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Breaking through

As we recover from Dasain, there's some respite before the headlong dash into Tihar. Nepalis may be surprised to find themselves hopeful of respite on the political horizon as well, but only time will tell if our politicians can come together and break on through to the other side. Sometimes everything has to be just right for things to move forward, it's not enough to look towards the destination longingly and hope it will all work out fine. If wills can be stimulated and coordinated, then anything is possible. This is as true for the constitution and the peace process as it is to promote tourism around Mugu's Rara Lake, and to build or renovate monasteries in far-flung corners of Nepal.

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FORCING TASKS

We are in the eye of the festive storm. Fresh from tika chats across the country, Nepalis will once more turn their eyes back to the headlines and try to make sense of what's going on. The appointment of Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to the helm of the newly created High Level Task Force can be seen as a positive move, at least in the sense that it acknowledges the need to actually resolve the political and constitutional stalemate, and the responsibility of the biggest party to take the lead.

Like many such task forces, committees and mechanisms that have come and gone, without any concrete concessions towards consensus, the Nepali public may be forgiven for cynicism towards this latest development. But this same public, as long as it is not given the opportunity to move beyond expressions of frustration in the street (through the medium of elections), has no choice but to wait and hope. As it has done for so long on so many occasions, even though this has meant giving the politicians the benefit of countless doubts and extensions of mandates.

There is no doubt that the patient public deserves more from our current crop of incompetent and indecisive politicians. We now have a new committee that means to

settle the fundamental bones of contention in the constitution-drafting process. Presumably, talk of security sector reform will not be very far away either. The sudden prominence given to the High Level Task Force after repeated failures in forming a government betrays the fact that the caretaker government's longevity is not solely due to ego clashes or the intractability of parliamentary numbers.

Will the task force deliver? Initial reports are positive, even though Dahal is meant to be travelling to China today. There should be no more benefit of the doubt. Rather, the parties should make it clear to the public exactly what is being debated in these closed-door sessions, what the positions of the parties are on each of these issues, and what has been agreed on. It is incumbent upon the parties to make this clear to each other and to their constituents, so we can have a national debate about what we want our future to look like.

If the representatives of the Nepali people cannot decide on certain issues that matter to our future, then perhaps, as was suggested last week, the people themselves can decide through a series of referenda? It cannot be a lengthier or costlier process than the current process is proving to be.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

STATUS QUO OR NO?

Certainly many local initiatives may be far more promising than the paralysed national politics ('In defence of the status quo', Publisher's Note, #523). But why give credit to the past instead of to the changes that have unleashed more vibrant local energies that were stultified in the past? Was community radio produced by the old semi-feudal 'elected' local councils that in fact represented local land owners and other 'notables'? Or did it take off after they were overthrown?

Arthur

● "We abandoned everything from the past, even the good stuff, and threw the baby out with the bathwater."

We??? Maybe you and your pseudo liberal revolutionary friends did. But most Nepalis were always aware that violence would not lead to revolution but only to chaos. *Nepali Times* had/have a bigger role in creating the current mess than the average Nepali. You chose to use your privileged position of influence to mislead Nepalis and perhaps, more importantly, foreign readers of *Nepali Times*, who unfortunately have more power and influence than their moral and ethical attributes warrant.

jange

● NT at that time was giving the benefit of the doubt to the Maoists. Nepalis are a breed, if you ask them not to touch fire or flame they won't listen to you. They have to feel the flame.

Kale

● Kunda Dixit is dreaming again. The past is past, and *Nepali Times* contributed to making the past, past. No use crying over spilt milk. The 'great revolutionary leaders' you promoted are in position now. So just rejoice, do not gripe.

KK Sharma

● A needless war, yes indeed. What did we get as a result? A precarious and even worse off state of affairs. Local government elections would be a good thing, but would they really be

free and fair without voter intimidation? It all comes down to sorting out the Maoist combatants and YCL. The Maoists have shown vulnerability and political naivety with the current events, which now even to their own admission would leave them worse off in any kind of negotiation on Maoist entrants to be recruited into the Nepal Army.

Had it not been for this waste of time Maoist self-declared war on the state, we would have been in such a better position right now.. An example of our determination is given by the reduction of the maternal deaths, neonatal deaths and lengthening of our life expectancy. It shows what achievements were made even despite such difficult times. Our people are hardy, tough, resilient and able to endure. We will endure the current situation, however turbulent it may be.

Rishav

NGO ETHICS

Great news. At least here is a genuine Nepali development worker who is serving the poor, unlike some sycophants in the human rights sector who operate a husband-wife NGO, bend over backwards to please their donors, and get awarded by some mediocre American universities ('Right livelihood', #523). Thank you Shrikrishna Ji, you have made us all proud by serving the ones less fortunate than us so selflessly.

Sameer B

NOT MUCH HOPE

Unfortunately this is not the norm in the education and development of Nepali youth ('There is hope', Artha Beed, #523), firstly as the author clearly indicates in his book *Unleashing Nepal*, or from my own experience of working in support of seven community schools in Kathmandu. The whole system at the junior level virtually suppresses everything the Beed mentions via a curriculum that emphasises memorising and a teaching style which encourages obedience and repetition. The Government's School Sector Reform Plan is focused on improving the hardware of the school (buildings, classroom furniture) rather than the

software of the school (teaching styles, curriculum etc), which would open up the child's mind. You have seen a glass which is half full, but in the circles of Nepali youth in which I operate, sadly the glass is half empty.

Dr. B

EYESORES NO MORE

Very informative and well-researched article by Rubeena Mahato ('Grand designs', #523). Nepal could easily go through an architectural renaissance if only the middle class was better educated in design and aesthetics and started demanding simple, functional and elegant buildings instead of the malignant tumours we see all over Kathmandu these days. And also the architecture and civil engineering schools should be teaching the richness of Malla period architecture and how to incorporate them in a modern design. All the examples are model houses, congratulations to the architects featured.

Johann

● The architects mentioned (Tuladhar, Thapa, Puri, Sherchan and others) deserve our appreciation and cogratulations. New buildings should reflect the architectural heritage of Kathmandu valley, but sadly we are increasingly seeing buildings, houses and malls which totally lack aesthetic sense, and are eyesores. Just look at the facade of the mall in Sundhara.

R Rai

BIRDBRAIN

There is a saying in English: "Birds of a feather flock together", and that is exactly what is happening ('Maoist induction of royalists', From the Nepali Press, #523). The Maoists and the previous royalist government ruled by coercion, suppression, and threats. Now they are banding together to do the same thing to the people. Beware of such devils.

Laxmi Karki

UPLIFT YOURSELF

Dekendra Raj Thapa should serve as a role model for all Nepalis ('Badi life', Dewan Rai, #523). When a society

takes care of its most downtrodden, it elevates the entire society.

Note that Thapa was not a politician. While politicians deserve a lot of the blame for the state of the Badis and nearly everyone else in Nepal, we can all do something. As JFK said, "Ask not what your country can do for you..."

Bottom line is we can't just blame the politicians - we all deserve some blame.

Ganesh

IMAM BUDDHIMAN

Excellent innovation of the Malaysian media channel Astro Osis, and in particular, Izelan Basar, congratulations ('Who wants to be an Imam?', Clarence Chua, #523). Nepal must emulate such innovations, especially when our parties, I mean the leaders in the parties, are infested with deadwood. Imam means a leader, says the text, so it is applicable to leaders everywhere, Nepal too. Leadership is the main crisis area in our land. Most of them live in an age which has nothing to do with the present. They have very little knowledge of governance with some dose of development planning, economics or international affairs, etc.

This system can groom youths to be statesmen too. Let us not miss this opportunity (donors too can support such projects.) Muda means 'fool', so we'll have to change the name from Imam Muda to Imam Buddhiman.

