious effort ourselves to overcome this paralysing ennui.

Unseen heroes

There are two kinds of histories: one is written and the other is unwritten. Written history is found in books, unwritten history is found in the good deeds of people.

Throughout our country there are unseen heroes who don't get written about, don't compete for headlines, but work quietly to help their communities and the nation.



GUEST COLUMN
Karna Shakya

Ram Shrestha left the comforts of an affluent life in Europe and mobilised his community to set up a world-class hospital in Dhulikhel. Also in Dhulikhel, Suresh Raj Sharma used his experience in education to set up a university that is helping build the country's human resource base. Lili Thapa's husband was killed in the war, but she turned her grief into helping other women affected by the conflict by setting up the Single Mothers' Society. Sita Pokhrel in Biratnagar invested her husband's entire inheritance and pension to set up an orphanage.

Neighbours think Sebailal Tharu is slightly mad. Any barren plot of land he finds, Tharu plants trees. All his life, he has been walking half-naked in his bare feet, planting saplings which have now grown into tall trees all over his home district.

Mahabir Pun gave up an IT career in the US to come back, not just to Kathmandu, but to his

home district of Myagdi to set up a world-acclaimed effort to bridge the digital divide in local schools with wireless internet for education. There are many Mahabirs in Nepal, contributing to society without much fuss.

Then there is Sanduk Ruit who has restored the gift of sight to tens of thousands of Nepalis with cataracts. Every day at his Tilganga eye centre there are miracles as people see again after decades of darkness. Ruit takes his mobile clinics to remote parts of Nepal, and even to Tibet, North Korea and Ethiopia. He has made Nepal a major production centre for corneal transplants. We in Nepal were

in Chitlang which has an exclusive clientele in Kathmandu. Thakuri buys goat milk from surrounding villages, which have set up the Chitlang Chandragiri Cheese Production Society, raising cash incomes of hundreds of families.

They are everywhere, these creative and independent Nepalis. You just have to look for them. They don't sit on their hands complaining that the government doesn't give them this or that, they are enterprising and implement projects that provide self-esteem and income to fellow Nepalis.

This country's future lies in the combined efforts of hundreds

Let's applaud Nepalis who have quietly contributed to the nation

slow to recognise and honour people like Pun and Ruit, who are both Ramon Magsaysay awardees for public service.

Ujalata Subba of Myaglung started an embroidery unit after her husband died and now employs 100 women. A student from Pulchok campus went back to his village in Lamjung and built a 3.5MW hydropower unit. Today, while the capital has six hours of power cuts every day, Lamjung's Besisahar and surrounding villages have 24-hour electricity.

Ashok Thakuri is a trained cheesemaker. Instead of staying on in France, he returned and has set up a goat cheese factory

of thousands of Nepalis like these who combine appropriate, human-level technology and sheer hard work to achieve tangible results.

There is plenty to find fault with in Nepal, but if we just complained about them we would be stuck. This Dasain, let us recognise and reward the efforts of these unsung heroes all over Nepal. ●

Karna Shakya's latest book, Khoj, was launched on Monday.

Khoj (in Nepali)
Karna Shakya
Page 374
Price Rs 275

Witch hunt hits wrong target

There are worse things to worry about than a beauty pageant

The Miss Nepal 2008 beauty pageant, slated to be held at the army headquarters last weekend, was postponed again—for the fourth time. The women's wing of the Maoist party, the All Nepal Women's Organisation-Revolutionary said the contest discriminated against certain ethnic groups and against shorter and darker women. They claimed it demeaned women by using them to advertise toothpaste and shampoo.



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

Hours before the event was scheduled to take place the organisers got a notice from the DAO asking them to cancel the show as the event threatened to create 'a law and order problem'.

Every year, women's organisations protest outside the contest venue, but after the pageant is over and the winner crowned, the protests fizzle out and everyone goes home happy. This year, however, the protests have been stepped up. Demonstrators stormed the offices of Dabur Nepal, the official sponsor, and made threatening phone-calls to contestants.

The lure of this beauty contest is that the crowned winner will get to represent Nepal at other international beauty competitions. In the last 14 years none of our girls have made it pass the first round,



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

but we are willing to overlook that because they do get international exposure and return to Nepal more confident. And the winner, apart from becoming the face of the sponsor and brand ambassador for a few organisations, doing a few modelling assignments and dabbling in a few social causes, doesn't have to do much. They all say that they want to alleviate poverty, help the hungry and end conflict, but 12 months is just not enough time to achieve that.

When Miss Nepal 2008 was postponed, the contestants and their parents organised a press conference and said that the ban violated women's rights. There was some truth in that. Forget women's rights: what about the rights of these young ladies to make a decision about their own lives? All the contestants are over 18—an age where you are allowed to vote, drink, buy pornography and get married without

parental consent. Does the Maoist-led government think that suddenly these young women could not make informed decisions about how to live their own lives?

The current political leadership seemed to have no problem using 18-year-olds to fight their war and to campaign for the party during the election. When others didn't trust the Maoists, 18-year-olds like these young women went to the polling booths this year because they trusted the Maoists to be different.

The pageant's organiser, The Hidden Treasure, is a private entity that pays taxes to the government. It has set up offices in Birganj, Dharan, Butwal and Pokhara and has tried to be as inclusive as possible in selecting candidates. Why does the government, or any women's group for that matter, need to be involved in deciding who makes it to the finals when they are in no

way involved in the entire process?

The ANWO-R has said that beauty contests do nothing to improve the lot of women. In case they had missed it, a new constitution is being written. Instead of these groups threatening contestants with physical violence, they could be pressing lawmakers to make the new constitution more gender-sensitive, ensuring that women's causes are better represented, and campaigning for more money from the budget to be directed at helping women. They should be trying to rescue thousands of Nepali women who are trafficked to the red light districts of Nepali and Indian cities.

Nightclub owners are out on the streets demanding their right to engage in far sleazier business than beauty pageants, but we don't hear ANWO-R condemning them. They seem to have no problem with dance bar operators making handsome profits from exploiting women's bodies. Perhaps they view dance bars as more 'proletarian' and therefore acceptable, whereas beauty pageants are 'capitalist' and should therefore be dismantled.

The Maoists haven't been consistent in their reasons for opposing Miss Nepal 2008. Other beauty pageants have been organised in the Valley in the past month and they chose to look the other way. One wonders why there's so much antagonism towards Miss Nepal 2008. Why the witch hunt? ●

LETTERS

SECULAR BUDGET

Prahsant Jha raises a good point in his column, Plain Speaking (Secularism in a diverse state, # 419). But I think the French Model would be better. The government needs to stop subsidising any particular community's festival. It would have been great if those who protested raised some money and did it on their own, and in a much organised and dignified way. Nepalis need to get rid of the mentality of extracting resources from the state.

Anand Jha, Texas

● Regarding the president attending the Hindu religious functions—what if we have a Christian president or a Muslim one? As Jha points out, secularism looked like a huge positive leap for new Nepal, but I wonder, like many other Nepalis, if the consequences would be a gift or a punishment for generations to come.

Mahima Adhikary, Sydney

● Jha should have researched what previous governments did in the name of nationalisation and how they looted ethnic people of their rights and property. Remember, even all these national parks were once ethnic property. In the case of Indra Jatra, there was a Guthi. Nevertheless, Jha raises some really good questions on secularism, religion and politics. Well done.

A Shrestha, Kathmandu

● Everybody will ask for their share of the pie. After all, we are about to write a new constitution and the state has already become secular. Newars don't need any state funding. Just give them back their property worth billions of rupees confiscated by the government. Do not be surprised if from now onwards Newars demand the dismantling of the Guthi Sansthan that is responsible for destroying our culture systematically.

Gaganendra Shrestha, Thamel

● The riot was never about the money to sacrifice buffalo (Interesting Times, 'What a riot', #419). The government was not giving this money as a donation to the Newar community, but it is a compensation for the Guthi property seized by the government. So interpreting it as a mere 'buffalo riot' shows your shallow knowledge about this issue. Newars have accepted this for a very long time and never raised their voice against it. But curtailing even that small amount is a violation of the law.

Ram Bhakta, Banepa

● If other ethnic communities receive special consideration in these times, then why not the Newars of Kathmandu? Have they not demonstrated sufficient restraint? What happens if the Newars of the Valley as a group feel disillusioned and decide to shut down the capital? What implications would that have? I

am arguing that at a time when the discourse of this country has begun to encompass an ethnic dimension, one cannot then discriminate by asserting that these subsidies are for 'elite' activities of a certain community such as animal sacrifices during important festivals, which can be jettisoned, and that those subsidies are for more immediate and pressing concerns of another community that cannot be jettisoned.

BP Sharma, Biratnagar

● The riots were far more complex than just about buffalos. Still, Mallika Aryal's conclusion that we now live in a society where anyone who doesn't get their way in Kathmandu simply resorts to violence at the expense of the rest of the country is where the real point lies. Didn't it occur to the people that the Maoists are communist, and ideologically against religious tradition, when they voted for them? Was this really such a big surprise from a group that swears by the leader of a 'cultural revolution'?

Name withheld

● I think there is nothing wrong in cutting the budget for cultural celebrations. Otherwise, how can a poor country like Nepal afford to sponsor events of more than 100 communities? Bhattarai did a good thing by starting to cut from Jatras and other festivals.

Premarshhi Chaudhari, Dhangadi

POWER PLAY

Finally something about augmented flow (Editorial, 'Powering growth', #419) This is where it's at folks: not megawatts but in charging for additional flow of water in the winter. If we are to inundate Nepali land in order to provide increased water to India

during the dry season to increase their agricultural output, India must pay for this service. It's all about the water, not the electricity. Soz is right: India cares first and foremost about the water, and power is just a bonus. If they have high demand for the irrigation rights, we must be willing to charge them for it accordingly. Nepali politicians take note: discuss how much the Indians are willing to pay per cubic metre of augmented flow of water during the dry winter season before discussing the price of electricity per kilowatt.

