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GREEN HUNT

The most serious side-effect of Nepal's prolonged political volatility is the way it is undermining the dramatic progress since 1990 in community forestry.

In the past 20 years, even with the country mired in short-sighted politicking, corruption, war and its aftermath, not everything fell apart. The country's once sub-Saharan levels of maternal mortality have dropped by 40 per cent, under-5 child mortality has been halved, female literacy has nearly doubled and nearly 80 per cent of the population now has access to safe drinking water. Imagine how much more progress we'd have made if there hadn't been a ruinous war, if the government had been cleaner and more efficient, and we actually ended up spending the development budget to deliver services.

It has been said before, but merits repeating: everything that has worked in this country since 1990 has the word 'community' in it. Our network of

community radio stations, community-managed schools, community-led women's cooperatives, community irrigation schemes, community-run electricity distribution are all successful models of decentralised development.

However, systematic corruption in the Ministry of Forests due to unstable and unaccountable leadership threatens to unravel Nepal's internationally acclaimed success with community forestry. As reported by Rubeena Mahato in the last issue of this paper ('Village forests go through midlife crisis', #509) District Forest Officers are parcelling out rich sal forests in the Tarai to loggers, or handing over government land to corrupted user groups. Despite the flood of coverage the rampant and blatant logging has received in the national press, caretaker officials are either looking the other way or are plundering what is left as if there is no tomorrow.

Nepal's forests have always been pillaged during periods of political upheaval: for resettlement during the Panchayat, around the time of the 1980 referendum, and during successive elections after 1990. In the past four years there has been a deliberate attempt to pad vote

banks by settling party supporters from the hills in the plains. Encroachment encouraged by various political parties, but now mainly the Maoists, has not even spared the national parks.

The Minister of Forests seems to think his job is not to save forests but to raze them. With the entire government machinery out to fell what is left, the trees don't stand a chance. Before it is too late, and even if it is the last thing he does as prime minister, Madhav Kumar Nepal needs to stop this disaster.

The community forestry program needs to be revitalised, and the rewards we can reap in the future from carbon sequestration under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Land Degradation (REDD) scheme can be ploughed back into the program.

The central state has no right to destroy what communities throughout Nepal have protected and nurtured for the past 20 years.

K&Q

10+2 for public health



GUEST COLUMN
Kul Chandra Gautam

Nepal's public health successes are extraordinary, but a 10-fold focus supplemented by a healthy body politic is needed to consolidate our achievements so far

Nepal enjoys strong international support in health programs, but there is room to ensure greater aid effectiveness to produce even better results.

Additional +2 elements are needed to ensure a peaceful and healthy national body politic to further advance Nepal's public health:

1. Institutionalise a culture of non-violence

The 'structural violence' of poverty, inequality, exclusion and marginalisation has long existed in Nepal, but widespread physical violence in public life is a recent phenomena. We must reject this cancer of violence as an acceptable means for achieving any worthy goals, and inculcate non-violence in the minds and hearts of our children.

2. Consolidate genuine democracy

The WHO defines health as being "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Such well-being is only possible in a full-fledged democracy with a thriving economy in which people can live a long, healthy, productive and creative life.

This article summarises the keynote address at the inaugural conference of the Nepal Public Health Foundation in Kathmandu, 30 June 2010

Nepal is on track to achieve and even exceed a few of the Millennium Development Goals, such as reduction of child mortality, maternal mortality, fertility, access to drinking water supply, and basic education.

In the past half century, Nepal reduced its under-5 mortality by 80 per cent, from 250 to 50 deaths per 1000 live births. Most European countries took two centuries to achieve such a reduction.

Some of the greatest public health success stories in Nepal are the eradication of smallpox, virtual eradication of polio, and significant reduction in iodine, Vitamin A and iron deficiency anemia affecting large numbers of women and children. Our national network of 50,000 female community health volunteers deserves credit.

The children of Nepal today are healthier, more educated, and more knowledgeable about the world than any previous generation. There has also been good progress in women's health, education, and their overall status in society.

But there are huge inequalities and disparities among various population groups. Some of our historically marginalised

communities and population groups lag seriously behind, not least in terms of child and maternal mortality rates, and access to health facilities.

In the light of this mixed picture, a 10+2 agenda should govern public health in the coming decade in Nepal:

1. Scale up essential health care
We have to substantially increase the number and quality of trained health workers, ensure there is no stock-out of essential medicines, upgrade health facilities, and offer conditional cash grants for vulnerable populations to ensure universal access to basic health services.

2. Focus on equity
The elimination of user fees for certain basic health services has progressively reduced barriers to access by the poor, marginalised communities. But more effort must be made to implement the National Health Systems Plan (NHSP-II), which contains specific objectives to reduce cultural and economic barriers to accessing health care services by the poor, Dalits, Janjatis, Muslims and deprived Madhesi communities.

3. Tackle malnutrition
Nepal has unacceptably high

maternal and child malnutrition. A key strategy to improve nutrition is to ensure household food security. But beyond food, control of infections and good caring practices are equally important. Pilot schemes initiated to improve maternal and child nutrition should be scaled-up.

4. Prioritise non-communicable diseases
Nepal is going through an 'epidemiological transition' to non-communicable diseases such as heart and kidney ailments, cancer, asthma, diabetes, obesity, and strokes, as well as accidents, injuries and mental health problems. The main response to these is behaviour change and adoption of healthy lifestyles.

5. Prevent accidents, injuries and disabilities
Besides prevention, much more needs to be done to expand treatment, rehabilitation and special education, and counter the alarming rise of traffic accidents.

6. Promote environmental health
Safe water, clean air, basic sanitation and hygiene are of critical importance with respiratory infections and diarrhoea, the leading preventable causes of mortality and morbidity

in the country. Our children should be taught good environmental citizenship.

7. Harness the power of education for behaviour change
The more we can do to empower parents with knowledge and skills in child care, the better the health outcomes. Teachers, and children themselves, are potential health workers, and we should harness the power of radio, TV, newspapers, and mobile phones to spread public health messages.

8. Strengthen health systems
To back up the health-seeking efforts of people themselves, we have to strengthen our health systems to make them more effective, including in emergencies.

9. Foster public-private partnerships
We need to foster a more productive partnership among the public, philanthropic and for-profit private sectors. Urgent action is needed to enact and enforce clearer norms and regulations, while avoiding excessive government interference or micro-management.

10. Capitalise on international health partnerships

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

UNITED WE STAND
Himalmedia should continue publishing such articles about Gandaki, Bagmati and Seti-Karnali as well (Prosperous east, #509). They are all as prosperous as the East. They have huge potential when they are together with Mountains, Hills and the Tarai. United we stand.

Daniel Gajaraj

AWAITING THE MADHES
Even after a half century's democratic exercise, Nepali leaders have not matured, so how can we expect Madhesi

leaders, who have emerged just recently, to be mature (Elusive unity, #509)?

Dipti Sikha

GEN WHO CARES?
I have a certain skepticism about portraying average middle-class urban-raised Nepali college kids as living in a 'hybrid culture' (From Chhi-chhi to chi chi, #509). Having lived in Nepal and abroad, I increasingly realise how little I know about the culture, religion or history of my country. I am curious to know what level of cultural awareness an average college

student possesses today. One can try tongba and kachila in Kanchiko pasal, and wear jeans or carry an iphone, but does that qualify as 'hybrid culture'? It is really hard for me to comprehend the cultural world of the 'who cares?' generation. Is their cultural experience authentic or a mere mimicking?

Anonymous

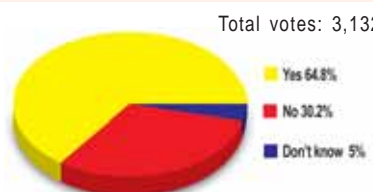
CORRECTION

In 'Red cards for child employers' (#508) it's not CWIN that is involved, but Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH).

Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 510

Q. Was Madhav Kumar Nepal right to resign?



Weekly Internet Poll # 511. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How many World Cup matches did you watch?





MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA


The Gambler



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Prachanda is playing three high-risk tactical games. The Maoist chairman's primary objective is neither a national unity government, nor the constitution or peace process. It is to split the UML. His political strength, bargaining power, and leverage have been the highest when a faction of the UML has been with him. During the presidential elections, if the UML and Maoists had been together, they would have got their man into office. If Jhalanath Khanal had stuck to his word, the Maoist-led government would have

Khanal's reluctance to split off his own party while he is chairman will be the biggest impediments to this plan. Either way, this will not resolve fundamental issues since the three key actors of the process remain India, the NC and the Maoists. And the first two will be in a confrontational mood if this scenario comes to pass. Prachanda's other gamble is to persist with the status quo on the PLA. The PLA is an asset for the chairman, in both inter-party and intra-party games. The former combatants remain a source of power and money for the party institutionally, and Prachanda personally. Barsha Man Pun's clear support for Prachanda as PM has shifted the balance within the party. Prachanda may make the

movement on integration – either a separation into three camps or a commitment on numbers and modality – will be difficult to achieve. This in turn means the constitution-making and power-sharing processes will remain stuck. Prachanda's third step is playing on India's fears in public, while continuing to lobby desperately in private. His support for the Naxalites and opposition to Operation Green Hunt is based on the calculation that the Indian establishment will become worried about possible links, and go back to the logic that motivated the 12-point agreement of detaching the Nepali Maoists and the Indian ultra-left and undermining the latter, an argument reiterated by former RAW chief PK Hormis Tharakan this week in a rare opinion piece. If this does not happen, and India continues with its hardline stance, he hopes that open solidarity with Indian Naxalites will block Baburam Bhattarai's chances too, since people in Delhi will argue against allowing any Maoist back into power in Nepal. But Prachanda perhaps does not understand the limits of his power. There is little tolerance in Delhi, or the embassy, for these kinds of games. It has taken a lot – the extension of the CA, hectic lobbying by some key people, the calculation that the Maoists have been relatively weakened and their internal divisions – for Delhi to give this process a last chance. Prachanda should just look at the militarisation of the open border, and the recent killing of Naxalite spokesperson Azad, to understand the changes in India's attitude to both Nepal and Maoism in general. How Prachanda's multiple gambles play out will determine the immediate future of Nepali politics. 

