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# Hu cares?

PRAKASH DAHAL

**A**t a time when India-China relations are returning to near-Cold War levels, the Maoists have been trying to play Nepal's two giant neighbours against each other. Having concluded that Delhi masterminded its downfall from government May, Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been cosying up to China.

Beijing, which was happy with the way the Maoists cracked down on pro-Tibet activities while they were in power, seems to be only too happy to play along. Dahal's visit to China last week, during which he also met briefly with Premier Hu Jintao was either perfect, or disastrous,

timing. We don't know what China's message was, but sources say Beijing underlined the need for stability in Nepal and Premier Hu was worried about the growing political drift in Kathmandu. If India and China are shadow-boxing, and that seems to be what is happening, then it may be better for Nepali leaders to try to

reassure both powers on political unity in Nepal, rather than try to use one to irritate the other. What Dahal's visit seems to have done is made the Indians even more paranoid, and to conclude that the Maoists can't be trusted.

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**Unstable stability**

This picture of the two shaking hands in Jinan on 16 October was taken by Dahal's son Prakash and is exclusive to **Nepali Times**.

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# Unstable stability

## Nepal's political future is locked into India's dilemmas

### DEMONSTRATING DEMOCRACY

The current debate on the kind of federalism the new constitution should incorporate doesn't take into account Nepal's experience with decentralised development in the 1990s. The devolution of political power to elected local councils was beginning to deliver services to the grassroots. While governance at the national level floundered, village and district councils proved accountability was the key.

This success was itself based on Nepal's tradition of community management of water and forests by local groups – a system that has been historically undervalued by successive central governments. Modern governance structures choked these practices, and community groups were, and remain, largely forgotten.

Until now. The Nobel prize in economics awarded to Elinor Ostrom last week brought much-needed recognition to the exemplary work of communities. Ostrom's research demonstrates that goods like water, which can be fairly inexpensively rationed, may be better managed collectively within communities than if privatised. It echoes, indeed draws inspiration from, Nepal's own experience with community initiatives. And it validates grassroots democracy in the country and the region at a time when it has become fashionable to be cynical about it. Democracy isn't just fair, it's good economics.

Ostrom goes further, saying that the more democratic a community initiative is internally (the more of a say resource users have in the rules by which they are used) the more successful it is likely to be. The implications can be revolutionary: it means caste-obsessed villagers will have to stomach their reservations and cooperate with the lower castes to buy into proven community forestry or irrigation programs.

Nepal's 40-year experience with community forestry bears this out, having done much to restore canopy cover and address poverty and discrimination. It now accounts for 40 per cent of forestry activities in the country, and plans are afoot to ensure its benefits are spread more equitably. Community forestry also showed what a blunder the nationalisation of forests in the 1960s was, and how quickly villages bounced back once ownership was transferred to grassroots groups.

To be sure, not everything has gone smoothly. Bureaucrats who can score a tidy commission by privatising public resources are trying to assert control. And despite the social changes they've wrought, communities are still dominated by the local elite. The government will have to step in as regulator. In an email this week, Ostrom told us: "When democratic national regimes recognise the rights of local peoples to self-organise, their rights are usually better protected. Due, however, to the earlier academic and policy presumption that 'the' government needs to handle most problems related to common-pool resources, even democratic regimes have failed to recognise the rights to self-organise at a local or regional level."

But however we qualify these successes, it's hard to deny an important lesson they teach us about democracy. Democracy has paid off in community initiatives only because they've been imaginatively designed and the incentives worked out in ways that factor in human frailties and psychology.

And the lesson of the Nepal experience is that grassroots democracy isn't just theory, it works beautifully in practice.

Convincing the Indians of the need to help salvage the Nepali peace process is getting harder. This is because of reasons both internal to Nepal, and the broader context in which Delhi has to make certain fundamental decisions.

The Indian state today is facing two big issues that will have long-lasting consequences for its own stability and for Nepal.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

The first is the growing tension with China. Strategic circles are agog with speculation about whether the global system can accommodate two rising powers simultaneously and peacefully – especially when they have fought a bitter war, share contested borders, and compete for resources and power.

The past fortnight has seen Beijing ratchet up the rhetoric on Man Mohan Singh's Arunachal visit. Uncharacteristically, India hit back, asking China to stay away from 'Pakistan-occupied

Kashmir'. Delhi has already given the go-ahead to Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal, and has now decided not to issue workvisas to unskilled Chinese workers.

Analysts have offered various explanations for the stand-off. Whatever the reason, this is not about to descend into a conflict. Both powers recognise the incentives for cooperation. The two Prime Ministers meet in Thailand soon. Foreign office spokespersons are already toning down the rhetoric. India and China just signed an MOU on climate change. Trade is skyrocketing.

But the trust deficit has sharply increased.

Right in the middle of this, with either a perfect, or disastrous, sense of timing, Mr Pushpa Kamal Dahal went off to China. We do not know what Beijing told him – to behave, be flexible and finish the peace process or to agitate and take on India with Chinese support. But what the visit has done is prove to sections in Delhi that the Maoists cannot be trusted.

The second challenge for India is 'Operation Green Hunt', a massive security offensive spread across central and eastern India against the Communist Party of India (Maoist). Paramilitary troops with heavy weaponry are being deployed with the support of Air Force helicopters. There are plans to launch coordinated attacks to recover the forest known as Abuj-Marh, which serves as a base area for the Maoists, and then move into other districts in Chhattisgarh. The idea is to 'clear areas of Maoists, assert state control, and begin development work'.

The government's plan is opposed by anthropologists, activists and even some security specialists. They point out that a military offensive will

not address the root issues of justice, displacement and tribal exploitation, and will only lead to 'collateral damage', impose development models that people do not want, and alienate them even more.

Across the board, however, a common refrain has been, "Why don't our Maoists imitate the Nepali Maoists? Look, they gave up violence and participated in elections." Ironically, even BJP leaders – who opposed our peace process – have been making these arguments.

The Indian establishment could see the utility of getting the Nepali Maoists back into the power structure to project them as a 'role model' to their Indian comrades. Or it may feel that their utility is now over. The role model argument has been made but the Naxalites, in any case, are not buying it. Nepali Maoists are already over-ground, and can be kept trapped in the process without offering them real power.

Against this national and regional backdrop, Delhi has to answer two questions.

Can it live with a Maoist-dominated power structure in Nepal – even though they have not undergone the prescribed 'course correction', continue to court China, maintain an all-embracing party structure, and stick to their ideological line? And can it live with a radically different Nepali state – where political elites may not be as pliable to Indian concerns, where multiple 'autonomous' provinces exist that may embarrass India, for instance by declaring the caste system a human rights abuse from a UN platform?

All options are on the table but it would be a surprise if the answer to either question were 'yes'. For security establishments, the prospect of 'controlled instability' in familiar settings usually outweighs the risks of the unknown. Nepal's political future is locked in precisely that dilemma. ●



## LETTERS

### THE GREAT HIMALAYAN TRAIL

To my knowledge, this is not a first ('The Great Himalayan Trail', #472). A French company sponsored a similar trip back in 1986/87.

Bousteaud is also wrong to claim that tourists were first able to visit after 2002, when Nepal "resolved all its border disputes with China". To the best of my knowledge, there was no border dispute, almost all of the Nepal Himalaya were accessible from the early 1990s on.

Next, I've always been uncomfortable with the idea of 'discovering' areas where people have lived for centuries. These high valleys are often Buddhist holy places and have histories of their own, with indigenous literature to show for it. Thanks notably to the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project, a considerable portion of it has been translated. You can find them easily in

Kathmandu, and on this website: <http://digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/ancientnepal/>

As for "creating value in regions that previously had little to offer," what does Bousteaud think tourists will bring? I'm not sure that tourism can help such areas much, since tourism also has an adverse impact, especially in fragile areas.

### COPENHAGEN CLIMATE COUNTDOWN

An 'emerging consensus' on what needs to be done to address climate change is not going to help countries like Nepal deal with



Marceau, email

global warming's effects, like accelerated glacial melt and its effects on water supplies. Every country needs to cut its emissions, including India and China. It may not be 'fair' historically, but arguing over fairness at a time when countries like Tuvalu are at risk of extinction, and

countries around the world, including India and China, are at risk of growing food shortages, is futile. Instead of rejecting all imposed cuts, developing countries like India and China should be pressing for more financial and technical assistance.

Margaret P, email

### JAZZMANDU

Great review of Jazzmandu! ('Let them hear jazz', #472). But I'm also glad you've brought attention to the jazz scene in Kathmandu, outside Jazzmandu. Many don't realise that there's tons for jazz-fans to be excited about in the city. Enough, at least, to keep them occupied until Jazzmandu rolls around again next year.