Name withheld, email

LETTERS

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

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Venting it out in Varanasi

Madhesi politicians need to figure out their vision

VARANASI—At a Nepal-India seminar organised by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs this week, two things stood out: the duplicity, opportunism and lack of clarity of the Madhesi leaders; and the need for India to be more deeply introspective about its security concerns.



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The themes hovered around the consolidation of the peace process in Nepal: rehabilitation, constitution writing, and federalism—as well as on bilateral issues like the open border. The participation was impressive, from retired officials like Hormis Tharakan, the former RAW chief who had a role in the 12-point agreement, to PLA commander Pasang and NC's Gagan Thapa.

The Madhes brigade included Hridayesh Tripathi, Sarita Giri, TMLP's Jitendra Sonal and Sadbhavana's Devendra Yadav. Minister JP Gupta was present in his capacity as a representative of the government.

The most jarring note was Gupta's intervention in the inaugural session. In the presence of Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, JP launched into a diatribe in Hindi against the Nepal government—the government he was representing—for not implementing promises made to Madhesis.

"The Kathmandu rulers are cheating the Madhesi people...they are going back on past agreements...there should be group recruitment of Madhesis in the army..." and he ended the speech with "Jai Madhes, Jai Nepal and Jai Hind."

This was a speech that would have



KUNDA DIXIT

NEPAL PANEL: Nepal's agriculture minister JP Gupta, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee former Indian ambassador to Nepal Deb Mukharji and law minister Deb Gurung at the inaugural session of the Indo-Nepal conference in Varanasi on Saturday.

been fine if JP Gupta was an MJF leader speaking to the streets of Rajbiraj. It may have been OK if he had fleetingly mentioned the Madhes problem. But it was totally inappropriate for a minister to be abusing his own government and pushing his political agenda on foreign soil. If Gupta wants to be a Madhesi radical, he should not have joined the government. He cannot use the state's legitimacy, resources and position to oppose the state in another country.

The incident is representative of the larger failure of Madhesi politics. As veteran academic SD Muni pointed out in Varanasi, the Madhes needs to figure out what its vision is of remaining integrated in Nepal and its leaders also

need to decide how they want to deal with India.

In a statement that left delegates squirming, Sadbhavana's Devendra Yadav told India: "You do not have to invest in security on the border because of us. Madhesis have been unpaid guards for India. We do your job for free. Now please help us against Kathmandu."

It is people like these who fuel Pahadi perceptions that Madhesis are the fifth column in Nepal and leave Madhesis weaker for they have to prove their Nepali loyalty all the time. Madhesis have close ties with people in India, but that doesn't mean their lives revolve around protecting the Indian state. Historically inaccurate

understandings are being foisted because select Madhesi leaders want to act as Indian sycophants. It will not work.

The other striking feature of the discussions was Indian paranoia about Nepal as a base for terror activities. The ISI may be present in Nepal, but for the most part, blaming Nepal and the open border is a ploy by an incompetent and paranoid Indian security establishment to hide its own weaknesses.

The Indian government's intelligence apparatus is in a shambles. India's home minister is too busy changing his wardrobe to pay attention to security. Indian politicians do not know how to deal with rising Muslim alienation within the country. A vicious cycle repeats itself: there is a blast, the media pressure on the establishment to show results increases, cops make arbitrary arrests and engineer fake encounters, leading to more alienation.

In the process, they start planting stories in a pliant media that the suspects have run off to Nepal. The case of the two 'terrorists' arrested in Kathmandu for the 1993 Bombay blasts and extradited to India, but who were innocent and acquitted by the court, proves how hollow some of these claims are.

Nepal must help India when these concerns crop up, but there is no need to bend over backwards to please Indian hawks who are wrong more often than not. In fact, Nepal has a strong case on cross-border crime, given the activities of Madhesi armed groups who have links with political elements in Bihar as well as sections of the Indian state. Given that both sides have concerns, the best way to deal with them is through institutional mechanisms instead of succumbing to the blame game. ●

"History begins anew"

Prime Minsiter Dahal should have also rung the opening bell at the stock exchange on Wall Street

DAVID SASSOON
in NEW YORK

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, wearing a blue business suit resplendent with a red necktie, seemed at ease as he took the stage at the auditorium of New School University last Friday in New York. A number of people jumped to their feet, raised their fists and cheered loudly when he walked in. It turned out they were members of various Marxist organisations who had come to catch a glimpse of their revolutionary hero.

The young fellow with a resemblance to John Lennon sitting to my right, a student from Lafayette College, was one of them. He had travelled by bus for an hour and half to attend the talk. What brings you here? "To see Prachanda," he said, as if he were talking about a rock star, and then explained he was a socialist. He was a very serious sort of person.

"You know I had a funny thought on the way over here," I said to him. "Wouldn't it have been great if they had arranged for Prachanda to ring the opening bell at the stock exchange on Wall Street? Visiting dignitaries do it all



the time."

Even my serious acquaintance couldn't suppress a smile. It soon took over his face. After all, Wall Street—the capital of capitalism—was in crisis, with the fate of Washington's \$700 billion bailout of the financial system hanging in the balance. The irony of an elected Maoist revolutionary ringing that famous bell to start the day's trading was delicious.

I was thinking about it more as a tactic to raise Nepal's visibility

in America. It would have made for one of those short news items beamed to 100 million Americans on the nightly news, a clever way to cut through the clutter. Dahal had already addressed the UN General Assembly earlier in the day, as had countless other heads of state, all equally ignored by the jaded media.

At the New School, Dahal faced a pretty tough crowd. He began his remarks by reading from a prepared text in English for 15 minutes. His primary message:

"History begins anew in Nepal."

He promised the rule of law and freedom of the press, a just, prosperous, stable and peaceful society, relief and rehabilitation, a growth of living standards and an end to governmental corruption—all leading to the socio-economic transformation of the nation. His remarks included an invitation to US investors and a guarantee of cooperation from the nation that was a bridge between two of the biggest markets in the world: China and India. Dahal was not exporting his revolution, he was seeking to import capital investment. That visit to Wall Street was perhaps not a farfetched idea after all.

The real action, though, came with the questions from the audience. Two long lines quickly formed behind each of the two microphones in the aisles. It was time to dig into the details of the just, prosperous and peaceful society-in-the-making. One group of questions centered around how to rein in the YCL and other vigilante groups. Another group of questions came from protectors of the Tibetan cause, who wanted their right for peaceful demonstration guaranteed. And what role for Hinduism? How will

land reform proceed? How will corruption be corrected?

"This is a very sensitive question," Dahal said more than once. In one instance, he said with jocularly: "You are trying to provoke me." In every case, his message was brief: these things will be handled in a very cautious way and balanced in a democratic way. But by the end, there were so many questions that there was no longer time for responses. Questioners were given 30 seconds to say their piece, until finally no one was left on the lines. Then Dahal waved and took his leave.

Aside from the UN General Assembly meeting and the stock market crisis, New York was host to another high stakes circus that week: the Clinton Global Initiative. This year, at the opening plenary, the achievements of the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, were highlighted and celebrated.

After taking the reins of the African nation torn by civil war, she has affected a remarkable transformation. The most telling detail perhaps is this: per capita income has risen from \$100 to \$400 in the two years she has been in office.

That stage where she sat is the Wall Street of global development. Getting there is no media event, no ironic ploy for visibility. The lights go on there every September when the General Assembly is in session, and it's another destination for the Awesome One to put on his agenda on his next visit to New York. ●



Prez in west

Having toured the Kosi-ravaged area of the east, President Ram Baran Yadav this week visited parts of the far west that have been ravaged by flash floods and landslides. Yadav spoke to the families affected by the devastating floods last month, lauded the government’s response to the disaster and promised to follow up on rehabilitation. He also used the opportunity to build on the brand new institution of the constitutional presidency, by rising above day-to-day politics to speak about humanitarian issues, development, communal harmony, the writing of a democratic constitution and of the need to protect Nepal’s “sovereignty and territorial integrity”. Wearing a churidar jacket and achkan on kurta-pajamas, topped by a Dhaka topi, the president mingled among people of Kailali and Kanchanpur in the plains. In the hills, he paid a visit to Bhim Bahadur Bhat of Joroyal in Doti and his two surviving daughters. His wife and four other daughters died in a landslide on 20 September. ●

PRESIDENT’S EYE VIEW: President Yadav looks down on the Karnali Bridge at Chisapani during his visit to flood victims in the farwest this week. The president visited the landslide victims in Doti and the rescue and rehabilitation site at Bhajani in Kailali. He posed with the crew of the presidential helicopter, with its newly-painted Nepali flag.



