At Sundarijal, the water runs crystal clear, gurgling down from Shivapuri. translucent fish dart in the cool pools among the boulders, and water birds peck gingerly along the sand banks. The air is scented with forest flowers.

Just five kilometres downstream, as the Bagmati passes Gokarna, the stench is already overpowering. Large cement pipes dump yellowish sewage into the river. Further down, new squatter settlements come right down to the river with plastic privies dotting the water’s edge. At Pashupati, there is just a small channel to take the ashes of the cremations. Sand mining has caused the collapse of the Sinamangal bridge, and surprisingly the sand is still being extracted by women carrying dokos full of wet sand. The black water slithers through canyons of rubbish towards Teku, and along the banks age-old religious festivals worshipping the holy river go on amidst the squalor and stench.

At Chobhar, the holy site where Manjushree sliced the mountain to let the water out and create the Bagmati Valley Civilisation, the white water is caused by detergents tumbling over boulders.

On World Environment Day, let us help the youth clubs, environmental groups and heritage conservation organisations helping to revive a river that once defined what was best about the Kathmandu Valley.
There is nothing in the 3-point resolution reached just before midnight last Friday that is not already in the 12-point, 40-point, or 6-point agreements that have gone before.

Striking an agreement is not the problem, the difficulty is putting it into practice. Why is it that we, the Nepali people, are unable to act with the vision and determination we expect? The politicians are often willing to put on a brave face and say the right things, but then the curtain is dropped and the reality is revealed. The language of the politicians is often vacuous and insubstantial, devoid of concrete action.

This deadlock is breathtaking.

We have a habit here of always looking at the bright side, however, and this time, too, we could say, “It could have been worse.” The 3-point agenda may be a dud, but at least the CA term was extended. The last-minute non-deal pushed us back from the edge of the cliff. It was a face-saving collection of words that bought time for more bickering for sure, but not extending the CA would have invited an even more dangerous scenario of instability and upheaval.

The extremists of the right and left would have exploited the fluid situation to push through their agenda of turning the clock back, and squeezing the democratic middle.

There are only two ways ahead. One is to be cynical about it and say the Maoists will never compromise, the prime minister will never resign, and one year won’t be enough. The other is to strengthen the moderate and pragmatic voices within all three parties so that they look beyond their partisan ambitions to the long-term national interest.

Just one glance at the economy may be instructive:

The contraction of the banking sector continues, high interest rates have killed new investments and the balance of trade deficit with India has created a shortage of Indian rupees and fostered a black market in cash. The nation and the people can’t take this punishment for much longer.

It doesn’t really matter who gets to be prime minister. In fact, “none of the above” would be the way to go, handing over day-to-day governance to a small team of technocrats within each party that can get the economy moving again, improve service delivery and basic law and order so businesses are not extorted and people can live without fear of being kidnapped.

The politicians can then concentrate on what they were elected to do: write an inclusive, democratic constitution that will extricate this country from the quagmire they have got us into.
O n the night of 27 May, NC's Krishna Sitaula and Amresh Singh met Prachanda. They told him the PM would not resign the next day, and deserved an honourable exit. If the Maoists extended the CA and moved one step on the peace process, the NC would get the PM to resign in a few days. Prachanda did not buy that. The NC negotiators had a similar conversation with Dr Bhutanri the same night and early next morning, and also met the PM to assure him of full support.

On the final day, all top leaders were in the CA, but the core negotiation were Sitaula, Singh, Bishnu Rawal and Krishna Bahadur Malla. The Maoists first proposed that extension and move on the process, the NC would get the PM to resign in a few days. Prachanda did not buy that. The NC negotiators had a similar conversation with Dr Bhutanri the same night and early next morning, and also met the PM to assure him of full support.

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Back from the brink

The three parties signed a three-point agreement minutes before the term of the Constituent Assembly was due to expire last Friday. The agreement paved the way to extend the CA term by a year, but almost a week after the agreement there are no signs of moving the peace process ahead. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal had agreed to resign as part of the deal, but has now said he will only do so after the Maoists come up with a specific plan and timetable for combatant management. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal initially said he felt betrayed but his party has now agreed to present a proposal for the integration of PLA combatants.

