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WARP SPEED: Weaving pashminas at the Tara Oriental, Harisiddhi, Lalitpur

KIRAN PANDAY

Keeping it together

If we're hard pressed for success stories in Nepal it may be because we're not looking in the right places. Yet far from the dirty politicking of parliament it's business as usual for some, and business is good. Our homegrown pashmina industry has weathered the storm of its uncontrolled early growth and is now maturing into a steady, innovative industry that employs thousands of Nepalis and earns billions for the economy. Pashmina is now a truly Nepali brand.

Pashmina Special p8-10

South side story: Sanjaya Baru thinks diplomats should bat for trade. Pranav Budhathoki is convinced we've all got batter for brains.

p14-15



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DRINK RESPONSIBLY

How do we get out of this hole?



KIRAN PANDAY

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and it may be opportune to think out of the box. The first priority should be to delink the prolonged political impasse from the country's stagnant development and economy. Service delivery and the economy are more directly relevant to the people's welfare and everyday needs than the shameless buying and selling of lawmakers in parliament. One area where development was beginning to take off was at the VDC and DDC levels in the mid-1990s before the Maoists came along and wrecked everything with their terror. And the reason it was beginning to show results was because we had hit upon the key to local development: grassroots democracy. So, here is a radical proposal. Why wait for the

formation of a new government, the new constitution and then a general election a couple of years after that? What's to stop us from having local elections right away? Of course, those who have ignored their constituents and fear they won't fare well will oppose this. Sher Bahadur Deuba cancelled the last local elections in 1999 because he felt the UML would sweep them, and did a big favour to the Maoists by creating a political void at the grassroots. Another audacious idea is for the Nepali Congress and the Maoists to team up to form a new government. It may be just the kind of forward-looking alignment that this country needs to leap out of the political quicksand it is mired in. This is by no means an original thought. Before he died, Girija Prasad Koirala was trying to engineer just such an arrangement. We pooh-poohed it then because GP was

trying to strike a deal with the Maoists to correct his legacy, and make himself president. The political playing field has to be level for this to happen. Which means the first step is for the Maoists to give up their ideology of violence. There is some justification for the fear among the UML, NC and Madhesi parties that if Pushpa Kamal Dahal becomes PM now, he will never give it up. In fact, if the Maoists don't give up violence and agree on a demobilisation timetable, there is no point having a new constitution even. The internal NC elections have thrown up a new crop of diverse local leaders, which is a heartening trend. The Congress is finally turning into what the Congress should have always been. A NC-UCPN(M) coalition could allow the NC to temper Maoist extremism, and the Maoists could help pull the NC back to its democratic socialist roots. The two parties would complement each other, one with its democratic credentials and the other with its egalitarian socio-economic agenda. However, if Deuba becomes party chief in the NC Convention, such a coalition would not be possible, because he is a polarising figure. Either way, the eighth round on 26 September won't be the last if we keep doing what we are doing now.

KD

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

INCOMPETENT CAAN

The history of tragic accidents in Nepalese civil aviation is a result of unscrupulous businessmen and unscrupulous civil aviation officials colluding in their pursuit of money ("I don't want any more Sarahs to die", #518). Nepal's mountainous terrain and the monsoon should not be used as an excuse anymore. There are enough safety margins in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for flights over our terrain during the monsoon to avoid accidents. Are these SOPs being observed? The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal is utterly incompetent when it comes to ensuring that the private operators are following proper maintenance practices.

Rasta

- Expert comments aside, flying in Nepal is not nearly as safe as it could be. Our regulations are so not in line with the larger international aviation scene, that forward thinking and creative entrepreneurs hoping to enter this business usually opt out in dismay. Cases where 'regulators' turn a blind eye to sub-standard performance happen so often, you'd have to be blind not to see them. The infighting between the regulators themselves, and pressure money provided by conservative operators to make things work their way happen all too frequently. What is needed is a complete overhaul of the system. Trying to supplement a diseased and failing organisation and expecting to reap yields is not the way forward.

Jeev

TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR

This is typical of the bajes running the parties and exerting their influence on the ministries ('Crackdown riles ISPs', Kunda Dixit, #518). Instead of advancing initiatives to add fiber optic connections to India and spread high speed networking throughout Nepal, so that call centres and other VOIP-based industries can flourish and provide employment opportunities for Nepal's millions of young people, they allow the new CBI to harass ISPs and VOIP call bypass centers so their cronies at NTC and elsewhere in the government can continue to benefit from the status quo. I'm sure they don't have a clue about how much a modern economy depends on cheap and easy flow of information.

Kenji

- Call bypass exists because the rate charged by telecom operators in Nepal for incoming international calls is absurdly high. Their total cost cannot be more than 2 US cents, but they charge more than 10 cents for international calls. Generating profit is the primary motive of a company, but what they are doing (and what NTA is allowing them to do) is robbery. And who suffers from all this? The Nepali people, of course - thousands of Nepalis who toil in the oppressive heat of the Gulf and Malaysia. With high prices, they cannot afford to call their families more often and talk longer. Also, their hard-earned money goes to telecom operators overseas and in Nepal (and back overseas through NCell and UTL).

Rajen Gurung

IN OTHER WORDS

Quoting from the Indian embassy press release that Lal mentions ('Meddling in the media', CK Lal, #518): "The baseless adverse publicity against the products of such joint ventures will not only hit the Nepalese economy and exports but will also deter new foreign direct investments into Nepal." It is quite obvious what the embassy is saying: "If you try to adversely affect the business of our companies in Nepal, we will discourage Indian FDI." It may be wrong to try to defend the interests of one country's private enterprise in another, but it's done anyways. After all, national interests (business being one) are sacrosanct in our international system. But to do so with a threatening press release may be bad policy choice.

Battisputali

POWERFUL CLARIFICATION

Referring to the term 'financing fatigue' I had used in my article 'Power to India' (#517), I had used the term in the context of the level of 'gross national happiness' reached by Bhutan under the 'inter-government model' under which 60 per cent of the project cost is availed to Bhutan by India as grant and the remaining 40 per cent as a soft loan. It wasn't used to indicate financing fatigue with all types of financing configurations. After implementing 1,416MW under this model, the Indian 'power ministry is getting the jitters', as Tol reported last year. Therefore, the government of India is endeavouring to

drastically reconfigure the model so that future projects are built with 70 per cent loan and 30 per cent grant. This is a clear indication of India experiencing financing fatigue with regard to the 60:40 model. Conversely, India seems to be prepared to invest further if the model is turned on its head by drastically reducing the portion of grant from 60 per cent to 30 and increasing loans to 70 per cent from 40. However, this change will substantially increase Bhutan's debt service burden and pull down the gross national happiness index by a magnitude. Moreover, no attempt was made in my article to imply that the Indian private sector too has reached financing fatigue, which will be evident if the article is read carefully.

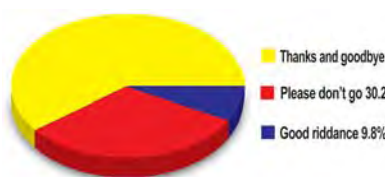
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Weekly Internet Poll # 519

Q. "Should I stay or should I go?" - UNMIN

Total votes: 2,361



Weekly Internet Poll # 520. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What worries you most about Maharagate?





KIRAN PANDY

New imbalance



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

After weeks of speculation, the government sent a 'constructively ambiguous' letter to the UN requesting an extension of UNMIN's mandate. After a long prelude, it asked for a mandate that focused on monitoring of Maoist combatants and arms without specifically asking that the Nepal Army (NA) be taken off UNMIN monitoring.

Three and a half years after the interim legislature was constituted and two years after

that the situation has 'evolved rapidly' and many of UNMIN's tasks are 'redundant'. One wonders what progress Baluwatar and its allies have seen in the peace process since the last extension in May, for the rest of the country can only see stagnation.

But the letter's details, and the legalistic claims and counter claims on both sides, are not really the core of the issue. Neither is UNMIN's functioning. It is the politics behind the extension.

The change in the balance of power since the agreements were signed originally, and the differing motivations of the actors who signed those pacts, explains why UNMIN manages to invite ire

Koirala decided that the best way to bring the Maoists 'into the mainstream' was by creating a new framework and new institutions that could accommodate them. The interim constitution, interim legislature, and interim government were constituted. The republican agenda was accepted. And UNMIN was invited, to give a sense of security to the Maoists, who wanted international legitimacy, and to fulfill the tasks of arms monitoring that no other external force could.

