

NEPALI Times

#516

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IT'S HOLY! Participants of last Friday's Dunga Daud, held as part of the 10th Bagmati River Festival, tune into the clear waters at Sundarijal before racing down to Uttar Bahini, seven kilometres south



KIRAN PANDAY

RIDE THE RIVER



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THE WINNER CAN'T TAKE ALL

It is now becoming clear that Nepal's main political parties can only agree on one thing: postponing deadlines to keep disagreeing.

On May 28, when it looked like they couldn't do it any other way, they agreed to postpone the writing of a new constitution by one more year. Nearly three months later, nothing has been done on the constitution or the peace process, and the country is wedged between two prime ministerial candidates. Then on Tuesday, the chief whips of the three parties actually managed to agree to

postpone voting for the fifth round till Sunday, because it looked like the deadlock would continue.

What this means is they can agree when push comes to shove. Although the leaders of the political parties believe this means they have five more days to horse-trade, it also means that there is more time to find a consensus candidate to lead an all-party government. By now, even the more die-hard proponents of majoritarian rule within the three parties have realised that this is just not going to work because their relative strengths in parliament cancel each

other out. They also know that the endless elections are turning into a political farce, and public disenchantment is growing.

While the NC still hopes that it can get the UML and Madhesi leaders to issue whips to back Ram Chandra Poudel, both the kingmaker parties have been forced to remain 'neutral' if for no other reason than to keep themselves intact. The Maoist central committee has got the message, and says it is 'flexible' even though Chairman Dahal hasn't yet formally given up trying to improve his tally in the electoral arithmetic.

Nearly five years after the war ended and two years after the elections, this is what it has come down to. The lack of trust between the two political camps is so great that there is chronic failure to compromise, and hence no agreement on a consensus candidate for prime minister. On the surface it looks like a power struggle, and it seems to be driven by individual ambition. That is partly true. But at the root of the disagreement is a chasm between those who think an unreformed Maoist party wants to take the country down the path to totalitarianism, and the Maoist chairman's determination to be in power when the constitution is written.

If a trust deficit is the reason for this deadlock, the onus is on the Maoists to prove to the NC and UML, among others, that they are serious about metamorphosing into a legitimate mainstream political entity by demonstrating a commitment to fulfil the six demands. The NC and UML also have a responsibility to be less stubborn about keeping the largest party out of government.

The main ingredient of a consensus is compromise, not winner takes all.



KIRAN PANDAY

ON THE WEB

www.nepalintimes.com

WHO'S BAD?

Nepali politicians made a fundamental error in allowing the Maoists to take part in normal politics while still retaining their instruments of murder, loot and extortion and their ability to indulge in violence ('Good guys and bad guys', Publisher's note, #515). Until this is corrected nothing will improve.

jange

- If by value system you mean democracy as a system of the politicians, for the politicians, by the politicians then I agree. That is what the current system represents, and that is not democracy.

But otherwise, I think it is doing well enough and will survive this turmoil. You just have to learn to appreciate that people are smart enough to know that democracy offers them the best hope. Authoritarianism represents a manner of functioning where the leader assumes that he knows best and everything must follow his belief system.

Slarti

- The fact of the matter is that in Nepal, a bunch of second-tier feudals are the ones masquerading as 'democrats' and 'democratic champions'. To them 'democracy' is little more than snatching away power from the first-tier feudals (King etc.) and divvying it up among themselves. And when this doesn't work, they try to assuage the rest of the populace with cliches such as "democracy is messy, but yadda, yadda, yadda..."

Satya Nepali

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

A good vision, but won't be realised for a few decades ('Win-win-win', Alok Bohara, #515). Not in our lifetime. If I were Dr Bohara, I would focus on the little things we can change instead of

chipping in with big dreams. Educated or not, living in or out, we need to change our mindset big time. As a Nepali, I need to change the way I think, the way I live, the way I treat others, the way I get things done, the way I define success, etc.

Rajan Kafle

HAND-ME-DOWNS

The article is about inheritance laws and the effect this will have on Nepali society, certainly economically but also culturally too ('Changing inheritance laws', Artha Beed, #515).

What happens today when a parent has one son and one daughter? What happens today when the son is unsympathetic and uncaring towards his parents in old age? Would such behaviour be mitigated under new inheritance laws? How do sons today plan for their future when they KNOW they will automatically inherit everything? How would this change?

My wife's family comprised three brothers and three sisters. During her parents' old age, one son cared for his parents relentlessly, one son ignored his parents, one son was an absolute misery to his parents with his criminal activity. When the parents died, guess how the property was divided, and how would this change under a future law?

I have in-laws who have two sons each, both who have wasted parents' funding on meaningless education overseas, returning to Kathmandu to live a life of idleness knowing they have only to 'survive' to inherit substantial property and businesses. Both sets of parents are completely ignorant of retirement planning or any other form of financial planning for that matter.

I have another friend who inherited a sum of money sufficient to build his own property and we advised him to build a two-storey property with a home for his

family on top and a lower floor area for a business of some sort. Eventually, he built a two-storey edifice, both living spaces, and rented out the lower floor. Today, he has nothing to do, no work, no business, and survives off the irregular income from semi-squatting tenants.

THESE are some of the issues that will be touched by the change to inheritance laws.

Dr B

HIMALAYAN HIGHLANDER

If the UML has 9 points, the Kangresis 8 points and the Baddies only 6 points – as reported by your good self – surely the UML's self-appointed 9-point plan should give them the lead on points to be Prime Minister? ('Nothing happened this week', The Ass, #515)

I have a 20-point plan – my platform is I could do a great job for Nepal from here, in Scotland, as it appears no one actually wants or expects the prime minister to turn up. I will start creating the Jockgressi Party in anticipation of my nomination: our party symbol will be a bottle of 'Three Bagpipers' and our party slogan will be 'No ice; just water'.

Peter Thomson

- Peter, the funny (and scary) thing is that you are in all likelihood more competent than any of our 'Nepali leaders' (which, admittedly, is not saying much). With a slogan like that, I'm pretty sure you'll win without requiring a recount. But a more appropriate slogan for a country like Nepal might be, "On the rocks!"

Hange

POLICY FIX

Although Nepali politicians both present and past, and the intelligentsia, should acknowledge their culpability in bringing the country to the anarchic state it is in today, the current situation in Nepal also reflects the complete failure of Indian foreign policy ('Patronising behaviour', Prashant Jha,

#515).

Given the fractured and unstable nature of Indian coalition politics, foreign policy decisions many times it seems, are made by incompetent bumbling bureaucrats with misguided input from its equally clueless intelligence service and also sometimes from partisan political leaders. Such misguided decisions have caused the foreign policy disaster in Nepal.

The Indians would be well advised to set up an independent non-partisan 'brain trust' on foreign policy to advise the government, so that foreign policy is taken out of the hands of the bureaucrats, always is guided by long-term national interest, and does not change with each successive change of the government.

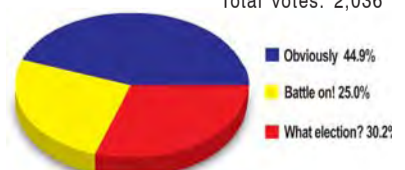
A stable, peaceful and independent Nepal is in India's (and China's) long-term interest. An unstable Nepal, by contrast, can be a playground for various interests including terrorist groups as well as ISI, and a destabilising force for both our neighbours.

Dahmoines

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 516

Q. Should Dahal and Poudel withdraw their candidacies before Wednesday's election?

Total votes: 2,036



Weekly Internet Poll # 517. To vote go to: www.nepalintimes.com

Q. What do you think of the en masse resignation of campus chiefs?



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Nepal is not a failed state, but the illegitimate, undemocratic makeshifts are holding up the transition

The Nepali state faces twin crises in the Nepali state—a failure to elect a new prime minister for the past two months, and a failure to elect new local bodies for the past eight years.

But a caveat is essential at the outset. There is resilience and robustness in the political system in Nepal that is often underestimated. This is because the purpose of the state structure is not to fulfil welfare functions, but to survive—first by fighting and then co-opting assertive social forces, and tying them into existing patronage networks. Despite the vacuum that we witness at present, Nepal is not about to become a failed state.

But the absence of a strong, functional, legitimate government at the centre is of course a problem. A full budget has not been presented yet and its impact can be felt across government offices, and in general and development expenditure. Policy decisions are left pending, files remain unsigned, and bureaucrats prefer to play it safe till the next political boss has taken office. For a donor footing the bill with little tangible outcome, an MP waiting to get funds for an already sanctioned road, a CDO who has referred a case to the Home Ministry, or a normal citizen in queue for paperwork, there is frustration all around at how routine administrative work is stuck.

The fact that government formation is so inextricably linked to the peace process and constitution writing makes the task even more urgent. Timelines have already been missed. Little homework has been done to reconcile the core ideological divergence on contentious issues. Non-Maoist parties will not accept a statute as long as the PLA is in the cantonments, and the Maoists will not move on integration till they get a stake in the government and guarantees on the constitution.