Daniel Gajaraj

Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 524

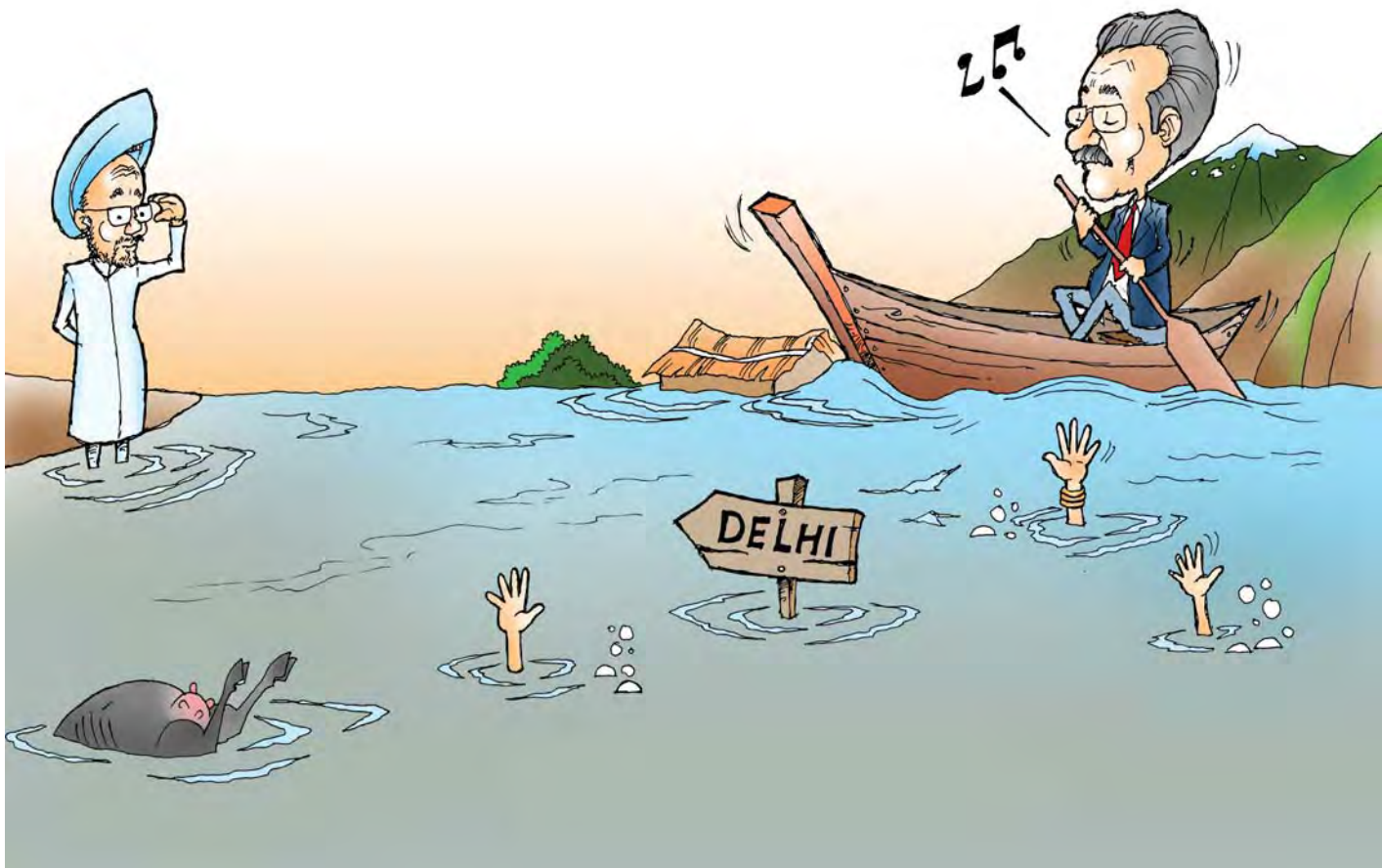
Q. What's on your mind this Dasain?

Total votes: 2,595

Politics	7.1%
Economy	13%
Family	66.7%
Wining & dining	13.1%

Weekly Internet Poll # 525. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think the High Level Task Force will succeed?



BILASH RAI

Propaganda war

The Indian media is happy to indulge its government every once in a while



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

Pushpa Kamal Dahal would like to forget the fact, but the Maoists owe their phenomenal rise partly to the overt and covert support of the Indian establishment. On the 12-point understanding that allowed for the safe landing of the decade-old armed insurgency, Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee once claimed on camera that New Delhi had engineered the deal. He didn't elaborate on how his operatives had acquired so much influence in an outlawed organisation.

It's less clear how Dahal and his comrades lost the confidence of their Indian sponsors, but the souring of the relationship must have begun quite early. After the formation of the Maoist-led coalition government, the Indian Foreign Office organised a seminar in Patna in April 2008, innocuously titled: 'Emerging trends in India-Nepal relations'. In retrospect, it appears that the meet was organised to tell the Maoists to deliver on promises made in the past, or ready themselves to face the consequences.

There are limits to what any government in Nepal can do to satisfy the ever-increasing demands of New Delhi. Singha Darbar can't afford to ignore the real or imagined security concerns of Beijing. It would have been political suicide for the Maoists to sign on the dotted line of every

document drafted by South Block officials. But India now wants to penalise the Maoists for their failure to deliver.

Caretaker Premier Madhav Kumar Nepal probably knew that his utility was limited to humiliating Girija Prasad Koirala and cornering the Maoists. He bought a deal merely to satisfy his urge to get what Gyanendra had once denied him – a stint in Baluwatar. Having realised his life's ambition, he has no further reason to humour meddling Indian interlopers. Strategists of Nepal policy in New Delhi must be alarmed by the turn of events in Kathmandu: they have alienated the Nepali Congress, lost the Maoists, maligned the Madhesbadis, and failed to wean away the military-dominated establishment (of which the UML is part) from their Western benefactors. In frustration, they are probably contemplating something as drastic as the 'Nepal Gameplan' propaganda war of June 2000, when *India Today* became the vehicle of a concerted disinformation campaign.

Seizing on the pre-Dasain indolence in Nepali politics and the media, the *Indian Express* charged the Maoists with training hundreds of Indian Naxalites on Nepali soil under the supervision of 'terrorists from Lashkar-e-Toiba'. Only the fertile mind of a misinformation expert could have made such a leap of faith in associating an extremist Islamic group with avowedly anti-religious leftwing radicals. The reporter attributed the 'news' to a Ministry of Home Affairs note accessed by

the paper. It seems to be a clear case of what New Delhi scribes call 'handout journalism', wherein renowned journalists lend their names to propaganda pieces from the government in exchange for important tip-offs once in a while.

The Nepali response to the allegation has been surprisingly muted so far. Meanwhile, the Indian disinformation campaign has continued with the arrest of Nepali citizens on charges of possessing Indian Maoist pamphlets. Does this mean Nepalis should be wary of being caught with anything penned by Arundhati Roy, lest they be accused of supporting the Naxalites?

In a rare show of restraint, the irrepressible economist and US Ambassador to India John Kenneth Gaibraith once wrote, "The press in India is free, but co-operative." It has since been co-opted completely, with the pen, the microphone and the camera doing the bidding of the government meekly.

For all its shortcomings, the Nepali media takes the role of permanent opposition more seriously than its Indian counterparts. However, when national integrity is under attack from foreign propaganda, the media has to line up with the government and the opposition to withstand the pressure. The Indian press behaves like 'partners in governance' on issues of foreign policy. The Nepali media will have to learn to juggle these roles during the times of crisis to come. 🇳🇵

THIS WEEK

Budget not budging

UCPN (Maoist) has reiterated that it won't allow the caretaker government to present the full-fledged budget in the Legislature-Parliament. A meeting of the Maoist office-bearers held at party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's Nayabajar residence on Tuesday concluded that the caretaker government "does not have the authority to introduce the budget".

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, Maoist Vice Chairman Narayan Kaji Shrestha said only a new government could come up with the budget. His party has restated its stance at a time when economists are warning of a serious economic crisis if the government fails to introduce the budget immediately, as the advance budget only provided until the end of the Nepali month of Asoj (mid-October).

Canada visit

An 11-member delegation of CA members, led by Speaker Subhas Chandra Nembang, left for Canada on Saturday at the invitation of the Canadian Government and the Canadian Bar Association. The objective of the visit is to hold discussions on federalism with the leaders of political parties and federalism experts in Canada. Nembang will also meet his Canadian counterpart and the law minister to discuss bilateral relations.



