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.
LAND OF MY FATHERS

It was exciting! If you can use such an adjective reading Raj Thapa’s “The land of my fathers” (#470). It was poignant and nostalgic. The two contrasting and majestic ‘durbars’ of the Thapas should be an eye-opener for everyone in Nepal. But the dung-decimated ‘lakhe’ made a grotesque exhibition, even if it was a wonderful shot. Congrats, Rabi!

A.S., U.S.A.

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ROGUES IN THE RANKS

The Maoists have turned ‘civilian supremacy’ into a political slogan. Ironic to say the least, considering it is truth a party that negates ‘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 3rd of October were not already, 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 army must be answerable to elected democratic institutions if we are to avoid the fate of countries with chronic coups.

The other activity in which the Nepal Army has historically excelled and earned well-merited praise 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. This is why we see a need to keep this part of the army’s mission. Our soldiers can stop war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but by and large our Blue Berets have done the nation proud.

Sure, we need a lean operation that can be rapidly mobilised for situations like the present. This is clear and the army brass needs to know this. The other ambition of some of his generals in check.

Ironic to say the least, considering it is in truth a party that espouses the rigour philosophy.

SPECULATION
Prashant Jha

T o the second part first.
Through last week, there has been hectic activity. Prachanda-GPK overcoat and covert meetings. Ten 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 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 Jhalaanath Khamal may want tooust 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’s myth has been exposed.

Madhav Nepal’s government should go, but will stay.

Should I stay or should I go

Madhav Nepal’s government should go, but will stay

agitation only helps the government, for they can persuade key interest groups about the unavoidable, uncontrollable 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 anodal for the last three months. This apogee is geared to bring the Maoists back into power, not to facilitate a replacement of this regime by another. Even if Prachanda also seems 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 clustered 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 just for 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 determination to prevent the emergence of a political prospect on the ground. They had to team up because they could not fight the Maoists as two sides, 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 1990-style politics, but 1990-style institutions. That is the problem. They have signed up for state resources but do not want to touch the army, bureaucracy, judiciary, or form of government. Most would prefer a centralised undemocratic 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 ethnicity questions. In truth, this is a coalition of the unwilling—groups who either did not want this peace process at all, or see some component of present structural changes as unnecessary and regret them.

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

The arrangement 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 right-wing presidential nuncio. 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 Nepal’s interest not to see a Maoist Democratic Forum in power, which would mean a destabilising factor!

But the Maoists are not in a mood to cooperate. They would not allow a political understanding because as soon as that happens, they will be left without a job. For now though, he can continue to enjoy the Baluwatar lawns.

L ETTERS

How has Indu been?

Indu Nepal needs a case pronto for vegetarianism. Ladies with bad haircuts 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 suffering animals been explored. 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, led by their tails, hung from their noses? Did she never witness the nonchalant killing of livestock by butchers using burning irons and knives? Chieffs hanging upside down on bicycles? Priests covered in blood? After all, seeing is believing. If believing is only in science: eating vegetarian meals allows you to lessen your carbon footprint, and helps you lose a few pounds more?

Pramada Shah and Lucie de Vries. email

What a wonderful idea: the abolition of the monarchy—wished for by everyone 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?

Sateyjesh Nepal, email

We should do it this way!

Mr Pramanth jha’s likening itself to Aung San Suu Kyi shows his arrogance.

Since day one, he’s roleed over controversy and hasn’t helped his people one bit. If he considers himself Aung San Suu Kyi, I am Mahatma Gandhi.

Prasana A.C., Kathmandu

BIZARRE BUT BANAL
Prashant Jha makes absolute sense (“Bizarre but banal”, #470). It leaves one wondering: what difference has the abolition of the monarchy—wished for by everyone 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?
Baniyas and Brahmins

H ot on the heels of the news that Rashtriya 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.

The announcement of some NC honchos’s visit to Europe or a few UML-apparatchiks’ planned trip to Scandinavian countries is awaited. MJF President Upenendra 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 India’s security. The relationship was further strained when Nepal Army officers killed a number of Indians in the Madi-Chhautara area.