Sudip Lama, email

### SUJATA

Sujata, Sujata, Sujata, Sujata! She hogs newspapers, she hogs magazines, and now she's DPM. What. The. Hell. But get used to this folks, we won't have serious leaders for a while. CK Lal's right ('The daughter also rises', #472), leaders of substance are squeezed out of parties.

Name withheld, email

# Government matters

The state has a role in keeping the commons for commoners

**N**obel Prizes in physics, chemistry and medicine are recognition of specialised achievements. Peers seldom challenge awardees. In literature, zeitgeist affects the decision of the committee. In the wake of 9/11 and rising Islamophobia, V.S. Naipaul's controversial *Among the Believers* was a clear winner.

The fear of belligerent China and resurgent Russia is the flavour of the season in the West this year. So the literature prize has gone to Romanian-German novelist Herta Müller, who endured Ceausescu's communist rule.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
C K Lal

The Peace Prize is pure politics. From Henry Kissinger to Menachem Begin, all kinds of controversial personalities have received it in the past. This year, the committee decided to reward America's first black president just for being a breath of fresh air compared to his predecessor.

Almost as controversial has been this year's Nobel for economics. Unlike in physics, chemistry and medicine (or even literature and politics), it's difficult to measure contributions economists make to the well-being of humanity. For years, free-market fundamentalists dominated the winners' list.

Mavericks like Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman have been chosen to correct the longstanding market bias. But apparently, the Nobel Committee needed to send an even stronger message after the sub-prime crisis that led to the global recession. So for the first time in the history of the economics prize it is a woman who has received it, for her research into resource management outside the market.

Professor Elinor Ostrom teaches political science at Indiana University and was recognised for her "analysis of economic governance, especially the commons". Based on her fieldwork, Ostrom



KUNDA DIXIT

claims that locally managed traditional irrigation systems in Nepal have successfully allocated water between users for a long time. Whether that falls under economics or the management discipline is for professionals to decide. But the politics of this position deserves some attention.

Nepal had a functioning system of community engagement that allowed cooperation in building and maintaining local irrigation systems. In the central Tarai, for example, villagers built earthen dams on perennial rivers at least twice a year to irrigate paddy seedlings and wheat during May-June and Jan-Feb. The water was then channelled through an intricate web of dora (flow channels) to paini (field channels) and pokhari (reservoir). The same infrastructure was later used to drain out floods during the monsoon.

In the Naya Muluk region of Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardia and Banke districts, a similar system was replicated with series of state-managed Rajkulo and locally maintained field channels. The Kathmandu Valley already had functioning

irrigation canals dating back centuries.

All such indigenous systems began to fall into disuse when King Mahendra started dispensing political favours in the form of land grants. Doras and pokharis became the private property of influential local politicians. Dry pained rice fields. Rajkulos were filled up to make roads. Deep and shallow tubewells soon became the favourite modes of irrigating fields. The government almost destroyed the entire community-led irrigation infrastructure within a decade.

When the 'project approach' of delivering water into farmer's fields failed to have the desired impact, consultants came up with the idea of user committees and consumer groups to implement and maintain minor irrigation systems. Introduced in the late eighties under the aegis of multilateral donor agencies, such an approach has transformed the community cooperation of the past into market relationships.

In the name of community

management and sustainability of projects, a monetary value has been put upon the contributions of locals. Water is priced with user fees. The government has cleverly abdicated its responsibilities of providing basic services, raising taxes, and administering justice. Since donors fund impact studies, it hardly ever gets mentioned in policy papers that community-administered development projects constitute privatisation of essential services through the back door.

It was first the might of government that was used to destroy the network of autonomous grassroots initiatives. Now the community is being set up to discredit the government. The market will then reign supreme. Subsistence farming will be easier to replace with commercial farms.

The Nobel hoopla over locally managed economic governance notwithstanding, the overarching role of central and provincial government is necessary to keep the commons for commoners. ●

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# Not strictly business

SHARDA JUNG THAPA

**P**rem Jung Thapa's opinion piece about the NRN movement (#471) was a rehash of some popular misconceptions about the NRN movement, focusing only on the investment aspects with a few gratuitous generalisations thrown in for effect.

On balance, some of his criticisms are valid but he tends to blame NRN leaders for failing to meet expectations that aren't their own.

Regarding the 'great NRN myths' he sets out to debunk, the first statement, that the diaspora includes some of the best and brightest of Nepal, is certainly not a myth. Prem Jung Thapa is a perfect example. The second myth, that NRNs are indispensable to Nepal, is a misinterpretation of the NRN line that our skills and investment could be a vital part of developing Nepal.

He may have missed the point in trying to discern two different definitions of and courses of action for NRNs. The objective of the movement is to have one seamless NRN 'new' constituency;

exhorting their ranks to help Nepal as a patriotic duty is just good marketing. Ultimately, business is business and when any NRN invests in Nepal it should be a business decision. True, some may choose to accept a sub-optimal return because it's Nepal and indeed some already have.

The putdown about the paltry capabilities of NRNs compared to Marwari business houses was plain wrong and also inapt, because there is neither a desire to have our potentials compared nor a demand to have NRN investments considered preferentially.

Furthermore, he ignores the fact that the NRN movement is also about keeping traditions alive so they aren't lost on our children.

Finally, I find it hard to stomach yet another reference to a link between dual citizenship and investment with the implication that investments are being held hostage. It is as if the NRN movement is stealing the crown jewels right under the unwatchful eyes of the Nepali politicians and people. Over the last six years we have laboured mightily to put in place a

framework that revises regulations that dictated the treatment of Nepali migrants to other lands, some of which dated back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Prem Jung Thapa may not be aware that even without these in place the NRNA has functioned on faith as an unregistered organisation in Nepal. In this same period, informal estimates indicate that some \$300 million in investments were made in Nepal by various NRNs.

A lot of the features of the dual citizenship sought are already enshrined within these revised regulations. There is no demand for voting rights or to be included in the political process and hold office. Neither are there any requests to be treated preferentially as investors and create an unequal playing field. Some of the perceived shortcomings of the current regulations in the areas of entry/exit and property rights would be corrected and I see no shame or reprehensibility in asking for them on the basis of maintaining existing ethnic ties.

Dual citizenship has a certain ring about it and the implication of tying migrants to the motherland. This may yield

incalculable benefits without any further major concessions. It is not for nothing that India, China and dozens more countries have chosen this route. The time in Nepal is right since a new constitution is in the making and this is something that could be accommodated. NRNs from the world over need not lecture on the globality of capital markets or the fungible nature of funds. If ethnicity and association with the motherland were not investment criteria why would the NRI and Overseas Chinese have pumped in tens of billions into their respective motherlands, commencing well before these countries took off economically?

In conclusion, there already is a special class of foreigners with Nepali ethnicity scattered across the world. I think we deserve to be recognised as such. It is for Nepal to decide whether to do so. It is our 'patriotic' duty to counsel Nepal to act in her best interests. In my mind this only becomes patriotic if I am a dual citizen. ●

*The author is a founding member, past country representative-USA, Past VP North America and Advisor to NRNA-ICC*

**Don't blame NRNs for not meeting expectations that aren't their own**



## Win Win

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## Branching out

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# Festivalonomics

## Have we understood the commercial potential of our festivals?

Driving on any of the Tihar holidays gives you the feeling that the entire city is asleep. Compared to the fun and revelry outside people's homes in other south Asian cities during festivals, Kathmandu looks like a ghost town. Eateries and shops are closed and for most there's not much to do. This Beed



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Artha Beed

is yet to understand how we can boost the economy if we always want to keep everything shut.

Hunting for a restaurant on festival days that actually is willing to serve customers is difficult even though going by the crowds around stalls outside City Centre, the demand is definitely there. Young people, especially girls, who earn and spend their own money ensured the stalls did great business. It is a pity that when there are so many customers looking for good places to eat, eateries are closed. In Nepal, people complain about business being bad, but if we keep on closing down on days that people want to splurge, then we have only ourselves to blame. This extends to our closing of markets

on Saturdays, the only days shoppers have time to go out on a buying spree. But to protect the interest of god-knows-who, we have decided to close markets on Saturday. If we complain about high unemployment rates, then how can we have the luxury of closing down for so many days?

Flower sellers on the first day of Laxmi Puja charge up to Rs 800 but don't realise that it is better to sell one's wares at reasonable prices. At the end of the day taking away unsold goods or selling at throwaway prices is definitely not good business. Yet so many businesses will foolishly try to take advantage of similar situations, be it by trying to sell water and noodles at three times the usual price during chakka jams or by trying to extort unreasonable prices from a tourist only to dissuade them from buying anything.

