

NEPALI Times

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DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

Early warning

The food emergency facing the country this year is so serious that the country's political leadership needs to immediately start working together to address its consequences.

In addition to writing a new constitution and keeping the peace process on track, a consensus is now needed to meet a nationwide food shortfall this winter because the crisis could have serious political and social repercussions.

TILLING FIELDS: Paddy terraces in Panchkhal that by now should have been thick with rice, were just being planted this week because of the delayed monsoon

A new report released by the World Food Programme (WFP) says 3.4 million Nepalis will be directly affected and will need urgent food aid. Investment in agriculture, which has been stagnating, needs to be raised, especially by irrigating more farmland.

The global fuel, food and financial crisis has been magnified by a domestic shortfall caused by two years of drought, growing population and political instability. ●



FOOD CRISIS

FOOD CRISIS
Less food, more mouths to feed
Confusion in the time of cholera
“Disaster in the making”
Super rice

p10-11



Enjoy the moment
a swing at a time



An advertisement for Swarovski Crystal Lights. It features a woman in a red dress reclining on a sofa, looking up at a large, ornate chandelier made of crystal. The background is dark, making the light from the chandelier stand out. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo for Swarovski with the word "SWAROVSKI" and a small diamond icon. Below the logo, the text "Made in Austria & Europe" is written. At the bottom, there is a logo for Jaguar with the word "Jaguar" and the tagline "The good life is real".

A photograph of a green glass bottle of Signature Rare Aged Whisky. The bottle has a gold label with the brand name 'Signature' in large script, 'RARE AGED WHISKY' in smaller text below it, and 'MADE IN NEPAL' at the bottom. In front of the bottle, there's a small, bright yellow splash of liquid. The background is a warm, out-of-focus interior scene.



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YEARNING TO BE FREE

Even though Nepal was itself wracked by years of war, it has provided safe haven for people fleeing conflict in other countries.

As Nepalis stream into India in search of work, there is a flow of economic migrants from northern India in the other direction. The six members of a single family who were killed in a tragic hit-and-run at Bhotahiti the other night were Biharis who worked here.

Tens of thousands of refugees from Tibet fled persecution to settle in Nepal in the late 1950s. In later years, refugees from strife in Kashmir, Afghanistan and even Somalia have come to Nepal.

Since 1991, Nepal has provided refuge to 110,000 Lhotsampa refugees driven out of Bhutan and the United Nations has been taking care of them in Jhapa and Morang for the past 18 years.

When it looked like India's backing for the Bhutan regime would make it impossible to facilitate their return home, the refugees were repatriated to third countries. This let Thimphu off the hook for ethnic cleansing of its country, but the resettlement was justified on humanitarian grounds. More than 10,000 refugees from Bhutan have so far been resettled in the United States, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, the Netherlands and Canada in the past two years.

On 1 August, democracy and human rights activist Ratan Gazmere was detained at Kathmandu airport when he and his wife returned to Nepal for a family visit. The Gazmeres (refugees from Bhutan themselves) were resettled in Adelaide earlier this year and were traveling on refugee documents since they don't yet have Australian passports. Immigration officials in Kathmandu refused them visas.

The Gazmeres physically resisted deportation and were later manhandled by airport police. They were then detained in a windowless room for two days and another day at a cell in Gaushala police station. It was only after Nepali human rights activists lobbied for their release that the Gazmeres were given a two-week visa on 4 August.

Home Minister Bhim Rawal needs to be commended for making a humanitarian exception in this case, but the shabby treatment meted to the Gazmeres seriously besmirched Nepal's image as a haven for the huddled masses yearning to be free.

The episode also highlights the need to change the rule about not issuing visas to refugees traveling on *titre de voyage*.

In the next five years there will be 80,000 Bhutani refugees resettled in other countries who will be visiting family here and who, like the Gazmeres, will not yet have passports of their new countries.

Other countries allow visas on such travel documents, it is time Nepal did the same.



ROUND AND ROUND

I shuddered at the bitter facts showcased by Prashant Jha about the contemporary politics ('Round and round', #462). Needless to say, most of our leaders are status quoists since they have yet to take the peace process to a logical conclusion. But they are showing carelessness in drafting the new constitution, bringing up the new republic, soothing the disgruntled populace and the PLA integration and rehabilitation process.

And they are always at loggerheads in the corridors of power. Nepal now needs new leaders to draft a clear roadmap for the days to come.

Bed Nath Sharma, Kaski

JUSTICE

Maybe Nepal is not a failed state yet but it certainly suffers from a failed justice system ('Rewarding the perpetrators', From the Nepali Press, # 461). When the justice system is governed by guns and violence, it effectively ceases to exist and becomes a mockery of justice. Combine that with the present situation when the police force is helpless and is afraid to investigate political murders and tortures for the fear of being assassinated themselves, all semblance of justice is gone. The law cannot apply

to some people sometimes, it has to apply to all people all the time. It is the very foundation of democracy. The lawlessness of the state is the most serious issue. It is worse than nepotism,

corruption or bribes. Those kill the economy, but lawlessness kills innocent people.

Luba Svrcina, Canada

ASS

In response to the Ass's call for suggestions for new names for Nepal ('Bckward society', #462): Babuchistan (Babulandia if you are very optimistic) Afnomanchuria, Singapoor, Khaobadia (divided in eight federal units: North North Kaobadia, North-East North Khaobadia, North-West North Khaobadia and so forth, divided in eight district each: South-West North-West North Khaobadia, South-West North-East North Khaobadia, and so on) Nepaland (if you are ready to go south), The Autonomous Region of Nepal (if you are ready to go north). Whatever the new name, the motto should be: 'Once we were poor, now more'.

Angelica Rosenberg Colorni-Khan, email

• My pet name for Nepal for some time has simply been 'Ke Garne-Land'. **Madhu, email**

• New names for Nepal: 'Himmat' (Himal, Madhes, Tarai) or Mandukath (Kathmandu backward). **Grimalji, email**

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Eyes on the ball

Kathmandu still fails to understand the Madhesi angst and the changing dynamics of Tarai politics

The turmoil of Tarai politics has got complex with two factions of the Forum getting formal status. Within each of them, though, resentment against the respective leadership persists for mismanaging party affairs and

PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

not delivering on 'Madhesi rights'. MPs feel that the Madhesi has become weaker as a political force in the last few months.

The TMDP continues to be a reluctant party in government. The selection of ministers has caused heart-burn amongst some others, the party was clearly happier and more united while outside. Mahant Thakur

continues to be one of the few leaders in the Madhesi political landscape who is not in the game for power. But he has not been able to translate that into organisational success.

The Madhesi fronts of the Maoists and Jana Morcha formally merged this week. With influence in pockets of Siraha, Dhanusha and a few other districts, this comes as a shot in the arm for the Maoists. The problem for Maoists in Madhesi continues to be leadership. For now, Ram Rijhan Yadav appears to be their key organisational person on the ground.

The dark horse is Matrika Yadav, who is following a four-pronged strategy:

- expand his network by allying with disgruntled elements of Maoists and other ethnic movements like Limbuwan
- try to wean away

disillusioned sections from the PLA, where he has found partial success

- go back to the land grab campaign in Tarai where the state has done little to address the landless question
- and, slowly collect arms He may or may not start an armed movement again, but his outfit can be categorised as a semi-militant one.

The armed groups continue to be fragmented, with most of them adopting the criminal route. The announcement of the new security policy, coupled with a spate of 'fake encounters', has reduced the possibility of talks with any of these groups. The militants have become more cautious but are planning to escalate attacks as 'revenge'.

The Tharus are becoming stronger, with Laxman Tharu as their most powerful leader. Till Raj Kumar Lekhi and Tharu Kalyankari Sabha continue to be UML lackeys, they may be able to stir up protests but will face credibility questions in the Tarai.

Laxman is busy expanding his party, with militant cadre, in the west. He is also networking with both ethnic activists and Madhesi leaders in Kathmandu to keep doors open for a broader alliance. He plans to announce an agitation soon.

