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# Seeing double



NANDA RANA

**T**igers may seem like an elusive remnant of our jungly past, but whether they continue to exist in the wild depends on a very current nexus of politics, economics and society.

Nepal and 12 other tiger range countries have declared that they will double the estimated 3200 tigers in the wild in the next 12 years. For Nepal, this means doubling our adult wild tiger population of 121.

"We understand tiger

conservation is not like breeding chickens," Forest Minister Deepak Bohara conceded in the course of being grilled by *BBC Nepali* on Monday. "That is exactly why we are extending tiger habitat in Banke National Park and taking a strong stance against forest encroachment, poaching and smuggling in tiger parts."

But in the face of continued poaching and encroachment, this is easier said than done.

2010 is the Year of the Tiger. With crucial tiger summits this

**BLENDING IN OR FADING OUT?**  
**Tigers in India's Bandhavgarh National Park, as captured by Nepali hunter-turned-conservationist Nanda Rana.**

year in Vladivostok and Doha that will define the stance of China and India, let's hope it turns out to be one that will pave the way for a Year of the Tiger 2022 we can truly celebrate.

Full story p12-13



## Numbers game

2011 is also Nepal Tourism Year. Will we cross the million-mark?

p6

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## TIGER ECONOMY

Looking around the country today, it is hard to recall that Nepal was once internationally recognised for its pioneering work with eco-tourism and wildlife conservation. The Annapurna Area Conservation Project, the rescue of the tiger and rhino from the brink of extinction in Chitwan, the successful translocation of these species to nature reserves in western Nepal and the gharial breeding program on the Narayani were all once models. Some were replicated within Nepal and around the world.

But Nepal's human population has doubled since the early 1980s, and political instability has taken its toll. Fickle governments have lacked the political commitment or the time horizon to invest in safeguarding past accomplishments in conservation as well as address new threats. Whatever is happening now owes much to the momentum of past success.

The midhills have benefited from the community forestry program, an exemplar of creating sustainable livelihoods by protecting nature. But the lack of accountability during the political transition and the post-war culture of violence have eroded some of the gains as user groups collude to harvest logs for personal gain.

Elsewhere, especially in the Tarai, migration and population expansion are increasing the pressure on protected areas. The Maoists have been following the example set by the NC and UML in the 1990s by settling hill farmers along what remains of the Tarai forests. The pressure on land in the plains is now the single biggest danger to the future of our forests.

Which is why the government's commitment to implement the World Wildlife Fund's campaign to double the number of wild tigers in Nepal by 2022 is such a huge challenge. Contiguous Tarai forests that served as wildlife corridors from the plains to the Mahabharat hills are being wiped away. Tiger, rhino and wild elephant populations can't roam as they used to, living instead in inbred isolation within fragmented jungle strips.

The breakdown of the state has emboldened poachers and Nepal now serves as a funnel for poached Indian tigers to China, just as it does for sandalwood and other contraband.

The solution is clear: protecting habitats, restoring jungle corridors along the Indo-Nepal border in the Tarai, and clamping down on the trade in tiger parts (see p12-13). But even these measures can be difficult in times of political volatility, and when joblessness and poverty drive desperate people to encroach and poach.

But Nepal has shown in the past that we can do it. We can once more take the lead in implementing eco-tourism models and fostering a sustainable, symbiotic relationship between people and parks.

Doubling Nepal's present population of 121 adult tigers is an achievable goal, and saving the charismatic species at the top of the food chain will also save the ecosystems where they live.

*KD*

# Congress conundrums?



### PLAIN SPEAKING Prashant Jha

Sometime back, NCMP Gagan Thapa addressed a party meeting in a Tanahun village. He tried to project an optimistic view about the party and national politics, and assured his audience they would succeed in writing a democratic constitution. He then declared NC would govern the country for twenty years and lead Nepal's economic transformation.

Pin-drop silence.

That's when Thapa realised just how low the morale of party workers had dipped. They had stopped believing in themselves and the party. Abusing the Maoists could energise the cadre temporarily, but 'we are the future' rhetoric could not penetrate the fog of despondency that had engulfed the party rank and file. Exactly six decades after NC led the first true democratic revolution in Nepal, the party is suffering from its deepest existential crisis.

It does not have an ideological direction. Radical social democracy fell by the wayside in the early 1990s and no one quite knows what has replaced it. The party has slowly shifted to the right of the political spectrum, but neither the party nor the right wing social base have quite embraced each other yet. It does not have a clearly articulated position on any of the contemporary debates that mark our politics – federalism, affirmative action, land reform or even India-Nepal bilateral relations.

NC has lost the propaganda war on 'change' despite being the first party with a remarkably national character. As Thapa points out, by dint of political work, not necessarily quotas, the party has two Newars as vice presidents (Gopal Man Shrestha and Prakash Man Singh), a Madhesi general secretary (Bimalendra Nidhi), and a former Madhesi general secretary as the country's president (Ram Baran Yadav). By comparison, the Maoist standing committee has a far more exclusivist character. But any inclusiveness seen in NC is all the result of pre-1990 efforts

by BP Koirala, Subarna Shumsher and Ganesh Man Singh. There was no effort in the 1990s to consolidate and go beyond the relatively privileged in these communities, a massive failure other parties have since capitalised on.


NC is saddled with a dull, uncharismatic leadership that has lost the art of political communication. Apart from Sher Bahadur Deuba, who commands a

there is now resistance to cooperating closely with the Maoists on the ground. In the Tarai, the NC core area, the exodus of leaders to Madhesi groups has been already documented and explains their electoral disaster.

The spat at the party's HQ in Sanepa on Wednesday revealed the factionalism that percolates down to the lowest levels of the organisation. At the top, the

for its own, extracting resources from the state for party or individual benefit, and encouraging crony capitalism by diverting local budgets to favoured businesses is the only way to become stronger.

If there is one lesson for NC, it is that this strategy has only made them weaker. The NC has become detached from its social base and ideological moorings precisely because it has become inextricably tied to the state apparatus without using it to effect any radical social change.

There is little doubt that Nepal, and Nepali democracy, still need a strong NC. But for that, as Thapa says, the party has to stop behaving like it is answering questions in an exam paper set by another party. Drive the agenda, discover your roots, engage in a generational transformation, get rid of the money launderers and right-wing pseudo academics that dominate the party's top echelons, spend a few years out of power, intervene on policy issues constructively and patiently rebuild the organisation on the ground. There is no other short-cut. 

## The grand old party has to start at square one if it is to continue at the heart of Nepali democratic politics

degree of mass support in his far west stronghold, it is hard to think of a single top leader with truly popular appeal. No one knows Sushil Koirala beyond the party and Ram Chandra Poudel has a limited base in the organisation beyond a few district HQs in the central hills. None of these leaders has ever attempted to explain the logic of the peace process to their own constituencies, which is why

leaders spend all their time devising plans to marginalise intra-party rivals. On the ground, the party continues to operate as parallel NC and NC (D) structures in many districts.

But just when you'd think soul-searching is in order, the party seems focused on how to get their own man appointed as governor of the central bank. NC has internalised the belief that securing political appointments

### ON THE WEB www.nepaltimes.com

#### SELF-DESTRUCT

I was really shocked to read these terrible statistics regarding women and suicide in Nepal ('Self-destruct', #489). Although I now live in Nepal, until last summer I was the founder director of a social enterprise that offered support to individuals regarding their mental health and emotional well-being in the UK. The rate of suicides for women in my home city of Nottingham is currently 6 in 100,000 per year. Yet these figures hide the real story – so many women feel equally desperate but feel trapped, unable to commit suicide out of concern that their loved ones won't be able to carry on without them.

Gill Maharjan

#### NURSING NEPAL

Amazing work being done by this one school in Phaplu ('Nursing Nepal back to health', #489). In five years, this training institute will have contributed more for the general health of Nepalis than all the modern private hospitals with MRIs and CT-Scans and whatnot. And look at the comments on this site: they're all about the cynical politics-dominated coverage with even more corrosive and jaded feedback. This is just to congratulate NT on the editorial, Dambar Shrestha and Smriti Mallapaty for their coverage of the vital issue of public health.

