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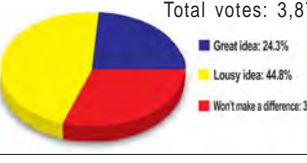
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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 422

Q. Do you think it is a good idea for the NC to join the Maoist-led coalition?

Total votes: 3,878



Great idea: 24.3%  
Lousy idea: 44.8%  
Won't make a difference: 30.9%

Weekly Internet Poll # 423. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)  
Q. Should the CPN-M, drop the 'Maoist' tag from its name?

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SABIN TULADHAR

# Shake a leg

**HOWDY:** Prime Minister Dahal receives American ambassador Nancy Powell in Singha Darbar on Tuesday. USAID announced a \$42 million aid package this week, but the CA hasn't yet started the constitution-drafting process.

DEWAN RAI

Six months have passed. Four months were spent forming the government, and two more were taken up with the budget and Dasain. The government has formed neither a high-level political council nor a special committee for integration and rehabilitation of the PLA.

With 18 months to go, there has been no work on writing the constitution. At this pace, there seems little chance the constitution will be written by April 2010.

"The government is not concerned at all and the CA members are helpless," said constitutional expert Bhimarjun

Acharya, who doubts whether the government is even committed to getting the document written. The CA Rules and Procedures are yet to be finalised as debate rumbles on about whether CA members are subject to the party whip or not.

But some people remain confident of progress. "The rules will be finalised by mid-November," says Radheshyam Adhikari, a member of the drafting committee.

Donors have taken some committee members abroad for a first-hand look at how federalism functions, administrative and educational reforms in the hope of providing ideas for Nepal. But the drafting committee has

remained inactive.

The parliament secretariat appears unaware of these trips. "We have not received any formal requests," said Mukunda Sharma, the secretariat's spokesman, who doesn't know when the members will return.

The CA was elected for a two-year period, but government ministers are now saying they might extend the drafting period for a further six months. "We have not completely run out of time," says Acharya. By his perhaps optimistic calculations, six months will suffice for deciding on the constitution's content. It will then take three months to write it with the correct legal terminology, a

further three months for public consultations, and the rest of the time for parliamentary discussion and eventual endorsement.

Adhikari blames the political parties' squabbles for the delay in finalising the Rules and Procedures. "If the parties cannot reach agreement over their differences, the writing of the constitution will be delayed," he says.

Subhas Nembang, chairman of the Constituent Assembly, is staying positive. He told *Nepali Times*: "The schedule might have changed a bit, but we will finish the constitution on time." ●

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## WAR AND PEACE

As we know only too well in Nepal, peace is not the absence of war. We are currently in a period of no war, no peace. For many relatives of the victims of war, the wounded and displaced, the war goes on.

These past two years, we underestimated the legacy of violence that the war left behind. The ascendance of the Maoists to government gave everyone with a grievance an excuse to set injustices right with the force of arms. It proved that if you killed enough people you could get what you wanted.

At a more mundane level, it demonstrated that blocking a highway, burning tyres, or closing down the country with a forced shutdown was the only way to get people in power to listen to you and redress grievances.

The 10 years of murders, mayhem and destruction also left a more corrosive residue of increased domestic violence, frayed nerves and a citizenry quick to resort to the fist. The elections showed that muscle-power can win votes, so all the political parties now have clones of the YCL. The Maoists have taught us well.

And there is the background presence of structural violence that has never really gone away. The heavy-handed behaviour of police at checkpoints, the aggression and rudeness of those who are supposed to be the guardians of law and order. The war was partly a response to state-sponsored brutality which is still prevalent.

There may be a ceasefire, therefore, but the aggression and cruelty that the war left us with will be around for decades to come. The peace process may be on track, but there are serious challenges ahead, most urgently the assimilation of the Maoists into the national army.

We will never be able to say that we are at peace until there is a new culture of non-violence. Peace is a dynamic process. It is not enough to simply wish it or pray for it. Peace must be actively pursued with education and advocacy. You can't talk about peace without reconciliation, truth and justice for those directly affected by the war.

War is just the fiercest form of violence. At a wider level, violence in society is also manifested in child malnutrition or environmental destruction. Ethnic and gender discrimination and human rights violations are all forms of violence. During the war, far more malnourished children died of preventable infections rather than in actual fighting. And they will continue to die.

Peace won't come to us just with the peace process. There will be no peace until we allow all Nepalis to make full use of their capabilities.

The new constitution is important because it will remove the structural reasons for conflict once and for all. So let's get on with it.

# Fusion or confusion

## The Maoists must clarify their commitment to multiparty democracy once and for all

Speaking at the Constituent Assembly, an elected body that the Maoists don't want to refer to as 'parliament', Prime Minister Dahal showed just how confused he is about his party's future ideological course.

He said: "We are at the cusp of transformation. We need to manage this transformation and take ourselves beyond the status quo. The people need to see a qualitative improvement in their

resurfaced and intensified. These doubts have not been allayed. In fact, subsequent pronouncements by senior Maoists have raised even more serious misgivings.

Dahal is right on one point: not only is it unrealistic to expect Nepal to become communist, it is doubtful if we can even be socialist in the true sense. Dahal himself has admitted that feudalism has not been completely uprooted, and we need to move from that through an economic revolution towards capitalism. But his hardline political stance doesn't fit the economic rhetoric.

The Maoists have been describing their current ideological line as a 'fusion', but it's looking more like 'confusion'. And because they are now leading the government, this contradiction is hurting the country. This lack of clarity doesn't just reflect on Comrade Prachanda but on Prime Minister Dahal, and through him, on the government he leads.

What is hard to explain is Dahal's allergy to the words 'parliament' and 'democracy' despite his party having come this far into the peace process. During the war, the main targets of the Maoists were the monarchy, multi-party democracy, parliament and the parliamentary parties. In this, the Maoists made common cause with conservative royalists who also wanted to weaken parliamentary democracy.

The Maoists killed, maimed and evicted hundreds of political workers of the NC and UML. They killed many teachers, journalists and intellectuals who did not agree with their politics.

They indoctrinated their cadre on the revolution, armed struggle and protracted war, turning them against the very concept of 'parliament'.

It is a well known fact that Prachanda was in negotiation with Gyanendra, and he had said he wouldn't talk to the 'servants' when he could talk to the 'master himself'. But after he saw that his revolution was going nowhere, he was forced to negotiate with the 'servant' parties NC and UML and sign the 12-point agreement.

Behind the persistent refusal to accept parliamentarianism is the Maoist leadership's need to present their transition to mainstream non-violent politics as a 'victory'. Which is why they are involved in elaborate semantics to hide their political defeat. They insisted on the CA being called a 'legislative parliament' as if the assembly's parliamentary functions would be any different whatever it was called.

The insecurity over nomenclature proves that this is a difficult political transition for the Maoists, and it has exposed the contradictions among party hardliners. The Prachanda-Baburam line is not followed to the letter within the party, and those in favour of continuing the armed struggle are still strong.

The sooner Prime Minister Dahal puts these contradictions to rest with a clear-cut pronouncement on multiparty, parliamentary democracy and rejection of violence, the better it will be for his party and for this nation.

After all, he is no longer in the jungles of Rolpa. He is a prime minister in Singha Darbar. ●



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Raghu Pant**

lives. But because of the prevailing situation, we can neither reach our goal of communism, nor can we stay stuck in traditional parliamentary politics."