Botched honours

What should have been a celebratory mood after the government announced its decision to honour 289 personalities for their ‘distinctive contribution to the country’ as part of the Republic Day celebrations has turned sour. A number of high-profile recipients refused to accept the awards. Actors Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansha Acharya, and journalists Kanak Mani Dixit and Yubaraj Acharya rejected the decorations, questioning the selection process. Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha chided the government for awarding medals to five judges, saying it had affected the independence of the judiciary. Families of the victims of Jana Andolan-II also condemned the decision.

E early this month, Gorkhapatra marked its 110th year of publication without much fanfare. Started as a weekly pamphlet to propagate the supposed virtues of Rana rule, Gorkhapatra has remained the trusted mouthpiece of the government. The tone and tenor of the paper’s content changes with every change of guard at Singh Darbar. However, since the Constituent Assembly elections two years ago, Gorkhapatra has acquired a somewhat different image. It’s now one of the least biased newspapers in the country. Part of the relative neutrality of this government publication can be attributed to the survival instinct of its employees. With a hung legislature, there is no way of knowing who is going to head the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. With profit and prestige as their primary motives, partisanship comes naturally to the proprietary media. The extent and scale of deforestation in the Tarai, for instance, is eerily reminiscent of the pre-Referendum devastation wrought to ensure the survival of the Panchayat regime. Law and order in the country has all but collapsed. Industrialists openly threaten to withhold taxes. Diplomats dictate terms undiplomatically. Despite mounting evidence of acts of omission and commission on the part of the current government, there is desisting silence on the media front. It’s the mortal fear of a Maoist takeover that has transformed the Nepali media into the willing accomplices of the government.

Complicity journalism

There’s something wrong when state-controlled media is less biased than the free press
A way from the political turmoil in the capital, a quiet revolution in rural Nepal has made this country a world leader in alternative energy. In the past 50 years, over 205,000 households have built biogas plants to turn farm manure into methane gas for cooking and lighting. The simplicity of the Nepali-designed technology that allows bacteria already inside the cow’s stomach to turn cowdung into a clean and safe gas is only half the story.

The other half is a successful government-subsidised soft credit scheme. There is almost 100 per cent payback, the effluent is excellent pathogen-free fertiliser, and the elimination of indoor pollution from kitchen fires has reduced child mortality.

The Nepali fixed-dome biogas design is cheap and maintenance free, and proved to be superior to Indian and Chinese models. After initial support from the United Mission to Nepal, the Dutch group SNV stepped in with the Biogas Support Program (BSP), and millions of farmers in nearly all districts of Nepal have benefited in the past decades.

Today, 98 per cent of the plants are still functioning, some of them nearly 30 years old. Nearly 20,000 new plants are being added every year and BSP’s goal is to have a total of 500,000 plants in Nepal. The organisation won the prestigious Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy in 2005.

One of the limiting factors is that biogas doesn’t work as well in the cold climate at higher elevations. But with its new pilot plants in Langtang, BSP has found a simple way to generate methane from yak dung even at higher altitudes.

Pasang Dendi Sherpa, a trekking guide, is happy with the biogas plant in his hometown. “It saves us a lot of firewood, and I wish more people would use it,” he says.

What Pasang Dendi and other high-altitude biogas users have done is to pile a compost heap on top of the underground digester so that the yak dung can be converted into cooking gas.

FIRE AND ICE: To make biogas work in cold climates, like this plant in Kyangjin Gompa in Langtang uses a compost heap to insulate the underground digester so the yak dung can be converted into cooking gas.

Heap composting to insulate digesters is a small-is-beautiful solution that needs no added cost, and the compost itself can be recycled for fertiliser. Biogas can now go to mountain regions, where replacing firewood for cooking is even more important to protect the environment.

BSP’s executive director Saroj Rai is not someone who rests on his laurels. He is happy that Nepal’s biogas program is an internationally acclaimed success story because of the ‘ecology of support’ it has from the government, banks, donors, technicians and farmers. But he wants to concentrate on making the technology even more widely available, and maintain the quality of the construction and after-sales service.

Says Rai: “Biogas is perfect energy solution for rural Nepal, and it is regarded as a model for other countries as well.”