Johann

• At present, Nepal needs preventive

medicine and access to relevant primary healthcare, rather than more complex hospitals and technology. Building TUTH and other ivory towers like Om, Norvic and Neuro hospitals is not making a perceptible difference in the health of many Nepalis who can never access them. Nepal can only aspire to making preventive and primary health care available to all its citizens at present. Reaching this modest target will make a big difference for ordinary Nepalis. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be making use of the latest medical technologies. Rather, this is a secondary goal to universal primary healthcare.

Dr. Manohar Budhathoki

### On the blogs

East West with Kunda Dixit  
Remembering a lost journalist



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 490

Q.Does the Jamim Shah murder typify the security situation in Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll # 491. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Should the Tarai forests support tigers or landless people?







# News that stays news



**FOURTH ESTATE**  
**C K Lal**

Eleven hours of load shedding have played havoc with the evening schedule of the Nepali middle class. Affluent television addicts have opted for massive inverters. But the rest of us have to either put up with FM banter or scan pages under candlelight.

Since prime time coincides with the heaviest power cuts, major advertisers are reluctant to

already torn every event of any significance apart. But the priorities of print have tended to be similar to those of television: in an attempt to reach the masses, both emphasise what is urgent rather than what is important.

Papers can add value not only by covering weighty issues but also by making them more interesting. This requires a reorientation of the way print journalism is done.

The Indian newspaper industry is trying to cope with the competition by transforming itself into a clone of the flickering monitor. Even in

everyday stories make this paper sell like, well, a tabloid. But looks can also be deceptive. *Naya Patrika* has more in-depth stories for highbrow readers than many ordinary broadsheets. In its centrespreads, talented reporters like Sangitshrota, Pramila and Deepak dig deep into personalities and events with unmatched literary flair.

The weekend issue of *Nagarik* daily has its own corps of writers who combine the integrity of facts, the beauty of truth and the drama of a story in their reportage. Buddhisagar, who also happens to be a published poet and a budding novelist, has drawn a picture of rural Kailali so vividly every antic of Laxman Tharu suddenly begins to make sense. Tharus are peripheral to Buddhi's story, but he explains the marginalisation of Laxman's generation in their own homeland more eloquently than any deliberately sympathetic coverage might.

Sudhir Sharma honed his storytelling techniques at some of the pioneering news magazines of Nepal before becoming the editor of *Kantipur* daily. His paper is too deep into the respectability groove to allow him to experiment with the so-called literature of facts. However, even the old lady of Subidhanagar recently ran a front page story describing how the palms of the bereaved Moin Shah were colder than the wet hands of the reporter. Great journalism is not only a window, but also a mirror—a reader looks at the world and sees his own reflection through every story.

Objectivity helps the media establish credibility. But a new crop of print journalists has shown that it is subjectivity in reporting that makes a story meaningful and enduring. 🇳🇵

## The print media can capitalise on the falling ratings for television in power-hungry Nepal

pay a premium for ad spots. The trend is not yet fully visible, but a sizable section of the audience and advertisers has begun to patronise the print media.

Diesel-run generators are expensive, and the publishers compelled to use them have no reason to be grateful to Nepal Electricity Authority for a sudden jump in circulation. But newspapers and magazines will certainly need to improve on quality if they are to retain new readers who will have the option of going back to television once the power supply improves.

Where regular reporting is concerned—who did or said what—newspapers can't compete with radio, television or the Internet. By the time the morning papers arrive, the talking heads of the evening shows will have

print, a story these days has to be small enough to fit the cellphone screen, but must have sufficient pictures to hold its own around the breakfast table, where blogs and newsfeeds are competing for attention.

A more sustainable response perhaps would be to do what only print is capable of doing: present news in such a way that it remains news. Newspapers now have to learn to do magazine journalism and magazines have to adopt the techniques of literary reporting. It may not have been by design, but some Nepali publications seem to be adapting successfully.

The cover of the daily *Naya Patrika* is quintessentially tabloid. Sensational headlines, arresting snippets, unusual pictures and fresh angles on

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# Money matters

SUVAYU DEV PANT

**F**ar from a short-term monetary phenomenon, the cash crunch signals deeper economic problems.

Liquidity is tight largely because commercial banks lack access to ready pools of cash, having converted too many deposits into loans. The credit-to-deposit ratio is 95 per cent, nearly 20 per cent more than what is considered ideal. The quarter-on-quarter growth rate of loans is four per cent higher than that of deposits.

“Only 8-10 banks are healthy, the rest have mismanaged their balance sheets,” says Nepal Rastriya Bank (NRB) Deputy Governor Krishna Bahadur Manandhar.

The consequent scramble to meet liquidity requirements has sent the inter-bank lending rate soaring to 11 per cent. At one point it was 14 per cent, which is about double the normal rate.

Deposit figures are low

because remittance growth has dropped about 56 per cent this quarter compared to the same period last year, and a significant amount of money has left formal financial networks for informal channels (such as cooperatives) or lies unspent in newly overflowing state coffers. Depositors have also

generously fed a surge in gold imports, as traders have taken to transporting gold to India via Nepal in order to capitalise on lower duties here, and investments abroad. According to Shivant Pande of Nepal Investment Bank, “Gold imports this quarter increased by over

**“The government needs to take a more holistic approach or the crunch could recur”**

been spooked by tough NRB disclosure requirements.

Siddhant Raj Pandey, CEO of Ace Development Bank (*pictured, right*) says, “Deposits are low in part because there isn’t much confidence from the public. This has been exacerbated by the note crisis over Dasain/Tihar. Decelerating remittances is another reason.”

Yet commercial banks have

225 per cent compared to the same period last year. Total gold imports almost offset our total exports.”

Not all earnings from the re-export of gold to India re-enter formal channels. Authorities have struggled to replenish the money supply since the widening trade deficit has hit foreign exchange reserves hard.

Authorities have responded



AHMAD ISKANDAR

by expanding credit and liquidity by way of repo auctions and subsidised loans to troubled banks, reinforced financial regulations, and plans to raise import duties on key items including gold. Officials predict a speedy recovery if banks shape up.

But a broader package of fiscal and monetary measures

may be needed. The government will have to dig deep to shore up investor and depositor confidence in the financial system.

Pandey says, “While banks must play their part, the government needs to take a more holistic approach to address the long-term economic issues or else the crunch could very well recur.”

## Short and medium-term optimist



**Sujit Mundul is the CEO and Director of Standard Chartered Nepal Ltd and spoke to *Nepali Times* about lessons learnt from India and the economic prospects for Nepal.**

**Nepali Times: Do you see any parallels with West Bengal in the old days with what you’ve seen in Nepal in the six years you’ve been here?**

**Sujit Mundul:** My times in Nepal has shown me how transformation in a country starts and progresses, albeit slowly. I was in college in Calcutta when West Bengal as a whole was severely affected by the onslaught of the Naxalite movement: destruction and killings, ruthlessly. Nepal has experienced similar kinds of events, though it may not be as intense as what we went through.

**Are there lessons we can learn from what Nitish Kumar has achieved in Bihar?**

Bihar is a real case study. It was synonymous with non-governance and non-performance for the last few decades but has now risen from the ashes. It’s all about Mr Nitesh Kumar’s leadership, which I think has gone above petty partisanship, but remained inclusive to usher in such fantastic all-round growth of a state that remained underserved for many years. Lesson learnt: a true leader will not bother about party line only, but will ensure holistic growth for the betterment of people and country.

**Are you optimistic about the coming few years in Nepal?**

I am optimistic about Nepal both in the medium and long term. Obviously there will be challenges. Adopting the right economic model and harnessing its resources (both natural and human) to ensure all-round growth is crucial. What would be the right fiscal policy at least for the next 45 years, with a critical evaluation at the end of each

fiscal year? What would be the right mix of monetary policies? What would be the ideal real interest rates? How to boost domestic savings and add FDI for growth?

We have lost a lot of time, the government should encourage FDI and the private sector. A more investment friendly labour policy (I don’t mean hire and fire) and maybe a bit of a tax sop would be conducive for the formative years of growth. The government has to not only encourage manufacturing sectors but also the service sectors, which hold enormous potential for growth in the South Asian sub-continent.