Ever since that speech on 14 September, existing doubts about the Maoists' commitment to parliamentary democracy have



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Kiboshed in Kabul

ISLAMABAD—Every week a handful of Nepali men make their way out of Afghanistan to the Pakistani city of Peshawar. They are headed for the Nepali embassy in Islamabad. They have no passports, no money, no place to stay. Sometimes they have nothing to prove that they are Nepali.



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
**Mallika Aryal**

Their stories are always the same: they went to Afghanistan to work after selling their houses or land in Nepal. The recruiter took them to New Delhi, where they waited a couple of months to get a tourist visa from the Afghan embassy. When their passports were finally stamped with a visa—usually valid only for 15 days—they left for Kabul.

Another recruiter there promised to arrange a work visa for another few hundred dollars. He took their passports and put the men up in small lodges run by Nepalis to wait for their work visas.

Some 500 Nepalis are estimated to be waiting for jobs. The lodges charge \$10 a day for small rooms where these men watch Hindi television programs, play cards, cook and just wait. When a job comes along, they go for the interviews. Out of hundreds of candidates, just one is chosen.

## Nepalis languish in Afghanistan amid lies and false hopes

Usually they never hear from their agents again. Some are picked up by Afghan police and thrown into jail for overstaying their visas. When money runs out they realise they will not get a job or get their passports back, so they make their way to the Pakistan border.

If they are lucky, they are not arrested at the border and eventually reach the Nepali embassy in Islamabad, which verifies their nationality and provides temporary travel documents to help them return to Nepal. Some have been stuck in Kabul for more than three years. Some have decided to stay

on, hoping their luck will change some day.

Nepal's Department of Labour bans Nepalis from working in Iraq and Afghanistan. But there are those who do get good jobs in Afghanistan, usually in security companies. A job that would earn them \$100 a month elsewhere gives them

\$1,000 in Kabul—which is why Afghanistan is such a magnet despite the risks.

Afghan immigration regulations have recently been tightened, and it is no longer so easy to get a visa in New Delhi. So Nepalis are now heading for Dhaka, Dubai and even Tehran to get Afghan visas.

If a licensed Nepali manpower agency is found to be sending labourers to either Iraq or Afghanistan, the penalties are steep, so the recruiters who offer work in these countries are unregulated. Because most of those heading for Afghanistan travel via

Delhi (because of the direct Delhi-Kabul flights), it is hard to know the numbers involved.

There is no Nepali consulate in Kabul to help. The Islamabad embassy looks after Nepali interests in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey, and the small staff is ill-equipped to cope with the many demands of its citizens in trouble. But illegal migration to Afghanistan is not a problem that is likely to go away soon, so there is a need for liaison between Nepalis in Afghanistan and the embassy in Islamabad.

Four years have passed since 12 Nepali men were abducted and murdered in Iraq. A new Foreign Employment Act was formulated last year. But imposing bans on countries doesn't work. As long as there is the hope of high salaries, workers will find ways round rules and laws.

If the government were to lift the ban and allow the registered manpower agencies to send labourers through legal channels, this might reduce the abuse and end the miserable situation of Nepalis languishing in the dingy dives of Kabul. ●



## LETTERS

### TERRAIN WARNING

The way I see it, the attitude of pilots on domestic flights are no different from those of buses on Nepal's roads. You are right in pointing out (Editorial, 'Terrain warning', #421) that there is just too much recklessness. I don't know where this comes from, maybe it is cultural, partly lack of training and partly insufficient regulation. Whatever it is, the end result is that 400 plus people have been killed in air crashes in Nepal since 1990 and most of it is due to pilot error. What are we going to do about it?

Jangbu Sherpa, email

- You have painted a needlessly gloomy picture about air accidents in Nepal and blamed pilots for being reckless. It is true that there are those who do not follow rules and that they take shortcuts, just like in any profession. But Nepali pilots are some of the most experienced, and they fly in the world's most challenging terrain. They know the risks and they weigh them before every flight. The rate of mishaps is directly proportionate to the challenges of flying in and out of the world's most difficult airfields day in and day out.

A Pilot, Kathmandu

- I completely agree with your portrayal of the cavalier attitude of Nepal's airlines towards safety. However, it is not restricted to the flight deck. Having been a trekking guide for many years, I have observed money changing hands during

check-in, where loaders can easily be bribed to push in couple of hundred extra kilograms of baggage and cargo into the hold. There have been numerous cases during which there have been near-misses when the pilots have made hard landings based on calculations of weight which were not accurate, or when the plane was not in equilibrium.

K Stenton, Edinburgh

- The fatalism that guides our attitude towards new technology, especially cars and planes, is seen every year at Dasain when goats and chicken are beheaded and their blood splattered on the machines to propitiate the gods during the coming year. With that sort of attitude it is any surprise that we have so many accidents?

Jujubhai, Asan



### WATER WORLD

Thank you for printing the brilliant panoramas by Sumit Dayal of the victims

of the Kosi disaster ('Water world', #421). Two months after the big flood, millions of people in Bihar and Nepal continue to suffer. The fact that the disaster happened in the most corrupt and inept parts of India and Nepal means that relief and reconstruction is slow, and this is prolonging the misery of the people. The lesson from the disaster is that the river does not respect national boundaries, and we should similarly plan to harness rivers so it will benefit people on both sides equally.

Kumar Mishra, Janakpur

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# Growing much more rice

Nepal can easily boost paddy productivity and be self-sufficient again



RAJENDRA UPRETY in MORANG

Nepal's food shortage is now approaching crisis proportions. Increasing population density, stagnant or falling productivity and fragmentation of land-holdings mean the gap between demand

and supply of food grains is growing.

More than half the country's 75 districts now have moderate to acute food shortages, and the government is spending precious resources to fly grain to remote airfields. Malnutrition is now a national calamity as fewer people can afford to buy food.

Rice is grown on 1.5 million hectares across Nepal, and even though much of this is irrigated, rice production has not been able to exceed 4.2 million tons. Nepal's rice productivity of 2.6 tons per hectare is the lowest in South Asia.

Because we have been so spectacularly unsuccessful in



RAJENDRA UPRETY

**NICE RICE:** Farmers (left) transplant rice seedlings in a paddy field in Morang earlier this year using the improved method that could double their harvests while using less seed and water. Another farmer (above) tests a new Nepali-made weeder.

raising paddy productivity, we are spending an average of Rs 5 billion to import 500,000 tons of rice a year. Because of the rise in grain prices worldwide, we will spend more this year.

But there is now good news. For the past five years, we have been testing a new way of cultivating rice that nearly doubles harvests but uses 40 percent less seed and needs much less water to flood the fields. This method also uses less fertiliser, pesticides and improved seeds.

It sounds like science fiction, but it is true. Field trials in Morang and 24 sites across the country have shown that the new method could be the miracle that we've been waiting for to boost agriculture production in this country.

Called System of Rice Intensification (SRI), the method was developed by a Jesuit priest in Madagascar in 1983. Since then, it has been adopted nationally by India and China, and has boosted rice yields in major producer nations like Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia.

Farmers using the SRI method grow normal mansuli rice seedlings. Instead of waiting six weeks as with normal rice, seedlings are transplanted at two weeks. The field doesn't have to be flooded. In fact it needs to be drained of excess water. The seeds are planted further apart so that while a normal paddy field needs 50 kg of seed per hectare, the new method uses less than 10 kg.