Few people in the NC and UML really believed in the new framework. But they privately knew Maoist strength had played a key role in bringing them back to power through the People's Movement. They also hoped this would 'lock' the Maoists in and co-opt them, and eventually through elections the hegemony of 'democratic forces' could be restored.

Think about all that has changed since then. The king has gone and there is no common 'enemy'. After the elections, but particularly since the Katawal incident last year, NC and UML started seeing the NA as a partner in their battle against the Maoists. This is a historic and unprecedented shift in Nepali politics; the NC and NA are on the same side.

There is almost a consensus in the 'democratic camp' that Koirala gave 'too much' to the Maoists, who are seen to have gone back on their promises. The logic of the anti-Maoist Madhav Nepal coalition was that it is not by

giving the Maoists space, but by isolating them entirely, that they will be 'weakened' and forced to 'reform'. So keeping them out of power, and getting all domestic and international actors to pressure the Maoists, became a primary goal.

But there is a problem. Two institutions serve as a constant reminder to the spirit of those heady 2006 days—the CA and UNMIN. Until the CA is around, the Maoists cannot be sidelined. The prospect of them coming to power remains, and their agenda cannot be brushed aside. Until UNMIN is present, there is a

symbolic acceptance of 'two armies' since that was the basis of the Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies. And there remains international recognition of the Maoists as a genuine 50 per cent stakeholder in the peace process.

If understood in the context of this anti-Maoist strategy, the attack on UNMIN makes perfect sense. But it is a reminder of how far we have moved from the days of the 2006 political framework, the new balance of power, and how implementing the peace accords has become infinitely more difficult now.

We've come a long way from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006, but shifting sands have got us into trouble

the special committee was formed, the government has discovered these developments mean there are no longer 'two sides' to the conflict, and that the government's voice is the only legitimate voice. Why were they going through the charade of consulting the Maoists on UNMIN extension all this time? Or, why did the Maoist government have to consult the NC on the issue? And why did they not revise agreements to reflect this reality, and change the mandate request accordingly, earlier?

The letter also tells the UN

at such regular intervals despite its fairly marginal role in day-to-day politics.

Think back to the end of 2006. The CPA was greeted with euphoria. The Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists saw themselves as partners against the monarch. The NA was still treated with deep suspicion, to the extent that GP Koirala gave the Maoists the green signal to inflate the numbers of the PLA in cantonments to 'balance the army'. Prachanda obliged way beyond Koirala's imaginings, and sent his core fighters to the YCL, but that is another matter.

THIS WEEK

Leaked tape

A private TV channel based in Delhi broadcast an audio tape conversation supposedly featuring Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara asking for Rs 500 million from a Chinese man to buy votes for Maoist candidate Pushpa Kamal Dahal, two days ahead of the sixth round of prime ministerial voting. On the tape, a man alleged to be Mahara discusses possible meetings with an unidentified person.

Both Mahara and the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu have denied involvement, and the authenticity of the audio tape is yet to be verified. The NC, UML, and civil society members have demanded an independent probe.

PM elections

Two rounds of prime ministerial elections, on 5 and 7 September, failed to secure a win for either of the candidates from the Maoists and the NC. The UML and the Madhesi alliance remained

neutral during both rounds of voting, despite threats from Upendra Yadav's MJF faction to cross the floor to vote for the Maoists. An eighth round of voting is scheduled for 26 September.

Roll on, UNMIN

After much dillydallying, the government has sought a four-month extension for UNMIN. The letter filed at the UN Security Council (UNSC) through Nepal's permanent representative to the UN, Gyan Chandra Acharya, has also asked UNMIN to monitor 'Maoist combatants, their cantonments and arms' while remaining silent on its role over the Nepal Army.

Briefing the UNSC on Tuesday, UNMIN chief Karin Landgren highlighted the risks to the peace process posed by the unresolved leadership battle. "The biggest risk of all may be that the peace process and parliamentary processes appear discredited, sending a discouraging signal to existing and emerging groups about taking the democratic route to push for change," she said.

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Home delivery



Bank of Kathmandu conducted a week-long program, 'BOK Ghardailo Saptaha', to encourage people to use banking services. The programs aimed to spread awareness about the benefits of banking and inform the public about services provided by Bank of Kathmandu.

Happy Teej

Janata Bank has announced a 'Smart Lady' saving scheme on the occasion of Teej. The account can be opened with Rs 100 and gives 7 per cent interest on daily balances. Account holders receive free ATM cards, chequebooks and other services along with gifts and 6-month subscriptions to Nari Magazine.

Expert advice

Green Invest, a financial services firm, has launched investment banking and business advisory services in Nepal. It will provide these services to Nepali organisations, multinationals and government institutions. Its team of professionals will collaborate with Ernst & Young for technical support.

Season's greetings

Nepa Hima Trade Link announced its Sony Festive Offer under which buyers will get a gift and a lucky draw coupon with every purchase of a Sony product. Dish Nepal DTH service will come free with Sony Bravia LCDs.



Fresh coats



Apurva International is to introduce Italian white cement and wall putty in the market. Wall putty is used to finish walls before painting. Italian white cement and wall putty are manufactured in three different factories in India.

New branch

Himalayan Bank has opened its 32rd branch in Kalanki. The branch will provide all the standard bank services and offer special savings and fixed deposit schemes.

Understanding inflation
Why are prices rising?



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Last week, more than a dozen people died in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, in a week-long riot caused by a 30 per cent price hike in food and other basic necessities. We may not know the official inflation rate in Nepal, but ask any householder who shops for groceries — prices change with each visit to the market. Rates in restaurants have increased and the cost of living, calculated on the backs of envelopes since we don't have credible indices, shows that it is getting dearer to live in Nepal, especially in Kathmandu. For Nepal, the increase of a single rupee in the international market or production centres means a greater increase in price for consumers.

The beed always wonders why his favourite egg rolls at roadside stalls cost just IRs 13 (Rs 21) in Kolkata but Rs 50 in Kathmandu. No meal in Kathmandu, even in stalls at the

यस्तो थिया ५० वर्ष अघिको बजार भाउ

मसिनो धान	१ मुरीको	रु. ११-	घिउ	१ धानीको	रु. ७-
मकै	१ मुरीको	रु. १०१-	तेल	१ पाथीको	रु. ७-
गहुँ	१ मुरीको	रु. १०१-	नून	१ पाथीको	१४० पैसा
कोदो	१ मुरीको	रु. ५१-	गरम मसला	१ धानीको	रु. २६१-
केराउ	१ मुरीको	रु. १५१-	जिरा	१ धानीको	रु. २०१-
मासको दाल	१ मुरीको	रु. १४१-	आलु	१ धानीको	१४० पैसा
मुसुरो दाल	१ मुरीको	रु. १२१-	प्याज	१ धानीको	१६० पैसा
खिरा	१ पाथीको	रु. ११-	नसुन	१ धानीको	रु. ११-
मसिनो चामल	१ पाथीको	रु. ११-	कुखुराको फूल	१ गोटाको	१२ पैसा
राँगी (ठूलो)	१ गोटाको	रु. ४०१-	हाँसको फूल	१ गोटाको	१३ पैसा
बसी (ठूलो)	१ गोटाको	रु. १०१-	भाले कुखुरा	१ गोटाको	रु. ११-
भेडा (ठूलो)	१ गोटाको	रु. ७१-	दूध	१ पाथीको	रु. ११-
च्याइया (ठूलो)	१ गोटाको	रु. ७१-	खानाको जुत्ता	१ जोर	रु. ३१-
चिया	१ कपको	१५ पैसा	सुन	१ तोलाको	रु. ८०१-
सिगरेट	१ बग्को	१० पैसा	चाँदी	१ तोलाको	रु. ४१-

bottom of the pyramid, is available at a price less than Rs 50; whereas in many cities across south Asia, you can still eat at stalls for less than Rs 25. Is it the cost of production, or is it that we are used to high margins? Many companies who operate in different geographies admit that Nepal has too many intermediaries and that retail margins here are the highest in the region. Therefore, until some large-scale retail operation that will reduce prices sets up shop here, consumers will continue to pay more.

The prices are also high because our labour costs, compared to productivity, are the highest in the region. We require more people to man our restaurant kitchens and production lines. With many holidays and the constant rise in wages along with diminishing productivity, labour costs are always on the up.

Besides, Nepalis are always on the lookout for opportunities to arbitrage. So any news of shortages, festivals, or other events that cause major shifts in demand mean prices spiral, as people love to hoard and make extra money. It is questionable how petrol stocks evaporate from underground tankers as soon as gas stations hear of a landslide, a strike on the highways or a rise in oil prices in India.