What is striking is that three of the above forces (armed groups of all hues, Matrika Yadav, and Laxman Tharu) are outside the framework of the CA process. If and when the constitution is written, be aware of their potential to question its legitimacy and challenge it.

In terms of the mood, especially in the Madhesi heartland, there is simmering discontent against Kathmandu and frustration with the

leadership. The Madhesi parties have not made the vice president's Hindi issue a street issue yet, maybe they were not allowed to by powers-that-be in order to save the government trouble. But the issue has revived memories of the regressive SC judgement of not allowing Maithili and Newari in local municipalities.

The hill elite has suddenly discovered the love of local Madhesi languages and pit it against Hindi. It is a pointless argument, for Madhesi parties see it as their language: it is widely spoken, and not allowing it only generates resentment.

This judicial judgement, the absence of Madhesi in political appointments by the executive yet again (and the shameful silence on the fake encounters by Kathmandu 'civil society' and the obscenely paid, self-obsessed, inefficient careerists at OHCHR who last produced a report eight months ago) has sent a message to Madhesi political actors: 'we haven't changed and we don't care'.

Kathmandu is lucky that Madhesi leaders are discredited. But by handing over one issue after another, they are only opening up the space for radical forces to capitalise on the 'Madhesi sentiment'. If anyone thinks that disillusionment with the Madhesi forces will help the NC and UML benefit (especially in its continued unreformed and conservative shape) they are mistaken.

Understanding the Madhesi angst, the changing ground dynamics, and politically engaging with it, is a full-time job. The sooner the rulers understand it, the better. They should keep their eyes on the ball. ●



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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Nepal goes to India

If the PM's goodwill visit ends on a feel-good note, that will be achievement enough

party that doesn't want to give any space to the Maoists. The foreign minister is the heir-apparent of the Koirala Clan and believes that the Maoists must somehow be accommodated to ensure the longevity of government. Both do pretty much as they please, seldom bothering to inform the prime minister of their intentions.

Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation Deepak Bohara thinks that nothing has changed in the country since he was a royal minister during Panchayat regime almost quarter of a century ago. He believes in treating the secretary of his ministry like a personal assistant and loves to dispense favours in ad hoc manner just as he did decades ago. Bohara's loyalties lie with his party boss rather than with the person he is supposed to work with.

A charitable view would be that these four ministers are what they are because Nepal has permitted them to be so. Leadership by inspiration can sometimes be more effective than management by objective. Unfortunately, the activities of the government do not appear to

be very inspiring. Let alone forging political consensus, tackling economic challenges, ensuring good governance or advancing national interests through proactive diplomacy, Nepal has failed to inspire confidence even in the bureaucracy: the instrument he has to depend upon to implement policies when he finally formulates them.

Beyond a certain level in the bureaucracy, professionalism alone isn't enough. The ability to be imaginative and the

inventiveness of going beyond rulebooks and precedence are essential qualities in an administrator. Then come considerations of inclusiveness, efficiency, track record, transparency, and accountability. Resignations of two of the best cadres of the administrative corps show the choices Nepal has been forced to make.

There is no challenging the legitimacy of the 22-party alliance. But it's difficult to be equally certain about the moral authority of the prime minister.

Nepal will be subjected to the intense scrutiny of strategic hawks at the South Bloc. Formality and protocol are his only defences.

For camaraderie and bonhomie with fellow pinkies like Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury, Nepal would need to wait for a more conducive atmosphere. If the goodwill visit to New Delhi ends on a feel-good note, that itself would be achievement enough this time around for Nepal-India bilateral relations. ●

When Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal goes on a goodwill visit to New Delhi next week, he will need to allay fears that he is heading a tottering government that can fall at any time. More importantly, he will have to do a lot of explaining to prove that he is indeed in charge.

When Nepal took the oath of office in May at the head of a 22-party anti-Maoist front, nobody expected much from his ragtag

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

alliance. Circumstances had pushed him centre-stage. He became the prime minister because NC strongman Girija Prasad Koirala didn't want to head a wobbly coalition with the largest party of the parliament (the Maoists) in the opposition. Probably Koirala also calculated that Nepal would be a willing accomplice to rehabilitate his daughter in the corridors of power.

Nepal's only strength is that he is politically too weak to be of any challenge to anyone inside or outside of his party. It appears that he exercises little control even over his own party colleagues in the cabinet, let alone other coalition partners. Nepal may be in Baluwatar, but his ministers in Singha Darbar do their own thing.

Home Minister Bhim Rawal got his job because some influential donors of Nepal found him most trustworthy to implement the Special Security Plan (SSP) they had spent millions of dollars to devise. Since security 'experts' have designed the scheme and prepared its details, SSP has no political component.

It's easy to identify "109 armed groups" operating in the country. But to establish reasons behind their phenomenal growth and plan methods of countering their influence would need the savvy of a politico. A donors' darling, Rawal has more faith in parachuting consultants than his own party cadre. All that Nepal can do to temper Rawal's fascination with technocratic quick fixes is to urge him to exercise restraint.

The two powerful ladies in the council of ministers have their own bases of strength. Defence Minister Bidya Bhandari is the widow of UML ideologue Madan Bhandari and represents the conservative clique in the

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Electric city



ANUP PRAKASH

The electric bicycle holds potential for Kathmandu and the Tarai

SUWAYU DEV PANT

The battery-powered bicycle, also called e-bike, cuts a lonely and ungainly figure in Kathmandu streets where it is easily overtaken and often mocked. The bike could, however, revolutionise urban transportation in Nepal.

So far the e-bike has fallen short of its potential because its price is inflated by duties and scarcity. Powered by a 48 volt, lead-acid or lithium battery and if charged for 8 hours, the bike can travel up to 50 km at a maximum speed of 40 kmph. They can also be pedaled manually.

The batteries don't emit greenhouse gases but the lead-acid variety is hard to dispose of without damaging the environment. At about 30 kg the bicycles have a heftier, alloy-aluminum frame than regular bicycles and scooter-like headlights, although some models are light enough to be folded into car trunks.

Sales of Chinese and Indian e-bikes have gotten off to a slow start since their arrival in Nepal in 2007, with only five companies selling 500 bikes in Kathmandu. That figure is minuscule when compared to the 65 million that dart through roads in China. (See box)

The buyers also represent a wealthier demographic in Nepal than they do elsewhere where the

e-bike has caught on among middle-class professionals.

"Our main customers are women and environmentally-conscious people, many from international organisations", says Sanjay Shrestha of Shree Eco Vehicles.

At between Rs 30,000-40,000 they are far too expensive for commuters they could help most: people living in the Valley rim who commute to work in the city like electrician Pramod Tamang, 42. He lives in the hills beyond Budhanilkantha and was enthusiastic about the e-bike but dismayed by the price.

Management expert Ashok Pandey of National Electric Vehicle Industries says, "There is a big market for bikes in villages on the outskirts of Kathmandu and in the Tarai".

E-bikes are expensive in Nepal because they are scarce, use pricey, green technology and are mostly imported. Although the import duty has been halved, it still stands at 20 per cent since the government classifies e-bikes as motorbikes which have a higher duty than regular bikes. Indian authorities alert to their social potential have subsidised e-bikes by \$150 making them as affordable as regular bicycles.

In Japan e-vehicles (EV) are 50 per cent cheaper than identical gas driven vehicles because of a government subsidy. Although the Nepal government has waived VAT duties on

batteries and kept import duties on EV accessories low, they've left some market hurdles undisturbed.

Likewise, e-car companies have long campaigned for reduced duties but have been repeatedly outdone by gasoline-powered car lobbies. Experts believe prices will come down once the supply of electric vehicles and their parts increase, but this will take time.

E-scooters cost Rs 60,000-110,000 and have been doing poorly in large part because people aren't aware that they make economical and environmental sense since it costs a mere Rs 10 to charge a 60V battery that can last up to 60 km.