Couple this with the fact that

the process will take far longer than people think and the 60-week timeline of UNMIN could well be a conservative estimate. Just a reminder—registration and verification of combatants took almost the whole of 2007. Given these trends, we can almost certainly say that there will be no constitution by the new deadline. The present political jostling is to be in an advantageous position on May 29, 2011.

Add to this the other, almost invisible, crisis—the absence of legitimately elected local bodies. Depending on their strength in their respective areas, parties have constituted joint committees at the district and village level. They sometimes work far more harmoniously locally than at the top. Read: the parties share the loot more peacefully on local tenders, contracts, and funds for school management committees and various user groups.

But there are several problems with such an arrangement. It just does not have the legitimacy that elected representatives possess, thus restricting decision-making abilities and leading to questions about expenditure, and eroding the credibility of the process. In areas where the balance of power among parties is not defined, or where newer groups fall outside the committees, conflict sharpens and often takes a violent turn; many killings and abductions in the Tarai are to do with the sharing of local budgets. Local leaders often complain about these issues to the top brass in Kathmandu, which only adds to the inter-party trust deficit. The bureaucrats at the VDC and district level skim off money, but often have to pay the price in terms of personal insecurity, which explains their exodus to district headquarters or the capital. There is little accountability and instead of reform, the rot in the system deepens.

And there is no prospect of elections at the local level in the

near future. Do you wait for the new constitution to ascertain the governance system first? Even after that, do you first have general elections, provincial elections, and only then local level polls? This could well be another five years down the line, in the highly unlikely event that there is a constitution on time. Is it

possible then to hold elections under the old model immediately? But will parties agree to it, especially those who have little confidence about their popular strength at the grassroots and fear a rout? Or are they more comfortable with what is an arbitrary, almost illegitimate, manner of deciding local political

outcomes?

The only reason why the state continues to thrive despite these multiple crises is because a large section of Nepali citizens have seceded from it and have little expectations. But for their long-term survival, the present political leadership would do well to think beyond Baluwater. ■



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MOBILE MONEY: CEO of Kumari Bank, Radhesh Pant (right) transfers Rs 100 to Leapfrog's Himel Karmacharya to test Kumari Mobile Cash ahead of the launch of the service this week. Leapfrog partner, Ramesh Pant (centre) checks if the transaction has gone through.



Two overseas Nepalis return to pioneer a mobile banking venture

Leapfrogging with phone cash

Growing up in a small village in Syangja, Himel Karmacharya excelled in school. He got a scholarship to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and worked for five years at Oracle. He could have stayed on like many of his peers, but decided to return to Nepal.

Karmacharya set up Leapfrog Inc. with Ramesh Pant and in collaboration with Kumari Bank, inaugurated Nepal's first phone banking project this week. "I had no doubts I'd eventually return to Nepal," Karmacharya says. "I always had this nagging guilt that I wasn't doing enough for my country. Now I have a chance."

Karmacharya's technical skills perfectly complement Ramesh

Pant's marketing background, from having worked for Xerox and WIPRO. Pant is a St. Xavier's graduate, and has returned to Nepal after 52 years, taking advantage of the new facility granted to overseas Nepali investors. "We have perfect synergy with Kumari Bank," explains Pant. "It's a forward-looking bank, the first to start e-banking, and our visions are aligned."

Kumari Mobile Cash will use software developed by Leapfrog to offer banking services through cell phones to millions of Nepalis. A World Bank study shows only 20 per cent of households in Nepal are currently banking, and the bank branch and ATM penetration rate in Nepal is one of the lowest

in the world.

However, mobile subscribers are growing at 36 per cent annually and by 2014 there are expected to be 14 million hand phone users, nearly half the population.

CEO of Kumari Bank, Radhesh Pant, is thrilled with the partnership. "We have been talking for years about the 80 per cent of the population outside the banking

net," he says. "Kumari Mobile Cash allows us to leverage a rapidly expanding technology to bring banking services to every mobile phone user in the country."

Radhesh Pant sees phone banking as a means to remit money directly and instantaneously. The family of a migrant worker doesn't have to travel to a bank branch, women don't have to walk long

distances to settle microfinance interest payments, pensioners don't have to spend two days going to towns to collect their paychecks, and parents don't have to waste time while paying school fees.

To demonstrate the ease of the facility, Radhesh Pant flips out his phone and sends Rs 100 to Himel Karmacharya's phone, which alerts him about the incoming transfer almost instantaneously. "It's very simple, and we are hoping adoption will be viral," says Karmacharya. A technical team from Kumari and Leapfrog have been working round-the-clock for 10 months to set up the software, iron out the kinks and solve teething problems. Subscribers to all three GSM networks in Nepal—NT, NCell and Hello—will be able to phone bank.

Radhesh Pant admits there will be challenges: new regulations for mobile banking have to be enacted, the bank needs to set up a nationwide network of agents, and the technology barrier among illiterate phone users has to be overcome. Leapfrog says it has a multi-layered security system. Anyone who wants to phone bank has to join the service by applying, in much the same way he or she would open a bank account. A pin code will be required for transactions, to be executed from the customer's phone.

Phone banking may sound futuristic, but the optimism of Leapfrog and Kumari stems from the experience of Kenya and Philippines, where mobile banking has taken off in a big way. Kenya's M-PESA has 7 million customers (out of a population of 38 million), barely three years into operations. Studies have shown that the income of Kenyan households using M-PESA went up by upto 30 per cent once they adopted phone banking.

Says Radhesh Pant, "Kumari Mobile Cash is a game-changer, because it piggybacks on the rapid proliferation of mobile phones to spread banking access to those who are out of reach."

Kunda Dixit

WHO BENEFITS

- 80 per cent of Nepali households that don't have access to banking
- Families of migrant workers, for safe and instant cash transfers
- Customers making payments to shops, restaurants, airlines
- Customers paying utility bills
- Peer-to-peer lending
- General public, to add stored value and turn cell phones into electronic wallets



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The urban bias



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

JANAKPUR. Physical violence is often the only way for small towns in Nepal to get into the headlines of the metropolitan press. Sure enough, a gun attack on a priest at the Janaki Temple became 'breaking news' for television channels in Kathmandu. Some of the national newspapers carried the story on the front page.

The local press takes its cue from the national media. For local dailies, events from neighbouring villages hardly matter. When there is no news of shootings, abductions or political protests, FM radio channels clamour to interview national leaders rather than farmers or activists of the hinterland.

From Parsa to Siraha, at least eight districts of the central Tarai are in the grip of major to severe drought. In a region known as the rice bowl of the country, trans-plantation of paddy has been adversely affected. Except in select places where irrigation facilities are available – usually the constituencies of influential politicians – farmers have lost all hope in their main crop this year. Rice fields are cracked and dry with shoots ready for transplantation wilting in seedbeds.

The scale and the extent of the rural catastrophe waiting to unfold is frightening. When food production falls, of course, it will influence the political economy of the country in unpredictable ways. However, Nepali audiences have little clue what is

happening in the countryside, as they are fed hourly accounts of the parlour games of power politics in the capital city.

The press across the border has shown more consideration for the plight of farmers. Forthcoming assembly elections did play a major role in politicising the drought in India. But at least part of the credit must go to the intensive coverage in the Indian media for getting Bihar declared a crisis zone and securing relief packages from central government for affected villagers.

The media is as guilty as government in neglecting the hinterland

Government interventions have their own flaws. To depict the corruption and callousness of relief measures, Ramon Magsaysay Awardwinner P. Sainath once compiled a book from his field reports: *Why everyone loves a good drought*. However, everybody loves a drought in India because the government cares about it, for whatever reasons. In Nepal, drought is a misfortune that does not interest anybody at all; villagers have to endure it all on their own.

In contrast, the devastation wrought by floods is spectacular. Scenes of helicopters

rescuing people from their rooftops look good on TV, and earthquakes, too, provide their share of drama. But the effect of drought is less dramatic and more insidious. It is much easier to leave it all to development organisations.

The fascination of the metropolitan press with fashion, food, fun and the fantasies of the middle class is understandable to a certain extent. After all, they are the buyers every advertiser wants to reach and influence. An obsession with politics, too, has its own logic; in a poor country, the government is the biggest business enterprise.

The media, however, needs to prove its relevance by showing it cares about society. Endless footage of Shyam Saran being escorted to the VVIP lounge of Tribhuvan International Airport and honeymoon photographs of Manisha Koirala may tickle as audience's fancy, but do little to enhance the image of the press as the Fourth Estate of a nascent democracy.

What's more, few television channels or newspapers have invested in training journalists for reporting from small towns and the rural hinterland. The neglect of agriculture is a symptom of a deeper malaise; it reflects the urban bias of a national media that cares more about the traffic congestion in Kathmandu than deforestation in the Tarai or the denudation of fragile mountain slopes.

It has been said that what is news on television often depends on where your reporters and camerapersons are. The media manufactures news by reporting it. But it should remember it's not just government that has been guilty of neglecting the pauperised peasantry. Peace building has many dimensions; compassionate coverage of the travails of the marginalised is one of them. 📺

THIS WEEK

New date

Parliament's Business Advisory Committee has set 23 August as the new date for the fifth round of elections for PM. The UCPN (Maoist) proposed deferring parliamentary voting, scheduled for Wednesday, as a mark of respect for CA member Ram Kumari Yadav, who passed away Saturday.