See also: ‘Nepal’s future is in the dung heap’, #234

‘Conching takes the cake’, #257
The age of enlightenment

AHMAD ISKANDAR

Necessity is the mother of invention, they say. Sure enough with the prospect of at least six more years of power cuts, businesses, homes and offices in Nepal are all migrating to solar power in a big way. Going solar isn’t going to make you more environmentally friendly in Nepal because hydroelectricity already accounts for 99 per cent of supply. But if you use diesel gensets to tide over long loadshedding hours, then it does make sense to use the abundant free energy from the sun.

Solar comes in two types: passive solar heating of water for the household, and electricity generation through photo-voltaic panels. Nepal’s urban homes and trek lodges routes have been using locally built solar water heaters for 30 years now. But solar cells for electricity are becoming more popular with the price of photo-voltaics coming down.

Across Patan, the World Food Programme (WFP) office recently completed the first phase conversion of its entire office to solar power, even when there is electricity from the mains. “Our annual electricity bill is $20,000, and we spend $12,000 on diesel,” explains WFP’s Tyler McMahon. “We hope to cut the utility bills by half once the whole system is in place and will completely eliminate the diesel bill for the generator.”

It’s not just big international organisations that are going solar. Electronic engineer Surendra Mathema has put his technical knowledge to good use at home where he has a fully solar 200W backup for the whole house, a passive solar water heating system and even a parabolic solar dish for heating water. Mathema also uses LED lights to reduce energy consumption and CFLs wherever he can.

“The great thing about solar is that it’s a one-time investment, once you set it up everything is free,” he says.

The next challenge is to convince NEA to buy back power when home generators like Mathema or organisations like ICIMOD have a surplus. This ‘making the meter run backward’ technology would not just turn households into power supply sources, but also help reduce loadshedding on the grid. The only obstacle is to introduce the technology and set up the regulatory framework.

The time and money invested by Nepal’s solar pioneers show much promise, and finally proves there may be a light at the end of the tunnel after all.
Reviving the river

The Bagmati River is an open sewer. The sewage that pollutes it is proof of everything that has gone wrong with this metropolis: the exponential urbanisation, the lack of planning, haphazard growth and non-existent waste management.

“Tha flat area used to be paddy fields,” says Hom Prasad Banskota, 83, pointing to Jorpati across the Bagmati from Gokhtar heights. Now it is built over with new houses, not a shred of green fields is visible. Krishna Prasad Banskota, 73, blames democracy for the urban disarray: “We used to drink water from the river. Now, you can’t stand the stink of the river.”

The High Powered Committee for Integrated Development of Bagmati Civilisation is trying to save what is left. But it is an uphill task. Says the Committee’s Ram Chandra Devkota, “We need more waste treatment plants, and we also need to recharge the groundwater, harvest rainwater and build check dams to revive the river.”

The city plan prohibits construction within 20 metres of either side of the river, but that rule has been ignored for a long time now. The Committee plans to develop a green belt of 12 metres on either bank and an 8 metre road. But demarcating the river border is a real problem as the land is already registered in the names of individuals.

The health of a city’s river says a lot about the city itself. There are a few bright spots along the stretch of the Bagmati, mostly on account of local endeavours, but we will all need to be involved if we are to bring the river back to life.

The source of the Bagmati lies in Shivapuri National Park.

TEKU

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During the last Year of the Tiger in 1998, Time magazine predicted that the tiger would be extinct in the wild by the end of the century. Like many such media predictions, the prophecy, thankfully, proved premature. That was largely due to the efforts of conservationists and governments to rescue the big cats from the threats of poaching and habitat destruction.

Hemanta Mishra is Nepal’s foremost tiger conservationist and a veteran of Chitwan National Park. Bones of the Tiger: Protecting the Maneaters of Nepal is his just-released memoir about tiger conservation. It has fascinating insights on Nepal’s tigers, all the way from the early hunting expeditions, the royal patronage that led to the setting up of the Chitwan sanctuary, and tiger research and relocation. Mishra left Nepal in 1996, worked for the Smithsonian and the World Wildlife Fund and published The Soul of the Rhino in 2008. His latest book is a significant contribution to the endeavour to ensure the survival of the wild tiger until the next Year of the Tiger in 2022.

