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Triumvirate

The big three are far from one



BLASH RAI

The future of the peace process and the new constitution depends on Nepal's holy trinity of leaders: Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the NC leader, Girija Prasad Koirala.

Dasain's tea party diplomacy looked like it had narrowed the differences between the three leaders. But internal pressures within the Maoists are making it

difficult for the leaders to follow through on promises. Maoist rhetoric has become more strident to mask internal dissent as well as disarray in their ranks. A

semantic formula is being worked out that would give the Maoists

and the other parties a face-saving way out of the current deadlock. The question is:

after ratcheting up the rhetoric can the Maoists sell any

compromise to their cadre?

The Madhav Nepal government will survive because there is no one else acceptable to everyone. Koirala flirted with Dahal to try to elevate his daughter Sujata, but that

proposal isn't going anywhere. Meanwhile, the inside-the-Ring Road government acts as if the

rest of the country's real problems aren't real. ●

EDITORIAL
Rogues in the ranks

p2

PLAIN SPEAKING Prashant Jha
The TINA factor

p2



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ROGUES IN THE RANKS

The Maoists have turned 'civilian supremacy' into a political slogan. Ironical to say the least, considering it is in truth a party that regards 'military supremacy' as its credo.

By this time in our peace process the demilitarisation and demobilisation of the Maoist army should have already happened. It is clear that the political stalemate is being used by interested parties to delay integration and/or rehabilitation of combatants.

Regardless of how the controversy over the president's move to reinstate the army chief plays out in the coming weeks, it is disingenuous for a political party that still commands a standing army to talk about civilian supremacy. If the events on the night of 3 May had turned out differently, by now we'd be living in a totalitarian people's republic.

Having said that, the peace process shouldn't be taken by the Nepal Army brass as an excuse for triumphalism. The generals must be answerable to elected democratic institutions if we are to avoid the fate of countries with chronic coups.

Security sector reform means strengthening the Ministry of Defense, which theoretically should act as a bridge between the military and their civilian masters. There is a danger that civilian command will mean politicisation of the army. And this being Nepal, that is going to happen whether we like it or not. But the Nepal Army has hopefully outgrown its feudal past and will be able to withstand and ignore efforts by politicians to patronise favourite *jarsaps*. The new army chief would do well to keep the political ambitions of some of his generals in check.

Nepal does not need and can't afford such a bloated army. What we need is a lean operation that can be rapidly mobilised for natural disasters like the floods in western Nepal on Wednesday night. In a rugged country like this, this means a decentralised air support structure equipped with heavy-lift helicopters.

The other activity in which the Nepal Army has historically excelled and earned well-deserved praise for is international peacekeeping operations. Some dirty stuff in procurement and lack of transparency in the Welfare Fund needs to be cleaned up, but by and large our Blue Berets have done the nation proud.

Which is why it is exceedingly important for politicians not to coddle brass tainted by past human rights violations. Protecting and promoting officers involved in war crimes could jeopardise Nepal's role in future peacekeeping operations.

But the army needs to stay clean and professional not just so our soldiers can stop war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but to sustain the peace process here at home.



DPR

Should I stay or should I go?

Madhav Nepal's government should go, but will stay

To the second part first. Through last week, there has been hectic activity: Prachanda-GPK overt and covert meetings; tea parties with pictures of top leaders where the PM has had to squeeze himself in; rhetoric about a high-level mechanism (little more than a



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

prelude to a new government). Speculation, fueled largely by overblown and inconsistent Maoist rhetoric, has hovered around the imminent demise of the present ruling arrangement.

This is all sound and fury signifying nothing, at least in the immediate future, for two reasons.

Madhav Nepal will survive for the next few months because of the TINA factor: There Is No Alternative. GPK and Jhalanath Khanal may want to oust the government, but are not in a position to carry their own parties along. The Madhesi parties, some of whom were created with blessings from down south, will not be destabilising factors, as the VP oath controversy showed. The Maoist

agitation only helps the government, for they can persuade key interest groups about the unreliable, undemocratic and violent character of the former rebels, who have not undergone the required 'course correction'.

Secondly, as usual, we do not know what the Maoists want and when. Their stated aim is to form a Maoist-led government. But they also need to escalate the movement for the party's own sake—to channel the energy of the cadre that has been fed with the prospect of an *andolan* for the last three months. This agitation is geared to bring the Maoists back into power, not to facilitate a replacement of this regime by another. Even if Prachanda agrees to back a compromise candidate to regain some power before the party's big convention in January, others in the party will oppose it precisely because they want to see a chastened and weakened Prachanda.

The government has a reduced majority, but a shift in the numbers on a scale that will change the game is not on the cards.

But this does not mean that the present arrangement has any business being in place.

For one, it was formed for just one purpose—to keep the country's most powerful political force out of the formal power structure. The rigid anti-Maoist stance of the coalition partners stems from their dwindling political prospects on the ground. They had to team up because they could not fight the Maoists on issues, agenda, and organisation. This administration must rank as one of the most unrepresentative, amoral, weak, and corrupt (though the PM is relatively clean), reminiscent of

the 1990s.

More worryingly, key constituents of this government are not only committed to 1990s-style politics, but 1990s-style institutions. That is the problem. They have signed up for state restructuring but do not want to touch the army, bureaucracy, judiciary, or form of government. Most would prefer a centralised unitary state but if federalism is inevitable, then carve out something on the lines of the old zones. They do not want land reform of any sort, and rest assured, have not spent any time on how to address caste and ethnic questions. In truth, this is a coalition of the unwilling—groups who either did not want this peace process at all, or see some of the recent structural changes as unnecessary and regret them.

Is it any surprise that the Maoists are not in a mood to cooperate? There are no incentives for them to do so.

This is not an argument for an opportunistic GPK-Prachanda alliance—a partnership only for the sake of a daughter cannot manage the transformations underway. Neither is it a plea for unilateral Maoist rule, or a rightward presidential move.

It is a case for a broad package deal between key actors that reworks the power-sharing arrangement, deals with the nature and timing of integration, and includes an agreement on certain broad constitutional questions.

As long as the present lot is in power, that broader process will remain stuck. It is in Madhav Nepal's interest not to allow a political understanding because as soon as that happens, he will be left without a job. For now though, he can continue to enjoy the Baluwatar lawns. ●

LETTERS

LAND OF MY FATHERS

It was exciting (if you can use such an adjective) reading Rabi Thapa's 'The land of my fathers' (#470). It was poignant and nostalgic. The two contrasting and majestic 'darbars' of the Thapas should be an eye-opener for everyone in Nepal. But the flung-out decapitated 'boko' made a grotesque exhibition, even if it was a wonderful shot. Congrats, Rabi.

Kamalmani Dixit, email

VEGETARIANISM FOR VEGGIES

Thank you for publishing a story on vegetarianism ('Vegetarianism for vegetables', #470) that was matter-of-fact, unassuming, and even humorous! I very much enjoyed reading Indu Nepal's piece and hope to see more of her thoughtful wit in the future.

A.S., U.S.A.

● Indu Nepal needs a case pronto for vegetarianism. Ladies with bad hairdos and scientific arguments don't convince Indu but how come the writer ignores the moral argument: the suffering of fellow living beings? Never before have so many animals been killed as today, and never have so many been exploited. In Nepal, despite the absence of a large-scale meat industry like in the West, the situation is not much better. Has Indu not seen the buffaloes being transported to Kathmandu, tied by their tails, hung from their noses? Did she never witness the



God Goods

BIZARRE BUT BANAL

Prashant Jha makes absolute sense ('Bizarre but banal', #470). It leaves one

nonchalant killing of livestock by butchers using hammers and knives? Chickens hanging upside down on bicycles? Priests covered in blood? After all, seeing is believing.

For those believing only in science: eating vegetarian meals allows you to lessen your carbon footprint, and helps you lose a few pounds. Need we say more?

Pramada Shah and
Lucia de Vries. email

wondering: what difference has the abolition of the monarchy - heralded with such fanfare in 2007 - made? We were told it would bring about a New Nepal. Instead we've now regressed to the middle ages in every sense. We've seen worse evils in the republic of Nepal than in the allegedly feudal and Hindu kingdom of Nepal. It's time to seriously ask: who have we helped by abolishing the monarchy?

Satyajeet Nepali, email

ARROGANCE

Mr Parmanand Jha's likening himself to Aung San Suu Kyi shows his arrogance. Since day one, he's roiled up controversy and hasn't helped his people one bit. If he considers himself Aung San Suu Kyi, I am Mahatma Gandhi.