Prachanda is exposed on multiple fronts, but may not recognise the limits of his power

successfully sacked General Katawal. If a large section of UML MPs had not raised the banner of revolt on 28 May, the Maoists would not have got the 3-point agreement on favourable terms. Prachanda is banking on Khanal's ego and ambition, and the old 'progressive' streak of many UML MPs. His preferred outcome is obviously to get the UML to back a government under his leadership. If that is not possible, due to resistance from Madhav Nepal and KP Oli, he will throw the 'left unity' card and back Khanal as PM. If Nepal and Oli publicly oppose this, they risk earning the wrath of many party members. If they do block it, Prachanda is hoping Khanal – with Bamdev Gautam's help – will split the party. Prachanda's inability to convince his other comrades and

appropriate noises, but will not complete the process of integration till he is back as PM, and can extract a governance structure – both a presidential system and a relatively favourable federal map – that helps the Maoists. Some within the party continue to stick to the old Maoist diktat of needing a People's Army and are reluctant to give it up at any juncture. Others are arguing that if giving up the army can help 'preserve existing achievements', including legitimate state power, it is worth it. But a powerful argument – across the pragmatic-dogmatic divide – is that if PLA integration does not help them exercise control over the Nepal Army, then the original intent is defeated. Either way, any drastic

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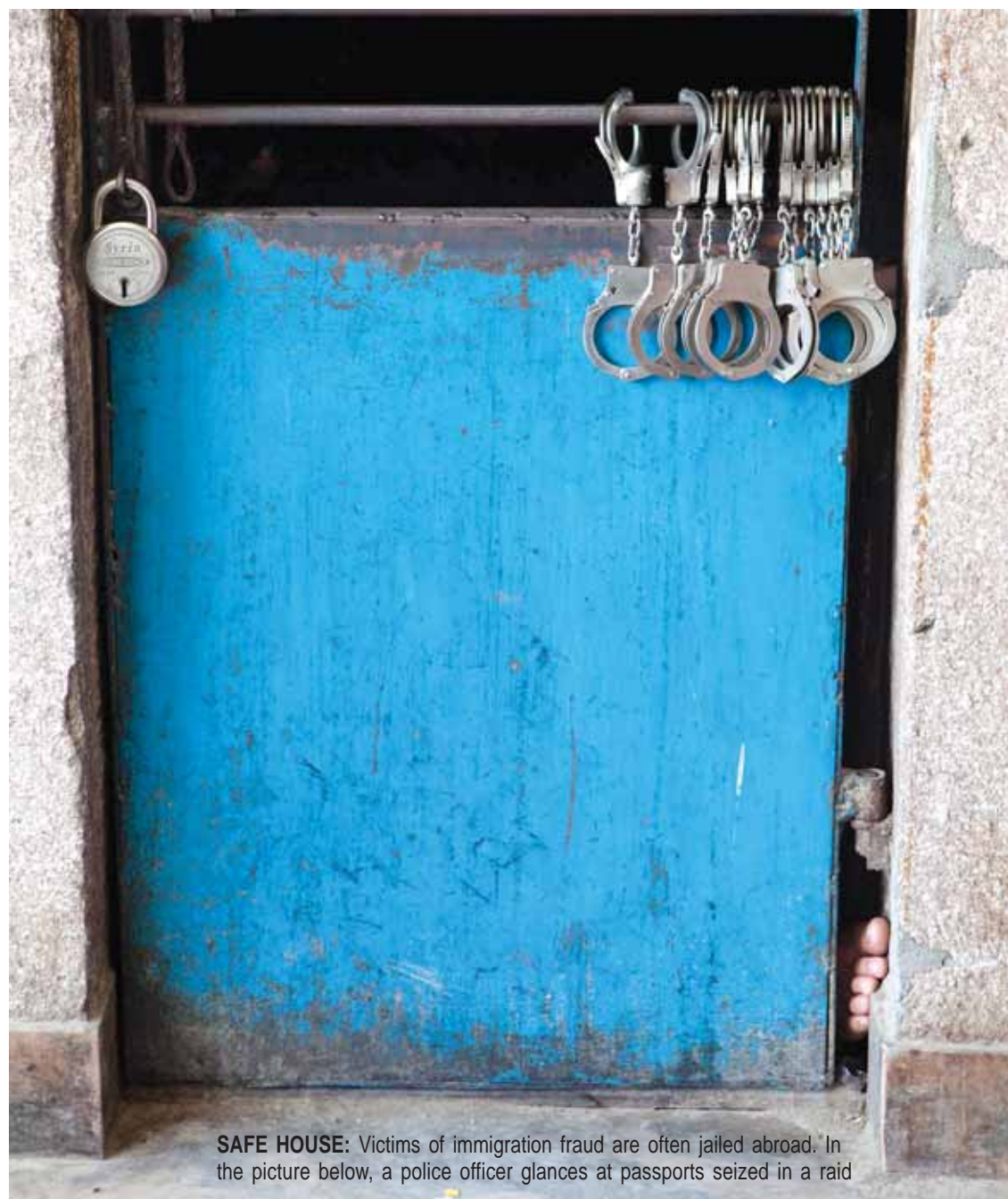
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SAFE HOUSE: Victims of immigration fraud are often jailed abroad. In the picture below, a police officer glances at passports seized in a raid

PICS: JANA ASENBRENNEROVA

Would-be migrants from Bangladesh find themselves in Nepali jails



SYED ZAIN AL-MAHMOOD

The holding cell at Maharajganj Police Station in central Kathmandu is dark, austere and cramped with men. Handcuffs hang from the blue-steel door, as if to remind the inmates of the severe limits imposed on their freedom.

When he left home in search of a better future nine months ago, Kamal Khan of Bhola, Bangladesh, had no idea he would end up here. Kamal, the eldest son of a village muezzin, had been led to believe he was going to Iraq as a tailor. But after arriving in Nepal, Kamal's recruiters told him he would be staying "for a few days" before going on to Baghdad. Those days

stretched into months, before the Nepal Police picked up Kamal in a pre-dawn raid on 26 May.

Inspector Praveen Pokharel, whose temperament is as sunny as his holding cells are dark, appeared to sympathise. "We arrested 12 Bangladeshis," he said. "Some of them have valid tourist visas, so we will let them go. But this guy's visa has expired. They say they paid



Lost in migration

a lot of money to agents to get to Arab countries. That's too bad — they won't be going to any Arab country from here."

The plight of people like Kamal Khan fits a broad pattern of deception where many overseas job seekers are being left in the lurch in Nepal by unscrupulous recruiting agents. In most cases, the recruiters — a nexus of Bangladeshi and Nepali agents — lured Bangladeshis by promising to arrange work using Nepali passports, allowing them to get around bans and quotas on Bangladeshis imposed by host countries like Malaysia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

It is feared that hundreds of Bangladeshis could be in limbo in and around Kathmandu after being duped by recruiters. Many would-be migrants are ending up behind bars for immigration offenses, while others face the daunting prospect of returning home with nothing but their debts.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Deepak Thapa, in charge of the immigration fraud case, claimed: "According to our information, there are more than 1,000 Bangladeshi citizens awaiting Nepali passports in Kathmandu."

The Bangladesh Embassy in Nepal acknowledged that such incidents were on the rise. "Several such cases have been brought to our attention," said Emdadul Haque, First Secretary, Consular section. "We get involved and try to help the victims. We have also written to the authorities in Dhaka to take action."

Detained Bangladeshi nationals said there are several establishments in the Bagbajar and Koteswor areas that are routinely used as 'safe houses' by recruiters. Kamal Khan, who remained in Kathmandu for nine months as he waited to fly to Iraq, was eventually given a Nepali passport (No. 2548166) that gives his name as Mamtaj Ansari, from Harinagara, Sunsari, Nepal.

Khan was joined by 11 other Bangladeshis recruited by the same group. They were housed in squalid conditions in Bagbajar. Tensions often ran high. After a fist-fight broke out between recruiters and migrant workers on 26 May, the police, acting on an

anonymous tip, arrested 12 Bangladeshis.

Khan said he had been recruited by an agent named Saifuddin, who was also picked up in the raid. Although Nepali police officers seem to believe they have captured the kingpin of the racketeers, *The Daily Star's* investigation indicates that he is only a cog in an elaborate network of agents and sub-agents.

The Nepali authorities are eager for success in the fight against immigration scams, following earlier allegations of high-level involvement in passport fraud. Bachchu Ram KC, a foreign ministry official, was arrested in January for providing Nepali passports to foreigners. Shortly afterwards, Nepal's foreign minister Sujata Koirala sacked her principal personal secretary Bharat Sapkota for alleged involvement in the same scandal.