The world over, people make lots of money from tourists during festivals. Why would tourists come to see how Tihar is celebrated when they have to clamour to find a place to have a decent meal without being fleeced? Wouldn't it be

wonderful to have cultural street carnivals without political overtones that showcase the culture of Nepal and would be on par with the carnivals of Brazil? If other cities famous for pilgrimages can leverage festivals to attract tourists, why can't we? The mass *mha pujas* could be part of a package that showcases the depth of local cuisine. How about events at the viewing point at Swayambhu or Lakhure or Hattiban to see the valley aglow during Tihar celebrations? There are so many things to do!

The way we celebrate Tihar now, by closing shops and eateries, shows that our mindset has not changed despite the immense political changes Nepal has undergone. Like the people who used to stand outside Narayanhiti Palace to watch the fireworks when they were banned for commoners, we use fireworks knowing they have been illegally procured. We spend hours gambling knowing very well that gambling is not legal here, with Nepali citizens prohibited from going to casinos. This is so confusing! No wonder Goddess Laxmi is yet to really make an impact in Nepal. ●

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# Manifesto, amended?

**PREM JUNG THAPA**

It's heartening to see that my article 'NRN manifesto' caught the eye, and even the ire, of fellow NRNs gathered for the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference. That the rebuttal is from a founding and tirelessly active member of the movement is a particular joy.

My purpose was to ask questions to stimulate clearer discussions about what the NRN movement stands for, and how to

interests of its members in Nepal and overseas, whether in commerce or culture. The cultural connection was not noted in my column, but I acknowledge this is a valued dimension.

Yet from the very beginning the NRN movement has been invoking a special mantra about helping Nepal and resident Nepalis as much as helping its members. And the investment route is identified as one of the key channels for this patriotic duty. So to me, and more

## If the NRN movement does not equate to NRN investment, it should say so

address the anomalies that occur when we have multiple objectives. It was not seeking to blame anyone or put down the NRN movement.

Sharda Jung Thapa's piece provides some of these answers, but I wish it had elaborated on the anomalies. If I am unaware of the real objectives and workings of the NRN, then perhaps there are many more like me who should be enlightened.

I already expressed my approval for a NRN movement that advances the private

interests of its members in Nepal and overseas, whether in commerce or culture. The cultural connection was not noted in my column, but I acknowledge this is a valued dimension.

Yet from the very beginning the NRN movement has been invoking a special mantra about helping Nepal and resident Nepalis as much as helping its members. And the investment route is identified as one of the key channels for this patriotic duty. So to me, and more

importantly to the millions of resident Nepalis, the *sine qua non* of the NRN movement is NRN investment in Nepal. This is what I strongly object to. If this image branding of the NRN movement is not what the NRN leadership desires, then the NRN manifesto needs to be amended, without pride of place for the \$100 million global NRN Fund.

that more and more productive resources are invested in the motherland. But make these provisions apply to all foreigners who invest in Nepal. The NRN movement may not be asking for special treatment of NRN investors relative to other resident investors, but by its very name it is championing special rights for foreign investors with Nepali ethnicity compared to non-Nepali foreigners. Why? Our funds will not be super-productive or get the job done better than alternative sources of investment funds. In fact, potential large NRN investors who are also in leadership roles in the NRN movement may have huge conflicts of interest between their private and organisational dealings.

If my call for non-discriminatory treatment of all foreign investors in Nepal leaves patriotic NRNs seemingly unfulfilled, perhaps the Ministry of Finance should have a 'patriot tax' whereby dual citizenship is granted to those willing to pay a small, say 1%, tax on their global earnings. In return, every two years they can hobnob in Kathmandu with the political and business leadership of Nepal, unveil statues, and for the especially patriotic, have streets named after them. ●



# Deusi ransom

Jagadish Ghimire in *Kantipur*, 18 October

कान्तिपुर

'Naya Nepal' has witnessed the dawn of many unseemly customs. One of these is ransom in the name of deusi/bhailo.

As Tihar approaches, offices and individual citizens receive notes or phone calls from political and non-political organisations, both known and unknown, informing them of their intention to visit their premises for deusi/bhailo.

Essentially, what all these ransom notes are saying is, "You may or may not know who we are, but we have decided to come and visit you to perform deusi/bhailo. Wait for us and don't forget to keep some cash handy. Otherwise..."

The notes in question bear

not the grace of the pen but the force of the sword. The going rate to pay off these troupes is not less than a thousand rupees, and certainly more is expected. Offices and public figures have to endure a whole rash of these notes. Those who haven't made their fortunes by illegal means face quite significant extra festive expenses. The earnings of these individuals are held to ransom by these notices. Their time off is held to ransom as they wait for said troupes to turn up. Their privacy is held to ransom, their happiness is held to ransom.

I remember how we used to enjoy deusi/bhailo when I was a child. People would visit their relatives, their neighbours and their friends. Both hosts and guests would look forward to the occasion, in which they participated as a community bound by love. Whatever was offered to the deusi/bhailo

performers, mostly food, was accepted in the same spirit. There were no ulterior motives, no threats.

This may still be the case in some parts of Kathmandu, but the custom is dwindling fast. More than ever, deusi/bhailo is characterised from the first day of Tihar by visits from gangs of unknown louts high on drink who enter practically by force and keep the neighbourhood awake all night with their carousing. Having coopted cultural traditions as a business, they demand to be paid and leave behind bottles, cigarette butts and the stench of urine.

Does individual freedom and privacy count for nothing in Naya Nepal? Are the cultural traditions of Tihar meant for our happiness or suffering?

Can the 601 CA members swear that they are not involved in this ransom-culture? If they are not, then working to criminalise this kind of culture will go some way towards relieving the problems they have caused the Nepali people.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Assets auctioned

Rishiram Paudyal in *Kantipur*, 21 October

कान्तिपुर

The lands of two families killed during the conflict are to be put up for auction in 35 days. The Agricultural Development Bank in Melamchi has decided to go ahead with the sale after the orphaned children were unable to pay the loans.

The Maoists had murdered two alleged informers — former VDC chairman Dil Bahadur Dhanuwar and RPP cadre Chitra Bahadur Thapa — who had refused to give donations. While Dhanuwar had a total debt of Rs 100,000 and Thapa Rs 184,000 with the bank, the total sums they owed amounted to Rs 183,000 and Rs 500,000 respectively.

As compensation for his murder the government had provided Thapa's family with Rs 150,000, which was spent on rent for seven people in Kathmandu. The family has been struggling to make ends meet, let alone pay debts.

Dhanuwar's family is in a worse condition as they were not given any compensation at all. Says Laxman, the younger son of Dil Bahadur, "The Maoists threatened us with violence if we took the money." The older son has been unable to work since he was electrocuted in an accident, leaving the family hopeless.

# Unjust reward

*Kantipur*, 21 October

कान्तिपुर

Twelve youths performing deusi/bhailo were beaten up the police in Lalbandi, Sarlahi. After Ganga Kathwada, a local of Lalbandi, mistreated the women in the group, she informed the Lalbandi police station. The police arrived immediately and lathi-charged the group. Amongst those injured by the police were female footballers Usha Bhandari and Kavita Oli. Enraged villagers of Lalbandi not only blockaded the police station but also set fire to police vans.



# Sujata's largesse



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Lekhnath Pandey in *Nagarik*, 21 October

नागरिक

Deputy PM Sujata Koirala spent one million rupees on gifts for colleagues and other officials on her trips to Egypt, Portugal and India as foreign minister. To make this less apparent, all expenses were tallied under the miscellaneous section of her budget for the trip. Sources state that meeting these officials was not even planned beforehand. All details about the items purchased along with the names of the recipients have been disclosed in a bill that adds up to a startling Rs 926,000.

The 'gifts' included expensive silver utensils with her name engraved on them. Others at the ministry found this extravagance in Koirala unusual because no former foreign ministers have gone to such excesses in buying items for their tours abroad. Past foreign ministers would simply present a souvenir that reflected something about Nepali culture: a handicraft, pashmina or a khukuri.



Bhai tika!  
Madhav Kumar Nepal: "Yamaraj will be impressed by our rule, sister"

नागरिक Rabin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 21 October

**रेडियो कार्यक्रमको आदान-प्रदान नेटवर्क हाइवे**

हरेक दिन बिहान र बेलुका साढे ६ बजेदेखि ७ बजेसम्म

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रेडियो तरङ्ग १०७.६ पोखरा

फरक परिवेश  
फरक संस्कार  
फरक भूगोल

रेडियो चितवन ९४.६ रत्ननगर

उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्क सानेपा

अब सधैँका साथी

# Country first



**Himal Khabarpatrika spoke to people in Birganj about key constitutional issues. Translated excerpts below:**

**Himal Khabarpatrika: Do you think the country will get a new constitution in seven months?**

**Om Prakash Rungta (social worker):** The political leaders are fighting all the time, so when will they find the time?

**Om Prakash Sikariya (President, Birganj Industries and Commerce Association):** The Constituent Assembly is also a parliament, which has slowed down the constitution writing process. There has to be a separate parliament and CA.