Obsolete currency

Nepal Rastra Bank will replace old currency notes that are damaged or which bear the former king's portrait by mid-April, 2011. Notices have been sent out to public organisations and financial institutions, and the bank has also announced it will not accept wads of notes with more than a single stitch in them.

En masse resignation

Campus chiefs of 10 major TU-affiliated campuses in the valley resigned Monday, saying they have been unable to implement the recent fee hikes for Bachelor's level students due to protests by student unions. TU had reviewed the old fee structure after 18 years.

Goodwill gesture

The Nepal Government has offered Rs 10 million in cash assistance to support the Pakistani flood victims. Floods that have left 20 per cent of the country under water have killed more than 1,500 people and displaced at least 12 million.



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3. Who uses BlackBerry® solutions and why is it so popular?

The BlackBerry solution is the 1st choice for busy corporate people all over the world who need to stay connected while on the move. With its advanced functionalities and broad network it enables entrepreneurs and businesses alike to deliver results efficiently and effectively. The BlackBerry solution also performs well on the personal front – keeping you in touch with things and people that matter the most to you.

4. What are the different packages under BlackBerry® services from Ncell?

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5. What phone do I need to activate BlackBerry® services from Ncell?

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6. How do I activate BlackBerry® services on my mobile phone?

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8. What about the cost benefit factor?

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9. How many BlackBerry® smartphone users are there in the world?

The number of BlackBerry smartphone users worldwide has now passed 12 million. Approximately 1.65 million BlackBerry subscriber accounts were added in the quarter and over 3.9 million devices were shipped. BlackBerry service is now available on 150 networks in more than 60 countries.

10. Some interesting facts about BlackBerry® solutions

BlackBerry infrastructure routes more than three petabytes of traffic each month which equals about 3,145,728GB. And that's a LOT of data.

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It's the bank's business



KIRAN PANDAY

Banks should have the freedom to decide how much to pay their employees, but they would do well to consider the society they live in



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Two weeks ago, Nepal Rastra Bank sent a letter to the commercial banks. It asked the bankers to consider whether there could be provisions for creating smaller gaps between the range of perks and benefits enjoyed by the top bankers and those at the lower end of the hierarchy.

Seeing this as an instance of unwarranted meddling, the bankers responded last Tuesday. Nepal Bankers' Association (NBA), normally a diffident body, sent out a letter basically arguing that as per Nepali laws, the task of determining a bank executive's salary, perks and benefits is something that's best left to the judgment and discretion of her bank's board of directors.

In both a free market and legal sense, the bankers are correct. The job of the Central Bank is to be an umpire that enforces the rules of the game and punishes violators. Its job is not to tell players when, how and which foot they should move in the game. Doing so diminishes its importance, and gets it bogged down in minutiae.

Still, it's arguable that there is a range of wider contextual issues that any banker should consider when thinking about salaries,

perks and benefits in the industry.

Friendly boards: Though the Central Bank should be applauded for strengthening the corporate governance of banks, much work remains to be done. At some banks, certain individuals are still both the chairman of the board and the CEO of the company. This arrangement might have served its purpose in earlier times when the banking sector was in its infancy.


In these days of competition and scrutiny, the arrangement simply strikes investors as a hassle-free way for the chairman to reward himself with other people's money. Besides, this also makes it easier for the chairman to stuff the board with his buddies so that all decisions, often made during family BBQs, go as per the chairman/CEO's wishes. Given the reality of these and other widespread questionable corporate governance practices, it takes a bit of chutzpah for some banks to present their boards' decisions as something that's kosher.

The issue of optics: The Nepali media never tires of reporting bankers' jaw-dropping monthly salaries, which range from Rs 500,000 to Rs 1.4 million – the latter being comparable to what commercial bankers in

major finance centres around the world earn. Put this in the context of the world's 16th poorest country, which has a high rate of unemployment and a very-sympathetic-to-the-Left population, and the optics do not come out well.

The point here is not that the bankers shouldn't be paid highly. It is that given the broader societal context, which envelops all that we do in Nepal, bankers should not complain when non-bankers are bitter about banking salaries. It's no surprise that they want somebody somewhere to do something to tighten the reins. A wise banker would recognise these broader societal trends, and find ways to mitigate the risks they pose – perhaps by ramping up credible CSR activities and by recasting their institutions as trustworthy servants of other people's money.

Moreover, given that bankers always complain of losing their good people to other banks all the time and that there's a severe shortage of people at the lower end, it's not a bad idea to re-examine HR policies, especially salary levels, perks and benefits, and see whether some parity could be achieved to retain high performers.

Viewed this way, the Central Bank's letter, though wrong in its intent, could serve as a wake-up call to the banks. 

Green standards

Under the initiative of the Standard Chartered Bank's Global Technology & Operations (GTO) Team, about 100 staff members from the bank participated in the 'Green Your Flight' campaign conducted on 14 August 2010. Bank staff, members of Bishankhunarayan Community Forest Consumer Committee and officials of the District Forest office volunteered to plant about 5,000 trees at Bhoot Dhunga, in Bishankhunarayan, VDC- Ward No. 2, Lalitpur,



covering an area of about 3.5 hectares of land. The GTO wing intends to plant 50,000 trees globally by the end of 2010 under the 'Green Your Flight' initiative, and 26,000 trees have already been planted this year. The Employee Volunteering Program is an internal initiative of the bank, whereby staff are encouraged to participate in community activities by taking up to three days leave in addition to their annual leave.

Safety net

The Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Fund Development Committee has decided to insure all taps, tanks and other infrastructure built with its support with National Life Insurance. The insurance will cover earthquakes, floods and landslides.



Penguin's turn

Gadgets Nepal introduced Bird Mobiles' Penguin K298. The double-sim model is equipped with a digital camera, FM, MP3, video player, and Bluetooth, and supports a memory of 4GB.

New models

Zenith Technology, authorised distributor of HASEE Computers in Nepal, launched seven new models of notebooks/laptops in the market. The new models are fitted with a processor from Intel Dual Core to Core i5 with a LED/LCD display of 10.1 inches to 15.6 inches. The models have hard drive space ranging from 160GB to 320GB, and are available for between Rs 27,500 to Rs 57,500.

Give blood

Standard Chartered Bank organised a blood donation camp this week with assistance from Nepal Red Cross Society, Blood Transfusion Centre. Around 80 people participated in the camp.

BlackBerry launched



Ncell, in association with Emitac Mobile Solution (EMS) and Research In Motion (RIM), has launched BlackBerry solutions in Nepal. It is offering the BlackBerry Bold 9700 model, fitted with 3G features, a next

generation (624 MHz) processor, 256 MB flash memory, built-in GPS and Wi-Fi and a 3.2 mega pixel camera. The smartphone is priced at Rs 49,999 including tax with BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES) for the corporate segment and BlackBerry Internet Service (BIS) for smaller businesses and individual users.

Green and clean

Clean Energy Development Bank planted trees in the foothills of Jal Binayak Chobar. The event was organised in partnership with Jal Binayak Community Forest Users Group and Budhathoki Nursery, along with Thompson Nepal (JWT) as a creative partner. The participants dedicated a tree to their loved ones with a contribution of Rs 1,000 to the Clean Circle Trust, which will be used to maintain the plants for the next decade.

Good shift

Goodwill Finance has shifted its corporate office from Dillibajar to its own premises in Hattisar. The Dillibajar office will now operate as a branch.

Rising up

Ambe Steel received the Nepali standards accreditation, NS 191, for its products in 8mm to 32mm segments. The company has already received the ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004 certification for its products.



Coffee blends

Camel Coffee (Nepal) has launched its series of Kaldi Fresh Roasted Coffee blends. The coffee is a blend of Arabica coffee beans imported from Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Costa Rica, as well as from Nepal. Camel Coffee's roasting facility is located in Kathmandu.

Return gifts

Virgin Mobile marked its second anniversary by organising a 'Customer Loyalty Offer' scheme. Rupak Regmi took home the first prize worth Rs 100,000. Deepak Shahi and Tika Simkhada won the second and third prizes respectively.

Sharp colours

Evolution Trading has launched the Sharp Quattron LED TV in Nepal. The four-colour technology of this model ensures bright and vivid colour reproduction. The Quattron line is available in 40, 46 and 52 inch-sizes.





PICS: BHEEM RAJ RAI

Exotic Nepali drinks

Forget fizzy sodas, how about a real Nepali energy drink?



Forget foreign brands when it comes to fruit juice in Nepal. Local options like bel (marmelos) and sea buckthorn juice will have you asking for more once you experience their exquisite taste and enjoy their health benefits.

Fabulous marmelos

Marmelos which grows wild in the Tarai region of Nepal, had long been an underutilised crop before it hit the stands in a bottled avatar. Now marketed by the Alternative Herbal Company under the brand name Marmelous, they sell 15-20,000 bottles of juice every month during the summer.