Prasanna K.C., Kathmandu

Baniyas and Brahmins

Hot on the heels of the news that Rastriya Prajatantra Party chief Surya Bahadur Thapa will be meeting almost everyone that matters in the Indian National Congress (INC) during his 'health trip' to New Delhi, reports indicate that Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal will be heading north for a tête-à-tête with President Hu Jintao and other luminaries of the Communist Party of China.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

The announcement of some NC honcho's visit to Europe or a few UML apparatchiks' planned trip to Scandinavian countries is awaited. MJF President Upendra Yadav will probably be heading for the US once again. Just as almost all local NGOs have their patrons abroad, each political party in Nepal has collaborators outside Nepal.

India continues to be the decisive player in Nepali politics, although its hegemony is no longer absolute. The Nepal Army used to be its most faithful partner. Since the Indians were the main source of arms and training opportunities, they considered the Nepal Army an extension of their own defence forces. The relationship began to sour when Nepal Army officers somehow got the impression they were fighting nothing less than the irregulars of Indian armed forces in the guise of Maoists.

The first elected government under the Nepali Congress angered Indian strategists by allowing Israel and Pakistan to open embassies in Kathmandu and by independently cultivating powerful leaders in Europe and the US. But the turning point was BP Koirala's Beijing visit in March 1960, when Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Chou Enlai rolled out the red carpet for their Nepali guests. Indians have viewed the Nepali Congress with suspicion ever since.



KIRAN PANDAY

Political parties in Nepal continue to compete for patrons outside Nepal, but India is still top dog

Despite their apparent cosiness, the Indian establishment perceives UML to be merely a political front for the Nepal Army and prefers to deal with the stalwarts of Balkhu Palace on a personal rather than organisational basis. In New Delhi, most Madhesi leaders are treated with contempt. It's not just South Block bureaucrats, even Indian politicians sneer at the various Sadhbhavana factions and ridicule MJF splinter groups.

Janardan Dwivedi, the AICC General Secretary who heads the training, media and party organisation department of the

Nehru-Gandhi party, was recently in Kathmandu. During a reception held in his honour, his body language was indicative of the relative importance the Indian establishment gives to competing political parties in Nepal.

With Nepali Congress hotshots such as Bimalendra Nidhi, Prakash Sharan Mahat and Minendra Rijal - some of the most vociferous supporters of the 22-party anti-Maoist coalition - Dwivedi was warm, but hardly friendly. Towards other Nepali Congress leaders such as Sushil Koirala and

Ramchandra Paudel, he was friendly, but far from warm. With Bijaya Gachhadar and Rajendra Mahato of MJF-D, he didn't make any attempt to hide his condescension.

TMLD leaders stood like obedient students in the presence of the former Associate Professor of Delhi University. UML bigwigs were dismissed with a polite nod and a reluctant smile. It was only when being introduced to Barsha Man Pun and Hisila Yami of the Maoists that a hint of grudging respect could be detected in the demeanour of the veteran INC leader. Clearly, the political class in India realises that the Nepali Maoists have outgrown its late nineties tutelage and deserve the courtesy due to equals. The same is however not true of babus and bureaucrats.

Professor SD Muni once chastised South Block diplomats as a bunch of trader baniyas who

insisted on immediate return on investments made in neighbouring countries. His characterisation is even truer today, as diplomats want to see Nepali Maoists transformed into mainstreamers before they retire. They don't realise the consequences of such an abrupt end to the decade-long armed struggle on its leadership.

The Maoists believe that the Indians have done them no favours. Like most Brahmins, they consider beneficence from baniyas their birthright. A Brahmin is not supposed to be grateful for anything he receives, for what he gives in return - blessings - is considered to be of higher value. Dwivedi is a Brahmin from Chitrakoot. If Nehru-Gandhi loyalist Surya Bahadur Thapa corroborates Dwivedi's assessment of Nepal's power politics, Dahal may yet repent of his decision to hobnob with Beijing. ●



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The NRN manifesto

The Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) movement has come a long way since the London restaurant meeting in August 2003 of the dedicated core group that still provides much of its inspiration and leadership. As more and more Nepalis join the global diaspora our numbers have grown dramatically, but the purpose of the movement has become hazier and more confused.



OPINION
Prem Jung Thapa

Are NRNs just one more 'province' of a new federal structure with demands of dual citizenship, voting rights, special treatment and concessions on investments in Nepal? Or are we the new Patriotic Corps rallying under the (slightly confusing) slogan 'for Nepalis by Nepalis' to save the motherland?

Either perspective is valid. Under the former, the NRN Association is like the Nepal Medical Association or the Ex-Servicemen Association: doing its best to further advance the private

and commercial interests of its members. In return, the members agree to a seemingly soft commitment to "strive to contribute to the overall development of Nepal".

But many NRNs, especially those in leadership, seem to confuse themselves with the development objective. They preach of a patriotic duty to rebuild a new Nepal with our advice, skills and resources. Again very laudable, though perhaps a bit fanciful.

What is reprehensible, however, is the effort to link these two with an unstated quid pro quo: you (Resident Nepalis) give us special rights, including dual citizenship, and we will bring in our skills and money to save you from doom.

This attitude is derived from three great myths about NRNs, namely:

- the best and brightest of Nepalis are living abroad
- our skills and investments are vital for Nepal's development
- directing our skills and investments back to Nepal is our patriotic duty.

Each of these is patently false, and most NRN members must

already know that to be so. Resident Nepalis can judge for themselves whether all our talent has gone overseas, but the more egregious myth is the second one: the belief that NRN skills and resources directed back to Nepal are indispensable for Nepal's economic development.

One or two middle-rung Marwari business houses in Nepal can raise within two days

the problem? If that is so, the proposed dual citizenship of patriotic NRN investors is not problematic?

In fact, there is great danger to Nepal in willy-nilly providing special treatment for NRN investors relative to other foreign investors. A favoured status for the former may even discourage the much larger resources available from the latter. The

Non-Resident Nepalis of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your imaginary importance

whatever the global NRN Association can offer as investment funds for Nepal over the next two decades. Why then is NRN money more valuable than what local businesses with local knowledge can raise and invest within Nepal? If it is not about the quantity, is it about the quality of the funds? And in the specific case of Marwari investments, is it their ethnicity, and perhaps the dual citizenship of some, that is

thought paradigm of national versus international capital is outdated now. There is but one global capital pool. The ethnicity and national origin of investors matters little in this game.

As the NRN community gathers for its Fourth Global Conference in Kathmandu next week, it is essential to clarify both our key objectives and the strategies to be pursued. Sustained economic

development that lifts living standards for all Nepalis is the great challenge of our era. This should be the singular focus for all patriotic Nepalis wherever they may live or work, and indeed for all well-wishers of Nepal, irrespective of nationality and citizenship status. How can the NRN community contribute most effectively to this difficult but noble task? Will dual citizenship for those of us already established abroad contribute to Nepal's development?

Ethnicity and past association with Nepal are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for promoting and participating in Nepal's development. It is more fitting that the NRN Association be a facilitator of 'investments' of new ideas and approaches and a window to how economic growth and development occurs in a globalised context.

The future of the NRN movement lies in contributing to a coordinated effort with the Nepali polity, donors, government actors, and resident and foreign businesses to design and implement national policies as well as individual projects that promote broad-based economic growth. It does not lie in creating a special class of foreigners with Nepali ethnicity. ●

Prem Jung Thapa lives in Canberra, Australia.



KIRAN PANDAY

Intelligent options

Gulmi's copper mines used to supply metal to the capital of the Oudh kingdom in Lucknow until 250 years ago. But the British East India Company offered copper at a cheaper price, and the Gulmi mines had no customers. Gulmi was annexed by the Gorkha kingdom in 1786. Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher's 50 per cent tax on copper, over a hundred years later, wiped out what remained of the mines.



OPINION
Biswo Poudel

At about the time of the Gorkha conquest of Gulmi, the Scottish economist Adam Smith published his magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations*, about the nature of the market. He believed that even if everyone behaved selfishly society as a whole would benefit. Smith's successors, particularly Ricardo and Malthus, thought otherwise. Then along

came Marx and his theory that capitalism inevitably leads to the rise of monopoly, a polarisation between proletarians and capitalists, and eventually the revolution.