**Pramod Kushbaha (President, Nepal University Teachers Association, Thakur Ram Multiple Campus):** CA members have forgotten why they're in the assembly and people need to remind them.

**Rajendra Prasad Koirala (intellectual):** There's just no alternative. Plus, if we get federalism wrong, we'll go the way the way of Bangladesh and Pakistan, which look like they will split apart.

**What do you think about the anti-secular voices that have been raised recently?**

**Nurul Huda (engineer):** Federalism is impossible without secularism in Nepal.

**Binay Yadav (Nepal Janata Party):** Hinduism is the greatest democracy, and it's taught us what democracy means. It should remain the state religion. Hinduism and democracy complement each other in Nepal

so we should be a Hindu republic.

**Yogendra Shah (UCPN-Maoist):** If Hinduism is a strong religion, it doesn't need special state protection. The state should protect all religions equally and the new constitution must ensure this. There is no alternative to secularism in Nepal.

**Man Deb Hajara (Dalit activist):** Dalits are being discriminated against by Hinduism. They are not allowed to enter temples even though they are themselves Hindu. Hinduism causes ethnic and religious discrimination, so Nepal should be a secular state.

**Arabind Shah (CPN-UML):** The state does not have any religion and Nepalis need not take it upon themselves to protect Hinduism. Nepal should be a secular state.

**Sabita Shah (women's rights activist):** The new constitution should confirm the country's current secular status. If Nepal becomes a Hindu country once again, there will be another revolution.

**What kind of provisions should the new constitution have regarding language?**

**Bishwambar Sharma (associate professor):** The new constitution should ensure the right of a person to use the language he/she knows. Sometimes, we ignore reality for the sake of politics. The country comes first. Language is a medium to communicate. We should not have conditions on

language in the new constitution.

**Babulal Prasad Kumal (NC):** There should be one national language that different provinces can use to communicate with one another. Each province should have its own language.

**Lalbabu Raut (MJF):** If we say Nepal is a multilingual country, it should adopt a multi-lingual policy. Maithali, Bhojपुरी, Abadhi are the major languages spoken in the Madhes. Hindi is the language of communication in the region. Therefore, Nepali and Hindi should be the national languages of the country. Hindi should be the language of the Madhes Pradesh.

**Laxmi Bhatta (social worker):** Nepal is my country, I am Nepali and Nepali is my language. How can Hindi be my language? Nepali should be the national language.

**What do you think of the Maoists' proposal to change the national flag?**

**Rajeshwor Prasad Koirala:** The suryavansi and chandravansi symbols on our flag represent the monarchy. They ought to be changed to represent Dalits, women, Janajati and Madhesi communities instead.

**Rajeshwor Tiwari (lawyer):** We didn't think there was an alternative to monarchy, yet we changed that. Why shouldn't we change the flag too?

**Babulal Prasad Kumal:** The national flag should not be changed as it represents the national identity.

## "Big egos"

Mrigendra Kumar Singh Yadav, Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, MJF, Saptari 6



**How many CA sessions did you attend after becoming minister?**  
I haven't attended any since the CA was postponed, but otherwise I have attended them regularly when I'm in town.

**Do you think the constitution will be written on time?**  
We must, and we will, if the political parties reach an agreement, and leaders deflate their big egos.

**So you're saying it won't be written on time without a consensus?**  
It would be better if there were consensus on deciding issues in the CA. If no agreement is reached, there is the provision of voting.

**Has the disruption of parliament sessions affected the writing of the constitution?**  
The CA sessions haven't ever been disrupted. They were postponed due to a lack of business.

**On what basis should provinces be created?**  
If we consider physical and cultural factors, instead of ethnicity and language alone, we can preserve the cultures of the Himal, Pahad and Tarai.

## "Flag's no big deal"



Sitadevi Baudel, Maoist CA member, Nawalparasi 3

**What do you do now that the CA is suspended?**  
We attend meetings for the drafting and parliamentary committees and sessions.

**Which CA committee are you in?**  
I am in the Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. We're still working on our draft report and concept paper. We are debating progressive land reform and prohibitions on regressive forces from opening parties.

**Is it possible to ban political parties in a multiparty system?**  
Everyone, except regressive forces, should be free to open political parties.

**Your party has been disrupting parliament. Doesn't that affect the constitution writing process?**  
This is the government's fault, not ours, and it hasn't slowed the constitution writing process.

**Why is the constitution writing process not gaining momentum?**  
Because of political instability, lust for power, the security situation and political disagreements. Once political consensus is reached, the constitution will be written on time.

**The Maoists gave out a separate province for Koche but not for Dalits. Why?**  
I'm a Dalit myself, and we realised that Dalits aren't a majority in any region, which is why they won't have a province to themselves. But we have suggested proportional representation, which will ensure Dalit representation in the legislature.

**What do you think of changing the national flag?**  
It's being discussed but isn't a big deal. I'm not that rigid about it.

KANAK MANI DIXIT

Many who have studied the Machapuchre massif will have wanted to get up close. Why should it not be possible to head straight up from the Pokhara Valley? What lies beyond the tree line? We headed up the ridge on a brief tented adventure over Dasain to find out.

In many parts of Nepal, trekking trails are being replaced by roads. The Annapurna circuit now has a highway up the Kali Gandaki and another is snaking up the Marsyangdi. The Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal and the Annapurna Conservation Area Trust have teamed up, with Swiss support, to keep tourists engaged in the region by introducing the 'Machapuchre Model Trek'.

Decades ago, this area was termed 'the other (Annapurna) sanctuary' by Col. Jimmy Roberts, rightly known as the 'father of trekking'. The trail was already active when it lapsed during the conflict, but is now open again.

The Machapuchre trail holds great promise, for the proximity to the Himalayan giants it provides, plus the flora, fauna and the views across the midhills of Nepal. But to take direct aim at a Himalayan peak, one has to be prepared for a steep and continuous ascent. Starting on the Mardi riverside at 1120m, passing the only village of Ribhan, you make your first camp close to the hilltop viewpoint of Odane (2513m). The second camp is on the kharka (alp) above the tree line at Khumai (3245m). From there, a day trip takes you up to Korchon (3682m).

Northwards lie the ramparts of Annapurna Himal, familiar and up close. To the left, Annapurna South blocks the summit ridge, to the right lie Annapurna II (*top*), III and Lamjung Himal, and Gorkha Himal is further on beyond the Marsyangdi. But centre-stage is monopolised by Machapuchre (6997m), with the trekking peak of Mardi Himal (4120m) looking rather diminutive to the left.



Wherever you are, you are on a direct line-of-sight heading from Pokhara to Machapuchre. The mountain does not oblige you by changing shape and exposing its fish-tail, it only comes closer while remaining aloof and imperious.

Looking downhill, a good part of Nepal is laid out. The sculpted natural terraces so distinctive of Pokhara Valley march all the way up the Seti River, past Kharpani village and provide proof of the ancient catastrophic landslide flood that created the flats of Pokhara Valley.

Pokhara is forever visible, but lower by the day. Dorniers and Twin Otters are like buzzing gnats as they bank over Naudanda and head for Jomsom. Far

to the south, the distinctive twin summits of Bandipur are clearly visible, as is Devchuli standing guard over Nawalparasi. Along the way, we passed numerous households boarded up, and farmed terraces going back to jungle – a pointer to the transforming economy and demography.

Early autumn had both jangal and kharka full of flowers, and the leeches were well-behaved. Half-feral buffalos looked at us with wild-eyed panic before bounding off. This is one of the best places in the world for bird watchers, and the flank known as Pipar was identified by Col. Roberts and Pokhara's redoubtable Jhalak Thapa as a pheasant sanctuary with six resident species.

It can be disheartening to see buffalos romping about in what was supposed to be a wild trek. But this reminds the trekker that the Himalaya is an inhabited mountain chain. And as you congratulate yourself on great physical achievement, nonchalant herders whistle their way upwards, with nothing but a quilt in their baskets to ward off the freezing night.