The other major cause for price rises is our love of cartels. Transport entrepreneurs have ganged up to overprice transportation

costs, making them among the highest in south Asia. Hair dressers have banded together to fix minimum rates and so have gold vendors. The fact that different gold associations fight tooth and nail over fixing prices and quotas makes us wonder if they are government agencies or the private sector. But the Nepali private sector, too, loves protectionism and continues to find ways of making money by fixing prices and quantities.

The consumers are partly to blame. Nepali consumers are not adamant about getting their money's worth. How many times have you seen people refusing to pay for a badly cooked dish at a restaurant or faulty service from cell phone operators? Lax attitudes mean suppliers of service can get away with increasing charges for low-quality products.

Compared to the value of assets, rents are still lower than in most low or middle-income countries. If this goes up too, it will have a multiplier effect on wages and product prices, making heady inflation a distinct possibility.

We need updated and reliable figures on inflation so that we can start being proactive in understanding price rises. A high rate of inflation increases income inequality, and for every high-end house that is occupied, we will see another ghetto. If we cannot understand and deal with price hikes, then the streets of Kathmandu may soon see riots like the one in Maputo. www.arthabeed.com

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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This is a Kathmandu based position but the candidate should be willing to travel extensively including the remote districts. It is essential that the candidate should have very good interpersonal and communication skills. The candidate with articles in refereed journals will be preferable.

nec's perks and benefits are applicable. However, NTDRC has a policy to reward the research professionals according to their level of delivery.

To apply for the position please forward your CV along with covering letter to: Nepal Engineering College, Changunarayan, Bhaktapur, GPO Box 10210, Kathmandu, Nepal, Email: info@nec.edu.np, Dead line for application: September 30, 2010.

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A decade since the boom ended, Nepal's pashmina industry is carving out niche market



Weaving a brighter picture

PAAVAN MATHEMA



ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

The pashmina industry seemed to have fallen prey to the classic trajectory of once-successful Nepali exports such as garments and carpets. In the late 1990s, there was a short boom for pashminas, during which time the number of pashmina factories shot up from 25 in 1993 to over 900. The heavy competition didn't translate into sustained growth, as compromises in quality began to hurt the industry.

But those who survived the bust learnt their lessons quickly, and are rebuilding the pashmina industry to cater to a niche market for high quality, innovative products. Last year Nepal exported Rs 2 billion worth of pashminas and earned an additional Rs 1.5 billion locally. Today, there are 150 pashmina manufacturers and more than 400 exporters in business.

"The growth of the pashmina industry at the moment is different from the rapid expansion we saw earlier," says Chandra Kakshyapati of Sana Hastakala. "It's a lot steadier."

It's also more diverse. Pashmina is no longer synonymous with shawls. Manufacturers are designing sweaters, wraps, gowns, gloves, blankets and even slippers made out of pashmina. Diversification is taking place not just in what is produced but also in the designs and methods used. Patterns are being woven and printed, and intricate beadwork and embroidery are adding value to the products. Manufacturers are using knitting along with weaving. Pashmina was traditionally mixed with cotton and silk; today we even have mixes with bamboo yarns.



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“We need to treat it as a fashion industry and be innovative in our designs,” says Anin Rajbhandari of Tara Oriental, which has been tying up with international brands and designers to make new pashmina-based products that appeal to buyers. Europe is the top market for Nepali pashminas followed by the United States, Japan, Russia, Brazil and the Middle East.

The pashmina industry has also realised that while major buyers are abroad, Nepalis are also keen on pashminas. Many export manufacturers have opened local retail outlets to cater to Nepalis and foreigners who might drop by.



Ladies behind the looms



Over 15,000 are people directly employed in the pashmina industry. Although the exact number of women employed in the industry is unknown, most manufacturers say that a majority of the workers in their factories are women. Twenty-four-year-old Saraswati Shrestha (*pic, left*) works at Nature Knit and is proud that she can support her household with her earnings from the factory. “I have been working here for four years and I get more respect at home,” says Saraswati. Phulkumari Magar, who works alongside Saraswati, adds, “With my earnings I have been able to send my kids to an English-medium school. I also have a say in decisions at home.” Factory owners say women are keener to learn, and they have a lower turnover because women are more loyal to the company.

China is the toughest competitor for the Nepali pashmina industry with its cheap labour, low production cost and skilled manpower. “It is impossible to compete with them but our advantage is that we can provide customised low-volume orders and work flexibly with our clients,” says Bharat Adhikari of Nature Knit (*Boudha factory pictured, left*). But cost-wise it is still an expensive business for pashmina makers.

Ironically, most Nepali pashmina is actually made of yarn imported from China. Commercial farming of Himalayan goats (*chyangra*) is

yet to take place in Nepal and the existing supply can only meet 30 per cent of the total yarn demand. The lack of spinning and refining factories here means farmers sell their wool to China at just Rs 2,000 per kg. Nepali manufacturers then buy back the yarn at rates higher than Rs 10,000

per kg. “Even before we start producing our costs are already 20 per cent higher, simply because we have to import our raw materials here,” says Gurvesh Singh of Umrao Cashmere.

But initiatives are underway to produce yarn locally. The Nepali Pashmina Industry Association is working with the Asian Development Bank to set up a yarn spinning and processing plant in Nepal. “A lot can be done to make Nepali pashmina



competitive,” acknowledges Shiva Shrestha of Dhaulagiri Pashmina. “At least the manufacturers have understood now that the quality of pashmina is not to be tampered with.”



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“One of the strongest Nepali brands in the international market”

Interview with the President of Nepal Pashmina Industries Association, Pushpa Man Shrestha

Nepali Times: What is the difference between cashmere and pashmina, when the raw material used is the same?

Pushpa Man Shrestha: You're right; the raw material for cashmere and pashmina is the same. But the standard we've set for pashmina is that the yarn used should be of less than 15 microns. Whereas cashmere is made with 19 micron yarn.

How can we brand the products as Nepali pashmina when all the yarn, dye and other raw materials used are imported?

Pashmina is one of the strongest Nepali brands in the international market. We were the first to market our products using that name. We're not self-sufficient in terms of raw materials but it is traditional Nepali craft which gives it its identity.



Chyangra Pashmina

The sales of Nepali pashmina went down after fake pashmina entered the market. What is being done in response?

We've developed the trademark of 'Chyangra Pashmina', which is now registered in more than 40 countries. This will prevent

duplication of Nepali pashminas and help maintain the standard of goods marketed under the trademark in the international market.

What about quality checks?

At present, we have no lab tests in Nepal that can grant internationally recognised certification.




Manufacturers have to send out samples for quality certification to verify raw materials. But we're in the process of establishing an internationally recognised testing lab here by working together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the quality department in Nepal.

How can a customer be assured of quality?

It's hard for even an expert to evaluate the exact quality of a pashmina just by touch. But if anyone sells you a 70/30 mix of pashmina for less than Rs 1,600 and a 100% pashmina for less than Rs 2,500, you know you're being duped.

Is the industry facing any particular problems as of now?

Nepal Rastra Bank provides loans at the rate of four per cent for exporters like us. But we haven't been able to get such loans from commercial banks, to whom we have to pay a rate of 13 per cent interest.





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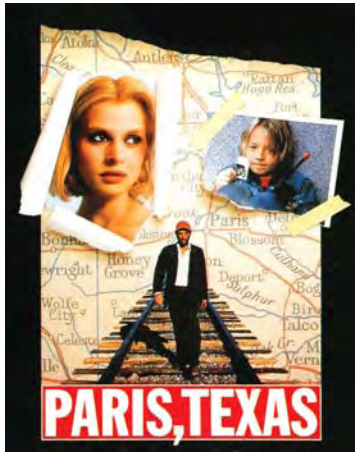
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EVENTS



Docskool, screening of *Paris, Texas*, directed by Wim Wenders. Friday 10 September, 3.30pm, Kathmandu Academy, Mahendra Bhawan Premises, Naxal, 4471104

A People War Exhibition, Nepal's conflict history in pictures. Every day except Tuesdays, 11am-4pm, Patan Dhoka, for school visits, call 5549948, www.apeoplewar.com

Julie Maiya, Mandala Theatre stages a Nepali adaptation of *Miss Julie*, written by August Strindberg. Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday till 16 September, 5.30pm, UWTC, Tripureswor

Bedazzle Fashion Walk, organised by PlayMysound. Friday 10 September, 7.30pm -11.30pm, Moods Studio Lounge, Tripureswor

TGIF Fashion Week 2010, IEC organizes the biggest fashion event of the year. From 13 - 16 September, Soaltee Crown Plaza, Tahachal

