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KIRAN PANDAY

Victory of good over evil

The country heads into the holidays with politics in a coma till at least 19 October. There seems to be no end in sight to the ever-lasting elections for prime ministership, with no possibility of the NC's Ram Chandra Poudel retracting his candidacy and no possibility

of him getting the required 301 votes.

After appearing to be flexible on a consensus government, Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal returned from a mysterious visit to Malaysia even more rigid in his demand that Poudel step down.

The budget is stuck, and development spending has ground to a halt. The Nepali people have never expected much from their governments, and are coping the best they can with inflation, worsening law and order and joblessness as they prepare for Dasain.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Himalmedia wishes all readers and partners a happy Dasain.

Nepali Times takes a break next week. The next hardcopy edition of this newspaper will come out on Friday, 22 October. For updates and blogs, keep reading Nepali Times online:
www.nepalitimes.com

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IN DEFENCE OF THE STATUS QUO

The everlasting elections for prime minister and the prolonged political impasse have now made the much-abused slogan of a 'New Nepal' a joke. All but vanished is the promise that the country will get a much-needed make-over. We are just trying to make do. People are now saying the 'Old Nepal' wasn't that bad after all. All we did with a ruinous war was import a culture of violence and impunity, and 16,000 Nepalis died so a few goons can now extort, intimidate and bag contracts. The revolution has degenerated into a nationwide network of looters. Those who believed in taking the country back to Year Zero have succeeded in a way they perhaps did not intend.

'Status quo' has become a bad word. Anyone who talks about non-violence, democracy or pluralism is a 'status quoist'. We abandoned everything from the past, even the good stuff, and threw the baby out with the bathwater. As we have often argued in this space, everything that has worked in Nepal since the First Democracy Movement in 1990 has the word 'local' or 'community' attached to it. Nepal's community-managed commons are a model for the rest of the world. The community forestry movement worked because nationalised forests were handed back to villagers to protect and manage. The community radio

network, with nearly 300 FM radio stations across the country today, provides the substrate for grassroots democracy by facilitating community participation in decision-making. Local mother's groups have been at the forefront of cooperatives that have improved family income. We were able to reduce our national maternal mortality average from 538 per 100,000 live births in 1996 to 280 today, as well as halve the child mortality rate in the same period, largely because of the work of local Women's Health Volunteers, of whom there are more than 50,000 across the country. Then there was exemplary community social mobilisation by groups like SAPPROS, whose Srikrishna Upadhyay is a co-winner of this year's Right Livelihood Award (see interview, page 3). All this happened despite a raging war, the post-conflict political disarray, the corruption and mismanagement at the national level, and the three-party dictatorship in the DDCs. Imagine how much more progress we'd have made if local elections had been held every five years. The interim constitution has a provision for local elections, so there is no reason why we should have to wait till the constitution is written or a new

coalition government is formed to hold local elections. If we wait, we may wait forever. Polls would allow us to correct some of the problems that local self-governance was slow to address, like user groups not being inclusive enough, the poorest of the poor not benefitting as much, or job creation lagging behind, as well as the poor quality of education and healthcare. But we were



on the right track back in the mid-1990s. A needless and wasteful war changed all that. It is not a coincidence that the first targets of the Maoists were local elected councils. Many VDC buildings like this one in Turang in Gulmi are still in ruins (pictured, above) while the current coalition tries to unravel the community forestry success with wholesale plunder. Let's bring back the elements of the old Nepal that worked, and were showing results. If believing in grassroots democracy, participatory development, non-violence and pluralism is to be a status quoist, then we are proud to be for the status quo.

KD

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

OLD LEADERS, NEW NEPAL

I think prudence is a virtue in politics because, let's be realistic: it takes time to build up personal political capital ('Old leaders of New Nepal', Indu Nepal, #522). Mere idealism isn't enough to get to positions of political leadership, and neither is merit. Both combined with the understanding of the context of power relations that one is operating in can help. An older politician isn't just going to give way all of a sudden. The younger politician will have to build superior political power with the aid of alliances (with media, party networks, and outside networks), and subtle jabs at the establishment that eventually morph into outright challenge. This process takes time. Building political capital is one thing. Using that political capital to finally obtain leadership positions is another. Most young Nepali politicians – actually, most young politicians everywhere – fail at the latter.

Battisputali

- It's quite comical to observe how these 'leaders' get slammed down and bite the dust in general elections where regular Nepalis get to vote. Yet, when voted on by their own cadres, they breeze through blazing with glory. What more can anyone expect from an election, where the voters have been handpicked by the same corrupt politicians, who vote to further expand their riches and their tyranny? It's a sham and we are insane to expect anything else.

Jay

- Once again the NC has proved that it is a hopeless party. Look at other parties: they are much more youthful. I believe that a country like Nepal needs someone who is below 50 to change this country and lead us to a new path. Old age brings orthodox ideology and beliefs in old traditions and cultures whereas the country has crossed over those boundaries. Unfortunately, once again a vibrant young leadership missed a very good chance to lead. This is because the 'young turks' always want to be led by

their leaders and don't have the guts to lead.

Kamal Kishor

- Age matters not in a physical sense, but in the sense of 'cerebral', i.e. creativity, vitality and the ability to generate ideas. One can be old but not necessarily outmoded in thinking. One of the crucial factors in the premature demise of the 75-year-old Soviet Union was the obsolete (and absolute) rule by successive leaders of the ilk of Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko ('the old guys'). By the time the 'young guy' Mr. Gorbachev arrived with the shots of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika', it was too late to resuscitate the dying Empire. On the other hand, the 200-year-old Empire across the Atlantic not only survived but outlived 'The Bear' not because it had a better genome, but because it was rescued by the likes of former Hollywood star, Mr. Reagan, who was old but still able to instill vitality and energy into America. In our own backyard, it was Deng Xiaoping, the Long March generation guy, who gave the much-needed shot of 'Four Modernisations' that revitalised and awakened the sleeping Dragon. China then emerged as the economic powerhouse of the twenty-first century. It is not biological age per se, but the 'obsolete mindset' of our leaders, professionals, and policymakers that is what concerns me the most. It is the content of character and not the age of our leadership that matters the most.

Anonymous

BLIND MEDIA

'The UML-led anti-Maoist coalition has used logging profits to buy the loyalty of supporters.' This story is incomplete. ('Unreported reportages', Fourth Estate by CK Lal, #522). They have kicked out the NC-wallahs from community forestry and taken it over. NC has now created its own forest community organisation, which is very ineffective. So the media will never bring out the real truth behind the racket that the powerful political bosses, national and local, are protecting. CK Lal should go to the field and bring out the real truth behind this devastating loss the country is facing.

Rita

MERRY GO ROUND

How do you propose to have consensus

between one side which says that as a political party, it reserves the right to use force and to maintain its 'coercive apparatus', and the other side, which maintains that a legitimate political party in a democracy is not entitled to keep and use its 'coercive apparatus' to further its political goals? ('Merry go round', Publisher's Note, #522). This issue should have been decided on before signing the 12-point agreement but it was glossed over at that time. If we are going to have a democratic system in Nepal, this needs to be decided first otherwise it will be a never-ending story; or we end up with a Maoist totalitarian state. There are some questions that can't be put off forever. There are some principles that can't be compromised. The Maoists have been given enough 'benefit of the doubt'. There is no point in going further until they show by their deeds that they mean what they say about engaging in non-violent politics.

Jange

- The major issue politically is what do we do with the Maoist fighters? They are weakened politically and are now more inclined to accept the terms of NC and UML on the PLA in cantonment sites. The Maoists are not even shouting and screaming about Nepal Army recruitment as they did before. It is quite obvious the Maoist leaders would like to include as many of their cadres as they can into the Nepal Army, but that doesn't mean they are up to the required standard. The outlets for ex-combatants will be rehabilitation, jobs abroad, civilian political mainstreaming, recruitment into the security border forces, etc. Only then will the peace process come to a logical and rightful end. The Maoist leaders will then really find out how hard it is to canvas for elections without the gun.

Rishav

ASSTROLOGY

Thank you Ass, for reminding us of the two preposterous news headlines which, however unpalatable, we are bound to be read every morning ('Let Sleeping Dogs Lie', Backside, #522). Telly-astrologers

and the bastu-forecasters should be discontinued from the TV channels too. We are already criticised as a nation of fatalists. The TV channels telecast such bogus programs that lack creativity. Will our Minister of Communication help rationalise our programs?