**There is talk of a liquidity crunch.**

Better governance is needed for a sustained performance in the banking/financial sector. The skewed credit/deposit ratio of most of the banks (C/D ratios more than 90%) is cause for concern and needs correction on a long-term basis. The NRB and MoF need to fine-tune monetary policy so flow of credit to the desired growth sectors are not hampered but speculative activities are curbed for better economic management.

The liquidity crunch that the market is currently facing, in my opinion, may not be a short-term phenomenon. It will re-surface if long-term corrections are not undertaken now and might inflict serious damage on the financial system in the not-too-distant future. But I don’t think the balance of payments is a real cause for concern.



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## Rural Access Programme

Nepal's Rural Access Programme (RAP), which aims to reduce rural poverty by building roads in the countryside, has won an award from the International Roads Federation. RAP is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and has already completed 607km of roads, connected three district headquarters, and is building a further 365km. RAP will have reached one million more rural people by the time it reaches completion.

## Nepal, India sign agreement

President Ram Baran Yadav, who returned from a four-day trip to India on Thursday, met Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Hyderabad House and signed a Memorandum of Understanding on four bilateral agreements concerning air services, construction of a polytechnic institute in Hetauda, a conference hall, and rail services at five points along the Nepal-India border.

## US snubs Nepali garments

The US does not appear receptive to a Nepali proposal for a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) to secure preferential entry for Nepali readymade garments. US officials pointed to Nepal's fluid political situation and lack of preparedness for TIFA negotiations. Exports of Nepali readymade garments to the US have plummeted since the Multi Fabric Agreement was scrapped in 2004.

## Dynasty continues

Air Dynasty Heli Services, which has operated in Nepal since 1993, has moved a step up with the arrival of its brand new AS 350B2 helicopter, acquired from Eurocopter South East Asia, Singapore. Dynasty now has a fleet of four helicopters.

## Über stylish

A new interiors store, Casa, has opened in Anamnagar, Kathmandu. The store boasts a collection of personally handpicked interior accessories from all over Asia.

## Branching out

Global Bank inaugurated its Dhulawari branch last week to provide services such as business and consumer loans, small and medium loans, Letters of Credit, bank guarantees and remittance services.

## Bike away!

Morang Auto Works, the sole authorised dealer of JCB India for Nepal, opened its branch office with 3S facility - sales, service and spares - in Itahari.

## Buy a share

Surya Life Insurance is providing a total of 1,080,000 shares worth Rs100 apiece. The shares are available at NMB bank.



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
**Ashutosh Tiwari**

In July 2002, the Deuba-led government cited the Maoist war as justification for letting the tenure of all local government representatives lapse. In 2006, the King tried to resurrect local government through elections, but nobody accepted the results.

In early 2008, there was an opportunity to provide a fresh start for local government bodies. But the politicians agreed among themselves that drafting the national constitution was so important that the simple, if banal, practice of choosing your own representatives to look after the affairs of your village or district was a task best suited for some future time. As a result, for the last nine years, almost 4000 village development committees, 58 municipalities and 57 district development committees across Nepal have had no local representatives. Next time you see piles of garbage on the streets of Kathmandu, don't bother asking who your mayor is.

The bigger implication is that we now have national Democracy – the one with the capital D, the one about national elections, competing political parties, and so on. But in pursuit of Democracy, we have been smothering

# Local lapses

democracy – the one with the small d, the one about the simple practice of local people electing their neighbours and villagers to local public offices for a fixed number of years to address communities' problems. Such a democracy is about holding locally elected officials accountable for the results, or lack thereof, of local development.

This was on my mind as I completed my visit to eastern Nepal two weeks ago. The heads of local government in all the municipalities are all government-

credit in their party's name for anything good that happens in their municipality while blocking local reforms that are likely to reflect well on other parties. Over time, such repeated posturing plays out in such a way that the local boards are often dysfunctional when it comes to working in the interests of locals.

Some village communities have gotten around this problem of local mis-governance. In one locality I visited on the outskirts of Kathmandu last week, the homogeneity of the local population

## If you're wondering who your mayor is, don't bother

appointed bureaucrats. They are not necessarily from the cities they have been assigned to serve. As is customary, they hold their posts for a relatively short time – about two years, if not less. Given how career games in a bureaucracy play out, they have more incentive to please their Ministry's bosses in Kathmandu than the local people.

Moreover, these heads report to local boards, which are often coalitions of the local reps of all national political parties. These are politicians who have been shut out from the national stage. But without the pressure of facing elections, they are content to take

seems to have allowed a reservoir of trust to build up among the people. This made it easier for a respected community figure to emerge as a leader to positively influence the process of local governance when it came to, say, having villagers install toilets and basic water mains. But this is also a troubling sign, in that this sort of Big Man approach to governance is not what democracy is about.

Depriving local citizens the practice of choosing their own representatives is probably the greatest quiet danger to Democracy than all the political strutting by parties in the capital. ■



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KIRAN PANDAY

# Not just numbers

For the economy, quality of tourism may be better than quantity

DEWAN RAI

The slogan for Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is ‘together for tourism’. On the first promotional event on 26 February at Tundikhel, the government, political parties, private partners and professionals will make a public commitment to support the campaign.

Nepal Tourism Year (NTY) 2011 aims to bring in at least one million tourists by 2011 and spread the benefits of tourism to the people at large. It was announced by the Maoist-led government in 2008 as part of its economic policy to achieve double-digit economic growth. Considering that Visit Nepal Year 1998’s aim of 500,000 tourists was realised only in 2007, and arrivals have

remained steady since, this is a tall order.

“NTY 2011 will be a litmus test to determine what should be done to develop the Nepali tourism industry,” says Aditya Baral, director of the Nepal Tourism Board.

Baral says the current political deadlock has really not affected tourism though the Maoists’ recent anti-India movement has impacted on Indian arrivals which make up 20 per cent of total visitors.

Stefan Shrestha of Pokhara-based Avia Club Nepal, is grounded yet optimistic. “There will definitely be an increase in tourist arrivals even if we don’t meet the target of one million by 2011,” he says.

But there are other numbers to consider as well. Though tourist arrivals are up year by year, Nepal’s foreign exchange earnings from tourism have never crossed the US\$350 million threshold.

The arrival of the first batch of hippies in the early 1970s, which put Nepal on the map, was also the beginning of tourism in the country. “Nepal never planned, it just happened and we went with the flow,” says Yogendra Sakya of the Program Execution Committee, NTY 2011.

Nepal hasn’t really explored high-end

tourism, despite the activities available here: ultralight aircraft, bungee jumps, mountain flights, rafting, and mountaineering. Adventure tourists tend to stay longer and about 200 mountaineering expeditions visit Nepal annually. But an average visitor to Nepal spends 11 days here, spending just \$73 per day.

Yogendra Sakya maintains that Nepal should have planned for upmarket clients. Stefan Shrestha advocates “promoting both quantity and quality tourism simultaneously, as we do not have the facilities and activities to cater for upmarket tourism.”

If high-end tourism were developed, Nepal could earn as much revenue from the current number of tourists as one million tourists would bring in. But if that target is to be reached at some point, Nepal has a long to-do list.

It could start with connectivity. The government has announced visa fee waivers for tourists visiting Nepal for the second time, and is working on online visa applications. But how tourists actually get to Nepal is moot.

Seventy per cent of visitors to Nepal enter by air. Currently, 25 international airlines operate in Nepal and three more will start operations by the end of this year. But they are all second-echelon Asian airlines catering primarily to migrant workers. After Lufthansa stopped flights to Kathmandu in 1995, for instance, German tourists fell from 44,530 in 1994 to 19,123 last year.

With Nepal Airlines continuing woes, Nepal remains less connected than its neighbours. “We have to improve land route services, and introduce homestay to complement tourist hotels,” says Sakya, “if we try, something will happen but if we don’t even try, nothing will happen.”

## License to trek

On the eve of Nepal Tourism Year 2011, the decision to raise fees for trekking from Rs100 to \$10 shows we want to squeeze tourists for every paisa we can.

Nepal Tourism Board has been authorised to issue a Trekkers Information Management System card for \$10. Aditya Baral, director at NTB, claims the estimated Rs100 million collected from tourists will be used for the development and promotion of new trekking destinations, infrastructure and rescue operations.

The Trekking Agencies’ Association of Nepal will buy the cards at \$10 apiece from NTB and distribute it to its 700 members. But individual tourists will have to purchase the card directly from NTB for \$20.