Gaijatra, solo painting exhibition by acclaimed artist Ragini Upadhyay Grela. Till 20 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 4218048

Repeating Bodies Structural Space, exhibition of paintings by Sanjeev Maharjan and Sunita Maharjan. Till 20 September, 11am to 5pm, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, 5521120

Cycle 4: Selfie, photo exhibition by 17 young amateur photographers. Till 23 October, Galleria CUC, Momo Magic, Pulchok

Kilroy's Annual Wine Festival, offers the widest range of choice in wines. Till mid-September, Kilroy's, Thamel, Jyatha Street, 4250440

MUSIC

Moksh Bar, live performances by Humble Bee. Every Tuesday, 7.30pm onwards, Moksh Bar, Jhamshikel, 5526212

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, KJC brings renowned German musician Rainer Pusch to town. Till 20 September, KJC, Jhamsikhel, 5013554, info@katjazz.com.np

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

DINING

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

Viva Italia, enjoy Italian food at its best, Italian Chef Massimo Gullotta brings the best of Italian delicacies. Till Sunday 12 September, 11am-11pm. Café Toscana, Pulchok 5537775, 9721458413

Hadock, big compound with ample parking space, their Western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. Jhamel, 10am-10am, 5546431

Arabian Nights in The Cafe, taste culinary delights from the Middle East. Every Friday from 6:30pm onwards, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234/4489362

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



Buddha Bar, offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. Thamel, 9851053235

Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. Naxal, 4424303

Bronco Billy, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. Pulchok opposite Namaste Supermarket

Ghangri Café, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Pulchok (near the Suzuki showroom), 11am-10pm except Tuesdays.



Irish Pub, not only does it feel like one, but it's Irish all the way down to the original recipes from the owner's wife. Go green with their fish and chips. Ananda Bhawan, Lazimpat, 4416027

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted aristocratic residence. Its walled ambience and green surroundings make it an oasis within the city, Kantipath, 4215068

It's not every day in Kathmandu you catch a virtuoso in flight. Last Tuesday I felt more spoilt for choice than I usually do mid-week, which is not at all. Despite our annual jazz and blues festivals, not to mention the film festivals, there's still a tendency to see the capital of Nepal as something of a backwater. Case in point: five years ago, the front pages were splashed with news of the impending arrival of international pop star and DJ...Dr Alban? Who penned one awful hit in the 1990s and promptly vanished, never to surface again, except in places awfully short on celebrity.

Indeed, things have changed. But how did the American Embassy manage to convince Roman Rudnytsky, the internationally renowned concert pianist, to drop into Nepal for a recital? I cared not; here was a rare opportunity to witness genius at work.

It didn't matter that the grand piano laid out for Rudnytsky looked and sounded a little worn, that the seats in the Russian Cultural Center were creaky, or even that the photographers from the dailies didn't seem to realise how loud their clacking cameras were. For two hours, the American pianist had us in a trance. Some members of the audience, of course, must have been bored stiff; for the rest, it was a guided tour through the best of the west, an amalgam of the familiar, the exotic, and the downright thrilling.



NIRANJAN SHRESTHA

A little night music

Rudnytsky introduced each piece with a few words on its provenance and place in the canon of classical music, choosing, intriguingly, to begin with the folk-influenced *Tres Danzas* from Guatemalan composer Manuel Herrarte. Following on with two stalwarts of the Romantic era, Beethoven (*Sonata in F, op.10 no.2*) and Chopin (*Nocturne in C sharp minor*), Rudnytsky quickly moved into the sublime. He then changed gears effortlessly with the jaunty and occasionally thunderous 'El Salon Mexico' by American Aaron Copland (left hand flat-batting the bass keys to great effect).

Following the intermission, Rudnytsky launched into Schumann's varied masterpiece *Carnaval, op.9*. He then eased into

the gentle tones of 'Venus' from Holst's *The Planets*. And how better to end a recital than with two pieces from that demon of the piano, Hungarian Franz Liszt? Anyone unconvinced by the intricate dynamic and harmonic fluctuations of Schumann would have had to submit to the showmanship of Liszt, the Paganini of the piano.

When Rudnytsky obliged with a rousing encore from American Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *The Banjo* (yes, the piano sounded just like that), I expected him to get up, sweep up the keys and dump them into the pockets of his jacket, so completely did he possess the piano. Suffice it to say I was happy to walk out with a head full of tinkling.  Nepali Kukur

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Dastardly Dogmandu



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Human rabies is a fatal illness. Unfortunately, about 80 per cent of the world’s human rabies cases (about 30,000 annually) occur in South Asia. Rabies is transmitted most often through animal bites, although other contact with the saliva or brain tissue of an infected animal can cause the disease as well. In Nepal, the most commonly infected animal

that transmits rabies to humans is dogs. Cats come a distant second, simply because they aren’t popular as pets. Whoever said our capital should be renamed Dogmandu instead of Kathmandu had the right idea, at least in terms of rabies. Children are especially vulnerable to rabies simply because they may be bitten or nicked by a rabid dog and not mention this to anyone. This may be fatal because after a usual incubation period of about a week to two months, the child may come down with rabies, by which time it is too late. It is clear that

rabies is under-diagnosed in the developing world. And not all cases of rabies manifest with hydrophobia (fear of water) and the terror-stricken behaviour we are used to hearing about in popular culture! So what can be done? Prevention, of course. Taking care of stray dogs would be a great idea, but this undertaking seems to lack political backing. The second best thing is to consider being properly vaccinated with human rabies vaccines which are available (at a price) mainly around the Teku Hospital area in Kathmandu. In the case of a bite, regardless of prior (pre-exposure) vaccination, the wound needs to be cleaned properly, daily, with liquid iodine or soap and water, as the virus hangs around the bitten area for a long time. A ‘top off’ shot or two to boost immunity will be required even if prior vaccinations have been taken. If prior vaccinations have not been taken, and especially if the bite is severe, then immunoglobulin (a kind of ‘prompt response’ medicine) needs to be administered. Immunoglobulin may be available in the Teku Hospital area again, but supply tends to be erratic. Hence ‘pre-exposure’ vaccination is best. Luckily, after a bite by a potentially rabid animal, the Nepali government does usually administer rabies vaccinations for free at Teku Hospital. 🇳🇵



IN MEMORY: Devotees thronged Gokarneshwor Mahadev temple on the occasion of Father’s Day, Wednesday. It is a tradition on this day for those who have lost their fathers to perform *shraddha* on the banks of the Bagmati near the temple.



AWARDING EXCELLENCE: Caretaker PM Madhav Kumar Nepal awarded 13 schools for quality education to mark National Education Day and International Literacy Day on Wednesday at Nepal Academy Hall, Kathmandu.

GREEN SCENE

Celebrate vultures

Roots and Shoots Nepal, an NGO dedicated to wildlife conservation, the environment, and human communities, has been busy preparing for the Vulture Conservation Festival 2010, to be held from 24 to 26 September in Basabasahi village of Nawalparasi district. “This will be the first of its kind in the world of vulture conservation,” says volunteer Neeraj Gautam. Vulture conservation has been approached in various ways since the mid-90s, when it was recognised that this important member of our ecosystem was critically endangered. Nepal has hosted summits, awareness workshops, scientific research, and observed International Vulture Conservation Day. These efforts have resulted in something of a revival for vultures – this year the number of nests in Nawalparasi exceeded 25, up from only 3 back in 2006. But the threats to vultures remain. The old problem of vultures suffering kidney failure induced by Diclofenac, the analgesic traced in carcasses of cattle, still persists. The ban on the manufacturing and import of diclofenac imposed in 2006 has not outlawed its use or sale, for the drug is also used as an anti-inflammatory analgesic in humans. As long as human use of diclofenac continues, it is likely to be used for veterinary purposes as well, as it is much cheaper than Meloxicam, the safer veterinary alternative. Nawalparasi’s vultures are also threatened by municipality use of poison on street dogs that are subsequently scavenged. It’s worth noting that if vultures disappear, the carcasses of animals, left attended, can be host to diseases such as TB, anthrax, and brucellosis. Roots and Shoots Nepal aims to spread awareness of these facts, and the threats to the newly emerging, vulnerable population of vultures, so that counteractive measures can be taken. One doesn’t have to be a hardcore activist, veterinary expert or an ecologist to support the upcoming vulture festival. There is ample opportunity



for eco-tourism. The festival has lots in store for adventure lovers, as there will be numerous activities including tree climbing, vulture nest watching, jungle hiking, cycling, tractor riding, cart riding, camping, beach football and volleyball, homestay with local Tharus, a Tharu food festival, and art and photo exhibitions of the different species of vultures in Nepal. The income generated at the festival will be used to fund local efforts in vulture conservation such as ‘vulture restaurants’ – where diclofenac-free carcasses are supplied to vultures. Celebrate vultures and help the environment this month, while having a great time yourself – contact Roots and Shoots Nepal (4107599) for registration forms. Prices for activities listed range from Rs 5,000 to Rs 15,000. 🇳🇵 *Shahani Singh*