Kale

- There are three dogs lying there. Couldn't you just tag them and save us all the trouble? How on earth are we readers supposed to figure out which one is which now? The puniest is sniffing his backside, I get it. The biggest is just pretending to be sleeping I reckon,

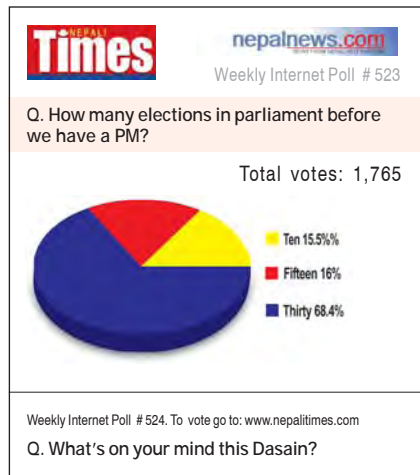


because his eyes must be firmly on the Darbar in front of him. But the one who wants to be woken up later, is he 'Lion Brave' who is still licking his wounds from convention humiliation?

Sarath G

- I love the *Nepali Times* back page. A bit of humour is the only thing we can extract out of the current political scenario.

Achyut



Right livelihood

Shrikrishna Upadhyay and the organisation he founded, SAPPROS (Support Activities for Poor Producers of Nepal), are co-winners of the 2010 Right Livelihood Award that honours and supports those offering practical and exemplary work on ecology, development and social justice.

Upadhyay shares the \$200,000 award this year with activist Nnimmo Bassey (Nigeria), Bishop Erwin Kräutler (Brazil), and Physicians for Human Rights (Israel). Often referred to as the 'Alternative Nobel', the Right Livelihood Award has in the past honoured people like Canadian environmental activist and broadcaster, David Suzuki, the Kenyan campaigner Wangari Mathai, Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva, and American ecological economist Herman Daly. The award will be presented in the Swedish parliament on 6 December, just before the Nobel Prize.

In an interview, Upadhyay talks about Nepal's current development status and the philosophy behind SAPPROS.

Nepal has just emerged from conflict, and faces political instability. How has this affected development?

Nepal is in a flux, warring parties are not coming to an agreement and the constitution-making process is hanging in the balance. People are extremely insecure and their faith in democracy is being shattered. Government structures are completely dysfunctional, the service delivery system is ineffective – there are huge policy and governance deficits.

Despite the political stalemate, people have started getting organised in order to provide essential public goods and services. Nepal can come out of poverty if we strongly believe in and support the creativity of the poor and show long-term commitment towards their cause.

How do you define poverty?

Poverty has traditionally been measured in the form of income needed for minimum subsistence, often given in predefined calories. Recently, this measure has been criticised as inadequate in reflecting the conditions in which the poor live. The poor are constrained due to a lack of access to resources, assets and services that are vital for the improvement of their quality of life. Using the Multidimensional Poverty Index, Nepal is the poorest country

“The poor must be treated as subjects and not objects of development”

in South Asia, with 64.7 per cent poor people. Using conventional income and consumption indicators, only 31 per cent of the Nepalese population is poor.

What structural deficit is at the heart of the poverty in Nepal?

There is an unequal power relationship based upon patronage-client relationships, leading to the exploitation of the poor. Tenants and small producers are exploited through production and market relations, also accentuated by a lack of remunerative employment opportunities in the villages because of sluggish growth of the agricultural sector. There is also exploitation of the poor due to monopolised land and product-markets controlled by landlords.

Is there a common formula that works in bringing villages out of poverty?

One factor which binds people together is the concept of sharing and caring that is manifested in community-based activities. We are trying to use this community spirit to build a base of stronger self-governing organisations, developing their problem-solving capabilities. Following a participatory approach and involving people in the planning, design, execution and management of small projects in rural areas will enhance their capacity and increase impact and sustainability. This will secure the base and strengthen democracy at the grassroots.

What are the main obstacles you encounter in your work?

The major one is a lack of long-term commitment to poverty programs. Government policies are seldom pro-poor, and often institutions designed to help the poor are not sensitive to their real needs. Donors remain in a cocoon and try to maintain their own turf and do not like to give long-term



SAVING LIVELIHOODS: Shrikrishna Upadhyay speaking to a women's savings group in Makwanpur set up by his organization, SAPPROS.

commitments, even to good projects.

In our work with the poor, we need a lot of flexibility because of the action-learning aspect, which is not usually supported by the traditional donor. Coordination becomes very difficult due to differences in work styles and missions, which often conflict. The effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery systems improves once communities are involved in service delivery and have control over resources, including external funding. Once the poor own the process and also contribute with resources, they will identify the demands and choose the technology and process which is appropriate and sustainable.

How would you formulate the basic paradigm of your work?

It is based on preserving the dignity and integrity of the poor. The poor are treated as subjects, and not objects, of development and own the process and manage resources through their own organisations. We want SAPPROS to promote self-governing institutions at the grassroots level, enhancing its capacity to do action research and training in the areas of social mobilisation and development of self-governing organisations. The participatory action research and training methodologies need to be readjusted so that they can also be used by other countries.

www.sappros.org.np
www.rightlivelihood.org

THIS WEEK

Futile elections

Parliament conducted two rounds of elections within a week for the post of prime minister. NC's lone contender, Ram Chandra Poudel, could not win even on the 11th attempt on Thursday, once more failing to garner a simple majority of 301 votes in the 601-member parliament. NC has 114 seats in parliament and requires 187 votes to win. UCPN (Maoist), UML and the Madhesi alliance have been boycotting the election process, demanding a consensus candidate for the post.

Pascoe's visit

United Nations Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, B Lynn Pascoe, arrived in Kathmandu Wednesday to observe the ongoing peace process and to encourage its progress. He met the prime minister and top leaders of major parties, and urged progress on the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants by mid-January 2011. Pascoe will prepare a report on the implementation of recent agreements between the parties and the government that settled the row over the extension of UNMIN's term.

Mr Gurung goes to London

Army Chief Chhatraman Singh Gurung left for the UK on a ten-day official visit on Sunday at the invitation of the British army chief. Gurung will hold talks with British General Sir Peter Wall on matters of mutual interest, including support to UN peacekeeping operations, Britain's Gurkha regiment, and the resolution of the peace process in Nepal. It has been learnt that he skipped meetings with senior staff at the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development after the Nepali embassy expressed concern, saying an army-level visit is not entitled to engage in discussions on issues related to the government.



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There is hope

Nepali youths always inspire

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Last week on Gandhi Jayanti, this Beed was judging an inter-school debate competition at Kendriya Vidyalaya, the Indian embassy school. The quality of the debate was as good as that in any school in the world. The quality of language and delivery was great, and the majority of the participants were girls. Further, it was clear the participants had done their research using international sources, indicating the extent to which the internet has penetrated their lives.

The students cited US presidents and global business leaders, which made one wonder how our political leaders can connect with such globally oriented minds. When some mentioned Warren Buffet, it reminded me of a political leader who once asked whether he was the man after whom buffet lunches and dinners had been named. The gap between digitally savvy youth and those who don't even have an email ID is sure to widen in years to come.

The debate competition also raised another question. Why is it that we have just one such competition for every 10 fashion

shows, and why do schools that work so hard to get their kids into the glamour world not think debates, quizzes and elocution skills are important? Indeed, it seemed that those children at the debate who had the fanciest school uniforms and the best hairdos performed the worst. Why is it that for us aping global fashion, so easy to do, does not go hand-in-hand with improving other soft skills like public speaking or communication?

When we get used to being negative and talk about how the country, including we ourselves, are going to the dogs, sometimes you need an outsider to provide a different perspective. Barry O' Brien, the popular Kolkata-based Southasian quizzier, visits Nepal each year to conduct a corporate quiz organised by Boss magazine. He notes how the quality of quizzes has improved over the years, and how Nepali participants are approaching the competencies of their Southasian contemporaries. You can hear this from other people who regularly visit Nepal and talk about the improving quality of writing in our papers and the food in our restaurants. A visit to Lalitpur's Jhamel can confirm the latter, as young restaurateurs there are producing food comparable to that of the food capitals of Europe.

The interests of Nepali youth are also expanding, and many are ready to pay Rs 350 for the very well written and produced novel by Buddhisagar, *Karnali Blues*. It is such interests that spur Nepalis to attend readings, screenings and concerts; the hunger for knowledge, information and networking is immense.

Skeptics may say these are Kathmandu-centric traits. I strongly urge people to chat with youth in the smaller towns and villages. They'll tell you all about how to prepare for the TOEFL or feed you the latest Hollywood gossip, just like their Kathmandu counterparts. In their quest to become global citizens, their horizons are expanding in something of a silent movement.

The biggest challenge will of course lie in our own definition of youth, especially in the political sphere, where every walking leader is referred to as a youth leader and only graduates once confined to a wheelchair. For all leaders – business, political and civil society – the challenge is to understand this transition and figure out how to accommodate the voices, hopes and aspirations of Nepali youth.