Despite tough rhetoric, few agents have been punished for ripping off overseas job seekers. Experts say obtaining a conviction in overseas fraud cases would require a high degree of coordination between national law enforcement agencies. They recommend a raft of measures including stern action against dishonest agents and greater vigilance at airports to discourage passport scams.

But preventive measures can only go so far. "Ultimately, the government and the private sector must work together to expand legal avenues for the outflow of manpower," said Dr Mokaddem Hossain, professor of sociology at Dhaka University. "When legal routes dry up, people tend to try unorthodox methods."

Meanwhile, Kamal Khan has been deported from Nepal, and arrived in Dhaka after an arduous overland trip through India. For him, the migrant dream has already turned into a nightmare.

"I didn't eat for two days," he said. "I even had to sell my watch to pay for transportation. Now I dread facing my family in Bhola. My father sold a piece of land to send me abroad. What am I going to say to him?"

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The case of Sita Tamang shows the media needs to exercise caution when it comes to covering conflict-sensitive issues

Conflict of coverage



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

Radhika Coomaraswamy, special representative for children and armed conflict of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, brings her formidable qualifications to bear on a very delicate responsibility. As the erstwhile chairperson of the Human Rights Commission and the director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka, Coomaraswamy is one of few Third World citizens who stride through the global corridors of power with ease.

Of the 4,008 disqualified combatants discharged from temporary cantonments in Nepal, over 3,000 were children. The Maoists claimed the discharges were a result of their magnanimity, while the anti-Maoist coalition of Premier Madhav Kumar Nepal claimed it as the most remarkable achievement of its 13 months in office. UNMIN, too, feels it is a success story for the organisation. Unsurprisingly, Sita Tamang, alias Manju Gurung, was a prize catch for the Security Council, where she made an appearance on 16 June.

It is extremely unlikely that Coomaraswamy was unaware of the potential repercussions of making Sita narrate her story in the full glare of the media eye. The 'Manju' alias was tokenism more than anything else, as the ensuing footage and photos of Sita did little to protect the testifier's identity.

In fact, the way media coverage of this teenage girl from Chitwan unfolded, it became clear that she might have been used as bait to trap the Maoists into fresh controversy. The ambush has been successful: the former insurgents tumbled into the trap when they quizzed and then reportedly threatened Sita last week.

The callousness of Coomaraswamy apart, Sita's travails also raise questions about the state of conflict-sensitive reporting in Nepal. The cover of the hapless student was very thin to begin with; *Himal Khabarpatrika* blew it with a lead story and an easily identifiable photograph on the cover page of its latest issue.

The report cannot be categorised as inflammatory. However, in countries where the capacity of the state to protect its citizens is severely limited, the media needs to exercise extra caution. Fact is a powerful weapon and everyone who uses it has the responsibility of making sure that unintended consequences are minimised.


In the fluid situation of Nepal, the media has to improvise as it reports. Before reporting about conflict-sensitive issues, a journalist needs to ask two questions: is the story contributing to conflict escalation? If so, what can be done to de-escalate the conflict without compromising the criteria of accuracy, balance and credibility? The rest follows from the answer.

Perhaps it was not necessary to disclose the identity of the victim; her story would have been equally powerful under an alias. Had the NGO to whom Coomaraswamy probably farmed out the assignment been able to pin the blame upon some individual Maoist commander,

the cause of peace and justice would have been better served through naming and shaming. Tales of victimisation may have fascinated the UN Security Council. It did precious little for the cause of truth and reconciliation in a society still struggling to recover from the conflict.

The caretaker government is dysfunctional. The Maoist leadership needs to ensure that no harm comes the way of Sita Tamang, their former comrade-in-arms. This becomes even more important considering she is an easy target for whosoever doesn't want to see the peace process in Nepal succeed.

Coomaraswamy will be pleased with her success in getting Sita to testify at the UN Security Council in New York. But should anything untoward happen to the girl, history will hold her responsible. At least part of the blame will fall upon the Nepali media, too, for selling Sita's 'celebratory' status for commercial or political gains.

What has been done cannot be undone. Its lessons, however, are for everyone to learn. 

THIS WEEK

Bal Bahadur Rai passes away

Senior Nepali Congress leader Bal Bahadur Rai passed away on 4 July at the age of 90. He died of kidney failure. NC leaders and well-wishers thronged TU Teaching Hospital when they heard the news of his death, but seldom visited him during his illness.

A Central Working Committee member, Rai served as acting prime minister 19 times during the governments led by Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba, besides holding various ministerial portfolios. He also acted as speaker three times as the eldest member of parliament.

Price hike

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) hiked the prices of petroleum products on 6 July, following which the artificial scarcity in the market ended. The price of petrol has increased by Rs 3 a litre and kerosene and diesel by Rs 2.50 each, meaning petrol will now cost Rs 85/l and kerosene and diesel will cost Rs 65.50/l. The prices of cooking gas and aviation fuel remain the same.

India is the sole supplier of petroleum products to Nepal. NOC, the state oil monopoly, received a new price list from the Indian Oil Corporation on 1 July. NOC has claimed it would incur losses of Rs 100 million a month if prices had not been revised.

MRP contract

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) awarded a contract to print and supply Machine Readable Passports (MRP) to French company Oberthur Technologies. The company, selected from among four bidders, presented the lowest bid at \$3.59 a passport. Bidders Perum Peruri and De La Rue filed a joint protest note at the ministry Monday, claiming the French firm did not meet the requirements.

Earlier, the government cancelled an MRP deal with an Indian firm amidst widespread criticism of the bidding process and fears that it would put national security at risk. Nepal has already missed two deadlines set by the International Civil Aviation Authority to introduce MRPs. The latest deadline is January 2011.

Horsing around

President Ram Baran Yadav extended the deadline for the formation of a national consensus government by five days at the request of political parties in the CA. Yadav had given the parties a week's time to form a national consensus government after Madhav Nepal resigned as premier last week. However, several rounds of talks have failed to yield any results.

An all-party meeting held in the CA building on Wednesday concluded that more time was needed to reach an agreement on a consensus government and decided to ask the president to extend the deadline. Senior leaders approached the president with a formal request to extend the deadline in the evening at his office, Shital Niwas.

The political parties agreed on consensus politics four years ago, but subsequent majority governments led by the Maoists and then the UML failed to take the peace process any further. If the deadline is missed again, the president can call upon the parliamentary parties to form a majority government as per article 38 of the Interim Constitution.

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What's sticky?



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Management communication is one of the least appreciated arts. Senior managers who are good at it are seen as born with an ability to communicate well. Others who would rather focus on a functional role such as finance or operations farm out critical communications to their public relations or marketing officers, thinking it is something best done by underlings with the gift of the gab.

But as one climbs higher in one's career, perhaps no other skill is as important as the ability to communicate well. Indeed, how a manager communicates to her board of directors, colleagues, employees, customers, stakeholders and the public at large can make or break jobs, careers and even organisations. Despite the importance of this skill, it is seen as something basic one should have picked up while growing up or at school – therefore, not worth bothering about and improving on at workplaces. Yet the reality at workplaces is different. Tales abound of missed promotions, missed sales, irate customers, and company-wide conflicts – all due to poor communications.

One important aspect of communications is to understand how the other side receives the content of one's messages, be they letters to shareholders or advertisements in the media. To be effective, one has to adopt an audience-centric view of communications. This is easier said than done, of course. But a 2007 book, *Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath, shows how messages can be put together to make them 'stick' in the minds of the intended audience.

According to the Heath brothers, who are associated with teaching communications at Stanford, the six elements of successful messages are:

Simplicity: is the message easy to understand? Most readers quickly forget the messages contained in various development reports because even the executive summaries of those reports use tediously complex language. But the same readers do remember the content of a trashy novel because of its simplicity.

Unexpectedness: the human brain ignores what is routine. It notices what is different. For other people's brains to pay attention, what's the unexpected twist in your messages? Stand-up comedians use this insight all the time: they start by saying something routine, only to throw in an unexpected twist to grab your attention and make you laugh.

Concreteness: does the message use concrete language? Good communicators use words to paint pictures in their readers' minds through metaphors and the like. In Nepali conversations, I've noticed that most otherwise highly educated people go on and on, sprinkling their sentences with ambiguous 'yo', 'tyo', 'yesari', and so on without being concrete about what 'yo' or 'tyo' specifically mean.

Credibility: why should anyone believe your messages? When crises strike at a company, nobody believes what the company's public relations officers say. People are more likely to pay attention to what the CEO or the chairman says or what the business media says. Who delivers the message is as important as what the message says.

Emotions: the Heath brothers write that humans "are wired to feel things for people, not for abstractions". Organisational messages may not contain emotions, but they can be rewritten to tell human interest stories for the audience to relate to.

Stories: people pay attention to stories. Yet story-telling is seen as something that belongs in kindergarten and not in workplaces.

These six elements could well be the key to making messages stick. Conveniently, they make up the acronym **SUCCES**. 🇳🇵

How you say it is as important as what you say

One more show

Morang Auto Works, the sole authorised distributor for Yamaha Motorcycles in Nepal, has opened a new showroom, Kismat Automobile, in Bhairahawa. In addition to showcasing all available Yamaha models, the showroom will offer valuation of old bikes and easy financing facilities for buyers. Kismat Automobiles is kickstarting business with an exchange and service camp.



Budding on

Rosebud School will start +2 classes in the management stream from this year on. Apart from regular classes, the school incorporates project works and internships in its courses. The school is located in Buddhanagar, Baneshwor.