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 Babuwar Thapa correborates Dwivedi’s assessment of Nepal’s power politics, Dahal may yet repent of his decision to hobnob with Beijing.

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

Despite their apparent connivence, the Indian establishment perceives UML to be merely a political front for the Nepal Army and prefers to deal with the stalwarts of Balbhadra Koirala 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 Sadbhavana 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 Nehru Congress hotshots such as Biramendra 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 Nepal Congress leaders such as Sushil Koirala and Ramchandra Paudel, he was friendly, but far from warm. With Bijaya Gauchadhar and Rajendra Mahato of MF-J, 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 of India realises that the Nepali Maoists have outgrown its late nineeties tutelage and deserve the courtesy due to equals. The same is however not true of babus and bureaucrats.

Professor SD Muni once said, with a polite nod and a reluctant smile: “You’re too young to understand such investment made in neighbouring countries. His characterisation is even truer now, 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 Babuwar Thapa correborates Dwivedi’s assessment of Nepal’s power politics, Dahal may yet repent of his decision to hobnob with Beijing.

experience

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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.

Either perspective is valid. Under the (slightly confusing) name of the Republic of Nepal, we are now working and living all over the world. There are NRNs who are well off and hold foreign passports, and NRNs who are working in menial, low-paying jobs. What local businesses with local money just might be called for.

The NRN manifesto is not about the market, it is about realising the potential of NRNs.

At 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 economic growth and development occurs in a market, integrated with an education and training system. He believed that NRNs skills and resources directed back to Nepal are indispensable for Nepal’s economic development.

It is not money that Nepal needs, as Paul Samuelson says, without confident hands and confident brains to use it. It, itself has no meaning. Gulmi’s copper is beautiful there. We can’t afford to waste any more time. Let’s learn the tricks of futures markets, learn the tools of how to make foreign exchange work for Nepal.

The problem is that the Dual Citizenship Act 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. With Nepal’s development. It is more than the belief that NRN skills and resources directed back to Nepal are indispensable for Nepal’s economic development.

The best and brightest of the NRN community contribute most to Nepal’s development. It is more than the belief that NRN skills and resources directed back to Nepal are indispensable for Nepal’s economic development.

The Communist Manifesto came out, Jung Bahadur entered the fray, and the world was not the same. In a crop options 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 time. This should be the singular focus for all patriotic Nepalis wherever they may live or are, and for all well-wishers of Nepal, irrespective of nationality and citizenship. We are a third of a billion, and it is the NRN community contribution most effectively to this difficult but noble challenge that we must focus our dual citizenship for those of us already established abroad contribute to Nepal’s development.

The idea of non-residents of Nepal being a dumping ground for foreign garbage. Whatever we do, let’s not waste any more time. Let’s learn the tricks of the world. We can’t afford to waste any more time. Let’s learn the tricks of futures markets, learn the tools of how to make foreign exchange work for Nepal.

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Unleashing Nepal
How column writing can lead to writing books

Since the first column appeared in this paper eight years ago, the HeNN has been harping on the paucity of people writing with a common sense perspective on issues of business and the economy. Perhaps Nepali readers prefer political commentary and the lack of demand for good economic analysis does not prompt people to write on business and the economy seriously. Perhaps my fellow page-rater Ashish Tewari 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 go about 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 horde of pressewatchers now shun neat to go about by business tycoons.

For this column, 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 asilies 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 ideas really happen, Nepal and Nepalis will surely be better off.

The book has been possible because of the readers of this column, who so generously encouraged the HeNN to keep going and walk the extra mile. As the book is launched in Kathmandu next week, this Beest 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

Inspiration, inc.

One charity has inspired thousands of Nepalis abroad to help Nepal

In 1999, BBC journalist Rabindra Mishra approached philanthropist Arjun Singh Baset with an idea to uproot the situation of Nepalis worldwide. He suggested connecting the swelling numbers of Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) worldwide and enable them to help their less fortunately counterparts at home. Ten years later, Help Nepal Network (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,” 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 conflict in Nepal.