Wishing all readers sacrifice-free festivities. www.arthabeed.com

Sherpa 1st Anniversary

Sherpa Adventure Gear's flagship store in Kathmandu's Lal Darbar Marg celebrates its first anniversary on Friday with special offers. The 'made in Nepal' trekking gear is exported all over the world. "We are really proud of the way the Sherpa and Nepal brands are now known for quality adventure apparel all over the world, and we'd like to thank all those who made this success possible," says Tashi Sherpa, founder of the US-based company.

New flights

SpiceJet has commenced flights between Kathmandu and Delhi, with rates starting from Rs 2,399. Kathmandu is SpiceJet's first international destination. SpiceJet's Boeing 737-800 will operate flights all days except Tuesdays. This brings total Kathmandu-Delhi flights to 10.

Zooming in

Padma Shree, sole distributor of Mazda Vehicles, has introduced Mazda2. The model has won more than 50 awards globally including the World Car of the Year in 2008.

Ice cream launched

National Ice Cream Industries has launched Azzabko Ice Cream. Available in 13 flavours, Azzabko also has ice candy and choco bar ranges. More than 300 retail outlets are now selling the brand.

FESTIVE OFFERS

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- Honda cars:** Buyers of Honda cars will get a Philips 32" LCD for free along with cash discounts and free ownership transfer including one fiscal year road tax.
- Dasain Tihar Upahar nai Upahar:** Bird Mobile is giving away a lucky draw coupon on every purchase, to win caps, t-shirts, shirts, Peacock T108 mobile sets and an HP laptop.
- Himstar Tara Tipau Tipau offer:** Buy a Himstar TV and refrigerator and get a scratch card to win stars of gold and silver and many other prizes.
- Samsung Jhyammai:** Customers will receive a scratch card with the purchase of every Samsung Product, to win cash prizes, CFL bulbs, a Samsung DVD Player or Microwave Oven. One lucky winner will win a Kawasaki Ninja 250R Motorcycle.
- Timex Dashain Megapix Offer:** Get a scratch card with the purchase of any Timex watch for a sure shot win including the latest Samsung cameras, cash prizes and huge discounts.
- Dashai Tihar Kharcha:** Virgin Mobile will give away a Cash Card worth up to Rs 50,000 depending on purchase amount at the Virgin Mobile store. The cash card can be used to shop at various stores and restaurants.

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GRAND DESIGNS

A new generation of Nepali architects is striking a balance between heritage and modernity

RUBEENA MAHATO

Nourished by its fertile soil and the hard work and creativity of its inhabitants, religious architecture flourished in the Kathmandu Valley. Rival Malla dynasties of the Valley's medieval kingdoms ploughed profits from the trans-Himalayan trade and agricultural surplus into the elegant temples, bahals and grand town squares of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur.

Today, this extraordinary architectural heritage is confined only to the city cores. But a new generation of Nepali architects are integrating the traditional silhouettes and textures of the Kathmandu Valley's Newari architecture into their new designs. This combination of tradition and modernity doesn't just help conserve Kathmandu's unique architectural heritage, but also results in buildings that are elegant, affordable, suited to the climate and aesthetically pleasing. *Nepali Times* talked to some architects and restorers and asked them what designs they considered appropriate for the Valley.

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They deserved to be preserved, #303



Sujata Tuladhar: Transcending time

Centuries since Hanuman Dhoka Palace Square was built, it is still an important public space in the city, apart from being a place of artistic beauty and grandeur. The square is host to a thriving informal economy with buyers and vendors bustling about the area. The raised Dabali in the plaza are widely used as platforms for political meetings, concerts and festivities, and the steps of the temples are handy seats.

For Sujata Tuladhar, the enduring use of Hanuman Dhoka over the ages has made it a perfect example of public space that transcends time. "Spaces are as important as the buildings and any collection of structures that can sustain their use for so long is an example of good design," Tuladhar says.

Prabal Thapa: Blending new and old

The house that Prabal Thapa has designed for Surya and Babyka Joshi in Bhatbhateni is a perfect example of a modern building combining traditional influences. The exposed brick facade meant there was no need to paint the walls, which age well and add an earthiness and russet warmth to the house.

Inside there are telia tiles on the floor, the stairs and on the terraces. The house is not opulent, but exudes elegant simplicity. "Whatever decorations are there, they have been built into the construction material. There are no extra design features," Thapa explains.

All living quarters face south, to catch the winter sun, and traditional awnings shield the windows from slanting rain. "I wanted a modern house that also draws on the wisdom of traditional architecture," Thapa says. www.prabalthapaarchitects.com.np

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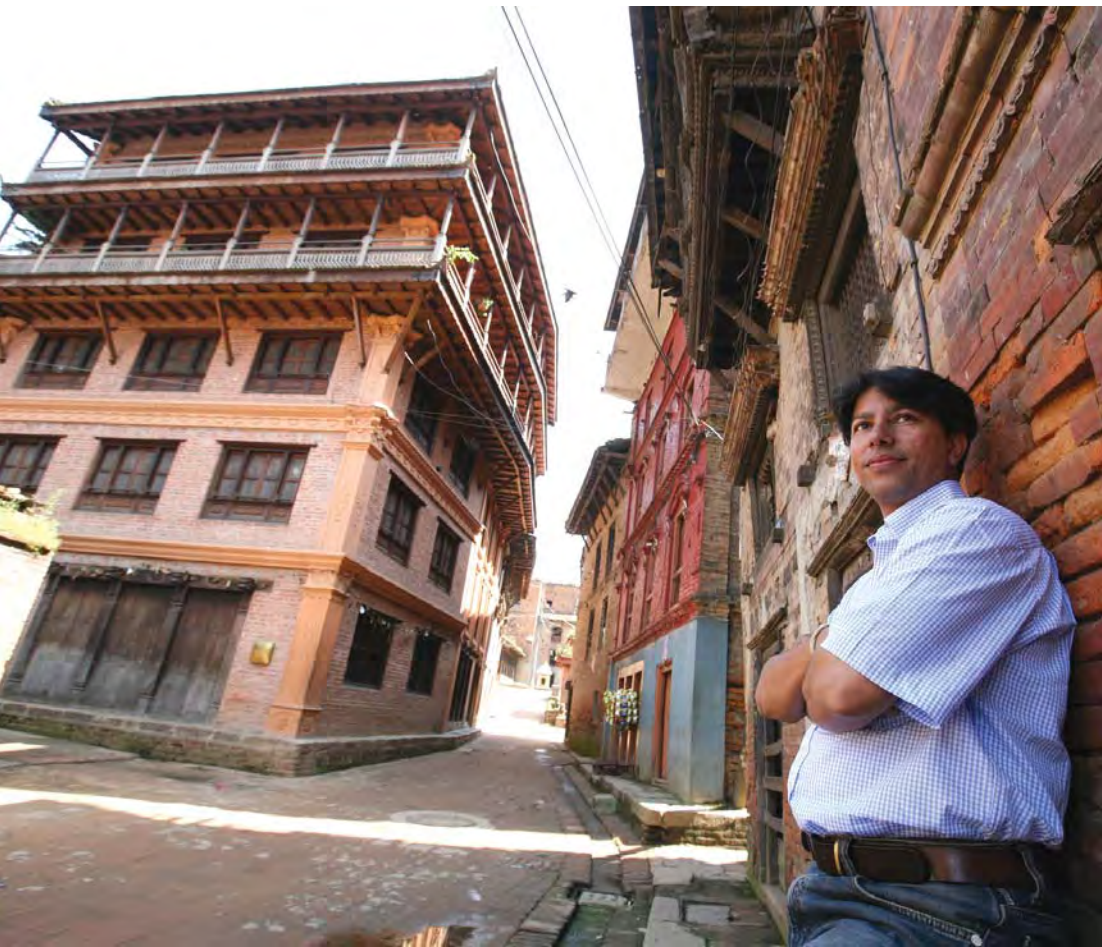



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ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Rabindra Puri: Modern traditional

For Rabindra Puri, a good house is one built with traditional wisdom that has evolved over hundreds of years of understanding and practice. His Namuna Ghar and Toni Hagen House in Bhaktapur (*pictured left*) are exactly that. Built with mud, brick and wood, they are very much what houses in the Malla period would have looked like.

“Traditional houses like these are most suited to the climate and terrain of Kathmandu,” he says. But inside, the kitchens and bathrooms are bright and elegantly simple, and furnished with all modern amenities. Puri has added a playful touch with wash basins and bath tubs made of copper vats instead of porcelain. Tolia tiles have replaced synthetic flooring, and provide not just good insulation, but are also much cheaper than marble or vinyl.