Maha-football

Winners of the 'Coca-Cola Football Maha Utsab' – Nirmal Bohora, Kumar Prajapati, Anurag Burma and Usanman Shrestha – flew to



South Africa to watch a 2010 FIFA World Cup match live. The four had the opportunity to sit in the stands as Mexico and Argentina battled it out on the field.

Big heart

Hridaya Group, a social youth organisation, celebrated its 7th year by donating clothes and stationery to 50 underprivileged children. The children enjoyed the day at Dharara Bakery Café with lunch and talent programs. NIC Bank Foundation and ANICBS assisted the group by paying for the education of 10 kids for a year.

Showing off

Troika Automobiles, sub-dealer of Mahindra2Wheelers for Lalitpur District, has opened new showrooms at Kumaripati and Balkumari. A service and spare parts centre are also annexed to each of the showrooms. Customers can also make use of exchange and finance facilities as well.



New buy

CG Electronics launched a new range of LG LED TVs that offer wide-viewing angle technology colour. Low resistance copper wiring helps to produce state-of-the-art displays suitable for high-speed drives such as the full HD 240 Hz. The new TVs save up to 30% of accumulative power.



Safety first

Syakar Company has introduced the campaign 'Learn safe for free and ride safe forever', offering free motorcycle or scooter learning courses worth Rs 6,000 at Syakar Safety Riding Training Centre with the purchase of any Honda two-wheeler. The scheme is valid till 16 July.



Chery prize

Bama Motors, authorised dealer of Chery cars, will co-sponsor this year's Miss Nepal. Along with the crown, the winner will take home Chery's QQ3 car.



Sharing partner

NMB Bank has been assigned by Unique Hydel to manage its share issuance and distribution. The company is issuing 500,000 shares to the general public.



Portable projectors

EvoStore is launching the NP series of portable projectors from NEC – NP216 DLP, NP54 DLP and NP905G. These high performance wireless LCD projectors are easy to carry and operate, and are meant for those who are often on the road.

Smart solutions

Netsystem Solution has been appointed the authorised reseller for Qquest Inc products Timeforce and Manager plus. Timeforce is time and attendance monitoring software while Manager plus is asset maintenance and management software.

Shiny pack

Josh cigarettes are now available in new HL packs priced at Rs 38. Each pack contains 20 cigarettes.

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The world of south Asia

If you missed out last year, Travelling Film South Asia 2010 brings you the best non-fiction of the region

The 12 documentaries of Travelling Film South Asia 2010 (TFSA '10) are outstanding examples of non-fiction productions from this part of Asia. They represent the cream of the 35 documentaries screened in the competitive section of Kathmandu's Film South Asia '09, the 'mother festival'. The selection was made in consultation with FSA '09's three-member jury, chaired by Chennai-based cultural critic Sadanand Menon.

TFSA was the touring companion for Film South Asia right from the outset, back in 1997. There have been six TFSA tours so far, going to an average of 50 venues all over the world. The TFSA '10 package includes three of the award winners at FSA '09 – Yasmine Kabir's *The Last Rites*, Lalit Vachani's *The Salt Stories*, and Tanvir Mokammel's *The Promised Land* – as well as other films selected to showcase the variety, treatment and intensity that today mark the world of south Asian non-fiction film.

And the winners were...

The Salt Stories (84')

India, 2008, dir – Lalit Vachani
Joint Winner of the Second Best Film Award



In 1930, a group of Indians led by a frail, elderly man marched 241 miles. They marched for salt. Mahatma Gandhi was able to craft an anti-colonial, nationalist movement around a basic issue of livelihood: the right of Indians to make and consume their own salt. Almost eight decades later, the film retraces Gandhi's steps, following the famous Dandi salt march trail in a film that focuses on the issues of livelihood in modern, globalising India.

The Promised Land (90')

Bangladesh, 2008, dir – Tanvir Mokammel
Joint Winner of the Second Best Film Award

A tale of statelessness spanning six decades and three countries, *The Promised Land* is about the 160,000 strong Urdu-speaking community of Bangladesh, living isolated lives in 116 camps across the country. The terms 'Urdu-speakers', 'Non-Bengalis' and 'Biharis' are used interchangeably to refer to the Muslim people, who originally emigrated from India to newly created East Pakistan in 1947 and afterwards. Many of them originated from the state of Bihar and were fleeing large-scale communal massacres. Three decades later, during the struggle for independence in Bangladesh in 1971,



this community became embroiled in conflict. Branded as collaborators against Bangladesh's independence, this moment was a defining one for the Urdu-speakers, one that has left a devastating legacy.

The Last Rites (17')

Bangladesh, 2008, dir – Yasmine Kabir
Winner of the Ram Bahadur Trophy for Best Film



A silent film depicting the ship-breaking yards of Chittagong, Bangladesh, a final destination for ships too old to ply the oceans. Every year, hundreds of ships are sent to these yards. And every year, thousands of people come to these yards in search of jobs. Risking their lives to save themselves from hunger, they breathe in asbestos dust and toxic waste. The ship has to die and man has to help it die, as if man and vessel were united in common bondage. *The Last Rites* bears testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

Film South Asia '09

The seventh edition of Film South Asia '09, with the slogan of 'Give me non-fiction', was held in Kathmandu from 17-20 September 2009. Veteran actor and social activist Shabana Azmi opened FSA '09 with Nepal's Minister of Information and Communications Shankar Pokharel. Thirty-five films were screened, selected from the 320 submitted.

If you are interested in hosting TFSA '10 in your city or would like more information on Film South Asia, please contact Mallika Aryal at +977-1-5552141, email [fsa\(at\)filmsouthasia.org](mailto:fsa(at)filmsouthasia.org), or visit www.filmsouthasia.org.

Travelling Film South Asia 2010, Kathmandu

16-18 July, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Friday, 16 July

11am **Opening**

Children of God (89')

Nepal, 2008, dir – Yi Seung-jun

The kids of the Aryaghat cremation grounds.

1.30pm **Afghan Girls Can Kick (50')**

Afghanistan, 2007, dir - Bahareh Hosseini

The girls do kick well.

3pm **Come to My Country:**

Journeys with Kabir and Friends (98')

India, 2008, dir – Shabnam Virmani

Unlikely bonds in quest for Kabir's 'country'.

5pm **The Way of the Road (60')**

Nepal, 2009, dir – Ben Campbell & Cosmo Campbell

The new Nepal-Tibet road and the locals.

Saturday, 17 July

11am **The Salt Stories (84')**

India, 2008, dir – Lalit Vachani

Following Gandhi's salt march in our time.

1pm **The Battle for Pakistan (40')**

Pakistan, 2009, dir – Maheen Zia

Do extremism and madrassas converge?

The Last Rites (17')

Bangladesh, 2008, dir – Yasmine Kabir

Where the ships go to die.

2.30pm **Children of God (89')**

Nepal, 2008, dir – Yi Seung-jun

The kids of the Aryaghat cremation grounds.

4.30pm **In Search of the Riyal (86')**

Nepal, 2009, dir – Kesang Tseten

Deep study of Nepali migrants in the Gulf.

Sunday, 18 July

10am **Saamam (The Music) (42')**

India, 2009, dir – Ramachandran K

Homage to Carnatic music and M D Ramanathan.

11.30am **The Promised Land (90')**

Bangladesh, 2008, dir – Tanvir Mokammel

Stigma still haunts Biharis in Dhaka.

1.30pm **Mayomi (50')**

Sri Lanka, 2008, dir – Carol Salter

Post-tsunami, she struggles for her family.

3pm **Out of Thin Air (50')**

India, 2009, dir – Samreen Farooqui & Shabani Hassanwalia

The high energy of Ladaki cinema.

Epic yearnings

Buddha's Orphans is ambitious in a way perhaps no work of fiction by a Nepali writing in English has been. It spans almost the entirety of post-Rana Nepal, ending with the royal massacre of 2001, and in doing so follows the lifelines of four generations in Kathmandu. An abandoned orphan, Raja, grows up next to Rani Pokhari, the site of his unknown mother's suicide. Nilu grows out of her own prosperous, but dysfunctional family. Together, they live through the joys and sorrows of the tumultuous decades of the Nepali half-century. An epic premise, and who better to bring it to life than pioneering Nepali author Samrat Upadhyay? Indeed, a blurb at the back likens it to a 'great old-fashioned Russian novel'.

But one fears such voluble praise does a book no favours. The implicit comparison to such luminaries as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and of course, Chekhov, ludicrous, and builds up the kind of expectation that hardly any living author anywhere could satisfy. Are we even expected to take the praise at face value in Kathmandu, where audiences and

peers are all too eager to hype each other up, lest the modesty of their talents be revealed to all?

Stripped of the hype, then, Upadhyay's latest novel is a reasonably entertaining romp through Kathmandu's recent history. As Kanak Dixit noted in the Tavern Tales session at the Nepal-Bharat Library last Saturday, *Buddha's Orphans* reminds us there was a Kathmandu before 1990.

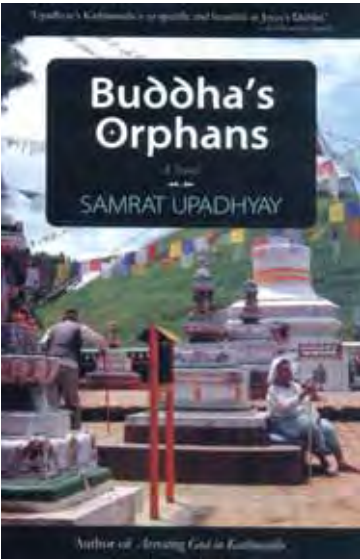
Samrat's latest novel has been orphaned by his publishers

Upadhyay has gone to some effort to recreate the setting in which his characters take root, and it is instructive to observe how he incrementally conjures up the congestion of the modern-day capital, as well as the changing public moods through the Panchayat era and into the confusion of the violent, democratic 1990s.