Prices could decrease further if e-bikes were manufactured locally, but a plant manufacturing electric bicycles would cost up to Rs 500 million and may not yet be viable.

Rabindra Sharma of Himalayan Power Solutions thinks joint-ventures with companies abroad is the way to go. "If we get support from foreign companies, we can have a plant up and running soon."

Local companies could also try marketing a more rudimentary e-bike by attaching batteries to regular bicycles. Pandey thinks a similar strategy could vastly diminish the price of e-cars.

"If we simply converted regular cars to e-cars, their price could fall from Rs 500,000 to just Rs 150,000-160,000." ●

Plug-in bicycles

It's a simple pleasure, but Xu Beilu savours it daily: gliding past snarled traffic on her motorised bicycle, relaxed and sweat-free alongside the pedal-pushing masses. China, the world's bicycle kingdom (one for every three inhabitants) is going electric.

The production of electric two-wheelers in China has soared from fewer than 200,000 eight years ago to 22 million last year, mostly for the domestic market. The industry estimates about 65 million are on Chinese roads. China's goal is to boost annual production to more than 5 million units by 2013.

Xu uses her Yamaha e-bike to make the half-hour commute from her apartment to her job as a marketing manager. "I like riding my e-bike during rush hour, and sometimes enjoy a laugh at the people stuck in taxis. It's so convenient and helpful in Shanghai, since the traffic is worse than ever."

The trend is catching on in the US and elsewhere. In Japan, plug-in bicycles are favored by cost-conscious companies and older commuters. "Many company workers are beginning to use them to visit clients instead of driving, to save fuel costs," says Miyuki Kimizuka of the Japan Bicycle Promotion Institute.

Australians use electric bicycles in rural towns without bus and train service. Tony Morgan, managing director of The Electric Bicycle Co, the continent's largest manufacturer and retailer of e-bikes, says he has sold about 20,000 in the past decade, priced at \$800-\$1,600.

In the Netherlands, an especially bicycle-friendly country, the industry says sales passed 138,800 last year.

China, the land of bicycles, goes electric



In India, Vietnam and other developing countries, competition from motorcycles, as well as a lack of bike lanes and other infrastructure, are obstacles. Indian sales have risen about 15 per cent a year to 130,000 units, thanks in part to a INR 7,500 government rebate that brings the cost down to about the cost of a conventional bicycle. But they are far outnumbered by the millions of new motorcycles taking to India's roadways.

The e-bike doesn't emit greenhouse gases, though it uses electricity from power plants that do. The larger concern is the health hazards from production, recycling and disposal of lead-acid batteries, and a bike can use up to five of them in its lifetime. ●

Elaine Kurtenbach in Shanghai (AP)

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The success of failure

Donald R Keough is the former president of Coca-Cola, and one of multi-billionaire Warren Buffet's long-time friends. Distilling decades-long business experiences and observations from around the world, he wrote *The Ten Commandments of Business Failure* last year. The



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

clarity, the brevity and the sheer common sense that the book puts forth could very well make it a thinking CEO's version of *The Elements of Substance for Business*.

Keough starts by saying that most businesses fail when they quit taking risks. If Min Bahadur Gurung had not taken risks to grow his one-room store at Bhatbhateni to a string of supermarkets to serve expanding middle class customers who'd drive to go shopping in urban areas, he would not have been the success he is today.

In Nepal though, since the tolerance for and acceptance of failure is low, it's better to take risks when there is evidence that opportunities are indeed increasing. The boom in housing industry, for instance, has enabled the interested to take risks in selling housing-related services such as setting up real estate marketing, computer animation, interior design and the like.

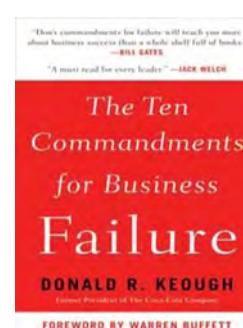
Another one of Keough's commandment for failure is that companies view their reputation and products with a combination of such arrogance and ignorance that they isolate themselves from the changing realities of the marketplace. This failure succeeds on two levels. First, Keough advises that those who run the company surround themselves 'with a collection of advisers and staff who are paid to think you are wonderful'. Second, over time, this 'bring me no bad news or else I will get angry' culture isolates the company from facing the harsh truth: paving the company's road to failure. By most accounts, this sort of culture took root at the troublesome Nepal Development Bank, whose heads routinely struck terror into the heart of those who dared to voice concerns that they did not like.

'Don't take time to think' is another recipe for failure in Keough's book. He cites Heisenberg uncertainty principle saying that it 'ensures that we cannot be certain of what we observe because what we observe is influenced by the very process of observing'. This is especially true when subordinates report to CEOs, who are likely to get the version of the truth they want and not the true version that exists out there. Managers who understand this do not react to everything that crosses their desks. Instead, they think, reflect,

Reviewing *The Ten Commandments of Business Failure*

ask searching questions, and understand the nature of problems and mistakes before taking actions.

Keough cites examples of companies that did not do well when they sent mixed messages to employees and customers. True, there needs to be a basic system in place at any company. Such a system gives baseline predictability about what the company does and does not do. But too much of systemisation can lead to the management managing the company through bureaucracy, while too little systemisation leads to *ad hoc*



decision-making processes that make it easier for some staff to ask for personal, rule-bending favours. Keough's final advice for failure is to 'be afraid of the future'. Indeed, one of my greatest challenges as a manager is to stop staff members from over-remembering their past successes, and instead help them focus on next week's or next month's goals and opportunities that are yet to be realised. Facing the future is especially important in the media business, in which the demand for solid, first-rate journalism continues to be high while the supply of news outlets is abundantly free on the Internet. ●

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नागरिक

"Boil water and cool it for drinking. Keep the well and water source always clean. Don't drink water from rivers and canals directly." That is how King Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah had directed Kathmandu dwellers in 1840 in his royal address.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal offered the same instructions to the people of Jajarkot last week. Nepal is where it was 200 years ago. How many Nepals are there within Nepal? By how many years is Jajarkot behind Kathmandu? By creating Newa Autonomous Region and Khasan Autonomous Region, will Jajarkot come to the level of Kathmandu? Nepal's population and infrastructure have grown in two

centuries, but can we say the same about our development?

We are centuries behind other countries in development parameters. Hundreds of thousands of our children have never been to school. Even those who enroll drop out. Half the population has no access to clean and safe drinking water. More than 50 per cent of children below five are malnourished.

The irony is that these are not priority issues in politics. We have never seen any party discuss its vision for health and education. They talk of making education "people oriented" or "scientific", but that is all propaganda. They never actually sit down and plan an implementation strategy. They don't discuss on how to reduce the maternity mortality rate, how to

make sure that children have enough to eat, how to provide people with access to health services. They don't give a damn. They treat these as "soft" issues for INGOs, NGOs and the bureaucracy while the political parties engage in serious politics.

We have never ever heard Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhav Kumar Nepal or Pushpa Kamal Dahal speak on fulfilling the peoples' basic needs. So these are never priority issues for political discussion. You can't hide the truth for long. We are struggling to resolve the problems that other countries achieved centuries ago. Unless we address these issues republican prime ministers will have to keep repeating what a medieval king said 200 years ago.

Enslaved

Sharu Joshi Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 4 August

कान्तिपुर

Thousands of Nepali women leave the country every year in search of a better life abroad. I met a group of women last week who were preparing to leave to work as cleaners in Saudi Arabia. I talked to them about safety abroad, how to stay in touch with family and how long distance and lack of communication can hamper mother-child bonds.

To go abroad, most had taken loans from the village money lender at an interest of a whopping 60 per cent per month. None of these women realized that almost every penny they earned abroad would be spent repaying the loan.

Nepalis are willing to work in the worst of conditions abroad to pay off this loan. A representative from Israel told me how Nepalis don't complain about work conditions as they fear being sent back. This tension at work translates into psychological problems like depression. Unable to pay off the loan women are forced into prostitution and often end up behind bars.