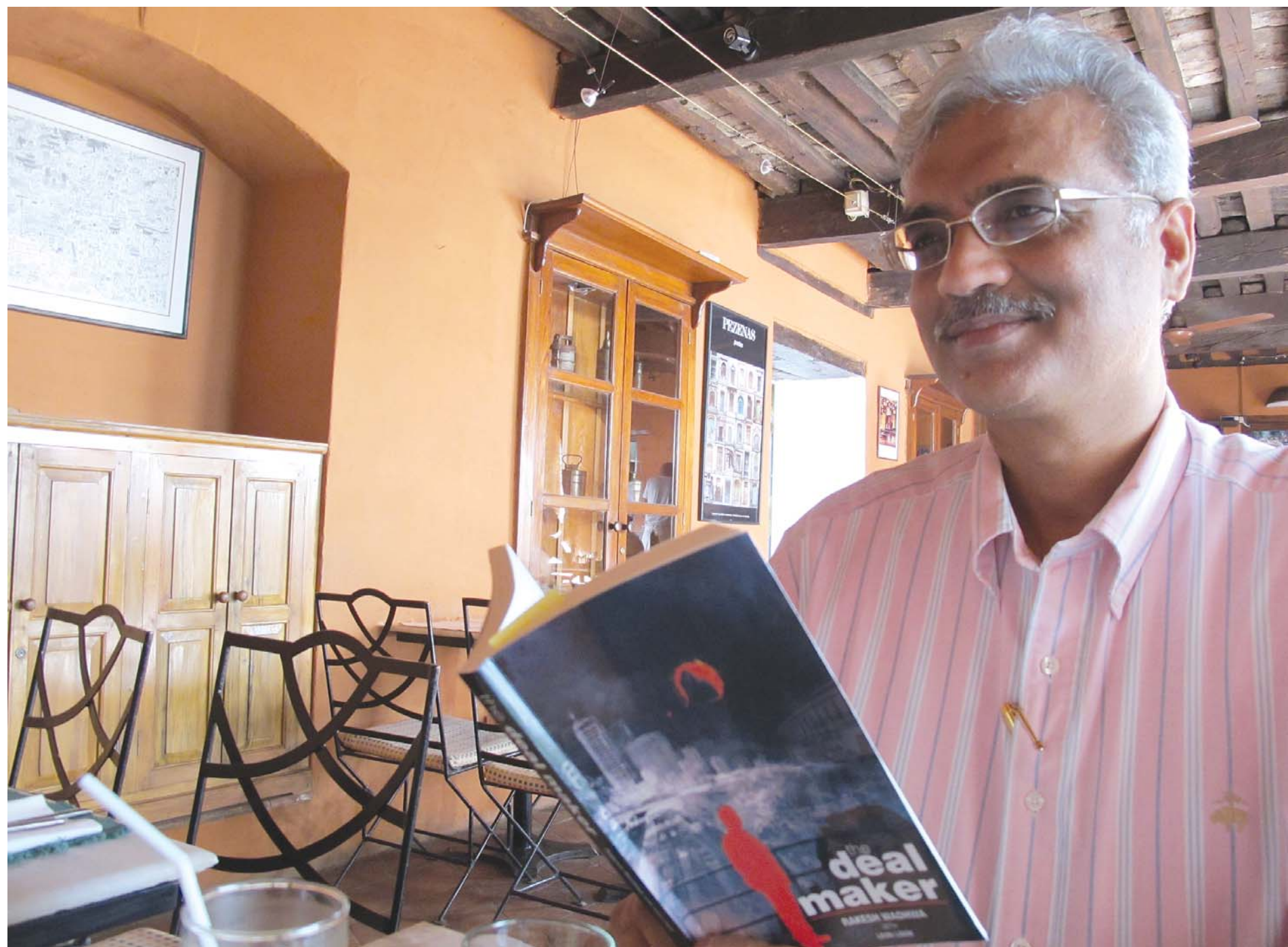
The Nepali delegation accompanying Nembang includes Secretary-General of the Legislature-Parliament, Manohar Prasad Bhattarai, Nepali Congress CA member Pushpa Bhusal, UCPN(Maoist) CA member Ekraj Bhandari, CPN(UML) CA member Agni Prasad Kharel, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik) CA member Ram Janam Chaudhary and officials of the Legislature-Parliament. Speaker Nembang and Secretary-General Bhattarai will fly back on 25 October in time for the 13th round of prime ministerial elections.

UML district leader found dead

A Dhading district leader of the CPN-UML, Shiva Thapa Magar, has been found dead near a forest in the district, three days after his alleged abduction by UCPN(Maoist)'s Young Communist League (YCL) on Wednesday.

Shiva Thapa Magar, 40, a former UML district committee member, was allegedly abducted by a group of YCL men led by Bikram Tamang, in charge of YCL's Dhading district area no.1, while he was returning home after watching a volleyball match.

The CPN-UML district committee has claimed that the YCL cadres subsequently murdered Thapa, and is demanding action against the culprits. UCPN (Maoist)'s Dhading district committee, however, has denied that the party had any hand in the abduction and death of Thapa.



Radical recovery

INSIDE STORY: Casino owner Rakesh Wadhwa, who made a dramatic recovery after being diagnosed with lupus, reading an excerpt from his novel *The Deal Maker*, to be launched in Kathmandu next month.

Rakesh Wadhwa has a drastic solution to save Nepal, a bit like the radical step he took this year to save his own life. He wants to free the economy from the prescriptions and restrictions of government and let it take care of itself.

In April, at age 53, he was diagnosed with the auto-immune disease, lupus. He found that the prescribed drugs had serious side-effects, so he subjected himself to a one-month fasting therapy that helped him lose 22 kilos and rid him of the disease.

"The therapy allowed my body to use all its energy for the healing process, allowing it to detoxify itself," says Wadhwa. His wife Shalini, who publishes the boss and VOW magazines, also underwent the therapy and brought her diabetes under control.

"There is nothing like a virtual death sentence to concentrate your mind," says Wadhwa. "If you were fasting for a month just to lose weight, then it probably wouldn't work."

Businessman has the prescription to cure Nepal of its degenerative disease

Wadhwa also claims the healing process at the True North Health Centre in California allowed him to regain his mental equilibrium and focus his mind on his novel, *The Deal Maker*, co-written with South African Leon Louw. It is being published by Rupa and will be launched in Kathmandu on 12 November. The novel tells the story of an Indian socialist dystopia of the future, and a visionary young prime minister with principles. The

underlying message is one of freedom, and the triumph of the human spirit. "My life's purpose is achieved with this book," says Wadhwa, who admits he is a proud follower of Ayn Rand.

Wadhwa, who runs several casinos in Nepal, has always been a libertarian. So it is not surprising that he wants freedom to underly economic matters in Nepal. He wants all trade barriers lifted and the economy opened up for foreign direct investment, removing the government's interference in business.

After having worked in and run businesses in Nepal, Wadhwa finds it is a pity that a country that straddles two Asian giants with the highest growth rates in the world should be so economically stagnant. With Nepal's lower labour costs, it could be a magnet for foreign investors if it took steps to facilitate free trade, slashed tariffs and used its natural assets.

"Opening up completely to FDI would

attract investors who still find India restrictive," he says. "You could change this policy in 24 hours, and start seeing results soon after."

Investment would create jobs, raise economic growth and lift the country out of the doldrums. Corruption could be a concern, but graft can be controlled by minimising government interference, Wadhwa adds.

"Nepal has to be more attractive to investors than neighbouring countries, otherwise why should they come here," he asks. "We have to go further ahead than India, you have to be even more liberal than India."

We ask Wadhwa to tell us in one sentence what he believes in. "I don't need a sentence," he replies, "it's one word: freedom."

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More rah-rah for Rara

Just because it's there doesn't mean tourists will visit it



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Rara Lake is beautiful. Sadly, that's pretty much it. In the forty-plus years since it was found to be the country's biggest lake, its potential remains almost completely untapped. In economic terms, the fixed wealth of Rara's beauty is yet to be converted into liquid capital, which could help the local economy in Mugu, one of Nepal's poorest districts.

This point was brought home to me last week, when I reached Rara after a six-day walk from Simikot in Humla. In Rara, I expected hot showers, a chance to spend money on good food, a room with a lakeside view, a small natural history museum with details on the local flora and fauna, marked walking trails, and maybe even an internet connection.

Instead, what I found was the ramshackle log cabin-like Danfe

Guest House, run by a political operative, with a dark and dingy kitchen that served fare no better than what one finds on isolated Humla trails. The record book of the nearby army checkpoint showed that little over 200 tourists visited the lake all of last year, most as members of trekking expeditions, while only a handful visited it during the 10-year (1996-2006) Maoist insurgency. The guesthouse owner shrugged when asked about his plans for Visit Nepal Year 2011, which is due to start in less than 70 days.

The benign neglect of Rara as a saleable destination points to three bigger tourism-related mistakes Nepal makes.

Political interference: I asked the guesthouse owner whether he had earned his lease via competitive bidding. He smiled, and refused to answer. It was not hard to see that his political connections, rather than his tourism knowhow, worked for him, and will continue to work for him as long as his political masters remain in power.



ASHUTOSH TIWARI

Nepal Tourism Board is a symbol of public-private partnership, but it's not immune to political pressure. The trouble with interference is not that it does not raise money from tourism. It does – to a modest extent. But its greatest harm is that it destroys incentives for others in the private sector to move in to offer diverse services competitively. Why compete when your competitors easily get the contracts through political blessing? The result is that the size of the tourism pie is

smaller for all.

From destinations to products: The mindset of tourism policy makers has long been shaped by a destination-oriented approach, which takes it for granted that tourists will come to Nepal. It is a passive approach, which goes not much beyond identifying places in pretty promotional materials.

What this fails to take in account is the intense competition from abroad that Nepal now faces. By contrast, a product-oriented mindset views a destination as a tourism

product, and thinks of the product in terms of uniqueness, features, benefits, services, market segments and the like. All of these require an understanding and satisfaction of customer demands, which makes more money in the long run.

What's in it for the locals? Tourism is already the biggest job-creating industry globally. It needs to be recast as a good source of local jobs in Nepal, especially in the poorest districts that are rich in natural beauty. The features, the services and the benefits of a tourism product call for local knowhow, local contacts and the availability of local manpower. A decent hotel near Rara not only provides employment to Mugu's people but also attracts more visitors and copycat competitors, which can only boost overall employment.