DANGEROUS FALL: A gigantic stone toppled down the hills on the Goleshwor-Beni highway, damaging a drinking water pipe and obstructing traffic. A team from the Nepal Army blasted the stone to remove it from the road.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Last Tuesday alone, the meteorological stations in Kathmandu and Okhaldhunga recorded 71mm and 105 mm of rain respectively, over one third of this month’s monthly quota. What is interesting about this year’s monsoon is that a large portion of the clouds came in straight from the Arabian Sea instead of the Bay as usual. After heavy precipitation this week, the monsoon pulses are reverting to their normal pattern, which means humid and sunny days and light showers towards evening. In the fresh satellite pictures, a powerful wave is sweeping clouds eastward from the Arabian Sea along the long range of the Himalaya. Valley residents may expect frequent changes in weather including intermittent rain followed by clear night skies through the weekend.

FRI	SAT	SUN
30-21	29-20	29-19

The kindest cut

This Dasain, we may want to consider the benefits of castration for goats, dogs and politicians



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

There are three dogs in my house. The oldest, smartest, and the smallest, a mongrel bitch, is called Jantari. Then there's two male *bhote kukurs* (Tibetan Mastiff): Rame, 3, and Pushe, 1.

Now, observant readers will note such a combination is a recipe for disaster. One female, two males. What's more, two males of the *bhote* variety, notorious for their moody aggression. And so it proved. Rame was lord of what little he surveyed, with Jantari a willing courtier, until brash Pushe came along. Rame could push Pushe the Pup around, but it was clear to us early on that Pushe would soon outgrow Rame. We hoped Pushe would accept Rame as his elder, or that Rame would gracefully abdicate with time. It was not to be.

Last week, after a series of minor squabbles, Pushe and Rame got into the worst brawl of their doggy lives. When they were finally separated, there was blood everywhere. Rame had a torn mouth and was limping. Pushe had swollen, bloodshot eyes and cuts on his flanks. Those trying to break up the fight got bites for their trouble, too. What's worse, the *bhotes* refused



CONSENSUS: Two canines talk it over in Singhadurbar

GYANENDRA KARKI

to make up. Another confrontation seemed imminent. What to do?

The doggy drama put me in mind of larger questions. What can one do when opposing forces refuse to acknowledge each other, other than as enemies, and continue to fight to the detriment of themselves and the wider polity? The analogy didn't seem so far-stretched applied to our own political games. Pushe and Rame were battling it out for dominance, focused solely on gaining the upper hand. Their owners, instead of feeling secure in the knowledge that two strong

and trustworthy employees were guarding the household, worried about their own security as they observed the snarling and growling from a distance.

Wild dogs, who live in highly organised packs attuned to collective survival, quickly find a way to adapt to hierarchical shuffles and get on with more important matters like procuring food. House dogs on the other hand, due to the idiosyncrasies of their breeding and owners, may take things rather more personally. So they persist in savaging each other, causing everyone around grief. Food still

comes in a bowl day in day out, after all, so they can remain focused on egoistic struggles.

Back home, after some consultations, the momentous decision was taken to castrate both Pushe and Rame, that is, *khasi banaune*. We'd been told this might mean reduced male-to-male aggression, while not impairing the dogs' ability to guard the household. They would even put on weight, the vet suggested, which wasn't a bad thing at all as long as we made sure they weren't overeating. And of course, Jantari and her owners could rest easy whenever she

came into heat – the boys would simply continue in their disinterested service of the household.

We're still awaiting the results of the kindest cut. If all goes well, our household and its dogs will forge ahead in security and prosperity. So I'm sorely tempted to suggest a similar solution for our political gladiators. Oh, I wouldn't be so vulgar as to suggest literally castrating the men who sit there snarling in committees ad nauseam while the *janata* look on helplessly. A symbolic self-castration of ego, though, would go a long way in resolving the impasse they have brought us to. Collective egoism in the form of jingoism, too, could be dispensed with either side of the border. What's it good for?

Just as an aside, however, I have been reading up on eunuchs of late. In many cultures across this wonderful world of ours, castrated men appear to have occupied significant roles in the courts of the good and the great. Eunuchs, being unable to propagate, were often considered more trustworthy and less driven by personal gain, at least from a dynastic point of view. For my part, I'd like to dedicate this column to the Chinese eunuch Cai Lun (ca. 50-121AD), the patron saint of paper-making. 📄

 **Nepali Kukur**

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हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै
रङ र जात पनि
हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान
लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन ।
चोरेर, ढाँटेर, छलेर,
लुटेर खान पो
लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ
रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ
त्यसैमा रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव
गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर
गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति
हो, भक्ति हो र
मुक्ति हो । कामको
इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको
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Trade diplomacy

Trade has long followed the flag, but in recent years the flag has followed trade



COMMENT
Sanjaya Baru

NEW DELHI – It is probably the first of its kind. A press release issued by an Indian embassy abroad in support of an Indian company and a very Indian brand.

Last week, the Indian embassy in Nepal was constrained to issue a press release alleging that sections of the Nepali media were seeking to malign an Indian company and suggesting that such a malicious campaign against an Indian brand could hurt bilateral relations.

The company in question is Dabur Nepal, a subsidiary of India's famous Dabur India Limited. The provocation for the embassy press release was a muted campaign against Dabur Nepal's 'Real' fruit juices, suggesting that the company was

selling inedible goods. What provoked the embassy to intervene was a desperate plea from the company.

Dabur Nepal had received a blackmail threat from a leading media group in Nepal stating that a major campaign would be unleashed against its products if the company did not resume advertising with the group's print and television media. The company also suspected the active involvement of anti-Indian politicians, especially the Maoists, in the campaign. This was not the first time Indian companies had felt threatened by such smear attacks and so Dabur Nepal felt compelled to approach the embassy for support.

Convinced of its case and taking the view that it is the duty of Indian diplomats to protect the interests of Indian brands and companies, the Indian embassy in Kathmandu issued a press release that sought to alert the general public to the threat of anti-Indianism masquerading as consumer protection. Nepal's media and its political class are engaged in an animated discussion on the rights and wrongs of such diplomatic intervention in a purely commercial matter.

Should diplomats only walk the high road of high diplomacy (strategic policy, bilateral relations and regional cooperation) or should they also walk the low road of low diplomacy (commercial and business diplomacy), promoting the cause of business and commerce? This is an old debate and has played itself out in other countries too. There are equally compelling arguments on both sides of the divide.

Should diplomats restrict themselves to policy issues and only help create a framework for improved economic and commercial relations between countries, or should they dirty their hands, wet their feet, sweat it out, and earn their spurs selling brands and promoting



Business as usual? Dabur Nepal's plant in Parwanipur, Bara

businesses? This is by no means a settled debate, but on balance most governments, and certainly companies, would increasingly expect diplomats to do precisely what the Indian embassy in Nepal did.

Trade has for long followed

the flag, but in recent years the flag has followed trade with companies opening doors in difficult lands to their countries' diplomats. Indian companies have helped open many doors around the world for Indian diplomats. In turn, Indian diplomats help open doors in foreign lands to Indian companies.

Every now and then this incestuous relationship between diplomats and businesses does irritate someone or the other. When US diplomats bat in India for American companies, many in India get shirty and upset. Just as the Nepali media is criticising the Indian embassy for getting involved in the Dabur controversy, Indian media and politicians often criticise American diplomats and officials for openly espousing the cause of their companies.

In an increasingly competitive, inter-dependent, integrated global economy, governments are expected to be more proactive in promoting the business interests of their respective companies. The Indian embassy in Nepal should, therefore, be complimented for its proactive stance.

Many politicians, officials and diplomats are actually quite comfortable with this hypocrisy of not being seen to be close, friendly and helpful to businesses in public but willing to more than bat in private. But a new generation of proactive diplomats, in embassies around the world, are willing to be more supportive of Indian business, without having to compromise on professional ethics and personal integrity. This ought to be welcomed. 🇮🇳

Dental Problems despite daily brushing ?