ALL PICS: KANAK MANI DIXIT

Dasain resolutions

The Beed’s campaign for a sacrifice-free Dasain a couple of years back has now actually reached the streets. In a secular Nepal, the right to infringe on other people’s beliefs and practices has become more important than the right to practise one’s own culture and beliefs. The challenge is to strike a



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

balance between animal rights and the right to worship, between the right to perform rituals in private and the right of reformists who do not want to see blood in the street. Fareed Zakaria in his recent book, *The Post-American World*, describes a new world order of contemporary practices, such as corporate management, diplomacy and Islamic culture. The book paints a picture of a world that will leave religious dogmas and beliefs in place, but will also see the rise of small groups of fundamentalists. Perhaps, for

secular Nepal, celebrating its first Dasain as a republic, now is the time to think about bringing in changes. We should begin by considering whether a week-long holiday for a particular religion needs any amendment. Should the compulsory one-month salary bonus be just a festival bonus that

This year, let’s go beyond khasi and gambling

people should have a choice to take at Christmas, Lhosar or Eid? Should the practice of bribing those in the corridors of power with bottles of booze be stopped, given that it has its roots in royal practices? Dasain also brings about positive mood swings. Even families with few resources plunge into merry-making, knowing full well that debts will be piling up from all the expenses incurred. There is an atmosphere of conspicuous consumption

and, for those who can afford it, a fair amount of wasteful expenditure. In an economy dominated by agriculture, dasain heralds the harvesting season—the time to convert the fruits of one’s labour into money. For traders and the quasi-money lenders of rural Nepal, it is the time to ‘profiteer’ sufficiently to keep them afloat for

the rest of the year. This year, because of the delayed budget, dasain has given us the chance not only to review our personal finances, but also to look at the macro-economic issues. Furthermore, the nice September weather and the fact that dasain falls early this year, has meant that the festival coincides with the arrival of ‘parachute consultants’ trying to figure out the political and economic agenda of the new Maoist-led government in an erstwhile Hindu kingdom. The

romanticised views of some donors for the current leadership may not be a healthy sign. It is important for the donors to test whether our rulers actually mean what they say in their wildly contradictory speeches. Post-Dasain, the challenges are immense. The government’s honeymoon period will be over. How does one increase agricultural productivity through economies of scale and at the same time promote reforms that will fragment land holdings? How does one decentralise the fiscal process when central resources have to be shared? How does one downsize an army that needs to integrate the PLA? How does one promote private enterprise while still trying to pour money down the public enterprise drain? How does one define a public-private enterprise? Will it still be a private enterprise forced to employ party cadres? Let’s wish ourselves luck, and all readers a sacrifice-free dasain. ● www.arthabeed.com

Helping hands

Standard Chartered Bank has donated Rs 500,000 to the Finance Ministry to help flood victims in the Far West and East. The bank was also involved in the Sahayogi Hatharu initiative launched by the *Annapurna Post*, through which it provided a further Rs 200,000 to Kosi flood victims.

Nabil on top

Nabil recently held its AGM and announced that with the past 24 years of operation the bank has paid out Rs 3.37 billion in cash dividends. The bank’s capitalisation was Rs 36 billion at the end of 2007.

Nokia calling

Nokia has launched a global contest for developers to create mobile applications that will help improve people’s lives in three categories. It seeks to develop: mobile solutions to help consumers make environmentally-friendly choices. www.callingallinnovators.com

Genius

Horlicks will hold its preliminary round of the Genius Nepal national students’ quiz in 16 centres across the country. The winning group from each place will go through to the semifinals in Kathmandu in November. Last year, 1,356 students participated in the contest. www.horlicksgenius.com.np

Kamana chha

Kamana Development Bank has opened a second branch within its first year of operations. The branch, in Chipledhunga, Pokhara, offers all basic services, has a savings account offering seven per cent interest, and plans to include SMS and e-banking soon. The original branch is in Tanahu.

Monte Carlo

A clothing brand from India, Monte Carlo, is opening a new outlet in Kumariapati after the success of its first showroom in Kamaladi. The store specialises in sweaters and jackets but also has casual wear, denims and accessories for customers of all ages. The brand currently has 85 stores in India.

Sterling

Mercury Apartments is launching a new apartments development in Dhobighat, Patan, to be called the Sterling Patan. This Golchha Organisation project, designed in Delhi, will have 32 apartments and two penthouses. Construction is expected to complete within 18 months.

Cool air

Him Electronics, part of the Golchha organisation, has introduced AUX air conditioners, available as wall-mounted or free-standing models for maximum flexibility. The company will also provide consultants to advise on installation and positioning, and has service centres in 12 towns in Nepal.

"We will protect democracy"

Interview with Girija Prasad Koirala in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 16-31 October

हिमाल

Where is the country heading with a Maoist-led government?

So far, the government's achievements were based on consensus and the support of the international community. But the Maoists have opted to discard the idea of consensus. The country's politics and peace process are heading in the wrong direction. Political stability and democracy are not possible without economic development. And economic development cannot be achieved unless we are all united. We have lost that chance to work together. The Maoists are now saying that democracy and communism should be fused and socialism is a product of such a fusion. But if you take out democracy from socialism, we will only have communism. The Maoists are taking the country in the wrong direction by claiming to implement an ideology discarded by history.

The NC has still not nominated its parliamentary leaders. How will such a party be an effective opposition?

We have set up a committee which will monitor the activities of the government. The party will not lose its standing, but we need to focus on being more aggressive and vocal against Maoist activities, among other things. We have to go among the people, not just sit in our cosy rooms.

Do you really think that the future of democracy is in danger?

Democracy will never be in danger, but we should be alert to protect it. Consider the present budget: it is too ambitious and could invite anarchy. They are creating a situation where they will eventually be able to blame NC



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

for the budget's failure. They want to disgrace democracy. We have to be strong and make people aware about this. The Maoists are trying to extend their tenure and I suspect that they are trying not to finish the constitution within the stipulated period.

We have to turn their attention towards formulating the constitution, and that may require protests and demonstrations from the people. Otherwise, there will be more anarchy.

Do you feel that the Maoists have deceived you?

They wronged us most during the presidential election. For example, they had agreed to make Madhab Kumar

Nepal the president, but dismissed his candidacy in the end. When the UML turned its back on us at the last minute, I chose Ram Baran Yadav. We talked to other parties, won their co-operation. They betrayed us again during the government formation process. We had asked for the defence ministry but the Maoists did not agree. Later they called me to have a discussion but by then I had lost my trust in them and chose to stay in opposition.

Do you take responsibility for the weaknesses of the government up to the CA elections?

I don't want to rake up old issues. If we get entangled in them, how will we move forward?

What will the future of the Nepal Army be?

I am completely against politicising the army and I feel that the political parties and the parliament should be alert to such a situation. The Maoist combatants can only be integrated if they qualify according to the standards of the army.

What do you think about the idea of federalism?

We started the peace process and established Nepal as a republic peacefully. Now we have to formulate the constitution. The question of federalism must reflect the unique Nepali identity. Geography and development should be prioritised as the basis for federalism.

What do you feel is the achievement of your political journey?

I brought the Maoists into the peace process. The NC holds the credit for this achievement. When the parliament was dissolved, I was the only one who said we could reinstate it. Many thought I had lost my mind, but I made it happen.

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Darjis for darj



Diwas Guragai in Nepal, 5 October

नेपाल

The daura suruwal tailors of Bhedasingh, Kathmandu, are very busy these days. They are so overloaded with work that they can't even take on any new orders. They claim they have never been this busy, and yet the orders continue to flow in. While it is natural for demand for daura suruwal to increase during the festive season, this year it is for quite a different reason: Darjeeling.

Surging Nepali nationalism in Darjeeling has led to mass protests in which Indians of Nepali origin don the traditional daura suruwal and gunyo cholo from 22 October to 22 November

to press their demand for a separate state, Gorkhaland.

Once Darjeeling and eastern Nepal could no longer meet the rising demand, Kathmandu's tailors stepped in. Along with daura-suruwal, the demand for gunyo-cholo has also increased. Niranjan Joshi, proprietor of Puja Store, says he has already sent out 600 pairs of gunyo cholo to Darjeeling. The traditional Nepali topi is also equally in demand. Sagarmatha Daura Suruwal Centre alone has sold 600 topis. Its proprietor, Naresh Kasti, says: "This is possibly the highest sales we've had in the seven generations that we've been in business. It's truly unimaginable."

Three weeks ago, about 10 tailoring centres each dispatched about 500 pairs of daura-suruwal, and are now sending another batch of 500 pairs of daura suruwal by the first week of October. Similarly, about 10,000 bhadgaule and dhaka topi have already reached Darjeeling. There is even a demand for khukuris from Nepal.

However, back home in Nepal, demand for daura suruwal is falling. Even ministers have discarded the national dress.

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मुन्दर नै रछौं, दुक्क भई जिऔं

Wounded tiger

Editorial from Annapurna Post, 2 October

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

As soon as PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal landed at the airport, he called on the NC to take part in the government and work together. The very same day Girija Prasad Koirala rejected the offer. Lately, Koirala has been on the offensive about the Maoists. He worked with the Maoists ever since the signing of the 12-point agreement between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists in New Delhi up to the establishment of Nepal as a republic. But things changed after the presidential election. Because he was not nominated president and was forced to climb down the power ladder, Koirala seems to have started acting like a spiteful, wounded tiger.

The NC has always thought of itself as the only genuine democratic power. Koirala sees the Maoists bent on totalitarianism. The Maoists understand that an extreme version of communism will not be accepted in the 21st century. With 'Prachandapath' as their base, the Maoists want to fuse the strong aspects of federalism to wipe out the weak aspects of a people's republic. But this model is not acceptable to the NC.

Writing the constitution is imperative to ensure Nepal's future. If the parties get entangled in power politics, the people's aspirations will never be achieved. The NC and the Maoists walked hand in hand from the time of the peace process to the period before the presidential elections. This laid the foundation for the state of politics today. Nepal still needs the Koirala-Dahal friendship. The people will benefit only if these democratic and revolutionary forces join hands as the country transforms itself. Those in government have more responsibility to ensure this than the opposition.

"When will they ever light the fire?"
Pot: Constitution

नेपाल Rabindra in Nepal, 5 October



Dolakha's

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA in DOLAKHA

Charikot, 133km east from Kathmandu by road, is the gateway to the recently opened Gaurishankar Trekking Area, encompassing mountain peaks, waterfalls, temples and monasteries in Dolakha district.

Despite its relative proximity to the capital, northern Dolakha feels nearly as remote as Humla. And because of the lack of roads and neglect of the state, it is desperately poor. Almost every household has several members working in Kathmandu or abroad.