Well planned tourism development guidelines driven by pro-local regulations, along with a competitive market, has the potential to turn places like Rara Lake into flourishing local economies for many Nepalis. 🇳🇵

NMB grows

NMB Bank concluded its 15th Annual General Meeting, announcing a 10 per cent cash dividend and 10 per cent bonus share to its shareholders.



The Bank recorded a net profit of Rs 159.8 million

during the fiscal year 2009/10. Compared to last year, the bank's deposits increased by 47 per cent and loans and advances grew by 50.32 per cent.

BOK gives

The 16th AGM of Bank of Kathmandu ended, approving a 15 per cent cash dividend and 15 per cent bonus share for its shareholders. BOK experienced a 10 per cent increase in its net profit this year, with a 12 per cent increase on its total deposits and 14 per cent on its loans and advances.



Branching out



Himalayan Bank has opened its 33rd branch at Satdobato, Lalitpur. The branch will offer full-fledged banking products and services, with

interest rates up to 9.5 per cent on savings accounts and up to 11.5 per cent on fixed deposits.

Reaching Rasuwa

The newly opened commercial bank, Janata Bank, has set up its third branch in Dhunche, Rasuwa. The branch will also have an ATM counter. Janata Bank has plans to extend its network throughout the country this year.

Insurance dividends

LIC (Nepal) has proposed a 5.26 per cent cash dividend to its shareholders. The rate is yet to be endorsed by Beema Samitia and the AGM of the company.

Strategic alliance

International Money Transfer (IME) and Bank of Kathmandu (BOK) have signed a contract whereby all branches of BOK will operate as representatives of IME. Remittance sent through IME can now be collected from BOK branches.



Revenue collectors

A Global Bank counter has been set up at the Passport office in Kathmandu to collect



revenue. Global Bank is the fifth commercial bank that has been allowed to operate for government transactions.

Going international



NIC Bank has launched NIC International Visa Card. This card is valid worldwide and can be used for withdrawal of cash at ATMs around the world. It can also be used to make payments for purchases or hotel/service expenses through POS terminals with the Visa brand mark. People travelling abroad can also take this card against their US Dollar deposits or passport instead of carrying cash or Traveler's Cheques.

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The value of deadwood

PKD is suddenly the most flexible leader in Nepali politics thanks to RCP's defunct candidacy



MY TAKE
Damakant Jayshi

Unwittingly, the NC's Ram Chandra Poudel, the lone candidate for the prime minister, seems to have acquired the magic wand needed now in Nepali politics. Given the arithmetic in the Legislature-Parliament, he can't win the election for prime minister, but he can't lose either.

However, after his 12th defeat, his candidacy has a value that has so far not been exploited to end the deadlock. In this political monopoly, the bargaining position of the buyer is as powerful as that of a seller in a

monopoly.

There have been multiple multi-point agreements since November 2005 among the political parties. Few of the provisions have been fulfilled, but what the political parties have failed to achieve the deadwood candidate could deliver.

Here's how. The parliamentary laws governing the election of the prime minister stipulate that once the process begins, it cannot be stopped unless it accomplishes the task it has set out to do: elect a new PM.

The laws also do not allow amendment to the existing provisions. Put simply, so long as Poudel stays in the race, neither Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal nor UML chief Jhala Nath Khanal, who have withdrawn from the race, can become prime minister.

Surely, Speaker Subas Nembang owes an explanation to the public as to why he is allowing these serial elections without the political parties first reaching a consensus on the next prime minister. He has given in to pressure from the Maoists and the UML faction led by Khanal in continuing to hold one inconclusive election after another. Trust the stickler lawyer in Nembang to go by the book. He has ruled out any amendment, pointing out that the constitutional provisions and procedures cannot be flouted to begin a new process to form the government.

This might help explain the desperation of the two communist prime ministerial aspirants. The Maoist-UML three-point agreement, signed and announced on the day the NC's general convention began in Kathmandu so as to put pressure on the party and its prime ministerial candidate, has backfired on both the

communist leaders.

As a result of that agreement, Dahal is now out of the race. To his horror, he found out that he can't become the prime minister unless Poudel backs out. Suddenly, Dahal has become the most flexible leader in Nepali politics thanks to Poudel's defunct candidacy. There's no way the situation can move forward without the two communist parties reaching an understanding with the NC. In other words, we can finally hope for some real compromise on contentious issues related to the peace process and drafting of the constitution.

The effect of Poudel's candidacy is already visible (and audible). The political parties have formed a task force to settle disputes over the provisions in the new constitution with Dahal as its chairman. The Maoists have also become flexible over speeding up the process of integration and rehabilitation of ex-Maoist combatants living in UN-monitored cantonments throughout the country. Given the history and fate of such flexibility, it is still too early to conclude whether these are meaningful developments but at least the political parties are talking about ways to minimise their differences.

Poudel's candidacy may actually lead to tangible and workable agreement(s) over contentious issues related to the peace process and drafting of the new constitution. There's no point asking Poudel to withdraw as some have done. The focus should be on how to extract the maximum out of his continuation in the race.

So, here's to deadwood candidacy. 🇳🇵

Damakant Jayshi's column, My Take, will appear weekly from this edition of Nepali Times. damakant@gmail.com

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

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काम सानो ठूलो भन्ने 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 सम्मान गरौं ।

नेपाल सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग



Tale of two gombas



One monastery rises as another falls

TEXT by RABI THAPA
PICS by GORAKH BISTA

'I could kick him,' rages the ponytailed caretaker monk of Tumkot Monastery (*top left*), referring to a government official who earmarked a paltry Rs 1,500 for renovations recently. 'The government set aside Rs 300,000 three years ago, but only Rs 35,000 made it to our trust fund. They ate it all.'

Chandra Bahadur Lama (*top right*) is a bitter man. His monastery, a 10-minute walk from the dank, dark village of Tumkot in Muchu VDC, Humla district, is in as dilapidated a state as a living sacred site can be. Some claim it is a 13th century building, and it shows from the moment you step into the confines of its small courtyard. Weeds festoon the broken flagstones, and the rooms surrounding the courtyard, meant to house the representatives of seven villages during festivals, are not even fit for animals. The cave-like prayer room is exposed to the elements (light and rain stream through an open 'skylight') and the murals are caked with mud and grime.

I stumble into a room the monk has led us past in the course of his guided tour, and immediately I am reprimanded: "*Kasto mancheraicha! That is Mahakala's room, you are in danger!*" He then informs us with some

satisfaction that though idols have been stolen from the monastery, the thief was duly cursed with an insectile pestilence. "This is a powerful place, you can't just go anywhere," he rants. I apologise for my transgression, somewhat taken aback by the virulence of Tumkot's head Lama.

It's understandable, though. For Humla, Tumkot Monastery is arguably more culturally and historically significant than massive Yalbang Monastery, a day's walk down the River Karnali. But it has been largely ignored by devotees and tourists. Chandra Bahadur Lama himself led efforts to raise funds from the villages meant to patronise the monastery, and managed between Rs 200,000-300,000. Subsequent repairs to the roof, however, were not wholly successful. "Now it leaks more than ever before," the monk complains.

As we head back to our campsite, 20 minutes down the mountain, our guide commiserates with Chandra Bahadur Lama. 'Even up to the time of his father, a renowned (and even more ferocious) monk, this monastery was doing fine. But hardly anyone visits now, and even if they did, there's no guarantee it will be open.' We pass a German contingent sharing the campgrounds. I recognise a few faces from Yalbang Monastery the day before. There, they sat crosslegged on the floor, expressions


devout, for the evening puja. But they are oblivious to what Tumkot has to offer, despite the sign pointing to the monastery off the trail. Perhaps because their guides haven't bookmarked it for a visit.

Yalbang Monastery (*bottom left*), on the other hand, seems to be on everyone's list. Formally known as the Namkha Khyung Dzong Monastery, it is the biggest in Humla, and is still expanding. Close to 150 monks live and study here. Most are gathered in the main prayer hall as we approach at sunset. Later, the younger monks dash across the huge courtyard, skipping over lengths of timber, just as children might after school. At the locus of this active, prosperous monastery is Rinpoche Pema Riksal (*bottom right*).

Meeting the Rinpoche, you can see why Yalbang Monastery is doing so well. He receives us in a spotless, pine-scented room in a small, separate house to the rear of the monastery. He is calm but full of a focused energy, and is approachable yet inspires a natural respect in those who encounter him. He is equally at home lamenting the 'grasping materialism' that bedevils our happiness as he is picking our brains about national politics, and discussing the prospect of a documentary about life in the monastery.