“It’s a misconception that mud houses are not strong or suitable for modern living,” he says. Puri restored an old house that had been turned into an ugly cement plastered block back to its original splendour, and named it after Swiss geologist and Nepal expert Toni Hagen. The Hagen House is not ostentatious or aggressive, and blends into the Bhaktapur urbanscape. The harmony of its proportions, and Puri’s attention to detail, add to the overall charm of both houses. Since Namuna Ghar is made of mud, it is cool in summer and warm in winter.

Puri maintains that good architecture need not be expensive. Paying attention to the orientation of the house and use of local materials can cut costs and heating and cooling expenses. “A three-storied traditional house can be built with Rs 2 to 3 million,” explains Puri, “and it will also be stronger.”

www.rabindra.com.np



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The house that Rabindra built, #126



Dipak Man Sherchan: Practical elegance

Compared to the high-rise apartments coming up all across Kathmandu these days, Indreni Apartments in Bhatbhateni looks strikingly different. The six-storied building is on a more human scale, with spacious interiors and a simple, traditional brick façade that anchors it to Kathmandu’s skyline. This is very much a ‘Dipak Sherchan style’, used in the other buildings he has done such as Heritage Plaza and numerous residences. “I like using local materials, bricks are durable and we don’t have to paint the walls every few years,” he says.

The overhung roofs not just give the apartment building a distinctive Nepali look but also shield it from rain. “I feel buildings should reflect the architectural heritage of Kathmandu, the buildings should carry influences of Newari architecture not just because they look good but because they are suitable for the place,” Sherchan says.

Sherchan’s designs are augmented with modern aesthetics subtly, keeping the climate in mind. He says: “You don’t want a fixed glass façade just for the sake of looking modern, you have to think what it does to your energy bill.”

Bibhuti Man Singh: Old, new school

When asked to pull down the old Rana-era palace that was St Xavier’s School in Jawalakhel and design a new one to replace it, Bibhuti Man Singh knew it was the most challenging task he had ever undertaken. The alumni had a nostalgic attachment to the building’s familiar façade, but the 100-year-old structure was falling apart. “Apart from durability and functionality, I had to also take into account the emotional attachment of Xavier’s students,” he says.

The result is an impressive building that very much retains the look and the feel of the old palace, but inside it is much more functional, and airier and brighter. The Rana Gothic façade in front contrasts with the back, where Singh has used more modern influences.

“People have taken a fancy to skirt roofs and tympanums that are purely decorative,” Singh explains. “But a school building must first of all be safe, bright, and well-ventilated, with lots of open space. It should retain a sense of history, while being functional.”



Kai Weise: Beyond buildings

“Every building should make a statement that goes beyond its functionality,” says Kai Weise. And the Coffee House building that he designed for Hotel de l’ Annapurna is a statement on its own. The Coffee House is “having a dialogue” with the main hotel without taking away from the essence of the hotel building, he explains. There is also a generational transition here: the original hotel was designed by Weise’s father in the 1960s and was a modern building for its time in Kathmandu.

Weise has used some of the elegant and simple elements of his father’s design in the Coffee House. The elevation is just right, not to overshadow the lower three-storied hotel, and is an imposing presence along Darbar Marg.

A good building is one that exudes clarity, proportion and minimal ornamentation, says Weise, adding: “Every single bit of the house needs to dissolve into the design.”



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The inside story

PPAAVAN MATHEMA

Ten years ago, interior designing in Nepal meant going to the local carpenter for your furniture and then picking out a carpet and accessories at a store of your choice. Professional interior designers were rare; the closest you might get would be tips from your architect.

But interior designing is getting to be serious business. People are concerned not just about how their house or office

looks from the outside but also about what the interior environment is like. “The exposure they get from travelling and the media have broadened their awareness of the need for professional interior designing,” says Shivendra Patrabansh, architect and interior designer. He adds that although earlier, professional help was largely sought for offices and commercial spaces, more Nepalis are now contacting interior designers to do their homes.

The boom in the construction industry of apartment blocks and



housing colonies has also fuelled the demand for interior designing. The personalisation and optimum use of a space made possible by interior designing becomes crucial when one lives in an apartment or

house that may be near-identical to that of the neighbours. It’s still a client-driven market, but with people opening up to new styles and ideas, designers have more freedom to be creative. “Clients have their specifications but they

let me plan out the interiors and design accordingly,” says Rishi Saraf, an interior designer and co-owner of Casa, a home accessories store.

Traditionally, Nepali homes were aesthetically rich. There are ample examples in Newari architecture of interiors designed to be functional and at the same time beautiful to look at. Rabindra Puri, involved in renovation projects of old homes, believes these aspects can be incorporated into new homes too. “For example, telia tiles (oil-based bricks) can still be used as flooring material. They are cheaper and safer than most modern flooring options and don’t need to be carpeted.”

Older people may still prefer classical ‘darbar style’ interiors,

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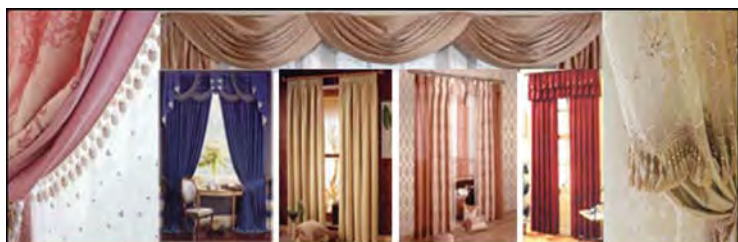
ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

but new home owners often seek to give their spaces a contemporary feel. "It depends on what image the client wants to project, the purpose of the space and also the budget they are working with," says Bipin Mishra of Karuna Interiors. "People are willing to spend now."

The interest in interiors has been complemented by the increase in the number of furniture and home accessories stores. "People's tastes have definitely matured in terms of the look they prefer for their spaces," says Sunaina Saraf, co-owner of Casa. "Rather than buying a haphazard collection of items, they make informed choices." In

addition to locally produced products, stores here showcase home accessories imported from Thailand, China, Malaysia, India and further afield.

Kunal Lama of Mitra Café, who has designed his own restaurants and is involved in the renovation of Hotel de l'Annapurna, explains, "One doesn't have to adopt a style and take it to the extreme. Moderation works well and one can always use a fusion of different styles. At the end of the day, it is about how to make your space beautiful and comfortable. And if there is expert advice available to help you make it happen, then why not opt for it?"



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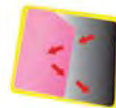
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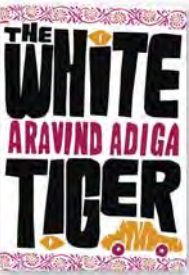
EVENTS

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

Araiya World Fashion Walk, latest in the fashion walk series presented by PlayMySound. *8 October, 7.30-11.30pm, Moods Studio Lounge, Bluebird Mall, Thapathali, 5006201*

Re-Fuzed, art exhibition by contemporary art group. *8 to 10 October, Bhaktapur*

KEC Inter College Music Competition 2010, performances by the eight finalists, E'Equals, Jindabaad and Indian band Kryptos. *9 October, 12pm, Kathmandu Engineering College, Kalimati, 9841368984*



Himalayan Readers' Book Club, book discussion on Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. *9 October, 3-4.30pm, British Council, Lainchaur, 9841322388, www.himalayanreaders.wordpress.com*

The Colours of Silence, Glimpses of Mustang, photographs by Italian restorer Luigi Fieni. *Till 24 October, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, Gallery hours: 11am to 6pm, 12pm to 4pm on Saturdays, 4218048*

Dasain Specials at Khetibazaar, stay healthy this Dasain, 10 per cent off on organic drinks, fresh apple juice, coffee, tea and more. *9-10 October, Khetibazaar, Bhojan Griha, khetibazaar@gmail.com*

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

DINING

Ramalaya Tea Room, now open for dinner, experience Chef Mohit's creations from Cider-brined Pork Chops to Guava Cheese, 10 per cent discount on evening dinners to all *Nepali Times* readers when they mention this ad. *Pani Pokhari, near Japanese Embassy, for bookings call 4006589, 4006589, www.rde.com.np/index.php/tea-room*

Arabian Nights in The Cafe, taste culinary delights from the Middle East. *Every Friday 6.30pm onwards, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234, 4489362*

Kakori at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kebabs, curries and more, enjoy Indian food at its best. *Everyday 7pm to 10.45pm for dinner, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, call 4273999 for reservations*

The Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar, enjoy a pleasant BBQ lunch in the ambient settings of The Garden of Dreams. *Every Sunday, 12pm to 3pm, Kaiser Mahal, Thamel, Rs 1200 per person, 4425341*

Saturday BBQ Brunch, enjoy mouth-watering Mongolian BBQ at Gokarna Forest Resort. *Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarna, 4451212, info@gokarna.net, Rs 1500 plus taxes*

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

GETAWAYS



The Fulbari Resort & Spa, special Fulbari Festive Package for Dasain. *Till 15 November, Fulbari Resort & Spa, Pokhara, 3 Days/ 2 Nights at Rs 6999 per person on twin sharing basis, 4461918, 4462248*

Tiger Mountain Nepal, special Dasain & Tihar offers for expatriates and Nepalis at all lodges and camps (Tiger Tops Chitwan, Bardia and Pokhara Lodge), *call 4361500 for reservations, reservations@tigermountain.com*

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Pizza & chicken



KIRAN PANDAY

Pizza Hut and KFC received an overwhelming welcome when they opened their doors a year ago, with people queuing for weeks to taste the offerings of the two international fast food chains. It's no surprise that they are already thinking of expanding.