Time to change your toothpaste. Switch to Dabur Red Paste. Enriched with the protective goodness of Cloves, Mint (Pudina) and Szechuan Pepper (Timur) among 13 natural germ-fighting ingredients, Dabur Red Paste always keeps your teeth and gums healthy and strong. So much so, you'll say -

Problems पर हट !

Sanjaya Baru is the editor of the Business Standard newspaper in India, and served as a media advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.



SURESH RAJ NEUPANE



COMMENT
Pranav Budhathoki

Twenty people died across Canada two years ago when meat-slicing machines at Maple Leaf Foods contaminated the production line and set off a listeriosis outbreak. This summer, salmonella traced to contaminated eggs made 2,000 people sick in the US. And Britain's Health and Safety Executive routinely hauls out rats and cockroaches from London's Chinese and Indian restaurants on live TV, not to mention the rat-in-a-bread-loaf disgrace of 2005.

The mission of feeding the world has never been fully hygienic. But it becomes downright filthy when jingoism is added to the mix.

The recent juice jolt in Nepal could have been triggered by something as mundane as a nail piercing a juice carton, shipments stored in a damp warehouse, a mouldy fruit on a conveyer belt, a disgruntled employee chucking a scrap into the production line, or a combination of all these.

But apparently it is wiser to suppose than to find out exactly what happened. All those wedged in this whirl are now poster boys for a textbook on idiocy.

First, the media went into a frenzy with cherry-picked facts. I wonder if any journalist bothered spending some time in Dabur's factory in Rampur to learn if the juice scare could be traced back to the production line. Some declared war on the company, some sensitised the public, and some just chose to hug the honey pot. The lack of rigorous investigation was

appalling.

Then there was the company management. If you get into a fight, you don't go running to your daddy. That's cool only when you're in elementary school.

Take the 'Pepsi panic' in the US back in 1993. A pensioner tampered with a can of diet Pepsi by putting a syringe into it. The media picked up the story, dozens of copycats replicated the hoax across the country, and Pepsi faced a catastrophe. But they simply involved the Food and Drug Administration, traced the tampering, and came out with a full page advert in newspapers

over a summer weekend that said, "Pepsi is pleased to announce...nothing". The public were handed out drink coupons with slogan, "Thanks, America."

No one expects Dabur to be that classy and imaginative. But involving the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control to look into its production facility and asking for a clean chit from the government; asking the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industries to help with damage control; taking the media on a fact-finding trip; and putting across the message that a company of that scale would never mess about with the health

Juicy gossip

The Dabur scandal betrays contaminated minds rather than packets of juice

of the people who help it to make a profit would surely have saved the company from the mess it is in today.

The government, as one would expect, never got off its sorry ass to find out if Dabur's recklessness was actually to blame. If they had, the ones responsible could have been brought to book and charged with criminal negligence, sending across the image of a responsive bureaucracy. And if Dabur was found to be clean, the government, which pays itself a salary with the money from tax paid by companies like Dabur, should have protected the company with all its might from the sustained slurs.

Then there is Lainchaur's abundance of folly and total lack of finesse. They say a diplomat is someone who can tell you to go to hell in such a way that you actually look forward to the trip. Someone there could clearly do with a copy of Diplomacy for Dummies if there is one, if their own 'how to screw up' guide to diplomacy has not yet gone to the press, that is.

Sifting through newsprint consignments, switching between being an ambassador

and a spokesperson for a private company, and attempting to preach to the Nepali media was all a little bit of diplomatic comedy gone stale. But it went beyond funny when a politician was threatened with his life and a girl's education was used as leverage.

India builds us hospitals and helps us save lives. India also builds us roads so that our farmers can sell their fresh vegetables in the market. India builds us schools in out-of-the-way villages so that our girls end up in classrooms instead of Kathmandu's dance bars. All that and more, while romantic Europeans are busy brooding over inclusive democracy with their handpicked native flatterers over a bottle of Chardonnay in Kathmandu's swish hotels.

But the loathing India evokes in the minds of many Nepalis is once more at peak levels. Our politicians simply do not have the intellectual capacity to strategise relations with a country we should have been best of friends with. So it comes down to the louts at Lainchaur. Someone there is clearly not doing the job right. Is it time for Mr. Sood to go back for good?



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Early warning for all

Who better to protect communities from floods than community members themselves?

SHRADHA GIRI



“At 3am I heard my neighbour scream. I ran to his house and saw his whole family standing in a foot of water. We realised we were being flooded. The water level rose quickly. We didn’t have time to collect anything, we just ran for our lives,” recalls Shakil Ahmad Khan of the floods that engulfed his village in 2063 BS. Back then the lack of an early warning system in Kamdi VDC of Banke district almost cost Shakil’s family and their neighbours their lives.

Things have changed in Shakil’s community since. With Practical Action’s Community Based Flood Early Warning System (CBFEWS) in place, communities in Banke, Bardia, Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts, threatened every monsoon by the Kosi, Narayani and Karnali river systems, receive warnings at least three to four hours prior to potential floods.

The mechanism of CBFEWS is fairly simple. Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) are set up with volunteers in both upstream and downstream communities. These committees are trained in flood awareness and preparedness before and after floods (*pic, left*). But it is the communication between these DMCs that is crucial to saving lives and loss of moveable properties.

“Upstream DMC members read the gauges installed in the river (*pic, right*) and if the reading

Special Security

SITA MADEMBA in DHARAN

Despite government claims, eastern Nepal is still under the sway of armed groups

Eastern Nepal has seen little respite from strikes called by armed groups following the implementation of the Rs 3.8 billion Special Security Plan (SSP) a year ago. Looting, arson, murder, kidnapping, seizure of property, and extortion is rampant, and people are living in fear.

On 4 May, Kirant Workers Party (KWP) launched a successful attack on a police post in Khotang district. They looted five 303 rifles and one Chinese pistol from Nunthala Police Post, the first such incident since the launch of the SSP. Immediately afterwards, the party torched the offices of Hasposh and Duwagadi VDC of Sunsari district and continued with its forced donation drive. KPWP plans to extort Rs 300,000 a year from each VDC within its sphere of influence, and party president Bibas ‘Bidrohi’ is candid: “We will be harsh with those who refuse. We will form ‘people’s governments’ in different places and continue our military activities.”

VDC secretaries have been leaving villages to take shelter in district headquarters, and feel the government has not done anything for their security. Vice President of the VDC Rights Protection Centre Ram Kumar Yadav claims demands for donations and threats forced them to leave their post. “You can hardly find secretaries in the VDCs now,” he says, and not without reason. A bomb was defused recently in the house of Gokarna Prasad Koirala, VDC Secretary of Triyuga Municipality of Udaypur district. The Joint Ethnic Liberation Front claimed responsibility.



Police make public weapons recovered from Kirant Workers Party cadres

PICS: SITA MADEMBA

indicates possible flooding downstream we immediately get a call of warning. We then call the DMC here, the police personnel, FM radio stations, and we also use a hand siren to attract everyone's attention," explains Akbal Khan of Kamdi VDC.

On 19 July 2010, for instance, Bhadra Bahadur of Kusum VDC, Banke, reported river levels of 5.8m. During a 2008 community meeting, an upstream reading of 5.8m had been signalled as dangerous for downstream communities in Binauna. A level of 5.8m at 9.30 am in Kusum, it was estimated, would cause a possible flood in Binauna around 11.30am. The reading was reported to the CDO of Banke, who alerted all the parties concerned. DMCs in Fattepur and Holiya, too, alerted their communities with hand sirens. Though Binauna escaped flooding that time around, quick communication from upstream to downstream helped alert those most at risk and allowed them to prepare safe evacuation. What's more, the incident prompted the communities to raise the danger level to 6m (upstream) for the future.

CBFEWS is also a cost-effective mechanism that involves communities right from the beginning. "Being a part of this committee has given me great satisfaction because people in our community now believe that even if nobody comes to help us we are ready to save ourselves and our belongings," says Shakil, now Secretary of Duduwa Lundri Disaster Management Committee. This emphasises the point that communities are not passive

victims waiting for disasters to strike; they have the capacity to build resilience to disasters.

A holistic approach is key. "Proper infrastructure can help minimise the loss of lives but it has its limitations. Effective communication mechanisms like CBFEWS are vital to saving lives, valuable documents and livestock," explains Deb Narayan Bej of Practical Action. "CBFEWS has proven to be very effective. We've also supported the communities with hand sirens, boats, life jackets, telephones and lifesaving training. We run awareness campaigns using street theatre, drawing and singing competitions, and door-to-door visits to explain the dangers of floods and the importance of early warning."

