The extended political deadlock is costing the country dearly. But until there can be a power-sharing agreement that includes all three big parties, nothing is going to move.

The CA committees are way behind schedule, and the constitutional committee can’t start drafting until that work is finished. The assembly has now amended its timeline for the seventh time to meet the 27 May 2010 deadline.

PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

But most people are past caring, says Prashant Jha. Apart from the party faithful, and tiny pockets of politically mobilised segments, the apathy towards wider politics has never been as deep as it is today. Hidden in the cynicism is wisdom. Decisions are made in Nepali political culture when three Bahun men are pushed by the Indian ambassador to sit in a drawing room and arrive at a consensus.

Solheim says
Norway’s Minister of Environment and International Development, Erik Solheim, speaks to the Nepal Times about the political deadlock in Nepal. He says: “I have spoken to Prime Minister Nepal, former Prime Minister Prachanda (and other leaders). They have all given the impression that they want to continue the reconciliation process and they want to find a solution to the problem, but of course they indicate different ways out of the problem... there are no specific ideas about what it is we can do at present.”

Full interview p10
REALITY CHECK

Get on with the power deal so we can deal with the real issues

F rom Baneshwor, here is a faint glimmer of good news. A seventh committee of the CA, on fundamental rights, recently submitted its draft report in line with the mid-November deadline. Here is the bad news. The committees on state restructuring, forms of governance, and distribution of natural resources could not finish off their concept papers. By extension, the constitutional committee, which has the unenviable task of integrating these diverse papers into a comprehensible, meaningful text, can only wait. The CA has now amended its timeline for the seventh time, while sticking to the broader goal of having a draft by May 28. The time for public consultations and article-wise discussions has been curtailed.

And this is the ugly reality check. Most people just don’t care any more. Apart from the party faithful, and tiny pockets of politically mobilised segments, the apathy towards the wider politics has not been as deep in the past three years as it is now. Ask people what they think about the constitution, and the usual refrain is: “These chor netas, thieves, politicians, have hijacked everything. They will share the loot and write what they want at the end.”

Hidden in the cynicism is wisdom. Decisions are made in Nepali political culture where the Bhutanese men are forced by the Indian ambassador to sit in a drawing room and arrive at a consensus. The only other time they are galvanised into action is when a popular movement threatens their survival. When there is such a confluence of internal and external pressure, the political bunch realises there is no alternative and gets its act together.

At its root, the CA process faces three challenges. The first challenge is to reconcile conflicting views into a common document. In each committee, there are differences between parties—on land reform, the nature of state organs, federal structure and powers, national security policy, border management, the scope of affirmative action, and prior rights for local communities. It would be a bit simplistic to see this as merely a Maoist-non Maoist divide. There are five competing models at play.

The first is the regressive social conservative model. This would like to see Nepal revert back to a monarchical, HIndu, centralised state controlled by elites. The second is the business as usual liberal democratic model, which would like to replicate the key features of the 1990 constitution such as periodic elections and the free press, and make mild concessions to curb the more recent ethnic and class upsurges. The third is the ethnicity-centred model, which pushes for ethnic homelands, and sees Nepal’s problem as exclusively that of identity discrimination. The fourth is the federalist model, which believes all institutions have a ‘class character’, and thus have to be brought under the people’s, read, the party’s control. But there is a fairly broad common ground that can span parties’ lines.

This fifth model can be termed the radical social democratic model. This would take into account that Nepal is a viable and strong centre, the liberal notions of freedom, pluralism, and open society; have a deep, communalist commitment to federalism where ethicity is a factor and to a radical affirmative action programme in a planning state that can address what Devendra Raj Pandey has called ‘failed development’; and draw upon state institutions to make them truly accountable to the wider citizenry—unlike what the NC and UML were used to in the 1990s and the Maoists went in an extreme form now.

The second challenge is converting the constitutional documents into real institutions. An excellent policy brief by Martin Chautar has highlighted the “lake of vision” in the way inter-communal structures and a consequential potential for governance gap.” There is need for time frames, structures, schedules for handling over of power, and overall management of expectations. It is time to think of what happens when the statute is in fact completed.

And the third challenge is to ensure a power-sharing deal as soon as possible. The time for public consultation has been the first casualty of the subsequent delays. There are several groups out there, who are not in the CA but have emerged as important stakeholders on the ground. Getting predominantly Bahun Chhetri parties to agree, with a few token Madhesi leaders thrown in, to a moderate political settlement, it will sow the seeds of further discord.

Politicians need to reach a new power-sharing deal as soon as possible, so they can focus on the critical issues that will really determine whether a New Nepal can come into being.

Nepal Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms are accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be contacted, if necessary. Email should be restricted to two paragraphs with attachments with ‘letter to the editor’ in the subject line. Email: letters@nepaltimes.com Fax: 977-1-5521013 Mail Letters, Nepal Times, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.

MULE RULES

Sane people always have read the Ass as the true image of Nepal for that week and beyond. Sometimes, the column makes you cry because it is so full of compassion and at other times, it is hilarious to an extreme and yet carries a deep undertone. I think of you once your laughter subsides.

Aawarten Discuss Nepal, www.itimesnepal.com/peacelovers

PEACEFUL PROTESTS

The demonstrations were very peaceful so it’s dishonest to say they weren’t (‘Ultra-violence’, ‘475’). Would people have preferred the routine tyre-burning and brick-batting kind of protests? The Maoists should teach NC and UML how to hold a peaceful protest. Dev Joshi, www.facebook.com/ nepaltimes

NC HEROES

CIX Lal’s got it wrong (‘The daughter also cries’, ‘475’). He says Sujata’s rise is a concern of Kathmanduites only and even blasts NC leaders who opposed her rise. Let’s not forget that while Sujata lost the election, Ram Chandra Poudel won by a big margin, without having contested in multiple locations. Poudel deserves far more respect. Poudel deserves far more respect.

COPYCAT

Rajesh Hamal’s interview was very interesting, but I don’t think he’s right when he says Bollywood rivals Hollywood now partly because it has a history of copying Hollywood films. He suggests this justifying his time copying Bollywood. But Bollywood isn’t doing so well today because it has produced unoriginal movies in the past. It’s doing well simply because India’s so much wealthier today than it was, say, a decade ago.

Name withheld, email

LETTERS

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BEAR UNMIN WITH A GRIN

The government is pleased at the way UNMIN has deliberately looked the other way on continuing Maoist excesses, while pulling up the Defence Minister for a trial balloon she floated on recruitment. How come UNMIN is so prompt to slap the army on the wrist every time when the PLA gets away with murder, literally, in camps supervised by the UN? But we always praise the people of the UN.