Although there are many banks in Nepal, women do not send home money through banks, money exchange agencies, or co-operatives. A young woman Chandrakala told me she couldn't go inside a bank because she was didn't know how to write, the staff did not help and were often intimidated by the security guards banks have outside their doors.

At a time when banking has become business, village cooperatives are unable to invest and remain frozen. This is a problem CA members can easily fix, and it's high time they took up the issue. The parties may talk about financial revolution, what they don't understand is that their members are working like bonded labourers. It is time to bring together village cooperatives from the villages where women leave and declare the village 60 per cent interest free.



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

Women show the way

Dinanath Baral in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 31 July-16 August

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Twenty-three-year-old Batuli Giri became a professional trekking guide because the money was good and she liked travelling to new places with tourists. In one trekking season she earns up to Rs 25,000. Giri had to quit school when she was in grade nine due to the conflict. She started out as a porter and later trained to be a guide with Pokhara's Three Star Adventure, which has given free training to over 700 women guides until now.

The majority of those who were trained are still in the profession and about 100 guides in 40 districts are now established trekking guides. Man Kunwar from Palpa took Three Star Adventure's training in 2001 and is still working there with her husband. Renu Karki took the training five years ago because she had some spare time and she thought it would be fun. Little did she know she was going to end up being a professional trekking guide.

Although there are more female guides now than before there are many challenges. They say that it is often hard to find places to stay along the trekking route during the busy season. Sometimes they have to share rooms with male guides. Women trekking guides are not as respected as the men and they are often seen in a



negative way by other guides and hotel owners. But they say the challenges do not discourage them. Uma Bastola joined the profession to challenge the patriarchal society and to prove that women can also do well in professions that men dominate.

Chair of Three Star Adventure Lucky Karki says women, especially Janajatis, want to train. She says that while before most trainees were social pariahs, now even married women with kids, or fresh high-school graduates are getting attracted to the profession.

Free training for women guides started nine years ago. Every year about 80 women are trained. The total cost of the free training is about Rs 200,000 which Three Star Adventure gets through fundraising events with foreigners.

A day in Girijababu's life



Nagarik, 1 August

नागरिक

3:45 am

The lights suddenly come on in a room on the second floor of a white house in Maharajganj. Behind the white curtains, an elderly man shuffles about as he wakes up. This is how Girijababu begins his day. Maharajganj is dark and all its residents still asleep, but Nepal's elder statesman is up and about. A man comes in with tea, not a word is spoken.

6:00am

Girijababu's doctor fastens a nebuliser to his face for 10

minutes and then massages his chest for another 10.

6:30 am

In the lobby of Girija Koirala's house the domestic helper invites us in for breakfast. "Come in, Come in, let's eat breakfast," Girijababu says as he helps himself to an omelet and toast and waves us to white plastic chairs. After breakfast he takes his pills and rests for half-an-hour amidst shelves stacked with books.

7:30 am

He puts on a white daura surwal, a black topi and turns on his 26

inch LG tv and watches the news. An assistant stands by and tells him his schedule for the day and reads the papers aloud to him.

11:30 am

He sits at a table in his bedroom and has a sparse lunch: soup, two-three spoonfuls of rice, dal and chicken or goat and yoghurt.

2:30 pm

Girijababu calls for tea and biscuits begins his appointments. He listens to his guests intently and responds. An hour later he has his favourite glass of milk and continues meeting people for the rest of the day.



BADRI POUDYAL

Brewing resentment

Politicians, intellectuals, lawyers, artists, students and representatives of ethnic and indigenous communities discussed the constitution writing process, the federal system and 'one Madhes one Pradesh' in Janakpur last month.

Pace of constitution-writing

Rajeshwar Nepali (Janakpur Intellectual Society): Fewer than 10 per cent of CA members actually understand the process in which the constitution is being written. Even the nominees aren't experts. If the leaders had good intentions the constitution would be written in three months. Instead, they're dishonest. They were quick to declare the country secular but haven't yet formed a state restructuring commission. In the Tarai, the ex-landlords and their relatives still want to enslave half the region's population.

Shital Jha (UML): Learning from our past, the new constitution should address the possible socio-political issues that might be controversial. Conflict is inevitable if the freedom of language and recognition of languages of minorities are not addressed. There is no difference between the one language policy of the Panchayat system and those who argue Nepali should be the only official language in the country.

Raman Singh (Sadbhabana Mahato): The big parties are making mistakes and the small parties aren't helping by complicating things. In 1980 our party called for a single Tarai province, but the big parties conspired against it.

Parameshwar Kapad (Mithila State Struggle Committee): Many have not been able to digest the issues being raised. Federalism requires negotiations. It should not be imposed. We have to have a big

heart to reach an agreement and then we can make a new constitution.

Ramchandra Mandal (Maoist): There are oppressed and oppressors in our society and the oppressed are still struggling for their rights. It is normal to have conflict in the constitution-writing process in such a situation. If the oppressors corner the oppressed too much, the latter will have to take another road. But instead of renewing these conflicts, we should work together.

Brisheschandra Lal (TMLP): The dominant Khas has delayed the constitution-writing process to expand their influence. The writing process would be much faster if the CA and parliament were separate. The CA members' focus is not on writing the constitution but on becoming minister.

Ram Saroj Yadav (NC): The different committees under the CA are working responsibly. It is true that leaders are engaged in making and breaking the government only. The country may go back to insurgency if the agendas of Janajatis, women and other backward communities are not addressed in the new constitution. These issues cannot be discussed within six months and that's why people doubt whether the constitution will be written on time.

Reservation, privileges and inclusion

Habib Munsuri (Nepal Muslim Society): Reservations should be merit-

based. We have seen that many of our CA members elected under reservations understand the issue and can actually express their opinion.

Surendra Labh (Rara Campus): Call it reservations or privilege, we need to establish an equal and just society. Only writing the constitution is not enough. There are many complications in its implementation. On what basis should we give reservations? Should it be based on caste, language, gender or region? We should reserve privileges for people because they're poor, not because they're Madhesi or women. We should make sure that reservations help the poor, unlike in India, where even the rich benefit.

Ramesh Ranjan Jha (Mithila Art Council): The truth is that only clever people benefit from reservations. There are high, middle and low class people within the Madhesi community. Among women, there is a wide gap between Madhesi and Dalit women. Even though the central government has provided reservations for Janajatis, women and Dalits, there is a majority of Pahadi people at policy and implementation level who only help their community.

Shambhu Thakur (Society of Backward Community): Backward community, Dalit and indigenous people from the Tarai should get reservation. We need reservation in military, politics, administration and education. The Tarai cannot move forward unless and until farmers get reservations.

"I'm losing sleep"

Krishna Kumari Pariyar, NC CA member, Kaski



How did you spend the last year in the CA?

In the first CA meeting, the Koirala-led government declared Nepal a democracy. This was a happy moment, since the monarchy had long imperiled peace in the country. Then we met in our respective subject committees and went to the villages to see what people wanted from the new constitution. Afterwards the committees began working on preliminary drafts and concept papers.

Will the constitution be written on time?

We must. I've been losing sleep worrying about it. The people have given us an enormous responsibility, haven't they? Every party needs to be aware of that.

What form of rule do you think the country should have?

For a society as diverse as ours we need an executive prime minister and an appointed ceremonial president. That way, tomorrow we can install a dalit as president, which would be difficult if the president were elected like the prime minister.

A parliament or ethnic assembly?

We shouldn't adopt an ethnic assembly, as the Maoists wish. How can we trust them? They didn't make one Dalit a minister and yet they talk about inclusiveness.

How should the provinces be defined?

We should define it on the basis of inclusiveness. We can't assign them haphazardly. We have to distribute regions to the people who really own them. I can't say much about federalism except that the provinces must be autonomous.

How can the state be more inclusive of Dalits?

As human beings, we have rights. The government must do more to fight discriminatory customs.