In contrast, Upadhyay's characters do not entirely convince in the manner of the

great Russian novels. It doesn't help that both Raja and Nilu grow up in extreme circumstances in the bland conformity of Panchayat-era Kathmandu, and that every act of theirs seems designed to entertain the reader rather than conform to reality.

The very strangeness of a tale is often that which warrants its narration. But Upadhyay's cause isn't much helped by his publisher in the subcontinent, Rupa & Co.



Buddha's Orphans
Samrat Upadhyay
Rupa & Co., 450 pages, Rs 470 (paperback)



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On the beat



RUKESH SHRESTHA

President and MD of General Motors India, Karl Slym, was in Nepal last week to launch a new mini-car from the Chevrolet series, and found some time to chat with *Nepali Times*:

You have just launched a new mini-car called Beat. Is this the fastest growing segment in the industry? The mini segment is always the fastest growing. The area that has been created by Tata's Nano is expected to be the new fastest growing segment. Just before the recession began, the luxury car market was beginning to grow fast. Towards the beginning of this year SUVs started to come back to the market. But if you are in Kathmandu, you are not going to buy a big car because you can't park it, you can't maneuver it and if anyone touches it, you get a huge bill to repair it.

Are you watching what your competitors are doing? We have overtaken them so I would say their biggest competitor is us. We have the fifth biggest market. We are the fastest growing nameplate in this region. I think everyone is watching Chevrolet rather than Chevrolet watching everyone else.

Compared to other countries, cars are very expensive in Nepal. How does this affect the manufacturers?

The price of a car is based on the import duty. The cost of the Beat will be more expensive and so will the costs of the competitors. I understand when countries penalise imports but the idea here is to incentivise the in-house job opportunities. You can't just penalise without helping. If you look at countries like China and India, and ASEAN, they have all provided support methodologies for people to become manufacturers in the country. That doesn't mean financial support but infrastructural support.

The market for hybrid cars is growing in Europe and America. When can we expect the same technology in this region?

The problem is the gap between what it requires as a fuel and what the infrastructure is capable of supplying. In Thailand, there is ethanol distribution; the government is incentivising it and people are moving to ethanol. We have an 83-hectare Jatropha farm in Gujarat, which produces a biodiesel product that can be used in a standard car. It is an interesting solution because you don't have to modify the car or the infrastructure.

EVENTS

Tavern Tales, a short talk on *Writing about Home* by acclaimed author Samrat Upadhyay. *Sunday 11 July, 5pm sharp, Quixote's Cove, Jawalakhel, 5536974, Entry Rs 50*

Kabita Yatra, solo poetry recitation by poet Viplob Pratik. *Saturday 10 July, 3.30pm sharp, Gurukul, Old Baneshwor, Tickets Rs 50 and Rs 100, 4466956*

Inner Beauty, Mayuka Kozawa touches the inner beauty of Mithila art in her paintings. *Saturday July 10 to Wednesday July 14, 11am to 7pm, Chai Chai Café, Pulchowk, 9849249012, 9808567361*

Weekly Farmers' Market, a market like no other with organic and gourmet food, healthy breakfasts, fresh coffee and lots of socialising. *Saturday 10 July, 9am to 12pm, 1905, 4215068*



Poetic Moments, an exhibition of paintings by various artists. *Till Saturday 17 July, 8am to 8pm, Kanipur Art Gallery, Boudhanath Circle, 9851076492*

Career Fair, organised by SAPE, leading educational fair organiser in South East Asia. *From Friday 9 July to 11 July, Exhibition Hall, Bhrikuti Mandap*

Omkarnations, solo painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha that expresses the omkar symbol in its various forms. *Till Tuesday 13 July, 10am to 6pm except on Sundays and holidays, 4241942*

Delicate Dedications, solo painting exhibition by artist Jasmine Rajbhandari. *Till Tuesday 13 July, 10am to 7pm. Satva Gallery, Kupondol, 9841469467*

SFF 5 Rs. Cine Fund launch, a local participation project to develop Short Film Factory as a locally empowered film fund in Nepal, accompanied by performances by Albatross and Alt F4. *Friday 9 July, starts 6pm, House of Music, Thamel, 4471104*



8th Annual Wine Festival, be there at Kilroy's for the biggest congregation of wine lovers in Kathmandu. *Kilroy's, Thamel, 4250440*

WORLD CUP EVENTS

Where to catch the last of the action from the planet's biggest sporting event:

Sports Bar, the only sports bar in town boasts a 109-inch screen with surround sound and the usual cocktails and drinks menu. Cover charge is Rs 500, but that will mean you won't have to worry about NEA's shenanigans. *Kamaladi, 4438017*

Rox Bar, watch the matches on the big screen at the bar and drink special cocktails prepared just for the occasion. For the sophisticates among you. *Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

Imago Dei, relaxed and friendly, it has a 250-watt sound system. Seats only 50 so come early and stay on. *Lazimpat, 4442464*

The Factory, a special chef is being flown over to create a menu corresponding with the countries battling it out. There will be games, prizes and pitchers of beer. *Thamel, 4701185*

House of Music, Terrace/lounge/music/football: expect lots of options. *Thamel, 9851075172*

1905, it's all about the food at 1905 in Kantipath, which is featuring a special menu throughout the World Cup with country-themed food or snacks. *Kantipath, 4225272*

Cinnamon Lounge, spacious lounge with a menu featuring grilled meat of various kinds. For the hungry man in you. *Jhamel, 5521339*

Vesper Café, a well-stocked bar and an airy patio to cool off during the intervals, and intense cheering. *Jhamel, 5548179*



WORLD CUP IN YOUR HOOD

If the fancy restaurants do not cater to your excitement levels, the World Cup games being projected at your neighbourhood intersections surely will. Get as close as you can to watching the game live without jetting into the Rainbow Nation by heading down towards the roaring applause and giant size projector screens. We've heard some enterprising types are even hawking mocktails and cocktails.

Catch the finals in Mangal Bajar, Basantapur, Sankata, Mitra Park, Baneshwor, Sanepa, Janabahal, Kantipath, Maruhiti, Dhokabahal, Khusibu and Asan. Entrance free everywhere except in Khusibu, where they charge Rs 25 per show. We hear there's some serious betting going on in Asan. Oops! that's illegal.

DINING

Saturday @ Hyatt, take a refreshing dip in the pool, soak away your weekday sorrows and sample the delicious barbeque in the open air. *Every Saturday from 12.30pm to 4pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi with an unparalleled view of Boudha stupa. *Every day from 9am to 9pm, Boudha, 2130681*

Chopstix, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken, it's one-of-a-kind. *Kumaripati, 5551118*



Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Bring your own booze though. *Jawalakhel, Open daily 11am-9pm except Mondays, 2110517*

Everest Steak House, an old-school joint for everything steak. A sanctuary for meat. *Thamel, near Chhetrapati chowk, 4260471*

Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get really busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Jhamsikhel, 5521810*

Hankook Sarang, serves up the incredible tastes of Korea, including superlative steamed rice to anchor meals fit for kings. *Thamel, near Roadhouse Café*



MUSIC

Attila Manju band - live in concert, dance to the groovy music, DJ BMan later on the wagon. *Friday 9 July, 8pm onwards, Regal Hall, 1905, Rs 350/person, 4225272, 4215068*

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, KJC brings renowned German musician Rainer Pusch to town to share his knowledge, an unmissable opportunity. *From Wednesday 21 July to 20 September, KJC, Jhamsikhel, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np*



Cycle city

There is an amazingly simple solution to curbing air pollution in the Kathmandu Valley (and your weight). Ditch your motorbike and get on a bicycle. And if you think the precarious road conditions of Kathmandu won't let you, there is some good news in the offing. An enthusiastic group of youths have devoted themselves to turning the capital into a cycle-friendly city by 2020.

An ambitious goal, but the small yet swiftly increasing breed of cyclists in the city can

at least look forward to breathing easier. Started a year ago by students of Kathmandu University, Rajan Kathet and Shail Shrestha, the Kathmandu Cycle City 2020 campaign is moving ahead with full force. It already has 700 active members, who use cycles as a regular means of transport.

Their plans involve building cycle lanes, promoting cycling to commute short distances, and encouraging youth participation in cycling sports. In the last year alone, they have organised cycle rallies and conducted cycle workshops to raise the profile of cycling. The campaign has also been lobbying government bodies to build cycle lanes on newly constructed roads and accommodate cycle lanes within existing road networks.

If the authorities reciprocate the campaigners' zeal, the usual spectacle of Kathmandu's infamous road traffic, which makes everyday cycling more akin to adventure sports, will hopefully take a turn for the better. Ride safe!



CHINESE WHISPERS: A well-wisher conveys a wish-list to former king Gyanendra on the occasion of the latter's 64th birthday on Wednesday.



GO IN PEACE, COMRADE: Nepali Congress leaders pay their last respects to Bal Bahadur Rai, who passed away at the age of 90 on Sunday.



WHAT'S GOING ON? The Public Accounts Committee grills political parties and ministry staff on alleged irregularities in disbursement of funds, Wednesday.