Kul Bahadur Gurung, executive member of TAAN, is worried the fee is too high. “This is not a trekking permit,” he says. “And there shouldn’t be a trekking permit in the future, either.”

## Also truly Asia?

Speaking at the inaugural function of the PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference in Kathmandu recently, the chairman of Malaysia Tourism Victor Wee shared the success of his country’s visitor promotion campaign.

When the Asian economic crisis of 1998 caused the economy to contract by 7.4 per cent and tourism to fall, the Malaysia Truly Asia campaign was launched. Malaysia’s visitor arrivals quadrupled to 22 million in ten years. Today, Malaysia is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest tourism destination in the world and rakes in \$15 billion a year.

- Wee had the following tips for Visit Nepal 2011:**
- Increase connectivity
  - Improve tourism infrastructure, cleanliness and hygiene
  - Leverage Lumbini as a Spiritual Tourism hub with direct flights
  - Improve security and political stability
  - Proactive and coherent government policy
  - Human resource development and providing value to customers
  - Dynamic and innovative marketing

## Pink for Dink

CA member and founder of Blue Diamond Society Sunil Babu Pant is also the organiser of the first LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) travel symposium in Asia. Excerpts of interview:

**Nepali Times: What is the objective of the symposium?**  
**Pant:** We officially want to welcome gay and lesbian visitors, who think Nepal is conservative. This is a huge opportunity for Nepal because no one has tapped this market.

**Who will be participating?**  
There will be travel companies from US, Europe, Thailand and Japan. Travel businesses over there focus on this market because they spend twice as much as other travellers. The term DINK stands for Double Income No Kids. They are luxury travellers, they stay in good hotels and spend a lot of money. It’s a very lucrative market for Nepal because we have virtually no competition from our neighbours.

You have also established a travel agency, Pink

**Mountain Travel and Tours.**  
It’s a travel agency like others. We are also focused on adventure travel. One difference is that we will have guides who will also explain historical sites from the LGBT angle.

**How have local businesses responded?**  
The response has been overwhelming. Several have asked me to endorse their travel agencies and hotels. I would be more than happy to. I just have to make sure they are gay friendly.

**You invited the Prince of Jaipur Manavendra Singh, who has recently announced that he is gay, to have his wedding in Nepal.**  
He is coming for a visit this year. He is the chief guest in the symposium. He recently announced that he is going to marry his long-term partner. We are thinking of taking him to Sauraha and decorating elephants in royal style. There are several couples who have inquired about getting married in Everest Base Camp. Why not? It’s good for our economy.







PICS: FOO CHEE CHANG

## Beans to brew

FOO CHEE CHANG

When Nescafé coffee was first introduced to Nepal, it took the ubiquitous symbol of instant coffee a number of years to catch on, and some more before Nescafé coffee machines held any attraction for café owners.

So ingrained was the culture of tea drinking in the fabric of Nepali society that the idea of a daily cuppa rarely meant coffee, let alone the filter variety. In recent times coffee has been embraced by Nepalis, especially the younger generation that has travelled and experienced the global fascination for the black, bitter brew served up in a myriad of beverages by the likes of Starbucks and Gloria Jeans.

Enter the world of growing and brewing specialty coffee, where innovation is limited only by one's imagination.

Sensing the opportunity in the market, Himalayan Java established Nepal's first specialty coffee house in 2000. It may have started off catering to tourists in Thamel, but now has a sizeable

local clientele. At around the same time Nepali companies and cooperatives started to produce and process Arabica beans for the specialty trade on a larger, more coordinated scale.

According to the National Tea & Coffee Development Board, the total size of Nepal's coffee cultivating area has seen little over a threefold increase in 10 years, with an area of 1531 hectares recorded in 2009. The export of

lucrative sector, pressing issues such as quality control and adherence to international fair trade and organic standards have to be addressed if Nepali coffee is to reach its full potential and leverage its position in the international export market.

"A lot of local coffees claim to be organic, but by what standards?" asks Dipendra Thapa, local distributor of Illy, a high-end Italian coffee.

### Nepal's nascent coffee business is slowly but surely redefining the idea of a Nepali's morning brew

Nepali green beans has more than doubled from 35,700kg to 88,020kg in the last five years. As of today, the majority of cultivation exists on small landholdings owned by individual farmers in the midhills region, which has the climatic conditions best suited to coffee – stable rainfall, humidity and moderate temperatures.

While smallholder farming means that more farmers are able to benefit from this increasingly

Price-wise, the government has intervened by setting a base rate of Rs 27 per kg for fresh cherries, more than the international fair trade rate. That said, there is currently no governing body looking into and regulating the quality of coffee grown here.

As a result, companies like Plantec Nepal Estate have taken the initiative in getting their coffee certified organic by the U.S.

Department of Agriculture, a lengthy and stringent process. P.K. Lama of Royal Everest Coffee Mill also sees the importance of obtaining proper certification for his coffee exports and is in the midst of preparing his company for a review. Such moves are positive signs for the future of the industry.

For locals who care for a taste of these Nepali brews, cafés in town like Beans Coffee offer beverages that look as good as they taste. If you fancy brewing your own (*see box*), you can get Top of the World Coffee delivered fresh to your doorstep. But for those whose tastes remain conventionally cosmopolitan, then high-quality Illy or Lavazza coffee is widely available at high-end hotels and restaurants. As someone once said, a morning without coffee is like sleep. Wake up and smell the coffee! ☐

Visit [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com) for more info on Nepali coffee.



## Coffee crusade

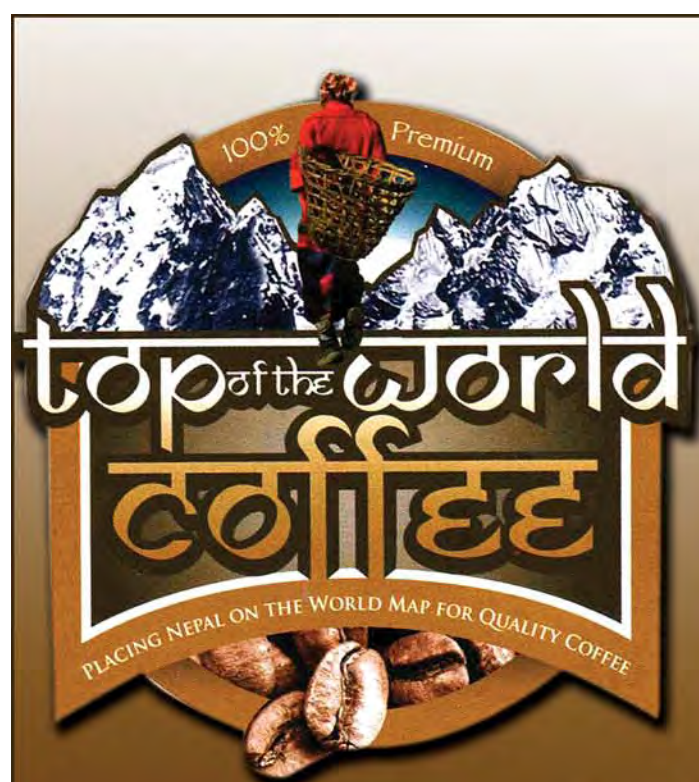
If you've wanted to ditch instant coffee but found load-shedding rendered your fancy electric coffeemaker as useful as a one-armed juggler, Richard Bull is here to the rescue.

Bull has just introduced the macchinetta, also known as the caffettiera, moka pot, or simply the coffee pot, to Kathmandu. His mission: to change the way we drink coffee. "A lot of coffee served is not good," he says. "It's bitter, flavourless, burnt, chemical, too strong, too watery, served in buckets, old, cold..."



While trekking in Langtang, Bull found every hotel, no matter how small or grand, was serving exactly the same instant coffee. He couldn't help but wonder: "Why does no one serve fresh Nepali coffee?" One lodge owner wanted to give his coffee pot idea a try. But since none were available in Kathmandu, Bull imported them himself. It took him over nine months to bring in a couple of hundred coffee pots. "There is pretty good coffee available in Nepal," Bull says. "A small coffee pot means everyone can enjoy this locally produced, internationally sought after stuff."