"We have had a very satisfying response in the first year," says Vishnu Reddy, Country Manager of Pizza-Hut Nepal. "And by opening new branches, we want to reach out to more of our customers." Jawalakhel and Thamel are the possible new locations and once they are in business, Pizza Hut will also start the home delivery services they are renowned for.

Pizza Hut and KFC are building on their success by expanding menus and operations

Expansion plans are well underway, but right now, Pizza Hut is expanding its menu. Nepalis seem to like thin crust pizza more, so Pizza Hut has introduced Pizza Mia in addition to the Pan and stuffed crust pizza range. "We bring out new items and offers every three months," says Reddy. In line with their strategy, Pizza Hut has also introduced a 'Meal for two', which includes garlic bread, two drinks and a pizza of your choice for Rs 599. At KFC, too, the Vegetarian Zinger Burger has been introduced to change the notion that KFC is only for chicken lovers.

KFC and Pizza Hut are the first international chain of restaurants to come to Nepal. Before their launch, the staff at KFC and Pizza Hut went through rigorous training in India. While most Nepali customers were rather surprised by the over-attentive service they may not be used to elsewhere, Reddy says they have received positive feedback on their customer service.

The menu at both KFC and Pizza Hut is based on that available in India, but it's likely we'll be seeing Nepali specialties soon. Chicken leg momos and sukuti pizza, anyone?

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 **DHANVANTARI**
Buddha Basnyat, MD

With Dasain around the corner, it's a good time to talk about alcohol. A lot of people including doctors do not know what, in terms of quantity, comprises a single drink. Without that knowledge, one wouldn't really know what alcohol abuse is, right?

We can broadly place alcoholic drinks into three groups: beer, spirits (whisky, rum, vodka, gin) and wine.

Regular alcohol content is about 5 per cent in a bottle of beer, 40 per cent in spirits and 12 per cent in wine. So about 350ml of beer (one can), 150 ml of wine (two thirds of a regular wine glass), and 45 ml of spirits would comprise one measure of a drink.

A healthy man without any contraindications to alcohol may have two drinks per day (or 14 drinks a week), and a healthy, non-pregnant woman, one drink per day (7 drinks a week), as women metabolise alcohol differently. Consuming more than this would constitute alcohol abuse.

Now what of all the news

about alcohol being good for you? Drinking, like most things in life, is a double-edged sword. There is some good evidence to show that moderate alcohol consumption may be cardio protective, as it decreases the chance of having blocked coronary arteries, which lead to heart attacks. In addition to having fewer heart attacks and strokes, moderate consumers of alcoholic beverages are generally less likely to suffer high blood pressure, peripheral artery disease, Alzheimer's disease and the common cold. That's not counting the 'ananda' factor of a little tippie.

All people who drink are certainly not alcoholics. But there is no question that the potential for abuse of alcohol is high. Homicides, liver diseases, cancer, strokes, and some heart diseases are all associated with alcohol abuse.

Trying to drink in moderation is difficult given the addictive power of the drug. Importantly, being able to 'hold your drink' is no protection against the ill effects of alcohol. People who are teetotalers should certainly not start drinking now based on what they have read in the papers about alcohol being good for health. By the same token, a healthy adult who drinks according to the above guidelines and has no contraindications need not stop drinking just because his or her mother-in-law does not approve. 🇳🇵



LET'S TALK: United Nations Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, B Lynn Pascoe, met Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal at his residence on Wednesday.



REST ROOM: A mobile toilet was recently installed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for those queueing up to apply for passports.

GREEN SCENE

Need for LEED

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), an international certification system that ensures environment-friendly design in buildings, is going to be incorporated for the first time in Kathmandu, in a real estate project by Crystal City Developers in Tahachal. A client of the consultancy firm Technical Interface in Thamel, the Crystal City Developers project will be monitored in seven categories that guarantee certification: site sustainability, water efficiency, energy performance, material reuse, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process, and regional priority in building. LEED certified professional Sujata Tuladhar will be working with the US-based Green Building Council (USGBC).

The concept comes from the US, but several aspects work well for buildings in our local environment. "LEED makes you go back to the basics," says Bibhuti Man Singh, Senior Architect and Proprietor of Technical Interface. "Over the years, architects have been distracted by the business side of architecture and have left behind the basics of building science," he says. "Basic facts such as how much insulation is needed during summer and winter, and how, say, the thickness of walls or the design of a room itself can meet these needs have been forgotten. They have been replaced by mechanical augmentations such as air-conditioners and heaters."



More reliance on 'active methods' of balancing room temperature mean most newer buildings in Kathmandu have more embedded energy, according to Singh, which leads to bigger carbon footprints. But carbon footprints as well as long-term energy costs will be reduced significantly by adopting LEED.

Most city developers have not yet recognised the social and material benefits of LEED, however. "Abiding by LEED criterion might increase the cost of construction by 10-20 per cent, but at the same time, it increases the prestige of a commercial building, for it speaks of their environmental stewardship," says Sujata Tuladhar, who acknowledges the lack of a niche market for LEED in Nepal. "Existing buildings can adopt LEED too through the LEED for existing buildings (LEED-EB) program, whereby one can improve sustainability by refurbishing AC systems, for instance." But Singh expresses frustration. "Big real estate developers are not pushing it, even though adopting LEED would not create too many costs. In fact it would make good marketing sense for them as it would have a great impact on the communities they build for," he says. With loadshedding creeping up on us already, there really is no argument against working to save energy. 🇳🇵

Shahani Singh



QUIZ TIME: The Himel Media Team was the first runner-up in Brainstorm-the boss Corporate Quiz organised on Friday at Soaltee Crowne Plaza.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

Although the monsoon has rolled back from the Himalayan region, it is still active in coastal India, where fresh satellite composites show a strong cyclone moving northward. Its impact will be limited to eastern Nepal and is unlikely to expand westward due to the counter force of westerly winds that are paving the way for clear skies in the west through this weekend. Expect cloudy skies with the possibility of light rains in the Valley and eastern hills over the weekend.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
29-17	29-16	27-15



CLARENCE CHUA

KUALA LUMPUR. Ever since the introduction of reality TV early this decade, Malaysia has embraced it with open arms – it even sent a man to space via a reality show. Now it has chosen a young Muslim cleric the same way.

The series, *Imam Muda* (young cleric), has generated plenty of interest in Malaysia and there are talks of a franchise in other Muslim countries. Last week a young Muslim student won the right to be an imam or cleric after winning the show.

Izelan Basar, the general manager for the religious channel Astro Oasis, is the brainchild behind *Imam Muda*. “I created the content and it was developed by some of my colleagues in partnership with the religious authorities. For many years, I have been thinking about how to attract young viewers,” said Basar.

Ten finalists were chosen from 1,000 contestants for the show. They were given a variety of challenges including preparing a HIV-positive corpse for burial and counselling marriage partners while living in isolation at a mosque.

Despite the conservative

Islamic trends in Malaysia over the last two decades, Izelan says he did not face any opposition from the religious authorities. “The word imam is actually translated as leader. In Islam, every single male is an imam. Good leaders come from the home. Leaders of a house must pray and tackle problems. That is what we are looking for,” he said.

Hassan Mahmood is the former Grand Imam of the National Mosque and the judge for *Imam Muda*. In the finals, he grills the last two contestants on the conflict between science and religion. He dismisses allegations of the show being un-Islamic even though the contestants are treated like celebrities and often wear western-style clothing.

“Many Muslims are static. They just watch the show and call it un-Islamic. We don’t want the best of Islam to be found only in books and theories. Islam is both East and West, so the criticism of the contestants wearing western clothing doesn’t really make sense. Whatever does not destroy our faith or our life is a good thing and is not in conflict with Islam. Why do we always look at things that pull it back? Islam is

Who wants to be an imam?

modern,” said Mahmood.

Finalist Hizbur Rahman Omar Zuhdi, a 27-year-old religious teacher, says the attention the show gets is good for the religion. “Let us ask ourselves: ‘Is this show a good or bad thing for Islam?’ The prophet Mohammad is glamorous. There is no problem with being glamorous for the good of society,” said Zuhdi.