CIRCLE OF FAITH: A devotee prostrates himself in the course of a circumambulation of Swayambhu Hill, Tuesday morning.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

There is no good news for farmers and all those expecting good monsoon showers to save their fields. Nepal received only half of the normal monthly quota rainfall of last month. Satellite pictures of Thursday afternoon show that the prevailing drought is likely to continue till next week, with only fragmented clouds floating around. This means more isolated showers, and not much more. Meteorologists blame the weak build-up of troughs (low pressure zones) along the Himalaya this year. Historical data from the Met Office suggests we are heading towards an abnormal period in our climatic history. Expect light showers during the afternoons or evenings in the Valley.

FRI	SAT	SUN
29-21	28-21	30-20



**POLITICALLY
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Indu Nepal

Last weekend, I joined my mother in the field to plant paddy seedlings in three tiny terraces by the side of a river. It's a task that always seems a little futile as the soil is comprised of pebbles and sand. Any fertile particles once there have been swept up and away by the trucks and tractors driving to the river for a wash, allowing the rocks underneath to enjoy the sunshine.

Like last year, the six-inch canal that leads to the field was delivering only droplets, a disappointment for seedlings that like to swim in water. Yet there was my mother, carrying spades, shovels and buckets, insisting on planting in the hope that using the land and the mulch produced during the harvest will make the soil a little more fertile next year.

Her hard work and the unshakeable belief that it will, one day, lead to success seemed particularly remarkable this year. I returned to Kathmandu with mud under my toenails to find pictures of the Fourth of July celebrations of my friends in America. Among the pictures of



Stuff of dreams

If nations were people what kind of person would Nepal be?

Wave Your Flag cakes and "the bunch of slobes trying to eat 78 hot dogs without barfing" were messages of pride in the American dream: the promise of freedom and with it prosperity and success, the idea that with hard work, everyone can achieve prosperity.

Whether it is the families behind Swayambhu breaking rocks day in and day out, or the men who lug around baskets of fruits on their bicycles in the high afternoon heat, the culture of hard work is not alien to Nepal. Yet there are also cases like that of Basudevi Sunar of Rajpur who

was forced to flee her village with two young daughters two weeks ago because she was ploughing her land to grow food. She was told that as a woman, she is not allowed to use a plough while her (by her account, useless) husband is still alive. So her neighbours shaved her head, paraded her

around the village with a garland of shoes around her neck, then kicked her out.

What kind of people punish a woman trying to make a living? And what does it say about the Nepal we want to live in? What is the Nepal of our dreams? Many countries have slowly picked themselves up after ravaging wars, aided by a collective vision. A dream. After the Korean War, South Korea rallied its human resources to build a new, prosperous nation. After the Second World War, the Japanese decided to ditch the warrior ethos and adopted a national policy centred on peace. Germany too tempered itself to put an end to its imperial ambitions in Europe.

It holds true that in life, without a vision, it is hard to move forward, hard to bind people together, and hard to lead people. If nations were people, what kind of person would Nepal be? Would it be a man of subsistence stumbling from one day to another? Would it only look out for itself, while making sure nobody is doing better? Never before in our history have we had so much freedom, never before have we had so much control over our destiny. This is the time to set our national vision, a dream that goes beyond the political masquerading that Naya Nepal has become. This is a time for Nepali heroes. Because people are the stuff dreams are made of.

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max L'agence / 10

Troubled waters

A report on water security in Asia warns of the dangers in store for the region

Nobody had anticipated a century ago that countries would enter into major wars over oil. Today, when identical predictions are made over water, the response is strikingly similar: disbelief and a general lack of concern. But experts say things are going to change. Water is going to be the most contested resource in the world in the coming years. Indian think-tank Strategic Foresight Group's *The Himalayan Challenge: Water Security in Emerging Asia*, warns that the four countries of the Himalayan sub-region – Nepal, India, China and Bangladesh – will have to make do with 275 billion cubic metres less water over the next 20 years.

This figure is greater than the total amount of water available in Nepal at present. But the Himalayan river basins are home to 20 per cent of the world's population. Water depletion in this region on such a scale, therefore, means serious social, economic and political repercussions worldwide.

The report warns that glacial melting will cause rivers such as

the Ganges in India and the Yellow River in China to turn into seasonal rivers by the second half of the century, greatly undermining the livelihoods of millions who live in these river basins.

Because of water depletion, glacial melting and erratic rainfall patterns, there will be a massive decrease in agricultural production. Food crop production will decrease by at least 30-50 per cent in India and China, forcing them to import from other countries. Consequently, the price of food will skyrocket in the

international market and nearly 100 million people in the four countries may be forced to migrate. According to the report, the food crisis and mass migration will lead to conflicts both within and between nations sharing river basins.

As water resources dwindle, water demand will increase along with population growth and economic development.

Inevitably, countries will tighten their grip on water resources.

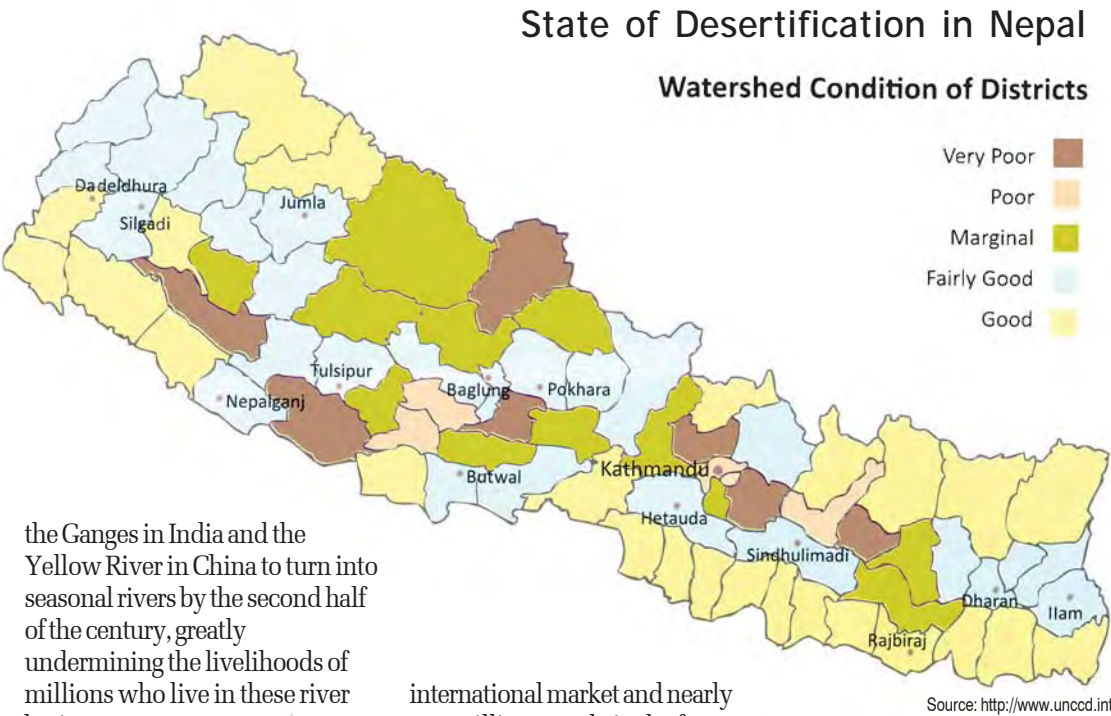
The Nepal problem: too much water, too little water

We hear much about the abundant water resources of Nepal. But 80 per cent of the annual rainfall of Nepal falls between June and September

and, as the report notes, many people in the hills have to survive on less than five litres of water per capita per day. The monsoon is characterised by heavy precipitation, culminating in flooding across the country. The rest of the year is marked by long spells of drought.

There have been marked changes in the behaviour of the monsoon, and therefore the pattern of water availability in Nepal. This year's delayed and sporadic monsoon has already furrowed brows. Nepal depends heavily on rainwater for irrigation, and only 35 per cent of its arable land has irrigation facilities. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Nepal will have a food deficit of more than 316,465 tonnes this year, owing to the unfavourable monsoon. The report warns that with changing weather patterns, erratic monsoons and rising temperatures, the 'too much water, too little water' syndrome is likely to continue in Nepal.

Water security is a cross-cutting issue with implications for political and economic security. The impact of such massive changes cannot be addressed by the unilateral efforts of nations. The report recommends transboundary collaboration among the four nations for integrated river basin management.  *Rubeena Mahato*





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Long journey home

Former child soldier Sita Tamang's powerful testimony at the Security Council focused the world's attention on Nepal's Maoists



RECOUNTING: Sita Tamang (second from right, at bottom) attended the Security Council's meeting on 17 June, narrating her experience as a child soldier with the Maoists.

Sita Tamang, a former child soldier, was excited to go to New York. But the journey she embarked on last month was less to visit the country she had heard so much about since her childhood than it was to fulfill a historic mission.

Sita was invited to the 6341st meeting of the UN Security Council by the UN Special Rapporteur on Children in Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy.

On 17 June, Sita was seated next to Coomaraswamy in the Security Council chamber, where there was representation from 60 countries. Over concerns for her safety, she was introduced as Manju Gurung. Then she recounted her ordeal of abduction by the Maoists at age 11. She was forced to perform heavy labour, trained for combat, and threatened with the murder of her family if she spoke to anyone about the Maoists. She told the assembly about her escape and the

discrimination she had to endure at the hands of her family and neighbours back in her home village. She also spent time in the Shaktikhor cantonment in Chitwan before she escaped and finally contacted a human rights organisation that aided her rehabilitation. The chamber was left shocked by her story.