The only catch is that since flooded fields control weeds in normal paddy fields, SRI fields need to be regularly weeded.

SRI also demands skilful farming and good preparation, conscientious planting, good timing and careful drainage.

But the benefits far outweigh these obstacles and farmers who have adopted SRI can't imagine going back to the traditional method. When one farmer tries it, others want to learn the method too, and the practice is spreading.

Pilot projects in Nepal have shown that SRI could easily increase our rice harvest to as much as six tons per hectare. Despite this, there is no political will and an apparent reluctance to push SRI as a national campaign. If the government gave SRI priority and coordinated the various ministries and departments to push the method, Nepal could easily become self-sufficient in rice.

So far, the Poverty Reduction Fund, DFID, Surya Nepal, ICIMOD and Care Nepal have been promoting SRI in pilot schemes in various parts of the country. Much more needs to be done to replicate this on a national scale. ●

*Rajendra Uprety is an SRI pioneer and works at the District Development Office in Morang*

See also:  
'The miracle is, it's no miracle',  
*Nepali Times* #256  
<http://www.nepalitimes.com.np/issue/256/Nation/569>  
<http://ciifad.cornell.edu/sri/>

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## Anti-smuggling meet

Customs officials from six regional countries met in Kathmandu this week to discuss ways to curb the smuggling of ozone-depleting substances.

The conference, organized by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), brought officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka to share strategies to implement the Montreal Protocol which controls chemicals that destroy stratospheric ozone that protects the earth from harmful solar rays.

Although most countries are complying with cutbacks in these chemicals, there is a thriving cross-border trade in contraband chemicals, mainly in Asia, that are used mainly in refrigeration.

Indian ambassador to Nepal, Rakesh Sood told the gathering: "Solving this crisis and minimising its economic and industrial upshot requires close cooperation among nations as well as industry partnership in controlling illegal trade."

## Evening waves

The BBC World Service has launched a news program, Evening Report, that covers current affairs and news related to South Asia. The news program, hosted by Tinku Ray, will be broadcast every weekday for 30 minutes at 7:45 PM in Nepal and will be available on FM throughout the South Asian region. You can also listen to the program online on BBC's website.



## Everest feat

Everest Bank recently celebrated its 14<sup>th</sup> birthday in Nepal. The bank pioneered services such as home loans, loans for professionals and loans against share holdings. It now has the largest branch network in the private sector with 27 branches and five extension counters. A 28<sup>th</sup> branch will open soon, in Golfutar. The bank was named 'Bank of the year, Nepal' by *The Banker*.



Nokia on Wednesday opened a mobile care center at the Tamarakar Complex Mobile Plaza (left).



application which allows users to recharge their mobile phones without buying a recharge card, but instead through electric recharge pins, which will be available in stores soon. The service works on any Java-compatible set which has been registered under Innovative PPL.

**CORRECTION:** Due to an editing error the story in #421 about Hyundai cars had the wrong title. It should have been 'Responsible cars'.

# Global meltdown

## Do we need to worry?

**W**e are witnessing the start of an economic crisis that could perhaps dwarf the Great Depression of 1929. The only difference is that the economic growth of the past 80 years might provide a cushion to soften the impact this time around.



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Artha Beed

This Beed talked of the looming crisis in March 2008 (#390, 'The American Dream') and has not been that surprised by the present situation in which government actions around the world are losing credibility. So far, more than three trillion dollars have been poured into banks by different governments, but it appears that this massive attempted bailout has not yet stemmed the crisis.

The financial sector went too far in creating dubious instruments to leverage brick and mortar assets, and these have now become worthless bits of paper. The epidemic has spread to Europe and parts of Asia. So far, India has not been badly affected, but as it is tied to the global economy, it surely will be. Which means Nepal too will be hit, thanks to its fixed exchange rate with India. It is therefore time to talk about the Beed's favourite subject: what to do in the long term with our exchange

rate. Apart from the Indian impact, here are some of Beed's views on the crisis and Nepal.

Left-leaning economists are having a field day crowing about the failure of capitalism. They feel Nepal should not pursue a market-reform agenda similar to that which has led to the global crisis. However, the only model that has brought about rapid economic growth successfully has been one that seeks a market-oriented economy where the government plays the role of facilitator and regulator.



Just because there has been a crisis—like many others which have been dealt with in the past—it is not necessary to experiment with any other 'isms'. Our finance minister and other propagators of socialistic economic models should give up those thoughts. Nehru's mixed economy ensured India missed out on the global mainstream for three decades; let us learn from that lesson.

A short-term impact we might see is a decline in demand for skilled jobs in the US and Europe, which would in turn have an affect on migration—although the labour markets in the Middle East may not be hit so hard.

For Nepal's overcrowded banking sector, there are lessons to be learnt. The attraction for some banks in keeping all their eggs in the real estate basket may cause them problems. One cannot lend to the developer, the contractor and the consumer of the same building project. And the

government does not have the money to bail out our banks in the way other countries have. Banking liquidity here can also be affected by the money taken out of Nepali banks to invest in the Indian stock market through various channels. With the stock market drop of the past six months, it will take quite some time for people to get their money out and back to Nepal.

The most important issue is now for the Central Bank and the government to look at

efficient regulation, without becoming a regime of control. Any control-oriented mechanisms will hit an already weak investment climate, so the challenge is to design policies and take measures that rise above creating 'control freaks' and instead provide 'facilitators' to ensure the Nepali economy avoids the worst of the crisis. ●

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# No change

Letter to the Editor in Kantipur, 21 October

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement assured that those killed would be honoured, their widows would get relief, their children would be granted scholarships and those injured would receive compensation. It said seized property would be returned, those displaced would be resettled, the whereabouts of the disappeared would be made public and the two armies would be integrated. None of this has happened so far.

My father, Tikaraj, was killed by the Maoists on 28 February 2000. After eight years, I went back home for Dasain this year. What I saw in my village in Ramechhap was that our public institutions and organisations were being shifted to other places. Tunaraj Giri, who had a limb amputated during the war, did not go home for Dasain this year. Subash Giri spent Dasain at home.

Asmita Pulami was injured in crossfire in Sindhuli, but left the Maoists. Sapana Pulami was afraid to talk to me even though she once had the

courage to flee from the clutches of the Maoists. Neither of these two names appears on the list of those affected by the war.

Kailash Giri fled the country after his entire family was thrown out of their home by the Maoists. Ana Bahadur Pulami is the former secretary of the VDC evicted from his house. His health deteriorated when his co-worker was killed by the Maoists. Kasiraj Giri (Nabin), a former Maoist rebel, was injured in a clash in Solu. He paid for his own medical expenses and is now a migrant worker.

Prakash Suderi could not return to his home because of threats from the Maoists. Fear for his safety made Koman Bahadur Khapange vote for the Maoists. His wife had earlier been assaulted by them.

The very Maoists who killed, looted, injured and displaced innocent people are now in government. Increased impunity has made it easier for the criminal state to threaten people. The so-called peace is lifeless in the village. On the day the government distributed Rs 3.6 million to cadres in the Maoist camps for Dasain, the conflict-affected were beaten by police in front of the office of the UN. Is this justice?