By the time *The Communist Manifesto* came out, Jung Bahadur was on a sabbatical from ruling Nepal. He met Queen Victoria but it is unlikely he heard about the philosopher in whose name a revolution would be fought in Nepal 150 years later.

Nepal may have been an isolated kingdom, but our lives have always been buffeted by far away events. In the world of ideas, you can either be an incubator, or a dumping ground. Nepal had great leaders who united the country and fought off big powers, but later leaders failed to turn this independence into prosperity. Part of the reason is that Nepal has become a dumping ground for foreign garbage.

This is where overseas Nepalis can come in, with their exposure to the outside world. Nepalis are now working and

living all over the world. There are Nepalis who are well off and hold senior positions, but a majority of them are working in menial, hazardous jobs in India and the Gulf. This tradition of exporting Nepalis, which started with the Gurkha soldiers 200 years ago,

insurance system, to help Nepali farmers burdened with lack of capital, high interest rates and weather risks.

The price of rice drops in December when it is being harvested. In a crop options market, farmers could buy

A market-based solution for generating work for Nepalis at home

continues to this day. If there is one thing non-resident Nepalis can do, it is to find alternatives to this trend, the social cost of which has never been assessed.

The only way out is to create new jobs in Nepal, which means one or several of the following: checking unruly labour unions, giving reasonable power to employers, opening more vocational training institutes, investing in infrastructure, and creating new 'intelligent markets'.

An example of an intelligent market is a new crop options market, integrated with an

insurance and futures to be hedged against risks. Many overseas Nepalis own banks and if we move soon enough, we can corner the market in neighbouring countries too. This way the land returns to being a source of livelihood, agricultural and finance-related jobs will be created, we feed ourselves, and we even get a market-based solution for food crises.

However, if you give free rein to institutions like an options market, there is always a risk that a few firms will collude to rob both the government and farmers who

buy these futures. That's why smart, honest and committed Nepalis are needed to monitor institutions that are set up. Initially, while some non-resident Nepalis can be market makers, others will have to work in foreign futures markets, learn the tricks of the trade, go back to Nepal and monitor the market on behalf of the government.

It is not money that Nepal needs. Indeed, as Paul Samuelson says, without confident hands and confident brains to use it, money itself has no meaning. Gulmi's copper is still in Nepal, it is our minds that can convert it into wires. It is hard to define what wealth is, but if we change something essentially undesirable into a desirable thing, that is a process of creating wealth. All we need is to use our brains. Whatever we do, let's not waste any more time. Let's learn something valuable while we are abroad so that when we go back to Nepal we can create something beautiful there. ●

Biswo Poudel is an economist affiliated with the University of California at Berkeley and the Coordinator of the Non-Resident Nepali Association Economic Policy Paper Taskforce.

Gearing up

Sherpa Adventure Gear, a Seattle-based climbing and outdoor clothing company, opened a store in Kathmandu on 1 October. Adjacent to the Royal Palace Museum, the store will cater mainly to trekkers and climbers coming to Nepal.

Go green

Bluebird mall, Pepsi and *The Himalayan Times* launched their campaign against the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags, encouraging customers to opt for environmentally friendly cloth bags.

Mobile money

Laxmi Bank has introduced mobile payments in Nepal under the brand ‘Mobile Money’ so people can make financial transactions like fund transfers or bill payments through a mobile phone.

Working women

Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Sharad Singh Bhandari inaugurated a business centre set up by the Federation of Business and Professional Women on Nepal to provide training to women entrepreneurs.

Unleashing Nepal

How column writing can lead to writing books

Since the first column appeared in this paper eight years ago, the Beed has been harping on the paucity of people writing with a common sense perspective on issues of business and the economy. Perhaps Nepali



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

readers prefer political commentary and the lack of demand for good economic analysis does not prompt people to take writing on business and the economy seriously. Perhaps my fellow page-mate Ashutosh Tiwari and I will always remain on the endangered species list. Is it really true that people do not want to keep themselves informed on business or the economy or do they simply consider the topics too serious to be bothered with? Do economic journalists feel left out as their colleagues hobnob with powerful politicians? Do a feudal mindset and reminiscences of the Shah and Rana regimes still mean we feel gratified whenever politicians acknowledge us? In India, on the other hand, political analysts have started trying out business journalism and hordes of presswallahs now shun netas to go after business tycoons.

For this Beed, the writing of a column, over the years, has evolved from a hobby into a

serious occupation. The more I wrote and the more feedback I received, the more my perspectives developed along with my curiosity. Fortnightly deadlines forced me to look at issues in a bit more depth and interact with different stakeholders with much more vigour. I didn’t just comment on budgets, but started wondering, how does it affect the common man? Are budgets necessary? When the financial crisis took the world by storm, I began to think, how do we defend capitalism?

My travels brought me into contact with different sections of society from different countries, helping me really understand how Nepal is different or similar to these countries. The analysis of the present was never possible without understanding the past and the more I tried to understand the past, the more I became concerned about our present state of hopelessness.


All this has now culminated in a book. *Unleashing Nepal* is published by Penguin India and looks at Nepal from the perspective of a lay person looking at the state of the economy and asking a few simple questions. What made Nepal one

of the poorest nations in the world and is there no hope? What hope for the young people who comprise half the population of a country that is 40th in the world in terms of population size? What hope for a country that just needs to latch its carriages to the superfast engines of neighbouring India and China? What hope for people who have smiles as their greatest asset? What hope for the hundreds of thousands of Nepalis who leave Nepal in search of greener pastures, who strive to transform themselves from



migrant workers into NRNs? What hope for the water resources that can ensure Nepal earns more than Saudi Arabia just by selling energy? The list is endless and if we can make just a few of these ideas really happen, Nepal and Nepalis will surely be better off.

The book has been possible because of the readers of this column, who continuously encouraged the Beed to keep going and walk the extra mile. As the book is launched in Kathmandu next week, this Beed really wants to take the opportunity to thank all his readers for the encouragement that inspired him to keep going from column to column. ● www.arthabeed.com



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Inspiration, inc.

In 1999, BBC journalist Rabintra Mishra approached philanthropist Arjun Singh Basnet with an idea: to set up an organisation that would connect the swelling numbers of Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) worldwide and enable them to help their less fortunate compatriots at home. Ten years later, Help Nepal Nework (HeNN) is flourishing, having raised over Rs 60 million to help thousands of poor Nepalis.

“Everyone, especially those of us living abroad, wanted to do something to help Nepal, but nobody really knew how. The point of HeNN was to connect like-minded Nepalis so they could take action,” says Basnet, now president of the charity’s Nepal chapter.

The organisation is run by a motley crew of professionals, most of whom live abroad but share a deep concern for Nepal. HeNN focuses on education and health and has started a campaign to help Conflict Impacted Children (CIC), or children uprooted by the civil war.

At its inception, HeNN had two chapters in London and Kathmandu. It started small, collecting about Rs 80,000 from NRNs to set up a school in Dolpa. But the organisation and the scale of the projects it has undertaken have



One charity has inspired thousands of Nepalis abroad to help Nepal

ballooned since. HeNN has raised Rs 8 million to build an orphanage in Dhulikhel for CICs. It’s joined forces with the local community, which has granted HeNN a sizeable plot of land, and a renowned engineering group which will offer its services for free.

HeNN has also built 12 of a planned 75 e-libraries - essentially a network of computers that hosts books and study materials - in select schools across the country. The e-libraries cost 75 per cent less than conventional libraries since they require only one server to connect each batch of computer stations.

As the organisation has grown, HeNN has roped in more Nepalis worldwide.

Starting with 2 chapters, it now boasts 21, and 4 of these - in Australia, the UK, the US and Sweden - are officially registered charities with their respective governments. Two more chapters are set to open in Qatar and Japan.

But more remarkable even than the scale of HeNN’s projects is the manner in which they’re financed. Unusually for a charity, not one penny of charitable donations goes on the organisation’s overhead and administrative costs. Mishra concedes that the policy, although appropriate, makes the organisation difficult to manage, but says HeNN has made headway in establishing a separate administrative fund to which 25 Nepalis

have already contributed over \$100,000. And more is on the way. Kush Kumar Joshi, President of the Federation of the Nepalese Chambers of Commerce, was so impressed by HeNN’s work he’s promised to raise an additional \$130,000.