It’s no fault of the UN monitors here that a political settlement to ensure the discharge of unqualified combatants has not yet been made. That should have been the first priority of the UNMIN. That was a goal that has very little to do with the UN.

Nepal’s political leadership has not yet been made. That should have been the first priority of the UNMIN. That was a goal that has very little to do with the UN. The demobilisation of Maoist combatants cannot begin as long as there is no consensus between political parties about the structure of the process. Good intentions are not enough.

By now, it should be clear that the business of constitution writing will continue to be problematic as long as the Maoists are not taken on board again as full partners of the peace process. That is a goal that has very little to do with the UN.

The best and fastest way to get rid of UNMIN is making its presence unnecessary. For that, Nepal’s political leadership has to get its act together.

PLAIN SPEAKING

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Ask people what they think of the broad goal of having a comprehensible, meaningful text, can only wait. The CA has now amended its timeline for the seventh time, while sticking to the broader goal of having a draft by May 28. The time for public consultations and article-wise discussions has been curtailed.

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Politicians need to reach a new power-sharing deal as soon as possible, so they can focus on the critical issues that will really determine whether a New Nepal can come into being.
During the Constituent Assembly elections last year, the world came to learn of the political loyalties of Nepal’s leading business personalities. The Beer Baron turned out to be a Marxist-Leninist. The Noodle Tycoon admitted to have been a closet Stalinist. The owner of a premier trading house joined the Maoists to safeguard his market position. The super-rich, in believing that they can use whoever is in government to their advantage, continue to be supremely confident of their political abilities.

Perhaps that’s the reason the overclass has not taken the challenge of the Maoists too seriously. Unlike the panicky NGO-entrepreneurs, the bankers and builders appear to believe that Baburam Bhattarai is no different from Mahesh Acharya or Bharat Mohan Adhikari. This complacence of the rich is confusing the middle class no end. The class base of Nepal’s political parties has never been very clear. However, a rough generalisation was still possible until the mid-nineties. Following the first Jana Andolan, the upper class retained its loyalty to Panchayat-era politicos. Independent professionals and the self-employed gravitated towards the Nepali Congress. The NCP (UML) emerged as the bastion of the petty bourgeoisie. In European terms, these three groupings formed the conservatives, the social democrats and the Hindu democrats of the Nepali polity. Since there was no political force that represented the peasants or the working class, they simply traded their loyalties whenever and wherever they could.

Enter a group of wily political entrepreneurs, who mobilised the unorganised and carefully presented themselves as a credible challenger to all existing forces. For the royalists, this new formation was republican. For the NC’s free market fundamentalists, they were reinvented communists. And for the hubristic Brahminists of the UML, these new politicos who organised the outcastes, untouchables and the marginalised were a challenge that undermined their standing at the very core. The Maoist brand name helped—nothing galvanises the underclass as strongly as the idea of getting back violently at their real or perceived oppressors. But it was such an incendiary mix of ideas that the resulting wildfire soon careered out of control. The middle class watched in fascination until the heat of the insurgency became unbearable.

It was the very composition of the Maoist party base that most frightened the insecure middle class. Maoist enforcers were neither peasants nor workers but belonged to a group that Marx called the lumpenproletariat—those renegades of society who often turned out to be “bribed tools of reactionary intrigue.” The Maoist people’s carnival last week was a mammoth public relations exercise to reassure the Kathmandu bourgeoisie that there was no need to fear a party whose chairman was willing to boogie in public with a Nepali actress. Unfortunately for the Maoists, the charade turned out to be completely counterproductive.

Over half of Kathmandu Valley’s three million residents are well off by Nepali standards. In emerging societies, prosperity doesn’t come cheap; in fact it often extracts a very heavy emotional, moral and physical price. The protestors that the Maoists paraded around Singha Darbar last week gave the queasy bourgeoisie a glimpse of their own past. No wonder the motorcyclists looked so terrified. The sight of tens of thousands of upstarts singing and dancing, ostentatiously to grab their hard-earned comforts, must have been pretty unnerving.

The upper class of yesteryear had at least a vague notion of noblesse oblige and rid itself of its guilty conscience through favours, acts of kindness towards those who could come in handy in times of trouble. For the overclass, everything has a price and everybody is for sale, including the Maoists. Meanwhile, the underclass has little to lose and looks up to the Maoists with expectant eyes. So what if Comrade Chairman lives in a fortress? Even in a Dalit village of straw huts, local deities have to be housed inside a brick house.

But for the aspiring class that has earned its present level of prosperity by treating greed as god, the Maoists have little to offer except assurances. The future of the UCPN (Maoist) ultimately depends on how it can win over the terrified middle strata of Nepali society.
Safeguarding children in New Nepal

T
oday marks four decades of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Nepal, and twenty years since its return to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child when it entered into force. These are anniversaries worth celebrating. When UNICEF opened its country office in Kathmandu in 1969, the situation of Nepal’s children was among the worst in the world.

**Guest Column**

Kul Chandra Gautam

In 1970 Nepal had the 12th worst child mortality rate in the world. By last year, we had moved ahead of 50 other countries, to rank 52nd. During this period the under-five mortality rate went down by nearly 80 per cent, from 250 to 51 per 1000. Four decades ago, 400,000 children were born each year, but 100,000 of them died before reaching their fifth birthday. Last year, 7,32,000 children were born, but less than 40,000 died. Forty years ago, barely a quarter of school-age children went to primary education. Today, 90 per cent of children enrolled in primary school, including a majority of girls.

That certainly is progress. It is all the more remarkable that Nepal made great strides in reducing the number of child deaths even in the middle of the violent conflict of the last decade. In our lifetime, we have seen dreaded diseases like smallpox and polio eradicated, deaths due to measles drastically reduced, guiter disappear, and immunisation services for children becoming virtually universal.

The children in Nepal today are healthier, more educated, and more knowledgeable about the world than in any previous generation. Both 1990’s first Jana Andolan, which ushered in democracy, and the coming into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), gave great impetus to the cause of children. Whereas earlier programs for children were designed to be needs-based, sometimes even as a charitable response to the plight of children, a rights-based approach came into vogue following the advent of democracy and application of the CRC.

While UNICEF continued to help tackle some of the age-old problems of illness, illiteracy and malnutrition in Nepal with some success, three new problems surfaced in the past two decades: HIV/AIDS, trafficking and abuse of children on a massive scale, and a terrible civil war that led to new forms of violence and exploitation of children. But through its innovative, dynamic approaches to complement its traditional programs in health and education, water, sanitation, UNICEF has been able to address these challenges.

As we look ahead, I see a bright future for the children of this country, provided we Nepalis are able to overcome our self-destructive orgy of hyper-politicisation and violence and adhere to the overarching principles of the CRC. These principles are non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, the right to survival and development, and respect for the views of the child.