"70% of the work is done"

Eknath Dhakal, CA member Pariwar Party, Gorkha

How did you spend the last year in the CA?

I'm the only CA member from my party. I'm a member of four CA committees and three parliamentary committees. We've gone to the villages to solicit people's suggestions about the constitution and discussed them within our committees. Four committees have already finished their work.

Some have complained the CA hasn't achieved much in the last year.

The CA's finished 70 per cent of its work. We've established the rules of the CA, the committees, gotten people's suggestions for the constitution and have been writing drafts on the basis of those suggestions. There has been delay so some have been disappointed.



Will we finish the constitution on time?

Yes, we must. The committees still have to iron out some details with regard to federalism, and the form of rule and elections. So, the big party leaders must resolve their differences to finalise the work.

What style of federalism does the Pariwar Party want?

We can't have ethnic federalism. We need to determine the provinces scientifically according to geography and population resources along with ethnicity.

What form of rule should we have?

The Westminster system, where a separation of power is ensured, is best. The prime minister will be held accountable to parliament, and the parliament is held accountable to the people. The Maoists want to use the constitution to establish the basic framework of a people's republic. But, this is not right. Since we're a multi-party democracy, there must be two houses.

Mist-ical

LISA SC



No place better
than Pokhara
to soak
in Nepal's
rainy season
experience



PICS: LISA VON RABENAU AND LISA SCHWOERER

monsoon

HWOERER



Don't believe the guide books. Visit Nepal in the monsoon, especially Pokhara the part of Nepal with the highest annual rainfall.

Last week, as expected, Pokhara's lakeside was deserted. It is supposed to be the "off" season. Besides fewer tourists, the town's adventure sports facilities also close down: paragliding, ultra-lights, rafting and trekking. Despite the erratic monsoon, however, there is nothing to match the greenery at this time of year. And when the Annapurnas make an appearance through clouds they have a ghostly monochromatic light that you don't see any other time.

Even besides off-season discounts and delicious mangoes, the monsoon has a lot to offer that can only be enjoyed during this special time of year. So let's explore Pokhara and its beautiful surroundings for its wet season instead

and vitality while strolling past the freshly laid out rice terraces glistening in the sun. Over three-fourth of this country's population is involved in agriculture and this time of year the hard work that goes into producing every plate of dal-bhat can truly be understood and appreciated. Further up, one enters the abundant greenery and mystical light of Panchase's cloud forests, and its abundant biodiversity.

"Panchase offers over 12 different types of forests and 112 different species of orchids to discover, some of which only bloom during monsoon," says Ram Saran Sedai of the Machhapuchhre Development Organisation. The jungle gives protection from the fierce sun and the raindrops and the abundant waterfalls and ponds serve as cooling bathtubs for cows and buffaloes. Pokhara is so close to the mountains, that you usually get at least one break in the clouds to enjoy majestic views of Machapuchre and Annapurna. Even on



of trying to avoid the rain. It only takes a change in attitude and some precautions to enjoy a (quite literal) dip into the monsoon experience. Bring proper rain gear, tablets against diarrhea, mosquito repellent, sun block, salt or chewing tobacco against leeches and a willingness to get wet. Once prepared, a three to five day trek around Phewa Lake to Panchase provides visitors with an opportunity to soak in the beautiful scenery and greenery special to the monsoon. Panchase has the highest precipitation rate in Nepal, even more than Ilam.

Roads less traveled due to the small number of fellow hikers will (as one experienced trekking guide put it) 'make you feel like you're actually in the mountains again'. Watch farmers carefully plant rice seedlings and enjoy the overwhelming feeling of tranquility

good mornings, a few isolated clouds might at first create a 'scenery-problem'. However, you may soon find that the clouds only pay sufficient respect to the magnificence of the mountain ranges, completing the sense of distant mystical grandeur rather than disrupting it. Undeniably, there is something cheerful in the suddenness and strength of monsoon showers to which the colorful and manifold-patterned umbrellas, popping up everywhere with the first drops of rain, only add.

The soft and soothing sound of falling rain is a lullaby helping exhausted trekkers fall into a long and peaceful sleep at night. Learn to love the monsoon as a symbol of rebirth and rejuvenation. The mountains around Pokhara are the best place to see this hidden mystical land in the mist. ●

Bloody leeches

Unfortunately, the monsoon is also the peak season for leeches. Though they do not transmit diseases, leech bites can be irritatingly itchy and precautions are thus advisable. There is no fool-proof method to prevent leech bites, but there are ways to minimise the damage they cause.

For example, leeches supposedly cannot bite their way through nylon stockings and stay away from skin rubbed with soap or chewing tobacco. Personally I find that the smell of chewing tobacco on your legs will not only keep leeches, but also friends away.

Another efficient practice demonstrated to me by Rupesh Gurung in Panchase is tying a cotton bag filled with salt on the bottom of a stick to use the stick to remove leeches from shoes before they get a chance to bite.

Once the blood-suckers have attached to your skin, contact with chewing tobacco or salt will cause them to shrivel up, fall off and eventually die. Another method involves using a fingernail to break the seal of the anterior and posterior ends of the leech, disturbing the suction and causing the leech to remove its jaw.

Chose the right precaution and hope for a relatively bloodless trek.

Confusion in the time of cholera

Stop the witch-hunt, send medicines and address the cause of infections

It will soon be 100 days since the cholera epidemic started in the mountains of western Nepal. This week, the death toll in Jajarkot crossed 140. The disease has spread to 17 districts where it has killed another 105. The cholera bacillus is present in some of the stool samples.

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal illness caused by the infection of the intestine by bacteria and the patient eventually dies of acute dehydration. The disease spreads through water contaminated with fecal matter. This year, the acuteness of the disease was compounded by a long winter drought followed by pre-monsoon squalls that washed contaminants into water sources.

The disease is preventable as well as treatable. Because it is a communicable disease, the first line of defense is communications: making people aware about safe drinking water. But awareness alone is not enough for behaviour change, people need alternatives. Safe drinking water systems need to be accessible.

If the infection is already spreading, prevention is too late, and the public health authorities need to move fast on treatment. Acute diarrhoea and cholera are treatable through oral and/or intravenous rehydration to replace the lost water in the body.

An outbreak like this was waiting to happen. The areas where the epidemic is seen are the most impoverished and remote. Boiling water and personal hygiene are not priorities in districts where people don't have enough to eat. And hunger makes them more vulnerable to infections. Two years of winter drought and a monsoon failure had physically weakened people. The areas hardest hit are so remote that no health worker wants to go there. Medicine and doctors have remained in the district headquarters, while those who have needed medical attention dehydrate and die in villages that are a few minutes away by helicopter.

The government's apathy is shameful, but sadly, not surprising. At the height of the epidemic the health minister left the country for a junket in Europe, the PM was off for a NAM summit. The media dilly-dallied with the issue, the public did not want to admit that in this day and age there are people dying of cholera in Nepal. Aid organisations, even those working on health, had other priorities and didn't have 'epidemic' listed in their area of work.



KALENDRA SEJUWAL

Despite the daily headlines and field reporting, the government response is still sluggish. It seems Singha Darbar just wants the problem to go away. Meanwhile, private individuals have been doing the government's job by air-lifting doctors and medicines to remote villages. Here was a chance for the government to show it cared, and it didn't do enough—at least in the public perception.

The sick are scattered across remote mountainous villages, they are difficult to identify and reach. Doctors and nurses need to move out of the district capital in helicopters, sending medicines by donkey will take too long. The best doctors need to go, not interns, and stop the token press conferences in Kathmandu about "package relief programs" when people are still dying. Translate these words into action.

The opposition pointing fingers by saying that the government is not doing enough because the affected areas are former Maoist strongholds doesn't help. Also, it doesn't help that human rights organisations divert attention from the urgently required responses with wildly incorrect statements that the WFP's food aid caused the cholera epidemic. It doesn't help that organisations with no expertise on epidemics or contagious diseases are pointing fingers at other organisations that are doing their best in these trying times. There is a danger that people will avoid or skip meals in an attempt to protect themselves from cholera, which will endanger more lives.