We were doubly intrigued to encounter a Bahun sheep herder at this altitude. He had quit college in Pokhara and taken up this profitable but arduous profession once his father died. In his words echoed the fears and desires of the Nepali people at large. He had been to the Gulf once, but had barely scraped by. Though he was thinking of taking up a job in Libya, he was torn by the idea of leaving "these mountains".

What was a Bahun herder doing up here in what is supposed to be a Gurung/Tamu region? Was the downward movement of affluent Gurungs being mirrored by Bahuns moving up the mountain?

In four nights, we had experienced the thrill of breathing the High Himalayan air, taking in mountainous wonders and the birds and flowers. But we were never far from human concerns, and seeing Nepal spread out below we were forced to ruminate-yes, just like the buffalos. ●

A four-day trek can take you right below Machapuchre

# The other sanctuary



# Charity, away from home

## Helping hands bring healthy smiles to western Nepal

**BILLI BIERLING**

Somewhere in the mid-hills of western Nepal, in the shadow of Manaslu, is a small, impoverished village at an altitude of 3,780 metres. Thanks to a joint initiative by Himalayan Experience, the World Food Programme (WFP), SmileHigh and Himalayan Health and Environmental Services, Samagaon has just received much needed aid in the form of health and dental services, food, and human expertise.

Samagaon is the gateway for many expeditions to Manaslu (*top*), which at 8,156 metres is the eighth highest peak in the world. Mountaineering expeditions have passed through this village since Manaslu was first climbed in 1956, with 34 expeditions in 2008 alone. But there has been very little development. The closest health facilities are either a six-day trek or an expensive helicopter flight away.

Russell Brice is a guide from New Zealand who has climbed in Nepal for 35 years. This year his company Himalayan Experience organised an expedition to Manaslu.

"When I arrived in Samagaon I was shocked to see how backward this village was. I expected poverty but I was not prepared for what I saw. People are in desperate need of health and education," he said.

According to the WFP, 48 per cent of the children in the area are underweight and nearly 70 per cent of the children under five are stunted.

"There is only one school, which is more like a shack, and the area has no health facility or dental clinic," said Dr Mingma Nuru Sherpa, a dentist from Khumjung in the Khumbu region.

"The people live how we used to live 30 years ago. Up until I was six years old I did not own shoes, and if Sir Edmund had



DAMES GIAMBRONE

not built a school in Khumjung, I would not have been able to become a dentist," he recalled.

### Healthy smiles

During a week-long mission in Samagaon, five dentists treated around 1,000 patients, extracted 300 teeth, and distributed about 1,000 toothbrushes and 800 toothpaste tubes.

"None of the children had ever seen a dentist, but their teeth were actually quite good. It is different in the Khumbu, as many kids have got into the habit of eating sugary western food," Dr Mingma observed. He is the co-founder of SmileHigh, a dental aid organisation he set up with friend and fellow dentist Julian Haszard in 2004 to bring dental

health services to mountain communities.

### Work for Food

Apart from a lack of health and education facilities there is also a significant food shortage in the area.

"There is simply not enough space to grow enough food for the entire population," said Richard

Ragan, WFP country director in Nepal. He was also part of Brice's Manaslu expedition.

"So far, we've provided food to over 1,000 people and are implementing a 'Food-For-Work' program whereby the locals receive food in exchange for work that goes towards community-based projects. In 2010 WFP will cover nearly 15,000 people in seven districts of the upper Gorkha area," said Ragan.

Key to the success of this joint initiative has been the willingness of the locals to participate. Even before WFP arrived, the locals had started improving the trail to Manaslu base camp, with support financed by Brice.

Brice recalled: "At first the locals were a bit suspicious as Manaslu is a sacred mountain for them. But when we told them about our plans, they showed great enthusiasm."

With part of the Rs 100,000 he donated to the village last year, Brice organised 25 villagers to each carry about 30kg of rubbish down from base camp.

"Within half an hour, 750kg of rubbish was carried off the mountain. It was amazing to see how quickly this was done," Brice said.

Next year the team is planning to spend another week in the area to provide the villagers with more food, training, and dental and medical care. Ken Noguchi, a Japanese mountaineer, has organised several clean-up operations on mountains in the Himalaya. He is now building a boarding school for about 70 children in Samagaon.

The case of Samagaon shows how climbers and trekkers committed to not just mountains but the communities that live around them can make a difference. With improved infrastructure and a healthier, happier community, Samagaon will be better equipped to welcome more tourists to Manaslu. ●



SNACKS ON YAKS:  
WFP food is unloaded

DAMES GIAMBRONE

# Well runs dry

Culture is collective achievement, not collective cretinism

The times they've been a-changing for a while now, and some year for the good old bad old days when things were far from ideal, but 'worked', democracy or no. The more practical among us recognise the ultimate futility of nostalgia. That ideal of a unity-in-diversity nation under a benevolent demi-god, that semi-pristine Kathmandu Valley of Toyota taxis, mom 'n pop stores and easy-going grace, that simple amorphous countryside, steadily developing, never really existed except in the minds of the myth-makers.



**KALAM**  
Rabi Thapa

But one can see where these sentiments spring from in our fraught modern times. Some of the old was better dispensed with, but there are new things to

worry about all the time. Only last week I rejoiced in the wealth of global culture some of us are enjoying here in Kathmandu. Film festivals, book launches, concerts and art expos engaged local and international artists and audiences. Culture seemed to be progressing even as our politics was stymied by the pygmies in charge. And if culture were flourishing in the capital, perhaps it could represent a larger force for good throughout the nation?

It's easy to get carried away. While the cup we hold up to toast the world indeed runneth over, our own cultural reservoirs are running dry. At the very least, they are being poisoned by the arsenic of Naya Nepal. Crassness is filtering into every aspect of our Nepali cultural experience, nowhere more so than in our cities.

Whither the community of deusi and bhailo? It used to be something we all looked forward to, hosts and guests. My neighbours in Dhapasi have never stopped to consider the effect of their drunken railing or wailing dogs, but the festive seasons trigger not eager anticipation now, but dread. This Tihar, we were brave enough to turn away prospective entertainers after 9 (but not to refuse them unearned cash prizes), but the lawyer who'd just moved in next door seemed less bothered by neighbourly propriety. After a dazzling, wholly illegal display of fireworks on Laxmi Puja he and his family appeared to have settled down to a well-earned night's rest. It was not to be, not for them, not for us.

At a quarter to 11 their doorbell (an ear-splitting rendition of a well-known bhajan, a marvel of public piety) began to sound. The door opened at 11 to let in a stream of shrieking youngsters who then proceeded to regale the neighbourhood. To their credit, they'd been practicing for weeks, live and electrified. But their amalgam of Hindi and Nepali pop remixes was as hopeless as it had been to begin with. At least the comrades didn't come knocking with their hypocritical Loktantrik deusi.



Where is the charm of festive gambling when it simply represents for most of Kathmandu's idle elite an intensification of what they do the whole year long with endless rounds of Marriage? Dasain is just one big sale. Holi has long since lost its charm to marauding bands of spray-painted goons. Wedding parties are all very well but even the humble Bratabandha has now become an exercise in pompous excess. Perhaps the comrades have a point. If only they could desist from using the very culture they decry to feed their greed.

Culture is meant to represent the collective intellectual achievement of a people. With such cultural diversity as the Nepali peoples possess, one would think our collective culture would possess such beauty and wisdom as few nations could match. Then why is it that a day in the life of the Kathmandu Valley, especially one marked out for celebration, is increasingly characterised by collective cretinism? What is happening to Nepalis?

Doubtless there is some confusion as to what Nepali culture means anymore – who it is for, and what it is for in the age of Naya Nepal. Our very diversity has engendered such a situation. This is understandable. But if youthful confusion hardens into criminalised cynicism, then cultural loss won't just be limited to occasional exasperation with ritualised socialisation. It will be permanent, with living cultures coopted by ossified ideology as hollow as the idea of a Maoist 'people's culture', and our well will truly have run dry. ●

# Mustang's murals

International efforts have revived Mustang's cultural heritage



UNMASKING BEAUTY: Mustang's gods are young again



When Mustang was first opened to outsiders in 2001, visitors in the capital Lo Manthang encountered extraordinary monasteries and religious murals that alas, had been damaged by centuries of exposure and neglect. Luckily, conservation groups like the American Himalayan Foundation and NOVA immediately sprung into action, and 18 years later, astounding progress is evident.

The monasteries were built by Mustang's indigenous Loba people during the kingdom's 15<sup>th</sup>

century heyday. The murals they housed, Tibetan-style depictions of Buddhist gods and mythological creatures, had mainly ritual functions but were in such bad shape that they were no longer worshipped by the locals.

The murals had collected layers of grime and soot and had lost their original vibrancy. The monasteries had been rocked by earthquakes and let in water that caused massive damage.