We must therefore ensure that in education, for instance, we are not satisfied by high average enrollments but go for universal and equitable improvement. As special measures for children who are likely to be disadvantaged, such as Dalits, those from certain indigenous communities and girls.

We may have reduced child mortality, but deaths is only the tip of the iceberg. We must invest heavily in maternal, newborn and child health especially to combat our unacceptably high levels of child malnutrition, and to promote early child development. After all, whether a child will grow up to live up to his or her full human potential is largely determined in the first few years of a child’s life, before the child enters school.

Young people are amazingly resourceful and we have seen time and again that child participation works. Participation is a passport to belonging, so let us give our young people their place in shaping the future of a more democratic, peaceful and prosperous Nepal.

Finally, in everything we do, if we are not sure what the right way forward is, we should always ask the question: is it in the best interest of our children? •

Kul Chandra Gautam is a former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

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**Too big to fail**

We are perilously close to an economic crisis

INCU NEPAL

T
he Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police were not paid their salaries last month. Neither were they able to withdraw money for their rations. The five biggest hospitals declared they had run out of funds in October. Several districts failed to pay their schoolteachers last month. If the budget remains pending, no one will pay them next month either. Nor will the government be able to provide allowances to Maoist combatants stationed at various UNMIN camps. Prison authorities have run out of funds to buy food for inmates.

At the time of writing, the Rs 296 billion budget from the Ministry of Physical Planning and from the Ministry of Finance has not been passed. The government is the largest single spender in the country, and the budget constitutes almost 28 per cent of the economy. A pending budget basically means that the economy is running on an empty tank.

The inability of the government to spend is having serious economic impacts. The remote areas are dependent on the government for all of their economic activities. During the harvest season, the government usually delivers essential crops to remote areas for the winter months. None of this has happened so far. Exacerbating the problem is the dramatic decline in agricultural production this year because of a 60 per cent decrease in monsoon rain.

The government was entitled to spend one-third of the budget in advance. Four months later, most of the ministries have already used up this allowance. Government institutions are now relying almost entirely on loans from each other. The office of the prime minister, for example, had to borrow money from the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works to pay its staff. “We have been told that prison authorities had to borrow from the National Food Corporation to feed inmates,” said Finance Minister Surendra Raj Pandey. Bishambar Pyakurel, Professor of Economics at Tribhuvan University, is categorical. “If the budget fails to pass, we will have a crisis, much more severe than the Maoist war.”

Even if the budget is passed quickly, our troubles are not over. The budget was structured on the basis that the country would enjoy a growth rate of seven per cent in the following year. It was an ambitious assumption considering it was five per cent when the Maoists were leading the government.

Even aiming to maintain this rate is not realistic, points out Pyakurel: “With the political stalemate of the last six months, Nepal will be lucky if it has a growth rate of 2.5 per cent.”

The budget could be passed by ordinance, effectively bypassing parliament. But this is only a stop-gap measure. The ordinance would need to be ratified in parliament within six months, postponing the political crisis for another day. “Passing a budget through an ordinance basically means waging war with the Maoists,” says Pyakurel.

In the past few days, the government has scrambled to find a way to pass the budget. On Tuesday, Finance Minister Pandey said, “We have no alternative but to pass the budget. We are in discussions with the opposition party about it.”

But the opposition party is framing this as the government’s problem. Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai accused the government of using the issue of the budget to divert attention from their demands for civilian supremacy. “We have never said we will stop the budget, we have never said they should be more responsible and addressed our demands on time.” •
Bank approved 10 per cent Bonus Shares, the Koteshor and Budhanilkantha. The AGM of the Kumari Bank opened its 20th and 21st branch in Nepal.

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November to help set up a Credit Rating Agency signed a MoU on 16 Memorandum.Individuals were treated.

association with the Lions Club of Kathmandu-School in Malpi VDC. The camp was held in check-up camp at Bhaleshwore Secondary School in Morang Auto Works, sole authorised dealer of Yamaha motorcycles for Nepal announced the ‘Yamaha Care Camp’ for 150cc Segment Yamaha Motorcycles from 17 to 20 November.

Warming earth The Mountain Institute in association with Hokkaido University (Japan), ICIMOD Nepal, and the American Alpine Club carried out their first field expedition in the remote Hongu valley of Makalu-Barun National Park between 15 October and 15 November, 2009 to assess the condition ‘potentially dangerous’ glacial lakes.

Automobilesaviour BG, an American-based line of system service products, has finally arrived in Nepal. Sole distributor BG Nepal guarantees your vehicles will be pollution free, eco-friendly and efficient.

Flying high Yeti Airlines unveiled Chigadhi as a new destination on 16 November, and has also started supplementary flights to Janakpur and Bhadrapur.

Gurgaon: Just as I was wondering, while cruising down a world-class expressway connecting Gurgaon and Delhi, what was behind India’s booming prosperity. I hit a kilometre-long queue at a toll plaza. So much for the time saved on the expressway.

The point is, the benefits of the best roads and technology count for nothing if you can’t change people’s attitudes. So, lesson No. 1, hardware and technology upgrades have to be backed by changes in mindset, which are always the hardest to achieve.

The skyscrapers may have given Gurgaon a look that puts some of the west coast developments in the US to shame, but the streets are dotted with shacks, cattle and garbage. Every cop wants to pull you over to make a quick buck. To be sure, cops, car mechanics and politicians may be the same all over the world, but how can a city claim to drive the Indian economy when its residents remain the same as their brethren in Jogbani or Raxaul?

If the government makes lots of money collecting taxes from multinationals and other companies operating in the cities, it has a duty to provide better citizen services too. Lesson No. 2, the government must invest the taxes it collects in a particular area or service back in the same area or service. For instance, at our own airport, while airport tax collected from a mere 25 passengers could pay for better roads in the valley, we still rely on other organisations to give them to us.

Gurgaon’s world-class housing and golf courses arrived in advance of public infrastructure. fancy bathroom fittings preceded a reliable water supply and expensive, sensor-aided, hygienic WCs were given priority over sewer lines. In the absence of public transportation, the choice is between driving a BMW to the mall, and a subsequent 20-minute wait for a parking slot, or riding a man-pulled rickshaw. Lesson No. 3 for Nepal, we should build efficient service infrastructure before satellite cities.

Perhaps there should be a system of collecting high infrastructure development fees from builders to be put into a fund managed according to public-private partnership models. This could ensure basic service delivery.

During every visit to India’s National Capital Region, this Beed is struck by the realisation that distance kills. While it takes minutes to confirm a meeting on one’s Blackberry and respond to emails, it takes hours to get to the meeting that has been so easily set up. The Beed keeps wondering how this hurts productivity. When most services are outsourced, it becomes more important that the outsourced service is delivered on time. When computer networks go down or when physical delivery of items is impeded by traffic, what is the effect on productivity?