Now, thanks to help from the Austrian NGO Eco Himal, Dolakha has become an example of how tourism can inject cash income and help development. Eco Himal began in 1997, helping locals construct tourist lodges to attract trekkers. "We invested in this area because we saw the potential," says Eco Himal's Kurt Luger, "as a tourist destination Gaurishankar can be as popular as the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna regions."

Eco Himal first built a lodge in Bigu, a four-day walk from Charikot up the Tama Kosi river. Since then it has handed over other lodges for local groups to run. "We couldn't have invested so much ourselves, but we've taken the responsibility," says Ranabahadur Thapa Magar, chairman of the Bigu Tourism Development Cooperative.

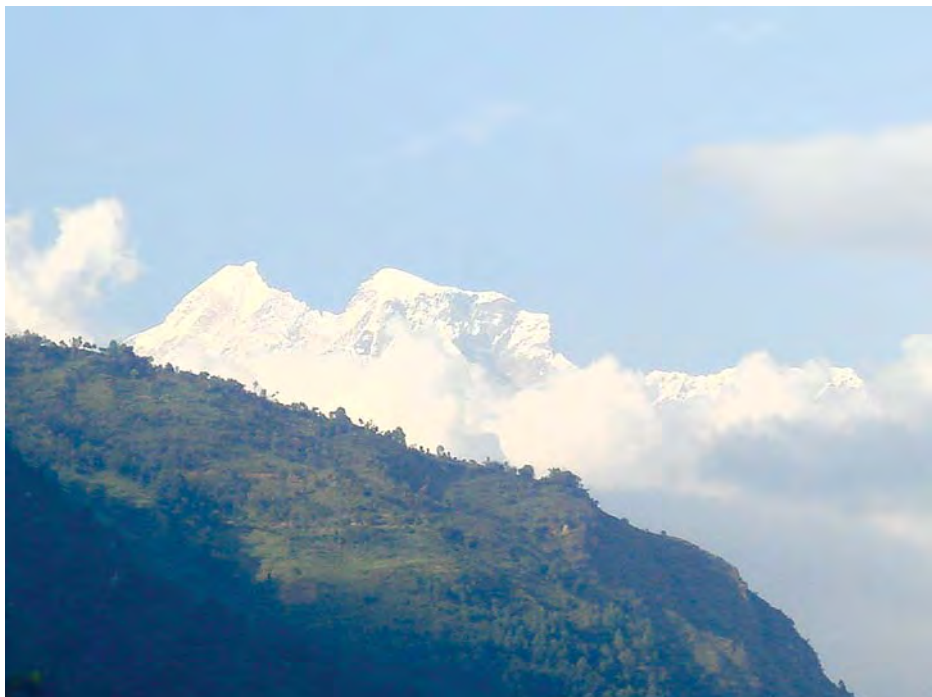
The lodges offer clean rooms, hot showers, a variety of food and local handicrafts. Where there are no lodges, there are campsites. The cooperatives have also worked with Eco Himal to renovate temples, build bridges and improve hiking trails. Increasing numbers of schools now have safe drinking water and hygienic toilets.

HOW TO GET THERE: Kathmandu-Charikot, Charikot-Singati Bajar by bus. Trekkers can choose between five, 10 or 20-day hikes in the area. All the lodges are operated by local residents.



Ten-year-old Sonam (above) appears lost in thought during her first day at the Tashi Chheme Gomba in Bigu. She is one of 12 children who entered the nunnery last week. Built 75 years ago, it is one of the largest in Nepal.

A line of gold-tipped chortens at the Tashi Chheme Gomba.



Gaurishankar (7146m) stands tall and splendid, seen from a hill at Singati Bajar.



A suspension bridge crosses the Sorang River between Loting and Ladok in Dolakha.



Ranabahadur Thapa Magar, chairman of the Bigu Tourism Development Cooperative, (centre) with members.



Even the roads are submerged in water due to the rains, turning the tracks into little waterfalls.



A Thami man from the village of Alamphu in Dolakha district returns home with a chitra woven from bamboo.

hidden charm





Tata Indigo CS (Compact Sedan)

The Tata Indigo CS is smart—a blend of hatchback and saloon whose compact build is handy for Kathmandu’s crowded lanes. The interior feels spacious for the smallest sedan in the world and is kept uncluttered. The rear seats fold down to increase the size of the boot. The 1405cc diesel version comes with a charcoal-black interior while the economical 1193cc petrol version comes with a beige interior. The car, who’s official distributor is Sipradi Trading, also comes equipped with a new front grille and headlamps, along with a thinner rear bumper for a smaller profile. Despite its name, the Indigo CS is available in six different exterior colors. This is a relatively cheap car, ideal for the first-time buyer.

Naza Forza

The Forza, a Malaysian subcompact offering, is the updated version of the Naza Sutera. Although still powered by a 1.1-litre engine, the 1,075cc car comes with all power options and safety features. Buyers can choose from an array of six shades of this fuel-efficient automobile. Its distributor, Alpine Motors Company, offers two years warranty and five free servicings. Spare parts are also easily available.



Need for speed



Kia Sportage

The all new Kia Sportage compact SUV, whose sole distributor is Continental Trading Enterprises, tries to appear youthful and adventurous, and it is bulky enough to be noticed. Kia claims the new model has improved traction and is equally at home performing the city crawl as it is on the open road and off-road. Inside are smart storage compartments and reclining rear seats along with all the safety requirements: central locking and keyless entry. There are 2.0 litre inline four cylinder petrol and common rail diesel engine versions. Sportage is available in six colours.

So what if there’s no space on the roads? So what if they are all potholed? So what if traffic jams make getting from Dhulikhel to Kathmandu three hours? Car sales are booming like never before.

Car prices are coming down and sales have never been better. Upwardly mobile urbanites are graduating from motorcycles to cars in greater numbers. With better paying jobs and higher disposable incomes, they are not prepared to wait. And thanks to generous finance schemes, they don’t have to. Competition is prompting dealers to offer better after-sales service and many are upgrading their maintenance facilities.

“Nepalis are working harder and are willing to invest in cars,” Anup Baral of Sipradi Trading, the agent for Tata in Nepal, told *Nepali Times*. “The fuel situation is worrisome and the market is unpredictable, but we are seeing higher sales than in 2006.”



Hyundai i10

The Hyundai i10 supermini, distributed by AVCO international in Nepal, offers choice: five models are available in 10 colours. The i10 Era model is powered by a 1.1 litre petrol engine, while the i10 Magna is powered by 1.2 litre engine. The two-tone beige interior looks good and is comfortable, with front and rear arm rests and space to fit five adults comfortably. Hyundai has paid attention to safety with front airbags and an impact-sensing automatic door unlocking mechanism among other features. The car also won an award for the Indian car of the year 2008.



Skoda Laura

If you want soft leather seats, enough leg room to stretch out, and a silky smooth engine, check out the luxurious 1,896cc Laura. This 1.9-litre diesel-powered car has won numerous awards in Europe and is fitted with a ‘rough road’ package of upgraded shock absorbers, protective underbody coating and 160mm ground clearance to cope with Nepal’s potholes. Morang Auto Works, the distributor of Laura, has a fully equipped workshop for its servicing.



Special Dasain and Tihar Festival Offer:
Padma Shree Private Limited offers one electric bike free of cost (model TDR64ZWG) in each purchase of a Renault Logan. Nemlink Int. Traders will be offering a Perodua Scheme in which 6 Installments is free from any interest.



SsangYong Actyon

The newly launched Actyon A200XDi SUV replaces the unhandsome Musso. Hansraj Hulaschand, the SsangYong Motors authorised distributor in Nepal, says the fuel-efficient 2000cc advanced XDi 2.0-litre diesel engine earns the car its green credentials. It comes with CD player, power steering and electric windows and rear-view mirrors as standard, and with audio control on the steering wheel.



Perodua Viva

Local distributor NemLink International Traders is offering this sleek, fuel-efficient, Malaysian supermini in three different sizes: 660cc, 850cc and 1.0 litres. Front airbags, a collapsible steering column, anti-lock brakes, alarm and central locking are standard—and signs of Perodua's attention to safety. With engines enhanced by Dynamic Variable Valve Timing, Double Overhead Camshaft and Electronic Fuel Injection, the performance is high. Colours range from glittering silver to passion red.



2009 Subaru Forester

The new Forester is bigger—and claims to be better—than the old model. This SUV remains as practical as ever, and is well powered by a turbo-charged 2.5-litre engine with four-speed automatic gearbox. It has the clearance for Nepal's rough roads, a spacious interior and a huge boot. The roaring machine is fitted with standard safety options. Its distributor here is Vijaya Motors.

Mahindra Renault Logan

It's already won the Business Standard Motoring Jury Award 2008. Its high quality has also led the J D Power Asia Pacific 2007 India Initial Quality Study to rank the Logan as 'Best Entry Midsize Car in Initial Quality'. This product of a joint venture between Renault and Mahindra is affordable, reliable and low-maintenance. This is also one of the safest cars as it has an anti-lock braking system with an electronic brake force distribution. Local distributor Agni is offering the car in a 1.4-litre petrol and a 1.5-litre diesel version. It also features state-of-the art technology such as advanced in-built tachometer.

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Living beyond one's means

Foreign aid has hardly altered Nepal's state of under-development in its struggle for modernisation. From financing the First Five Year Plan in 1951, foreign aid accounted for half of the capital expenditures in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007). Almost three-fourths of the capital expenditures in the current Three Year Interim Plan up to 2010 are expected to be borne by external grants and loans.