Bones of the Tiger: Protecting The Maneaters of Nepal
Lyons Press, Connecticut, USA
2010

Climate skeptics have had a field day with the controversy over the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change’s fudging of figures on the extent of glacial retreat. But for the citizens of the Himalaya, climate change is not just theory, it is a fact of life and they see its effects all around them everyday. However, there has been no real study about how far the expanding glacial lakes are a result of global warming, which lakes are vulnerable, and indeed, the field has been lacking an inventory of Himalayan glacial lakes in China, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Pakistan. Kathmandu-based ICIMOD seeks to plug the gap with the definitive tome on glacial lakes and the risk of outburst floods. Formation of Glacial Lakes in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas and GLOF Risk Assessment was co-authored by three of the world’s specialists on glacial lakes: Jack Ives, Rajendra Shrestha and Pradeep Mool.

Formation of Glacial Lakes in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas and GLOF Risk Assessment
Jack Ives, Rajendra Shrestha and Pradeep Mool
ICIMOD, Kathmandu
2010
Green Dance Party, Tri-Chandra College’s students want to raise awareness about climate change by dancing the afternoon away. We do not really know how the two go together, but everyone needs a reason to party.

Friday 4 June, 2pm onwards, Insomnia Club, 9844347718

Baneswor Street Festival, pay a visit to the Carbon Neutral Concert featuring Nima Rumba, Rubicon, Mukti &Revival and other famous names in music, as well as the mural art, photo exhibitions and documentary shows to mark the World Environment Day.

Saturday 5 June, starts at 12pm, Baneswor

Docskool Friday Film Show, Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask, a sequence of comedic shorts by Woody Allen, loosely based on the book of the same name by David Reuben.

Friday 4 June, 3pm, Docskool, Gaurighat, 4471104

E-car Rally, the second such rally in Kathmandu has this tiny, sprightly cars driving to Banepa and back on a single charge, as a fundraiser for the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre.

Saturday 5 June, Starts at 8am, from Maligaha, Mandal

Bagnati River Festival, it’s not much of a festival, more a cleaning session of the stinky river than runs through the capital – well, at least a part of it. Bring a nose mask and lots of good vibes.

Saturday 5 June, 7am, Pashupati

Saturday’s Farmer’s Market, a weekly farmers’ market that is different from all the other farmers’ markets in town with lasagne, pies and Mediterranean treats along with organic fruits and vegetables.

Every Saturday, 9am to noon, 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath

Putaliko Ghar, a Nepali adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, which has seen more than 180 performances in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Denmark and Norway. Starts Friday June 4 (everyday except Mondays) 5:30pm, Gurukul, Old Baneswor.

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, for the real taste of Tibetan Gyakok, a hot pot affair with dumplings, meats and vegetables. Candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night.

Boudha, 2130681

The Factory, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Don’t miss out on their cheesecake, it’s a must.

Mandala Street, Thamel

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The monsoon is still at least a week away. But with the humidity building up, the pre-monsoon showers are upon us. The moisture build-up has intensified with the injection of water vapour from a cyclone that is battering the Arabian Peninsula and its tentacles are riding the jet stream towards us.

Expect afternoon thunderstorms, lots of sound and fury, but not as much rain over the weekend. The real monsoon show should start next weekend, and this satellite radar composite on Thursday afternoon shows monsoon systems over Bangladesh and offshore from Kerala.

**VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**

**POSITION:** Programme Coordinator

CWS Welfare Scheme (CWS) is a UK-based charity with its head office in Pokhara which supports organisations in Nepal which work with disadvantaged and marginalised children, young people and their communities, with the aim of transforming their lives and providing them with a productive future.

CWS is looking for a dynamic, mature and confident professional to lead one of our most interesting and challenging projects implemented by our partner CWGN.

Program Coordinator for YUOTI Vocational Training Centre

Qualifications: Higher academic qualification preferred.

Salary: Negotiable

1. Experience:
   At least 5 years’ experience in the field of education management, preferably technical education and vocational training. Experience in leadership, administration, strategic planning and management. Experience in working with children and young people from difficult and disadvantaged backgrounds.

