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.

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.

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.

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

Enjoy the moment
a swing at a time

Signature
Yielding 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 Nepals 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 Bhaktapur the other night were Bharians who worked here. Tens of thousands of refugees from Tibet fled persecution to settle in Nepal in the late 1950s. In recent years, refugees from in other countries. The Gazmeres, who like the Gazmeres, will not yet have passports of their new

resettled in other countries who will be visiting family here and

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and were traveling on refugee documents since they don't yet have

Bhutan themselves) were resettled in Adelaide earlier this year

Gazmere was detained at Kathmandu airport when he and his wife

Canada in the past two years.

Since 1991, Nepal has provided refuge to 10,000 Bhutanese 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 Indias backing for the Bhutanese 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 own 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 Gazmeres 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 Gauthaula police station. It was later alleged that human rights activists lobbied for their release that the Gazmeres were given a two-week visa on 4 August.

Home Minister Bihm Rawal needs to be commended for this case, but the shaky treatment by the Gazmeres seriously besmirched Nepals image as a haven for the huddled messengers of justice. The episode also highlights the need to change the rule about not issuing visas to refugees traveling on title de voyage.

In the next five years there will be 80,000 Bhutan 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.

EYES ON THE BALL

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

Yielding to be free

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EYES ON THE BALL

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

Although Nepal has got complex with two factions of the Forum getting formal status. Within, who is whom, though, resentment resists the against the responsive mainstream parties if

lack of formal participation

go back to the land goal

campaign in Tarai where the state has done little to address the landless

and, slowly collects arms

He may or may not start an

movement again, but his

outfit can be categorized as a semi-militant one.

The armed groups continue to be dismantled, 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 among their most powerful leader. Till Raj Kumari Lekhi and Tharu Kalyan Shankha 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 cadres in the west. He is also networking with both ethnic activists and Madheshi 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 Tharu groups of all hues, Madheshi Maoists, 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, essentially in the Madhesi heartland, there is simmering discontent against Kathmandu and frustration with the leadership. The Madheshi parties have not made the vice president’s Hindi issue a street issue yet, maybe they were not allowed by powerful-people that be in order to save the government trouble. But the issue has revived certain 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 party and then 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 has produced a report (eight months ago) has sent a message to Madhesi political actors: we haven’t changed and won’t change.

Kathmandu is lucky that Madheshi leaders are discredit. 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 similarly, the Madheshi leaders themselves) they are ultimately 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.

LETTERS

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 Mandakuth (Kathmandu backward).

Grimaldi, email

Letters Times welcome feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and details will be given preference. Letters should be in text format without attachments with letters as email subject line.

Email: letters@nepalitimes.com
Fax: 977-1-562013
Mail: Letters, Nepal Times, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.
W hen 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 new government. 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 Bahupat, 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 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 inventive is going beyond rulebooks and precedents is essential qualities in an administrator. Then come considerations of inclusiveness, efficiency, 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. ❄️

### Nepal goes to India

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

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**Min Ratna Bajracharya**

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

SUVAYU 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 e-bikes are hauled off to a scrap dealer. They are light enough to be folded into car trunks.

Sales of Chinese and Indian e-bikes have got off to a slow start since their arrival in Nepal in 2007, with only five companies selling 500 bikes in Kathmandu. That figure is expected to increase, but this will take time. E-scooters cost Rs 50,000-110,000 and have been doing poorly in large part because people aren’t aware that they can save fuel costs, says Miyuki Kimizuka of the Japan Bicycle Promotion Institute.

Since April, the Nepal government has waived VAT duties on e-bicycles to lure consumers. Although the Nepal government has waived VAT duties on e-bicycles, says he has sold about 20,000 in the past decade, priced at Rs 30,000-40,000.

E-bikes are expensive in Nepal because they are scarce, use prices, 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 bicycles. 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 catching on among business-conscious companies. “There is a big market for bikes in villages on the outskirts of Kathmandu and in the Tarai”, says Sanjoy Shrestha of Shree Eco Vehicles. Between 2007 and 2008 there was a 40 per cent 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 can save fuel costs, says Miyuki Kimizuka of the Japan Bicycle Promotion Institute.

Plug-in bicycles

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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 from about 15 per cent a year to 130,000 units, thanks in part to a Rs 7,250 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 roads.

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 the battery that can last up to 60 km. 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.

Australia is a world leader in electric bikes. Sanjoy Shrestha of Shree Eco Vehicles

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

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.

Reviewing The Ten Commandments of Business Failure

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Enslaved

Sharu Joshi Shrestha in Kathmandu, 4 August

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 in the child trade.

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 put in place.

At a time when banking has become business, village cooperatives are unable to invest and remain frozen. This is a problem GAs members can easily fix, and it’s high time they took up the issue. The parties may talk about financial revolution, but the actual needs of the mass working abroad are not addressed.

Women show the way

Dinash Banal in Almatti, 31 July-16 August

Twenty-three-year-old Natali 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 training at Three Star Adventure, which has given free training to over 700 women guides until now.