BOOKS

Shyamal K Shrestha

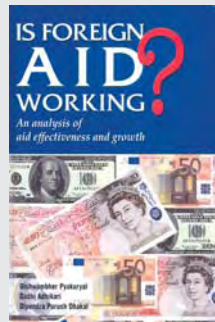
Dependence on foreign aid suggests that Nepal's economy still has a long way to go in attaining self-reliance as government revenues go mostly towards meeting consumption, which doesn't leave much for investment. The share of regular expenditure in the GDP is almost double to that of capital expenditure, with foreign aid financing most of the latter. Current saving levels are as high as 30 per cent of GDP but stagnant investment undermines growth, leaving little resources to meet the debt burden. Nepal's external public debt fell sharply from half of GDP in 2002 to 30 per cent in 2007. But external debt service (as per cent of exports of goods and non-food services) climbed from eight to 11 per cent, reflecting a crisis-ridden export sector and overall economic languor.

Do donors help or hinder self-reliance and development?

Aid can complement national poverty reduction and growth strategies in low-income countries, but there are grounds to believe that this may not be so. The market economy advocates claim that the receipt of concessional resources delays self-reliance on the part of the recipient nation, substitutes for domestic saving, fosters *dirigisme* and postpones much needed policy reforms.

Left leaning economists believe that aid perpetuates dependency, props up authoritarian regimes and perverts domestic development. Despite these extreme views 'Does aid work?' may be considered largely an empirical question. Studies by aid agencies conclude that most aid does indeed 'work'. Evaluations by the World Bank, the ADB and the Inter-American Development Bank for the period 1970-2000 show that a majority of their loans fully met their objectives.

A three-member team made up of Bishwambher Pyakuryal, Dadhi Adhikari and Dipendra Purush Dhakal has made an attempt to study the Nepal experience by updating their background document, Nepal's Foreign Aid Policy 2002. *Is Foreign Aid Working? An analysis of aid effectiveness and growth* compiles past evidence and raises pertinent issues in the domestic context. Based on a time series data from 1975-1994, Bikas Joshi's 1996 research reveals that foreign aid contributed positively to growth in Nepal. Another study by World Bank economist David Dollar suggests that aid volumes to Nepal were insignificant to trigger any significant positive change in per capita GDP largely due to a weak domestic policy environment.



Is Foreign Aid Working? An analysis of aid effectiveness and growth
Bishwambher Pyakuryal, Dadhi Adhikari and Dipendra Purush Dhakal
118 pages
NRs 550
Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu 2008

It is unlikely that Nepal would have been able to achieve its current income levels in the absence of physical infrastructure, financed mostly by foreign aid. These public goods contributed in overcoming geographical barriers, establishing markets, and provided communication, drinking water, education, energy, health, and transport facilities. Skills and technology constitute hidden externalities aiding national capabilities.

However, domestic economic mismanagement aggravates aid dependency. Business principles are often subservient to personal, group, and party interests in Nepal's case. Under both the Panchayat (1960-85) and liberalisation (after 1985) domestic economic mismanagement bred externally-driven solutions often at high cost to the public exchequer as well as compromised domestic policy-making space.

For instance, state-owned banks resorted to politically-motivated lending, misallocating scarce resources while making its main goal of ensuring financial inclusion difficult to attain. Unwarranted government interference in the industrial sector undermined the performance of public enterprises, culminating in stunted industrialisation. A mix of feudal land tenure system and low investments slowed the modernisation of the largely traditional agricultural sector. Unless sound business principles are followed, it won't matter which model of economic reform is adopted. However, greater domestic ownership can generate wealth, empower excluded sections of the population, and reduce deprivation as the successes of community forestry, primary education and adult literacy, and rural microfinance attest.

With their rich experience as Nepal's prominent economists and policy makers, the authors identify leading issues in Nepal's foreign aid. Despite the sometimes plodding text and desultory arguments, this is a subject that matters greatly to make the promised 'economic revolution' a reality. ●

Aid and influence

Except for emergency humanitarian assistance, no aid is completely altruistic. Overseas development assistance always has a geo-political, military or commercial motive. Some of this influence is harmless, but much of the aid in the past 50 years has ended up benefiting the donor rather than the recipient. Just like war is politics by another means, foreign aid is foreign relations by other means.

Seeing 'Gift of the Government of India' painted in large letters on the sides of the commuter buses for the employees of the Constituent Assembly secretariat it is clear that aid is also public relations, and most donors want to make a big song and dance about having been so generous.

Veteran international civil servant, Stephen Browne, in his book *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* takes a somewhat cynical look at foreign aid over the ages, highlighting the ivory tower planning of non-participatory aid policy. But Browne also presents solutions: promoting neutral and beneficial schemes like fair trade, debt-cancellation, peace-building and improved governance.

Developing countries also have plenty of in-country examples of where aid has worked and lifted communities out of dependency. Countries of the south can also learn from each other with successes in social mobilisation and community participation in development. Browne also makes a suggestion that may be pertinent for Nepal: the government should be more choosy about aid and not just take everything that comes along.

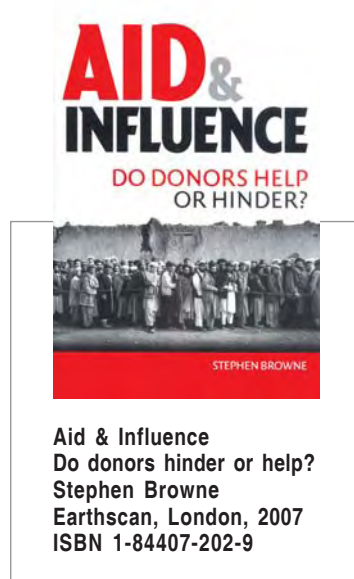
The book has a chapter on donors from the South, looking at the little-examined subject of regional powers which are major recipients of western development assistance themselves projecting 'soft power' through aid for infrastructure and development in neighbouring poor countries. The OECD estimates that ten per cent of aid (up to \$10 billion a year) is between countries of the south.

Although published 10 years ago, *The Economics of Development Assistance: Japan's ODA in a Symbiotic World* is still

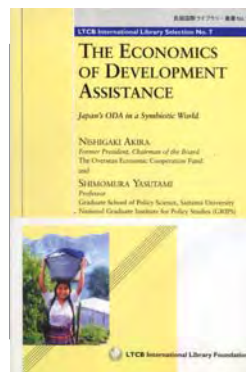
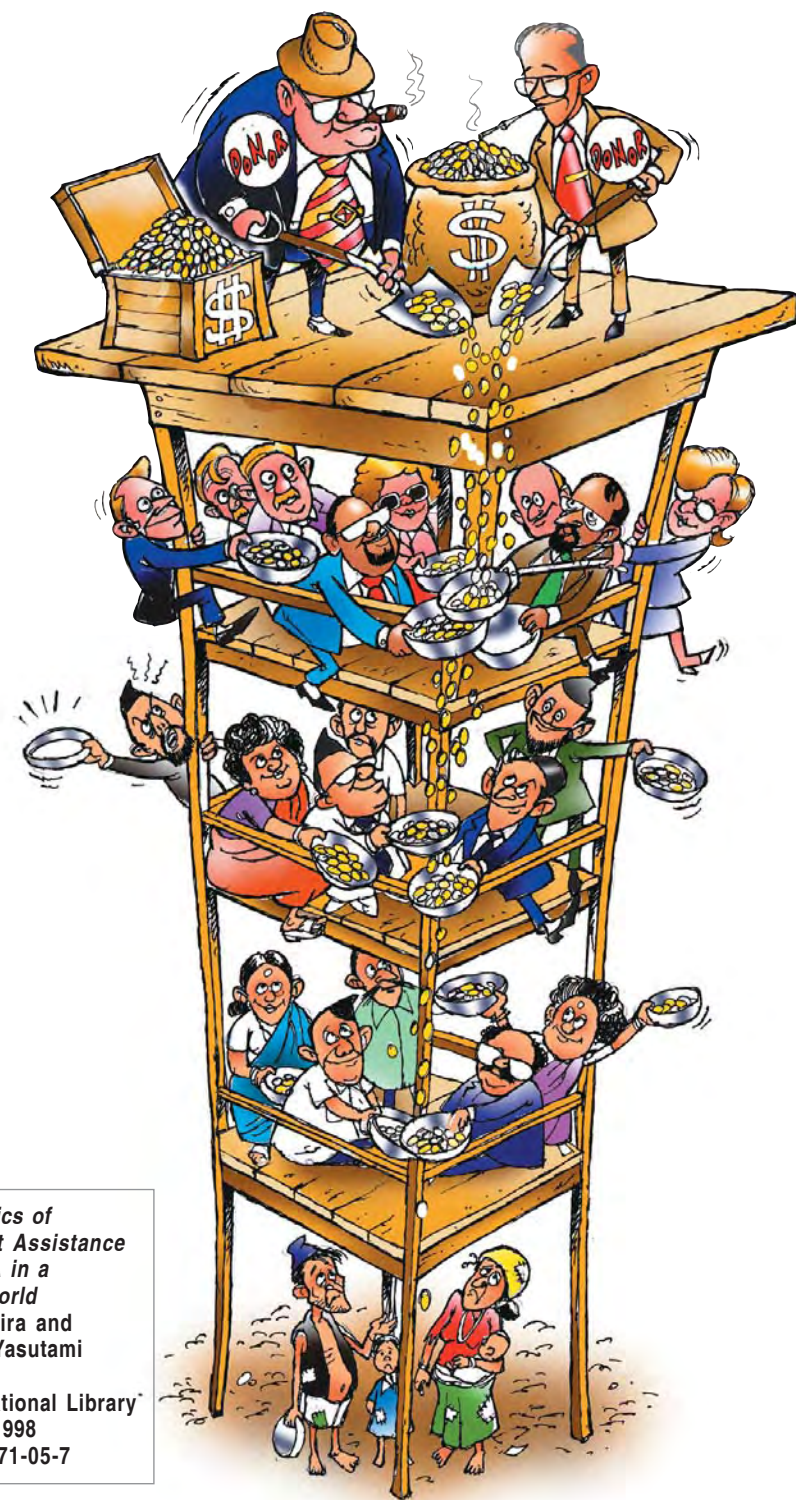
a useful overview of Japanese development assistance. Japan overtook the United States to become the world's largest donor on a net disbursement basis in 1992. What is dramatic is that in 1965 Japan ranked second only to India as the largest borrower from the World Bank.