And it is us in the media who deserve part of the blame. We have joined the witch-hunt, bannered absurd accusations without cross-checking facts and proper research. Shallow and irresponsible reporting in the time of cholera can kill. One wonders if the government itself benefits from this attempt to distract attention from its own failures in preventing and treating the sick.

GRAIN DRAIN: A United Nations helicopter drops off sacks of rice at a school playground in remote Humla after the failure of winter rains this year.



Less food, more

KUNDA DIXIT

NePAL suffers chronic food shortage, but a convergence of crises has created a food emergency which could have serious political repercussions in the coming year.

An apocalyptic new report by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warns of a "sharp and sustained decline" in food production in Nepal. Even if only some of WFP's predictions come true, food shortages could trigger widespread social unrest.

"The Cost of Coping: A Collision of Crises" adds up the cost of the global fuel, food and economic crises and how these are magnified by a stagnation in Nepal's food production, growing population and political instability. In addition, a cycle of droughts and floods has pushed an already vulnerable population to the edge of famine.

As a result, 3.4 million Nepalis don't have enough to eat. An additional five million Nepalis have fallen below the poverty line in the past three years: forcing them to take children out of school, eat seed stock or sell land.

"If current production growth rates remain constant...it is likely that within the next 3-5 years Nepal will become food deficit at a national level even during years of normal harvest," warns the report.

There are more mouths to feed, but Nepal's rice production actually fell by one percent between 2002-2007, while harvests increased by 16 percent.

New report warns of an impending food emergency in Nepal

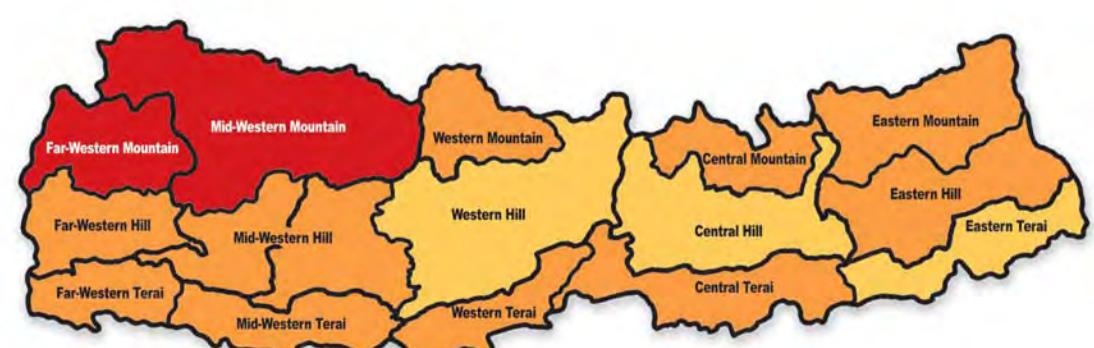
in Bangladesh and 31 percent in India. Nepal's investment in agriculture fell from 30 percent of the budget to 5 percent in 2008, and even so only 16.5 percent of the allocated money was spent.

"The three aspects of food security: production, availability and affordability, and we have to respond to each," says Yubaraj Khatiwada, the newly-appointed head of the National Planning Commission.

The winter drought in 2006-7 was followed by another eight-month drought last winter and then a bad monsoon this summer. This may lead to a food grain deficit of more than 200,000 tons because winter harvests in the mountains came down by half and even the Tarai may suffer huge rice harvest shortfalls this summer.

But at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC), spokesman Hari Dahal says the WFP report is "alarmist". He admits the food deficit has affected 700,000 people, and adds: "I haven't heard anyone dying of hunger, there is no shortage."

But even the MoAC's own

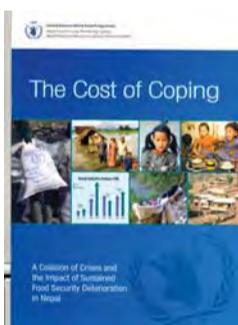


HUNGER MAP OF NEPAL



mouths to feed

figures point to a harvest shortfall. This needs urgent investment in agricultural infrastructure and subsidies for inputs. New technologies for dryland rice like the System for Rice



Intensification (SRI) need to be promoted. (See box, below) All this needs the political will to grasp Nepal's food emergency and do something about it.

Sixty percent of children under five in the mountains are undernourished: one of the worst figures in the world. Nepal is now even more unlikely to achieve the UN's goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

The government needs more effective distribution of subsidised grain to hotspots, expansion of food for work programs like the ones

implemented by WFP, and school meals for vulnerable children.

The WFP report concludes with this dire warning: 'If urgent action is not taken to address Nepal's food crisis, then the situation will deteriorate further through this decade and the next...urgent prioritisation of national food security is required at the highest level of the Nepal government and supporting development partners.'

harvests for only one-third of the seedling and with very little water. The only drawback is that farmers have to spend more time weeding their fields.

Ananta Ram Majhi (*pictured*), a farmer near Biratnagar, used to harvest five tons per hectare, and has been getting double that amount after he adopted SRI seven years ago.

"Initially, I thought to myself, if this is such a great idea why didn't my ancestors think of it?" he told *Nepali Times*.

Actually, farmers have been more enthusiastic than agronomists and government officials in Kathmandu. SRI was invented by a French Jesuit in Madagascar in 1983 and has since been adopted in 20 countries from Cuba to China.

Indian scientists at the Punjab Agricultural University and in north-east India have been conducting limited trials for SRI in arid areas, but are encouraged enough by results to extend it to other areas. This year's failed monsoon has renewed interest in India for SRI.

The success of the technique depends on skillful farming, good timing, weeding and careful planting and drainage. SRI converts in Nepal include agronomist Rajendra Upadhyay who initiated the SRI trials in Morang in 2002. He is convinced no part of Nepal need be short of food if SRI is promoted nationally.

(See also: 'The miracle is it's no miracle', #256)



For a country so dependent on rainfed agriculture as Nepal, there is a tried and tested way to make rice less water-intensive. The real surprise is why the government isn't promoting it more vigorously.

The rice seeds are not a high-yield hybrid, nor genetically modified. It doesn't need farmers to flood their fields, nor use chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The secret lies in a method of cultivation called SRI (System of Rice Intensification).

In trials in Morang and Nawalparasi, the new method of rice cultivation has yielded double the

"Disaster in the making"

Nepali Times: Nepal has always had a food crisis, why is this one so serious?

Richard Ragan: Even prior to this crisis, every other child under five in Nepal faced chronic malnourishment which means they can't reach their full mental or physical potential because they don't have enough food to eat. These figures are comparable to many Sub-Saharan countries. Now add to the hunger problem the recent crises: successive years of drought, double digit food inflation, paused development because of conflict, and the global economic meltdown. It's a country-wide disaster in the making that could undo hard won gains Nepal has made during the last two decades against poverty and hunger.

When will we start seeing the impact?

We are already seeing the impact. More than 40 per cent of Nepal's population is undernourished and more than 30,000 children die every year of malnutrition-related diseases, yet this has yet to grab headlines here or in the world.



Richard Ragan, the Nepal country representative of the UN's World Food Programme spoke to *Nepali Times* about the food emergency threatening the country and what can be done about it.

What does the government need to do urgently?

There are millions of people hungry now that need help to save their lives. Addressing hunger and providing basic services like medical care needs to be a national and international priority. Both the government and the international community need to address immediate hunger and medical and sanitation needs, while at the same time investing in basic infrastructure so that people can pull themselves out of the hunger trap. I believe food for work activities are a key part of the response because it meets hunger needs while enabling people to build infrastructure that contributes to longer-term food security.

And in the longer term?