The majority of those who are trained are still in the profession and about 100 guides in 40 districts are now established trekking guides. Man Kamkar from Palpa took Three Star Adventure’s training in 2001 and is still working there with his wife. 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 the challenges do not discourage them. Uma Baral 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.
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 redraw half the region’s population.

Shital Jha (UML): Learning from history, the 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 Tamgh province, but the big parties conspired against it.

Parameswar Kapad (Mithila State Struggle Committee): Many have not been able to digest the issues being missed. 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 oppressors 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 removing these conflicts, we should work together.

Brisheshendra 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 Munuresi (Nepal Muslim Society): Reservations should be cust-based. We have seen that many of our CA members elected under reservations understand the issue and can actually express their opinion.

Surendra Lah (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 Madhesis 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 Madheshi community. Among women, there is a wide gap between Madheshi 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 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?

It’s been a difficult year for the CA. The opposition, which has been the single largest party, is not in a position to form the government. We have given the public a good government. We have been working hard. A lot of legislation has been passed. The government has started many projects, which will benefit the people of this country.

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

A republic, a federal state, a representative form of government. The people of this country are not satisfied with the current form of government. The people want a government that is responsive to their needs. The CA has to listen to the people and take their views into account.

How should the provinces be defined?

The provinces should be defined on the basis of geography, language and culture. The provinces should be autonomous. The people of each province should be able to govern themselves.

How can the state be more inclusive of Dalits?

We must give reservations to the Dalit community. The government must formulate policies that will benefit the Dalit community. The government must also work to create a society that is inclusive of Dalits.

“70% of the work is done”

Eknath Dhakal, CA member, Pariwar Party, Gorkha

How did you spend the last year in the CA?

I’ve spent the past year in the CA working on legislation, and trying to ensure that the government is accountable to the people. I’ve also been working on issues related to education, health and development.

What style of federalism does the Pariwar Party want?

We want a federal system that is democratic, inclusive and accountable. We want a system that respects the diversity of the people of Nepal.

What form of rule should we have?

We want a republic, a federal state, a representative form of government. The people of this country are not satisfied with the current form of government. The people want a government that is responsive to their needs. The CA has to listen to the people and take their views into account.
No place better than Pokhara to soak in Nepal’s rainy season experience
don’t believe the guide books. Visit Nepal in the monsoon, especially Pokhara the part of Nepal with the highest annual rainfall.

Last week, an 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 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 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 mindrops 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 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.
Compounded by a long winter drought followed by pre-monsoon fecal matter. This year, the acuteness of the disease was dehydration. The disease spreads through water contaminated with some of the stool samples. The disease is preventable as well as treatable. Because it is 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. 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, banning 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.

Interesting Times
Mallika Aryal

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 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. 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, banning 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.

Confusion in the time of cholera
Stop the witch-hunt, send medicines and address the cause of infections

I t 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 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. 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, banning 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.

New report warns of an impending food emergency in Nepal

N epal 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 exacerbated by 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 10 percent 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), spokesperson 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

Less food, more hunger.
mouths to feed

Super Rice

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 halving 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 Nepalese government and supporting development partners.”

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 crisis” and it won’t take much to mudge things over the edge.

For a country so dependent on rainfall 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 harvests for only one-third of the seeding 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 and around, and 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 skilful farming, good timing, weeding and careful planting and drainage. SRI converts in Nepal include agronomist Rajendra Uprety 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)
INTERVIEW
7 - 13 AUGUST 2009
#463

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 enjoy 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 pressured 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).
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 degrade 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-publicism-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 simulacrum of bricks, the simulacrum of technology, the displacement of identity, and the fulcruum 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.

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

Cuisine art

Just when Graham Sydney decided he needed a sabbatical from his job in the hospitality industry, a man came to his restaurant, Restobar Knus in Amsterdam, and offered him a two-month training stint in the Netherlands. And offered him the opportunity to improve food and beverage standards of hygiene and food 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 these items include ‘Pork Saltimbocca’ (Italian entree 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

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

Installation art exhibit explores the displacement of identity

just when Graham Sydney decided he needed a sabbatical from his job in the hospitality industry, a man came to his restaurant, Restobar Knus in Amsterdam, and offered him a two-month training stint in a hotel in Kathmandu. The man was Cas de Stoppelaar, the owner of a hotel in Kathmandu. Graham thought the offer was providential he did not 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 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 some items include ‘Pork Saltimbocca’ (Italian entree 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.

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See: Recipes by Graham Sydney p 14

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.