Gyanendra Aaran  
Member of Neka District Committee  
Ramechhap

# For the people


Rishiram Kattel in Himal Khabarpatrika, October 2008

Most college graduates dream of a nice high-paying job in the city with a life of comfort and luxury, and join the rat race to achieve it. But not Budhinarayan Shrestha of Solukhumbu. After finishing his bachelors at Pulchok Engineering College in Kathmandu, he went right back to his remote village of Dorpubajar in Salleri. Along with 11 other students, Shrestha established the Young Star Club which is involved in implementing projects for development, health, education, communication, the environment. It has won the trust of the people because of its dedicated work to develop Solukhumbu. "We have reached this stage only because of the belief in service that our friends share," says Shrestha. "If we foster the feeling of community service, a lot can be done and our work has proved it. We have contributed more towards the development of Solukhumbu than the government."

Shrestha has been leading the club as its president since 1985. The people here look up to him as an inspiration. Says Nigma Pakhrin, manager of the Solukhumbu Edu-Communication Project: "If we had more people like him here, our district would be completely different."



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Australia has become a popular choice for overseas students and the number of Nepalese students has risen sharply over the few years. According to the statistics published by Australian Education International, the number of enrolment of Nepalese students has gone up to 500% at times. In the year 2007, Nepal became the 13th largest source country in terms of number of student enrollments. In this year also number of students going to Australia has gone up compare to last year. The maximum number has commenced their studies in Vocational Education and Training Sector.

With the aim of attracting non-European migrants by the Australian Government, Nepalese started to migrate to Australia from 1975. There is no official data before 1975 and only 4 Nepalese permanently migrated to Australia in the year 1975-76. It is interesting to stipulate the Nepalese migrated to Australia from the year 2000. Nepalese migrants were 228 in 2000-01, 166 in 2001-02, 2002-03 in 176, 2003-04 in 235, 302 in 2004, 304 in 2005-06, 460 in 2006-07 (Source: Australia Bureau of Statistics). The number of Nepalese migrated to Australia is increasing every year and Nepalese community has been well recognized by Immigration Department.

People who want to live permanently in Australia must apply to migrate or, if already in Australia, apply to change their status to permanent residents. There are four parts to Australia's migration program and they are:

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# Trekking jam in



Annapurna II seen from the point from which it rises up from the Marsyangdi at Chame.

There is a trekking traffic jam this autumn in Nyeshang, as Manang is called locally. The ACAP post at Dharapani has registered an average of 300 plus daily arrivals over the last two weeks.

The lodges are so packed that guides rush ahead up the trail to reserve rooms for clients. When nothing can be managed, trekkers pitch tents on the flat roofs of private houses. Many lodges and restaurants have been rented out to Gurung folks who are reaping a bonanza.

Manang Valley is about as close as you can get to 'Alpine' terrain in Nepal. Above the gorge country beyond the district headquarters of Chame, the glacial valleys are wide and the views panoramic, amidst meadows leading up to pine forests and dwarf junipers beyond. Annapurna Himal commands the western flank of the Marsyangdi Valley, while the fine and accessible 'trekking peaks' of Pisang, Himlung, Kangaru and many others make up the rib of the district.

It was in the 1990s that the 'Around Annapurna' trek started becoming popular, with visitors peaking in 2000. After that, the war took its toll and trekkers slowed to a trickle. Maoist cadres along the trail charged trekkers Rs 200 a day, and trekkers dropped to 40 a day.

The Maoist activity drove backpackers into the 'tea-house trekking' mode, which has proved a boon for local hoteliers. The number of trekking staff who used to benefit from carrying loads for camping groups and run kitchens is down drastically, however, and this has adversely affected employment.

Manang will see changes as the road from Besisahar is completed in the next few years as the cliffs are blasted and landslides controlled. There are worries about what this will do to tourism, but the village committees here have agreed not to allow the road to go up to Thorung La.

## This season, Nyeshang reaps a tourism bonanza

Rather than fret over how the road's arrival may destroy the environment, culture and trekking, people here seem determined to adjust to it and take advantage of better access. After all, Chamonix and Zermatt did not collapse with the arrival of the motor road.

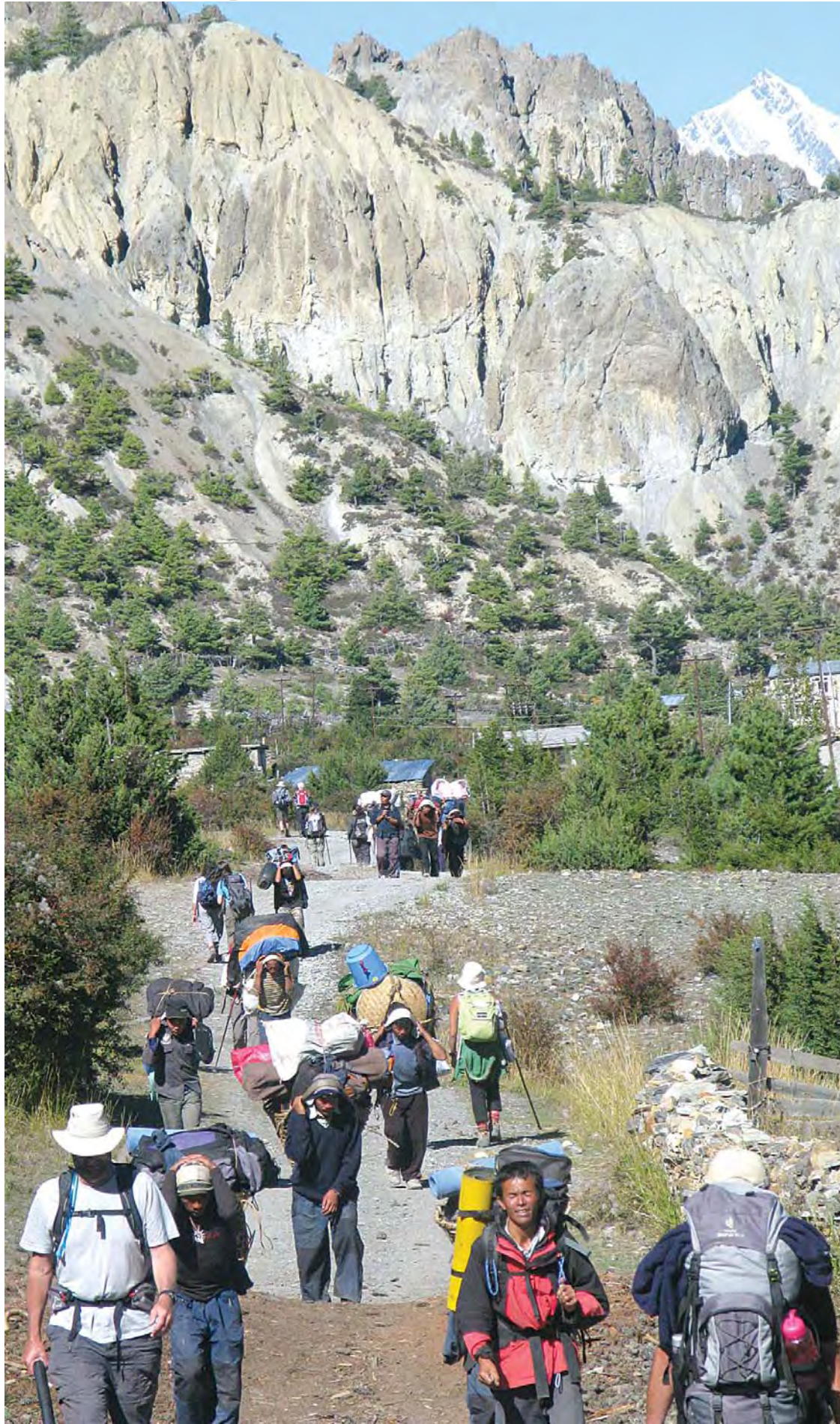
Besides Thorung La and Tilicho Lake, Manang's attractions include the Milarepa Cave above Braga, the massive bare-rock amphitheatre of Swargadwari, the twin valleys of the Marsyangdi and Naur Khola, as well as the great views of the Annapurnas from the north.