Authors Nishigaki Akira and Shimomura Yasutami are Japanese ODA experts with past experience in government and have made a thorough academic study in this translation of their book. They examine the shifts of Japan's aid policy from the 'tied aid' on large infrastructure projects in the past to a more sophisticated approach towards aid policy and the aid fatigue that accompanied an economic slowdown in Japan.

The philosophy of Japanese aid shifted along the way to promote self-help efforts, which the authors say are rooted in Japan's own post-war modernisation process. The authors do try to either play down or justify the 'tied aid' component of Japanese



development assistance, saying that 80 per cent of Japanese aid in 1993 was already 'untied' compared with only 30 per cent for France, UK and the United States in that year. The proportion of Japanese companies that win yen loans for infrastructure assistance has gone down in the past decade, but larger projects are still Japanese-dominated. ●
Kunda Dixit



The Economics of Development Assistance: Japan's ODA in a Symbiotic World
Nishigaki Akira
Former President, Chairman of the Board,
The Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund,
and
Shimomura Yasutami
Professor,
Graduate School of Policy Science, Saitama University
Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, JICA
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Aid doesn't reach the ultra-poor

ABID ASLAM
in WASHINGTON

Developing countries have raised large numbers of their people above the poverty line but few of the ultra poor 162 million people in the world have benefited, says a report from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The findings, based on household survey data from 20 developing countries, constitute a wake-up call for the international aid establishment and national leaders.

The thinktank urges aid officials to tailor anti-poverty efforts to fit the specific needs of the ultra poor. Needed initiatives include basic training in literacy, numeracy, and other skills required to make use of microcredit, which has helped many poor people but remains beyond the reach of the poorest, said Akhter Ahmed, lead author of the report.

Policies that make outcasts of citizens because of their ethnicity or religion also must be scrapped: The report says the ultra poor overwhelmingly come from minority or, in the case of India, lower-caste communities.

Scattered about the economic fringe, the ultra poor are so numerous that were they gathered in a single country, it would rank as the world's seventh most populous. This country would be overwhelmingly rural and lack roads connecting scattered hamlets to market towns. It would be populated almost entirely by illiterate and innumerate outcasts whose physical strength and stamina is drained by malnutrition.

In all, some 969 million people, nearly one-sixth of all people on the planet, fall below the dollar-a-day poverty line. Half of them live on at least 75 cents a day and about one-third live on between 50 cents and 75 cents. The ultra poor make up 17 per cent of the poor.

Nearly 20 million, or 12 per cent, of the world's ultra poor live in South Asia. The region saw economic growth to rival East Asia and the Pacific in 1990-2004 but failed to parlay this into gains for its poorest people. In 1990, the two Asian regions had the same number of people living on less than a dollar a day, IFPRI says. By 2004, East Asia and the Pacific had lifted 307 million people out of poverty. South Asia managed to improve the lot of only 33 million.

Existing measures to promote income growth need to be buttressed with measures that reduce the risks and costs that ultra poor people incur in daily life and that cut them off from economic opportunity. Simply focussing on growth will not be enough, the report says. ●

No bailout for the world's poorest

THALIF DEEN at the UN

As a spreading financial crisis threatens to deepen the economic recession in the United States, the news of an unprecedented 700-billion-dollar bailout package reverberated through the corridors of the UN this week when over 100 world leaders gathered in New York for the annual General Assembly.

At a time when the United Nations is seeking increased financial assistance from rich nations to help developing countries meet the faltering Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015, the current US economic crisis is expected to be a major setback.

Addressing delegates last week, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that the current gloomy outlook threatens the well-being of billions of people, especially the poorest of the poor and compounds the damage caused by the higher prices for food and fuel. Ban has called for \$72 billion per year in additional external financing to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

As one Asian delegate put it: "The 72 billion is peanuts compared to the 700 billion the White House wants to dish out to save some of the Wall Street firms from going belly up."

Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman of Nicaragua, the newly-elected president of the General Assembly, warned that the current financial crisis will have "very serious consequences" that will impede the significant progress, "if indeed any progress is made", towards the targets established by the MDGs.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg told delegates that "money doesn't seem to be a problem, when the problem is money".

As the economic meltdown in the United States continues, the casualties are piling up both among commercial and investment banks: Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers and Washington Mutual (allowed to collapse with no government bailout); American International Group, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley (allowed to survive with emergency financial assistance, including some from the government). Merrill Lynch has been folded into Bank of America and Citigroup has



DAMBER KRISHNA SHRESTHA

taken over Wachovia Bank.

As the entire U.S. economic edifice is in danger of collapsing, the White House has been called upon to save some of the biggest financial institutions in the country and, at the same time, redress the excesses of Wall Street business tycoons who earned multi-million-dollar salaries and extravagant bonuses.

The greed factor in the crisis is that these same tycoons, who are responsible for mismanaging their companies, still insist on continuing with their same lavish lifestyles and lofty salaries even after the massive taxpayer-funded bailout.

But these salaries and bonuses are likely to be curbed as part a return for the bailout package.

Addressing the 192-member General Assembly last week, the President of Brazil Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said the economy of any country is "too serious an undertaking to be left in the hands of speculators". He added: "We must not allow the burden of the boundless greed of a few to be shouldered by all." ● (IPS)

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Building Identity

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Boxed up

For the serious film enthusiast, buying a boxed collection of one director's work is an alluring, yet uncertain, proposition. On the one hand, for your money, you get several films that you would probably buy anyway, with a whole lot extra thrown in besides. On the other, the attractive exterior sometimes hides shoddily organised content, absent subtitles and below-par quality. However, there are treasures to be found nestling among the junk: perhaps a hard-to-find favorite or even a title you have never heard of.

One illustrative find is the Studio Ghibli collection I came across. Studio Ghibli is synonymous with the name **Hayao Miyazaki**, one of the world's most respected animators and creator of some of Japan's



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D'Silva

most popular animated characters. Studio Ghibli's box-office shattering creations and its huge influence have earned Miyazaki the apt, if

perhaps chauvinistic, label of the Walt Disney of Japan. But his work has a level of sophistication that is not often found among his counterparts in western popular animation, even while it resonates with the experience and tastes of a young audience.

In his meticulously crafted, fully realised, fantastical worlds, populated with complex characters, Miyazaki draws on themes of mankind's uneasy relationship with nature, our tendency for war and violence and our resilience and hope that he seems to believe will preserve us from our own disasters. He constantly probes the problematic relations between the world of modernity and the beleaguered spirit world it has supplanted. Gods and spirits operate juxtaposed with our world, and few humans can recognise them, let alone placate or relate to them. Miyazaki provides the requisite sense of wonder that we expect from good animation, but often he also does something more, to leave us pondering over the serious themes that inform his little universes and weigh heavily on our big world.

The works of Miyazaki, Hitchcock and Almodóvar

You would be hard-pressed to find a collection as comprehensive as the one dedicated to **Alfred Hitchcock**: a whopping five-disc set with around 50 titles amounting to dozens of hours of screening time. Hitchcock needs no introduction, being one of the most widely recognised directors in the history of cinema (partly, it must be said, due to his self-promotion and showmanship). Hitchcock's gripping suspense thrillers remain entertaining and accessible even half a century after they were made. The collection is well representative of his career, with material from both sides of the Atlantic and from every decade of his working life, including episodes of the television show *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. Best of all, the collection covers his most important period—the 1950s—very well, with *Rear Window* (1954) and *North by Northwest* (1959) among others.

The **Pedro Almodóvar** collection is populated by women careering wildly along the edge of a precipice to disaster and men driven by obsessive desires. The films are entertaining, campy and stylish, even when dark and despairing. I find a thread of continuity stretching between Hitchcock and Almodóvar: the shared experimentation with film noir and the exploration of psychoses and existentialism. Clearly a debt is owed, but an Almodóvar film exists in another moral universe: absent is the judgment that Hitchcock's films render on their outcasts.

While Hitchcock's characters are cast as fugitives by circumstance, only to be rehabilitated before the end, Almodóvar's aren't framed innocents but the real McCoy, lobbying fierce, if futile, attacks on the structures of society. Almodóvar embraces the subversive, identifies with the rejected, and welcomes our human foibles.

The Pedro Almodóvar collection includes most of his oeuvre, including the early, flawed and outrageous *Pepi, Luci, Bom & Other Girls on the Heap* (1980) and real gems like *Women on the Verge of Nervous Breakdown* (1988), but sadly *Volver* (2006), his most recent work, is bereft of English subtitles (like others in this collection). The old adage applies: buyer beware. ●

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Reel revolutions

Tired plots from Maoist filmmakers fail to attract audiences

It's 8AM on a weekday morning and just along the street from the vacant Narayanhiti palace, the sound of frenzied cheering erupts from the packed Biswa Jyoti cinema hall. On the big screen, Maoist cadres are gloriously storming a prison to free their friends to the familiar beat of the *Mission Impossible* theme tune.

The event is a special screening of *Jana Yuddha*, a film produced by the Maoists which portrays, in scene after scene for nearly three hours, the Maoists' struggle to liberate the people from the clutches of a corrupt state, which is repeatedly depicted as the perpetrator of

unwarranted violence against the powerless.

This portrayal is neither unexpected nor overly



PHILM FARE
Surabhi Pudasaini

misleading. As with leftist revolutions elsewhere, the armed struggle in Nepal was a response to the state's failure to do its job. But the villains of this film are small-time district officials, not the wider oppressive state against which Marxist dogma rails. Land owners and businessmen—the usual culprits from the feudal or capitalist classes—do not appear in the film.