The group faces other challenges, particularly in monitoring completed projects so they don’t stagnate and unravel. “Monitoring requires us to send people frequently to remote parts of the country to check on these projects, which is difficult,” says Basnet. But the organisation has become astute in involving local communities in the management of these projects, which means for the most part they can operate autonomously.

HeNN’s success has inspired individual Nepalis worldwide to pick up the baton and do extraordinary things to help the country. In the past three years, young Nepalis in the US and the UK have run marathons to raise funds for HeNN to run health posts across the country. Others have put on music events to raise awareness or diligently collected money for particular projects. All of them, it seems, have heard HeNN’s call for help. Or as Mishra puts it, “If we don’t, who will?” ●

To make a contribution visit www.helpnepal.net



Communists don't celebrate Dasain

Interview with Ninu Chapagain, in-charge, Cultural Division, UCPN (Maoists), in *Samayabodh*, Oct-Nov, 2009

समयबोध

As in-charge of the Maoist Cultural Division, how do you view the festivals that people celebrate in Nepal?
Nepal is a multi-cultural nation. The different ethnic and language groups here have their own cultures. But instead of considering all these Nepali culture, there is a bad tendency here to think of the culture of those ethnicities and classes in power as Nepali culture. This needs to be corrected.

Nepal's festivals are generally based on Hinduism. Are there any scientific aspects to these religious festivals?
Religion and science are opposed to each other. To believe in god is to deny man agency and to accept external control of oneself. This is not culture, but a lack of it. If it lacks humanity, intellect and independent agency, it cannot be considered culture.

UCPN (Maoist) has been speaking out against religious festivals but hasn't hesitated to indulge in religious inaugurations of hospitals and schools it is involved in. Isn't this double standards?
The wrong idea that it is acceptable to use any means to collect funds continues to hamper our revolutionary progress. That is why we have seen communist party members engaging in cultural traditions such as *deusi* and *bhailo* that actually extend the reach of the Hindu cultural hegemons in Nepal. Our cultural revolution lags behind our political revolution.

Chairman Prachanda announced at a religious program recently that the Maoists aren't atheists. What do you say?
I am ignorant of the context in which these remarks were made, so it's better not to dwell on them. But if by religion we understand a system that works to trap people who live off their labour into believing in the supremacy of an external agency, that prevents them from realising their full potential and from changing society through struggle and class awareness, then we don't believe in it, we are atheists.

How do communists celebrate Dasain?
Dasain has become a *dasha* (ill omen) for the mass of the people in recent times. It is a financial burden for most people. Noone who is concerned for the welfare of the people will insist that everyone should celebrate Dasain. The only good thing about Dasain is in strengthening social ties. If poor people feel compelled to mark Dasain by spending money on special food and new clothes, to the extent of incurring debts, then the festival has no meaning. There is no reason for it to be spread over 10 days either, with attendant public holidays so people can indulge in drinking, gambling and fighting.
If communists want to celebrate Dasain then they should limit themselves to renewing social ties with their families and local communities, and spend time speaking out against the social evils of this festival and promoting other local festivals.

What is the people's culture that the Maoists want to replace our old cultural traditions with?
A people's culture is one that first involves giving up exploitative customs in order to move towards a new culture in favour of those who live by their labour. This means a culture based on science, nationalism and a people's or democratic set-up. A new people's culture is a scientific culture that works for the liberation of Dalits, farmers, workers, indigenous peoples and women. A revolution cannot only be based on political change, to be sustained it has to be accompanied by cultural change, a cultural revolution.

They say culture represents a country to the world. If we rid ourselves of our culture then don't we risk losing our identity?
Opposing a backward culture does not mean opposing culture itself. Communists are in support of a progressive culture for all.

Pothole president

Makar Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 4 October

कान्तिपुर

On the last day of Dasain, President Ram Baran Yadav visited Bhaktapur's Nawadurga temple and caused road maintenance authorities there a headache.
These authorities commission people to even out roads by filling potholes with tar and gravel. When they were notified of the President's visit, they had to scramble together a team to fix the Arniko Highway connecting Kathmandu with Bhaktapur. "Because the President was coming, we had to fix the roads one way or another," said one road repairman. He said 18 people were put to the emergency task.
The same thing happened last year but large swathes of the road, over 2km in total, have disintegrated since. Only bits of the pitch laid down last year remain.
The President passed through Suryabinayak, Sallaghari, Jagathi and



KIRAN PANDAY

Chyamasingh before reaching the temple at 3:20PM. He spent about 10 minutes worshipping and then left.
The President drew a huge crowd when he took this trip last year. Fewer people were interested this time around, although some Maoists waved black flags at him, chanting slogans in support of civilian supremacy.

Favouritism



KIRAN PANDAY

Bhagawati Timalcina in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 6 October

समाचारपत्र

Although blindness afflicts more women than men, an equal number of men and women get treatment.
A recent study by the Nepal

Gender and Eye Health Group, which followed the treatment of 2.5 million blind patients over the course of two decades, shows that overall women don't receive any more treatment than men although there are twice as many blind female patients as men.

Madan Prasad Upadhyay, president of BP Koirala Lions Centre for Ophthalmic Studies says, "Gender bias has played a role."
Sixty per cent of patients were women in 1981, but the figure shot up to 68 per cent in 2001. Upadhyay says this shows how indifferent the government is to women's health concerns.
Although many new hospitals have been built in the country over the last 25 years, women still have limited access to healthcare. However, the number of women eye patients has increased in temporary eye camps. "The government should launch a program focusing on women. Even donors can lay down conditions for 70 per cent female patients in free treatment packages they offer to improve the situation of women," says Upadhyay.



Army sleeve: "Special security campaign"
Dog: "Our new friend, he's a journalist breed"

नागरिक Robin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 8 October

Confused state

There are lots of nice things you can do with sand; but do not try building a house on it.

— C.S. Lewis

It's been six months since they started work, but of the 11 committees of the Constituent Assembly only 6 have submitted their drafts to the Chairperson. The 5 remaining committees have been given until mid-December to complete their drafts. With the amendments of September 9, the constitution-writing timetable has now been revised 6 times.

Disagreements along party, ethnic, linguistic and regional lines in the committees responsible for state restructuring and distribution of rights have made it unlikely the constitution will be written on time. The most disappointing thing is the lack of

constructive dialogue on the part of the leaders of the big three, the Maoists, the Nepali Congress and the UML. Regardless, the goal of completing the constitution by 28 May 2010 remains intact. This has further confused people.

When she heard the news that the constitution-writing timetable had been adjusted for the sixth time, a housewife had this to say:

"I am building a house. Making a constitution is also like building a house. Since one brick has to be laid over the other it takes time to build a house, you can't just erect it overnight. It takes time simply for the foundations to solidify. But

these people, in the past year, have not even gotten to the blueprint for their house; they haven't dug the foundations, they don't even know where the bricks and the sand are. So how will their house be built within the deadline they've set themselves? Or is it going to be like a house from one of Birbal's stories?"

The truth is, the Constituent Assembly's neglect of its work and the behaviour of the political parties have completely confounded the public. Can they trust the politicians, should they hope, and do they have any other choice but to do so? ●



KIRAN PANDAY

Natural resource rights

Surya Nath Upadhyay,
Nagarik, September 7

From the Constituent Assembly to various meets, write-ups and television programs, ILO Convention No.169 on indigenous rights has been used to debate the idea of granting indigenous peoples rights over water, forests and land. But the issue isn't limited to debating indigenous rights. People have been claiming indigenous rights by force, banning other groups from the use of common natural resources in places.

Nepal is a diverse community of 102 ethnic groups. But these ethnicities are scattered all across

the country. For instance, 96 different ethnic groups live in Jhapa district alone. Further, a single person can be categorised in many different ways. For example, a Rajbanshi from Morang district can be termed a Madhesi, a Janajati, a Maithili language speaker, a member of a backward community, and also a woman, if that is the case. There is no justification for granting more or fewer rights on the basis of ethnicity alone. Economic classifications should be used to improve the lot of those at the bottom of the heap. Laws should be formulated accordingly and positive discrimination can be employed if necessary. But

economic upliftment cannot be based on ethnic rights.

It is crucial to interpret ILO Convention No.169 in the light of Nepal's context. Nepal is the only country in South Asia that has ratified this treaty. Nations that have similar or more ethnic diversity than in Nepal such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Bangladesh have not ratified this treaty. The treaty specifies that indigenous peoples should be granted the right to preserve their culture, traditions and religion. But it does not allow for the granting of rights to indigenous peoples in such a way that would impinge on the rights of others.