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 means for the most part they can operate automatically.

HeNN’s success has inspired individual NRNs worldwide to pick up the baton and do extraordinary things to help the country. In the past three years, young Nepalis in 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 Kuma 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 unwell. “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 NRNs worldwide to pick up the baton and do extraordinary things to help the country. In the past three years, young Nepalis in the UK, the US and the UK have ran 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

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 Nepal culture, there is a bad tendency here to think of the culture of those ethnicities and classes in power as Nepal 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 belief in supernatural powers which control the destiny of man, then we don’t believe in it, we are atheists.

How do communists celebrate Dasain?

Dasain has become a dasha (illicit) 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 strengthening social ties. If poor people feel compelled to mark Dasain because they are压榨 by their labour, 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.

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

Mukar Shrestha
Kantipur, 4 October

On the last day of Dasain, President Ram Baran Yadav visited Bhaktapur’s Narawang khel temple and caused road maintenance authorities there a headache.

These authorities convinced 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 to 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 been disintegrated since. Only bits of the patch laid down last year remain.

The President passed through Staryabinayak, Saligahari, Jagathi and

Favouritism

Bhagwat Timalsina in Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 October

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.

Mohan Prasad Upadhyay, president of BP Koirala Lions Eye 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 is because when a woman loses her sight, her husband takes 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.
Confused state

Surya Naik Upadhyay, Nagarkot, 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 Iluapa district alone. Further, a single person can be categorised in many different ways. For example, a Rajbansi 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 cultures, 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 ‘kipau’ are praised as upholding ethnic rights and recommended for reinstation. On the other hand, the world-renowned community forestry programs of Nepal have been criticised, as well as publicising the 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 Helmsman 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 without the support of the 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 Helmsman 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.
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 featured 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 met an eagle everyday from musicians who want to participate in Jazzmandu,” says Nabin Chhetri of the band Galerazi. He started the festival with Chheedup 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 of 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 Galerazi in Jazzmandu for the past two years. On Wednesday he joined Vatchapuj on stage and played guitar while Martial and Phonamuai bellowed 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
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, Valchiqui, Sounlafé, Trio Loka, Simon Flak, Celencia, Kutamba, Prusiaar

Jazzmandu master class
Sunday, October 11, 2-3.30PM
Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamikhel

Upstairs Jam
Sunday, October 11, 7.30PM
Upstairs Jazz Bar, Laskipal

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, 8.30-10PM
Sambhak Garden Hotel Shangri-La
The festival finale with all featured musicians
Trekking in the Indian Himalaya

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 Garwhal 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 Panch, 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 Uttamanchal 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
Priestly ambition

Gopal Gartaula

A dream of the refugee camps in here is a remarkable story of how Arjun Biswokarma got to be a Dalit. He is a low-caste Biswokarma, forehead. This priest has briskly out of his hut in Sector C, residents. Pandit Arjun marches bell chimes through the high-caste classmates. An he wasn't allowed to go to school he wanted to study, he discovered their lives in isolation within other Dalits, Biswokarmas aren't worried about the ill-effects of alcohol and drugs. 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."
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.

Policy makers, 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 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.

Technology deficit

“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 Civilization.

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 civilization is between social-political and natural tipping points.
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 ignominious mistake. It misunderstands 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 into account 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, in the vibration of a word or the inflection of the ending 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 scientific technology. Anyone who has tried their hand at translation, indeed any reader, will have experienced the different analytical stands 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 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 Nepali’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 justly judged in terms of literature, rather than as a contest of translation.

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 dusty lanes in our nearest galactic neighbour (see star map). If you have binoculars, check out the rather stilly 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...