Greater access will allow trekkers to climb Manang's mid-sized peaks: Himlung, Pisang, Yak and Thorung which are ideal for 'holiday climbing', a pastime that has not yet made its mark in a country where expedition-style and extreme-alpine-style are the standard.

Last week, after acclimatising in Manang village, a French team with just a guide and a cook was off to Pisang West. The plan was to set up one high camp a day above the village, and make it to the summit the day after.

In future, whether they arrive by road from Besisahar or by air at the Humde airstrip, the holiday climbers will spend a few days acclimatising on the Marsyangdi Valley with side trips to villages, glaciers, lakes, caves and ridgelines. Then they will take their pick of the mountains of Manang. ●

Kanak Mani Dixit in Manang



Trekking traffic approaches Humde.

ALL PICS: SHANTA DIXIT



Karma Gurung of Tilicho hotel with his 'hotel is full' sign.

Access: Nepal Airlines and Yeti offer flights to Manang's Humde airfield from Kathmandu and Pokhara. The alternative is to take a bus to Besisahar and start walking. After crossing Thorung La, take a jeep down to Jomsom to fly back, or walk to the road head at Beni.



# Manang



Looking back at Annapurna II from Thorung La



The motorable road to Manang is carved out of sheer rock.



Swargadwari's spectacular rock ampitheatre.

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# Army amalgamation

What happens with the PLA combatants is critical for the peace process as well as the internal dynamics of the Maoists. The rebel army did not lose the war, and past pacts have talked about a future for the fighters.

The country cannot afford to have thousands of war-hardened young men and women disillusioned, angry and insecure. They will not live in the cantonments forever.

The Nepal Army knows it will have to take in some of the Maoist fighters. The Maoists know that not all their soldiers can get into the army. They will have to agree on numbers, but only after public posturing and secret bargaining.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

There will be a tussle within the NC and the army pushing the principle of individual entry, and the Maoists asking for recognition in principle of bulk entry. How it will play out depends a lot on what happens in the Maoist meeting next month and whether Puhspa Kamal Dahal or Mohan Baidya emerges the stronger. It will also depend on what COAS Gen Katuwal's associates inside and outside the army tell him. He doesn't have the strength to go to the brink by himself.

Dahal needs to find a deal he can sell to his commanders, who can then go and sell it to the guerrillas in the camps. Any such deal will also have to allay the apprehensions of non-Maoist forces that one party will control the entire defence establishment.



UNMIN

## The integration debate is not only about numbers, but control

The reason to be hopeful is that both armies have a history of talking to each other from the war days. The JMCC, which includes UNMIN and top military brass of both sides, has been a rare institutional success. India has enormous leverage with both sides and will not allow the process to fall apart over a row on integration. The Indians have said the army should not be disturbed but that stance will have to evolve as we approach the endgame. The Indian Army may talk to the Nepali brass, and MEA with RAW will push the Maoists.

But the real battle here is not over numbers, but control. The army has never been as autonomous in its functioning as it is now. It would like to retain this independence because of its deep distrust for the political parties, its antagonism towards the Maoists, and its contempt for the civilian bureaucracy.

The army top brass has been unaccountable for all its actions and finances. This is the only country where UN peacekeeping money goes to the army, not the state treasury. Recently, the army transferred officers without even telling the Ministry of Defence. It often purchases equipment on a single tender, generating huge opportunities for kickbacks.

For their part, the Maoists know that their political consolidation will remain incomplete as long as the army is out of hand. They did not fight the war to get a few thousand of their soldiers into the army at junior levels. Their aim is to have both political and ideological control over the military and a decisive say in the command structure. And since the elections, they can claim democratic legitimacy to push this agenda.

But political control does not mean the Maoists or a Maoist minister will control the army. It means the Ministry of Defence running the army affairs and not being a mere postbox. It means strong all-party parliamentary defence committees keeping an eye on army finances and its professionalism. It means regular oversight by the whole cabinet.

For too long, the army has been in the hands of a tiny nexus of generals from the hill elite. Integration needs to take place for the peace process to succeed. The army has to be brought under civilian control if we want politics in the country to stabilise, without allowing any party to think of the institution as its own fiefdom.

And the army needs to be more inclusive of the marginalised to give diverse communities a sense of ownership and help carve a new sense of nationalism. ●

# The big green

## The challenge of climate change is much bigger than the global financial crisis

NEW YORK – Amid the pressures of the global financial crisis, some ask how we can afford to tackle climate change. The better question is: how can we afford not to?

Put aside the familiar arguments, that the science is clear, that climate change represents an indisputable existential threat to the planet, and that every day we do not act



**WORLDLY WISE**  
Ban Ki-moon

the problem grows worse. Instead, let us make the case purely on bread-and-butter economics.

At a time when the global economy is sputtering, we need growth. At a time when unemployment in many nations is rising, we need new jobs. At a time when poverty threatens to overtake hundreds of millions of people, especially in the least developed parts of the world, we need the promise of prosperity. This possibility is at our fingertips.

Economists at the United Nations call for a Green New Deal. Thus, this week the UN Environment Program (UNEP) will launch a plan for reviving the global economy while dealing

simultaneously with the defining challenge of our era: climate change.

The plan urges world business and political leaders, including a new US president, to help redirect resources away from the speculative financial engineering at the root of today's market crisis and into a more productive, growth-generating, and job-creating investments for the future.

This new 'Green Economy Initiative', backed by Germany, Norway, and the European Commission, arises from the insight that the most pressing problems we face are interrelated. Rising energy and commodity prices helped create the global food crisis, which fed the financial crisis. This, in turn, reflects global economic and population growth, with resulting shortages of critical resources: fuel, food, and clean air and water.

The interlinked problems of climate change, economic growth, and the environment suggest their own solution. Only sustainable development, a global embrace of green growth, offers the world, rich countries as well as poor, an enduring prospect of long-term social well-being and prosperity.

The good news is that we are awakening to this reality. We have



experienced great economic transformations throughout history: the industrial revolution, the technology revolution, and the era of globalisation. We are now on the threshold of another: the age of green economics.

Silicon Valley has been investing in new renewable-energy and fuel-efficiency technologies. The venture capital firm that underwrote Google and Amazon, among other archetypal entrepreneurial successes,

# Sarala's struggle

## The woman who defeated Bam Dev Gautam in the elections can't understand how he could be made minister

DEWAN RAI

When Maoist activist Sarala Regmi defeated the UML's Bam Dev Gautam in Bardiya in the April elections, she was full of hope that a new Nepal was indeed being born. But her hopes were dashed a few months later when Gautam was nominated Home Minister in the coalition government.