The misinterpretation of ILO Convention No.169, which has spread misinformation and exacerbated problems in Nepal, is due in part to the activities of foreign organisations. This becomes clear if you look at, for instance, a July 20 report produced by UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya, who visited Nepal recently. In his report, exploitative and anti-poor systems of collective land ownership such as 'kipat' are praised as upholding ethnic rights and recommended for reinstatement. On the other hand, the world-renowned community forestry programs of Nepal have been criticised, as well as

national parks that have been instrumental in preserving global ecological treasures. Such reports are one-sided, interventionist and unseemly.

Natural resources are a nation's wealth and must be used for the common good of the nation. We should not agree to meeting the unreasonable demands that local communities have placed upon government, as the Helmus of Melamchi, the residents of Sisdole or of Chilime have done. The good of the nation cannot be compromised in the name of ethnic rights. We must not forget that no part of Nepal can survive independently. ●

INDU NEPAL

For a rainy October Wednesday evening, Lazimpat's Jazz Upstairs was filled generously with people. Pharadon Phonamuai rolled up his wet jeans and blew into his saxophone while fans cured their chills with pegs of whisky.

It was Jazzmandu's unofficial kick-off jam session. If it were not for this festival, we would have never met Phonamuai's Thai/French band, Vatchapuj, and we would have never wished that they ruled the world. They looked like teenagers who drank a little too much coffee, but their lungs... Phonamuai can trumpet with or without the saxophone, and even in the dives of London and New York, we haven't met a flautist like Vincent Martial. These guys probably have rubber valves for lungs, and they can bend their instruments to their will.

They are not even the headline band at Jazzmandu, which is in its seventh year in Kathmandu. That spot is shared by two Brazil-influenced bands - Trio Urbano from New York and Sheyla Costa La Brasileira from Paris. Trio Urbano even features Grammy award-winning pianist Dario Eskenazi.

Therein lies the strength of Jazzmandu. Its popularity belies the reality that the last seven years in Nepal haven't been particularly

peaceful, prompting the organisers to tag the festival with the slogan 'Music for peace and compassion'. Yet it consistently attracts top talent from around the world. "I get an email everyday from musicians who want to participate in Jazzmandu," says Nabin Chhetri of the band Cadenza. He started the festival with Chhedup Bomzan of Jazz Upstairs after seeing their first live jazz band in Australia.

In fact, the idea of a jazz festival in Nepal - in Shangri-la, the top of the world, a place where you least expect it - might be the attracting factor. This novelty could also explain why there is another music festival of not too dissimilar music in Kathmandu this week: the Himalayan Blues Festival, which boasts an equally impressive line-up, and will be playing in some of the same venues as Jazzmandu.

Organisers for both events played innocent to the date clash and fans of live music will probably not object to having too much of a good thing. In any case these festivals are less about having jazz and blues symposiums, and more about just the music. That's why while the foreign bands and artists come wielding saxophones, basses and drums, Nepali bands like Kutumba have their tabla and sarangi.

It is also about collaboration and cultural exchange. "The best thing about the festival is definitely meeting the artists," says Rajat Rai, who has played with Cadenza in Jazzmandu for the past two years. On Wednesday he joined Vatchapuj on stage and played guitar while Martial and Phonamuai belloyed awesomeness. "No matter where you are from, it's easy to talk about music. If it wasn't music it probably wouldn't have happened."

That may be the entire point of these festivals. "These guys have no idea what to expect when they come here. They have no idea about other artists. They come here and make awesome music together," says Jazzmandu's Chhetri. "I get a kick out of that."

So much music, so little time

Jam packed Kathmandu





KIRAN PANDAY

Jazzmandu line-up

Jazzmandu headliner

Friday, October 9, 7-9PM

Regency Ballroom, Hyatt Regency

An evening of Brazilian jazz featuring Trio Urbano from New York and Sheyla Costa La Brasileira from Paris

Gokarna jazz bazaar

Saturday, October 10, 5-10.30PM

Gokarna Forest Gold Resort and Spa

A music marathon with international and Nepali musicians – Trio Urbano, Sheyla Costa La Brasileira, Yuro Honing Trio, Vatchapuj, Soulmate, Trebeka, Simon Fisk, Cadenza, Kutumba, Prustaar

Jazzmandu master class

Sunday, October 11, 2.30- 3.30PM

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel

Upstairs jam

Sunday, October 11, 7.30PM

Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat

Jazz at Patan

Monday, October 12, 6-8.30PM

Patan Museum Square

Nepali classical music and jazz with Cadenza and others

All-star fever

Tuesday, October 13, 6.30-10PM

Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La

The festival finale with all featured musicians



MUSIC FOR PEACE & COMPASSION



Time : 7.00pm - 10.00pm

(Gates open at 6pm, please be seated by 6:45pm)

**Venue : Regency Ballroom ,
Hyatt Regency Kathmandu**

Price : 599/-

Jazzmandu Headliner

An evening of Brazilian jazz

9th October, Friday

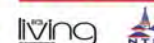
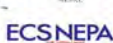
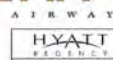
The evening feature two extraordinary bands ; Trio Urbano with leading Brazilian & American jazz musicians from New York and Sheyla Costa La Brasileira , Brazilian musicians living in Paris will bring the sounds & rhythms of Bossa Nova , Samba and American jazz.



Tickets available at respective venues, Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat/Moksh, Jawalakhel / Nepa Music Outlets , Thamel
For bookings call 9803965746 or log on to www.jazzmandu.com

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Trekking in the indian himalaya

Home thoughts from a meadow walk in Garhwal

The first comment we got from fellow travellers on a trail in the Indian Himalaya was: "If you are from Nepal why are you trekking here?"

By the second day, we'd lost count of the number of times we were asked that question. But also by the second day it was clear that trekking in India is one of that vast country's best kept secrets.

The Indian Himalaya is overshadowed by Nepal's higher profile in trekking and mountaineering, but the scenery is just as spectacular and in many ways the walks are more accessible and hassle-free. Remote valleys that in Nepal would take a week to walk to can be reached in a day-and-a-half drive from New Delhi.

In Nepal you are never too far from a settlement, but here in the Garhwal Himalaya the hikes are usually through wilderness areas. Which means one has to camp, and the 'tea house' trek model that has made Nepal's tourism such a big economic pump



for mountain valleys is less common here.

The Nepal Himalaya is a series of 'himal' massifs more than 8,000m high sliced by deep gorges. The treks in Nepal are along the bottoms of these valleys (which restricts the views) and the ups and downs when traversing them are much more vertical.

Here in Garhwal, the mountains are much more manageable. The steep parts can

be negotiated by road, so the ridge walks are gentler and the views of surrounding peaks like Bandar Punch, Kalanag, Jaunli and Srikanth are consistently superb. Comparable ridge walks in Nepal would be the Panch Pokhari trek in Sindhupalchok, the Panchase trek in Kaski or the Tijure rhododendron walk in Terathum.

Because of the network of highways in Garhwal and Kumaon, the trekking possibilities are endless, but here along the upper reaches of the



Bhagirathi River near Gangotri they are mostly meadow walks.

What in Nepal are known as *kharka* are called *bugyal* here, but unlike in Nepal these high altitude grazing pastures are extensive and you can trek for days from one meadow to another, walking on a velvety carpet of flowers. It is Khaptad multiplied ten times. The resplendent impeyan pheasant, their *monal* to our *danfe*, is also Uttaranchal's state bird.

These mountains were lost to the British after the Sugauli

Treaty of 1816, but there are still signs of Nepal everywhere. The Gangotri Temple was built by Amar Singh Thapa and the place is full of pilgrims from all over Nepal taking the holy dip. The road signs point to famous battlefields from our history books like Nalapani and Kangra. The Garhwali dialect people speak here is close to the trans-Karnali lingo in western Nepal. Rising living standards in Uttaranchal mean that it is hard to find locals to carry loads, so the trekking porters are from Nepal.

Most, like Pasang Lama from Sindhuli, go back to Nepal in the trekking season and work here during the monsoon carrying loads for pilgrims. "It's not like working in Nepal, here we are outsiders," complains Pasang.

But in the evening by the campfire, it is the Nepali porters who are the first to get off their feet to dance and sing. They teach the Garhwali muleteers Nepali folk songs.