Following her presentation, delegates suggested the council take stringent measures to bring the recruiters of child soldiers to justice.

US representative Susan Rice, quoting the nineteenth century abolitionist Frederick Douglass, said, "It's easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." Citing Sita's case of successful reintegration, she emphasised the need to join the campaign against child recruitment into insurgencies. "Even after conflicts end, scars remain in the form of prolonged trauma and impaired social, emotional and cognitive development,"

she said.

Council President Patricia Espinosa, Secretary for External Relations of Mexico, said all types of child abuse during insurgency or war are war crimes. She urged all states to take stringent measures against those involved in such activities. Speakers also argued the Maoists have to do a lot more to prove their innocence. Some even opined they should be charged with war crimes in Sita's case. The Maoists released 2,395 ex-combatants below 18 years of age seven months ago, but 1,614 of 4,008 minors had already fled the cantonments by the time the discharges took place.

For her part, Sita has no desire to return to the US following her 10-day visit. She wants to see children across the globe secure. "My goal is to complete my studies first and then help rescue troubled children like myself," she said. 🇳🇵

Threatened

Former Maoist child soldier Sita Tamang, who gave testimony at the United Nations Security Council in New York last month, has been threatened by Maoists at her home in Chitwan.

Tamang, now 18, was introduced as Manju Gurung by the UN Special Rapporteur on Children in Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy. Sita recounted her life story, detailing how she was forced into the Maoist movement at age 11. Upon her return, five combatants from the UN-supervised Shaktikhor Cantonment went to Sita's home while she was out grazing goats.

A car stopped at our house and five people came out of a car looking for my daughter," said a terrified Dhan Maya Tamang. They said she might have to face consequences in the future.

The Maoists said to me that I should not have criticised them, and that something bad could happen to me in the future," Sita said.

Sita first told her story to *Himal Khabarpatrika* three months ago, as part of a series on what has become of former Maoist combatants. The UN then took her to New York as a case study of how ex-child soldiers can be successfully rehabilitated.

Human rights organisations and journalists in Chitwan say they are worried about Sita's safety and the local police has posted a sentry at her house.

Sita's story

I first saw the Maoists in 2002. I was studying in Class Four and must have been about 11 years old. The Maoists were running a 'one family, one member' campaign. Because my parents were occupied with work, I was compelled to go. They said, "Bourgeois education is useless, you should join us," and didn't let me return home.

After that, I don't know where I travelled but after seven days we reached my maternal uncle's home in Dihitar. I was very scared. I managed to write a letter to my mother. She came to my rescue and took me home. I was terrified when I found out that while I was at school, the Maoists had come to my house and threatened to kill me if I

didn't join them.

During the ceasefire in July 2003, the Maoists organised a general assembly where we went as volunteers from our school. However, after the event concluded, they forcefully took us to Dhading. They threatened us and made us walk night and day. I would watch other children go to school as I walked along with weapons. At that time I was unaware of child rights. I did not know that using child soldiers is a crime. The Maoists made us till fields and roads to gain the favour of the villagers. We had to carry big stones. We were taught to ask the villagers for food. Although we didn't fight, we had to carry guns, bombs and supplies and walk on difficult terrain.

Six months later, my father found out that we were in Kamitar for training and came to



JB PUN MAGAR

get me. But they wouldn't let me go. We underwent rigorous military training. They threatened to kill us if we disobeyed or tried to run away. I was seriously injured while jumping from a height of six feet and health problems dogged me from then on. Even so, they told me I had come second in training and made me a section commander.

I understood that during war we would be in the frontline and the commanders would give orders from the back.

During the ceasefire in June 2004, we lived in a camp in Chitwan. After the peace agreement was signed, we were moved to the cantonment in Shaktikhor. I took three days of leave and went home, with no

intention of returning. I wanted to study. But at home, my mother said that she couldn't send me to school and people started gossiping about me. I felt miserable, disillusioned and devastated.

In despair, I went back to the cantonment. Saying that it would cure me, they pressurised me to marry. When I refused, I was harassed. I couldn't stay there so I returned home but again they came for me. They took me to the cantonment and talked of taking action against me. Two days later I ran away to Narayangadh even though I was sick.

I then came across a rehabilitation program that helped me to resume my studies. I now study in Class Nine and I am also the president of a children's club. But the fear of the Maoists still haunts me.

As recounted to the UN Security Council, New York, 16 June

The road from here

This commentary from senior NC leader Bal Bahadur Rai was published in *Himal Khabar Patrika* 30 June-16 July.

हिमाल

It was dictated from his hospital bed 10 days before he died on Sunday.

All the leaders of all the parties acknowledge that there is no alternative to consensus politics. Yet they can't get themselves to rise above personal and party interests. They are prisoners of their own leadership ambitions.

The biggest party in the CA, the Maoists, instead of cooperating, is playing dishonest games. It has repeatedly failed to honour its past commitments, and muddled the political waters to allow all kinds of extremist and reactionary groups to take root. It was always necessary to get the Maoists on board for the management of their fighters, return of property and the dissolution of the YCL, and it still is. But past agreements have been just for show. There is little chance the Maoists can get into government without fulfilling these commitments.

The Maoists can't hide the fact that all levels of their party hierarchy are either abetting or doing nothing to stop their warlike involvement in kidnappings for ransom, murders, extortion, beatings, and threats. At one



NHUCHE MAN DANGOL

time, we also waged an armed struggle for democracy, but we never made the people suffer. We fought the enemy, whereas the Maoists fought against the people. In the name of revolution, they killed and terrorised the people. This isn't politics, it's banditry. Mao Zedong himself said, "don't even take a needle from the people," but the party that is waging havoc in Mao's name in Nepal has forgotten all that.

The Maoist idea of 14 provinces is not viable and will lead to the fragmentation of the Nepali nation. There should never be more than six provinces and under no circumstance should they be demarcated along ethnic lines. The Maoists only used the ethnic card to help recruitment during the war. Just look at Gopal Kirati. The Maoists refused to give him an important portfolio when they were in power. They said he couldn't handle it, so they

fabricated a new Ministry of Culture to make Gopal a token minister. But even an old man like me served 19 times as caretaker prime minister under successive Nepali Congress governments.

The Maoist promise to give marginalised ethnic groups, Madhesi, women and Dalits rights is just eyewash. And even if they wanted to give them rights, the Maoists would bungle it: just look at the way they have handled the ethnic state councils.

To be sure, Nepalis historically marginalised groups need to be liberated, they have to be given equal rights and opportunities. Nepal is hugely diverse and the groups need to be represented proportionately. But in doing that we shouldn't disturb the traditional harmony of our diversity or threaten the country's unity.

The path we have to take now should allow any Nepali, be they Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Magars, Gurungs, Yadavs or Biswakarmas, the chance to be prime minister. Pushpa Kamal Dahal promises to give the Limbus a Limbuwan, the Rais a Khumbuwan, the Magars a Magarat, the Tharus a Tharuhat, the Gurungs a Tamuwani, but will he ever propose to give the prime ministership to Srijabegu Limbu, Gopal Kirati, Arasi Chaudhary, Ram Bahadur Thapa Magar, or Deb Gurung?

Win-bean situation

Dipendra Baduwal in Kantipur, 2 July

कान्तिपुर

Bharatpur: Vegetable farming has transformed the livelihoods of farmers of Shaktikhor VDC especially wards 7, 8 and 9.

The villagers started vegetable farming 15 years ago. District Agriculture Office (DAO) records show these villages produce about 42,964 metric tonnes of vegetables during winter and 23,368 metric tonnes in summer.

The villagers traditionally farmed potatoes, cauliflowers and cabbages. Since they switched to green beans, there has been no looking back, and their living standards have gone up noticeably.

According to DAO chief Laxman Poudel, a migrant from Dhading district introduced the beans to the village some years ago. Since they found it profitable, other villagers followed suit in cultivating it. Now, green beans are cultivated throughout the VDC. Indeed, the DAO has declared Debitar a 'green beans pocket area'.

The villagers have also set up Niureni Fresh Vegetable and Fruits Production Cooperative. Chitra Bahadur Magar, chair of the cooperative,



SAMIR JUNG THAPA

says green beans have transformed their lives. He no longer has to struggle to make ends meet. He even manages to send his children to school, and has replaced his thatched roof with tin recently. "Some farmers have even managed to build cement houses," he says. According to him, all bean farmers have tin-roofed houses at the very least. Even Chepang farmers of neighbouring Siddika village are taking up green bean cultivation.

Green beans are cultivated on 75 per cent (or 200 hectares) of the arable land of the VDC, and 1,500 households benefit from its cultivation, which yields about 12 metric tonnes per hectare.



SAM KANG LI

Rice crisis

Yashoda Timsina in Nepal, 11 July

नेपाल

Nepali's prime crops are wheat, corn, millet, rice and barley. Although these are not produced in Karnali and the far-western districts, buckwheat, potatoes, sweet potatoes, walnuts, milk products, meat and other vegetables are found in ample amounts. It is hard to believe that people here die of starvation.

Last year, Dolpa produced 2,000 metric tonnes of apples, 5,000 tonnes of potatoes, 500 tonnes of walnuts, 800 tonnes of milk products, 300 tonnes of meat, 900 tonnes of eggs and 800 tonnes of vegetables. These are as nutritious as any other food. The list of produce from other districts of Karnali is also similar. But we still hear of people dying of rice shortages in these districts.