A well-managed city, therefore, has enormous advantages. Would it be befitter to have a city where distances are manageable or one where distances are managed well? Lesson No. 4, does Nepal have the opportunity to leverage this and use it to attract businesses?

www.artabeed.com

Lessons from India

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Gurgaon’s flashiness masks its infrastructural weakness

Xchange
Nokia has started a charger exchange program under which certain Nokia-branded chargers manufactured by a third-party supplier can be exchanged for free replacements. Call 4241923 for more information.

Helping hand
International Money Express held a free health check-up camp at Bhaleshwore Secondary School in Malpi VDC. The camp was held in

Sky rocketing
Kumari Bank opened its 20th and 21st branch in Nepal.

Memorandum
Himalayan Infrastructure Fund and the Indian Credit Rating Agency signed a MoU on 16 November to help set up a Credit Rating Agency in Nepal.

Car care
Moring Auto Works, sole authorized dealer of Yamaha motorcycles for Nepal, announced the ‘Yamaha Care Camp’ for 150cc Segment Yamaha Motorcycles from 17 to 20 November.

Care camp

Promoter Shares to Public Shares. The redemption of existing 70 per cent Promoter Shares to 51 per cent and the remaining 19 per cent Promoter Shares to Public Shares.

Lessons

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Extortion
Santa Gaha Magar in Himal Khabarpatra, 1-15 November

Side by side with the Maoist street protests, there has been an increase in the number of beatings, robberies, extortion cases and other acts of violence by the Maoists nationwide. In fact, all this is reminiscent of the war years. One example of this is the extortion of trekkers and security agencies in recent weeks. Last month, a group of trekkers who had just returned from the Manaslu and Annapurna circuits held a press conference to complain that they were all stopped and asked to pay Rs 2,000 each (see pic). A trekker with Maoist receipts, TAAN chief Rajendra Baijai says the Maoists have forcibly solicited ‘donations’ from many of the 15,000 trekkers who visited the Manaslu area this season.

He says: “This has not just spread terror along the trekking trails, but it has also put a damper on the trekking industry.” The Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Security Workers Union has been collecting a compulsory levy from all security guards. Union boss Ghanashyam Thakuri admits that his group collects Rs 425,000 a month from the estimated 17,000 security guards in the country.

Almost all community schools in Ilam are short of students since they transferred to private schools in the region. “It’s pointless coming to the school, there are hardly any students,” complains Taminath Khatiwada, principal of Saraswati Prathamik School. Just two years ago the school had more than 80 students per class, but there are now only eight students in the entire school, of whom five belong to the same family. Four private schools opened simultaneously in the region, following which the ‘wealthy’ locals of Ilam decided to spend more on their children’s education. Some parents still enrol their children in community schools in order to receive compensation from the government but send them to private schools for their actual tuition.

Says local Bhednath Khatiwada, “Unlike community schools, private ones include an English curriculum.” This is attractive to students and their parents. “Had community schools incorporated English, the students might not have moved to private schools,” he adds.

Meanwhile, the irregularity and deteriorating quality of education in community schools is worrying those who cannot afford to send their children to private schools.

Marooned

85 families have been displaced for the last four odd days, largely because government help hasn’t been forthcoming, reports the Godadaka VDC.

Many of the displaced woke up every day at dawn to go to Siligudi Municipality to look for help. Some even carry their infant children with them.

Tularam Luhar says, “Because it’s so cold, many children are sick and have been tossing and turning all night.”

Taradevi Luhar adds, “We’re about to die of cold and hunger.”

But their pleas have gone largely unheard. “People from the municipality gave us Rs 2,000-4,000 and told us to forget our problems,” says S she Bahadur Luhar.

Doti district has so far received five million from the government, but the Dalit families have only received Rs 2,000-4,000 and 25 kilos of rice, which they claim is insufficient.

Begum live

time was up, the minister shouted at them: “If you call me, you have to let me speak, you can’t say your time is running out.” Rupesh and Simrika were lucky she didn’t slap them on camera. She was asked whether she would surrender or go into hiding, with a warrant out for her arrest. She replied that she wouldn’t do either. But she didn’t deny that she slapped the CDO, explaining that it was the CDO who first quarrelled with her. But she can’t say your time is running out.” Rupesh and Simrika were lucky she didn’t slap them on camera. She was asked whether she would surrender or go into hiding, with a warrant out for her arrest. She replied that she wouldn’t do either. But she didn’t deny that she slapped the CDO, explaining that it was the CDO who first quarrelled with her. But she can’t say your time is running out.” Rupesh and Simrika were lucky she didn’t slap them on camera. She was asked whether she would surrender or go into hiding, with a warrant out for her arrest. She replied that she wouldn’t do either. But she didn’t deny that she slapped the CDO, explaining that it was the CDO who first quarrelled with her. But she can’t say your time is running out.” Rupesh and Simrika were lucky she didn’t slap them on camera. She was asked whether she would surrender or go into hiding, with a warrant out for her arrest. She replied that she wouldn’t do either. But she didn’t deny that she slapped the CDO, explaining that it was the CDO who first quarrelled with her. But she can’t say your time is running out.” Rupesh and Simrika were lucky she didn’t slap them on camera. She was asked whether she would surrender or go into hiding, with a warrant out for her arrest. She replied that she wouldn’t do either. But she didn’t deny that she slapped the CDO, explaining that it was the CDO who first quarrelled with her.
Himal Khabarpatra: How do you view the constitution-writing process? Do you think the deadline will be met?

Kagendra Thapa (teacher): I never thought the deadline would be met. People are trying to split up the country, and we face mountains of challenges. The biggest issue is that of federalism. I seriously doubt the constitution will be written on time.

Pitamber Dhakal (Vice-Principal, Bheri-Karnali Campus): The Rana regime ended in 1951, but as we had not decided what kind of democracy we wanted, it was not sustainable. We are facing the same situation now: the parties do not know what kind of constitution they want.

Uddhav Pyakurel (researcher): Our politicians are accustomed to coming to last-minute agreements, so they will agree on a constitution. But without addressing the contentious issues, it will be difficult to come up with the type of constitution the people expect.

Hariharnath Yogi (teacher): Hopes of a constitution and a sustainable peace are fading. Maybe the constitution will get written in another two or three years.

Prem Bahadur Thapa (Chairman, Nepal Workers Peasants Party, Surket): We’ll get a constitution within the period specified but the issue is what kind of constitution. Better to have a good constitution rather than one that might leave us without a country.