Luigi Fieni leads the restoration work by the

American Himalayan Foundation, a US-based non-profit that helps preserve Himalayan cultures, and describes what he saw when he first encountered the murals in 2001. "Water infiltrations had washed away part of the pictorial cycle, and rising dampness had eroded and destroyed the lower sections of the murals. In some of the worst cases, the wall paintings were detached a couple of inches away from the wall, ready to fall off."

The Foundation trained over 100 indigenous local carpenters and artisans to restore the monasteries, and they hope they will manage their upkeep in the decades to come. Luigi's workers have been joined by other conservation groups, including NOVA, and local non-profits run by members of Mustang's former royalty.

Work has focused on the bigger gompas like Thubchen, Jampa, Ghar and Tsarang and has involved advanced restoration techniques (see box). So far, the work has gone brilliantly, but conservationists insist the results are about much more than brick and mortar.

"More important than that, the Loba community acknowledged the importance of their own cultural heritage, something they are really proud of now," says Fieni. ●



More pictures at [www.nepalitimes.com.np](http://www.nepalitimes.com.np)

Visit [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/tibet](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/tibet) and [www.pbs.org/mustang](http://www.pbs.org/mustang) for more on the restoration work in Mustang

## Remaking masterpieces

LEXI KROCK

When restoration work began in Lo Manthang's Thubchen monastery in 2001, the once-vivid colours of its wall paintings appeared dull and grimy, trapped behind 500 years of smoke, soot, and grease from butter lamps, and large pieces of these medieval masterpieces hung precariously off the walls.

But the restoration team worked wonders, returning Thubchen's surviving wall paintings to remarkably close approximations of their original magnificence.

In order to repair the paintings, head conservator Rodolfo Lujan and his team began a painstaking process. First, they carefully cleaned

the paintings to ensure that only the painting's surface dirt – and not its pigments, made of semiprecious stone – came off.

Once the paintings were clean, the team began to secure loose pieces of the murals using plaster made from mud and a powerful adhesive.

The final step in restoration involved touching up areas of the paintings where colour was missing due to extreme damage. To preserve the integrity of the original paintings, Lujan's team used washable watercolour paints in crosshatched strokes.

The ongoing restoration of the paintings in Thubchen, along with the structural renovations to the monastery's roof and beams, should help ensure that these treasures will remain intact for another 500 years.

COUNTRY ROADS:  
East, not West

PICS: DEWAN RAI

# Road to nowhere

**T**he far western districts of the trans-Karnali get all the attention for being under-developed, but the far eastern mountains of Khotang, Bhojpur, Udaypur and Sindhuli often fall into the cracks.



**UPS AND DOWNS**  
Dewan Rai

Consider this: the interiors of these districts are still roadless. Only 18 kilometres of earthen roads have been built in the last 15 years. The health statistics are almost as bad as in Jumla. Khotang is the 46<sup>th</sup> poorest of Nepal's 75 districts.

After a stomach-churning 14-hour bus ride to Gaighat you need to hike two days up the mountains to reach my home district of Khotang. The bus was filled to capacity because of the holiday season, and a couple dozen more passengers were riding on the roof. The driver seemed to have a death wish and talked non-stop while he negotiated the blind curves. It's a miracle we reached Saune in one piece.

The construction of the Sagarmatha Highway connecting Gaighat, Khotang, Solukhumbu and Okhaldhunga began in 1984 under the aegis of a short-lived

UML government. The government changed after nine months. The kangresis wanted another road alignment that catered to their vote bank from Okhaldunga, and the highway went into limbo. Even this stretch of road is only passable after the rains, and it takes three days to walk from Saune to Diktel.

Another dirt road connecting Bhojpur to Khotang was completed last year under the Rural Access Program (RAP), and

links the area to Dhankuta. But for those travelling from Kathmandu it is a 200km detour to come this way.

The Hilepani-Halesi to Diktel road has been constructed with

**Welcome to  
the far east,  
if you can  
get there**

community participation and the involvement of the DDC and VDCs along the way. It is the only motorable road in Khotang. But the idea of 'motorable' has to be taken with a pinch of salt: there is no bridge over the Dudh Kosi, and a whole section between Hilepani and Halesi was washed away by a landslide and was never rebuilt. So the Diktel-Halesi section does not connect to any other road. The jeeps that ply here were airlifted by helicopter and the diesel has to be brought in by

porters.

This is all good news for young men who haven't got the down payment for a job in the Gulf or Malaysia, or the connections to make it into the Gurkha battalions. There are plenty of portering jobs, and a porter like Dil Kumar Rai, who was carrying rice up from Saune to Diktel, said he saved up to Rs 8,000 a month.

The UML is in power once more, and it has declared that 2010 will be a 'Year of Road Construction'. We'll have to see how much budget is allocated for Khotang and whether it will ever translate into upgrading the existing tracks. Some money has been set aside for the Leguwa-Khotang road but locals say they will believe it when they see it.

The level of cynicism here is so high that the government has an uphill task regaining the trust of the people. For the moment the only way to get to Khotang is by plane and there is such high demand for tickets to Lamidanda and Bhojpur that you have to be a VIP, even if you can afford the fare. Two more STOL airstrips are under construction in Khanidanda and Thamkharka, but it is doubtful if any private airline will fly there, and the state airline just doesn't have enough planes. The far east is as far away as it ever was. ●



# Re-learning democracy

## How capitalism is greed, and work needs democracy

The Nation's Naomi Klein spoke to filmmaker Michael Moore about his latest documentary, *Capitalism: A Love Story*. Excerpts:

**Naomi Klein:** I saw you on the Jay Leno Show, and I was struck that one of his first questions to you was this objection – that it's *greed* that's evil, not capitalism. And this is something that I hear a lot – this idea that greed or corruption is somehow an aberration from the logic of capitalism.

**Michael Moore:** Well, people want to believe that it's not the economic system that's at the core of all this. You know, it's just a few bad eggs. But the fact of the matter is that, as I said to Jay [Leno], capitalism is the legalisation of this greed.

We have a number of things in our species that you would call the dark side, and greed is one of them. If you don't put certain structures in place or restrictions on those parts of our being that come from that dark place, then it gets out of control. Capitalism does the opposite of that. It not only doesn't really put any structure or restriction on it.

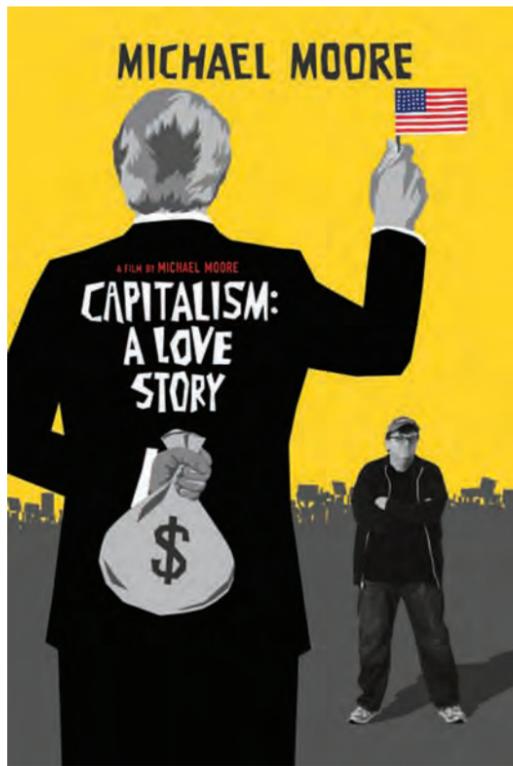
It encourages it, it rewards it.

**NK:** The thing that I found most exciting in the film is that you make a very convincing pitch for democratically run workplaces as the alternative to this kind of loot-and-leave capitalism. So I'm just wondering, as you're traveling around, are you seeing any momentum out there for this idea?

**MM:** People love this part of the film. I've been kind of surprised because I thought people aren't maybe going to understand this or it seems too hippie-dippy – but it really has resonated in the audiences that I've seen it with.

But, of course, I've pitched it as a patriotic thing to do. So if you believe in democracy, democracy can't be being able to vote every two or four years. It has to be every part of every day of your life.

We've changed relationships and institutions around quite



considerably because we've decided democracy is a better way to do it. Two hundred years ago you had to ask a woman's father for permission to marry her, and then once the marriage happened, the man was calling all the shots. And legally, women couldn't own

property and things like that.

Thanks to the women's movement of the '60s and '70s, this idea was introduced to that relationship – that both people are equal and both people should have a say. And I think we're better off as a result of introducing democracy into an institution like marriage.