Ravi Rawat, who leads treks in Ladakh and Himachal in the company of Nepali porters, knows 'Resham Phiriri' by heart, but with slightly modified lyrics:

*"Resham phiriri, resham phiriri...
Rafting ma monkey,
Trekking ma donkey, resham phiriri...
Kodo jharyo makai jharyo
Jyan payeko chhaina..."*

Kunda Dixit in Garhwal



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रत्ननगर

अब सधैका साथी

Priestly ambition



A Dalit in the Bhutanese refugee camps breaks through religious taboos

GOPAL GARTOULA

A bell chimes through the morning air at the Bhutanese refugee camp in Beldangi, Jhapa, waking a few residents. Pandit Arjun marches briskly out of his hut in Sector C, murmuring vedic hymns and wearing a saffron dhoti, a sacred thread and a holy mark on his forehead. This priest has in the last decade been the chief reciter of the Purana on 21 occasions, but he is a low-caste Biswokarma, a Dalit.

This is no ordinary scene, and how Arjun Biswokarma got to be here is a remarkable story of perseverance amidst the thwarted dreams of the refugee camps in Jhapa.

Eighteen years ago, Arjun Biswokarma was a farmer in Bhutan’s Chirang district where for generations his family performed its caste-prescribed duty to make tools like khukuris and hoes. People from all around visited him to purchase these tools, yet few of his mostly high-caste customers dared enter his home, worried they would contract ritual impurities. Like other Dalits, Biswokarmas aren’t allowed near high-caste people and as a result spend much of their lives in isolation within communities.

When as a child Arjun decided he wanted to study, he discovered he wasn’t allowed to go to school where, school administrators worried, he would pollute his high-caste classmates. An

insistent Arjun asked to be allowed to listen to the teachers from outside the classroom, at a distance from his classmates, but he was denied even this.

Bitter but desperate to learn, Arjun bought religious texts at an Indian market and studied them himself. A quarter of a century later, he has amassed an impressive collection of religious books, like the ancient Veda, from which he draws great inspiration.

A key discovery for Arjun has been the fact that these texts do not sanction the rigid, prejudicial caste system that has currency today.

“The Puranas say that everyone is born an untouchable and rises up the caste system according to his or her merit. A brahmin is just a very wise person who knows the eternal truth.” Supporting this interpretation, he says, is an old custom that deems all newborns impure. “Only after 11 days is it alright to drink water from the house in which a baby has been born.”

Following rigorous independent religious study and a three-year scholarly stint in Kasi, Arjun established himself as a priest and a scholar, continuing his vocation in the refugee camp that has become his home. But he complains that very little has been done to help people like himself who have suffered caste-based discrimination. He’s seen countless politicians preach caste equality and talk about bringing ‘revolutionary’ changes to people’s lives, but few, he laments, have corrected their own prejudices. Even in this day and age, he says, people will clean their kitchen floors with cowdung if low-caste people have entered them.

What we need, he says, is less revolutionary talk and more well-targeted policies. He is especially worried about the ill-effects of alcohol and drugs.

“People are bad by habit, not birth. So we need to stay away from things like alcohol and drugs, which have ruined communities, including my own.” ●

Our cup runneth over

The idea the first hippies must have had of Nepal, and indeed realised to a large degree in hilly perambulations radiating out from the Valley of Temples, has died hard. Yet seeking Never Ending Peace And Love through the prism of half-baked spiritualities was always a bit of a hash, and was never really a self-fulfilling prophecy for Nepalis. As tourists poured into Nepal for a little exotica, we poured out for the same. If they came for natural beauty and cultural stasis, we left for its polar opposite - man-made monuments and cutting-edge western civilisation. And in that *pharen* package could be found the best of what the rest of the world had to offer- the arts.



KALAM Rabi Thapa

Of course the majority of Nepalis who leave Nepal do not care for the culture, high or low, of their hosts. For those who do, Nepal always seemed a backwater in its western incarnations, typified by the fossilised rock of Thamel. But Nepal is not all as non-happening as some local yokels and NRNs might make out. On the evidence of recent happenings Kathmandu, at least, has an arts scene far surpassing that which might be found in many places in the West.

We’ve just been treated to Film South Asia, and soon enough we’ll be bracing for the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival. We’ve got not one, but two music festivals colliding with each other (and their audiences) this weekend - Jazzmandu and the Himalayan Blues Festival. To cap it all, we have an international arts exhibition in a fortnight or so. Never mind the absurdity of cramming two music festivals into the same weekend. Our cup runneth over, I’m diving in.

Of course, the Nepali calendar is not always so star-studded. Bear in mind it’s easier to get international artistes to visit Nepal

The old dilemma – big fish small pond, small pond big fish – is increasingly irrelevant



in the aftermath of the rains, when the air is cool and clear and vistacious. Load-shedding, at least on a scale that renders concerts, exhibitions and screenings all but impossible without the attendant roar of a thousand generators, is a distant memory if a growing foreboding. And it’s the Kathmandu calendar we are really talking about. If Pokhara can host a festival in prime tourist season (and then screw it up), Biratnagar, Nepalgunj or Hetauda are some way away from a Great Exhibition of any description.

For some reason then, despite the urban nightmare it has become, Kathmandu still retains a cache for visiting artistes, now more than ever. Kathmandu blurs the line between the international and the national like many other developing country capitals increasingly do: the peripheries are becoming centres in their own right. This is not to say that Kathmandu is looking London, talking Tokyo quite yet. But the old dilemma facing those contemplating leaving Nepal or returning to it is increasingly irrelevant. To be a big fish in a small pond, or a small fish in a big pond? It is enough perhaps to find your niche, whatever it is, and exploit it to the fullest, right here in Nepal. If you can combine local and Internet networking craftily enough, you may even secure an international audience if that is what you crave. Perhaps it is more likely you will be discovered by the rest of the world if you stay right where you are.

Wishful thinking, some will say. Of course things could be better for those in the arts here. Writers, for instance, are the fourth estate’s real estate. If at root the reward of writing should be writing itself, the shoots need nurturing too. But I’m hopeful this grand bazar of artistic exchange that Kathmandu has transformed itself into these last few months will go some way towards redressing the imbalance. If organisers and audiences value local artistes as much as their international guests do, the Kathmandu scene may sustain itself and nourish the rest of the country. If not now, one day perhaps. But for now, the teeming populations of Nepalis hanging tough in dead-end bars in Nebraska and Reading might desist from uploading their facebook photos of Amrika and Yukay for us to pine over. The world has come to Nepal. ●

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Technology deficit

COPENHAGEN—Our current approach to solving global warming will not work. It is flawed economically, because carbon taxes will cost a fortune and do little, and it is flawed politically, because negotiations to reduce carbon dioxide emissions will become ever more fraught and divisive. And even if you disagree on both counts, the current approach is also flawed technologically.

To meet the ambitious but popular goal to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by three fourths by 2100, non-carbon-based sources of energy would have to be an astounding 2.5 times greater in 2100 than the level of *total* global energy consumption was in 2000. At our current rate of technological development we won't meet this goal in time.

Policymakers, and especially politicians in Copenhagen this December, should abandon fraught carbon-reduction negotiations, and instead make agreements to invest in research and development to get this technology to the level where it needs to be. Not only would this have a much greater chance of actually addressing climate change, but it would also have a much greater chance of political success since the biggest emitters



KIRAN PANDAY

today, India and China, will much prefer to embrace technological innovations than costly carbon caps.

Today's politicians focus narrowly on how high a carbon tax should be to stop people from using fossil fuels. That is the wrong question. The market alone is an ineffective way to stimulate research and development into uncertain technology, and a high carbon tax will simply hurt growth if alternatives are not ready.

Investing about \$100 billion annually in non-carbon-based energy research would mean that we could essentially fix climate change on the century scale. Research shows that for every dollar spent this approach would

avoid about \$11 of climate damage, while strong and immediate carbon cuts would be more expensive but achieve as little as \$0.02 of avoided climate damage.

If we don't shift our attention to developing technologies, there is only one possible outcome: virtually no climate impact, but a significant dent in global economic growth, with more people in poverty, and the planet in a worse place than it could be. ●

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

“New leadership, not technology”

Inter Press Service environmental correspondent Stephen Leahy recently spoke with Lester Brown, founder and President of the Washington-based Earth Policy institute, on the launch of his new book, *Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilisation*.