Should we insist on having the constitution ready by May or extend the term of the Constituent Assembly? Kagendra Thapa: The biggest problem lies within the Maoists, and this has resulted in the call for ‘civilian supremacy’. If the constitution is not written it will be because of the Maoist protests.

Rishi Gautam (Bheri-Karnali State Committee Secretariat Member, UCPN-Maoist): The decision to go for federalism was an emotional one made in the aftermath of the Madhesis movement. Before that there was only some talk of state restructuring, there were no demands for federalism. If the mountain, hill and Tarai regions are separated the Nepali people will be dealt a terrible blow. Federalism must incorporate regions from the north to the south.

Uddhav Pyakurel: Federalism was meant for inclusion. But if this is done on the basis of ethnicity, it will lead to more divisions.

Arjun Bahadur Airi (Assistant Principal, Birendranagar Multiple Campus): If we can’t meet the deadline, then we could amend the interim constitution or add time to come up with a good constitution.

What kind of federalism do the residents of Surket want?

Pitamber Dhakal: The decision to go for federalism was an emotional one made in the aftermath of the Madhesis movement. Before that there was only some talk of state restructuring, there were no demands for federalism. If the mountain, hill and Tarai regions are separated the Nepali people will be dealt a terrible blow. Federalism must incorporate regions from the north to the south.

Uddhav Pyakurel: Federalism was meant for inclusion. But if this is done on the basis of ethnicity, it will lead to more divisions.

Arjun Bahadur Airi: There are no calls for ethnic federalism here. Even though the Tharus in the south and the janajatis in the north are demanding rights this is to achieve inclusion. Federalism shouldn’t be based on ethnicity, and neither should provinces be named after ethnicities as this will give rise to the feeling that some groups won and others lost.

Pabitra Shahi (social worker): Federalism is for the distribution of power, for development and social progress. It’s to safeguard national sovereignty, not to split the state into pieces. Everyone should be able to feel that federalism was for their sake.

Kagendra Thapa: We have to ensure that provinces won’t go broke and consider the risks of division of federalism. If we really were to talk about ethnic inclusion, then we’d have to talk about federalism, who constitute 15 and 12 per cent of the population respectively.

Sanjib Singh Biswokarma (Dalit rights worker): The disadvantaged communities do not want pity or alms, they want participation on the basis of population.

Prem Bahadur Thapa: Federalism has to go south to the south. If this is done then language rights can be given to local states. The provincial capital should be on the basis of its regional headquarters. Kang also could be made a capital.

Shobha BK (social worker): If One Madhes One Pradesh comes into being then all the capital will accumulate in the Tani at the expense of other regions. If the midwest becomes one province then what will be the basis by which it will sustain itself? If we go into federalism without doing our homework it will lead to more problems.
Electric dreams

Bolivia takes measure of its treasure of lithium

SCALING UP: Salt miners have long worked on the salt fields of Uyuni for a pittance, but the advent of industrial scale lithium mining could ring in the changes for the economy of Bolivia, the poorest country in South America.

ROCK POOL: Miners extract the floating lithium from salty evaporation ponds filled with water from the underground lake beneath the fields, a process that takes about two months.
Lithium is used to make lightweight, high-powered batteries for mobile phones, laptops and increasingly, hybrid and electric cars. Demand is expected to triple in the next 15 years. With an estimated 50 to 70 per cent of the world’s lithium supply buried in the salt flats of Uyuni, Bolivia is poised to capitalise on its newly-found status as the ‘Saudi Arabia of lithium’.

Foreign governments and multinationals such as Mitsubishi and LG have expressed interest in investing in lithium mining in Bolivia. Its socialist government, however, means to tread lightly on the Salar de Uyuni to avoid foreign profiteering that ignores the indigenous communities that make up the majority of Bolivia’s population. Bolivia has invested $6 million in a plant in Uyuni to go operational by the end of this year, and has so far only accepted technical advice from abroad.
Animal fights

T

here I was, in deep discussion with a member of the Animal Welfare Network Nepal, getting the low-down on the impending sacrifice of half a million animals at the Gadhimai Mela in the southern district of Baza. “It sounds like madness,” I nodded as I listened to her decried what seemed a veritable orgy of alcohol-fuelled slaughter condoned by mass superstition to the ends of organised crime syndicates. Then a friend who’d been listening in blurted out: “Didn’t you just take part in one of those things?”

It was true. Only months back, I’d visited my ancestral village northwestern of Dhanakuta under the pretext of attending a kulevada puja and that the sixty thousand goats were a gift to our goddess (Coward, ‘The land of my fathers’). Or was it the other way around?

But ideally, it should at its core consist of a conviction that if we use animals for labour, food, entertainment or companionship, our treatment of them should be humane, in as much as killing can be humane.

Many campaigners for animal rights, too, understand that coexisting vegetarianism upon the essentially omnivorous human species is unlikely to work. They are therefore willing to accept that most people (for the foreseeable future) will continue to eat meat, as long as the process by which they obtain their meat is kosher, so to speak. Life is full of half-measures after all, else we would be either gods or demons, not humans.

But then there are those who would have you believe, barbarity.

What this means in practice is not always so clear. While I’ve always found it a little disturbing to see roadides goats tethered next to the remains of their erstwhile companions, I am not convinced slaughterhouses are any better in any sense other than that of scaled-up efficiency and hygiene. These are good enough reasons to keep animal slaughter out of the public space, surely, but in a country where animal sacrifice is so deeply embedded in religious culture, one can’t just decree it out of existence.

How then does one who accepts animal sacrifice as virtually inextricable from the process of obtaining meat for food face up to slaughter on the almost unimaginable scale of the Gadhimai Mela? The Animal Welfare Network Nepal and the 1990-strong membership of the various Mea committees are diametrically opposed on the issue of animal sacrifice, and may inevitably end up denouncing one another. Those in between may root for those half-measures – quarantine checks and vaccinations for livestock, adequate arrangements for the anticipated 10 million pilgrims, transparency in Mela finances, among other things – but what of the actual fact of the mass slaughter?

It is the fact of the slaughter, more than anything else, that attracts or repulses. The imagery employed by those speaking about the mass slaughter (western) notions of sanitised, civilised progress. The focus is on this hypocrisy; on how barbarian one is towards ‘those others’ – but what of the actual fact of the mass slaughter?

Norway’s Minister of Environment and International Development, Erik Solheim, spoke to the Nepali Times on Wednesday in Oslo about the political deadlock in Nepal, Norwegian development aid and the negotiations leading up to the international climate conference in Copenhagen next month.

I have spoken to Prime Minister Nepal, former Prime Minister Prachanda and UML leader Babarathi Khadka, and Mr Koitala has also agreed to speak to me but there are some practical difficulties. They have all given the impression that they want to continue the reconciliation process and they want to find a solution to the problem, but of course they indicate different ways out of the problem. They have all asked Norway and the international community to do what they can to help. We of course stand ready to do that, but there are no specific ideas about what it is we can do at present.