The cosmopolitanism of Pema Riksal

may seem remarkable in a remote village in Humla. But his willingness to engage intelligently and compassionately with everyone who comes to visit him makes it difficult to begrudge him his spiritual and material comforts in relation to that of Tumkot monastery and its impoverished, impassioned caretaker. He was anointed as the reincarnation of the Chimed Rinpoche, spiritual leader of Shedphel Ling Monastery in Ngari, Tibet, at the age of three. After a youth devoted to spiritual studies, Pema Riksal undertook the building of the Namkha Khyung Dzong Monastery in Yalbang in 1985. This was itself a reincarnation of the original in Tibet, destroyed in 1959.

Today, Yalbang Monastery, with its school and plans for a clinic, stands as a tribute to the dedication of Pema Riksal. Equally, it is a testament to the enduring devotion of the thousands of visitors it receives. The irony lies in the fact that a Tibetan monastery was resurrected in Nepal while a few hillsides away, a Nepali monastery is close to ruin. Buddhism itself may remind us of the impermanence of material things. But in our world, the material too often affects the spiritual. As impressed as I was with Yalbang, the only solace I could find in Tumkot was the fact that the monastery remained standing, and in the unlikely form of Chandra Bahadur Lama, had a guardian angel. 

On the eigh

PAAVAN MATHEMA

**Jazzmandu
will be a
riot
between
the
festivities**

The festive season is in full swing, and what better to work on that swing than our very own international jazz festival? Jazzmandu, now in its eighth year, needs no introduction. You can pick up a copy of *JazzTimes* if you're not sure; Kathmandu is now on the international jazz map. While most music festivals come and go, Jazzmandu has been able to stick to its schedule every year, inviting talented artists from home and abroad to be part of the biggest jazz party in the Himalayas.

It all started when Cadenza was playing at the Palmer Street Festival in Australia in 2000. It seemed obvious, if audacious—a jazz festival in Kathmandu.



Cadenza's Nabin Chettri says, "When we organised the first Jazzmandu in 2002, we weren't thinking of doing it on a large scale. But the response was so overwhelming that we continued, and it's been great." An impressive, varied ensemble of invitees testifies to the growing success of

the event.

Jazzmandu will kick off on 29 October with gigs at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Moksh and House of Music. These will be followed by the regular shows at Gokarna Village Resort and Patan Museum, and the grand finale at Hotel Shangri-La

will cap it off. There will be a special free show for students at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, where a band from Woodstock School, Mussorie (India), will perform. Jazz enthusiasts will also get a chance to interact and learn from the musicians.

Ari Hoenig (*left*) is headlining this year's festival. A renowned drummer, Hoenig will bring a welcome dynamic change to the Kathmandu scene, where guitars usually dominate. "Hoenig adds not just beats to a piece but has a way of creating melody with his drumsticks," says Pravin Chettri, who will be playing bass with Hoenig at the festival.

Simak Dialog from Indonesia will be showcasing their unique jazz fusion with Indonesian beats. Alukomarai, with members from England, Thailand, Japan, Norway



th note



and Germany, will treat the audience to progressive jazz, blended with their varied influences. Other international acts to look forward to are Adrian d'Souza Quartet from India, Bug from the USA and Saksri Pang Vongdharadon Quintet (above) from Thailand. If last year's explosive mix of Asian, European and Latin influences are any indication, this

year will be a sonic treat. And of course, our very own Cadenza, Kutumba, Gandarva, and Prabhu Raj Dhakal & Friends will join the fray for their own Nepali take on the genre.

The jazz scene in Kathmandu has come a long way in the last decade. Musicians who have been involved in the festival from way back say that the majority of faces

in the audience are now Nepali. And while Jazzmandu is a frenetic, creative time, there's plenty going on at other times, not least in the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, where Nepali as well as foreign artists come to learn and teach. "Every year, we feel our culture growing," says Nabin. "Seeing young musicians interested in jazz means we can be optimistic about the future."

www.jazzmandu.org

VALLEY JAMS

Date: 29 October, Friday

Time: 7.30-9.30pm

Ticket: Rs 400

Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat: Simak Dialog (Indonesia), Alukomarai (England, Thailand, Japan, Norway, Germany)

Moksh, Jawalakhel: Adrian D'Souza Quartet (India)

House of Music, Thamel: Saksri Pang Vongdharadon Quintet (Thailand)

The valley will resound with the sounds of jazz! Different venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various Jazzmandu artists.

GOKARNA JAZZ BAZAAR

Date: 30 October, Saturday

Time: 2.30-10pm

Ticket: Rs 699

Gokarna Forest Resort

(Gates open at 1.30pm and close at 7.00pm)

Featured artists: Ari Hoenig, Simak Dialog, Bug, Saksri Pang Vongdharadon Quintet, Adrian D Souza Quartet, Alukomarai, Cadenza Collective, Kutumba, Gandharva, Prabhu Raj Dhakal & Friends

A marathon of jazz and traditional Nepali folk and classical music performed by international and Nepali musicians. Jazzmandu T-shirts and souvenirs will be on sale. No outside food and beverages or pets are allowed. A shuttle bus will be available every hour from 1pm to 4pm. Shuttle bus pick-up is outside the Hyatt Regency gate, Boudha. Return shuttle bus available from 10.30pm to 11.30pm to Lazimpat. (Please note that the availability of seats is not guaranteed)

JAZZ FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Date: 31 October, Sunday

Time: 2.30-4.30pm

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory (KJC), Jhamsikhel

Free entry by invitation only

An opportunity for young students from various schools around the valley to experience quality jazz by international musicians.

JAZZMANDU MASTER CLASS

Date: 1 November, Monday

Time: 4.30-5.30pm

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory (KJC), Jhamsikhel

Free entry (limited seating)

The master class is for music students & jazz enthusiasts to interact with musicians, share their experiences and learn different instrumental tips and techniques.

JAZZ AT PATAN

Date: 2 November, Tuesday

Time: 6.00-8.30pm

Ticket: Rs 1199

Patan Museum Square, Patan

(Gates open at 5.00pm, please be seated by 5.45pm)

Featured artists: Headliner Ari Hoenig Trio, opening act Cadenza and Friends

A unique evening of Nepali classical music fused with jazz at a historic and magical venue.

ALL STAR FEVER

Date: 3 November, Wednesday

Time: 6.30-10.00pm

Ticket: Rs 799

Hotel Shangri-La, Shambala Garden, Lazimpat

(Gates open at 5.30pm, please be seated by 6.00pm)

The festival finale - The All Star BIG JAM. Musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating high-energy, improvised music.



A healthy Tihar



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Tihar is likely to be laden with sweets. All the sweet shops in Nepal will do brisk business, but in the wake of Dasain’s excesses, this may also be the time to reflect upon the dangers of eating *guliyo* to our hearts’ content. South Asia has the dubious distinction of being home to the largest number of diabetics in the world. Undoubtedly, diabetes is the king of cardiovascular problems; it leads to a greater likelihood of strokes, heart attacks, kidney

failure, and blindness, to name some of its important complications. At least we have antibiotics to cure widespread infectious diseases like TB, malaria, and typhoid. But with cardiovascular illnesses, the most one can do is control the disease rather than cure it. For many in Nepal, the financial costs of treating cardiovascular conditions such as diabetes may be too daunting. As though this were not enough, there may also be a genetic component that predisposes South Asians to heart disease. When studies were carried out on South Asians living in the UK, it was found that they had a higher risk of

heart disease than other groups in the same age groups. Similar studies in the US have confirmed that South Asians are at higher risk for heart disease. In fact, a cardiac gene defect (MYBPC3) has been shown to afflict 4 per cent of the South Asian population, predisposing them to cardiovascular illness. Four per cent in South Asia translates to millions of people, and even the World Health Organization confirms that South Asia will soon be the epicentre for cardiovascular illness globally. So why bring up this gloom and doom during the magnificent festival of lights? There may be genetic disadvantages that we cannot undo, but there are some good health habits that Tihar’s lights can remind us of: eating less sweets and oil-soaked kebabs, going for morning walks to get out of that sedentary lifestyle, keeping our blood pressure under good control with medicines if necessary, checking our cholesterol level, and finally, stopping smoking. This last is a double whammy of a health risk for those living in Kathmandu, with its rampant pollution. Why not lower your sugar and smoke intake this Tihar? Nothing could be more of a blessing. 🇳🇵

GREEN SCENE

Vampire power

Are you sure your TV is turned off?