Regmi came to Kathmandu with high expectations that she would take part in the drafting of the new constitution. After years spent underground and facing the hardships of the war years, Regmi felt the Maoist election victory was a logical outcome of her party's sacrifices.

"No one knew how the elections would turn out, but the people rewarded me with their trust," says 39-year-old Regmi.

After she was declared the winner, every other contestant congratulated her except Gautam. When she came to Kathmandu, however, Regmi did congratulate Gautam on being appointed minister.

In Kathmandu, Regmi soon found the backroom wheeler-dealing of politics unbearable, and the constitution-drafting process was delayed by wrangling over rules of procedure. Appalled by the lack of a sense of urgency among politicians, she returned to Bardiya.

"A lot of people back in the district ask me what I think about the man I defeated being made the home minister," Regmi told *Nepali Times*. "But I guess it was up to the UML to decide their candidate for the post." She says her party had no option but to accept the decision of coalition partners UML and MJF on

ministers. However, Regmi says it would have been better for the UML if it had chosen someone from among its elected members.

Regmi has some bad memories of the elections. She claims Gautam launched a smear campaign against her for being married twice. "I was hurt," she recalls. "I was not expecting it from a politician like him. It revealed his impoverished intellect, but his dirty tricks backfired on him."

Regmi was married to fellow Maoist Gyan Prasad Chalise (Ayam) in 1997, when both were underground. Chalise was arrested in 2001 and died in army detention in the Chisapani barrack. The party later arranged her marriage to Gunaraj Lohani in 2007, pairing her with someone who had lost his wife during the war.

Regmi was among the first 60 guerrillas to be trained to launch



# jobs machine



directed more than \$100 million into new alternative energy companies in 2006 alone.

In China, green capital investment is expected to grow from \$170 million in 2005 to more than \$720 million in 2008. China has become a world leader in wind and solar power, employing more than a million people. Globally, UNEP estimates that investment in low-greenhouse-gas energy will reach \$1.9 trillion by 2020.

The financial crisis may slow this trend. But capital will continue to flow into green ventures. I think of it as seed money for a wholesale reconfiguration of global industry.

More than two million people in the advanced industrial nations today find work in renewable energy. Brazil's bio-fuels sector has been creating nearly a million jobs a year. Economists say that India, Nigeria, and Venezuela, among many others, could do the same.

In Germany, environmental technology is expected to quadruple over the coming years, reaching 16 per cent of manufacturing output by 2030 and employing more people than the auto industry. Mexico already employs 1.5 million people to plant and manage the country's forests.

Governments have a huge role to play. With the right policies and a global framework, we can generate economic growth and steer it in a low-carbon direction. Handled properly, our efforts to cope with the financial crisis can reinforce our efforts to combat climate change. In today's crisis lies tomorrow's opportunity: economic opportunity, measured in jobs and growth.

It is important that the global public recognise this fact, perhaps nowhere more so than in the US. When the next American president takes office, voters and elected officials alike should be reassured by studies showing that the US can



fight climate change by cutting emissions at low or even no cost, using only existing technologies.

We know that the poorest of the world's poor are the people most vulnerable to climate change. They are also the most vulnerable to the shocks of the financial crisis. As world leaders, we are morally bound to ensure that solutions to the global financial crisis protect their interests, not just the citizens of wealthier nations. Those left behind by the previous boom (the "bottom billion" living on less than \$1 a day) must be brought into the next economic era.

A solution to poverty is also a solution for climate change: green growth. For the world's poor, it is a key to development. For the rich, it is the way of the future. ●

*Project Syndicate*

*Ban Ki-moon is Secretary-General of the United Nations, and is visiting Kathmandu on 31 October.*

the 'people's war' in 1996. She worked as battalion commissar to a central committee member. She is now a member of Tharuwan State Committee, and sides with the faction of the party that favours a federal people's republic.

Says Regmi: "We don't want a Bihari-style republic. The war was for liberation of the oppressed and the poor. We fought to establish a people's republic. The battle field may have changed but the fight still continues."

She argues that there would have been no need for armed struggle had the democracy addressed the country's structural problems. "The war dismantled the feudal structure and raised ethnic, gender and class issues, and now it is time for the state to address them," she says.

Regmi misses her young son who lives with relatives in Kailali when she is in Kathmandu. She studies, and writes when she has some free time. The rest of the time she spends strategising with party colleagues.

She adds: "There is so much to do, and there is so little time. We think about our country's future and not just about ourselves." ●



KIRAN PANDAY



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# Ugandan parallels

There are many things here in Uganda that make a Nepali nostalgic for home, especially during the festival season. Uganda is landlocked like Nepal, and the rolling green hills look like the midhills back home. The children love to laugh and, like Nepali children, break quickly into smiles. Ugandans are gentle, but behind their politeness is a 'trying to figure you out' expression and body language, something that is carried over from the country's 22-year war, before which the country bled under the brutal dictatorship of Idi Amin.

Peace and development are relative terms here. Sickened by the excesses of Amin, Obete and Okello, Ugandans have enjoyed peace since President Museveni was sworn in in army fatigues in 1986.



**NEPALI PAN**  
Subhadra Belbase

His National Resistance Army was a highly disciplined and organised guerrilla force that had the support of the population, especially the young people.

Uganda's post-conflict transformation holds lessons for Nepal, both successes we can emulate and mistakes we must avoid. For Museveni, economic development was priority number one. Although trained in Marxist ideology, he was accepted by the west for opening up the country to foreign investors. Businesses driven out by Amin were given tax-free privileges to rebuild the economy. Roads in industrial areas ravaged by war were quickly rehabilitated and factories resumed production.

Uganda's GDP which had shrunk by 40 per cent under Amin soon returned to the prosperity of the 1970s when Uganda was called the 'pearl of Africa'. Museveni not only understood that economic development was crucial, but actually did a lot to spur growth.



## Successes Nepal can emulate and mistakes we must avoid

He built a government of national consensus and set up a broad-based Constitutional Commission which travelled throughout the country to meet tribal leaders and people from various ethnic groups. Their viewpoints were heard and suggestions were incorporated into the new constitution which took 10 years to write.

One wonders about our own two-year timetable for drafting the constitution, of which only 18 months are left. Museveni's government also didn't get distracted by politics. It used the 10 years to really kickstart the economy and the campaign of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Will we do the same?

Besides the economy, Museveni paid special attention to education and health. He became a crusader in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and Uganda is regarded as a model of how a developing country can successfully tackle the epidemic with public awareness and behaviour change.

Absolute poverty was reduced from 56 per cent to 44 per cent by 1995. Primary school enrolment jumped from 2.5 million to 6.8 million. In 1986 there was only one university but by 2001 there were 13.

The recent controversial amendment of the Ugandan constitution to cater for another presidential term for Museveni has angered many outside his party—and some within his party. Squabbles and rivalries within his party are now fodder for newspaper headlines. The once-disciplined liberators are now accusing each other of corruption.

Hopefully our new government will have the wisdom to invest in health and education and propel the economy with investor-friendly policies. Let's hope our political leaders can work together in a consensus government and not delay the constitution-making process with endless wrangling. Fifteen thousand Nepalis sacrificed their lives in the war. Now their souls demand nothing less.