Some say marmelos comes closest to litchi in terms of taste, although it is a whole lot healthier. The juice is packed with vitamins and minerals and comes sans artificial colours and flavours. The use of marmelos in Ayurveda is well known, and it is used as a cardio tonic, to treat indigestion, and is prized for its memory-enhancing properties. Bel juice also revitalises the body instantly and fights fatigue.

economy as well. Fifty-one percent of the total sales of the juice go to the local producers in Siraha and Bardiya, who have been trained by the company to collect and process the fruit.

Local farmers and community forest user groups are also making good money from the sales of marmelos that just rotted in the woods earlier. "A single person earns up to Rs 2,400 everyday from selling marmelos," Ghimire says.

One glass of Marmelous can make four glasses of sorbet without adding sugar. This is why they are being widely used in wedding parties as well. With restaurants in Kathmandu offering bel juice, the demand is likely to rise even more. Dhokaima Café, for instance, offers a bel juice cocktail, 'Nepal libre'.

Wonder fruit, sea buckthorn

The people of the Khumbu had never imagined that they would be serving local sea buckthorn juice to tourists, as it was a fruit they had frowned upon as bird food till now. Today, sea buckthorn is a must-have item on menus

throughout hotels and teahouses in the Khumbu; it has become an important alternative income source for high mountain farmers.

Locals collect the sour berries that grow wild along the river banks and the trekking trails in the region and process them manually to create a highly concentrated juice. This initiative started after the Khumbu Alpine Conservation Council, with support from The Mountain Institute, trained locals to turn sea buckthorn into an edible health drink.

There are few fruits in the world that can match up to the nutritional credentials of sea buckthorn. Largely cultivated in China for its medicinal properties, sea buckthorn is being heralded as the new wonder fruit. This citrus has 15 times the Vitamin C found in oranges, and is also rich in carotenoids, Vitamin E, amino acids, and minerals.


Sea buckthorn has long been used in traditional Chinese and Indian medicine to treat diarrhoea,

ulcers, and cardiac disease, and to promote tissue regeneration. Russian scientists have developed drugs from sea buckthorn oil to increase immunity. The berries are also believed to be potent against cancer and the dengue virus. And the good news is, sea buckthorn grows like anything in the alpine regions of Nepal, from Mugu to Taplejung.

However, juice made from sea buckthorn has caught on only in tourist regions like the Khumbu, Mustang, and Manang, where demand is high. Manual processing and the lack of human resources means that production is limited, and it is already difficult to sustain the huge demand.

"The demand for sea buckthorn juice is so high that imported juices have been almost displaced and we cannot even supply enough to Namche, let alone Kathmandu," says Ang Rita Sherpa of The Mountain Institute. But they are not pushing hard for mass production either. "We want the initiative to progress gradually without damaging the ecosystem, our priority is local consumption," he adds.

Apart from making for a healthy drink, sea buckthorn also helps control soil erosion and retains water. There is enough sea buckthorn not just to produce juice for export but also for use in the pharmaceutical industry. "If the government brings in the right policies, we can transform Karnali in a few years from sea buckthorn alone," says Youbaraj Pokharel of the Tree Improvement and Silvicultural Unit, who was awarded the Abraham Conservation award by WWF last year for his work in promoting sea buckthorn.

For now, Kathmanduites will have to either wait or ask their friends returning from the Khumbu, Manang, or Mustang to get a taste. Sea buckthorn is on the horizon, but you may have to go to the source first. 

Rubeena Mahato





64th Independence



सत्यमेव जयते

भारतीय राजदूत, काठमाण्डू
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA
KATHMANDU



On the auspicious occasion of the 64th Independence Day of India, I extend warm greetings to all Indians and our friends in Nepal.

Our independence was won after a long and arduous struggle. Countless men and women, yearning for liberation from the colonial yoke, energized by the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, joined the ranks of freedom fighters and won for India a new destiny of freedom and liberty through an agitation based on the principles of Ahimsa and Satyagraha. India embarked upon a journey of nation building guided by the principles of democracy, inclusive economic development, social empowerment and a value system based on our civilizational heritage.

India's unwavering belief in democracy, respect for human rights and the dignity of the individual, and our rapid and steady economic progress, achieved by the labour and hard work of ordinary Indians, both in India and abroad, has established India's credentials as the world's largest democracy, a progressive society and our stature as an economic powerhouse. Even in the face of a global slowdown, the Indian growth-story has continued with its upward trajectory. We have a large domestic market and inherent strengths to drive the economy forward. As we focus on areas of proven strength, on building of infrastructure throughout the country and rural development, it has been our incessant endeavour to expand into new areas of growth.

Today's India is prepared to face a future whose contours would be shaped by innovation, technology and a spirit of enterprise. Transformational changes have taken place in India where technology has been used for development. India has been playing a leading role in the knowledge economy

and in the IT enabled sectors. The strength for this transformation continues to come from the focus on strengthening our academic institutions and research facilities and a determined desire to achieve excellence.

Yet there are challenges to the peaceful pursuit of achievement of a better life for our citizens. Having confronted it for over three decades, India has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, which poses an unprecedented challenge to the civilised world. India has always unequivocally condemned terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations and is convinced that no cause can ever justify it. We are determined to fight and stamp out all evil designs that preach violence and terror.

And while we celebrate our freedom- rejoicing the liberties and enjoying the fruits of progress in India, we also invite the people in our neighbourhood to share our success. More so to the people of Nepal, with whom we share special bonds of fraternity and friendship. The special relationship shared by India and Nepal allows the people of Nepal unparalleled opportunities to partake of the vibrant and exiting economic transformations taking place in India. Our age old relations that transcend boundaries and formal agreements have strengthened over the years and are expanding constantly to encompass an ever widening spectrum. It is our ardent wish that our partnership is deepened and diversified even further in coming years for mutual benefit.

Through this message, I would like to convey my greetings, and those of the Government and people of India, to the friendly leadership and people of Nepal. We wish all of you success in your efforts to build a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Nepal.

15 August 2010

Rakesh Sood



INDIA ON RUNWAY TO FUTURE - NEW T3 AIRPORT

- New Terminal 3 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on July 3, 2010.
- Eighth largest airport terminal in the world
- Latest Cat III runway landing systems
- Built in record 37 months
- Eight levels spread across build up area of 5.4 million sq. ft. and an apron area of 6.3 million sq. ft.
- 168 check-in counters
- More than 95 immigration counters
- 78 aero bridges, 97 automatic travelators, 63 elevators, 31 escalators
- Around 800 Flight Information Display Systems for live flight information
- 8,000 speakers installed for public address system
- Around 3,000 security cameras
- 100-room transit hotel
- Five level in-line Baggage Handling System with explosive detection technology
- Total length of conveyor belts is 6,400 meters to handle 12,800 bags in an hour
- Multi-level car parking with a capacity to accommodate 4,300 cars
- Separate surface parking area for 2,200 cars
- 20,000 sq. m. of retail area
- Initial capacity of 34 million passengers per annum
- Dedicated Metro line 'Airport Express' from Connaught Place

"We are all very happy and indeed very proud of the completion of one of the world's largest airport terminals in a record time of 37 months...This terminal establishes new global benchmarks for India. It also shows our resolve to bridge infrastructure gap in the country."

- Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh

DELHI METRO

- Delhi Metro is a world-class metro equipped with the most modern communication and train control system.
- Total network of 125 km with an average ridership of 1098000; On completion of Phase II in September 2010, the total network will be 192.46 km and 144 Stations.
- Presently 105 trains make about 2106 trips a day at 106 stations.
- State-of-art air-conditioned coaches
- Ticketing and passenger control through Automatic Fare Collection System
- 100% punctuality achieved making it the most punctual metros of the world
- Trains available at just over three minutes frequency
- Entries and exits to metro stations controlled by flap-doors operated by 'smart-cards' and contact less tokens
- Special facilities for people with disabilities
- Spotlessly clean stations with park and ride facility
- Well integrated with other modes of public transport
- Feeder buses for metro stations are operating.
- 10 out of a total of 11 venues for Commonwealth Games to be connected by metro
- Trendsetter for such systems in other cities of the India and in the South Asian region
- Construction of 1st phase alone has removed around 60,000 vehicles from roads reducing consumption of petrol/diesel by 126,000 litres.
- Training school for Metro Operating and Maintenance Staff has been set up at Shastri Park which is ISO 9001:2008 certified.



Metro line 'Airport Express'

Spread across 4.30 lakh square feet, the New Delhi Metro station, the first stop for the high-speed Airport Express Line, will be like a mini airport terminal with facilities like high-end retail outlets, restaurants and food courts, airline check-in counters, flight information boards, jazzed up interiors, a plush waiting lounge and a fully-automated parking lot. The station will bring the airport to the heart of the city as it will allow passengers boarding the high-speed trains to the airport to check-in their baggage and get boarding passes right at the Metro station. All they need to do after this is board a train that will take them to the airport in flat 20 minutes, clear immigration and security checks and finally board their flight. Their baggage will be loaded onto the flights directly.