What future do you see for UNMIN?

I think UNMIN played a very crucial role over a long period of time. This kind of international presence is always very helpful, in this instance with the demobilisation of the Maoist fighters. The usefulness and future of UNMIN is up to the Nepalis to decide for themselves.

Are you satisfied with the track record of Norwegian aid in Nepal?

Basically our engagement on development issues is unconnected with the government of the day, we cooperated closely with the Maoist-dominated government at a time when Prachanda was prime minister, and of course now with the Madhav-Nepal government. As long as they are in power through a democratic process, whoever is in government can reckon with Norway as a development partner. A key area where we want to increase our involvement is in the hydro sector. Norfund has lined up with India’s Tata group in a partnership to boost investment in hydro-power. We also stand ready to find ways to support the peace process, through small amounts of money, or Norway can offer its embassies. But in principle it should be a Norwegian-driven process.

You’ve just returned from Copenhagen. The negotiations seem to be stuck.

I am fairly optimistic we will get a political agreement in Copenhagen that will be followed by a legally binding agreement later in 2010. All the main players the US, China, India, the EU, all want an agreement. But a lot more needs to be done. Nepal is very vulnerable to climate change as your big rivers and glaciers will be affected by melting snows, and this can be an area of future cooperation between Nepal and Norway. I have agreed to meet with Prime Minister Nepal in Copenhagen next month. Your environment minister has also indicated an interest in coming to Oslo, and he is in a good position to participate.

Your program to help forestry worldwide through the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) mechanism doesn’t yet recognise and reward the contribution of Nepal’s successful community forestry program. Any plans?

I am absolutely ready to talk about that. The main focus of the REDD program has been the protection, conservation and sustainable use of rainforests because those are the most important from the viewpoint of biodiversity and climate change, but we can expand it to ‘REDD Plus’ to include other aspects like agricultural forestry. We are absolutely interested in discussing this.

KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Nepali Times: I understand you have been speaking to Nepali leaders on the phone from here. What is your assessment of the situation in Nepal from these conversations?

Erik Solheim: I have spoken to Prime Minister Nepal, former Prime Minister Prachanda and UML leader Babarathi Khadka, and Mr Koitala has also agreed to speak to me but there are some practical difficulties. They have all given the impression that they want to continue the reconciliation process and they want to find a solution to the problem, but of course they indicate different ways out of the problem. They have all asked Norway and the international community to do what they can to help. We of course stand ready to do that, but there are no specific ideas about what it is we can do at present.

So until we resolve the conundrum of animal sacrifice at the heart of Nepali Hinduism, we can work on making God’s work a little less barbaric. If the Meat Act and the Animal Transportation Act are implemented, and if a much-needed Animal Welfare Act ever sees the light of day, then we will not only be performing a service to public health and safety, but will also do much to ease the suffering of those animals whose deaths we consider necessary to our lives.

“Nepal needs to come back to the spirit of finding a homegrown solution”
A lifetime devoted to developing Nepal’s indigenous capacity to harness water resources, what does Odd Hoftun have to say about the power cuts in Kathmandu? The sprightly 82-year-old Norwegian is surprisingly upbeat. “Look, so much political change has taken place in Nepal since 1990, it takes time to digest it all and move ahead,” he said this week in Oslo during the launch of his biography Kraftverket (The Hydropowerplant). “You just need a new generation of technocrat politicians to take charge and move forward.”

The book was launched on the 25th anniversary of the Norway-Nepal Association in Oslo last week, following three years of research by author Peter Svalheim. Hoftun went to Nepal as a missionary in 1958 and helped build the Tansen Hospital, which half a century later still stands as a model community medicine centre. Hoftun soon realised that to tap Nepal’s enormous hydropower potential and use it to drive development, indigenous capacity had to be built. He started work at the Butwal Technical Institute and later the Butwal Power Company (BPC), which worked on successively larger hydroelectric projects like Tinau, Andhi Khola and Jhimruk.

Today, BPC is part of a larger consortium of joint Nepali-Norwegian energy companies that built the Khimti project and is now working on the Tama Kosi 3 power export project in collaboration with India’s Tata Group. The step-by-step growth of engineering capacity is just what Hoftun had envisioned 50 years ago: to make Nepal self-reliant, to spread the risk, and take on ever larger projects as the technical capacity of Nepali engineers improved.

The book, which will soon be translated into English and Nepali, also follows Hoftun’s life in Nepal through the tragic loss of his anthropologist son Martin in a plane crash in Kathmandu in 1992, to the setting up of the research centre, Martin Chautari, in his name. The centre holds regular discussions on the social sciences, media, education and policy issues.

Hoftun was a keen observer of Nepali society, and says that it was evident even when he first arrived that conflict was inevitable. “Nepal was an innocent society in those days, but the injustice, the discrimination of the caste system were glaring. It was the neglect of these issues that ultimately led to the upheavals of the 1990s,” he recalls.

A modest and self-effacing man with a frugal lifestyle, Hoftun has shunned interviews and avoids the media. But, he says, he wanted to publish the book so there would be a record not just of his life but also of his ‘small is beautiful’ philosophy towards technology. He calls this the ‘bottom-up approach’ of empowering rural areas. But Hoftun is careful to stress that not all big is bad, and that a country and society have to be ready for big projects and make sure the benefits are distributed equitably while they support national development. You can have a network of small hydro plants but, he says, for national-level planning and economies of scale there have to be big reservoir projects too.

Hoftun remains supportive even of the much-delayed Melamchi project because, he says, it is a project whose time has come. He agrees with Nepali activists who want the current design to be expanded to include hydropower and irrigation components that will make it a multi-purpose regional scheme, and not just a water supply system for Kathmandu.

He also thinks power exports to India are now a necessity because of Nepal’s trade deficit with that country. “We now need export projects,” he explains, “but we have to build our own industrial base at the same time.” Hoftun’s use of the words ‘we’ and ‘our’ are a giveaway as to his loyalties. That feeling was reciprocated at the book launch at the Nepal-Norway Association function, where he received a standing ovation.

Says the Association’s Marit Bakke: “We wanted to honour Hoftun’s life and work because it is an inspiration for the next generation of Nepalis and Norwegians.”
Cycling for life

SUBEKSHA POUDEL

It’s not everyday one cycles from London to Paris. But that’s exactly what Alison Marston and other keen cyclists from 60 different charities did to raise funds over three and a half days. They managed an astonishing £160,000 in total. Alison herself raised £2000 (Rs 224,859) from friends and relatives supporting her sponsored bike ride. The donations went to Burns Violence Survivor Nepal (BVSN) and will be used for the care of burn patients in Bir Hospital and other government hospitals.