Even after three hours, and despite the locale, there is little to be learnt of the specific Nepali context of the conflict. If one were to alter the set, cast and language, *Jana Yuddha* (see pic) could just as easily be about the Naxalites of Chhattisgarh or Peru's Shining Path.

Such generalised representations of the decade-long conflict dominate the growing oeuvre of Maoist cinema that has appeared since the party entered mainstream politics in 2006. Films such as *Awaaz* ('Voice'), *Shahid* ('Martyr') and *Paribartan* ('Change') all revisit the same old themes.

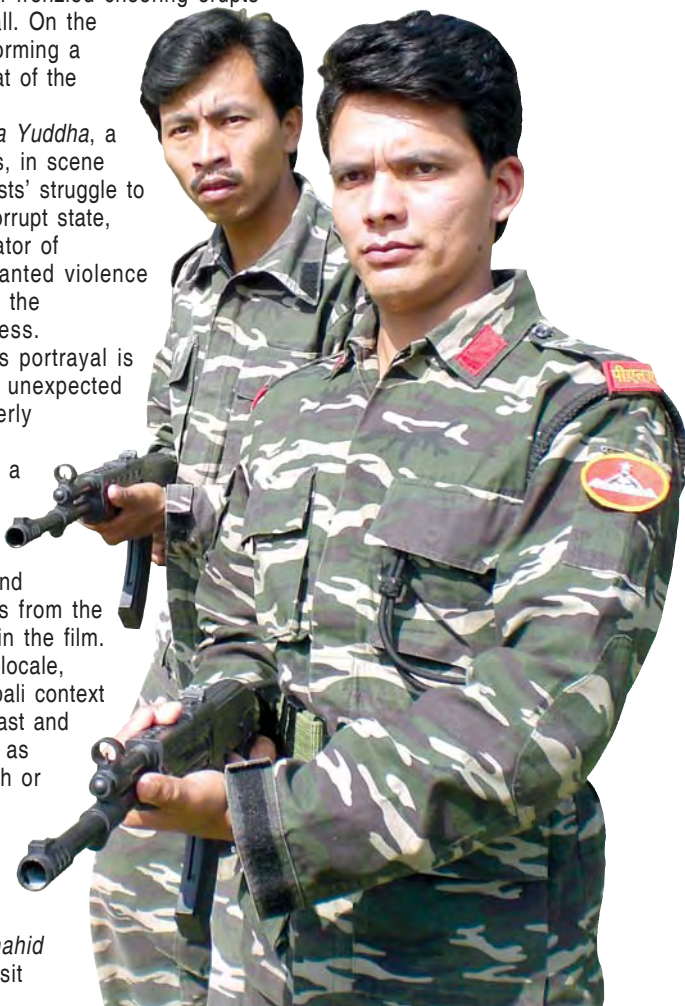
As commercial undertakings, these films were created to entertain, to tug at emotions or propagandise, not to explore the nuances of the conflict. The prominence of romance in many of the narratives, complete with dance numbers to revolutionary lyrics, certainly supports this view.

But the movies haven't been commercially successful. While the special screenings organised by the Maoists are well attended, regular sales of both theatre tickets and DVDs have been less than spectacular. This is not surprising. The Nepali film industry is totally overshadowed by the enormously successful productions that pour out of the vast Bollywood machine.

Maoist-produced films released thus far do not even outshine the average Nepali film in terms of acting, cinematography or script, so most viewers have little reason to watch them. The Maoist producers and directors don't seem to realise that they might find a larger audience if they simply delved a bit deeper into the many issues surrounding the actual conflict. This is being attempted by director KP Pathak in his film *Maina*, which is based on the real-life story of Maina Sunar. The movie is due for release next month.

Two years have passed since the war ended but political stability seems a distant aspiration. The country has yet to begin examining the impact the conflict had on society. As the country struggles forward, popular culture can and should play a significant role in sparking much-needed public dialogue.

The Maoist movies could have offered much more than other movies. If these revolution films were to even begin to show the complexities of the last decade of war, this might not only help them sell more tickets and DVDs, but also help heal some wounds. ●



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Uniformly smart



KIRAN PANDAY

PRAVAT J GURUNG

You can see them at the cinema, on the sidewalks, inside micros, on the backs of speeding motorcycles: boys and girls with modified college uniform.

The boys can't do much with their trousers and shirts, but with the girls, the skirts have edged higher and higher and long socks have come into vogue. Influenced by wildly popular South Korean teledramas and the proliferation of branded apparel, shoes and hand bags, Kathmandu's youth are not letting their college uniforms get in the way of their individualism.

Television and college uniforms have transformed fashion in Kathmandu

There isn't much the parents seem to be able to do about this. And at a time of cut-throat competition, colleges appear secretly happy that the more risqué the dress code, the more enrolments they get. Said one 10+2 principal: "Girls chose colleges with daring uniforms, and if the girls are there the boys come automatically."

Officially, colleges in

Kathmandu do not allow students to individualise their clothing and take strict action against it, but the hemlines seem to go up as soon as the girls are outside the college gates.

Suyash, a student, says the media has made his peers pay more attention to fashion. But fellow student Anisha doesn't like the competition to experiment with uniforms: "Fashion is not for college students. We have the whole day to show how fashionable we are but we have to be properly dressed when we are in school."

Sonam says it's the South Korean films such as *My Sassy Girl* and *My Tutor Friend*, whose young stars are widely

imitated, as can be seen from Sonam's own hairstyle. It seems youngsters are very easy to lure and fashion houses rely on them to spread new ideas.

Naresh P Shrestha, principal of Prime College in Naya Bajar takes a dim view of all this. "We have uniforms so that everyone is uniform," he said, "all this modification will also harm a student's future career."

The students appear to want to be part of a group where they judge each other by what they wear and which mobile phones they carry. But has the alteration of uniforms gone too far?

"Absolutely not," says Sujita. "A big no. We should be allowed to wear our uniforms the way we want to and be comfortable, but of course a certain limitation should be enforced by the college."

Sujita adds: "We should be given a standard size to which the pants can be modified and to what extent can the skirts be short."

Ultimately, most students want to fit into a crowd and show that they are cool enough to be in the group. This is seen particularly when students pass out from school and move to college. They may be insecure,

there is peer pressure to conform and many don't know the real value of money.

Some colleges hold special sessions with parents when new students are admitted where the rules about uniforms are explained. When a student is not properly dressed, initially, they are given warnings and ultimately the parents are called. ●

Café Kantipur



ANUP PRAKASH

The first season of one of Kantipur Television's more popular shows for youngsters, *Café Kantipur*, has come to an end. The show revolved around six friends and a café called Café Kantipur, much like the hit American sitcom, *Friends*.

Prachanda Shrestha and Reecha Sharma admit the show has made an impact on urban youth fashion, but that they themselves, would never wear modified college uniforms they wear in college.

"I wear dresses on the show that I am not comfortable in, and I don't dare wear them outside," says Reecha, "Students should not follow on-screen fashion because on-screen, it's more

about appealing to the viewers. One's got to give respect to their uniform."

Assistant director, Prachanda Shrestha, says, "Fashion is all about seeking attention. It's an individual choice and we are not opposing anyone."

Is adolescent fashion influenced by television, or does college fashion influence television? When college girls wear short skirts, are they imitating what they see in the new teleserial *College*? Or are the producers of *College* just duplicating what they see on the streets outside the colleges in the capital?

In the past year, college fashion in Kathmandu has seen a transformation from knee-length pleated skirts to its stylish mini version and socks that come up to the thighs.



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Down and dirty

Bagmati lovers turn out in force for a clean-up

The all-pervading stench clings to you long after you've crossed the Bagmati Bridge. It's scarcely believable that this toxic soup of garbage and raw sewage is the holy water that is supposed to purify bodies and souls. Previous efforts to stop the pollution and clean up the river have never been successful.

The problem is so vast that the government needs to be involved, but that hasn't stopped pressure groups like Friends of the Bagmati and other activists from raising awareness and organising clean-ups. Friends of the Bagmati marked the 16th global Clean Up the World Campaign on 28 September by teaming up with the Australian Embassy to help tidy up the banks of the Bagmati at Teku.

While one may be skeptical of what difference one day of cleaning could make to this terminally ill river, it could at least generate some awareness of the problem.

Australian ambassador Graeme Lade (*in picture*) who lent a hand by picking up plastic litter said: "This day is about encouraging people to understand the importance of protecting their environment. Let's hope it will last all year and not just one day."



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

The Clean Up The World campaign started in 1993 as a smaller, national project in Australia, but founder Ian Kiernan found international interest overwhelming. Today, more than 35 million people in about 120 countries take part every September to encourage local communities to start conserving and cleaning up the environment around them.

The Bagmati is one of the most polluted places in Nepal, so for Kedar Bhakta Shrestha, chairman of the Friends of the Bagmati, it was the obvious place to begin: "Starting the campaign here would be a good way of encouraging people to clean up their own communities."

Defying a bandh, more than 200 people from different organisations—including the Nepal Scouts, Nagarpalika, Toyota, Agni Corporation, the Rotary Club and Nepal Police—turned out to take part in the campaign.

Keshav Mathema, another member of the Friends of the Bagmati said the larger problem of city sewage emptying into the river had to be stopped. "The major problem of sewage and drainage has to be addressed to give the Bagmati back its natural, holy character." ●
Shradha Basnyat



Mero jutta ho Nepali

PAAVAN MATHEMA

Dasain is usually the time Nepalis buy new clothes and shoes. This festive season, it is Made in Nepal shoes that are flying off the shelves.

If someone had asked you 10 years ago to name a Nepali shoe brand, you would have scratched your head. Today, BF Deerhill, Shikhar and Goldstar are all familiar brands that are crowding out imported shoes with lower prices and improved quality.