Coffee pots are on sale at Café Society and Gaia Café. Tips on how to make good coffee at [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com).



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Cell: 9851079387, E-mail: [info@topoftheworldcoffee.com](mailto:info@topoftheworldcoffee.com).



EVENTS

**Pepsi ICC World Cricket League,** Nepal hosts the Division 5 event from 20-27 February at the Army School, Tribhuvan University and Engineering College, <http://icc-cricket.yahoo.net/>

**Australian Embassy Film Roadshow,** a festival of contemporary Australian films such as *Chopper* (pic below) at the Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari, 19 to 23 February, tickets at Rs30 available at the Australian Embassy (4371678 ex 102), Gurukul (4466956, 2101332) and at the venue, proceeds to the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology.



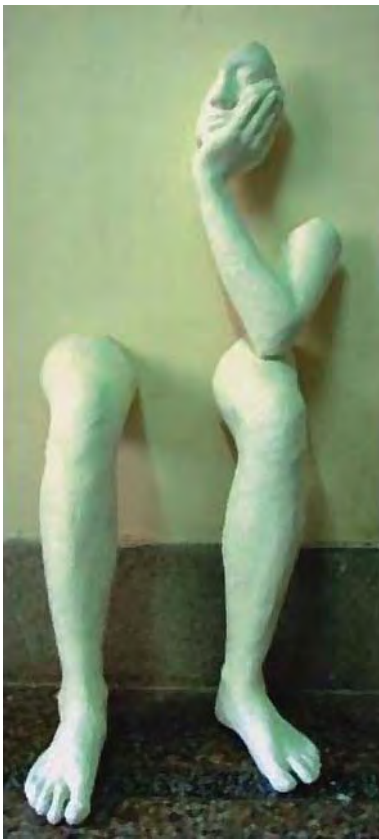
**Literally Figurative - An International Art Exhibition,** drawings by Kapil Mani Dixit and students of North Lake College on nudity, 17-26 February, Imago Dei Gallery, Nagpokhari, 4442464

**Second Class Room Show 2010,** botanical paintings in watercolour by amateur artists, 10.30am-6.00pm, 14-21 Feb except Saturday at Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 5522307

**Cooking class with lunch,** French cuisine first Saturday of each month, 9am to 2pm at Delicés de France Restaurant, 4260326, [info@restaurant-nepal.com](mailto:info@restaurant-nepal.com)

**Cultural Studies Group Nepal Monthly Lecture Series,** 10am, 26 Feb at the Shankar Hotel. Kunda Dixit presents the making of the *A People War* trilogy.

**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



**A Print Maker's Feelings,** exhibition of prints by Sauranga Darshandari at Kathmandu Contemporary Art Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120, [www.kathmanduarts.org](http://www.kathmanduarts.org)

MUSIC

**House of Music** presents AltF4 from 8.15pm-9.45pm and 1974AD from 10.15pm-11.30pm, 19 Feb, Rs199, 9849243807

**JSC Jazz Quartet,** every Saturday 8pm on at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat, 9803160719

**Chillout Lounge with DJ Miriam,** every Friday at the Bourbon Room, Lal Durbar Marg, 4441703

**Saturday African Nite,** with African food and music from 8pm at Jazzabell Café, Jhamsikhel, 2114075

**Robin and the New Revolution,** every Tuesday 7pm on at the Bamboo Club, Thamel, 4701547

**Gypsy jazz with Hari Maharjan,** with royal couscous and unlimited mint tea, 25 February, Rs1000++, Delices de France, Thamel, 260326 [info@restaurantnepal.com](mailto:info@restaurantnepal.com)

**Happy cocktail hour,** ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7pm  
**Nepali Ghajals** at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30pm, 4468589

**Rudra Night** live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7pm at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212




**Music with Kutumba and Mina P** at Basantapur Darbar Square, 20 Feb at 5pm

**Jazz evening** at Delices de France restaurant every Wednesday, 11am-2pm, 4260326

**HyJazz** at the Rox Bar every Friday evening and **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at The Terrace with live music from Inner Groove, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4489362, 4491234

Acoustic Night at Café Bliss, Jhamsikhel, 5pm onwards, 5528732

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## DINING

**Art in a cup** created with Royal Everest coffee beans at Beans Coffee, Kupondole, 5011713

**Enjoy local brews** with a book at Himalayan Java, Nepal's first specialty coffee house, Tridevi Marg, 4422519

**Coffee and conversation** in a cosy little corner at Magic Beans at Sherpa Mall, Darbar Marg.

**Lavazza Coffee and Baskin n' Robbins**, at Blue Note Coffee Shop, Lazimpat, 4491234

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

**Experience the Gyakok** (hotpot with T-momos, meats and more) for lunch and dinner at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, 4412999 or at Royal Saino Restaurant & Bar, Darbar Marg, 4230890, 4239077



**Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café**, for wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi Internet, 012130681

**Famous stews of the world**, enjoy famous stews of the world at the Rox Restaurant, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 6.00PM onwards, Hyatt Regency, 4491234/4489362

**Strawberry High Tea**, 4.30-6.30pm, The Lounge, Hyatt Regency, 4491234/4489362

**Vegetarian Buffet**, every Monday, **Oriental Nights**, flavours and specialities of Asia every

**Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070

**Live continental BBQ Fiesta**, exclusive BBQ Dinner at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel, from 6.30-10.30pm everyday

**Jazzabell Café**, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8pm, Jhamsikhel, 2114075

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

**Al Fresco**, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, 7-10.45pm, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 4273999

**Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318

Wednesday **Arabian Nights** for Middle Eastern specialities every Friday, 6.30pm at The Café, Hyatt Regency, 4491234/4489362

**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, **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999

**Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999

**Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068

**Gokarna Forest Resort** for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 44512126



## GETAWAYS

**Tiger Tops: Special Re-opening Offer**, 3 Nights/4 Days at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge & Tented Camp, with one night at Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge. US\$534 per person inclusive of all taxes. Offer valid until 28 Feb, 4361500, www.tigermountain.com

**Holi Boat**, all-day rafting and Holi experience on the Trishuli River, Rs3000 package includes transport to and from Kathmandu, breakfast, rafting, lunch, BBQ in Riverside Springs Resort, 28 Feb, contact Yeti Travels, 4221234

**Relax Package** at the Hyatt for Rs 6200 plus taxes for one night accommodation for two, including breakfast at The Cafe. Package valid till Feb 20, for local residents and Nepali citizens for a maximum of 3 nights stay. 4491234 or 4489800.

**Pokhara Paradise Package**, 1 Night/2 Days including buffet dinner and breakfast, happy hours at the Gurkha Bar, discounted spa & golf, till 28 April for Nepalis and resident expats for Rs 3999 per person on twin sharing basis. Call 431482, www.fulbari.com

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13-27 February

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How to make a democratic constitution by Kanak Mani Dixit  
The Maoists need to play a constructive role

## EDITORIAL

Extradition treaty with India

## REPORTS

Jamim Shah Murder:  
Groping in the dark  
We will help our villages, say trainee nurses  
Leading cause of death among young women: suicide

CONSTITUTION  
SUPPLEMENT

Krishna Khanal: "The problem is in the culture not in the model of state structure"  
Chandra Kishore: Let's not forget the geography of the Tarai-Madhes  
Tharus want rights, not a province

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**WEEKEND WEATHER**  
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Don't expect major changes in the weather this weekend. There will be less temperature fluctuation as night temperatures will hold constant owing to clear skies. Days will grow significantly warmer. A light breeze will pick up in the late afternoon and early evening. Satellite pictures show that the system is largely clear so you can look forward to good mountain views.

FRI	SAT	SUN
22-3	23-5	24-5



**OUT AND ABOUT:** President Ram Baran Yadav inspects an honour guard at Delhi's Presidential Palace on Tuesday during his four-day visit to India.



**BROTHERS-IN-ARMS:** State Restructuring Committee members (L-R) Ram Nath Dhakal (UML), Dinanath Sharma (Maoist) and Pratibha Rana (RPP) visiting Army Headquarters on Monday.