IPS: You are calling for global carbon reductions of 80 per cent by 2020. That's far, far more than what any country is proposing to do right now.

LESTER BROWN: We looked at how much of a cut is necessary to avoid the most dangerous effects of climate change, not at how much is politically feasible.

Is such a huge global reduction in emissions even possible?

It will take a worldwide mobilisation at wartime speed. First, investing in energy efficiency will allow us to keep global energy demand from increasing and then we must cut carbon emissions by one third, replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. A further 36 per cent cut in emissions would come from restricting transportation systems, reducing coal and oil use in industry, ending net deforestation and planting trees and managing soils to sequester carbon.

None of these initiatives depends on new technologies. Switching to LEDs and using motion sensor devices can reduce the amount of electricity used in lighting by 90 per cent, and places like Texas will quadruple its wind energy output to 8,000 megawatts. The rate of change is breathtaking. We know what needs to be done to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80 per cent by 2020. All that is needed now is leadership.

Most people, including our political leaders, don't seem to feel any sense of urgency or danger about climate change. What will motivate this wartime mobilisation?

We're already approaching a tipping point like that which preceded the Berlin Wall coming down in 1989. There were years of discontent at the local level and then seemingly overnight there was a political revolution that changed everything. In the case of climate change, US carbon emissions are down 9 per cent and it's not just due to the recession, people are increasingly environmentally savvy.

In the end, the race to save civilisation is between social-political and natural tipping points.

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The tussle of translation

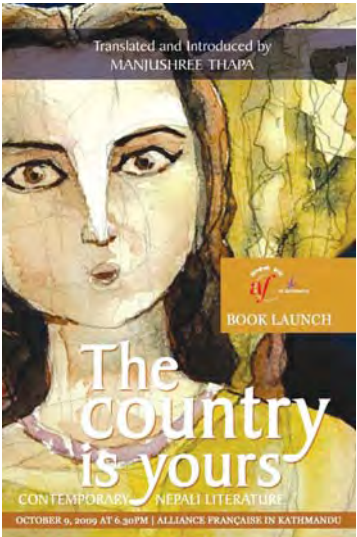
PRANAB MAN SINGH

Translation is a tussle with the impossible. Yet it is fundamental to the word. There is a persistent and misguided conception that translation consists simply of the substitution of words from one language to another.

This is an ignoramus mistake. It misinterprets and fundamentally misunderstands the word. No word can be substituted by a word from another language and match it identically for meaning, influence and association. This disparity in translation is accentuated when one takes on the task of translating between two radically different languages: Nepali and English.

Nepali is a language that floats upon inflections. The subtlest change in tone, the vibration of a word or the enunciation of the end of a sentence, can completely change its meaning. It is here that not only gender, size, shape and emphasis are defined but subtleties of character, attitudes, and moods are also communicated. For a Nepali, English is a language that is more conceptual and specific. It is the language of science and technology.

Anyone who has tried their hand at translation, indeed any reader, will have experienced the different analytical strands and imaginative possibilities that are inherent to any original work. The very essence of quality lies within this experience. The better the work, the more the possibilities of interpretation and the harder it is to translate. The translator must rely on approximations



A wise translator is one who knows the limits of translation and nonetheless takes on the impossible

while being aware of the multitude of interpretations that any original work possesses. A good translation is always attempting to convey the multitude of interpretations combined with the mood, tone and rhythm of the original. A wise translator is one who knows the limits of translation and nonetheless takes on the impossible. However, a good translation, while acknowledging

this, is able to capture the quality and soul of the original work. Good translations of Nepali works are few and far between. In this sparsely populated literary landscape, today's launch of Manjushree Thapa's translated anthology, *The country is yours* is a welcome new addition. In fact, Thapa has long been working in the field of literary translation, including in association with the *Nepali Times*.

It is undoubtedly important that more Nepali literature be translated into English and other foreign languages, not least because it introduces the wealth of Nepali literature and Nepal's unique cultural and historical perspectives to the global scene. It also provides a basis for foreigners and Nepal's own extended diaspora to get a more intimate introduction to the country.

However, in a country where translations are a rarity, it is often the case that the translation gets more attention than the original. While a good translation is important, the original literature is essentially the defining standard of its quality. As with all great works of literature in translation, I hope that Manjushree Thapa's efforts are judged in terms of literature, rather than as a contest of translation. ●

Pranab Man Singh is a freelance writer and a part of Quixote's Cove: the bookshop. For further details on the launch of 'The country is yours' (Alliance Française, 6.30pm, 9 October), please visit www.qcbookshop.com.

October sky

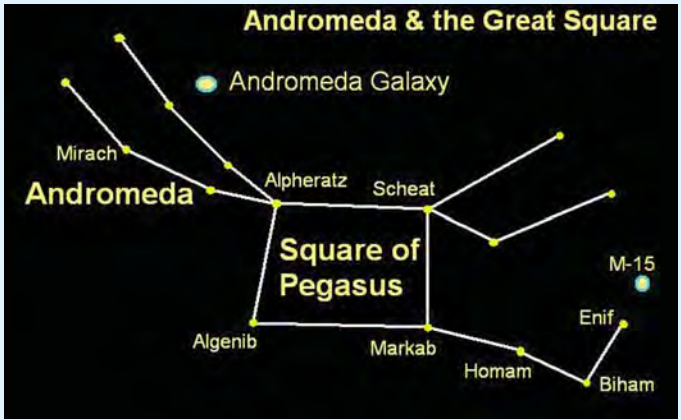
The October constellations are a mixed bag. At sunset, the summer constellations glow in the west, but are outshone by the winter constellations after midnight. So just when you thought summer was finally behind us, these stars tell you: no, not quite yet. On the bright side, a lot of the constellations have vaguely Star Wars-esque names, so if you're a Lucas fan, this is the month to check them out.

The Great Square, a constellation within Pegasus, will replace the Summer Triangle as the most prominent night constellation. Watch out for the distinctive W-shape of Cassiopeia in the north, and also Perseus nearby. The Andromeda Galaxy is very noticeable as a large bright elongated smudge, even through binoculars.

If you have a telescope, you can catch sight of dust lanes in our nearest galactic neighbour (see star map). If you have binoculars, check out the rather stiffly named star cluster, M-15 (what did I tell you about Star Wars?). Don't worry: they're far more interesting than they sound.

After midnight, look out for the bright star Capella in the constellation Auriga. Right beside it, you'll see a large, smudgy patch. This is M45, the Pleiades, in the constellation. In the same constellation is Aldebaran, a bright orange star. If by this time you still have the energy for more stars, check out Orion (the hunter) in the southeast. Orion is easily one of the more distinctive constellations, with a belt formed by three stars set within the giant silhouette of a hunter.

If you're a fan of Star Wars, this is the month to check out the skies above



Planet observing: You'll have a great chance to see **Mercury**, that elusive little planet, in the eastern skies just before sunrise when it will be a little left of a brilliant Venus. **Venus** will be so brilliant you can pick it out fairly late into the morning.

Mars, in Gemini, is rising in the northeast well before midnight, and by dawn it will be climbing high into the southern sky.

Jupiter, in Capricornus, will be brighter than most stars and will set in the southwest around midnight.

Saturn, which was hidden behind the sun for a large part of September, will emerge in the dawn sky to the lower left of Venus, though it'll be considerably dimmer than other planets and stars. It'll be right beside Venus on 13 October.

If you tire of planets, the **Orionid** shower will be visible during the second half of October and will last for about a week or more. The best time to see these showers is early in the morning when moonlight won't blot them out. There will also be sporadic showers from other systems throughout the night.

Click on <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html> if you fancy vivid pictures of galaxies and other deep sky objects. These pictures were taken by NASA's newly repaired Hubble Space Telescope and are really terrific.