There are rich European nations that have less wheat production than Nepal. While they have comfortably survived on potatoes, the people of Karnali are still chasing after rice.

Actually, it hasn't been long since this rice culture took hold. When the government and WFP started flying in rice to ease the food crisis in Karnali, it became the staple food there. Food experts claim that this is why Karnali suffers from food shortages for 9 out of 12 months a year. In addition, the state bears the expense of transporting rice to Karnali.

This year alone, Rs 450 million has already been spent on transportation. President of Rural Reconstruction of Nepal, Arjun Karki, says, "The food policy of the state is responsible for making the people here depend on relief packages of rice instead of being self-sufficient by cultivating what can be grown locally."

Last year, Nepal produced 2 million metric tonnes of potatoes. If we are to believe the official statistics, the deficit was 100,000 metric tonnes of food. Combating this crisis simply requires a change in food habits. The Ministry of Agriculture's spokesperson Hari Dahal says, "The food shortage will increase due to a change in weather and unsafe storage facilities. Imports will also decrease. So we have to shift back to the most suitable staple foods." For instance, Nepali potatoes are exported to India, then imported back at a higher price in the off season.

In the last five years, 146,000 metric tonnes of rice were imported from India. This year, Japan has offered food support of 95,000 metric tonnes and WFP has increased its annual food support to 70,000 metric tonnes, up from 50,000. WFP has launched a program called Food for Work, but as long as it translates to 'rice for work', experts say that Karnali will continue to have a food deficit. Self-sufficiency has to be encouraged as a long-term solution.

Exodus

Nagarik, 5 June

नागरिक

Kathmandu: Nepali hydro-engineers are leaving the country for jobs in conflict-affected Afghanistan, where there is a high demand for a skilled workforce.

Experienced Nepali hydro-engineers are in demand, says an official at the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) who has returned from Afghanistan. He worked in KFW Bank in Afghanistan for a year. KFW has invested billions of dollars in the hydro sector.

According to the official, half a

dozen Nepalis are employed in major positions in hydro projects, with two engineers overseeing many such projects in Afghanistan. They are paid a minimum of US\$5,000 a month, and some are paid as much as US\$25,000 a month.

Afghanistan is getting aid from all over the world. Donors have made a huge investment in short-term hydropower projects. The risk is high but a year of income is enough for a year's expenses, says hydro-energy expert Dambar Bahadur Nepali.

In Nepal, the project head of

a hydropower project is usually paid about Rs 200,000 (about US\$2,500) a month. But Nepali hydro-engineers with two years of experience in the field are poached by foreign hydropower companies. A project needs 8 to 10 engineers, says Nepali. Big projects require at least 30 engineers. NEA engineers take unpaid leave to work in foreign companies due to the attractive pay and perks.

Nepal produces about 400 hydro-engineers annually.



SRIJAN SHRESTHA/KANTIPUR

Delayed justice

Ghanashyam Khadka in Kantipur, 2 July

कान्तिपुर

Kathmandu: Oblivious to the rush of people and the sultry sun, a man is fast asleep at the main entrance of the Supreme Court. Dressed in a dhoti, a soiled labeda, torn plastic slippers and a yellow muffler wrapped around his neck, he lies down, head cushioned by his black umbrella.

Muleswar Yadav of Rajbiraj wakes up after only three hours of sleep. "I came by the night bus," he explains. "I have to attend the hearing. I was so tired, I dozed off here."

It has been 16 years since he has been seeking justice. For him, justice is exasperating and expensive. "I don't have money to stay in a hotel. If you are sleepy enough, you can sleep even on the ground."

Yadav was not satisfied with the share of land his father left to him when he died. He filed a case against his brother Jaleswar Yadav in the district court, Saptari. The court took five years to come to a verdict in his favour. But his brother refused to yield, compelling him to go to the appellate court. Here, too, it took four years for a decision in his favour. Jaleswar then took him to the Supreme Court, and Muleswar shuttled back and forth to Kathmandu for another seven years before he got a favourable verdict. But it didn't make him particularly happy.

"I got back the inherited land," he says. "But had I not fought the case, I would have bought more land instead of paying the lawyer. I would have worked in the field instead of spending time in court. If I had been in service I would have retired by now. I could have started a business. So many years were wasted."

Today is his last visit to the court. "I will not fight any more cases even if I win the world," he says. He's come to Kathmandu to dispatch the SC decision taken four months ago to the district court. "I've had enough of this for this life," sighs the 55-year-old.

Crime and politics

Editorial in Rajdhani, 6 July

राजधानी

On Sunday, cadres from the Matrika Yadav-led CPN-Maoist smeared black soot on the face of Madhav Acharya, Director General at the Department of Forests. Acharya was verbally insulted and physically harassed in his own office. Such incidents linked to Yadav are not new. As a minister under the Maoist government, Yadav made news by punishing Local Development Officer Danda Raj Ghimire by locking him into a toilet. It appears that Yadav's eccentric ways are now being copied by his party members as well.

Earlier, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal had claimed that the security situation in the country had improved. His government may have been reduced to a caretaker but the reins are still in his hands. Even then, party workers of another party were

able to manhandle a high-ranking official. This clearly proves that the security system is not as stable as Nepal claims it to be. Other political parties have also remained silent on this issue, which simply gives everyone the freedom to act as they please. This can only invite a culture of violence and hooliganism.

Matrika Yadav has to take responsibility for this incident. A group that takes the law into its own hands cannot be called a political party. If Yadav refuses to take action against those involved in this incident, the Election Commission should review the status of his political party. When criminal activities are allowed under a political umbrella, things can take a dangerous turn. There are more than 100 armed groups operating in the country, some of which claim to be political parties. A clear line has to be drawn between politics and crime.

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Far pavilion



PICS: CHONG ZI LIANG

The Nepal Tourism Bored may have hit upon a great fundraising strategy completely by chance. Our roving correspondent took these snaps of bronze Buddhas at the Nepal pavilion of the World Expo in Shanghai this week. Even without a sign saying ‘Donations Welcome’, Chinese visitors (there have been 5 million so far) have dropped oodles of yuans. The only Nepali officials present seemed busy hawking handicrafts on the side, and it wasn’t clear what happened to the money at the end of each day. By the end of the Expo in September there should be a couple of million dollars right there. We could use the money to buy more x-ray machines to reduce congestion at the airport and maybe a fleet of new airport taxis ahead of the

expected invasion of one million tourists during NTY 2011. The donkey just got a brainwave: how about installing a dozen more Buddhas and line them up at the exit to the Shanghai pavilion?

No wonder the Chinese are so spooked by a Buddhist monk’s 75th birthday. After all, no one ever throws money at the mummified cadaver of the Great Helmsman at his Maosoleum in Beijing, whereas a Nepal-born mendicant commands such respect and following even after 2,500 years. Incidentally, we were all fabulously impressed by the vigilance and courage shown by our Armed Police Force Special Unit in preventing people at Boudha and Jawalakhel from rallying for peace and

compassion. And if you were wondering what caused the huge traffic jams on Tuesday it was because APF commandos were dragging away ‘Tibetan-looking’ persons out of buses coming in through Kalanki, Koteswor, and Jorpati. The Chinese may be so impressed with the thoroughness of our APF they could request a loan to quell future disturbances in Lhasa. Then what do we do?

Why is everyone getting so worked up about Awesome telling the Times of Hindoostan that Indian and Nepali Maoists got along like a house on fire and that the Naxalites were welcome in Naxal anytime? PKD told confidantes he was striking while the iron was hot as the Congress was being

badgered by the BJP and the CPM. He said this was part of his carefully calibrated ‘bargaining tactic’ to hit the headlines in India so he would be noticed and finally get the audience he has been craving at the Delhi Darbar. My educated asinine guess is that the interview will backfire on Terrifico. Then the very next day Hormis Tharakkan writes in the India Espresso calling on the Govt of India to be ‘more flexible’ in dealing with Maos in Nepal. India’s Super Spook seems to have a soft spot not just for Nepal but for its baddies as well. But Com Hormis should’ve also enlightened us on his engagement with the guerrillas during the war and the safe haven he provided the teroristas in India then.

You know fhit is about to hit the san when the comrades at Perish Danda stop picking up their mobiles. It looks like they are literally busy with internal ‘party’ politics. PKD found out that the four commanders plus Baburam and Kiran attended Com Hitman’s party at Gongaboo last week. So the Chairman invited them to the Pistachio Palace for a charm counter-offensive. It seems to have worked cuz Ananta and Pasang quickly un-defected. The rank and file are now really confused because the PKD and BRB are

nowboth in the semifinals for PMship. Which is why the three parteis all looked sheepish when they arrived at Shital Nibas on Weds to get the prez to extend the deadline for govt formation by five days. After all, they squandered the whole past week squabbling and the first time they even met was on Wednesday, and that was to sit down to agree to ask the president for an extension.

Finally good news from the North American Nepali diaspora: NAC and ANA have merged to form the NRNNCC, the USA chapter of the NRNA. It will now lead the ANA to set up NRN America and ANA, NRNNCC/USA, NRNA.

A kangresi, an eh-maley and a maobuddy went to the CA canteen. The sauni asked, what kind of tea? One said ‘white’, one said ‘black’ and the third said ‘black or white’. The alert sauni said: “You want milk in your tea, so you must be a kangresi. You want black tea, you must be a maobadi. And you don’t seem to know what you want, you must be eh-maley.”



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