Given the recurrent troubles of those who live on or around the floodplains of Nepal, investment in early warning systems involving communities would be a cost-effective use of limited resources. Currently, the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) maintains a network of 17 hydrological stations and 28 meteorological stations for flood forecasting and warning. CBEWS represents an opportunity to extend a network of flood safety mechanisms across the country. Vulnerable communities have a right to such warnings, and who better to look after their security than community members themselves? 🇳🇵

Shradha Giri works for Practical Action

👉 nepalitimes.com
Early warnings, #206



Plan falters

On 14 May, police found 3 pistols, a homemade gun, 10 shotguns, 14 rounds of magnum bullets, and one SLR magazine in Tirahut temple of Trikol VDC, Saptari district. It has not been determined who these arms belong to. Udaypur District Police Chief Police Manoj Kumar Yadav complains, "Terrorism activities can never be controlled without the help of the people. But those affected hesitate to inform us, as they fear being targeted."

The first few months of the SSP looked encouraging. It set up 10 security base camps of the Nepal Police in the eastern Tarai and 13 camps of the Armed Police Force in hilly districts (see box). The KPWP's donation drive, which had caused such havoc in the eastern hills, flagged. Bhisma Prasain, police chief of the eastern region, claims incidents of kidnapping and extortion declined significantly. In 2008/9, he says, there were 268 incidents of kidnapping. This went down to 46 with the introduction of the SSP, and except for a solitary case where ransom was paid, all

victims were rescued by the police. Further, murders are down to two this year from thirteen in the previous year, and there have been only 34 strikes called (down from 166 last year).

With police cracking down, some armed groups have been forced to merge or cease activities altogether. The Limbuwan National Liberation Forum and Upper Kirant and Limbuwan Liberation Army have all but disappeared while the Limbuwan and Khambuwan Fronts have merged. About 20 cadres of KPWP, including its secretary, have been arrested with arms. But despite claims of success on the part of the authorities, extortion continues.

The regional and ethnic fronts of the east, who are fighting for their own states, have been opposed to the SSP from the very start. Spokesperson of the Khambuwan National Front, Rajan Bantawa, says, "This is a plan to sabotage our movement for liberation." He claims his group is already on a peaceful course to achieve this, but like

other groups, their future strategy will depend on how government approaches the issue of security. They want the SSP to be withdrawn. Kumar Lingdel, president of the Democratic National Forum, says, "We have started training Limbuwan volunteers to fight on all fronts. If the government does not address our demand of an autonomous state, we will form a shadow government and even a parallel government."

Businessmen, too, are unhappy with the SSP. "The government has poured billions into the sand in the name of the security plan," says Dharan businessman Sitaram Acharya. "But we don't feel secure, extortion is getting worse, and we are afraid to speak up." General secretary of Sunsari district's Nepal Industries and Commerce Federation, Bijay Shrestha, agrees.

Analyst Kamal Tigela says the SSP is a paper plan, and has not had sustained impact. "The Maoists were the only group during the insurgency, now there are many such groups," he says.

Bhawani Baral, who has been closely studying the ethnic movements in the east, warns, "The SSP could boomerang if ethnic sentiments are not addressed properly. If the ethnic movement is not handled properly, it could lead to communal violence and a separatist movement." 🇳🇵

Centre For Investigative Journalism

Armed groups in the eastern hills



Limbuwan volunteers train in Dharan

Khambuwan National Front
Khambuwan Democratic Front
Federal Limbuwan State Council (Kumar Lingden group)
Federal Limbuwan State Council (Sanju Hang Palungwa group)
Federal Limbuwan State Council (Revolutionary)
Upper Kirant Limbuwan National Forum
Kirant People's Workers Party
Khambuwan Combatant Party

Source: Home Ministry

Special Security Plan

Started: August 2009
Budget: Rs 3,800,100,000
Security base camps: 13
Eastern Tarai districts: 10
Eastern hill districts: 13
Control room vehicle (CRV): 14 (Sunsari, Morang industrial corridor)
Special Security Campaign: Mechi highway
Arms recovered: homemade guns/rifles: 63; revolvers/pistols: 205; live bullets: 213 rounds

Source: Regional Police Office, Biratnagar



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Real respect

Interview with Udyan Ganguly, Chief Executive Officer of Dabur Nepal in *Karobar*, 5 September

कारोबार

What is the condition of Dabur Nepal at present?
Pretty good. We have managed to stay put and earn the trust of our consumers even at a bleak time for the country.

How much respect has the company gained?
The communities we are working in have always appreciated and encouraged us. But the fourth estate of the nation, the media, should evaluate us fairly. Dabur has invested Rs 2.5 billion in Nepal and has helped promote Nepal for the last 20 years by exporting products made here. Dabur Nepal's juice plant is among the seven best for tetra packs in the world. These packs are used not just for packaging juice but also for packaging milk and cream, which get spoiled even sooner.

Then why is the quality of your products being questioned?
The raw materials go through at least 73 quality controls before they go outside as products. So the accusations made against us are baseless. The Food and Quality Control Department has been conducting quality tests of our products at least once a month for years now.

What do you think led to this problem?
The problem is of governance. Can a single entity have the right to launch a case, hand down verdicts and take action in a democratic society? If Nepal is the only country where this is happening, this is something everyone should think about stopping.
This case also shows how incomplete news can create big problems. The Food and Quality Control Department has already presented its report, saying there is nothing wrong with the quality of Real juice.

How much has this scandal discouraged you?
We are disheartened to an extent. Everyone who is interested in the industrial development of Nepal should have been at least impartial if not sympathetic toward us. But we were made victims of outright bad publicity. If they didn't have any prejudice against us, they should have at least publicised the matter after investigating it. What is the value of the 20 years worth of hard work we put into the industrial development of Nepal? Of course our sentiments have been hurt.

Could you have ignored the matter?
Our corporate discipline does not let us ignore the questions raised against our products. We had to speak in order to clear facts and convey the truth to our consumers. Otherwise, we would have never had to offer clarifications regarding our high-tech machines and production process.

How will Nepal's industrial environment be affected by the Dabur case?
All the industries in India are closely observing our situation in Nepal. We are also influential members of India's FICCI and CNI. Also, everyone who intends to invest in Nepal does not do so without consulting Dabur Nepal, Unilever, Surya Nepal, and Asian Paints. When multinational companies get into trouble, won't the industrial environment of the country suffer?

Tape trouble

Sudhir Sharma in *Kantipur*, 5 September

कान्तिपुर

The Chinese ambassador to Nepal often invites editors from the Nepali media for interaction in a house in Baluwatar. A similar interaction was taking place Friday evening when a senior diplomat from a neighbouring country called. He wanted to know if news about a telephone tape could be published.

When asked what the tape was about, Kathmandu Post Editor Akhilesh Upadhyay was told that he would know once he listened to the tape. All three editors of Kantipur, Kathmandu Post and Kantipur Television were present at the time.

News started coming in from other sources as well. The tape was allegedly of Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara asking for a sum of Rs 500 million from a person claimed to be Chinese. It was not clear who the 'Chinese' person was, what the numbers used for the conversation were, or how it was recorded in the first

place. The diplomat's only concern was whether it could be published that day or not.

How can we readily believe unverified news about a neighbouring country coming from another neighbor? We decided to publish the news only after listening to the tape and ascertaining its authenticity. But the informer did not want to wait for all of that; he wanted to publicise it immediately, and so, started looking for alternatives.

The phones of other invitees at the dinner started ringing as well. After some time, the news was broadcast on television and on Saturday, two publishing houses gave front page coverage to it.

The news given out by an embassy in Kathmandu could have been true, or not. Now that we the media have publicised it without investigation, and elicited responses from all quarters, it will be very difficult to find out the truth.

News about monetary dealings during the prime ministerial election is not new. The Chief

Secretary of ML, CP Mainali, recently revealed that the Maoists offered the party Rs 50 million to support them. The Maoists haven't satisfactorily clarified this allegation so far, so it is not unnatural for the media to believe this tape involves the Maoists.