FEEL THE HYATT TOUCH

For further details please call 4489362
P.O. Box 9609, Targop, Boxlela, Kathmandu, Nepal
TELEPHONE +977 1 449 1234 FAXSWIPE +977 1 449 0003 kathmandu.reserve@hyatt.com
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**EXHIBITIONS**

- **Calendered.** photo exhibition of cotton textiles of Southern China and Thai fashion design at Indigo Gallery. 7-16 Aug. GPM.
- **Nepal Rendezvous.** An Exhibition of paintings from Nagarkot workshop by Nepali and Bangladeshi artist at Siddharta Art Gallery, Baver Mahal Revisited, Il 10 August. 4210448

**EVENTS**

- **My Life as a Dog.** movie screening at Lazztat Gallery Café, 8 Aug. 3:50 PM. 4242546

**MUSIC**

- **Americana and Roots music,** with Greg Doelezal at Lazzmat Gallery Café, 7 Aug, 5:30 PM
- **Baja gaja,** every Tuesday at Moksha, 7:30 PM onwards, Pulchok. 5236412
- **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Durbar Marg, 4227286.
- **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency from 12-3:30 PM. 4491234
- **Jazz evening** at Defile de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-7PM. 4290136
- **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarka’s Hotel. 4479488
- **Happy cocktail hour,** 5-7PM, ladies right on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatta Cafe & Bar.
- **Live Sensation** performance by Yankley every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- **Live Band Sensation** performance by Aplinuth, every Saturday till late, Rux Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4483636
- **Sunday Jazz Brunch** by Inner Groove with barbeque, Sunday, 12PM-3:30 PM, The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4483636
- **Nepal Ghajals** and songs at D’Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards. 4488589

**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 10-31JUV. GPM. 4411818
- **Wine Festival,** until 15 September, KIwyosThamale. 4250040
- **A café’s café** Dhoikama Café, Patan Dhokka. 5522113
- **The Corner Bar,** 3-11PM, 5-7PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu. 4411818
- **Mango Elagante** with hi-tea at The Lounge from 4.30- 6.30 PM, Hyatt Regency. 4498362
- **Weekend Brunch** by the Poolside every Saturday and Sunday, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, 11AM-3PM. 4739999
- **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Heights. 4283070
- **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at Le Cafe, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- **Tepanyaki** meat tama and garlic rice right at Le Restaurant, Galindhara. 4436018
- **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri La, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- **Reality Bites.** The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarka’s Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- **Starry night barbacue** 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. 4249999

**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 1500, from 24-July-30 September. 4223289
- **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night on double occupancy with breakfasts, complimentary use of spa and, offer valid to Nepalis and local residents only. 4489890

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**ABOUT TOWN**

- **TERI: Eternal Internationals,** 4290203, Classical Santoorians & Trade Concert 4493103
- **TIRKLINE:** Nimal Marter & sanitation. 412667. SARKRUKSU: Erito Santook 4384913
- **POKHARA:** Arthtrend Trading, 01-22687, P.N. 01-222362

**WEEKEND WEATHER**

- **KATHMANDU VALLEY**
  - The monsoon is the resultant 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 breaking of the monsoon in mid-June. The monsoon pulse will bring

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**RECIPE**

**Watermelon Gazpacho**

*SERVES 6*

- 4 cups diced watermelon
- 1 small onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 tbsp vinegar
- 3 lbs fresh green pepper
- 4 cups diced, sliced or cubed
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup water

1. Seed and dice the tomato, onion, garlic, half the cucumber and half the watermelon. Mix with all the ingredients and blend to your desired consistency.

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**DIRECT LINE**

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**DID YOU KNOW**

- **Love Aaj Kal** is a romantic comedy where Veer does not understand how Jai can treat matters of the heart like it were a financial transaction and Jai does not understand how Veer Singh could have been so naive and silly about Harleen in the days of his youth. But as both stories, one set in the 1960s and the other in the new millennium, unfold we realize that the process of relationship might be different in each era, but the experience of being in love remains the same

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**For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepaltimes.com**

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- **NGAMINDRA DAHL**
- **GRAHAM SYNDY**

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**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 top 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 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 with salt and pepper and serve with the diced tomato, cucumber and green pepper, a drizzle of good olive oil and some garlic breadcrumbs on the side.
HAPPENINGS

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 Swayambunath Temple on Wednesday in preparation for the coming religious holidays.
The baddies are revolting

Y
gp, the Mao baddies 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 comittee meeting did defuse a brewing
mutiny by distributing plum party posts to dissidents and preserving
the privileges of the Big16 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
Nanyan Kamroo to Chairman Number Four. The Old Doc has been
promoted to Brother Number One, which means the hardline
ideologues will be less of a zone cannon.

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 Mao baddies 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:

a) Be polite when making anonymous threatening phone calls in the
wee hours to export a couple of karods
b) Ensure that the kalo-moso is made from ISO9000 boot polish and
contains no harmful chemicals that would damage the ozone layer
c) Stop discrimination in casinos, allow Nepalis to gamble
d) Make press conferences extra exciting by administering corporeal
punishment to outgoing corporation heads

Slash country’s fuel import bill by declaring sudden chuka jams and
closing down autonomous state councils one by one

f) Contribute to reducing the country’s balance of trade deficit with
India by facilitating the cross border trade in sandalwood, wildlife
parts, stolen cars, dynamite and detonators

g) 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 spies, 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 Corruption (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.

Contribute ‘Only in Nepal’ by sending your entry to
ass(at)nepalitimes.com and get a chance to win exciting
prizes.