2. Skills required:
   - Can work independently and has strong leadership skills
   - Excellent and effective communication and coordination skills
   - Ability to face challenges and difficulties in positive, creative and logical way
   - Excellent planning, monitoring and reporting skills
   - Knowledge of children’s rights and child protection issues
   - Creative, exploring new ideas and showing initiative
   - Excellent writing English and computer skills
   - Financial management skills
   - A strong practical & hands-on approach

3. A proven track record in:
   - Senior management of Educational/Vocational organisations
   - Social enterprise set up, management and coordination.
   - People’s management and performance management monitoring

Further information about the work of YUOTI can be found at www.yuoti.org.

Interested applicants should, in the first instance, forward a copy of their curriculum vitae along with a statement of interest for:个工作

The closing date for applications will be June 12th, 2010

**TRIPLE TANDEM:** Mohammad Isdakhad of Ghorahi takes a ride on his bike designed to carry three people, which can be pedalled by two.

**OLD TRADITIONS:** Young girls and women queue outside Chobar’s Jal Binayak on Mangal Chaturdashi on Tuesday.

**SCHOOL IS HARD WORK:** School children from Kathmandu take a hike in Sundarijal as part of their school field trip on Sunday.
Maoist threats have stopped preparatory work on a $600 million Indian hydropower joint venture on the Marsyangdi, showing how political instability is affecting infrastructure work on the ground and possibly what lies in store for the country under federalism.

The Rs 70 billion Upper Marsyangdi-II project entails building a 15 km tunnel from Dhampur, Tal Bajar in Manang to the powerhouse in Syange of Lamjung, and is being jointly built by India’s GMR and the Nepali company Himtal Hydro. When completed in five years it will export electricity to India and also provide power to Nepal’s domestic grid.

However, the preparatory work on the project has been stalled since February by the Maoists as part of their anti-India campaign. Eighty per cent of the detailed project planning had been completed, including a 300 km tunnel to study the geology of the area. Eight engineers and 80 workers have left because of the prolonged deadlock.

The Maoist Tamu Liberation Front closed down work, threatening the consequences, and the district administration has stood by, helpless. They say the project is anti-national, and because the electricity will go to India.

“We will only allow large projects like these after the large restructuring commission determines the sharing of natural resources between the central and federal units,” Maoist Lamjung in-charge Devendra Parijul (pic. above) told us.

However, district leaders of other political parties say the only thing holding things up is the Maoist demand for a payoff before letting the work resume, which GMR and Himtal have denied them.

“This is not about nationalism or sovereignty, its because the company and the Maoists are bargaining about extortion,” says Krishna Koirala of the NC. The UML’s Juminda Ghale agrees. He says local all-party meetings have proposed that the work should be allowed to go on because the locals would benefit from it, but the Maoists refuse to listen.

Seventy per cent of the population of Lamjung are Gurung and other indigenous people, and the district chairman of the Janjati Federation Khem Jung Gurung says: “The project people are willing to talk, but the Maoists are pursuing their own political agenda at the cost of our development. I don’t understand what the Maoists get out of this.”

The stoppage of the Upper Marsyangdi-II project mirrors national level political polarisation, and provides an ominous portent of how carving up Nepal into federal units will complicate natural resource exploitation at a time when both water and power have become precious commodities.

“Development should not have to wait for federalism. After all, work here now doesn’t make sense. Where’s the dignity of telling the world to get their act together when we live in the crescent that is Kathmandu? There’s no blaming the rain for the Bagmati Sewer,” writes urban architect Rabi Thapa.

Has Kathmandu’s environment had its day?

Whatever happened to that great catchphrase of the last decade, “think global, act local?” Thinking global is just about all we seem to have accomplished. All that requires is a sense of drama and a penchant for rhetoric—from Switzerland to Singapore and back to Everest. We can’t really do very much to mitigate climate change, but we can sure prevent the support of a government that has to do very little about it. Is it just me, or do those 600 carbof’s of us to Copenhagen last year on taxpayers’ cash (only to be reminded that it was not up to them) bring you in mind of another very similarly positioned 600?

Acting local is rather harder. It means doing your bit to solve the problems you see around you. Using less water. Using fewer plastic bags, and not dumping your rubbish (and without taking them) bring you in mind of another very similarly positioned environmental bugbear that decrease our quality of life. Where’s the dignity of telling the world to get their act together when we live in the crescent that is Kathmandu? There’s no blaming the rain for the Bagmati Sewer.
I njus glacial lake, at 5,010 metres above sea level, is some 1,700 metres long and 500 metres wide. This body of water was created in the last century by a rapidly retreating glacier, and is still growing. If the lake were to burst its banks, it would sweep away many downstream settlements, destroy infrastructure, and forever erase parts of an ancient culture.