XIX COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2010 DELHI OCTOBER 3-14, 2010

'Come Out and Play'

- India is hosting the XIX Commonwealth Games in New Delhi on October 3-14, 2010.
- The 17 sports to feature in the XIX Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi will be held at six venue clusters and five stand alone venues in Delhi.
- 26 training venues have been constructed and 16 training venues have been upgraded.
- The total budget estimated for hosting the Games is US\$ 1.6 billion and this amount excludes non-sports-related infrastructure development in the city like airports, roads and other structures.
- The hosting of the Games provides a historic opportunity to exhibit and showcase India's rich and cultural heritage to the world.
- Events displaying Indian culture, heritage and folk lore will be held throughout the Games at several locations across the city.

- Shera, the mascot, truly represents the modern Indian. He is an achiever with a positive attitude, a global citizen but justifiably proud of his nation's ancient heritage, a fierce competitor but with integrity and honesty.
- The logo is inspired by the Chakra, the national symbol of freedom, unity and power. Spiralling upwards, it depicts the growth of India into a proud, vibrant nation.
- Come Out and Play- the logo tagline is an invitation to every person across all divides to let go of themselves and participate in the Games to the best of their abilities, in the true spirit of the Games.
- Organizing Committee Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi has taken upon itself the mission to host Green Games by using effective carbon emission mitigation, reduction and offset techniques.
- The Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the XIX Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi are planned to be a dazzling display of Indian creative energies that will live in the memories of the spectators for a long time.
- Delhi will witness a slew of events celebrating the diverse cultural panorama of India including its folk and classical dances, classical music, theatre and films as well as other creative skills, arts and crafts.





Day of India

ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT WITH INDIA'S COOPERATION:

India-Nepal economic cooperation programme was launched in 1951 with the objective to supplement the efforts of the Government of Nepal (GoN) in the national development. Government of India (GoI) is providing technical and financial assistance for multi-sectoral development of Nepal.

Total outlay: Over NRs. 5,700 crores © No. of projects: 393 © No. of districts covered: Over 70

EDUCATION

School/College/Library buildings: GoI has so far provided assistance for construction of 181 schools spread over 61 districts at a cost of more than NRs. 400 crores in recent years.

Manmohan Memorial Polytechnic: This is the first polytechnic of its kind in Nepal providing technical education in three engineering streams and several vocational courses to almost 500 students at a time. Constructed at a cost of NRs. 42 crores, the Polytechnic was inaugurated by the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal on 2nd November 2009.

Polytechnic at Hetauda: GoI has agreed to construct a government polytechnic at Hetauda with estimated cost of NRs. 40 crores that will impart mid level technical courses in four engineering field.



HEALTH

Bir Hospital: Five storied OPD complex of the Bir Hospital at Kathmandu with the capacity to accommodate 2500 out-patients was constructed with GoI assistance in year 1984-85. Sophisticated equipments including a modern Nuclear Imaging Medical Centre were provided by GoI.

Trauma Centre at Bir Hospital, Kathmandu: The Trauma Centre, on the lines of the AIIMS trauma centre, New Delhi, is being constructed at a cost of NRs. 100 crores. It will be a super speciality hospital and first of its kind in Nepal.

B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS) at Dharan is the biggest hospital-cum-medical college outside the Kathmandu Valley which was constructed with GoI assistance of NRs. 192 crores. The institute is providing MBBS and post graduate degrees in medical sciences, besides valuable health care for eastern Nepal.

Hospitals and Maternity Centers under SDP: Infrastructure of 19 health posts, nursing campuses, maternity centres, eye hospitals, naturopathy hospitals is being created with an assistance of NRs. 44 crores in 10 districts of Nepal.

Gifting of Ambulances/Buses: In order to facilitate the movement of patients from rural and remote areas to medical centres and hospitals, GoI has gifted 282 ambulances across 68 districts in Nepal since 1994. 54 buses have also been gifted to various health and educational institutions.

Goitre Control Programme: Starting from 1973, GoI has provided assistance of NRs. 65.58 crores for the programme of control of Goitre and other iodine deficiencies in Nepal. This is one of the most successful programmes in the health sector of Nepal.

Assistance to Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh (NNJS) for Cataract and Trachoma surgeries programme: With the GoI assistance of NRs. 13.79 crores, NNJS has held 400 Diagnostic Screening & Treatment (DST) camps and cataract surgery camp free of cost in 50 districts. More than 4.25 lakh people have been screened in 1600 camps organized in 51 districts. More than 72,000 patients have been cured for cataract and nearly 3,000 patients have been treated for trachoma.

School Eye Health Care Programme: Since 2007, GoI has provided annual assistance of NRs. 2.67 crores to NNJS for holding eye camps in schools and providing free of cost 9,000 optical dispensing device to "Vision Impaired" children and 300 low vision dispensing device to children. A mobile eye care van costing NRs. 21.63 lakh has also been provided to NNJS.



TELECOMMUNICATIONS

GoI provided an assistance of NRs. 135 crores for the laying of 904 Kilometres Optical Fibre cable along the East-West Highway and setting up of 80 stations of SDH equipment.

ROADS AND BRIDGES

GoI has constructed 807 km out of the total road length of 1024 Kms of the East-West Highway from Mahendranagar to Mechi. 22 bridges constructed by GoI on Kohalpur-Mahakali section of the East-West Highway were handed over to the GoN in 2001. Recently, 6 village and urban roads and 2 bridges have been constructed with an assistance of NRs. 14.36 crores. Presently, work is ongoing for construction of 9 roads and 2 bridges at a cost of NRs. 32.13 crores.

Terai Roads Projects: First phase of the project covers development of 20 link/postal roads in 13 Terai districts with GoI assistance of NRs. 1245 crores for which Detailed Project Report has been completed. Phase-I will be followed by Phase-II and Phase-III.



Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal inaugurating the bridge constructed over Bagmati River between Gaur (Nepal) and Bairgania (India) on 21st May 2010

FLOOD CONTROL

India is assisting Nepal in strengthening and extension of embankments along Lalbakeya, Bagmati and Kamla rivers for flood protection with an assistance of NRs. 148 crores. India is also providing assistance of NRs. 19.5 crores for river training works along Gagan, Trijuga, Lakhandei, Sunsari and Kankai rivers. A project for river training works on River Kali Gandaki in Kagbeni (Mustang) has been initiated at a cost of NRs. 3 crores.

Central Depository System

India is providing grant assistance of NRs. 14.72 crores for setting up of a central depository, clearing and settlement system in Nepal for accelerated development of the financial market in Nepal.



STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER LINKS

ICPs are proposed at 4 points at India-Nepal border namely: Raxaul (India)-Birgunj (Nepal), Saunali (India)-Bhairahawa (Nepal), Jogbani (India)-Biratnagar (Nepal), and Nepalgunj Road (India)-Nepalgunj (Nepal). Home Minister of India laid the foundation stone of ICP at Raxaul on April 24, 2010 while the Minister of State for Home Affairs laid the foundation stone of ICP at Jogbani on 24 June 2010. Work on corresponding sites at Birgunj and Biratnagar is expected to start soon.

Cross-border Railway-Links

Cross-border railway links at five locations on the India-Nepal border are being established namely: (i) Jaynagar to Bardibas, (ii) Jogbani to Biratnagar, (iii) Nautanwa to Bhairahawa, (iv) Rupaidiha to Nepalgunj, and (v) New Jalpaiguri to Kakarbhitta. Work on the Jaynagar-Bardibas link involving conversion of 51 km railway line from Jaynagar to Bijalpur into broad-gauge and its 17 km extension upto Bardibas is expected to start soon. Work on the 17.65 km Jogbani-Biratnagar rail link will also start in the first phase itself. Estimated cost of the two rail links in the first phase is NRs. 1040 crores.



DRINKING WATER

GoI has provided NRs. 22 crores for drinking water projects in more than 200 villages. Another ambitious project to provide drinking water at the Mt. Everest base camp in district Solokhumbu is being undertaken at a cost of NRs. 3.95 crores.



CULTURE

GoI has contributed towards the renovation and preservation of the cultural heritage of Nepal with an assistance of over NRs. 11 crores. Some projects include restoration of 9 historical sites in district Lalitpur and restoration of Nepal Bhasa Parishad House in Naradevi, Kathmandu. Work has started for the restoration of two historical ponds i.e. Ganga Sagar and Dhanu Sagar along with Rang Bhumi Maidan in Janakpur.

Superbugs



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In the international medical news last week, there was a great deal of alarm caused by some resistant bacteria that infected western patients in India, who had come to the country for treatment. Such incidents could potentially

doctors have detected such instances here that have become increasingly difficult to treat. Doctors believe that the infection here may have been introduced from India, but this remains to be investigated.

One bacterium among this resistant army is E. Coli. It appears that E. Coli has fortified itself with a special enzyme called the New Delhi metallo beta-lactamase (NDM), which



threaten the medical tourism industry of India, which has been progressing by leaps and bounds – a jump of almost 30 per cent every year.

These resistant bacteria have been found to trigger urinary tract infections in India. Even Nepali

makes it resistant to regular antibiotics such as ciprofloxacin. In fact E. Coli, doctors have found, is not only resistant to regular antibiotics, but also the *Ram Banh* of antibiotics – the extremely effective but expensive carbapenems. This is worrisome,

because the antibiotic armamentarium against more dangerous strains of the usually harmless E. Coli could be fast diminishing.