**LOVE ETERNAL:** A couple celebrates Valentine's Day at 1905 Restaurant, Sunday



**TWO VIGILS:** Buddhists celebrate Tibetan New Year amidst tight security in Boudha, Sunday



**TECH TRANSFER:** Rotary Club of Patan hands over 80 computers and printers to nine public schools in Lalitpur.



# Looking for a home



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
**Mallika Aryal**

The Nepal Government suspended inter-country adoption in 2007 following evidence that Nepali 'orphanages' were selling children for thousands of dollars to foreign parents. Nepal then drafted new Terms and Conditions on adoption and once again opened shop for potential adoptive parents. Although the new policies were an improvement, they were still full of loopholes and did not prioritise the best interests of the child.

In April 2009, Nepal signed the 1993 Hague Inter-country Adoption Convention. A mission representing the Convention visited Nepal, concluded the 2008 Terms and Conditions were not adequate, and called for temporary suspension of inter-country adoptions from Nepal.

Forty-four Nepali orphanages have been accredited by the government to recommend children for adoption. The Investigation Monitoring and Recommendation Committee established by the Terms and Conditions receives files from orphanages. Its role is to verify the authenticity of each child's file, following which it can recommend the child to the Family Board, which matches



SAM KANG LI

the child with adoptive parents. The committee should be independent, but in Nepal includes representatives from orphanages - a blatant conflict of interest.

In addition, it is bureaucrats, not social workers, who match children with adoptive parents. Investigations focus on whether the paperwork is genuine or not, whereas they should determine if the child has parents, and if local solutions can be found. In many cases the biological parents go from one place to another looking for their children, who may have already been adopted in Kathmandu by foreign parents.

One of the key reasons Nepal suspended inter-country adoption back in 2007 was because large amounts of money (sometimes up to US\$20,000)

## A suspension on inter-country adoption will give the government time to work on strict adoption legislation

were being paid by adoptive parents to facilitators and orphanages in Nepal. Some progress has been made in regulation, but financial gain is still at the heart of most inter-country adoption abuses. Now, once a child is officially approved for adoption, foreign adoptive parents pay \$5,000 to the orphanage, regardless of the time the child has stayed there, and another \$3,000 to the Nepal Government. In addition, 79 international agencies pay \$10,000 per year to be accredited

by the Nepal Government, regardless of whether or not referrals are made. The authorities have not checked if these foreign adoption agencies are registered in their own countries according to the Hague criteria. This means foreign agencies that have been refused accreditation, are under investigation or have been cited for violations in their own countries are allowed to operate in Nepal.

A fund was established to oversee the money received from these foreign agencies and a

management committee has been established under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. The chairperson of the Child NGO Federation-Nepal, who basically represents Nepali orphanages, is a member secretary of this committee. But Bal Mandir and the Central Child Welfare Board are not represented.

It is clear the 2008 Terms and Conditions have failed. The German and Swedish embassies have stopped allowing adoptions under these rules. If Nepal is serious about ratifying the Hague Convention, it needs to start working on firm laws on national and international adoption. A temporary suspension will allow the government time to do so, as was done successfully in Guatemala and Cambodia. However, this suspension must not affect those adoptive parents who have been matched already.

Children without parents do not belong to orphanages. If they do not have anyone in their families they can live with it is the State's responsibility to assign appropriate guardians. There is a growing number of Nepali parents who want to adopt and can give children safe homes. Let us seriously develop foster families and in-country adoption. Only where this is not possible should we send a child abroad permanently. 🇳🇵

*See also:*  
'Baby Bajar/On sale', #339  
'Floodgates closed', #387  
'Abandoned', #417

# Cinderella Children

PHILIP HOLMES

Last week three Nepali boys aged 8, 9 and 10 were removed from juvenile 'homes' in Kolkata by a rescue team from the Esther Benjamins Memorial Foundation (EBMF), working in close cooperation with the Nepalese Consulate. The two oldest boys had been detained there for four years, and the youngest, Suraj, for three years.

Suraj's face still bears the scars of a vicious attack by a mentally disturbed juvenile who was also held at the centre. All three boys had originally run away from abusive step-parents. They found their way onto the streets of India and, through the police, into the juvenile detention centres.

The boys' release coincided with calls from organisations such as UNICEF and Terre des Hommes to suspend, once again, inter-country adoptions from Nepal. The organisations accuse the government of failing to meet commitments to bring the adoption process in line with the Hague Convention it ratified in 2009, and disregarding the child protection that should be central to adoption procedures. Terre des Hommes claims 62 per cent of children in 'orphanages' actually have both parents and many could be with their families.

However, orphans (genuine or otherwise) are not the whole story; government criteria include step-children as candidates for inter-country adoption. This recognises that it is common in Nepal for step-children like Suraj to be unwanted within new marital relationships.



JAMES MORGAN

## Suspending inter-country adoption will deny kids in need the chance of a better life

It would be bad enough if such children were unwanted and treated as de facto slaves, like Cinderella. EBMF has found children sometimes run away from abuse to live on the streets and have been sold by step-parents to be trafficked into Indian circuses.

Arguably these children could have been cared for under

family support, kinship or domestic adoption arrangements. EBMF tried the first of these to reintegrate refugee children with families, but found that material support could not buy the love of step-parents, and the children returned to the refuge. Since relatives are often directly involved in trafficking children, kinship arrangements are a very high risk option.

Domestic options, including adoption, should take precedence over inter-country adoption in line with the Hague Convention's 'Subsidiarity Principle'. But it is worth keeping in mind that Nepal has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 144, compared to such adoption destinations as the USA (HDI 13), Spain (HDI 15) and Italy (HDI 18). Suspending inter-country adoption means denying a child the prospects that droves of their fellow-Nepalis are leaving Nepal to access.

The nightmare scenario now is that the call for a blanket suspension of inter-country adoption may be heeded, and followed by another prolonged period of indecision. But reforms could be introduced very easily. The ridiculously high financial return to the government, agencies and orphanages from inter-country adoption should be reduced. Doubtful cases should be investigated thoroughly. But clear cut cases such as those of unwanted step-children should be fast-tracked for inter-country adoption before a worse fate befalls them.

Every day a child spends in a grim orphanage is a developmental disaster. Nepal's Cinderella Children should be protected by preserving what I believe to be the preferred alternative to inadequate domestic alternatives, the oblivion of India or the abyss of the domestic sex trade. 🇳🇵

*The author is the Country Director of Esther Benjamins Trust - Nepal, and the father of two adopted Nepali children. This article represents his personal views. [www.ebtrust.org.uk](http://www.ebtrust.org.uk)*





NANDA RANA

# Back to the jungle

NIRMAL GHOSH in BANGKOK

Across China, tiger merchandise is all the rage at the start of the Year of the Tiger. In India, celebrities are involved in campaigns to save the real tiger. Yet there are still many Chinese who would rather eat bits and pieces of a tiger than save the great cat in the wild. And there are still many Indians who do not see why it is necessary to save the tiger. Estimates put the number of tigers in the wild across 13 Asian countries at around 3,200, down

from 5,000-7,000 in the last Year of the Tiger in 1998. India has 1,400 wild tigers left, and 23 were killed by poachers in 2009. Nepal has 121 adult wild tigers but has lost at least 28 in the last five years to poaching. Many tigers are in small populations in remnant patches of habitat, are constantly under threat and short of prey. Poachers kill not only the tigers for their bones, organs and skin, but also their prey (deer and wild boar) for meat. Small populations are also