There is plenty of information about the threat of this and other glacial lake outbursts in Khumbu, also known as the Everest region. But there is very little documentation of the human aspect. How do Khumbu people perceive this threat? What changes do they see, and what alarms them most? What are the solutions to these problems, and where should they come from? Some are not sure about the signs of change; they are restless and angry, demanding scientific solutions. They see their future threatened – language, culture, livelihood, all melting away with the snow on the mountains. They live in constant paranoia that glacial lakes will burst and sweep away all of Khumbu.

Others place the blame locally, and therefore see the possibility of redistribution through change in behaviour. This group blames itself for veering away from traditional modes of living to one that generates a lot of waste. If the people of Khumbu stop ang string they, they say, the apocalyptic signs in Sherpa scriptures – during which nine suns will fill the sky and melt Earth – will be postponed until such a time when people forget their Dharma again.

This series of portraits and interviews is part of a larger body of work commissioned by the Alliance Française in Kathmandu that traces the Himalayan waters down to the Kosi and Eastern Tarai. It seeks to ask how the changes in climate patterns are, and what threats these hold for the Sherpas of Khumbu, who are increasingly moved within and affected by these changes. These works will be exhibited during Planet Nepal: a Festival of Arts and Environment, scheduled for November in Kathmandu.

Bhesh Bahadur Ghimire, JTA at the Yak Breeding Farm in Syangboche

Bhesh Bahadur Ghimire is in charge of the well-being of the yak and rak at the Yak Breeding Farm at Syangboche. He follows the herd from pasture to pasture for a few weeks each season, supervising the calving and selecting animals to sell to the people of Khumbu.

“There is no commercial benefit in keeping yak and rak any more. Who wants to chase after cattle and live in remote pastures when they can join the tourism industry? When old men who keep yak die, their sons sell off the herd within two, three months. The yak was a part of the culture, but tourism is killing it off. They are mating and calving earlier than usual. Their time to head north has changed by almost two weeks. Everything is changing around them. If nothing is done soon enough, the yak will be found only on old postcards about Khumbu.”

Lobsang Sherpa, 28, entrepreneur in Dingboche

Lobsang Sherpa blames industrial nations and the rise of human population for global warming that is melting the glaciers. He blames research groups for failing to respect local cultures and concerns, and for failing to propose solutions. Lobsang’s lodge at Dingboche is called the Arizona Lodge because Arizona looks like Dingboche.

“This scaring me around is 7-8 years old. Some unscrupulous types scared people to get them running, so their land could be bought for cheap. Just last year, people were scared to build new homes, but they have forgotten everything now. So much research has been done, but the lake hasn’t burst. The locals want someone to propose a safety solution, instead of spreading fear. What use is an internet-based monitoring system for us? People in Japan will know that the lake has burst, but how does that help us here?”

Pemba Digi Sherpa, 69, farmer in Shomare

Pemba Digi Sherpa has lost one husband and one son to the wrath of the mountains. She doesn’t blame the mountains for their death: they died on the job, after all. She spent the insurance money on rituals and donations. She believes the Rinpoche of Tengboche holds back Imja with his powers.

“The small stream from Tobuche flooded suddenly. It dragged our fields to the river below. People returning from market thought water seeping from the ground was ruining the paths. They were repairing the paths when a huge flood came down the mountain and took them. A girl I knew – Dawa Lhamu. A Tamang named Chhaka Bahadur. Four others. Of course I am scared of another flood. What will I do if it takes my house? We have no powerful Lamas here, the people have forgotten their Dharma, there is no Mani to walk around. My fate is to die here.”

Ang Kanchhi Sherpa, 56, health work pioneer in Debuche

Ang Kanchhi Sherpa saves lives. For 32 years, her home in Debuche has often been the place where many trekkers imagine they will breathe their last. She heals them; they remain grateful forever.