The finalists were tested on reciting the Koran, presenting a sermon and singing religious hymns, among other things. The winner was Muhammad Asyraf Mohamad Ridzuan, a 26-year-old religious scholar. His prize includes a scholarship to study at

al-Madinah University in Saudi Arabia and a job at a Malaysian mosque. Asyraf says, “Sometimes young people feel they have been sidelined from carrying out their religious duties. This program shows they can also contribute to Islam. Everyone can aspire to become a good imam and they can do it in many ways, not strictly through the Koran.”

And it is this simple message in a modern reality show that makes it so appealing to both the young and old. *Imam Muda* creator Izelan Basar says they have even received interest from abroad. “We have received interest from a few Islamic countries

including Turkey and Egypt, but we would like to perfect the program first. When we designed it we did not think about going beyond Malaysian shores.”

Izelan says there will definitely be a second season of *Imam Muda* and who knows, it may even be in a different language, in a different country. 🇲🇾

This article was first broadcast on Asia Calling, a regional current affairs radio program produced by Indonesia’s independent radio news agency KBR68H and broadcast in local languages in 10 countries across Asia. www.asiacalling.org

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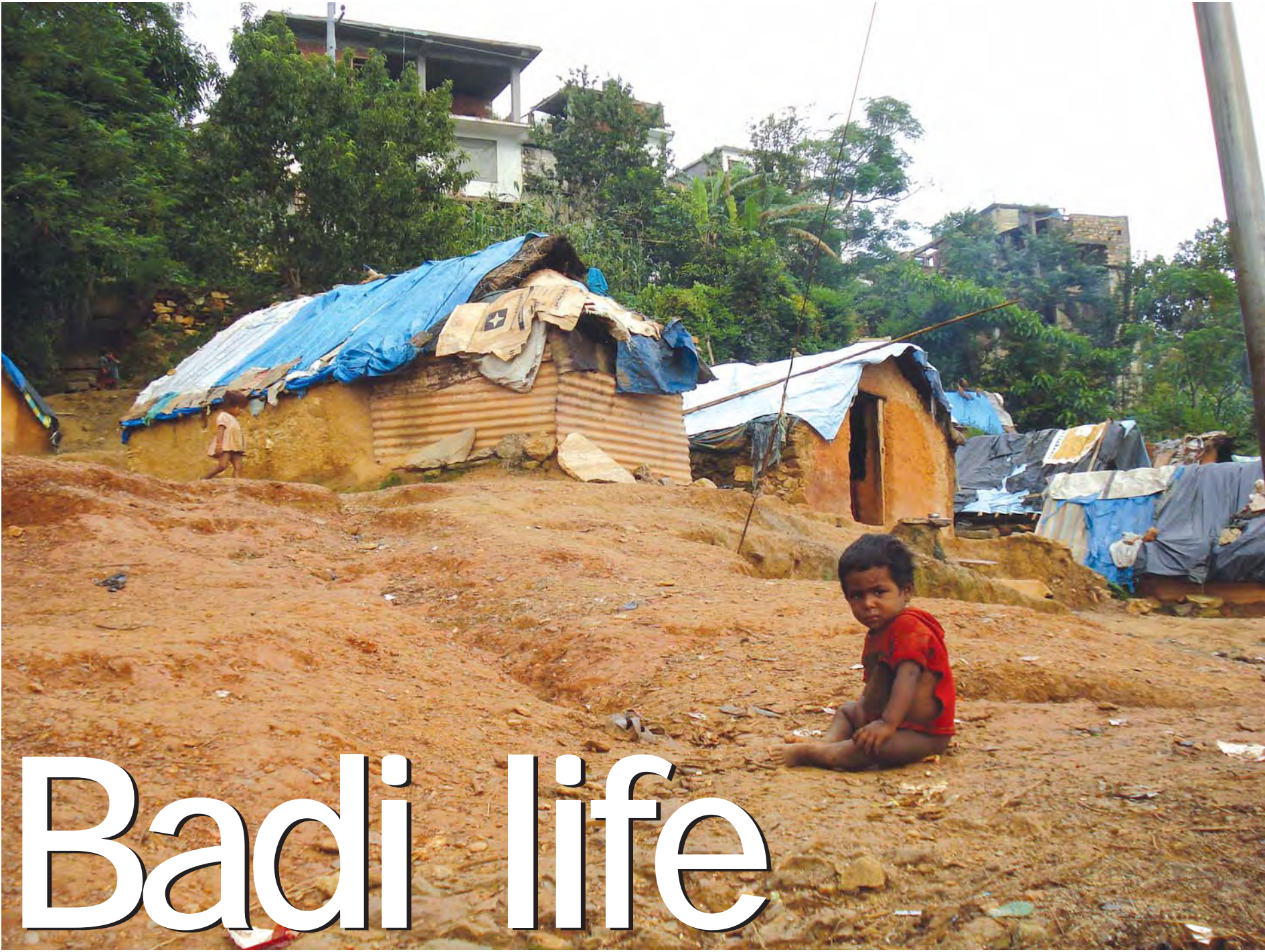
Back to the village

With the spread of the road network, telecommunications, schools, and healthcare more and more Nepalis are opting for the cleaner, healthier life of the villages.

Editorial: The relevance of this year’s Dasain Hope amidst suspicion in politics
Jugal Bhurtel: Renounce violence, form government
CARS: From luxury to necessity

Himal Dasain Literature Special
Short stories by: Rajab, Anbika Giri, Rambharosh Kapadi, Kalpana Bantawa, Anmolmani, Bika Giri, Dhruva Chandra Gautam, Krishna Dharabasi, Basanta Thapa

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PICS: DEWAN RAI

DEWAN RAI in DAILEKH

As soon as she gets home from work, Balsera Badi prepares dinner for her family of seven. First she breastfeeds her two-year-old daughter Maya, then puts the small package of rice bought with the day’s earnings in a corner of the kitchen and asks her daughter to make a fire. “*Bhaari bokna paye khwai hunchha, natra ruwai hunchha* (If I get to carry a load there’ll be eating, if not there’ll be crying),” she says.

Balsera Badi has been living in a plastic tent with her family for the last 14 years. A 25-square-foot piece of land in Namuna Basti, a settlement at the edge of Dailekh’s district headquarters, is all they own, and they don’t have a deed to the land yet. “Monsoon is a real problem as the rain floods the room and we have to stay awake all night,” she says. The tent is open on all four sides and even the plastic material of the roof has begun to wear.

All Badis who inhabit Namuna Basti suffer the same plight as Balsera. They used to live in Bhaire, Kalika Thum, Dullu, Belpata, Sattala, Singaudi, Naumule, and Lakandra VDCs, but moved to Dailekh since their displacement during the Maoist insurgency. “We used to entertain people by singing and dancing on different occasions or going door-to-door begging for food,” says RABI THAPA



Narajit Badi, recalling how they were displaced from their homes. “But the Maoists banned all these activities and asked us to join the insurgency. We left and moved here.”

Discriminated against because of their background, the Badis spent four years in Dailekh without shelter until Dekendra Raj Thapa came to their rescue in 2000. Thapa, a local journalist, negotiated with the local administration for a piece of public land for the Badis to settle on. He called it Namuna Basti, as he wanted to develop it as a model settlement. But Thapa did not live to see the realisation of his dream. In 2004, the Maoists kidnapped and murdered him.

Since Thapa’s death, the local administration has been neglecting the Badis’ needs. Some local leaders approached the



TOP: Namuna Basti, on the outskirts of Dailekh’s district headquarters, is home to a community of Badis

Left: Narajit Badi holds a picture of Dekendra Raj Thapa, a local journalist who helped the Badis acquire Namuna Basti to settle on

The social stigma of being a Badi is nothing compared to their current struggle for survival

settlers during elections in April 2008 but haven’t been since. This year the Badis were asked to welcome the state minister for local development, Ganesh Bahadur Khadka, who was attending a District Council meeting. Khadka made promises of land ownership certificates that never materialised. The Badis have been told that the process is delayed for bureaucratic reasons.

With no deeds or a representative to fight for their cause, Namuna Basti faces a bleak future. The heat makes living under tents almost unbearable by day. There is not a single toilet in the settlement due to lack of space and even a brief drizzle renders the settlement muddy and unhygienic. “We have to wait for our turn to go to the toilet even if it is in an open space,” says Padam Badi. The risk of

health hazards is high. But a few lucky Badi children have made it to school. They were initially admitted into the Bal Mandir in Dailekh, as funds for a child care centre were transferred there due to a lack of administration in Namuna Basti. But Bal Mandir abandoned them. According to headmaster Guru Prasad Regmi, “We could not accommodate them in our school, so we recommended Janata School.” There are now 29 Badi kids in Janata Lower Secondary School. Shata Thapa, who teaches the 22 Badi children in Grade One, says they are doing well, but adds that she is not sure how long they will come to school. Given the deep-rooted stigma they live with, and the squalor of their day-to-day life, education may be the only way out for the Badi community of Namuna Basti. ■

From city to country

Through travel, you can create new landscapes of thought



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Leaving the city for the country can be transformative. The designation of the break obviously influences the tenor of one's activities and what one gets out of the experience. But all journeys share common features, and when it's the Great Himalayan Trail in far northwestern Humla you're headed to, the experience is all the more extreme.