You may want to get off your sofa and switch off your TV at the socket the next time you are done watching. Apparently, the idiot box continues to drain your mains of power (10 watts for a CRT TV) even when turned off by a remote. The same goes for any electrical appliance which is connected to an external power supply or which comes with features like remote controls, digital clocks, or LCD panels. To turn them off you really need to turn them off – by unplugging them, or by turning off the mains socket your appliance is connected to. Otherwise the appliance will go into standby mode, drawing small amounts of power even if you are not using it – see that little green light in the corner of your TV? A few watts per appliance may not sound



like too much but given the number of electrical appliances we use in our homes, standby power can really add to overall energy consumption. Just consider this: a cell phone charger plugged into a socket will draw 1 watt of electricity even without the phone plugged in. With a plugged-in phone that is fully charged, it will continue to draw 4.5 watts more. Standby power on mini-stereos, home theatre systems and other household appliances can be between 10 to 15 watts per device, or even more. Studies conducted in the UK and the US have shown that standby power, or ‘vampire power’, accounts for 8 to 10 per cent of total domestic power consumption. Switching off devices at the socket when they are not in use is the most effective way of minimising such power loss. Alternatively, one can make use of surge protectors, or line adaptors. These devices, into which your appliances are plugged, can be switched off, cutting supply to all your appliances in one go. Vampire power contributes to 1 per cent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Switching off to save 30 kWh a month per household can mean upto 550 pounds less of CO2 emissions in the atmosphere per year. A little extra effort may seem inconvenient but if you think of the long, dark winter to come, and the savings you can make on your energy bills, a flick of the switch won’t seem too hard. 🇳🇵



SUPER SAMAY: Locals prepare a feast of samay-baji, a traditional Newari dish, as an offering to the temple of Jwala Mai near Ason last Sunday, on the third day of Dasain.



GOING HIGH-TECH: Election Commission officials click a picture of a local in the Ward office at Machendra Bahal, Kathmandu, last Wednesday. This is part of a campaign to upgrade the voters’ list and issue national identity cards.




MARCHING RESCUERS: The high-altitude police rescue team march past at a program held at the National Police Academy, Maharajganj, on the occasion of 55th Police Day last Monday.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

Before you go out and start blaming climate change for the late monsoon, it bears reminding that autumn is the cyclone season in the Bay of Bengal. What hit us over Dasain was a massive low pressure trough that invaded the Orissa coast and headed straight to Nepal. A smaller system spun off from the mother circulation and headed over to western India, and it is the moisture from that system that brought us the massive thunderstorm on Wednesday night. This lingering moisture will create misty mornings, afternoon buildup, and light localised showers over the midhills into the weekend with snow flurries down to 4,200 m.



FRI	SAT	SUN
		
26-16	25-16	26-17

EVENTS

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*

The Seven Henry Series: In Search of an Ideal Landscape, an exhibition of supracollages by the acclaimed Indic-British artist Syyed Iqbal Geoffrey. *Starts 28 October, 5.30pm, till 17 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, Gallery hours: 11am to 6pm, 12pm to 4pm on Saturdays, 4218048*

Mandala Street Festival 2010, food, music and fun awaits you in Thamel. *22 to 24 October, Mandala Street, Thamel*

Civil-Military Relation in Nepali Context, seminar with Dr Bishnu Pathak from Transcend Peace University, Switzerland. *24 October, 3pm, Martin Chautari, Jeetjung Marga, Thapathali, 4238050, 4102027*

Book discussion on *Nilima ra Gadha Andhyaro*, a collection of short stories by author Anmol Mani Poudel. *26 October, 3pm, Martin Chautari, Jeetjung Marga, Thapathali, 4238050, 4102027*

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

DINING

Ramalaya Tea Room, now open for dinner, experience Chef Mohit's creations from Cider-brined Pork Chops to Guava Cheese, also 10% 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*



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*

Waffles promotion at The Lounge from *12.30pm to 4.00pm everyday*, **Vegetarian Buffet** at The Cafe *every Tuesday from 6.30pm*, and **Arabian Nights** at The Cafe *every Friday from 6.30pm* at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, *4491234, 4489362*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Cafe, enjoy wood-fired pizza with a superb view of Boudha stupa and free wifi, candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night. *Boudha, 2130681*

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*



The Dwarika's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. *Dhulikhel, Rs 3500 (single), Rs 5000 (double), 10 per cent service charge extra, 4479488 for reservations*

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

Whose language is it?

WAYNE AMTZIS

Language for a New Century: contemporary poetry from the Middle East, Asia and beyond, a Norton anthology edited by the poets Tina Chang, Nathalie Handal and Ravi Shankar, presents over 400 poets from 61 countries. These include eight from Nepal: Mohan Koirala, Bhupi Sherchan, Banira Giri, Poorna Vaidya, Manju Kanchuli, Manjul, Bimal Nibha and Toya Gurung. The 700-page book is organised thematically, with the editors identifying nine categories of poems. While reading, I chafed against the limits these categories set, believing that poems are surely multi-themed, and often instead of following the writer in her concerns and creativity, her emotive power and idiomatic awareness, I found myself asking as I read – *where is this poet from?*

The phrase 'Parsed Into Colors' from Vaidya's poem 'What Water Is' precedes the second section of the book, as indicative of the theme of identity. But for Vaidya the focus may have been consciousness and vision. Nibha's 'The Cycle' is tagged here as a poem that "uses a lost bicycle as a metaphor for the rediscovery of a new interiority". Can't a bicycle just be a bicycle and someone who uses and needs it, despite its pitiable state, feel its loss, a loss that tells us much about the conditions where he lives? And what of the aside, when Nibha moves from description to thought? "What kind of place is this/ ...where in the bright light of midday/ a whole life has vanished". Readers coming to this simply stated poem might realise its social implications, and after years of civil strife might take the leap and read "a whole life has vanished" explicitly. Half the poets from Nepal are identified as poets of individuality. Does this reflect the editors' reading rather than the poet's intent as seen within the body of their work or by readers in their own country?

Regardless of how the poems are presented, anyone who engages this provocative collection will be rewarded by its range and diversity and will be, as I have, seduced, confounded, disturbed, entertained, kicked in the gut and called to action and compassion by the many languages of this new century.

The Country Is Yours – contemporary Nepali literature presents 49 writers and poets whose work appeared, according to the translator Manjushree

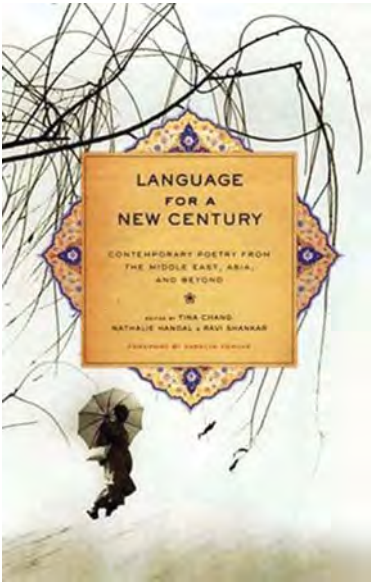
Thapa, before and after "the reestablishment of democracy in 1990, a period of unprecedented free expression in Nepal." Familiar with the Norton format, Thapa organises this collection thematically. Here, within a shared, recognisable history, themes make sense and the short fiction interspersed throughout gives the collection an added depth, leaving the reader with the recognition that it is not only the quality of the writing but the insight into the country that matters.

Whose City Is This? (Yo Sahar Kosko Ho?) comprises Nepali poems in a bilingual edition sponsored by GTZ and Siddhartha Art Gallery. It uses Ulrich Treichel's 'Whose City Is This?', written after the fall of the Berlin

Two poetry collections from Nepal make for harmony, while a vast, rich compendium of Asian poetry risks cacophony

Wall, as a catalyst. Twenty-seven poets appear in Nepali (and Nepal Bhasa) and in translation. Poems by Rajan Murkarang, 'City Of Dreams'; Bhupal Rai, 'This City Till Yesterday'; and Swo Swapnil Smriti, 'Red Brick Jungle' stand out for their powerful voice, perceptive observations and intensity of language. In this collection a single question and example brings forth a range of language, emotion and intent, and a penetrating expression of what it is like to live in Kathmandu.

These two books from Nepal are bound by insights from a common undertaking or a shared history and circumstance. The three poems by Bimal Nibha in *The Country Is Yours* inform each other, as does the work that surrounds them. Individuality and social concern resonate through the language used. Their strengths, like many of the poems in all three collections, are manifold, and no single reading or theme lays claim to their meaning. Failing to first read poetry in its own setting, however, with the author's intent in mind, unmoors the creative mind. The understanding that follows will partake more of air than earth and the insight that flickers there will burn fast and be rootless. 🇳🇵



Language for a New Century, edited by Tina Chang, Nathalie Handal and Ravi Shankar

The Country Is Yours, translated by Manjushree Thapa

Whose City Is This?, translated by Sajag Rana et al

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Food revolution

Development strategy isn't working. Neither is food aid. A farmer-focused policy could solve both these problems.



POLITICALLY
CRACKED

Indu Nepal

World Food Day, a global event meant to raise awareness and stimulate action on hunger, fell right in the middle of our festival of gluttony this year. Nepal's country-seat at the FAO headquarters in Rome was empty as the '1 billion hungry' project was launched. About 4 million of those hungry people are here in Nepal.

Food is basic. Our life and livelihoods are planned around it, if not only for it. It starts from the moment you open your eyes and ends with the big supper at the end of the day when you tell friends and family about the day that has passed.