India is understandably worried that the lucrative industry of medical tourism may be negatively affected by the advent of these 'superbugs'. Although the article in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* that broke this story on 11 August focused on India, Pakistan and the UK, it is unclear as yet if this problem exists in other parts of the world. Only time and further studies will tell.

Regardless of how NDM plays out, it is clear that in our part of the world, there are several practices regarding antibiotic usage that may exacerbate the risks. Antibiotics in Nepal, unlike in the West, can be easily bought over the counter. This leads to misuse, and eventually resistance to antibiotics. Our future government will clearly need to have better control over the sale of antibiotics. In addition, patients need to be educated about antibiotics and their side effects. Finally, doctors need to guard against polypharmacy, which is the common practice of prescribing too many medicines or antibiotics to treat a single disease in a patient. All of these measures will help in preventing the rise of sinister enzymes such as NDM, and retain the effectiveness of treatments. 📺

ABOUT TOWN

Kathmandu Valley Down the Ages: depicting life in ancient and medieval Kathmandu, a painting exhibition by veteran artist Hari Prasad Sharma. Till 21 August, Art Council Gallery, Babar Mahal, 9841269959

Root Periscope, a group art exhibition by celebrated artists. Till 24 August, Sattva Art Gallery, Kupondole, 9841241790

Gaijatra, solo painting exhibition by acclaimed artist Ragini Upadhyaya Grela. Starts Saturday 21 August, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 4218048

Dabur Vatika Teej Festival 2010, get all decked up for this Teej, stalls of handicraft, sarees, jewellery and more. Till 22 August, United World Trade Center, Tripureshwor

Nepal Seen Through My Lenses, a photo exhibition by Danish Ambassador Finn Thilsted. From Tuesday 24 August to 29 August, 12pm to 6pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

House of Music, 1974 AD performing live. Friday 20 August, from 7.30pm, House of Music, Entry Rs 250, 9849243807

Sunday Jazz Brunch, enjoy a relaxing Sunday in The Terrace at Hyatt Regency with barbeque and live jazz music by 'Inner Groove'. Every Sunday from 12pm to 3.30pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362

Dhokaima Cafe has a new menu, try the Blackened Norwegian Salmon and Grilled Shrimp Ajillo, Patan Dhoka, 5522113

Olive Garden, mediterranean food fest. Every day, 6.30pm to 10.30pm, till 31 August, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, Rs 1200 plus taxes for veg. and Rs 1500 plus taxes for non veg. call 4411818

Splash Bar & Grill, great weekend BBQ dinner, Fridays and Saturdays, 6pm to 9pm, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, Rs 1200, 4411818



Koto Restaurant, the first Japanese restaurant in Kathmandu, serves up 25 years of history. Whether it's the fresh sashimi, sushi, sukiyaki or tempura, their experienced Japanese and Nepali chefs are sure to impress. Darbar Marg, 4220346



Saturday @ Hyatt, take a refreshing dip in the pool and sample the delicious barbeque in open air. Every Saturday from 12.30pm to 4pm at the poolside, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234



KIRAN PANDAY

OLD WISDOM: Members of Senior Citizens' Society Nepal stage a sit-in protest outside the CA building on Wednesday, demanding timely formation of the new government, completion of the constitution and assurance of peace and security.



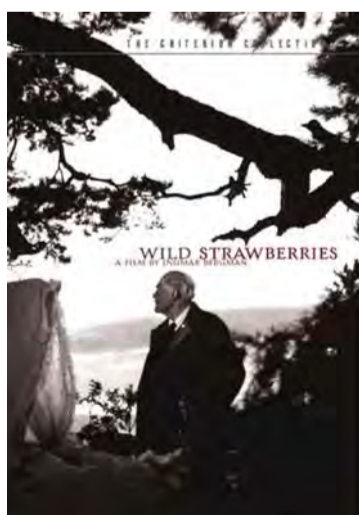
SUNITA DANGOL

PUTTING IT ON: Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal dons a photojournalist's vest after meeting with members of the National Forum of Photo Journalists at his residence on Tuesday. The Forum discussed the attacks on photojournalists by Maoist party members during protest programs.



KIRAN PANDAY

SKIPPING PYRAMID: Chinese artists perform an acrobatic show at Nepal Academic Hall on Monday to mark the 55th Anniversary of Nepal-China diplomatic relations. The show ran till Thursday.



Docskool, screening of Wild Strawberries, a Swedish film by Ingmar Bergman. Friday 20 August, 3.30pm, Kathmandu Academy, Mahendra Bhawan Premises, Naxal

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

With the exception of cloudbursts leading to landslides and flooding in western Nepal, this month's weather will follow a regular pattern. But this time, unlike the decreasing trend of rainfall from east to west, the reverse has been true. This is mainly because of the powerful cyclones over the Arabian Sea and Pakistan, from where breakaway clouds are reaching us. The satellite picture shows the Bay pumping in moisture at a relatively slower pace. The monsoon trough has been consistently positioned along the Himalayan foothills, which means a couple of showers every day, mostly during the night.



FRI SAT SUN



30-20 31-21 32-21

Nein Kampf



**POLITICALLY
CRACKED**
Indu Nepal

A crop of neo-Nazis is gaining ground in Mongolia, *The Guardian* recently reported. They might be the exact opposite of the Third Reich's Aryan ideal, but the ultra-nationalists there want to fight the influence of Chinese in their homeland, and they want Adolf Hitler to show them how.

In India, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* has been a bestseller for more than a decade, giving steady business to roadside hawkers, bookshops big and small, and online stores. His fans are found in the most unlikely of places – the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, for example, whose management students say they “admire his leadership qualities”.

But we need not go so far to meet the crazies. A book fair in Kathmandu carried a Nepali translation of *Mein Kampf* last week with a translator's note that read: “Hitler had a bad and a good side. This translation focuses on his good side with the hope it will be instructive to young people in Nepal today to learn about nationalism.”

In a discussion titled “Nepal is in need of a leader like Hitler!!” on Facebook, someone has commented: “It's Nepal's misfortune that a Hitler has not been born in Nepal.”

Fringe thinking is not and should not be a cause for alarm but idol worship guided by sheer ignorance should be worrying. In the process of turning Narayanhiti Palace into a museum, a senior bureaucrat spoke proudly of a Mercedes Benz apparently presented to the then king of Nepal by the Nazi leader. “The car will be a major attraction there,” he said. When it turned out that the vintage car was actually in India with one of the descendants of Juddha Shamsher, the Indian media sounded almost jubilant: “Hitler's car in India, not in Nepal's palace”.



RABI THAPA

Erasing the past won't reveal our future

In Nepal, idol worship is a standard political affair with Maoist leaders posing next to Joseph Stalin in official portraits. But don't blame their version of communism and somewhat easier relationship with violence for the worship of a man responsible for the ‘liquidation’ of 15 million people; the centrist CPN-UML had to hide a picture of Stalin hanging in their offices when former US ambassador James Moriarty dropped in for a visit a year ago.

What seems to be lost in attempts to channel these strong leaders, and among young people donning t-shirts with Nazi swastikas in Jawalakhel, is the understanding of basic historic facts. Over six million Jews, homosexuals, and disabled people were gassed in Germany under the strong leadership and efficient management of Hitler. Nearly 700,000 were executed during Stalin's Great Purge, that too by conservative accounts. His policy of forced collectivisation was responsible for the death of 15 million peasants. We can argue they were strong leaders but what of their brutality?

Without a doubt, there is a yearning for a great leader here in Nepal, just as in Germany following the crushing humiliation of the First World War and its aftermath. We want a leader to show us the way forward, and to deliver unto us the rewards of freedom that we were promised. It's also clear the Maoists and others, in seeking to align themselves with the ‘great’ leaders of the past, mean to present themselves as great leaders whose time has come.

The question for Nepal is whether nationalism is even a workable idea if the goal is prosperity for the country and security for its people. Already four million Nepalis work outside Nepal. Remittances are the biggest and fastest growing source of national income. Individuals are pursuing their own goals. Never mind international boundaries, Nepal isn't really one nation. Just ask the minorities.

Great nations need great leaders. The best leaders aren't those who emulate past figures, they are those who take inspiration from their surroundings and the people they seek to serve, and those who understand the context of the changes taking place around them. Hitler may have run a tight ship back in the day, but if we follow him blindly, we will end up looking like the Mongolian neo-Nazis – just plain stupid. 🇳🇵



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INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA

We extend our Heartiest Greetings & Felicitations to the Government, Business Community and friendly people of India for their continued progress and prosperity. We also hail our age-old relations on the occasion of the **64th INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA.**



The Prime Minister



Message

On the happy occasion of the 64th Independence Day of India, on behalf of the Government of Nepal and the Nepalese people, I express hearty felicitations to the Government and friendly people of India.