The government should make household food security as important as macro-production. People often look at national production figures without a focus on how this translates to what a family is able to put on the table, particularly for the most poor. Producing enough food at a macro-level isn't enough if the majority of the population doesn't have access to it because they can't afford it or find it in the local market. This means focusing on ways to help rural communities grow enough food to feed themselves by providing access to seed, building community irrigation, improving post harvest storage, and building roads that support markets for farmers. In short, government should view small farmers like national assets, after all, more than 80 per cent of Nepal's people are involved in some aspect of agriculture.

How much time do we have before Nepal's silent food emergency turns into famine conditions?

I'm hesitant to use the word famine because it evokes pretty strong reactions. They are usually caused by a combination of political, economic and environmental factors all of which are prevalent in the country today. Nepal is already facing a "silent food crises" and it won't take much to nudge things over the edge.

"We've given up violence for the time being"

In a smart business suit, a salt-and pepper-haired Hisila Yami spoke to the Indian magazine, *Tehelka*, this week about the Maoist transition from revolution to realpolitik.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Tehelka: What brought the Maoists victory in Nepal's Constituent Assembly elections?

Hisila Yami: Our armed struggle was a people's war. The people of Nepal had grown intolerant of a corrupt and inefficient government. The monarch and other non-left parties have promoted and taken advantage of the dominant Hindu belief systems. The CPN-M declared total war against these forces. We had even thought of taking over Kathmandu but we realised that this would not be appropriate. Besides, we knew

how India and China would have responded.

How difficult is it for Maoists to deal with realpolitik?

Entering a multi-party parliamentary democracy system is certainly a departure from certain models of communist revolution. Yet, in another way, war and democracy have a dialectical relationship. We are following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement a timetable for the Maoists to enter parliament, lay down arms, join the government and participate in the

electoral process.

At the Constituent Assembly meetings, I watch our cadre members and am amazed at how quickly they have learnt the ropes. Yet, the struggle is on. We fight now with words and not with guns, we argue over the expressions to be used in drafting the constitution (*smiles*).

What roadblocks are causing the current stalemate?

Our strongest opposition is from the military because their supremacy is challenged in a

parliamentary democracy. They enjoyed impunity under the monarchy and do not like us for our egalitarian ideals and the idea of civilian supremacy. Other non-Marxist parties such as the NC, too, see the military as their last saviour, and so cling to each other and to imperialist agents. We are keen to end the impasse and want to be flexible but our flexibility is not absolute.

Have you left the path of armed struggle for good?

We have given up violence for the time being. In fact, we want to integrate our PLA into the Nepal Army so that our boys receive good training. To us, this was part of a restructuring exercise. The Army is rather feudal and is resisting this.

If the peace process is long, some cadres may leave us. Some of them have joined the Tarai movement. Even within our party, some want to go back to the path of revolution. A philosophical churning is on, not just within our party but within other parties as well.

In other South Asian countries, federal decentralisation has defeated the collective spirit. How will you ensure you don't repeat the mistake?

Federalism helps reach out to every person in a parliamentary democracy. We are discussing this at the CA and are proposing 15 states to accommodate all communities. As Maoists, however, we believe that as economic development takes over, religious and ethnic sentiments will wither away. In the name of culture, religious and ethnic issues can

take the stage. By ensuring that workers and peasants have representation within ethnic groups, we hope to resolve ethnic and class conflicts.

How are you ensuring that constitution-making is progressive, particularly with regards to women?

We have been preparing for this moment for a long time. Women are part of all CA sub-committees on planning and development. There are several young women from the Dalit, Sherpa, Madhesi and Muslim communities representing different political parties. They are planning land reforms while keeping the interests of women, Dalits and other marginalised groups in mind.

What role do you expect India to play in Nepal?

India's role should be mature. During the debate over Army Chief Katawal's unconstitutional response, India supported him and pressurised us to give in to an Army that has always supported the monarchy and been status quoist.

The Indian government has declared the CPI (Maoist) as terrorists and has banned them.

Banning the outfit will not help. Economic issues should be dealt with through economic measures. The Indian Maoist parties concentrate on their own work. We focus on ours. We do sympathise with them.

How is China reacting to the developments in Nepal?

China is busy doing business (*smiles*).
Tehelka

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NEPAL FASHION WEEK '09

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Bricks in the wall

Throughout human history, walls have been structures that capture and express the best and the worst of human nature. It stands as an ancient example of human industry, urbanisation and civilisation. In its more amiable form, the wall provides identity and community, at its worst it stands for the violence and greed that debase our humanity. The wall protects and limits, it provides stability and presence, it accentuates the separation between those inside and those outside.

As Kathmandu urbanises and finds itself turning into a megalopolis, walls are being raised to define identity and ownership. They are conforming to mask the new urban fear of the other.

In the installation art exhibition, *Rhythm of Solitude*, artist Binod Shrestha who is assistant professor of art at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse reflects on being Nepali.

The exhibit is a unique blend of basic everyday materials like salt, pigments, fabric, wood, sand and bricks with elements of modernity that have captivated Binod and to a larger extent, the Nepali nation.

Hosted at Yala Maya Kendra, the venue was chosen specifically for the inside/outside and semi-public/semi-private nature of the location. It provides a walled in courtyard garden that captures the traditional Newari courtyard housing complexes that were once common in the

inner cities. These courtyards created the community as much as they defined it. The setting enables Binod to capture that unique sense of Nepali community while meditating on our propensity to violence (physical, emotional or psychological).

Given our communal, social and familial upbringing, where does the violence come from? The answers are perhaps best experienced through the installation itself rather than through the ambiguity of words. But, what is clear is that peace can't reign when fear, subjugation, helplessness, discrimination and insecurity are present, rampant or hidden.

As part of a diaspora community that derives its identity from a nation that is increasingly unsure about its own identity, the exhibition is as much a quest for

identity. The wall is a metaphor, the similitude of bricks, the simulacrum of technology, the displacement of identity, and the fulcrums of fear. The vagueness of these terms in relation to the hidden humanity within Nepal and the Nepali are captured in the base materials of the exhibition. ●

Installation art exhibit explores the displacement of identity

Rhythm of Solitude
9-15 August at Yala Maya Kendra
10 am to 7 pm
The exhibition is organized by Quixote's Cove: The Bookshop
www.qcbookshop.com

hesitate to say yes.

"The two months in Nepal stretched to six months, a year and now it's been three years," says Graham, a native South African who has run restaurants in Johannesburg, Durban and the Netherlands.

Graham has since been involved in improving the food and beverage department at the Summit by implementing western standards of hygiene and food preparation, introducing new recipes and styles of cuisines.

He has also been involved with other projects, including product development and training to improve food

Cuisine art

production in Nepal as a whole.

"I gained experience from extensive travels through Africa, Asia and Europe, and this has influenced my cooking style to combine cooking techniques and ingredients from all corners to create original, simple recipes," explains Graham.

These recipes are now available every week on p 14 of Nepali Times, and recent items include 'Pork Saltimbocca' (Italian entrée served with ham, cheese and sage rolled into meat

and pan-fried) and 'Barbecued tuna with a red onion Mascarpone sauce (which is self-explanatory). The recipes are available for orders at the Summit for the week after it appears on Nepali Times.

Says Graham: "We want to offer some original, exciting recipes to guests at the Summit and also entice amateur chefs out there to try them out at home." ●

See: Recipes by Graham Sydney p 14



MILAP DIXIT
WEST MEETS EAST: Graham Sydney with tandoori chef Ram Kaji Lama cook their chickens for a lunch spread at the Summit Hotel on Tuesday.



enjoy

Unisong Song Contest finalist Phil Tweed performs live at the Rox Restaurant on August 7th and 8th from 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm. Enjoy an evening of fine cuisine and outstanding music.