Once the decision is made to leave, anticipatory excitement or reflection is soon crowded out by the minutiae of planning. You have to pack, not just for the journey ahead, but the life you are leaving behind, so as to resume where you left off. Some people enjoy this, but it can be so consuming it's only when you bid your farewells and sit back in car, train, bus or plane that you can shift gears and relax.

Leaving behind obligations, deadlines, and even attachments,

the mental and physical clutter of the urban landscape and lifestyle begins to subside. The boxscape of Kathmandu, through which fuming serpents of roads wind, falls away. Settlements become sparser, padded out by neat cultivated squares, until they too are lost amidst rising ridges and valleys, human endeavour terribly insignificant from a bird's eye view.

When you arrive, you are somewhere else. The contempt with which you treat the familiar vanishes, and your most mundane observations are tinged with wonder. You may reach out to your former life through the ever-expanding tendrils of technology, and catch up on the day's news from the capital. But soon, if you go far enough, if you are in Humla, those traces will dry up and disappear. Away from Simikot, along and beyond the rocky hillsides rising sheer above the raging Karnali all the way to the Nepal-China border at Hilsa, there is barely any mobile or internet coverage. And when there is no state except for a police post at Muchu, what need is there of news of the state?



RABI THAPA

This disconnect can be disorienting. But it is more likely the slowness of the unmooring will leave you open to the new environments you are passing through.

Simikot is perched upon a small plateau a shade under 3000 metres, and at harvest makes for a pretty, verdant sight. As we moved up the Karnali through Dharapuri to Yalbang, the culture morphing from Hindu to Buddhist, the landscape became

both more imposing and less munificent. Shrubs replaced trees, the vegetation progressively more miserly until it disappeared altogether in the scorched sienna gradations of the Tibetan plateauscape of Hilsa. Turning southeast into the Limi Valley, giant, broken red boulders haunted by blue sheep and vultures at least betrayed some life, animal and plant. It was brief respite leading up to the windblasted glacial valleys before the Nyalu pass at 5000

metres, below which we spent a freezing night staring at an exploding Milky Way. But after descending the pass and following a river some way, the transformation was sudden and total. Coming up a rise we entered lush, autumnal birch forests laced with pine through which mountain rivers surged furiously, and in clearings belled yaks seemed to question our intrusion. It's a revelation that cannot but affect your spirit permanently, if

you will it so. Could it be that we were stripped down and reconstituted in the course of our journey? That we became somehow simpler, purer and then regenerated? It's easy to laugh off such notions, which in some part are the privilege of the tourist. But as local Jas Bahadur Singh told me on our last day, "How you feel about Humla is similar to how we feel about Kathmandu, I love to go wandering there."

Coming to the end of such a circuit, it's natural for your thoughts to turn to home and hearth. You round off your experience and appreciate all you have gone through. Inevitably, you yearn for your attachments, and the burden of your obligations will once more weigh on you. But in the memory of a dozen butterflies shying up from a waterlogged path you are crossing, or the cheeky smile of a child who trades you fresh-picked walnuts for sweets, nothing seems insurmountable. 🇳🇵

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Finding the Dhanusa 5



Seven years ago this week, Sanjeev Kumar Karna and four friends - Durgesh Kumar Labh, Pramod Narayan Mandal, Shailendra Yadav and Jitendra Jha - were allegedly shot dead and buried by security forces by the banks for the Kamala River.



Four bodies were recently exhumed in Godar, and the remains have been sent for DNA testing.

TEXT & PHOTOS
NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI

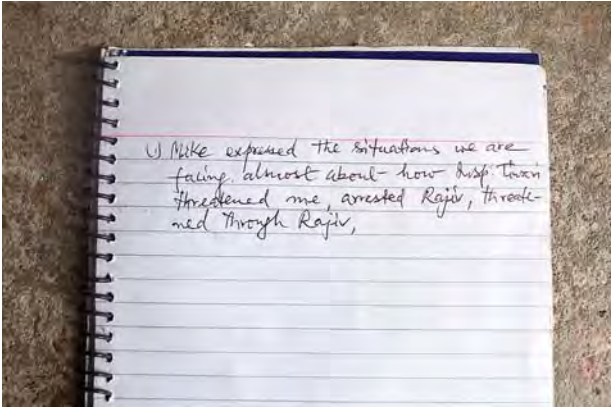
Seven years ago on 8 October, Jai Kishor Labh got a phone call; his son Sanjeev Kumar Karna had been taken into custody by the security forces. Jai Kishor, a lawyer, understood the gravity of the situation but the police and army repeatedly reassured him that his son would not be harmed. Several days later, Sanjeev and four friends were reportedly taken to a quiet place by the

Kamala River on the border of Dhanusa and Sunsari and shot dead. The police and army now denied having taken Sanjeev and his friends into custody at all. Jai Kishor fought hard. He tried to file an FIR (first information report) with the police but was met with aggressive resistance. He lodged a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which was told Sanjeev and his friends had been killed in an ‘encounter’. He spent most of his savings in cyber cafes, emailing countless organisations, both national and international, for help. He methodically

and tirelessly gathered evidence to support the case. Just as stubbornly, the system resisted: getting one office to write letters to another, stalling, threatening Jai Kishor and his family, and offering monetary settlements for him to withdraw the case. Jai Kishor died of a heart attack in April 2010. He was by no means helpless in the face of his family’s tragedy. He was a skilled lawyer, courageous and principled. But he was unable to make the justice system serve justice. Recently, there was an NHRC-led

exhumation in Godar, by the Kamala River, where locals had seen bodies buried following the disappearance of Sanjeev and his friends. The remains of four bodies were unearthed, but the search was called off before a fifth body might have been found. The families await the results from the forensic labs, but without Jai Kishor, it is unclear if the latest developments will bring the families of the Dhanusa 5 any respite.

nepalitimes.com
Without a Trace #450



A page in Jai Kishor’s notes describes how his youngest son Rajeev was repeatedly threatened by the police. Jai Kishor decided his family would live under a witness protection program for a while.



A portrait of Jai Kishor at his home in Janakpur. For seven years, this was where the families of the five young men came for news. With Jai Kishor gone, the families feel they lack the courage to fight on.



Despite the dust on Jai Kishor’s belongings, his wife Bimala Devi and son Rajeev are committed to fighting for justice for Sanjeev.



By all accounts

The young woman,
still caught in the shadows of dawn

bends from the waist
to the tin pot at her feet,
outstretched fingers
rinsing free
the last of the morning meal

By the time she steps out
into the light

to crouch deeply
beside the hefty clay pots
awash with soapy water,
clothes have piled up

The young man,
by all accounts a family
friend,
lingers by his motorcycle
for a parting glimpse and a
smile

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how we live
In the far corners of the
house
secrets stay secrets
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हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Khagendra Singh Dhami still returns to his ancestral village every year for Dasain to cut a goat and enjoy a meal of meat. But he hardly manages two meals on a daily basis. Prem Raja Joshi has celebrated eight Dasains in a rented room. This Dasain might not be any different, and he has not been able to manage food for his family.

Khagendra and Prem Raj are among the thousands of Nepali victims of the Maoist land seizure drive. NC cadre Khagendra is from Siddheswar-4 of Baitadi. In 2001, the Maoists set his house on fire and labelled him a feudal element. They dispossessed him of all his property and kicked him out of the village just before Dasain. His family has been living

in a hut in Attariya, Kailali ever since. His 80-year-old father Nain Singh says, “Never had I thought my hard-earned savings might turn out to be a bane for me, that too at this age.”

Prem Raj’s family was chased out of their village in Khailad-4, Kailali on a similar charge. They now live in Kalakheti. “I was forced to take my daughter out of school as I was unable to buy books for her. How can I celebrate Dasain?” he says.

Bam Bahadur Oli, too, was displaced from his village a day ahead of Dasain, nine years ago. The Maoists demanded he donate money to them rather than spend on traditional festivals. Oli now lives in a squatters’ camp in Attariya. His children go around the village looking for jobs instead of going to school. He had bought some land from savings made working as a security guard in India, but he says, “My hard-earned money caused me trouble instead.”