But how sensible is it for the media to implicate China just because a foreign embassy leaked the tape claiming the conversation was carried out with a 'Chinese' person? If tomorrow some other country gives us a tape involving an Indian national, should we drag the entire Indian nation into it? What would become of our duty to seek truth if we started publishing sensitive but unverified information without proper investigation? If we become an easy platform for one country to provoke another, where will the complex geopolitics of India and Nepal take this 'boulder between two yams'? The tape scandal offers lessons to those concerned with these questions.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Long-distance call

Gunaraj Luitel in *Nagarik*, 6 September

नागरिक

The alleged telephone conversation between Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara and an unnamed 'Chinese' is not being analysed to the extent that it deserves to be. Instead of trying to investigate the authenticity and content of the tape, all sides seem to be trying to exploit the incident for their own benefit. One can't say the Maoists have already condemned it, so we don't need to do anything. The government's disinterest in investigating this is objectionable. If phones were being tapped, who was doing it? If it was some outside agency, what does it mean?

Mahara himself admitted to his party paper *Janadisha* on Sunday that it could be his voice. But, he added, "with modern technology my words could be spliced and taken out of context". The Maoists are obviously trying to invoke 'technology' to absolve themselves of blame. After all, the same technology that 'faked' the conversation can also be used to prove

that it is indeed fake.

The Maoists themselves created the conditions for people to believe the accusations are credible. Their leaders shuttle between Kathmandu and Hong Kong and Singapore all the time, or they meet Indian intelligence officials, or have secret meetings with the Chinese. They take loud recourse in 'nationalism' but are themselves active in inviting foreign interference. CP Mainali, a responsible member of the CPN (MaLe) party, has publicly disclosed that he was offered Rs 50 million by the Maoists for the prime minister elections. Most people believe the Maoists are indulging in horse-trading. This must be because the end justifies the means for a revolutionary party.

India has always been mixed up in controversies about interference in Nepali politics. This time, it is China's turn. The reason is that the government and the political parties have not shown any inclination to control it. At this rate, foreigners will be taking part in future elections, and they will form future governments.

“I am worried”

President Ram Baran Yadav in *Nagarik*, 7 September

नागरिक

We restored democracy thrice but never succeeded in institutionalising it. We could not manage it. People have sacrificed to achieve the democracy we are enjoying today.

There are communist countries around but only a multiparty system accommodates all ideals, guarantees fundamental rights, and includes socio-economic changes.

I am a believer in a socialist economy, where everyone has equal social, economic and political rights under democracy.

This is a critical time. We have achieved democracy. People have the power. Feudalism and monarchy have been eliminated. It is time to give the country stability by quitting the politics of guns. The country needs a constitution.

We need to establish democratic values by writing a good, democratic constitution. But there is no magic wand that will do it for

us. We have to develop it by ourselves.

There can be no comparison with America which has had 230 years of democracy, or with Europe, which has had a democratic history of 400 years. We can look at our neighbour to the south. In 63 years of democratic practice, only 15 parliamentary elections have been held. Ethnicity and religions are no longer issues for them. Socio-economic transformation has been the issue in recent elections. India is prospering due to democracy.

So much can be done if we can institutionalise democracy and make use of our resources. Although it has been 20 years since democracy has been in practice, the Maoist

insurgency ate up 10 years and the king ruled for 3 years. So democracy has only been practised for five years.

To institutionalise the democratic republic is our priority. We should move ahead by managing weapons and writing a constitution. Political parties have their own ideologies but they should know nothing is above the country.

We can make our country beautiful. But we are wasting most of our time criticising foreigners. We can set an example if we resolve our differences by ourselves. We worked in unison during the CA elections. But we could not work together after the elections. We all

are to blame for this.

Our next door neighbours, one democratic and the other communist, are progressing at high speed. Can we not learn anything from them? Can we not benefit from them?

I am worried as to what will happen if we are not able to institutionalise our achievements. We are at a serious juncture. The economy is going down, ethnic and regional issues are being raised. This has made me worried.

The CA is the place to resolve these issues through discussion. History has shown that there is no end to fighting. The Nepali people cannot afford another conflict.

Nature's call

Mohan Bhattarai in *Naya Patrika*, 5 September

नयाँ पत्रिका

It sounds astonishing - Rs 150,000 has been spent this fiscal year to build toilets for a population of 6,000 in Tetariya VDC in Morang district. But it is part of a concerted campaign to declare the district an open defecation free area by 2015.

“The villagers are ready to use their development budget for toilet construction and sanitation,” says VDC chairman Lila Ram Bastola. “Next year we have a proposal to allocate Rs 350,000 for the same purpose. The aim is to declare the whole area open defecation free.” Awareness programs and regulations have been implemented to achieve this.

For instance, the villagers have decided that anyone who wants to obtain citizenship papers must have a toilet in his or her house. “Applicants who don't have a toilet are given a few days to build one. Recommendation for citizenship is given only after we have confirmation that the applicant has a toilet in his home,” says Bastola. It is also mandatory for every civil servant and political leader in the village to have toilets in their homes.

“Students who have a toilet in their house are given an extra 10 points in Health class,” says Pralad Bhagat, a teacher at Bidhya Mandir Lower Secondary School. “But we deduct 10 points for those who don't have toilet facilities at home.”

Two VDCs of the district have already been declared open defecation free. According to Aheb Manoj Mandal of the sub-health post in Tetariya, toilet usage has risen from 2 per cent last year to 48 per cent this year. Initiatives taken by the government and several NGOs have helped bring about this change. “The increase in the use of toilets has also controlled the spread of communicable diseases,” says Mandal.

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Rumble in the jungle

Ramdev can say nasty things about Coke and get away with it, it's so fashionable to take potshots at multinationals after all. Why shouldn't the Ass stick his snout in? Here are news items he's looking forward to: **'Soda Found in Pepsi'**

'KFC Admits It Mixes Chicken in Extra Crispy Boneless Bucket'

The way they are being courted by left and right, the **Madhes baddies** are going from being king-makers to kingpins. JP broke off from Upadro and Bijay Babu locked up his MPs in the parliamentary party office during Round Seven. Comrade Twitchy was twitching more than usual on Tuesday because he was so nervous about whether the guys he thought he bought would show up to vote. But some Tarai MPs are miffed at not being sufficiently rewarded for their role in keeping the Baddies out of power and for their supreme sacrifice in turning down tempting portfolios. Those wearing T-shirts that say **'We Stayed Neutral And All We Got Was This Lousy T-shirt'** are Awesome's last hope.

In the end, what did the trick on Tuesday afternoon was the tape of the wiretap that Uncooked leaked to the press. That this is authentically Mahara Kamred's voice there is no doubt, which means we all need to



be careful henceforth on our mobiles. But was that really Mr Cheng playing Chinese whispers at the other end of the line? And why did the Baddies need the **Northern Centre** to supply the dough? Jamkatel comred with his casino connections could have delivered it by the sackloads to Perish Hill within 12 hours. Mahara is in a fix: CA members who had offered themselves for sale now say they don't want Rs 1 karod in cash, but in gold biscuits.

The **Rastrafarian Bank** was forced to ban the import of gold when it found out that gold worth Rs 40 billion was brought into the country in the last fiscal year. Which means we spent all the hard currency we earned from our exports on importing gold, most of which we smuggled into India because of the INR 35 price diff on every 10 grams. This makes us one of the world's top gold exporting countries, and the beauty of it is that none of the revenue comes back to Nepal. One wonders how **Surrender Pandey** is ever going to resolve this, but given he is JN's bro-in-law maybe he doesn't have to.

Hard to figure out this love fest between the British East India Company (now known by its acronym UNMIN) and the Baddies. Comrade Chairman is caught on candid camera telling his cadre: "I fooled UNMIN, I lied to them and inflated our actual number three times so I could

squeeze some more money out of the Nepali taxpayer besides what I am already extorting from them. I am so smart, hah hah hah." And all is forgiven. The Baddies never fulfilled the 12-point agreement, they flouted the 6-point agreement, and they had no intention of fulfilling the 3-point agreement and unilaterally added a 4th point ("we must be allowed into power, or the deal's off") but nary a squeak from the Meanines. Then **Uncle Ban** decides to punish the wrong dude and writes a letter which no self-respecting govt would even agree to receive because it questions the legitimacy of a member state, equates it with some genocidal central African republic, and some P5 members threaten us with Chapter 7. Look, if you love Stalin and Mao Zedong so much, take them home with you and wage a revolution in your own backyard. Someone tell the Mau Mau they're actually hurting the UN's credibility in Nepal by being the only party still so openly supportive of UNMIN.

And now for the part you've all been patiently waiting for, the announcement of the Donkey's Actual Headlines of the Week Award, which are in order of merit:

1. **Overworked Equine in Donkey Heaven** (personal favourite)
2. **PAC Smells Rat** (hmm, quite a lot of rat-smelling going on lately)
3. **Butt Backs Down** (Pakistan cricket scandal)
4. **Ban on UNMIN** (not making any of this up)

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