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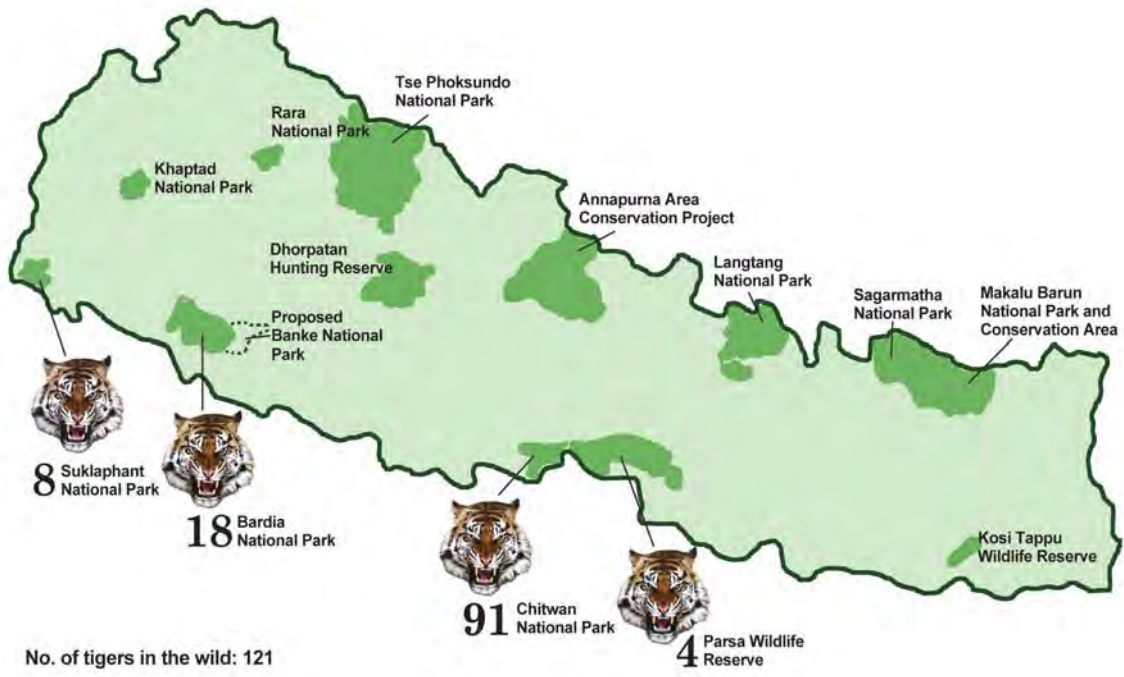
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genetically vulnerable. There are only a few areas which, if protected and ideally also restored, could support more tigers. These include Thailand's 17,870 sq km western forest complex, overlapping Burma's Tenasserim region. Northern India's Terai Arc landscape, shared with Nepal, is historically the most productive breeding ground for tigers. But both the Indo-Nepal and Thai-Burma landscapes have habitat breaks that need to be restored to link sub-populations.

The most basic requirement remains that of protecting tigers, and on the demand side, China's role is critical. Despite studies showing tiger bones and organs are no different to those of dogs, pigs and goats, there is still demand. Wild tigers regularly turn up in Thailand sawn in half and stuffed into the boots of cars carrying them up the Malay peninsula to China. Once chopped up and passed up the line, the sum of a tiger's parts can fetch up to US\$70,000.

China, backed by owners of tiger farms with over 6,000 of the big cats in stock alive or dead in deep freezes, has been trying to get the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to agree to opening up the market for farmed tigers. A proposal to this effect is reportedly ready for the next



No. of tigers in the wild: 121

CITES conference in Doha in April.

The farms claim that opening up the trade will flood the market with tiger parts, lowering prices and removing the incentive for poaching wild tigers. But it costs up to \$4,000 a year to rear a tiger in captivity, and less than \$25 to have one killed in the wild. Everywhere in the world, traders and smugglers exploit the smallest price differentials. Consumers will also prefer wild tigers to farmed cats, creating a black market.

At a meeting in Hua Hin in Thailand last month, officials

Will the real tiger survive until the next year of the tiger in 2022?

from 13 Asian tiger range countries pledged to double the number of tigers in the wild by 2022, the next Year of the Tiger. Studies in India and Thailand suggest this is achievable, but the challenge is to restore broken jungle corridors linking habitats.

The WWF and the World Bank (which, thanks to its president Robert Zoellick is a recent convert to tiger conservation) are planning a Tiger Summit in Vladivostok in September. It will be chaired by Zoellick and Russian Premier Vladimir Putin.

Hua Hin warned of trouble ahead. A World Bank statement saying China's tiger farms should be shut down irritated the Chinese. And India snubbed the World Bank, sending a junior official. Granted, the World Bank saving tigers is a hard sell in India, where its track record shows wildlife habitat has always been "acceptable collateral damage", in the words of Mumbai-based conservationist Bittu Sahgal, editor of *Sanctuary* magazine.

Separately last month, India said it would release over \$200 million to relocate communities from tiger habitats. In recent years tigers have completely disappeared from at least two sanctuaries in India, and may be on the way out in about half a dozen more.

Whether the tiger's call in the wild will still be heard 12 years from now, or if today's children will grow up to see the great cats only in cages, can be decided only by local protection and enforcement in its last few viable habitats.

*Nirmal Ghosh is a conservationist and senior foreign correspondent for The Straits Times. He is also a Trustee of conservation NGO The Corbett Foundation. Full version of this article at www.nepalitimes.com*

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**Completed applications have to reach the Nepā School office by 4:30 pm, Friday, 5 March, 2010.**

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# Dig deeper

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 17 February

कान्तिपुर

According to the police the mastermind of media owner Jamim Shah's assassination were Bharat Nepali and Balloo Shrivastav, both of whom are operatives of Indian underworld don, Chhota Rajan. The murder was planned by an Indian named Babloo and Dipak Shahi and two others. But the only person in custody so far is Prakash Chhetri, a policeman accused of being an accomplice. Why was Shah killed? How did all the perpetrators manage to get away?

It is a serious matter if it's true that a policeman was involved. On top of that, Chhetri was assigned to the US Embassy in Kathmandu as a liaison officer. Another ex-DSP Jagdish Chand reportedly was in frequent phone contact with Balloo Shrivastav, but his name has been dropped from the list of suspects after pressure from higher up. The perpetrators reportedly planned the attack in the house of ex-DIG Gyanendra Rai. How come so many policemen and Indians were knowingly or unknowingly involved? Balloo Shrivastav is in an Indian jail. The state should initiate procedures to get the Indians extradited. The international



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

aspects of this case need to be investigated. Why were Indian gangsters coming to Nepal to kill Shah? Why didn't they kill him in an easier location, but choose a busy high-security zone? Is there a political or psychological message in the murder? One lead could be another assassination 11 years ago of MP Mirza

Alam Beg; the police believe the same group carried out both murders. At that time Chhota Rajan admitted involvement and described himself as a "nationalist out to exterminate all anti-Indian groups" with links to intelligence agencies. The truth will only be known if we know who were the hidden forces behind Chhota Rajan and Balloo Shrivastav.

# Inverter import ban ill-considered

Editorial, *Abhiyan*, February 15-21, 2010

अभियान

The government has banned the import of inverters, effective last Wednesday. It has reasoned that the inverters, which charge batteries so power is available during load-shedding hours, are inefficient and are exacerbating load-shedding. The Energy Ministry also intends to discourage the use of inverters by implementing the ban on importing inverters. The Nepal Electricity Authority also claims that if inverters were totally banned, load-shedding could be reduced by two hours daily. In the last three years, 30 brands of inverters have been imported into the Nepali market. The inverter business is worth about Rs 500 million a year. Prices range from Rs 4000 to the hundreds of thousands. Though on the surface the ban on inverter imports appears to be positive, it only reveals the short-sightedness of those who allowed the growing use of



inverters all these years. It's not as if Nepal's power shortfall, and the accompanying load-shedding, is anything new. The government's decision has meant that the price of some imported inverters has shot up; this will only encourage the black market, which will thrive across the open border with India and the black market across the Nepal-China border at Tatopani. Smugglers will benefit – Nepali customers will suffer. An energy use policy is imperative that takes into account the minimum necessities of citizens, such as the use of a couple of CFL bulbs. Solar energy should be encouraged, and the 'solar plan' aimed at rural and urban residents should be further developed and made attractive to customers. It is also key to plug the leakage of upto 30 per cent from the national electricity grid, find ways to link small power producers to the grid, and make arrangements with neighbouring countries to boost supply.

# "Ms Sujata! You may go."

Santosh Ghimire in *Naya Patrika*, 15 February

नयाँ पत्रिका

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala appeared before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to clarify the cancellation of the international bidding process for Machine Readable Passports (MRP). The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) had circulated a directive to its members to upgrade passports to machine readable versions a decade ago but the government did nothing for nine years.