The Nepali shoe industry has certainly come a long way since the days of the now departed state-run Bansbari shoe factory. Its momentary success did at least prove that there is a market for locally-made shoes if the quality and price are right. Newcomers to the shoe market are now hard at work to re-establish the lost prestige of the 'Made in Nepal' label.

"Previously, we struggled just to survive," says Ram Krishna Prasai, managing director of Shikhar Shoes, "but now we can proudly say that we are growing, and growing dynamically."

Today there are about 60 registered shoe manufacturers in Nepal, with perhaps another 100 operating informally, and the industry estimates that local brands now account for about 35 per cent of the local

footwear market. Retailers, once reluctant to sell locally made shoes, are now eager to stock them.

And it's not just the standard selection of leather shoes, as many Nepalis think. Domestic manufacturers are now producing a wide variety of sports shoes, ladies' footwear and casual sandals.

"High quality, competitive designs and a price range that fits most Nepali pockets" are the

Despite these improvements, many shoes sold here are still wrongly labelled and mis-sold. "A lot of shoes make it to the Nepali market illegally, and there seems to be an unhealthy competition between the registered manufacturers and the non-registered sector," says Surendra Dahal of the Leather Footwear and Goods Manufacturers Association.

While the domestic market is booming, local shoe

This Dasain, Nepali shoe manufacturers have good reason to be cheerful

reasons for this new-found success, according to Hom Nath Upadhyaya, managing director of BF Deerhill Shoes. Initially, the market was dominated by cheap and shoddy Chinese shoes which often quickly fell apart. Manufacturers here say customers have now learnt that Nepali shoes, though more expensive than the Chinese models, last longer and still undercut prices of shoes from elsewhere.

Another change is that local manufacturers and retailers are now marketing their products more aggressively through advertising and eye-catching promotions. Many come with a warranty which has increased their credibility among consumers.

manufacturers have made little headway in finding export markets. About 70 per cent the raw materials still need to be imported, and there has to be an improvement in quality before Nepal can compete with Vietnam, Indonesia and Sri Lanka as a manufacturing base for designer shoes.

Officially, only one Nepali brand, Goldstar, is currently exported to India. In fact Goldstar is so popular in Nepal and India that the Chinese have started making knock-off Goldstars to sell in Nepal.

Says Goldstar's Rajan Shrestha: "Our sales are growing at 10 percent a year and there is a huge market right next door for our shoes." ●

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- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
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- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **TGIF** with live band EPIC every Friday, 7-10PM, Jazzabell Café. 2114075
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour** 5-7PM, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Wok & Curry** every Wednesday at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mariano and his band from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Organic Salad Bar and Steak** at Jalan Jalan restaurant every Friday from 6PM, Rs 650
- ❖ **Ily Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangrila, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Café. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and café item** with live band every Friday at Vintage Café and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg.
- ❖ **Unlimited wine offer** for Rs 990 at La Maison wine and cigar lounge. 9841333628
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619

For inclusion in the listing send information to [editors\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:editors(at)nepalitimes.com)

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

So it's October, and we saw the monsoon give its dying gasp this week. As has been the trend in the past 10 years, the monsoon departure date is being pushed back by two weeks and also marked by high-intensity cloudbursts. The total monsoon precipitation and monthly totals at most stations were normal or above average. In September, Kathmandu received nearly 300mm of rain, well above its normal monthly quota of 190mm. Interestingly, most of the rain fell in the span of a few hours last week. Similar patterns were reported from flood-hit areas of mid and far west Nepal where a few hours of intense rain, after months of below-quota rainfall, triggered heavy landslides and huge floods. The satellite picture on Wednesday afternoon shows a north-south cloud band over far west Nepal gradually being pushed eastwards by nascent westerlies. The Valley is likely to receive light night-time showers with misty mornings and sunny, breezy afternoons during Dasain.



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(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

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हरेक विहान ५:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना शिक्षा र स्वास्थ्य मनोरञ्जनका लागि भरपर्दो साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज

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KESHAV THOKER

YESTERDAY'S MAN: Ex-king Gyanendra being greeted by a well-wisher at his first public appearance after vacating Naryanhiti at the Shyamashyama Dham in Thimi on Thursday.



KIRAN PANDAY

JETSETTERS: PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal arrived back in Kathmandu on Tuesday after his trip to New York. Greeting him are UNMIN's Ian Martin, UNDP's Robert Piper, OHCHR's Richard Bennett and UNICEF's Gillian Mellsop. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has accepted Dahal's invitation to visit Nepal on 30 October.



DIRGHA UPADHYAYA

DESOLATE DASAIN: 27 homes were swept away by flash floods in Bhuruwa VDC in Kanchanpur on 20 September, and dozens of people were washed away. Their homes and crops gone, the survivors are now living in tents.



ARPAN SHARMA

GREAT SAVE: NRT keeper Surendra Shrestha blocks a shot on goal from Gorkha 11 in Majhua Deurali in Gorkha on Saturday. The match marked the end of NRT's eight-venue national tour, organised by Nepalaya to popularise football and engage youth in positive activities.

LET'S HAVE CHINESE TODAY!

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Just when you thought he couldn't be more dim-witted after banning night clubs and cyber cafes, unelected Home Minister Ban Dev has told the people of Pokhara that he wants to turn that city into a Free Sex Zone for foreigners.

No, Comrade Leftist God wasn't being misquoted, or quoted out of context, he actually wants Pokhara to be a "free sex" tourism destination for foreigners. And just like the casinos, only tourists will be allowed to partake in the fun and frolic, Nepali citizens will not be allowed into Pokhara's red light district as customers, only as sex workers. Time for NTB to get cracking with catchy slogans: 'Screw in Nepal, Once Is Not Enough', 'NEPAL: The Land of International Intercourse', or even 'Go Get a Poke in Pokhara'.



In his drive to crack down on dirty dancing and cyber porn,

Kam Dev seems to have completely overlooked the trafficking of Nepali women to Indian brothels and the red-light districts in **Sore Khutte** that are now doing a roaring business because there is nowhere for bar hoppers to go after 11 at night.



However, the Ass has nothing but praise for Fearsome's terrific performance in New York. He even managed to give the Secret Service the slip after taking the ferry back from the Statue of Liberty to take the Number 1 subway uptown to the Grand Hyatt. He must miss being underground.

Glad to see, though, he took our advice on the wardrobe and to tell the yanks what they want to hear. Although he should go easy on the **Brylcream**, the greasy look makes him look, well, oily. And then there is the other small matter of taking the entire family along on these trips. At a presser on return, the **Terrific One** was

quizzed on his son Prakash accompanying him everywhere he goes. Mummy Sita had already begun to reply to that one, when Daddy motioned her to keep quiet and clarified that the First Son was the prime ministerial computer assistant.

Fair enough, but eyebrows are now being raised even within the Maobaddies about sonny boy Prakash, nephew Samir having a secretarial position in Baluwatar, daughter Ganga made a section officer, elder daughter Renu being a CA member on the PR list and brother Narayan a member of the CA from Chitwan. This must be how dynasties are born.



Awesome's luggage seems to be jinxed. Heads nearly rolled when his checked-in baggage with valuable documents was lost on the RA return flight from Delhi last month. And this time, it looks like Sita's overstuffed Delsey burst open somewhere

between JFK, Frankfurt, Bangkok and Kathmandu leaving a trail of clothing and other belongings in aircraft cargo holds spanning continents.



Ex-king Gyan went on a pilgrimage to sacrifice pancha bali in Kamakshya after being enthroned. Girijau went to Tirupathi. So it's no big deal that Comrade Terrifying made sure he made time for a side-trip during the Olympics for a **darshan** of Mr Zedong's birthplace in Shaoshan and dhogo the Maosoleum in Beijing. And when it looked like Angela Merkel couldn't find time to see him in Frankfurt last week, Awesome made a three-hour dash for Traier, the birthplace of Karl Marx. And if there is a visit to Russia soon, even the war in Georgia may not prevent Lotus Flower from expressing a desire to visit the birthplace of Stalin in Gori.

It's a good thing our senior officials are busy traveling all over the world. The YCL and the Youth Force chieftains found themselves on the same junket to **South Africa** last month, they drank together, they visited the Apartheid Museum together. It may not be connected, but there were fewer reports of YCL vs YF clashes after the trip.

Before jetting off to the **US** next week, BRB at gostis around town has been reciting Sanskrit slokas (after banning Sanskrit and bombing Sanskrit schools during the war). Deb Gurung paid a pilgrimage to **Sarnath**, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. And when PLA Commander Pasang sprinkled holy water from the Ganges on his head in **Banaras** last week, Hridayesh Tripathi couldn't help telling tl panda: "He needs to wash off his sins."

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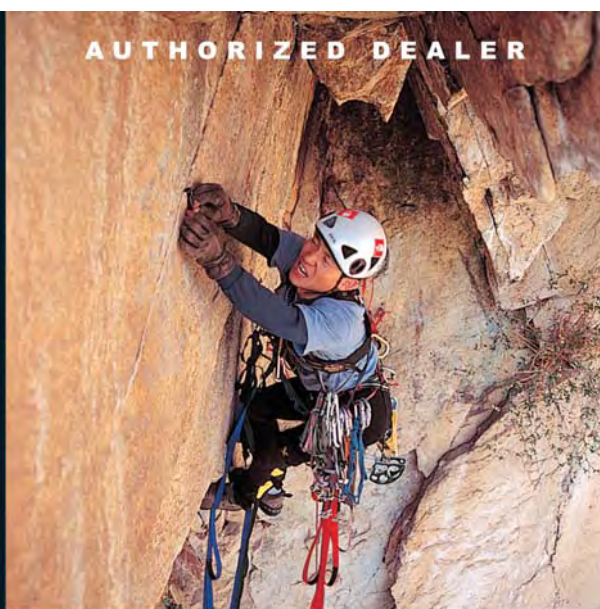
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