One woman’s bike ride will be a balm for many at Bir’s Burns Unit

“It got extremely tiresome at times,” Alison confesses. “I thought only Nepal had hills, apparently England does too.” But the spirit of her friends back in Bir Hospital kept her going.

Alison has been working for the Burns Unit in Bir Hospital since 2001. Patients from all over the country throng the unit for its exceptionally inexpensive treatment. “It’s generally marginalised people, mostly women, who come,” Alison explains, adding that there are many cases of attempted suicide or domestic violence. Had it not been for the services Bir Hospital provides, the dressing, nursing and medication required to treat burns would have been prohibitively expensive for these patients. Also, the hospital provides the patients with protein-rich meals free of cost. The people who come here are usually so poor the entire family shares the free meal.

Unfortunately, the country’s premier government hospital has been without a much-needed plastic surgeon for four years. This means burn victims, without the surgery needed to treat deeper wounds, not only heal more slowly but may also end up becoming disabled or disfigured.

With Alison’s help, Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI) is willing to train surgeons for the Burns Unit in Bir hospital. ASTI is a UK-based charity that recruits teams of volunteer doctors to provide medical, surgical, and other forms of professional assistance to doctors in developing countries.

If you would like to help improve the condition of burn patients in Bir Hospital, please contact alimarston@alimarston.com, as the hospital “desperately needs help.”

One woman’s bike ride will be a balm for many at Bir’s Burns Unit

As we pull out all the stops, The Himalayan Times now comes to you loaded with Specials everyday. Spawning the gamut of life, your daily indulgence 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
Watching Israel

The Israeli film fest wasn’t one for the brochures, but made for compelling viewing

ost of us seated in the Russian Cultural Center’s auditorium are finding this hilarious. We’re watching funky seventies Israeli film Kazablan’s finale. That standard scene in a musical where everyone celebrates everything turning out OK, with the hero getting the girl. But here it is set to a community celebration of a Briss, the male circumcision ceremony central to the Jewish faith. Now that must make us understand that it is set to a community celebration of a Briss, the male circumcision ceremony central to the Jewish faith. Now that must make us understand that

The exhibition centre will also feature follow-up photographs of some of the subjects of A People War in December 2006 it became an instant bestseller. A People War and Never Again, and also follows the subjects of the first book to find how they have coped with the legacy of war. Says Dixit: “These are astounding stories of how people have struggled with their sorrow, survived and in many instances come out stronger. It shows the resilience and inner strength of the Nepali people.”

A People War in permanent exhibit

When nepa-laya published its pictorial record of the conflict in December 2006 it became an instant bestseller. A selection of the 180 photographs in A People War were then taken around the country in a travelling photo exhibition that was seen by a staggering 350,000 people in 32 districts.

Now, nepa-laya is teaming up with Madan Puraskar to put the photographs on permanent display at the latter’s library in Patan. The exhibition centre will also feature follow-up photographs of some of the subjects of A People War, as well as temporary exhibits from visiting photographers from conflict zones around the world.

The permanent exhibit will open on Saturday, 20 November to coincide with the launch of the last book in Kunda Dixit’s trilogy of books on the conflict, People After War. The third book follows A People War and Never Again, and also follows the subjects of the first book to find how they have coped with the legacy of war.

The exhibition will serve as a repository of war experiences and testimonies for visitors as well as an archive for literature, letters, posters and other artefacts from the Nepali conflict that lasted from 1996 to 2006. Explains nepa-laya’s Kiran Shrestha: “We are very happy with this collaboration with Madan Puraskar and hope that a lot more people will not only view the photographs but also record their experiences and help in the healing process.”

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Some photographs from People After War will also be touring various parts of the country for three weeks until 14 December.
ABOUT TOWN

EVENTS

- What Works, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, 26 November, 6PM, 4489549
- Spanish fiesta, at the Minibel Resort Hotel in Dhulikhel, 28 November, 12PM onwards, 4495643, reservations required
- Nepali Art: In Present Scenario, documentary screening, 28 November, 2.30-5PM and 5-6PM, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dihaka, 5537767
- Kathmandu Chorale, a winter concert at The British School, Jhamsikhel, 12 Dec, 3.30PM and 6PM
- Patan Presa Club meets every Thursday at Drokama Cafe, 6PM, 552113
- Himalayan Buddhism Meditation Centre. Tai Chi 10-11.30 AM Saturday, Yoga 8.30-9.30 AM and Meditation 5-6PM weekdays, Keshar Malai Marg, Thamel, 4410402
- AIWON Christmas Bazaar, a winter concert of locally produced arts and crafts, 5 Dec, 10AM-3.30 PM, Hyatt Hotel, aiwoncom@gmail.com

MUSIC

- HyJazz every Friday evening by Inner Grove at the Rox Bar, 4489392
- Live every Tuesday at Moksh, Patan, 7.30 PM onwards, 5526212
- Live band every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi, 4489708
- Sunday Jazz brunch, at The Terrace, Hyatt Regency with barbeque and live jazz by Inner Grove from 12-3.30 PM, 4491234
- Live Band Sensation every Saturday till late with Aprilrush at The Terrace, Hyatt Regency
- Nepali Ghajals and songs at D'Longue Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards, 4485859
- Rudra Night live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7PM at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212

DIKNING

- Thanksgiving Celebration, at K-Too Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel, 26-28 November, 4700043
- Live continental BBQ Fiesta, exclusive BBQ Dinner at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel from 6.30-10.30PM everyday
- Global flavours at the casual table for thin-crust pizzas, fruity hookahs, brewed coffees & desserts, 4254809
- Coffee, Chocolate and Caramel, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234
- Wine and cheese, every Friday & Saturday at The Lounge, 5PM, 4491234
- A cafe’s cafe, Drokama Cafe, Patan, Dihoka, 5522113
- Jazzbell Cafe, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8PM, 2114075
- The Corner Bar, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4415185
- Al Fresco, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 4273999
- Kakori, for bryansinis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45PM
- Chez Carolina for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- Mediterranean cuisine every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle East at The Cafe, Hyatt Regency, 4491234
- Tepanyaki meat and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Garadha, 4436318
- Plat Du Jour at Hotel Shankri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999
- Reality Bites, The Kaiser Cafe, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika’s Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM, 4423541
- Starr night barbecue at Hotel Shankri-La with live performance by Citrey Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambara Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards, 4412999
- Himalayan Rainbow Trout at Hotel Yak and Yet, Darbar Marg, 4412999
- Tiger for Breakfast, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 26-28 November, 4700043
- Shupa Restaurant, for vegetarian creations & clay oven pizza at Boudha Shupa, 4480262
- Gokarna Forest Resort for a variety of sizzlers at Tripl bar, 4451212

EXHIBITIONS

- A People War, permanent photo exhibition, Sunday-Friday at Madan Puraskar, Patan Dihaka
- Unfold invention, exhibition of paintings by Govinda Sah Azad at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, till 23 November, 11.00AM-5.00PM, 4489897
- Exhibition of Nepalese Buddhism and Hinduism Art Painting by Sudhanshu Swat at Summit Hotel, Kupondole, till 30 November

WEEKEND WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY: Cloudy with thunder showers. Expect cloudy mornings and clear days this week. The cyclone in the Arabian Sea, which had generated cloud cover last week, has by and large disappeared. Satellite pictures show scattered, passing clouds. Daily mean temperatures are dropping by 1 degree every two weeks on average. Conclusion: hit the trails, the mountains will be clearer than ever.