I am happy to note that Nepal enjoys cordial and cooperative relations marked by goodwill, cooperation, mutual trust, and understanding to each others aspirations. The bond of close bilateral ties is based on solid foundation of historical, cultural, social and economic linkages, which have been further nurtured by extensive people-to-people contacts and frequent interactions at various levels.

India has been Nepal's important development partner, which has been extending invaluable support in our development efforts. We highly appreciate for continued support and cooperation to our quest of national economic development. Her cooperation to Nepal has significantly contributed in such crucial areas as infrastructure and human resources development in Nepal.

There is tremendous opportunity to further diversify trade and economic relations between the two countries in mutually beneficial sectors such as investment in hydro power, infrastructure, and tourism related projects in Nepal. In this context, I appreciate the efforts of the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry to promote bilateral trade and investment between the two countries and wish them all success.

Date: 15th August 2010

Madhav Kumar Nepal

(Madhav Kumar Nepal)



Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry

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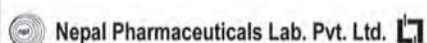
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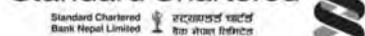
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The Ambassador
of India



Message

On the auspicious occasion of the 64th Independence Day of India, I, extend warm greetings to all Indians and our friends in Nepal.

Our independence was won after a long and arduous struggle. Countless men and women, yearning for liberation from the colonial yoke, energized by the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, joined the ranks of freedom fighters and won for India a new destiny of freedom and liberty through an agitation based on the principles of Ahimsa and Satyagraha. India embarked upon a journey of nation building guided by the principles of democracy, inclusive economic development, social empowerment and a value system based on our civilizational heritage.

India's unwavering belief in democracy, respect for human rights and the dignity of the individual, and our rapid and steady economic progress, achieved by the labour and hard work of ordinary Indians, both in India and abroad, has established India's credentials as the world's largest democracy, a progressive society and our stature as an economic power house. Even in the face of a global slowdown, the Indian growth-story has continued with its upward trajectory. We have a large domestic market and inherent strengths to drive the economy forward. As have focus on areas of proven strength, on building of infrastructure throughout the country and rural development, it has been our incessant endeavour to expand into new areas of growth.

Today's India is prepared to face a future whose contours would be shaped by innovation, technology and a spirit of enterprise. Transformational changes have taken place in India where technology has been used for development. India has been playing a leading role in the knowledge economy and in the IT enabled sectors. The strength for this transformation continues to come from the focus on strengthening our academic institutions and research facilities and a determined desire to achieve excellence.

Yet there are challenges to the peaceful pursuit of achievement of a better life for our citizens. Having confronted it for over three decades, India has been at the fore front of the fight against terrorism, which poses an unprecedented challenge to the civilized world. India has also way unequivocally condemned terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations and is convinced that no cause can ever justify it. We are determined to fight and stamp out all evil designs that preach violence and terror.

And while we celebrate our freedom and rejoicing the liberties and enjoying the fruits of progress in India, we also invite the people in our neighbourhood to share our success. More so to the people of Nepal, with whom we share special bonds of fraternity and friendship. The special relationship shared by India and Nepal allows the people of Nepal unparalleled opportunities to partake of the vibrant and exciting economic transformations taking place in India. Our age old relations that transcend boundaries and formal agreements have strengthened over the years and are expanding constantly to encompass an ever widening spectrum. It is our ardent wish that our partnership is deepened and diversified even further in coming years for mutual benefit.

Through this message, I would like to convey me greetings, and those of the Government of and people of India, to the friendly leadership and people of Nepal. We wish all of you success in your efforts to build a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Nepal.

15th August 2010

Rakesh Sood
(Rakesh Sood)



नेपाल-भारत उद्योग वाणिज्य संघ
Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry



Message

The Nepal India Chamber of Commerce & Industry (NICCI) congratulates India on its 64th Independence Day! NICCI wishes the nation and her people, prosperity and peace!

The relations of Nepal and India need no introduction or elaboration; what it needs is a strengthening in the aspects of economic diplomacy and business opportunities.

It is long said and echoed that Nepal can gain from the progressively successful Indian design of pluralism and economic growth. NICCI is committed to making this win-win situation a reality through its services for the Indian investments, bilateral trade and commerce and economic relations at large. Not just because India continues to be the largest trading partner but more so to replicate the success stories of various sectors like agriculture, education, infrastructure, development management, ICT and human resource management, to name a few.

Bilateral treaties and Agreements will remain just a papercraft if not given the right implementation and review mechanism. NICCI would endeavour to make the Treaty work for Nepal and to harness the good offices of both the countries to drive economic growth here.

A visionary leadership, a professionally sound management mechanism and the earnest efforts to drive the processes of bilateral relations, in the true sense of the word, is the need of the hour. Selecting projects of national relevance, creating employment opportunities, training the right workforce and engaging in wealth creation for the benefit of all peoples, is a prime agenda of the people and institutions invested with such responsibility. NICCI would be happy to participate in the appropriate processes to bring about a whole new dimension between the two countries.

On this glorious occasion, NICCI reiterates its commitment to economic co-operation and institutional development that would set Nepal on the sure and steady path of success, prosperity and peace.

15th August 2010

Arun Chaudhary
Arun Chaudhary
President



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Whither constitution?

Interview with Nilambar Acharya, Chair, Constitutional Committee in *Kantipur*, 15 August

क्रान्तिपुर

How is the constitution-writing process going?

The process has come to a standstill. We couldn't bring the budget or the constitution on time. And now we have not been able to form the government on time. We have been making this crisis worse from day to day. The entire process of constitution writing is in crisis.

What is the reason for the CA's inability to continue with the process?

Constitution writing has never been a priority of the political parties. The process has been hampered by the differences between political parties, their internal conflicts, failure in implementing past agreements, their tussle for power, and the error of starting to write the constitution without agreeing upon its fundamental points. Political parties have forgotten that it is an interim period. They are suffering from the belief that they can direct the entire process as they please once they get power. This has put the process in danger.



You just pointed to an erroneous start to the process. Why was this not thought of in the beginning?

We should have thought about it, but no discussions were held regarding the basic principles of the constitution. I hear of passing the final draft with a majority and then going to the public for their opinion, rather than agreeing on constitutional fundamentals. Ten of eleven preliminary drafts were passed with a majority while one draft did not get a majority. We should still move forward and maybe forge a consensus on the fundamental issues, otherwise it will be impossible to finalise the constitution with a majority decision. Consensus is ideal and it is compulsory for two-thirds of the committee to endorse the constitution. Decisions have been taken by majority so far, but it is likely to invite difficulties at the final stage. Another mistake was to put the government and the constitution in the same place. Can there be a consensus if we pass the draft by a majority government? This is the paradox of the moment.

Why hasn't there been any discussion on these issues then?

The truth is we never looked back and reviewed the process of writing the constitution. We would have corrected some things had we evaluated then. But is it the government or the big parties that should assume responsibility for taking the process forward? The big parties are the ones who should be responsible, but they tussled for power instead of writing the constitution. Why do all parties need to be in the government for an interim period? It is ridiculous to see parties fight for an interim government. If it is really important, we should have a group of experts draft the constitution to be tabled in parliament for endorsement.

What should be done to move the process forward?

Political parties should find out the reasons for its delay first. There should be a different plan of action this time. The leaders should sit together and resolve their differences. We talk about consensus but there is no mechanism to facilitate consensus in times of disagreement.

EU bandh?



Editorial in *Nagarik*, 17 August

नागरिक

A dispute between the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and its donor, the UK aid agency DFID, has revealed that foreign aid is being used to deprive Nepali citizens of their basic rights. This became apparent when NEFIN enforced a nationwide strike to pressure the Constitutional Committee to expedite the process of writing the constitution. The strike took place despite DFID threatening to withhold funds from NEFIN.

It is unfortunate that organisations that receive foreign aid to enable and promote citizen's rights involve themselves in activities that curtail freedom of movement. Donors should be wary of such cases where rights advocacy and empowerment aid get used for political interests. A huge chunk of aid goes into the pockets of local employees for consultations, junkets, protests, workshops, and seminars. These activists who feed on foreign funds are to be blamed for threatening national integrity.

Finance ministry officials, who are supposed to monitor foreign aid, keep silent as they too get consultancy fees and free trips abroad. As an institution, DFID does not intend to curb rights nor promote individual political interests. Therefore, it is the local employees of the organisation, corrupt government officials, and activist groups that are to be blamed for the misuse and misappropriation of funds.

The government should act to prevent such incidents. Issuing a white paper on received aid and project expenses of organisations should be the first step.

Give 'em rope

Rewati Sapkota in *Annapurna Post*, 15 August

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

The Maoists are going to make an alliance with the royalists, because they feel they both support peace, constitution, and national sovereignty, while other political forces don't.

The Maoists have formulated a strategy to end the present government-less status of the country by roping in the royalists. Shakti Bahadur Basnyat, a member of the Maoist politburo, says that the central committee meeting on 19 August will decide upon how to proceed with developing this alliance.

The royalists have been in conversation with the Maoists time and again. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal met RPP-Nepal's Kamal Thapa to ask for his support during the PM elections. Supporters of Dahal held meetings with Tulsi Giri, vice-chairman of the last royal government, to form a 'new alliance for national sovereignty'. The Maoists also held discussions with Kirti Nidhi Bista and Ramesh Nath Pandey.