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Calendered.** photo exhibition of cotton textiles of Southern China and Thai fashion design at Indigo Gallery, 7-16 Aug, 6PM.
- ❖ **Nepal Rendezvous,** an Exhibition of paintings from Nagarkot workshop by Nepali and Bangladeshi artist at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, til 10 August. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **My Life as a Dog,** movie screening at Lazimpatt Gallery Café, 8 Aug, 5.30 PM. 4428549

MUSIC

- ❖ **Americana and Roots music,** with Greg Dolezal at Lazimpatt Gallery Café, 7 Aug, 5.30 PM
- ❖ **Baja gaja,** every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Durbar Marg. 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM. 4260326
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, 5-7PM, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar.
- ❖ **Live Sensation,** performance by Yankey every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Live Band Sensation** performance by Aprilrush, every Saturday till late, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** by Inner Groove with barbecue, Sunday, 12PM-3.30 PM, The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards. 4468589

DINING

- ❖ **Asparagus mania,** enjoy all flavours at the Rox Restaurant, all through August. 4491234
- ❖ **BBQ Obsession,** on Fridays and Saturdays at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel 10-31 July, 6PM. 4411818
- ❖ **Wine Festival,** until 15 September, Kilroy's Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **A cafe's cafe** Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka. 5522113
- ❖ **The Corner Bar,** 3-11PM, 5-7PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu. 4411818
- ❖ **Mango Etagere** with hi-tea at The Lounge from 4.30- 6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** by the Poolside every Saturday and Sunday, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu ,11AM-3PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice right at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara. 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri La, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites,** The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Spa Package** - a 60-minute Ayurvedic massage and access to the pool and spa with either breakfast or lunch at The Cafe or hi-tea at the Lounge for Rs 3000 at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Dhulikhel Lodge Resort,** offers an overnight stay for Rs 1600, from 24 July-30 September. 4222389
- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night on double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa and, offer valid to Nepalis and local residents only. 4489800

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoon is the result of a gigantic low pressure over the Indian desert that sucks in moisture from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. That dynamo is still working but because of global warming, high altitude temperatures are just not low enough to trigger precipitation from the moisture that is pushed up the mountains. This week's heavy rains across Nepal were more characteristic of the breaking of the monsoon in mid-June. The monsoon pulse will bring heavy precipitation into the weekend. Climate change is also pushing the monsoon back and it ends later. October cyclones in the Bay also result in unusually massive blizzards and storms. There is nothing to do but to be prepared for these unusual weather events.



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RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

Watermelon Gazpacho

(Serves 6)

This fresh, light and healthy Spanish soup with a twist is perfect for the hottest monsoon days. One can vary the garnishes to include boiled egg, celery, Parmesan cheese, chicken strips, shrimps and even red chilli.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 2 kg | ripe tomatoes |
| 3 cups | seeded watermelon |
| 1 | small to medium cucumber, peeled and seeded |
| 1 | small onion |
| 2 cloves | garlic |
| 3 tbs | raspberry vinegar |
| 1 | large green pepper, seeded |
| 1 cup | olive oil |
| 4 slices | day old bread |
| ½ cup | water |
| a few drops of Tabasco salt and pepper to taste | |



Soak the bread in the water. Take 4 of the tomatoes and cut them into quarters. Cut the seeds out and dice the flesh into small blocks. Cut a small cross into the point of the remaining tomatoes and place them into very hot water for 45-60 seconds. Remove and allow to cool in cold water before peeling them. Roughly chop the tomatoes, onion, garlic, half the cucumber and half the green pepper and blend with the watermelon, bread mixture, Tabasco, vinegar and olive oil. Finely dice the rest of the cucumber and green pepper into the same size as the tomato, for the garnish. Season the soup well with salt and pepper and serve with the diced tomato, cucumber and green pepper, a drizzle of good olive oil and some garlic bruschetta on the side.

Summit Hotel
Somewhere special



STRIKING BACK: Protesters near Rani Pokhari demanding action against the driver of the fatal hit-and-run that killed six Indian nationals early Wednesday morning in front of Bir Hospital.



MAYDAY: Five political parties come together on Monday to demand that Jajarkot be declared an 'Emergency Zone' following the cholera epidemic.



KNOTTY COP: A police woman takes a break from work to have a ritual thread tied around her wrist during Janai Purnima on Wednesday in Kumbeshwor Temple.



HOLY MURMURS: Worshippers chanting Buddhist prayers during an annual month-long festival for peace in Swayambhu last week.



FACE LIFT: Workers spruce up Swayambhunath Temple on Wednesday in preparation for the coming religious holidays.

A wonderful privilege and honour to visit Nepal for the first time and to visit Dharan, surely at the heart of Gurkha recruitment, I am a daughter of the regiment my father James Lumley served all his life with 6th Gurkha Rifles. His spirit is with you all as I write these words with affection respect and gratitude.
Ayo Gorkhali

Johana Lumley with her husband Putting her Memoriam at the VVIP guest book @ Nirvana Country Club Health & Golf Resort

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The baddies are revolting

Up, the Maobuddies are revolting again. They agreed to a Supreme Council headed by Girija the Grand Ayatollah and are still dangling premiership in front of his face. However, the three-week marathon central committee meeting did defuse a brewing mutiny by distributing plum party posts to dissidents and preserving the privileges of the **Big 16** by allowing them to keep perks and privileges. But just to show the party still has fangs, the comrades decided to launch People Power LXVIII.



Ferocious showed awesome talent for appeasement by entrusting BRB with the post of Chairman Number Two and demoting nemesis Kazi Narayan Kamred to Chairman Number Four. The Old Doc has been promoted to **Brother Number One**, which means the hardline ideologue will be less of a loose canon.

Surprisingly, the General Secretary position has gone to Cloudy the Fence-Sitter, probably in recognition of his important mediatory role in fixing things. There are two secretaries now in the CentCom to balance the two factions: Fearsome-loyalist Post Bahadur and CPji from the anti-PKD faction.



The Maobaddies also announced their much-anticipated 16-point Code of Conduct for the Comrades, the interesting thing about which was that none of the provisions like the ban on keeping drivers, security guards, servants and renting out flats in KTM apply to senior brass. George Orwell must be having **flashbacks in his grave**. One of the first guidelines for party cadre is the requirement for all to behave like "professional revolutionaries" which must mean that there are these sub-guidelines so the comrades can continue to show their true colours:

- Be polite when making anonymous threatening phone calls in the wee hours to export a couple of karods
- Ensure that the kalo-moso is made from ISO9000 boot polish and contains no harmful chemicals that would damage the ozone layer
- Stop discrimination in casinos, allow Nepalis to gamble
- Make press conferences extra exciting by administering corporal punishment to outgoing corporation heads
- Slash country's fuel import bill by declaring sudden chukka jams and closing down autonomous state council regions one by one
- Contribute to reducing the country's balance of trade deficit with India by facilitating the crossborder trade in sandalwood, wildlife parts, stolen cars, dynamite and detonators
- Keep hospital emergencies busy by cracking the skulls of headstrong political opponents



Hot on the heels of the cabinet decision to finally nominate political appointees as ambassadors comes the news that GON is setting up a Rs 240 million Bureau of Foreign Intelligence (BFI). As all of us know, at a time when the country is going through a cholera epidemic, a catastrophic food emergency and rampant crime, improving our counter-intelligence capabilities in foreign countries is a matter of utmost priority. Every nation state worth its salt needs spooks, even if half its children go to bed hungry every night. Which is why all Nepali missions abroad are henceforth going to have in-house spies to spy on the spies of other countries to determine exactly what they are trying to spy about us. Only once we have this intelligence will we be able to counter all international conspiracies to undermine our territorial integrity, our sovereignty and our freedom to have **warped priorities**.



And finally, we come to this week's installment in our series 'Only in Nepal'. Petrol and diesel tanker drivers are threatening to go on strike because the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) is refusing to double the '**evaporation loss rate**' that gave them 1.6 litres for every 1,000 litres of petrol which they used to sell in the black market to augment their salaries. "How dare they take away our only source of extra income, if they don't double the evaporation loss rate we will go on strike," an irate tanker driver is quoted as saying. Needless to say, nothing that the Ass reports in this column is made up, and if you don't believe me you can check page 19 of the 2 August issue of Kantipur.



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