“Although people today have become more intelligent, have more knowledge, they have also become weaker. In the old days, all food came from the fields, you knew what you ate, everything was fresh. Now, everything is packaged in a factory – who knows what goes into those shiny packets? People these days look cleaner, wear nice clothes, but they have a lot of stress. Their minds are more disturbed. Now Sherpas have diabetes! All kinds of people come to Khumbu and mix with Sherpas, bring diseases.”

www.planetnepal.org.np
Maoist trust deficit

Keshar Jung Rayamajhi in Nagarik, 2 June

You can extend the CA as many times as you want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance. Regime change at the behest of outside powers will want, but it has no more relevance.
The man of miracles is intent on bringing the power of dance to those who most need it

Prakash Pathak has been working in Edinburgh, Scotland since 1998, but wants to settle in Nepal permanently. “I worked voluntarily for a year and a half in Nepal, but one can’t do this indefinitely,” he says. He plans to open a dance therapy institute in Nepal in 2010. “I want to use my dance therapy skills and teaching power to bring the power of dance to those who need it,” he says.

To carry forward his work in his absence, he is mentoring a group of people, including a training programme at the Kathmandu Metropolitan City and a group of six people interested in establishing a dance therapy centre in the Pokhara area.

According to Tuladhar, to continue the project would be to let down the children, as well as their parents. It was, after all, the dedication and patience of the children that brought magic to the stage last month. The standing ovations from the hundreds present acknowledged as much. Before leaving Nepal, Pradhan transformed that pressure into the motivation needed to “let down the children, as well as their parents. It was, after all, the dedication and patience of the children that brought magic to the stage last month. The standing ovations from the hundreds present acknowledged as much.”

For further information, visit www.nepaleconomicforum.org

In Nepal, political analysis often overlooks economic analysis. There is a deficiency of accurate and unbiased economic data, and whatever is available is usually from a development sector perspective that is inadequate for the private sector. Nepal Economic Forum’s NEFport is meant to bridge this gap, with the second issue published in April this year.

On the global front, the international economy showed signs of recovery as prudent fiscal and monetary measures by governments and central banks helped shake off the effects of the global financial crisis. Nationally, the economy of Nepal experienced some major setbacks due to the black political outlook, coupled with a significant downturn in the financial sector. The key stories and business highlights of the year included the liquidity crisis, capital flight, balance of payments, real estate market, gold imports, and inflation.

The liquidity crisis deepened after Dasain 2009, with financial institutions unable to access ready pools of cash. It was then that capital flight was assessed. NEFport reports that USD 100 million (over Rs 8 billion) from Nepal found its way into banks in Hong Kong during the first five months of the fiscal year.

Similarly, gold imports crossed 14 tons in the first seven months of the fiscal year 2009/10. The Nepal Rastra Bank banned the import of gold from mid-January, on the grounds that gold imported into Nepal was being smuggled back into India. The bank feared excessive spending of foreign reserves on gold imports. Inflation soared to 4.2 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, increasing the price of sugar and related products by almost 80 per cent. The government cut import duties and the Agricultural Reform Fee on raw materials for the edible oils industry, and also pledged a 50 per cent VAT refund, in order to curb inflation.

The real estate market in Nepal continued to boom, in sharp contrast to the serious slump in land and property markets globally. Land prices are estimated to have risen by close to 200 per cent in the past three years. Concerned that the real estate bubble would burst, Nepal Rastra Bank decided to impose a cap on financial institutions’ loan exposure to the real estate sector. Following this move, the lending rates of financial institutions arbitrarily increased to 15-16 per cent, up from 10 per cent.

The negative balance of payments, NEFport noted, reflected a ‘worrying reliance on imports for goods including gold, petroleum products and vehicles, coupled with a decline in foreign exports and low overall economic growth. The slowdown in remittance growth coupled with an increase in imports has led to a BOP deficit of around Rs. 19.7 billion, compared to Rs 28.53 billion surplus the previous year’. NEFport concludes that the dominating influence of politics will make it difficult for the economy to buck the trend. Nevertheless, it is hoped the appointment of Yuvraj Khatiwada as the new governor of Nepal Rastra Bank will accelerate a much-needed macroeconomic clean up and enforce stronger financial discipline.