*Subhadra Belbase is country director for Plan International in Uganda, and the author of the recently published book, Mero Nepal. ●*



TOM OWEN-SMITH

TOM OWEN-SMITH  
in LONDON

Prashant Tamang may have dropped out of the headlines, but he is still

running a busy schedule, wowing Nepali audiences worldwide.

After a touring the US with Raju Lama (formerly of 'Mongolian Heart') in September, Prashant Tamang swept through

the UK for three days. He had just enough time for an interview before dashing off to catch a plane for a concert in Guwahati.

Over the weekend, Prashant performed two concerts and, not

# Freefall over Everest

While the parachutists got all the attention after the first-ever sky diving from above Chomolungma this month, we didn't hear much from the pilots.

Ruedi Isenschmid and Henri Schurch flew their Pilatus Porter aircraft all the way from the Swiss village of Biel/Bienne to Kathmandu via Bahrain and India, and then on to the disused Syangboche airstrip, the world's highest drop zone at 3,883m.

For 10 days from 2 October, Isenschmid and Schurch took four skydivers at a time up to an altitude of 8,990m above the world's highest mountain so they could freefall down to Syangboche.

On 8 October, the two pilots along with the skydiving team stopped all jumping activities and observed a minute's silence to remember the 18 people who had died in the Lukla plane crash.

Billi Bierling spoke to Isenschmid at Syangboche after he had dropped the first three skydivers to freefall from above the world's highest mountain.

**Nepali Times: You have been a professional pilot for more than 30 years. How was this different?**

**Ruedi Isenschmid:** It was a very special and amazing experience. I fly a lot in the Swiss Alps but here you are much closer to the steering limit of the aircraft. It took us an hour to climb to the required height. The scenery is stunning and we flew very close to the 8,000-metre giants and Ama Dablam, the Matterhorn of Asia.

**Was there a lot of pressure to perform as many flights as possible?**

We have to do as many flights as possible before the clouds come in, and they normally build up in the valley in the morning. I have to closely observe the clouds and if they accumulate around the airstrip I have to land very quickly. If Syangboche is covered up I either have to go down to the airport in Lukla or go all the way back

to Kathmandu.

**Is it normal for such a tiny plane to fly to almost 9,000m?**

We normally do not fly so high and for this event we needed special permits from the Swiss authorities. The jumpers and I are also using oxygen for this flight. The usual altitude for such an aircraft is about 3,000m to 4,000m.

**What is the main challenge in taking off and landing at Syangboche?**

When we arrived on 2 October it was the first time a Pilatus Porter had landed here in decades. However, what was much more challenging was the introduction course I and my colleague Henri had to do in Kathmandu for Nepal's aviation authorities. It was all theoretical but the funny thing was that when I asked for the coordinates for Syangboche they did not know them.

**How did you find this tiny airstrip without the coordinates?**

We got the coordinates for Lukla airport and we found the airstrip using tourist maps I had bought in Kathmandu.

<http://www.everestskydive.com/>

<http://www.highandwild.co.uk/>

<http://www.swissboogie.ch/>

**HIGH ADVENTURE:** Henri Schurch (left), owner of the Pilatus Porter, organiser of the Everest skydiving event, Nigel Gifford of High and Wild (centre), and pilot Ruedi Isenschmid.



JASON BRYANT



# Indian idolatry

A year after he burst on to the music scene, Prashant Tamang unites Nepalis worldwide

surprisingly, was feeling a touch groggy after being woken from his jet lag to talk to *Nepali Times* in a living room in a southern English barrack town.

But once a cup of coffee had washed away the cobwebs, Prashant was a thoughtful and articulate speaker, and still strikingly humble despite the widespread adulation to which he has become accustomed.

So, how has his life changed since winning *Indian Idol* one year ago? "It's changed completely," he says. "When I think about what I was doing before and what I'm doing now, it's like a different world."

Prashant was training as a commando in the Kolkata police

force when his friends persuaded him to audition for the show. "I was used to performing in the Police Orchestra, but when I sang in front of the cameras for the first time, I trembled as I knew that people all over the country could see me. The cameras make a big difference."

In the first weeks, the contestants were kept incommunicado from the outside world, so Prashant had no idea of the wave of support and Nepali pride that was surging through India and across the world as fans tracked his progress week by week.

"When we reached the final 10, they let us read the newspaper," he recalls. "Then I

spoke to my mother, who told me that I had a fan club in Darjeeling now, and that people had been sending money from America and Europe to vote for me."

But the scale of the hysteria only really hit home when he returned to Darjeeling towards the end of the show and was met by a rally of thousands of supporters, with people hanging from windows and climbing onto rooftops for a glimpse of him. "My heart still jumps when I remember that day," he says.

"No Nepali had ever won a competition like *Indian Idol* before, and I suppose that's why they were so excited. There

is talent in Darjeeling, even though it's a small place. And I hope that my success will help other Nepali singers to come through," says Prashant.

Prashant's victory generated an upbeat feeling and new-found optimism that has indirectly enforced the political wave of support for Gorkhaland autonomy and created a surge of pride among Nepali-speakers across Darjeeling.

"I suppose it was time for this to happen and it happened," muses Prashant. "Personally I was never really interested in politics, but since *Indian Idol* I think Nepalis have been feeling more united,

both in India and elsewhere. And if that's had a good effect on politics then I'm happy."

Prashant says there is a certain 'Nepaliness' that united Nepalis all over the world. "I live in India, but I am a Nepali. That's why I wanted to sing 1974 AD's '*Nepali ho*'. That's a great song as it speaks to all Nepalis no matter where they're living: *yo man ta Nepali nai ho*," he says.

With a record deal from Sony and a worldwide performing schedule, Prashant has come a long way in the past year. He now wants to take his music and singing to a higher level.

After the interview, Prashant is whisked away to dinner with various leading lights of the local Nepali community. At his London concert the following night, women well into their thirties leap up on stage beside him, only to be pulled down by security, and fans of both sexes, young and old, crowd round him when he steps down into the stalls. ●



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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **A way of Life-** a photo show by Rajendra Manadhar, till 26 October, 5PM onwards at The Bakery café, Pulchowk.
- ❖ **Kumudinee-** The Lotus, an exhibition of drawings and black pottery sculptures by Kalapremi Shrestha till 28 October at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Sunday-Friday 11AM-6PM and Saturday 12PM- 4PM. 4218048

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Peace Photo Award 2008** by National Forum of Photojournalist & peace for Nepal on the 24 October, 4PM, Bhirkutimandap.
- ❖ **Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory** presents in Jazzmandu 08 Catia Werneck and workshop with Bossa Nova and Brazilian Jazz Quartet, 26 October. 5013554
- ❖ **Non-violent Communication Workshop** on 26 October 9.30AM-5PM, Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Keshar Mahal Marg. 4410402
- ❖ **Cultural Studies Group of Nepal** presents from Sherpa culture to social work lecture, 31 October, 9.30 PM, Shanker Hotel
- ❖ **New session of French classes**, admissions on till 9 November, next session starts on the 10 November-22 January at the Alliance Francaise. 4241163
- ❖ **Nepal Music Center's International Folk Festival 2008:** An ode to life and culture, 4-8 November. 4256909
- ❖ **Divinity of the common life**, an artistic performance by Pierre-Alain Hubert and Karl Knapp, 7 November, 6PM, Open Theatre, Kula Manch, free event. 4241163