The foreign ministry suddenly cancelled the bidding process that had finally begun six months ago. It will take at least another six months for a new bidding process and printing of the MRPs. As per ICAO law, no conventional passport issued after 1 April 2010 will be valid. However, those issued before the deadline will be valid until November 2015. When Sujata Koirala arrived for questioning, she looked restless and was in a hurry. She tried to deflect the barrage of questions and responded too fast. Here is the conversation between one of the committee members, Prakash Chandra Lohani, and Minister Koirala:

**Lohani: Four companies were on the short-list. So one of the companies had to be given the contract. But the bidding process was stopped. Why?**  
Koirala: How long shall we talk about this? Ask me something else.

**Aren't you the Foreign Minister? You have to answer all the questions this committee has.**  
I have other programs to attend. I am in a hurry. Please talk faster.

**Who are you to give directions to the committee? I am not your secretary. You may go.**  
Why are you angry? How many times are we going to repeat this conversation?



"There is a small hole here."  
Umbrella: Peace and security

कान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 12 February

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# Political culture is the problem

**Himal Khabarpatrika: The committee on system of governance failed to present an 'ideal' governance system. Weren't the models floated in the committee any good?**

**Krishna Khanal:** The committee failed to propose a single model even after voting on the main proposal and those of the dissenters. There are clearly three models for a governance system. The Maoists' model of the presidential system got 18 votes but failed to garner a majority. The UML/NC proposal for an executive prime minister elected through parliament got 14 votes, while TMLP's proposal for an elected president through parliament got three votes.

For those who truly believe in democracy, the governance model is not as important as the principles involved. First, there should be an elected government. The biggest party should lead the government. Second, the government should be accountable and capable of governing and delivering services to the public. They should not be in power forever once they get elected. There should be periodic elections: usually 3-6 years in democratic countries.

The executive president as proposed by the Maoists would also be elected through periodic elections. We can make a provision to ensure such a president would only be eligible to serve two terms. The reformed model proposed by UML and NC is the Westminster model of parliament, which is a popular model. An added provision in this model is that a no-confidence motion shall not be tabled twice in the same parliamentary session. The 1990 constitution also had this provision but it did not work, as parties resorted to special sessions of parliament to table such motions.

Although TLMP's proposed model is similar to the Westminster model, it has an executive president instead of a prime minister, as is the case in certain African countries, where parliament elects the president.

Therefore, all these models are democratic models. An elected government through periodic elections and an accountable and capable government to ensure good governance is what people want.

**Why isn't there a consensus if all models are in line with democratic norms? A lack of expert advice?**

Lack of inter-party dialogue and rigid party stances prevented a consensus. The discussion on the proposals was not sufficient and the other democratic models were not even discussed..

There was expert advice but the

political leaders didn't make use of it. For instance, why did UML suddenly abandon its official proposal and support the NC proposal? TMLP did not support a directly elected executive, as that would not benefit small parties. Since the Maoists won the last election, they opted for a directly elected executive. However, we have to look at this proposal in its totality. It is important to know what kind of legislative, judiciary and executive they have proposed. One can see that the Maoists' proposal leaves open the possibility of a totalitarian leadership. For instance, they have

All three models proposed are based on a first past the post system. The Maoists and TMLP have different opinions on the election of an executive president. NC and UML are parliamentarians traditionally. Although the parliamentary system is unstable, the government is more accountable to the public. The executive presidential system is stable but not as accountable. The British saw the monarchy as a symbol of continuity and they chose the parliamentary system to make government more accountable. The Americans wanted stability and opted

**Why do you think the Westminster model didn't work in Nepal?**

Because we lacked the necessary political culture. This model is characterised by government and opposition in parliament. The party in majority leads the government and other parties make up the opposition, also called the government in anticipation. They wait until the people vote them into power, whether that takes 10, 20 or 50 years. In 15 years of parliamentary practice, our political parties did not exhibit the necessary patience to play the opposition. NC, which supported this system, didn't even stay out of government for six months at a time. The opposition has the right to criticise the works of the government. In parliamentary culture, they play a productive role outside of government, and there needn't be requests for a national unity government. We need to revise the form of state governance in light of our political culture. This is the job of political parties and intellectuals.

**Could a directly elected prime minister fulfill our needs?**

A directly elected executive prime minister might be new to many of us. The checks and balances system will be weak in the presidential system but in a directly elected prime ministerial system there will be a set of control mechanisms. There are two reasons for Nepal to go for such a prime ministerial system. First, the country's diversity should be reflected at the highest government levels. For that, federal and provincial parliaments can elect the president, who can exercise limited power. Second, if the popularly elected prime minister exceeds his authority, the president can correct him.

**What form of state governance would you recommend?**

A directly elected executive PM is not a bad option. As the country has become a federal republic, it is realistic to have an executive elected directly by the people. It does not matter which system: prime ministerial or presidential, but the executive should be directly elected by the people. However, the presidential system should be different from the Maoist proposal, which doesn't maintain an appropriate balance of powers. The conventional parliamentary system won't work now. Therefore, a directly elected executive prime minister and a president elected by the federal and provincial parliaments will be the most appropriate model.



**Political culture is more important than the model of governance for democrats, says political scientist Krishna Khanal in this Himal Khabarpatrika interview**

proposed a unicameral parliament while they advocate a federal system. Their system lacks checks and balances for legislative bodies. Besides, they have also demanded supremacy of parliament. They have even recommended control via a parliamentary special committee of other organs of the state. The Panchayat regime had this structure. The Maoists' model on the form of state governance is questionable for this reason.

**Which of these models is most suitable for us?**

for a presidential model, as there was nothing that could bring them all together.

The monarch is now gone. Though we never took him as a symbol of unity, we do need stability. That is why the president should represent diversity, not continuity, and we should have a directly elected executive prime minister. In the past, we never got a stable government even if a party got majority. Given the nature of our parties, a directly elected PM could mean more stability.



# Placating the planets



None of you who watched on tv the **Suzie Jost vs Moonlight Lohani** squabble in the Public Accounts Committee in parliament the other day now has any reason to complain about our politics. This was audiovisual entertainment at its very best. “Am I your secretary? Am I your PA,” thundered Lohani. The reference was to SuzyQ’s assistant, who has admitted to selling Nepali passports to Afghans. Now that parliament has got into the act you can bet your left ass that we are not going to have MRPs by the ICAO April deadline.

Every political party in this country is split between a disgruntled faction and a gruntled faction, so it is now going to be even more difficult to resolve the political deadlock. You may, for example, get the Baddies and the Kangresis to smoke the peace pipe, but the very next day the gruntled faction in the NC is going to practice wushu on the GP & Dotter faction, or vice versa. The Old Fox, it is now apparent, is harassing the UML-led govt so he can get the Baddies to get him to power. But it’s not true Girjau wants the **prime minister’s chair**. He actually wants the **prime minister’s bed**.

When the king went off on state visits in a royal cavalcade the whole city used to grind to a halt, and it used to be a national holiday. We hear the cabinet (for old time’s sake) nearly passed an edict to declare the president’s departure date a holiday and order a 18-gun salute, but Shit All Nibas vetoed the idea. Radio Nepal has restarted the Panchayati tradition of informing listeners in its morning news bulletins that PM Nepal has felicitated the **King of Tonga** on his auspicious birthday.

The parallels with Animal Farm are getting a bit uncanny. The whiff of Farmer Jones is strongest with Chairman Awesomeness who has gone from atheist to agnostic to a full-blown fundu. First, he visits jyotisis in Sunsari who put the fear of god into him by warning him that his Saturn is totally off whack. To placate the planets, they advised him to worship a **she-water buffalo**, which he promptly does. Quizzed about this by local reporters, Fearsome’s soundbite is our quote of the week: “I have discovered that astrology is very scientific. This country needs a fusion of spiritualism and materialism.”

Nepal’s leaders have always fallen over themselves to seek the blessings of Indian godmen. Which is why Prez Ram Baron helicoptered to Haridwar to touch the feet of Pilot Baba. And when Chandra Swami came to Kathmandu for Shivaratri, it wasn’t suprising that the ex-king, ex-PMs and the current PM all trooped off to the Everest Hotel to have their futures foretold. What was a little surprising was that Comrade Fabulous was among them, but a lot more surprising was what that he confessed to Chandra Swami: “Baba, it was a mistake to declare Nepal a secular state, and we haven’t done enough homework on federalism.” **Now he tells us.**

Nepal’s problems can be summarised in a **nutshell** Our socialists are anti-social and our communists are communal.



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