According to Basnyat, "The palace's affections did not reach the ethnic people, so it was unable to



bond all Nepalis. The palace wasn't pro-people but the Maoists are. We are trying to build national unity among people who care for the country." He further said that if the UML has the courage to move forward without the NC, then the Maoists are ready to welcome them as well.

"We shouldn't lose our way because of elections where no one ever wins," said Mohan Baidya, vice-chairman of the party. He added that the three big parties have to sit down together to reach a consensus.



"This isn't the octopus Paul, it's Jhal, it doesn't make any decisions."

नागरिक Robin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 17 August, 2010

Reaching the hungry



KIRAN PANDAY

The outgoing country representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Nepal, Richard Ragan, spoke to *Nepali Times* about the organisation's expansion under his watch, how food insecurity should be addressed, and why Nepalis are like American Southerners.

How has your time here been?

It's been a great four years. Not just in terms of the deep friendships I and my family have developed, and the places we've seen, but also because we've been able to expand our operations to reach many more Nepalis. WFP was feeding 700,000 Nepalis with a yearly budget of \$25 million when I got here, it went up to \$125 million last year, and this year we're feeding 2.5 million people with \$100 million.

Why did you expand your operations so dramatically?

It was a necessity. WFP has been in Nepal for 40 years, but when we carried out our first emergency operations during my first year a lot of people wondered why. The truth is there was a silent emergency going on here for years, even though the malnutrition across the country would have justified emergency measures anywhere else. It was unacceptable to do nothing and say "oh, hungry people will just migrate to India for work". By arguing the case for bigger operations we made the issue of food insecurity a key part of the public domain.

What triggered the shift in attitudes?

When I arrived, the peace process was kicking off, but there was still a lot of tension in the countryside. Many NGOs, INGOs and donors had scaled back operations, but I insisted on helping people out there transition out of conflict. We were willing to go into remote areas and take risks to reach people, and I think our funders recognised the importance of what we were trying to do.

So the conflict was a trigger for WFP to reach more people in need?

The aftermath was. There was a vacuum after the conflict in places the government had not reached, and we seized this opening to go for a different approach. As a logistics-based organisation, we had the capacity to get to these places. Things are not going to change until we access these places and get a real sense of how people live up in Humla, Jumla, Dolpa.

One of the big benefits of WFP's expansion was that we began to work with NGOs, and we started pushing Nepalis

into these remote areas. We've created a whole new wealth of Nepali capacity that wasn't there before.

What kind of work have these people been doing?

We are working with a whole range of NGOs that are largely staffed with Nepalis, on a range of initiatives. But we also have a Vulnerability & Analysis unit that moves across the most remote districts with PDAs and SAT phones to feed us real-time information on what exactly is going on regarding food security. These districts are now no longer just places on a map - we have the information to act on now. We have built up food security networks in 54 districts with the government.

I also believe modern communications has changed the game for us. Having a phone doesn't mean they can access services, but at least they have the means to try now. Technology can do different things, and allows you to be creative.

You mean doing more than just giving people food?

WFP started out as a development organisation, not a humanitarian one. We've tried to link the two, rather than just give food or money to people without asking for anything in return. So we've implemented food for work programs and had success, particularly with getting communities to build roads and other infrastructure in exchange for food. We even tied in such programmes with civic education about democracy and the constitution.

Cash for work programs are more recent, but we are piloting them in areas with large clusters of unemployed poor people, for example in the Tarai. We have a deep reach, so we try to think of ways to take advantage of that, and allow other programs and organisations to piggyback on us.

What needs to be done to eliminate food security in Nepal?

We need a multi-pronged approach led by government, to address food security in terms of health, education, food access and food production. To date government has focused mainly on the last, whether we produce enough cereal. The answer is no, it hasn't kept pace with demand.

But access is a problem too, and providing roads is part of the solution. Take the road to Jumla. Prices of beans have gone down by 60-70 per cent. We also need to develop markets, give farmers incentives to produce and sell locally for a profit, and invest in farmers like they are a national security interest, like in the US.

Can farmers in Karnali produce enough food?

A lot of the land at higher altitudes, in places like Karnali, is simply not productive enough. It's not that the farmers are lazy! And many households don't have access to plots big enough to support themselves. For some, the answer is tourism, like in the Annapurna and Khumbu regions. If places like upper Gorkha, Dolpa and Humla are developed, the market will come to them, there is huge potential for tourism as well as for cash crops like herbs.

What are the difficulties of working in Nepal?

The frustrating thing is the multiplicity of factors at play. The geography, the weather, the closed borders (in terms of open trade) have an impact on the food market. There are unfair commercial practices and supply issues, which push up inflation. With some political help, we are dealing with the problem of the transport cartels, but they are a big impediment when we are racing against time to feed people. And of course, political instability disrupts operations: during a bandh, between 500 to 3,000 tonnes of food get stuck.

But with a multi-pronged approach over the medium to long term, there's no reason why the country can't move away from food insecurity. At least people now recognise there is a serious problem, and are talking about it. The media and the government are finally accepting it's cholera killing people in the west, not WFP food. If we had to suffer from the accusations last year so people are talking about the real issues now, then it's been worth it.

Are you ready to leave Nepal?

No! The people I've met here are probably the best in the world in terms of kindness and generosity. They may not have anything, but they'll welcome you and cook you their chicken! I'm from the south of the United States myself; Nepalis remind me of the people there.



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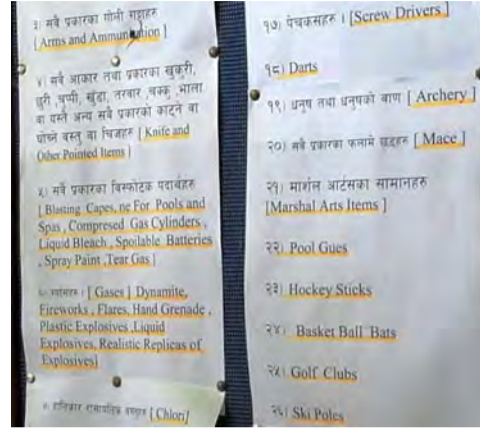
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Only the goats know



The airport has demolished the ugly edifice at the Ring Road intersection and replaced it with a phallic symbol that is an even bigger phallus. This means we as a nation are now fully prepared for VNY 2011, and ready to impress the world with our **monumental erections**.

ॐ

It's now official: the Baddies have the hots for a return to the monarchy and are leaving no stone upside-down to get the mandalays on board. They were trying to elicit the support of the Hindutva-wallahs in India, but the BJP made it clear it wouldn't tolerate the Baddies in power. So that's that. Far from a sign of flexibility and ingenuity, the comrades battling for a 'cultural king' is being seen as a sign of desperation. We get it from those close to kingji that his ex-majesty is in no mood to talk to Awesome, and the Chairman is not taking too kindly to the royal rebuff, re.



ass(at)nepaltimes.com

The donkey's hardcore fans have been writing in asking what's up and what's gonna happen. Well, having been sent this picture of Bagmati Bridge during the Junjati Bund on Sunday, I can only refer you to my friends, the goats. They're the only ones who seem to know where they are going.

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That bund was an appropriate curtain-raiser to the autumn tourism season: announcing a nationwide chukka jam as a sign of things to come during **Visit Nepal Ear 2011**. Poor Yogi, tried his best to convince his fellow Adivasis to call the whole thing off, but to no avail. He

should've known it was futile because NEFIN is answerable to a much more powerful force than HAN. This was probably the first-ever bund called by an NGO that is a direct beneficiary of Kathmandu-based aid organisations. No wonder the shutdowners announced beforehand that unlike public buses and motorcycles, blue-plated SUVs would not be vandalised and set on fire if found to be defying the ban on transportation.

It was when people started calling Sunday's shutdown an **'EU Bund'** that DFID quickly disassociated itself from the NGO and even threatened to cut off NEFIN's funding, inadvertently

letting the cat out of the bag. But the plot thickened when Comrade Lekhi confessed he had been under pressure from DFID to call off the bund, and said he had told the Brits in no uncertain terms to shove it. The Ass now learns NEFIN is split down the middle, and the bund was called by a faction that has fallen foul of the donators. Perhaps the same faction responsible for wall graffiti in Jawalakhel earlier this year that read: 'DFID don't fund NEFIN, they are cheats'? Political parties are supposed to be accountable to the people, but who besides their donors are Nepali NGOs accountable to?

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The authoritarians in charge of TIA have refuted an American intelligence report that the airport's security is lax. How can it be lax, when they have just put up a computer printout next to the x-ray machines (*see pic*) banning basket ball bats, bows and arrows, and hockey sticks? They have also added two more layers of **rubber stamp security**: one before the manual hand baggage search and one after the rubber stamp checker has checked the rubber stamp and added his rubber stamp to the baggage tag. That should do the trick. With such foolproof security apparatus, and when the line at the x-rays takes more than an hour to get through, how can the Americans call our security 'lax'?

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