But imagine waking up everyday with the pain of hunger pangs. Whether you dine at your local momo station or at Soaltee's Al Fresco might be an indicator of status for some but for others, a meal becomes a matter of life and death.

Smart agricultural policies actually go beyond fulfilling this basic need. The World Bank estimates that growth in the agricultural sector is twice as

effective in reducing poverty as growth in other sectors. Brazil and China rose to become important powers in the world arena only after a successful implementation of green revolution techniques to boost agricultural yields. Despite similar gains, India, while enjoying comparable economic growth and technological advances in many areas, is still bogged down by the predicament of how to feed the 421 million who live below the poverty line.

That political parties are trying to outdo each other with creative food and agricultural policies is a sign of how seriously India takes the issue. The message is clear. A country needs to feed its people, or, as the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development said in Rome last week, "it has no right to sovereignty."

There are some examples we can learn from. After the 1994 genocide it looked like Rwanda would take decades to heal its wounds and get on the path to successful nationhood. With an aggressive program to boost production through use of improved seeds, better crop husbandry, and the merger of small farms for better yields, Rwanda has made incredible progress in the agricultural

sector. In 2007, agricultural growth reached 15 per cent, up from 0.7 per cent in 2006. Rwandan coffee exports rose from zero to USD 8 million between 2001 and 2006. An average Rwandan now receives 2,176 calories a day, a remarkable shift from its pre-green revolution calorie intake of 1,000.

What worked for China and Rwanda will not work for Nepal for, along with land ownership issues, agriculture is not free from the shackles of politics and bureaucracy. Infrastructure is key, storage and drying facilities are needed, and when production is ample, farmers need to be connected to the market. Jumla may produce juicy apples but it will be of no use to them and the nation if only Chinese apples find their way to consumers in Kathmandu.

It boils down to the fact that 65 per cent of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihood and one third of GDP is attributed to agriculture. A successful development strategy should take these numbers into account and boosting food production should be an important national policy. As much as breakfast is necessary to tackle the day ahead of you, feeding the country is necessary to achieve our other national goals.

FIONA LEDGER

I know of women in the UK who pretend to be less successful, less clever, less happy than they are just to make their menfolk feel better. I know of professional women in Nepal who change personality in front of their parents-in-law. There are others who refuse to play that game. What happens then? Listen to the BBC's *Katha Mitho Sarangiko* radio series to find out.

Binita lives in Kathmandu. She's westernised, educated, intellectually hungry. She defies tradition, marries out of her ethnic group, and wants to write the greatest thesis on Gandharba music known to mankind. Compare her story with Manika's. She lives in the Tarai. She has no love interest. She has more modest aims: she wants to study beyond SLC and stay with her widowed father. She bows to tradition when the pressure to marry her off builds up.

Binita's father is dead, she has no brothers, and although her mother grumbles at her behaviour, she lets Binita have her way. Binita has the choices of a modern urban woman, but these choices are not easy to manage. Her privileged lifestyle buys privacy; privacy leads to pre-marital sex with her boyfriend, Ashish, and an unplanned pregnancy.

This being modern, urban Kathmandu, love wins through and they get married. It's not long, however, before Ashish is under pressure from his large and dominating family to produce a boy. Alas for Binita, she gives birth to a daughter. When she gets pregnant again, Ashish suggests a scan to find out the sex of the baby. 'We can always try again if it's a girl,' he says softly, and Binita realises he sees abortion as a possibility.

Her world collapses around her. From being a serious student of folk music, she now feels reduced to a boy baby-producing



DOWRY STRESS: Rakesh, played by Madan Thakur, and his daughter, Manika, played by Rina Yadav

As for Manika, she has none of the privileges of a modern woman, living as she does in a small farming community in the Tarai. All she has is the very tender affection of her widower father, Rakesh. With no son, and a daughter who should already be married, he is a fragile outsider in the community.

Rakesh tries to delay Manika's marriage, and rejects the approaches of a well-off father with a hooligan son who is infatuated with Manika. But father and daughter become the victim of the son's campaign of harassment. Fearful that he cannot protect his daughter on his own, he finally gives Manika in marriage to another family with a heavy heart.

Manika, who agrees to the marriage out of love for her father, finds her husband empty-headed and dull. Her mother-in-law launches pitiless tirades against her for bringing a small dowry. Isolated and miserable, Manika imagines – wrongly as it happens – that her parents-in-law want to kill her. Here, too, the resolution lies with changing the thinking of her husband and his family. This is achieved by linking the self-interest of the parents-in-law to Manika's well-being.

Men may behave badly, it's true, but they are also victims. I like to think that a third role lies before them for the taking: as pioneers of change, weaving a new pattern of behaviour in the social tapestry that pleases their wives, their daughters, their sisters, their daughters-in-law, and themselves.

Men behaving badly

machine. But she doesn't take it lying down. She complains, she protests, she stops being a compliant wife. Small domestic issues become the focus for bitter recriminations. The marriage becomes toxic, and when Ashish turns to drink and forces himself

drunkenly on Binita one night, she retaliates with accusations of marital rape. The marriage has reached rock bottom.

Shivani Singh Tharu's story is a serious investigation into how marriage can be caught in the vice of modernity and tradition. The

resolution, for Binita and Ashish, requires the latter to reinvent tradition, and delink his sense of status from needing a son. Just as important, he realises how much her academic work outside the marriage is a key to her happiness within the marriage.

bbc.nepalidrama.com

Listen to both the stories

The 2nd part of Manika and Kishan's Tale goes out on 22 Oct at 8.15pm on 103FM

nepalitimes.com

Who owns a woman's body? #507

Drama in real life #384



TENSION: Binita, played by Shivani Singh Tharu who also wrote the story, with Khagendra Lamichhane as Ashish.



ANGER: Binita and Ashish work things out

Farming Karnali



Toofan Neupane in Jumla, translated from *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2 October-1 November

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Every year thousands of men from Karnali travel to India (going to Kalapahad as they call it here) to work as porters and labourers. But Padam Mahat of Jumla left a well-paying job in Kathmandu to return to his village in Mahatgaun just so he could grow apples. Today his farm does not just have organic apples but fruits of all kinds that are cultivated around the world. “Now that the road has come to Jumla, I am less worried about the market,” he says.

Mahat is the first man from Karnali to pass the SLC (School leaving Certificate), following which he came to Kathmandu to further his education. He wanted to become a pilot. But a visit to Himachal Pradesh in India, while working for the Land Reforms Office, changed everything. He saw how cultivation of fruits and medicinal herbs had transformed the region. Mahat had always been pained by how his classmates in Kathmandu looked

down on him because he was from Jumla. He thought this was his chance to change things. After the trip, Mahat headed back to his village, this time for good. It's been 28 years, and Mahat has single-mindedly pursued apple farming in this time.

Starting with five apple trees on one ropani (508.72 m²) of land, Mahat now has more than 5,000 apple trees of 23 types growing over 110 ropanis (5.5 hectares) of land. He also grows 7 types of pears, 11 types of walnuts and 3 types of peaches and chillies on his farm. He has cultivated cumin, fennel seeds and medicinal herbs as well. Upto 20 people work on his farm, which has become a destination for study tours for local farmers. In fact many farmers now practice improved terrace farming, which they learnt from Mahat.

Mahat's youngest son is planning to expand operations and purchase a machine for processing apples. The father-son duo have established Nabin Organic Multipurpose Cooperative and are now looking into working with other farmers like them.

No Dasain for finance staffers



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Kantipur, 20 October

क्रान्तिपुर

Staff members of the finance ministry missed out on the Dasain fun this year. “We were busy preparing the budget as per the direction of the prime minister,” senior economic advisor to the ministry Keshab Acharya said. The ministry was

closed only a day before Tika. “The finance minister, secretaries and all staff members have been toiling hard,” Acharya said. “An eight-month budget will be presented soon.”

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal had directed the ministry to present the budget by 26 October, fearing an economic collapse. He also held

consultations with leaders of political parties, ex-ministers and businessmen, asking them to cooperate. Although all preparations had been made, only one third of the budget could be passed last July owing to Maoist obstruction.

Acharya said that if the budget was not passed soon, the country's economy will come tumbling down. “After a month, the government will not be able to support its employees, Maoist combatants or even emergency services like hospitals,” he said.

Meanwhile the Maoists have not budged from their stance on the budget. Maoist leader Dev Gurung has warned that any attempt by the government to pass the budget would be considered a violation of the comprehensive peace accord.

Chairman of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce Surendra Bir Malakar, however, has warned of a nationwide agitation by the business community if the budget is not presented next week. “We will now take to the streets to make way for the budget,” he said.