WEATHER WEEKEND

Cloudy, expectation of rain in Kathmandu valley from Friday to Sunday.

About the Author

GRAHAM SYDNEY

‘Tabouleh’

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

This middle eastern salad can be varied by adding almost anything you want. Try variations like adding chopped chicken, shrimps, smoked salmon, scallops, lamb, beef, grilled or roasted vegetables, garlic rice or fruit. This tarragon trained parsley, celery, spring onion, coriander, parsley, and celery together with a fork every few minutes. Mix the spinach, rocket, allow to soak for 20-30 minutes, breaking up any lumps with a fork every few minutes. Mix the spaghetti, rocket, spring onion, coriander, parsley, and celery together and mix in the couscous. Add the shaved almonds and season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with some extra shaved almonds and serve.

Summiters’ Summit

World-renowned mountaineers will come together in Copenhagen on the occasion of International Mountain Day on 11 December to raise awareness on climate change in the Himalaya. The Summiters’ Summit, led by the Government of Nepal, is supported by ICIMOD, NyTNC, NBR, NMA, the World Bank and Mountaineers Apa Sherpa and Donau Seewen Sherpa of the WWF’s Climate for Life Campaign will be representing Nepal. www.climate4life.org

Avantika (Karsena Kapoor), a psychology professor in New York, decides to make her way back to India to be with her aging father. She temporarily finds work at the prestigious Smith University and meets Ehsaan Khan (Saif Ali Khan), a substitute teacher there. Ehsaan’s charm is irresistible and despite reservations about Ehsaan being a Muslim, Avantika’s father agrees to her wedding. Avantika and Ehsaan get married and learn to start a new life in New York in a conservative Muslim society. Her changed lifestyle is a shock to Avantika, and her life turns upside down once she is married. She is warned not to trust anyone.

Call 4442240 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com
YOU STOLE MY SPOT: Prachanda and Paras’ cars side by side at Tribhuvan International Airport before their flights to Singapore on Tuesday.

LIFE AND DEATH: Maoist protestors block an ambulance during demonstrations outside Singha Darbar on Friday.

LEARNING BY EXAMPLE: Himal Editor Kanak Mani Dixit with Professor Mushirul Hasan, who spoke on the 'Evolution of Federalism in India' at the Yak & Yeti Hotel on Tuesday.

DONE DEAL: Prithivi Pande of Himalayan Infrastructure Fund and P.K. Choudhary of ICRA Limited shake hands on Wednesday after agreeing to a joint venture to set up a credit rating agency in Nepal.

CHAMPIONS: Everest Bank’s volleyball team lifts their championship trophy after winning the RSR Beach Volleyball 2009 at Kurintar on Sunday.
D<br>idn’t Girjau just go to S’pore on Monday, and isn’t he returning on Sunday? Don’t PKD and GPK get together every other day at Maharajganj anyway? And each time after every meeting don’t they express their commitment to resolve their differences by forging yet another high-level political mechanism to break the deadlock? Then what was the need for a Singapore Summit? Is there something even beyond the As’ surveillance radar going on here? Or did something path-breaking really happen on the seventh floor VIP room at Gleneagles Hospital? We will know only if the govt indeed falls as Awesome predicted as soon as he got back. If it doesn’t, then we could legitimately ask who paid for the Maoists’ roundtrip on Royal Silk Class and who paid for GPK’s Learjet air ambulance. The bizarre nature of the Singapore shuttle has set a lot of tongues wagging and a lot of speculation flying about why Singapore. OK, Prof Muni is a visiting faculty member at LKW but does he have to be a facilitator for a secret power-sharing pow-wow? That seems to be stretching it, and methinks the professor is floating that rumour himself to boost his image as kingless Nepal’s kingmaker. Besides, GPK and PKD are united by their common interest in weakening Makunay, their mistrust of the Indians and the shared allergy for President Ram Baran. They don’t really need an ex-JNU prof to expedite things, therefore. So that leaves us with the only possible explanation for the Gleneagles Summit: the self-importance of these two leaders. With eternity staring at him in the face, GPK is finally worried about his legacy. The image of the great statesman that he cultivated during 2006 has now been whittled away by his later opportunism and willingness to sleep with the enemy just so his dotter could be deputy PM. The most unpopular leader in Nepal after king G just got more unpopular and the old man wants one last chance to launder his reputation by fixing the political deadlock. We would never be in the soup we are in now if we only had let Girjau be president last year. He took it out on all of us, and still hasn’t quite forgiven us. Now there is moose left to blame, and he wants to fix things before he goes. And Makunay must be feeling his days are numbered cos he just named Cousin Bikupa as consul general to Hong Kong. One has to hand it to the Mackinderites, the comrades are serious about corruption control. And what an ingenious way they have found to go about it. Those who bemoan the delay in passing the budget miss the point. Since so much of the budget is embezzled, by not letting parliament function to ratify the budget, the Maoists have removed the biggest source of corruption in the country. If there is no budget, there can be no corruption, hoina? If the Mule hadn’t actually seen the circular DfID sent out to its partners recently, it would never have believed it. With a new surge in Baddie extortion being reported nationwide, the department fell over backwards to justify it by saying by way of preamble: “we have to understand that the UCPN-M have expenses and have to take care of their cadre” or words to that effect. from a democratic country that would never tolerate political violence on its own soil justifying extortion here, who needs enemies? Here’s this week’s most interesting vacancy ad. It’s sure to set off a stampede outside the Norwegian embassy for a Specialist Visa. WANTED Nepali Brahmin Priest Recently resettled Bhutani refugees in Alta, Norway, need a Brahmin priest pronto to officiate all annaprasans, bratmans and bihays. Should be a god-fearing vegetarian who can read the stars of the northern hemisphere and work for extended periods above the Arctic Circle. Interested candidates should apply with references from all three political parties. assi@nepalitimes.com