## MUSIC

- ❖ **Dutch Jazz Prio**, jazz piano & vocal at New Orleans Café, Thamel on 26 October and New Orleans Coffee Shop, Patan on 29 October
- ❖ **Jazzmandu 2008** till 27 October. 9841614230
- ❖ **Poesie and Fags** a jazz vocal trio from Holland, Saturday at Patan .5522708, Sunday at Thamel.4700736. New Orleans Café, 7PM
- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at the Jazzabell Café, everyday happy hour 6-8PM.
- ❖ **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, 8 PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

## DINING

- ❖ **Fusion Gourmet steaks** at the Chimney restaurant till 30 Oct, 6-10PM, Yak and Yeti Hotel. 44248999
- ❖ **Wok & Curry** every Wednesday at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mariano and his band from 12- 3.30PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Organic Salad Bar and Steak** at Jalan Jalan restaurant every Friday from 6PM, Rs 650
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 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 cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg.
- ❖ **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 LeMeritien-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
- ❖ **Ily Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangrila, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel

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

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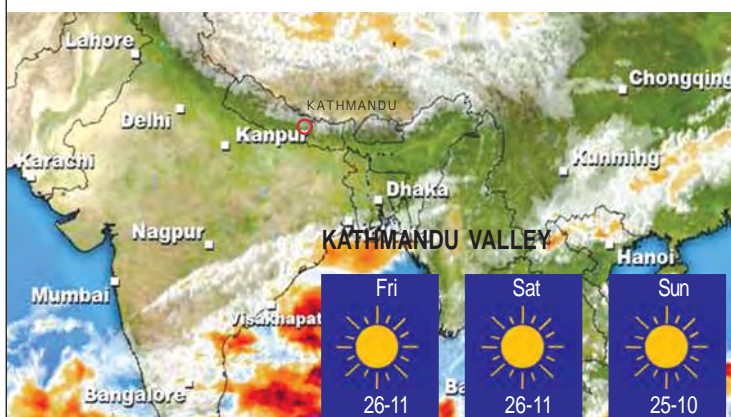
The Bakery Café, Bhatbhateni  
Phone : 4441590



## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

If you carefully look at the satellite pictures this week, you will find striking low pressure zones on the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian sea and see that it resembles monsoon-like situations. However, a vast high pressure zone over the Tibetan Plateau has acted as powerful repellent, keeping moisture away. The high pressure system has brought in dry cold air from the northwest and sent the temperature plunging to two degrees below normal for this time of year. The weekend and into Tihar we will have chilly nights and mornings with warm afternoon sunshine amidst a brisk breeze from the west.

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**हालवाल**  
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प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुरुवार बेल्का (६:१५-६:३५)  
हरेक आइतबार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)  
“रेडियो सगरमाथा निमित्त सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी”  
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ५५२८००९, ५५२८२४५ मोस्ट वक्ता: ५५२८२, ईमेल: [info@radiosagarmatha.org](mailto:info@radiosagarmatha.org)

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





MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**THIRSTY PRESIDENT:** President Ram Baran Yadav works up a thirst at the launch of a book about Ganesh Man Singh at the City Hall on Friday.



PRABIN GAUTAM

**SURFING IN ROLPA:** Young women in Thawang learn to use a new computer installed at their local library recently set up by students of Kathmandu University and Tribhuban University as part of a joint effort to take educational materials to remote areas of Nepal.



EKAL SILWAL

**YAHOO:** A boy jumps into the water of the Lothar river last week in Chitwan. A flash flood on this river in October 2000 killed hundreds of people.

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# Conjugal ministeries and first relatives

The Maobuddies may be against absentee landlordism, but there is nothing they seem to be able to do about absenteeism during Constituent Assembly plenaries. As the house reconvened last week after the Dasain recess, only 32 of the 601 members were present in their seats.

Part of the reason is that Nepal's donors seem to have decided that the best way to help Nepal at the present time is to send our MPs abroad in large herds during the holiday break. Soon after a big Nepali delegation returned from South Africa, 11 honourable members of the august house are in Japan and 30 assembly members are in Germany and Switzerland this week to learn how federalism works.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking on the constitution-writing process with only 18 months left, and the members haven't even been able to agree on the rules of procedure. One rule that should be immediately implemented is a moratorium on junkets.



Not a week goes by without Comrade Dam Dev trying out something new. Last month, it was a curfew on dance restaurants, two weeks ago he went after cybercafes, last week it was the turn of sidewalk vendors and this week he has started cracking down on construction material dumped on the footpath. All these moves have since been revoked amidst protests. Wonder what it will be next week: ban Fashion TV? Leftist God is in a hurry because he has to go off to the People's Republic (not ours, theirs) next month and he needs to tie some loose ends before that. Bum Dev is Home Minister even though he lost the election because he is the go-between between the UML and the Maobuddies. Which may be why the Middle Kingdom is grooming him because he is the only one who can get the two parties to unite, call the new entity CPN and drop the Maoist puchhar.

Comrade Ferocious is not one who is deterred by a coy Koirala playing hard-to-get. After all, he met the ex-king last week so he must've thought the ex-premier would be a piece of cake. He took the ex-royal chopper to the far west, but when Romeo Alpha Golf developed a tail rotor snag in Mahendranagar, Comrade Bhayankar personally called Girjau on his mobile to fix an appointment. But he got the brush-off and was told to talk to his secretary to find out when he was free. Imagine the cheek. Undeterred, when he got back to KTM on a standby helicopter, Bhayanak went personally to the Koirala Abode like an over-persistent suitor.

The prime minister desperately seeking kangresis to join the government. The question is what for? What good will that do? We hear GP is also under pressure from internationals to stop sulking. But everyone underestimates the Old Fox's stubbornness.



When newspapers broke the story that dozens of guests were evicted from Sneha and Batika hotels in Nepalganj to accommodate the prime ministerial entourage, their editors probably expected us to be shocked. But nationwide, us readers just gave a big wide yawn. So what else is new?

Nepalis are so used to netas doing netagiri from absolute monarchs, to democrats they voted for, to elected totalitarians, that nothing surprises us anymore.

The Ass, having being bumped off a domestic flight over Dasain despite having a confirmed ticket, to make way for some ex-junglee VIPs is definitely not surprised.

Comrade Sita went to the India Sari Palace at Jackson Heights in NY to pick up some silk saris. So? And First Son (Prakash the Computer Secretary-cum-Body Guard) is hobnobbing with ex-royalist tycoons. Whatever.



The Baidya-Baburam rift is turning ugly with both sides

hurling missiles at each other through the media. As the party convention next month draws nearer, Comrade Kiran has made a pre-emptive strike by submitting a top secret memorandum to the party secretariat in which, among other things, he lashes out at Indian expansionism and hints that certain comrades in the party are Delhi's chamchas. The doc's hardline supporters are reportedly going to raise the issue in the party convention next month about this, and of First Relatives in the prime ministerial foreign entourage and the conjugal ministries of finance and tourism.



The big issue during UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Mun's visit to Nepal next week will be who takes more credit for Nepal's peace process. Does the UN need Nepal more than Nepal needs the UN?



ass(at)nepalitimes.com



## escape

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Venue : The Chimney Restaurant  
\*A La Carte Pricing  
(with one shot of complimentary Spey Livet)

For reservations, please contact  
Guest Services at 4248999 extn 2865