Inflationary pressures remain a distinct possibility because, as international growth picks up, Nepal too will be affected by the concomitant rise in oil and commodity prices. There will be no major changes in foreign aid. Nepal is likely to make use of the IMF’s standby credit facility in order to address its short-term macroeconomic imbalances. Capital markets will show signs of improvement, and the NEPSE index will rise to the end of the fiscal year approaches.
Real goal
Pashupati Kartik won the weekly highest correct SME prize, a Sony Bravia 22” LCD TV, in Dabur Real’s ‘Score the Real Goal’ campaign. The campaign started on 20 April, and while it is now just around the corner, identify the real football in the contest photos (in national dailies) and aim the number to 5004.

Spreading wings
Nabil Bank opened its 30th branch with an ATM facility in Charikot, Dolakha. This move aims to reach the remote district of Nepal so as to improve access to banking for rural populations. Four new branches will be opened soon.

Pepsi mania
Marik Nepal from Kathmandu and Tirtha Kumar Shrestha from Morang won this week’s lucky draw of a 32” Samsung LCD TV as part of ‘Pepsi Football Mania’. This promotion started from 21 May and will run till 31 July. Pepsi glass bottles have a blue band on the crown. Consumers will need to collect three crowns featuring Didier Drogba, Lionel Messi, and Thierry Henry, and 1 and Goal Crown, after which they have to SMS their name to a dedicated number. The grand prize winner will win a Hero Honda Karizma ZMR at the end of the promotion.

New mobile
Call Mobility Pvt Ltd, the sole authorised distributor of Yasuda mobile phones in Nepal, has launched the Yasuda QS model in the market. As the name suggests, QS is a full QWERTY keyboard handset with camera, FM radio, video player, Bluetooth, MP3 and MP4 players. The phone supports Micro SD card and dual GSM SIM cards. The handset, priced at Rs 5,090, comes with preloaded Facebook, MSN (e-buddy) and Yahoo applications. The set comes with a2 GB memory card and has a one-year warranty.

Rescue operations
Fishtail Air is laying the groundwork for an Alpine Rescue System in the Himalayas. It has partnered with Air Zermatt, a Swiss helicopter company, which will transfer technology. A Nepali team, including the CEO of Fishtail Air Sunam Panday, Capt Sabin Basnyat, Chief Pilot Pradip Gautam and a civil aviation official including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, Capt Sabin Basnyat, Chief Pilot Pradip Gautam and a civil aviation official including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, Sabin Basnyat, Chief Pilot Pradip Gautam and a civil aviation official including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, Basnyat, Chief Pilot Pradip Gautam and a civil aviation official including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, Basnyat, Chief Pilot Pradip Gautam and a civil aviation official including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, Sabin Basnyat, Chief Pilot Pradip Gautam and a civil aviation official including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday, including the CEO of Fishtail Air Suman Panday. Fishtail Air is laying the groundwork for an Alpine Rescue System. Fishtail Air is laying the groundwork for an Alpine Rescue System. Fishtail Air is laying the groundwork for an Alpine Rescue System. Fishtail Air is laying the groundwork for an Alpine Rescue System.

Winner
Om Kumar Shrestha from Bhaktapur is the first winner of AIOD Funana, and will be going for an all expenses paid Malaysia trip. He got lucky with the purchase of an AIOD Combi from a grocery store in Narayanghat. The scheme has been running from March in all the major districts of Nepal. The good news is that there are still other Malaysia trip coupons available, as well as prizes like refrigerators, microwaves, mixers, emergency lights and lots of cash.

Branching out
United Finance Ltd has opened its sixth branch in Narayanghat. The Chaudhary Group and Morang Auto Works are the promoters of United Finance, which has been operating since 1996.
Ménage à trois

T
he three-party threesome are at it again. They
manager to postpone a crisis in the nick of time last
week, but we are now back to
where we started arguing about
whether integration should
follow resignation or resignation
should follow integration. The
ménage à trois was caught in
flagrante at the BICC chambers at
the stroke of the midnight hour
making its tryst with destiny live
on nationwidetv.

Those of you who have by
now given up trying to make
sense of it all have my deepest
sympathies. As an Ass fan wrote in
to say last week: these guys
seem to be achieving previously
unseen levels of unseenas.
What can they do? They were
raised in our traditional culture,
which values back-stabbing,
procrastination, and
never
doing today what can be
done tomorrow.

The Interim Constitution was
signed at 4am, the elections were
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