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **'Nepal Rendezvous - Nagarkot Workshop'**, paintings by Bangladeshi and Nepali artists at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg, until 31 Oct, 4218048
- ❖ **Lungta Paintings**, exhibition by Maureen Drdak, 9-18 Oct, 5.30PM, Indigo Gallery



EVENTS

- ❖ **'The country is yours'**, Manjushree Thapa's book launch, 9 Oct, 6.30PM, Alliance Française, Tripureshwor, 4241163
- ❖ **Waltz with Bashir, movie screening**, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 10 Oct, 5.30PM, 4428549
- ❖ **Jazzmandu workshop**, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, 11 Oct, 2PM, www.katjazz.com.np
- ❖ **Patan Press Club**, meets every Thursday at Dhokaima Café, 6PM, 5522113
- ❖ **Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Tai Chi 10-11.30AM, Yoga 8.30-9.30AM and Meditation 5-6PM weekdays, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402

MUSIC

- ❖ **Jazzmandu**, Hyatt Regency, 9 Oct, 4491234, www.jazzmandu.org
- ❖ **Himalayan Blues Festival**, Rox Bar, 10 Oct, 7PM, 4489348, www.himalayanblues.com
- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30PM onwards, 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency, 12-3.30PM, 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, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30PM onwards, 4468589
- ❖ **Rudra Night** live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7PM at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212

DINING

- ❖ **Arabic Food Festival**, The Café, 9 Oct-7 Nov, 6.30PM onwards, 4491234
- ❖ **Famous stews of the world**, The Rox Restaurant, Sun-Tues through October, 6PM onwards, 4491234
- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234
- ❖ **A cafe's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café**, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, 2114075
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818
- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for home-made pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45PM
- ❖ **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 at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, 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
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068
- ❖ **Stupa View Restaurant**, for vegetarian creations & clay oven pizza at Boudha Stupa, 4480262
- ❖ **Gokarna Forest Resort** for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 4451212

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night of double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa. Offer valid for Nepalis and local residents only, 4489800
- ❖ **The Fulbari Resort**, offers a 'Dasain & Diwali Fulbari Fiesta Package' that includes a two-night stay with BB, buffet dinner and more. 4461918, resv@fulbari.com.np
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain**, offers a safari at Tiger Tops, Chitwan National Park or Karnali Lodge & Camp this Dasain, 4361500

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

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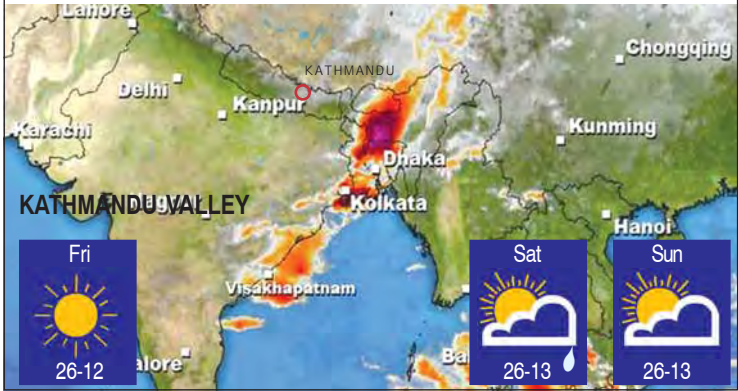
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

That was one enormous low pressure system over northern India that brought late monsoon squalls right across Nepal, and the snowline down to 4,500m in places. Luckily for us, the westerlies were already active over the Himalaya and pushed the trough back to the east. Since the jet stream hasn't yet gained strength, this didn't happen fast enough, hence the heavy precipitation. Paddy ready for harvest was destroyed in many places, but Kulekhani got filled up and the hydro powerplants are running full steam. More normal autumn weather this weekend with balmy sunshine, clear skies and afternoon buildup in some places.



RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

Oatmeal & Honey Cookies

(Serves 4)

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 2 cups | dry oats |
| 1 cup | desiccated coconut |
| ¼ cup | honey |
| 1 cup | sugar |
| 1 cup | flour |
| 4 tablespoons | butter |
| 1 teaspoon | baking soda |

Mix the oats, flour, sugar and coconut together. Boil the honey and butter together. Remove from heat and mix in the baking soda until frothy before adding the dry ingredients. Line a baking tray with baking paper and press the mixture flat into the tray. Bake at 180C until golden brown and cut to your desired size whilst still hot.



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NPA

FALSE HOPE: NC, UML and Maoist leaders shake hands on Sunday and pledge to resolve the political impasse by Tuesday. On Thursday negotiations were still ongoing.



KIRAN PANDY

WHAT'S THAT?: Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood tours Kathmandu Darbar Square on the penultimate day of Dasain last week.



KIRAN PANDY

CLIP, CLOP: Tourists enjoy a pony trek by Pokhara's Phewa Lake on Friday. Clear mountain views this time of year draw many tourists to the popular city.



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

PAPERWORK: Colonel R.J.J. Ellis of British Gurkhas Nepal explains on Wednesday how the Gurkha Settlement Office, which opened on Monday in Kathmandu, will help ex-Gurkhas and their dependents resettle in the UK, a right ex-Gurkhas won following a landmark case earlier this year.



KIRAN PANDY

GROOVING: The Mike Garner Band get down to it in Attic Bar on the opening night of the Himalayan Blues Festival 2009 on Wednesday. The blues fest runs till Sunday.

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Nepal rocks

Whatever Nirupama Diju told Girija, it seems to have done the trick. Suddenly Old Dodder stopped nattering on about First Dotter becoming Deputy PM. Everyone is getting pretty tired of GPK making it a point to ensure that **Suzy Q** succeeds him, and that includes his own cousins and nephews in the party. Just like king G was the biggest republican in this country four years ago, big G is the one bloke who has done more to undermine the kangresi party than anyone else. Yet why is it that noone in the NC is willing to **bell the cat**? Why does Ram Chandra have to whisper into Makunay's ear not to take GPK seriously? Why doesn't he go tell the old man himself?



At the rate the love affair between GPK and PKD is going the two are going to be smooching in public one of these days. Clandestine rendezvous in **Loktantra Man Singh's** house? Secret tête-à-têtes on mobiles? The two are both too smart by half, each thinks he is twirling the other around his finger. Each is trying to be more devious and outfox the other. Lotus Flower has dangled the presidency in front of Girija, allotting PM for himself and DPM for Suzy. GPK has played along, pretending to be interested knowing fully well Awesome just doesn't have the numbers to pull it off.



Contrary to the public perception that Comrade Awe-inspiring went to Hong Kong to see Chinese officials, it seems he actually went there to meet the Injuns! It was supposed to throw everyone off. The elaborate **Operation Honkyland** was to schedule a Fantastabulastic visit to China (to ensure that noone gets the impression he is kowtowing to Delhi) and then go to India in late November to discuss real substantive issues. Brokering all this is Comrade Krishna 'Money Bags' Mahara, who also had to stash away some of the party's ill-gotten wealth in some choice capital investment ventures. Mahara, to bring some of you up to date, has recently taken over from the India-baiting CP-ji as the head of foreign relations. He has a much more pragmatic approach towards Big Bro, or so they say. Needless to say, Com Gaurav is in a deep sulk, and internal fissures within the Baddies are about to erupt in a **major purge**. PKD, meanwhile, is already preparing the ground by giving a softie-softie interview to Prerana in which he comes across as Reasonableness Personified.



By all accounts, Makunay came away with flying colours in his pre-Dasain US/UN visit making up for his lack of stature with concealed heels and a tall Dhaka topi. Nepal's prime minister had taken a khukuri as a present to the President of the United States at a UN reception for peacekeeping countries, but the Secret Service apprehended the weapon saying 'swords' weren't allowed. Makunay pleaded that it was **Nepal's national knife** and it was a gift to the Chief, but to no avail. When he related this to Obama at the photo op, Sheikh Hasina made a wisecrack comment about how "khukuris were inappropriate for peacekeeping".

Makunay promptly told her off, saying that in Nepal the khukuri represented valour and loyalty, "both values necessary for peacekeeping". Prez was so impressed with the quick repartee he immediately accepted Makunay's invitation to visit Nepal.



The next day, Makunay smuggled along a piece of **limestone** from the summit of Everest to give to Obama (the Secret Service had no problems with that item) as a symbol of what climate change is doing to the world's highest mountains. Then Barack introduced Makunay to Michelle saying, "This is Mr Nepal, the prime minister of Nepal who comes from Nepal." Yeah, Nepal rocks, man.



Looks like Makunay made an even greater impression on Geri Halliwell than we all previously imagined at their touchy-feely function in Kathmandu last month. At a charity event last week in the Big Apple, according to the New Yorker, **Ginger Spice** told a packed audience about her meeting with Nepal's prime minister: "You know guys - you have to nurture them a bit, the prime minister appreciated my maternal pinch on the cheek and he told me he was scared. He had been prime minister for only three months." She then went on to pull out a shot of herself in a turquoise sari with her arm around the diminutive, smiling head of state, and said, "With collective energy, we can mother men into doing the right thing."

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