The Maoists have not spared those already deprived either. Krishna Kumari Lamichhane owned just three ropanis (1,000 square metres) of land in Pawera-1; Gore Kami and Janga Bahadur Sunar had seven ropanis (2,333 square metres) together; and Moti Ram Chaudhari owned 1.5 ropanis (500 square metres). The Maoists captured all their land. However, Maoists Lekharaj Bhatta and Khagraj Bhatta own 30 ropanis (1 hectare) of land each but they have been left unmolested.

Most seized land has been distributed to Maoist supporters, squatters and freed Kamaiya, and some of the land has been given on lease. While there is no exact record of captured land in Kailali, the District Administration Office estimates that 3,750 ropanis (125 hectares) of land belonging to 237 households was captured during the insurgency, and that about 5,000 households live on this land in Kailali today.

Maoist induction of royalists

Ganga BC in *Kantipur*, 2 October
कान्तिपुर

Royalists have been inducted into the UCPN (Maoist) party, and accepted by hardcore republicans within the party as well. Party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal welcomed former minister of the royal regime Radha Krishna Mainali to the party, and called Mainali’s entry a “special episode in the movement for national independence and change.”

The Maoists say they have united with the royalists out of a common interest in nationalism. “Those who supported the king with the belief that he would safeguard national sovereignty are now joining the Maoists,” said Maoist secretary CP Gajurel. “But not all royalists are nationalists and thus are not eligible to join the party,” he said.

The Maoists have used national sovereignty as bait to lure



BHASWOR OJHA

the royalists, and this is not the first time they have done so. After resigning from the government a year and a half ago, the Maoists unleashed an anti-Indian movement in the name of national sovereignty to attract royalists. The entry of royalists into the party, however, is perceived by some as a deviation from

principle. Mainali, who vanished from Nepal’s political scene after Jana Andolan II, has regained the confidence to resume his political career. “I will be active in politics now, and believe the Maoists alone can lead the movement of national sovereignty,” he said during his induction. He also

publicly confessed that he was wrong to have supported the then king Gyanendra. Former royal minister Hari Shankar Pariyar, former Rajparisad member Uttam Pariyar, former Brigadier General Kumar Phudung and former eastern region administrator Surya Bahadur Sen Oli have also joined the party. Phudung and Sen Oli are Maoist CA nominees. Rastriya Prajatantra Party president Kamal Thapa says the former royalists are attracted to the Maoists because in the absence of the monarchy, they are the strongest force. “They feel they should support those bringing the republic if that is something they have to accept,” he said.

Sources claim the Maoists are in constant touch with Thapa, former prime ministers Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bista, and Raj Bahadur Singh, son-in-law of the former king. Maoists are also in

contact with former minister Rameshnath Pandey, former chief of the National Investigation Department Debi Ram Sharma, former chief secretary Lokman Singh Karki, and former secretary Hira Bahadur Thapa. The Maoist government had attempted to appoint Karki chief of the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority, and Pandey as foreign affairs advisor. At a time when the Maoists have decided to form an all-powerful disciplinary commission, they have also been inducting various other personalities unconditionally. “We inducted them to protect the party’s identity,” said politburo member Netra Bikram Chand. Those who cannot enter the party directly will be slotted in through a joint front. The latest central committee meeting has decided to welcome nationalists and leftists into the party. “The nationalists will be brought in the front, but we can also work with those who do not want to join the front,” said Gajurel. It has become a convention for Nepali communist parties to form a joint front in times of crisis.

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Western woes

Hamro Samachar, Saniwar, 2 October

NEPALGUNJ. The need for the government to be serious in addressing food security problems was stressed during a program organised by Phiyen Nepal and various protest committees to mark World Food Day on 30 September.

Participants of the meeting felt that food security was not the only problem plaguing the country, however. Every year, the Rapti River floods its surrounding areas, causing great suffering, and they postulated that the proposed Banke National Park will also create problems for inhabitants.

Representatives of the Gandarbha community were present at the meeting, and they expressed fears that their livelihoods were under threat. They called for the constitution to ensure their rights.

“Mr. Prachanda Path, the Co-chairman”



Nagarik, 6 October
नागरिक

UCPN (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has accused the media of spreading lies about his Malaysia visit. “The media falsely reported that there was no conference at all,” he said at the airport after returning from his four-day trip to Malaysia. Displaying a

certificate of the conference allegedly organised in Kuala Lumpur, he said, “The Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation gave me this appointment letter as its co-chairman, which proves there was a conference.”

Dahal’s appointment letter reads as follows: “We are honor To Appointment Mr. Prachanda Path as the Co-Chairman of Asia Pacific Exchange & Cooperation Foundation.”

The organisation that made Dahal its co-chairman, however, does not exist in cyberspace. In fact, the only references to the conference on Google are news bytes on Dahal’s visit to Malaysia, as reported by Nepali news portals. Dahal claims there were participants from China, Thailand, Vietnam and other countries at the conference, who committed to work for peace and development.

Voting rights

Umesh Upreti, Letter to the Editor, Naya Patrika, 4 October

The Election Commission has started the process of voter registration in 58 municipalities in 43 districts. But instead of just updating the older list this year, representatives of the commission are going door-to-door to collect information from eligible voters. The representatives will check citizenship cards and then collect information, a photo and thumbprints of voters, who will then be issued with voter ID cards. The plan is to issue national ID cards as well on the basis of this information.

This process is being enthusiastically conducted in most districts, but is facing problems in the Tarai with some sections opposing the process. Although the decision to collect voter details was taken after consulting all political parties, the Madhes parties are now opposing the process. This is because voter ID cards are to be issued on the basis of citizenship cards, and as many in the Tarai don’t have citizenship cards, the parties feel the new process will deprive Madhesis of their voting rights.

But if the commission simply updates the old voter list, it will allow Indian nationals living in the Tarai to be issued voting cards as well. This might be beneficial to some political parties, but will be a threat on a national level.

Instead of opposing the process of collecting voter details, the Madhesi parties should look into why some Nepali nationals do not have a citizenship card yet; this is a problem that can be resolved.

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Let them eat ice-cream

The take-care prime minister is getting so bored with endless elections he is gorging on ice-cream. Can't blame him, he has a sweet tooth and needs a sugar fix. The good news is that under Nepal's watch, Nepal has officially become self-sufficient in ice-cream.

Former prime minister-to-be Lotus Flower is back from Malaysia. First, we heard that he was invited by the Asia-Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation, but when he got to KL (on the same flight, by the way, as former Clown Prince Paras) he denied he was invited by that group. But when the marigold-bedecked PKD returned to KTM on Wednesday he held up a certificate to prove the Foundation was genuine. The plaque read:

'We are honor To Appointment Mr Prachanda Path as the Co-Chairman of Asia-Pacific Exchange & Cooperation Foundation (signed) Wunan Xiao.' Go ahead, Google 'Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation'.

What was Comrade Path doing in Malaysia really? Did he go to meet his Uncooked handlers from the Noida days, or did Comrade Krishna Bahadur accompany the Chairman in person to collect the 500 million bucks promised in The Wiretap? By the way, as a token of appreciation, Nepali journalists in KL presented the ex-prime minister-to-be with a biography of Comrade Mahathir Mohamad. The visit was so secret that when Ram Karki was asked why his Boss was in Malaysia he shrugged his shoulders and said "I have



absolutely no idea", and he looked like he meant it. And what's with Sita Comrade's cool new tinted contacts, BTW.

The Ass has now reached the conclusion that the best place for PKD to meet RAW is in PRC itself. One hears on the grapevine that Singapore and Bangkok were suggested as rendezvous points by The Spooks, but PKD thought all three had been tainted because of his past meetings with them there, so he changed it to Malaysia. Superfluous came back so charged, he declared war on India on arrival, and fired the first salvo in Phaplu on Wednesday. And Jhallubabu got the fright of his life when someone he thought would support his prime ministerial bid told him to go stuff it. The trouble with PKD and JNK is that both comrades think they can outsmart the other.

Laldhoj used the time the boss was away in Malaysia to sneak off to Shitall Nibas and secretly meet the president,

something he'd not dared do before. PKD found out anyway, which is probably why BRB is cleansing his pro-Indian image within the party to improve his chances ahead of the Baddie Extended Meeting. Looks like the comrades who spent 10 years underground in the jungles terrorising everyone are themselves terrified of the dengue mosquito, and shifted their meeting from Chitwan to Gorkha.

Nepal's sovereignty has suffered another major blow with the refusal by duty-free shops at the new airport terminal in New Delhi to sell duty-free booze to Kathmandu-bound passengers. We don't know why, but with 10 flights a day between the two capitals and given the Nepali capacity to imbibe fire water, wonder who is losing out? Time to contemplate a diplomatic tit-for-tat and stop selling alcohol to Indians in KTM?

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