Maoists to buy Khanna Garment

Madhav Basnet in *Nepal*, 10 October

नेपाल

The UCPN (Maoist) is on a drive to amass as much property as it can. The Maoist leadership and its sister organisation, the All Nepal Trade Union Federation, are preparing to buy Khanna Garment Factory at Balkumari soon after Tihar. But the party is supposedly planning a final revolution. What need does it have for fixed properties if it is heading into a revolution?

The Maoists got hold of Khanna Garment soon after they came into the peace process. Khanna Garment was put up for auction after its owner, Kewal Krishna Khanna, failed to pay the bank loan on his factory. But the Maoists occupied the premises before anyone could take part in the auction, leaving the bank helpless. It has been used as an office and residence for YCL cadres since, and over 50 party members still reside there.

The Maoist Party has now decided to use Khanna Garment as its Trade Union office, which was displaced from Paris Danda in Koteswor once that site became party headquarters. Sources say that the Maoists are now planning to buy Khanna Garment, and are seeking to collect Rs 30.5 million for the purpose.

Nepali in my heart

Rajendra Bimal's acceptance speech on receiving the Jagadamba Shree, reprinted in *Nagarik*, 11 October

नागरिक

I am sure this prize hasn't been given to me because of geography, race, religion, relation or any other narrow-minded reason. It has been given to me because I am a Nepali. When an entire Nepali nation flowers in the heart, that is Nepaliness. It doesn't recognize ethnicity, community, territory, or other descriptions. The meaning of having Nepal in your heart is that your heart hurts when another part of Nepal is in pain. This prize has given me and other writers the message that our creations need to cry out loud about the pain in the Nepali soul. Words should work their magic to wipe the tears of sorrow from the faces of Nepalis and change them to smiles.

Writers need to show independence and integrity, and adhere to a higher moral calling. The 'form' in our writing must reflect contemporary life, its complexity and sensitivity. We must combine form with function and exercise aesthetic judgement, aesthetic expression, aesthetic pleasure and harmony. These are our creative responsibilities to the nation and society.

I dream that one day Nepal's many languages will all be robust and rich and contribute to a solid and united Nepali nation. Incorporating the vocabulary of other national languages will enlarge the mother soul of Nepali, and allow it to reflect Nepali society in all its diversity and facets.

For more than half a century, I have nurtured the dream that Nepali literature will be a rainbow whole of many hues that reflects this country's true essence. When I see the explosion of creativity among Nepali writers, I feel assured that I will see my dream fulfilled before I leave this world. Thank you.



Political parties

क्रान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 13 October

"We are not a failed state yet"

A career bureaucrat with the government of Nepal, Bhojraj Pokharel came out of retirement to chair the Election Commission overseeing the CA elections in April 2008. He was recently appointed to a UN Panel to monitor the upcoming self-determination referenda for Southern Sudan and the Abyei area. *Nepali Times* spoke to Pokharel before he left.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Nepali Times: Tell us about your recent appointment.

Bhojraj Pokharel: Sudan is home to the longest running conflict in the world. In Southern Sudan alone, two million people have lost their lives, and four million have been displaced. Darfur in Northern Sudan is another hotspot. The Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) signed a peace agreement in 2005 which stipulated that Southern Sudan would hold a referendum to decide whether it would remain part of Sudan. Another referendum will be held in Abyei on whether it will remain with Northern Sudan or become a part of Southern Sudan.

The panel will assess the political situation leading up to the referendum on 9 January, use the good offices of the Secretary-General of the UN to build confidence among the parties, and maintain credibility during and after the referendum in order to prevent

an adverse environment. **What lessons might be drawn from your own experiences here?** Obviously it's a different context, even though it's also a conflict situation. I can share examples and we can copy the modality of the processes.

President Bashir was charged with war crimes by the International Criminal Court, and there are fears the peace process could break down. How will that affect your work? There are two parties in the peace process: the SPLA and President Bashir's National Congress Party. We can't have a successful referendum if they don't work together. The rapport international players build with the parties will be important.

You are the first Nepali chosen for a UN panel of this stature. What was your reaction when you first heard the news?

I was delighted that the international community recognised Nepal and thought we might be able to help others in their peace processes. Whether this trust will continue will depend on my work. That is more humbling. There is a huge international interest in Sudan, including superpower interest. Add to this the complexity of Sudan's internal politics, then the

work becomes very challenging. **International agencies like the UN are often resented by local actors. Are you worried about that?**

There is a gap between understanding and reality. If we talk about UNMIN, there seem to be very few who understand its exact mandate, even among those who write about it. But when we fail at something we are quick to point a finger saying, "What's it monitoring, then?" So the credibility of the organisation isn't just based on its performance, it's also based on perceptions.

A recent report by International Crisis Group said, "Nepal is a dysfunctional state by demand." You were a life-long bureaucrat; are we a lost cause?

When I was at Harvard for a Master's degree last year, I was often asked, "Is Nepal a failed state, or on its way to becoming one?" I said we are not a failed state but we are moving towards the red line, and faster now. But whether we become failed or not depends on how we react.

Does that mean you have lost faith in the peace process?

I am hopeful. In the past, our

leaders have always come through at the last minute. The fact is there are no alternatives. I believe that when that moment arrives, the leaders will understand that some will rise and some will get crushed. If they see their decline, they will change their ways. That is the red line I was talking about. I hope we won't fall any further and become a failed state.

Some say there is too much outside interest in Nepal and our politics might no longer be in our hands.

Listen, the happiest day of my life was election day on April 10, when I went to a polling booth and found a long line at 7 in the morning. The outpouring of people made me realise that there was a hunger for peace. But we killed the national aspiration. I didn't even imagine our leaders could act so immaturely.

If I don't look after my house, my neighbours will peek in. If the activities of my household disturb my neighbour, he will be interested. The interest can be one of help or intervention. We still have time but I think we killed the national aspiration for peace, and this makes it easier for other people to be involved.

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Once is not enough



All is not lost. Now that elections for prime minister are certain to go on till infinity, it is time to turn our attention to more important matters at hand like Nepal making it once more to the Guinness Book. Look at it this way, at least Khagendra did the nation proud by being officially declared the littlest man in the world. And Nepal Tourism Board got its new mascot for Visit Nepal Year 2011 with the slogan: “Small Is Beautiful: One Is Not Enough”. While we are at it, we could also nominate Khagendra to the post of prime minister and kill two khasis with one stroke.

Someone should start seriously psychoanalysing this country’s infatuation with world records. The latest is a Nepali aspirant to a world record in bouncing a basketball. The next thing you know someone in Dharan is going to invent the **world’s fastest clock** and try to make it to the Guinness Book. Or another dude is going to claim to be the first person to climb Mt Everest in his sleep.

So, after being ridiculed for our inability to elect a leader, we should turn this into a positive thing and enter Ram Chandra Poudel in the Guinness Book for losing the most prime ministerial elections, and make him brand ambassador for VNY 2011 as well.

Speaking of which, there are barely two months to go for one million visitors to start streaming into Nepal. But at least we can heave a sigh of relief that we have completed the new Turd World Golden Gate at the entrance to the airport. Now, we are really ready. Tourists should not be alarmed by the sight of heavily armed soldiers at the airport, they aren’t there to put you out of your misery.

Our airport has been designed to give an authentic taste, feel and smell of Nepal as soon as you arrive. The two-hour wait for immigration and visas, and another hour for your baggage, will set you in the right frame of mind for what to expect outside. The authorities have arranged for the world’s one and only **Antique Taxi Service** at the departure concourse, and no cab less than 40 years old is allowed to take you into the city. The Municipality has been smart in arranging traffic jams all over the capital so that it is impossible for you to see Swayambhu, Boudha and Patan in one day. This means the average stay of visitors during VNY will go up from the current 2.75 days to at least 4 days.

Alert readers will also have noticed that the interior of the domestic airport has been especially redesigned to resemble the **Balkhu Wholesale Goat Market**. Tourists wait four hours for the fog to clear so they can go on their one-hour Mountain Flights, and CAAN has cleverly removed all functioning toilets to give the domestic airport a more authentic aroma of Real Nepal. The international departure area, too, has been revamped. A million tourists will have to go through exactly what they went through on arrival, but in reverse order, leaving a lasting impression on dear departing visitors so they’ll be tempted to keep coming back for more masochistic punishment.

Actual Headline	Paraphrased Headline
Leaders Underline Consensus	Consensus Only If I Get To Lead
We Will Work With Others	We Will Finish Off the Others
We’re Not Against Budgets: Maoists	We’re Only Against This Budget
We Are Ready To Compromise	Compromise Only If We Get Our Way
“I Don’t Want To Be PM”: Dahal	“Don’t Count Me Out Yet”: Dahal
“I Don’t Want To Be PM”: Khanal	“Watch Me Become PM”: Khanal
“I don’t want to be PM”: Poudel	“I don’t ever want to let go”: Poudel
UNMIN Bone in Govt Gullet	Delhi Attempts Heimlich Maneuvre
Maoists To Be Flexible	Maoists Flex Muscles

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