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Times

STARGAZING

Kedar S Badu

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EXHIBITIONS
◊ ‘Nepal Rendezvous - Nagarkot Workshop’, paintings by Bangladeshi and Nepali artists at Hôtel de l’Annapurna, Darbar Marg, until 31 Oct, 4218048
◊ Lungta Paintings, exhibition by Muneen.Dek, 9-18 Oct, 5.30PM, Indigo Gallery

EVENTS
◊ ‘The country is yours’, Manjushree Thapa’s book launch, 9 Oct, 6.30PM, Alliance Française, Tripureshwor, 4311663
◊ Waltz with Bashir, movie screening, Lazimpát Gallery Café, 9 Oct, 5.30PM, 4230848
◊ Jazzmandu workshop, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, 11 Oct, 2PM, www.jazzmandu.com
◊ Patan Press Club, meets every Thursday at Dikhatar Café, 4PM, 5235121
◊ 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
◊ Himalayan Blues Festival, Rox Bar, 10 Oct, 7PM, 4893485, www.himalayanblues.com
◊ Baja gap, every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk, 7.30PM onwards, 4361500
◊ Live band every Friday and rooftop Bob every Saturday at Kasturi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4223788
◊ Sunday Jazz brunch and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency, 13.30PM, 4491234
◊ Jazz evening at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11.30AM-4PM, 4208226
◊ Some like it hot every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rij and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika’s Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4476498
◊ Happy cocktail hour, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7PM
◊ Nepali Ghazals and songs at O’Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30PM onwards, 4486998
◊ Rudra Night live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7PM at Golma Forest Resort, 4401212

DIING
◊ Arabic Food Festival, The Café, 9 Oct-7 Nov, 6.30PM onwards, 4491234
◊ Famous stress of the world, The Rox Restaurant, Sun-Tues through 9PM, 4491234
◊ Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234
◊ A café’s café, Dhikatar Café, Patan Dhoka, 5221213
◊ Jazzbells Café, relaunch at JamshikHEL, 2114075
◊ The Corner Bar, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4418118
◊ Al Fresco, for home-made pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999
◊ Kakori, for bryani’s, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 6-4.15PM
◊ Chez Corinne for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Resto, 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 La Restaurant, Gainchura, 4436198
◊ Plat Du Jour at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpát, Rs 680, 4412999
◊ Reality Bites, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika’s Group of Hotels, 9AM-11.30PM, 4243941
◊ Sturr 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, 4246989
◊ Tiger for Breakfast, breakfast everyday at 1905, Karnapul, 4210668
◊ Stupa View Restaurant, for vegetarian creations & clay oven pizza at Boudha Stupa, 4402082
◊ Golma Forest Resort for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 4401212

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, 4488900
◊ The Fulbari Resort, offers a ‘Dessan & Dawai Fulbari Fiesta Package’ that includes a two-night stay with BB, buffet dinner and more. 4416198, fulbari.com.np
◊ Tiger Mountain, offers a safari at Tiger Tops, Chitwan National Park or Kalim Lodge & Camp this Dussehra, 4361500

ABOUT TOWN

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 away from it. 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 away from it. 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 away from it.

WEATHER FORECAST

For more details about what’s hot and happening around Kathmandu, visit www.katjazz.com.np

GRAHAM SYDNEY

Q. Has Dassun been over-commercialised?
A. Total votes: 1,314

What are the chances of the Big Three parties agreeing to form a joint government?

For information contact: Kedar Sitaula (9841538496)

Times Weekly Internet Poll #471

Total votes: 1,314

4.8% 199 votes

Nepalese chut

Nepalese chut

Nepalese chut

www.jainepal.com

Firecrackers? Yes 65% No 35%

for home-made pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@jainepalimes.com

RESOURCES

www.jainepal.com

Oatmeal & Honey Cookies (Serves 4)

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

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

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.

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.

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.

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.
Nepal rocks

Whatever Nirupama Dijju 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 Fantastabulous 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 UN/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 ‘wovens’ 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 peacemaking”. Prat was so impressed with the quick retort 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 Halliwed 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 turqoise 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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