But we spend eight to ten to twelve hours of our daily lives at work, where we have no say. I think when anthropologists dig us up 400 years from now – if we make it that far – they're going to say, "Look at these people back then. They thought they were free. They called themselves a democracy, but they spent ten hours of every day in a totalitarian situation and they allowed the richest 1 per cent to have more financial wealth than the bottom 95 per cent combined."

Truly they're going to laugh at

us the way we laugh at people 150 years ago who put leeches on people's bodies to cure them.

**NK:** It is one of those ideas that keeps coming up, but hasn't worked out as people wanted. It is actually what people wanted in the former Soviet Union instead of the Wild West sort of mafia capitalism that they ended up with.

You had your US premiere at the AFL-CIO convention. How are you finding labour leadership in relation to this idea? Are they open to it, or are you hearing, "Well, this isn't really workable"?

**MM:** I sat there in the theatre the other night with about 1,500 delegates of the AFL-CIO convention, and I was a little nervous as we got near that part of the film, and I was worried that it was going to get a little quiet in there.

Just the opposite. They cheered it. A couple people shouted out, "Right on!" "Absolutely!" I think that unions at this point have been so beaten down, they're open to some new thinking and some new ideas. And I was very encouraged to see that. ●

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unstoppable

As we pull out all the stops, The Himalayan Times now comes to you loaded with Specials everyday. Spanning the gamut of life, your daily is loaded with something exclusive for everyone. Easy to expect nothing less when you've accepted the unstoppable.

Specials

- **Sunday** - Shopping Plus - info, bargains, discounts, destinations
- **Monday** - Hi Tech Plus - technology and gadgets
- **Tuesday** - Health Times ; Medical Board - Nepal's best doctors respond to queries ; Wheels - everything automobile
- **Wednesday** - Campus Plus - collegiate life ; Appointments - careers and jobs
- **Thursday** - School Times - everything kids should know
- **Friday** - Green - environment matters
- **Saturday** - Property Plus - weekend two pager focusing on real estate



Nari Timi | Binod Pradhan

# Art attack

An art festival will explore the paradoxes of women's lives

Starting on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, Nepal will host 'Separating myth from reality – status of women', its first international art festival. The four-day art extravaganza in Kathmandu will bring together over 100 artists from 24 countries to six venues, including Siddhartha Art Gallery and the Nepal Arts Council, and warrants a visit from all the denizens of this city. The uninitiated and curious need not fear, for there could not be a more fertile ground for an introduction to contemporary art. For artists and art lovers, this is a true festival of the creativity and culture through which we define our humanity.



Widowed Women | Pramila Bajracharya



Mahila Shakti | Erina Tamrakar



Kites | Gyanu Gurung

Festival director Sangita Thapa expects the exhibition to firmly plant Nepal on the international art scene. She sees the festival as a means of introducing Nepal to the international art market while exposing Nepali artists and the Nepali people to the contemporary art that is being produced around the world. The festival highlights the myriad challenges women face in Nepal and abroad through the medium of the visual arts.

Modernity has brought about dramatic changes in the lives of women, nowhere more so than in Nepal. Women have to balance the pressures of modern life with their traditional roles. Although the 33% representation of women in the 2008 Constituent Assembly promises much, discrimination against women remains prevalent – cases of rape, murder, abduction and torture are still common. This paradox of women's lives – the reality and the myths of how women live – will be explored through the medium of paintings, drawings, installations and videos.

A lecture series will also run concurrently with the festival, addressing the themes of art, women and Nepal's contemporary art scene. These lectures will encourage debate and the sharing of ideas and experiences among local and international artists, and constitute an important educational component to the festival.

For Nepali art lovers, the festival is a unique opportunity to witness the breadth of Nepali art from the 1960s and 1970s onward. The works of 47 Nepali artists will be featured, from senior artists to recent graduates from Nepal's newest arts program at Kathmandu University. Art buyers should also take note of the signs of maturity manifest in the Nepali art market, for instance in the contracting of four Nepali artists by the Gaekwad Foundation and their sell out exhibition in Mumbai. The festival is a good opportunity for those interested in investing in art to identify future prospects. For the rest, it will be a sight for sore eyes. ●

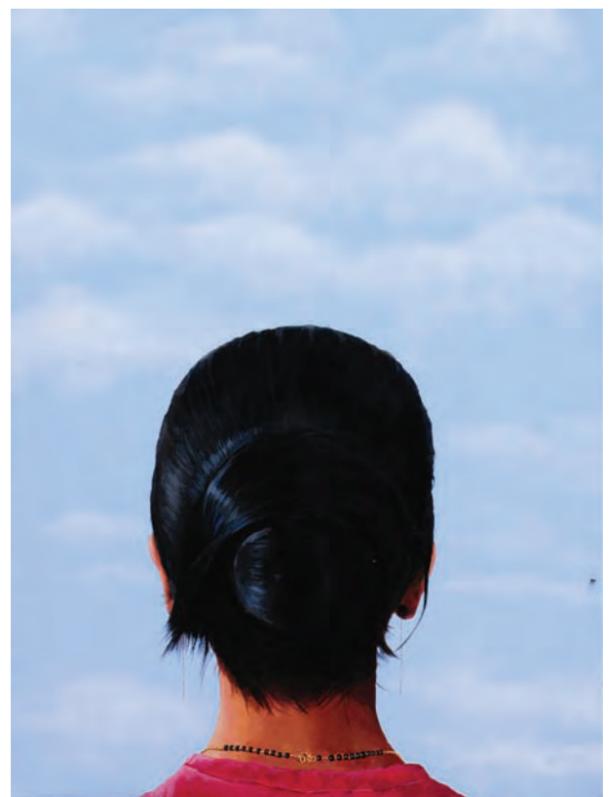
Pranab Man Singh



Widowed Women | Pradip Kumar Bajracharya



Lattice Window | Bhairaj Maharjan



The Dream | Sanjeev Maharjan

## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **'Nepal Rendezvous - Nagarkot Workshop'**, paintings by Bangladeshi and Nepali artists at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg, till 31 Oct, 4218048

## EVENTS

- ❖ **The Young Victoria**, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 24 Oct, 5.30PM, 4428549
- ❖ **Patan Press Club**, meets every Thursday at Dhokaima Café, 6PM, 5522113
- ❖ **Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Tai Chi 10-11.30AM Saturday, Yoga 8.30-9.30AM and Meditation 5-6PM weekdays, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402

## MUSIC

- ❖ **'Playing the Masters'**, western classical concert featuring Mariano E. Abello and Mayo Shimonishi at Lincoln School, 24 Oct, 4PM, www.katjazz.com.np
- ❖ **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**, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu with barbeque and live jazz by Inner Groove from 12:00 to 3:30 pm, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **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**, experience the finest cuisine from the Arabic world from till Nov 7 at The Café, 6.30PM onwards, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **Famous stews of the world**, at The Rox Restaurant, on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays, all through October, 6PM onwards, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **Wine and cheese**, every Friday & Saturday at The Lounge, 5-8PM, 4491234/4489362

❖ **A cafe's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113

❖ **Jazzbell Café**, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8PM, 2114075

❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818

❖ **Al Fresco**, for homemade pasta, steak and

freshwater trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999

❖ **Kakori**, for biryani, 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

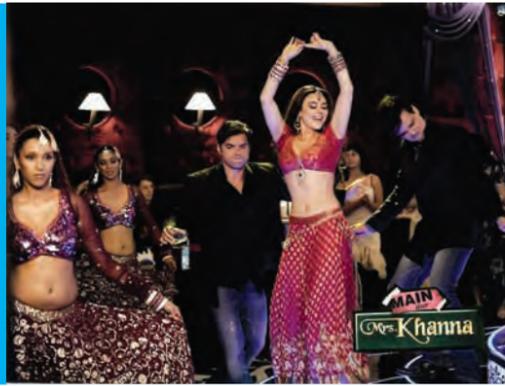
❖ **Gokarna Forest Resort** for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 4451212

## 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

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

## Quest Entertainment



Directed by debutante Prem Soni. Main Aur Mrs Khanna stars Salman Khan, Kareena Kapoor and Sohail Khan. The movie revolves around the theme of extramarital affairs. Raina (Kareena Kapoor) and Samir (Salman Khan) get married despite Samir's parents' disapproval. The couple lives a fairytale life, but after a couple of years, complications arise. Deepika Padukone makes a special appearance.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal  
www.jainepal.com

काम सानो ठूलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै रङ र जात पनि हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ, गौरव गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

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सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय  
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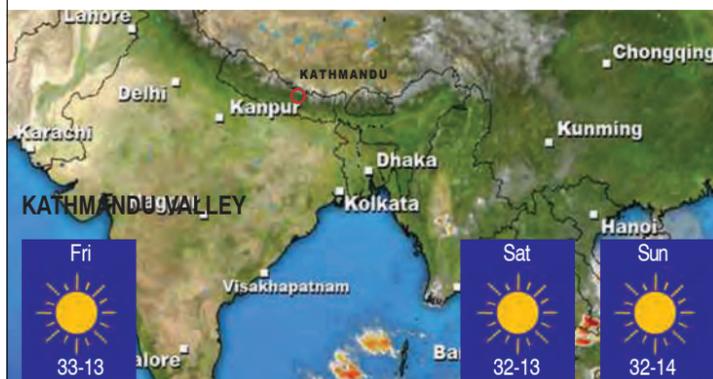
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Expect cool and breezy weather throughout the week. You'll see wisps of clouds in the sky, which will otherwise remain clear and make for nice mountain views. Valley temperatures will decrease by about two degrees compared to last week, while temperatures nationwide will decrease by an average of two degrees. Afternoons will be considerably drier than mornings, so remember to pack some chapstick.



## RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

## Warm chicken &amp; Brie salad

(Serves 4)

This salad has some strong, sharp flavours so I like to use some strong flavours in my salad ingredients. These include onion, green herbs, peppers, celery and radish. Avocado will also compliment this salad.

2-3	de-boned, skinless chicken breasts
½ cup	olive oil
3 cloves	garlic, finely chopped
1 teaspoon	fresh rosemary, chopped
1 teaspoon	chopped parsley
¼ teaspoon	red chilli powder
juice of 3 lemons	
salt & pepper to taste	
1 cup	Brie cut into 1cm cubes
some of your favourite salad ingredients	



Cut the chicken into strips of about ½ cm thick. Mix the garlic, rosemary, parsley, lemon juice, red chilli powder and olive oil together, season well with salt and pepper, and marinate the chicken for at least one hour. Arrange the salad leaves on the plate and top with the other salad ingredients. In a non-stick frying pan, sauté the chicken on high heat for 3-4 minutes before adding the rest of the marinade to the pan as this will serve as your dressing. Remove from the heat and toss in the cubes of Brie. Spoon the chicken mixture over the salad and serve immediately.

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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 473

Q. Will the Nepali Congress split over Sujata Koirala's promotion?

Total votes: 1,862

Weekly Internet Poll # 474. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Were you harassed by deusi-bhailo bands this Tihar?

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KIRAN PANDAY

**TEA PARTY DIPLOMACY:** Maoist Chaiman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, standing next to UML chairman Jhalanath Khanal, greets an artist during a Maoist-hosted tea reception to mark Tihar and Chhat on Tuesday.



INDU NEPAL

**MAX CAPACITY:** People throng Rani Pokhari, which was opened for an unprecedented second straight day on Tuesday, during Mha Puja.

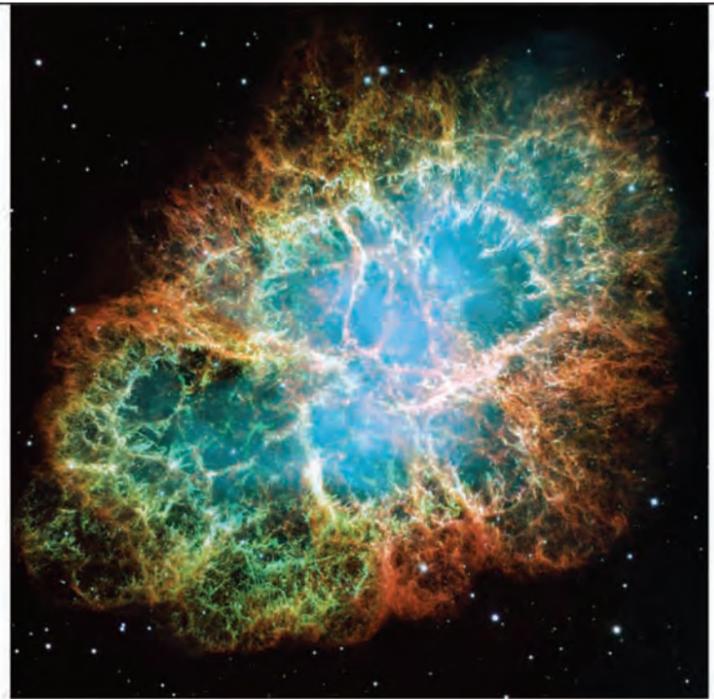


**WITH DIGNITY:** The World Economic Forum and Young Global Leader Forum joined hands with Kathmandu College of Management on Tuesday to celebrate World Dignity Day.



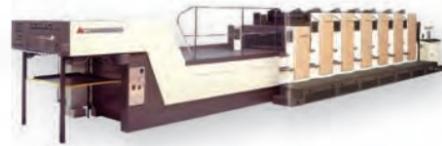
INDU NEPAL

**BAGMAN:** An overburdened salesman sells a bag to customers in Patan last week.



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# Flags of our fathers

Now that the country is polarised between those who want to keep the current solar-lunar double triangle flag and those who want to throw it out with the bathwater, the **Donkey** has come up with a compromise formula that will reflect Nepal's ethnic and political diversity. The beauty of it is we can keep adding as many triangles to it as we want every time someone comes up with his own 34-point demand.



✎

Ok, if you have something personal against triangles, then how about this one that symbolises our cutthroat national trait?

✎

The Ass has no quibbles about Ukrainian primordial minister Yulia Tymoshenko topping the list of **hottest heads of state** (<http://hottestheadsofstate.wordpress.com>) and Elvis-lookalike Jigme Jr of Bhutan making it to Numero Three. But what is puzzling is that the website doesn't make a distinction between heads of state and heads of government and has chosen to rank the First President of the Republic of Nepal at #128 below Man Mohan Singh (#85) and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda who looks like a Deux Chevaux after suffering a head-on with a 15-ton truck (at #119).

The only consolation for our young republic is that **Ram the Baron** is apparently handsomer than the Emir of Kuwait (#155) and Robert Mugabe (#168). For the record, President Nasheed of the Maldives, who has just emerged from an underwater cabinet meeting, beat President Obama by a nose to get to #14. If Awesome hadn't been so unceremoniously removed by a ceremonial prez, Nepal's prime minister would surely have made it to the Top Ten. And good thing Makunay wasn't in the fray otherwise we'd be somewhere next to Dear Leader Kim 'Bad Hair Day' Jong-Il.

✎

The reason for all the suffering we are going through today is solely because Girija just can't get around to forgiving anyone for thwarting his ambition to be the first president of Nepal. This is why he doesn't return the Baron's calls, and is consumed by revenge against all and sundry. Come to think of it, we should've just made him prez and gotten on with things. Things would be way better.

✎

This country's founding grandfather, King Prithvi, probably didn't realise he hit the nail on the head by describing Nepal's geopolitical predicament as that of a **sweet potato** squeezed between two boulders. At no time has this been as true as it is now with Asia's two giants getting ready to play kabaddi again. Poor little Nepal is once more feeling very yamlike. For a while it looked like we'd actually make something out of it, like in the Mahendra days, because no sooner had the Indian ambassador donated four karods to a monastery in Mustang, than the Chinese ambassador was off to Kakarbhitta to set up a Chinese Studies Centre. The fact that the Chinese poked a finger so close to India's Chicken Neck wasn't lost on the Delhi brass. Moral: you tickle our sensitive parts, we'll tickle yours.

✎

And that ain't all. There are Confucius Centres sprouting all over Nepal, and there are Peace Corps-type Chinese volunteers teaching Mandarin at nearly 200 schools across the country. Chinese-owned restaurants are mushrooming all over Nepal. The Ass finds nothing wrong with Nepal's learning to speak Mandarin and stuffing their faces with **Peking Duck**, but how come all these restaurant owners have blue-plated #11 cars?

✎

A mole just told the mule that the real reason Tuesday was declared a national holiday was because Com Yummy and her hangers-on at the Manka Khala blackmailed Makunay by threatening an **Upatyaka Bund** if he didn't agree to make Mha Puja a do-nothing day for all govt offices. MKN gave in 'coz Yummy had earlier threatened to go back to war for the umpteenth time if Nepal Sambat wasn't made a Rastra Sambat.

If the Maoists want a New Nepal why on earth would they want to hold a Dasain Tihar tea party like the bourgeois parties? Why can't they have a **Mao Tai** party and revolutionise these feudal events? Anyway, you must have heard that the reason Makunay didn't go to the Maoist tea party was because he was afraid the Baddies would show him black flags.

ass(at)nepalitimes.com



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