

NEPALI Times

#531

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16 pages

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Most Nepalis seem to have a common hope—a constitution and the completion of the peace process—but how to get there without crash-landing? The far western district of Humla stands as a symbol of Nepal's underdevelopment, but the reality is different from how it has been presented in the media to date. Many in Humla maintain

Safe landing

that they are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves, if only government facilitated irrigation along the Karnali flats. Nepal, too, is no tiny Himalayan nation incapable of taking care of itself, doomed to failure and constant interference from its giant neighbours. Every week, another entrepreneur or social activist proves that Nepalis are capable of incredible things. Surely, then, we can move on the peace process so as to prepare the ground for a safe landing. Then we can truly harvest the fruits of our labour.

Zdenek and Michal Thoma visited Manang, thirty years apart. Here's what they saw.

p7

Gemunu Amarasinghe captures the sorrow of war in his exhibition of images from the Sri Lankan civil war

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Destination Humla: One of the many delights of the Great Himalaya Trail, Humla will surprise Nepalis as much as foreign visitors

p12-13



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STEP IT UP

The budget has come and gone, as has the much hyped but ultimately disappointing (for all sides) Maoist plenum. With a flurry of international (and completely pointless) junkets under their ever-stretching belts, our politicians are delaying getting down to brass tacks. As the High Level Taskforce continues to sift through the bones of constitutional contention (with mixed results), we may say at least something is getting done, even though the biggest battles will be over federal restructuring. But a more pressing headline now looms – the departure of UNMIN come 15 January, 2011.

Integration of the Maoist ex-combatants has been the sticking point ever since the peace process began, and is the root of mistrust among the political parties. All manner of numbers have been bandied about, but the reluctance of the Maoists to commit to a figure has stymied progress. The PLA's participation at the Gorkha plenum has all but convinced the mainstreamers that integration is the do-or-die issue.

But criticism from the PLA itself for the party's inability to decide on integration and rehabilitation, amid suspicions that it is being used for political gain by the Maoist leadership, should hearten those who lamented their presence at the plenum. This, along with the appointment of retired general Balanand Sharma as head of the Special Committee Secretariat, provides just the sort of momentum we need to resolve the major issues of integration, and could pave the way for a smooth transition once UNMIN leaves.

If we fail to even decide on numbers and transfer the



KIRAN PANDAY

chain of command to the Special Committee by 15 January, then the departure of UNMIN could lead to chaos. It will encourage the resurgence of hardline factions within the Maoists and the other parties, who will either continue to make unfeasible demands of the integration process, or dispense with the principle of integration altogether.

Madhav Kumar Nepal is the head of the Special Committee. It is incumbent upon him to step up to the plate and step it up. If he wants to have anything of a legacy at all, then successful integration will prove he has more *cojones* than what he has demonstrated so far as a lame duck prime minister.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalimes.com

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

The Maoists are spoilt children who just demand and demand unrealistically ('Mission impossible', Prashant Jha, #530). They won't give up the threat of violence as they know without it people would rise up against them. Maoist leaders are also scared of their PLA, and know ultimately they must dismantle it and rehabilitate these cadres. They can't say that they will be inducted into the security forces or rehabilitated so they need to bring in the notion of democratising the Nepal Army and combining the two forces as equals into a new force. What a load of baloney! What really does it mean to democratise an army? Asking soldiers to vote on whether to fight or not? What the Maoists mean is that the army should be under their control, which ain't gonna happen.

I think things are turning against the Maoists. India won't support them anymore, the parties are hardening their stance against them, and the Maoist leaders are more divided on how they should move forward. The focus should be on transforming the Maoists into a civilian party that doesn't need to have an army or a paramilitary YCL. It's no point discussing the constitution if this does not happen.

rishav

- Our problem is that we indulge too much in scholastic masturbation and 'shashtriya' punditry (perhaps outward manifestations of the deep-seated 'Bahunbaad' syndrome?) rather than standing firmly on ground realities. We love to play with imported jargon both in party manifestos and public discourse. We are obsessed with feeding the people with empty rhetoric and tall slogans. What do 'democratising', 'civilian supremacy', 'revolutionary reform', 'dominant

nationalities', and 'mainstreaming' mean?

We need to construct alternative discourses and narratives if we are to succeed as a nation. Why don't our politicians and journalists talk about institution building; character building through self-discipline and abiding by the law of the land; becoming a 'model' citizen; learning from native and indigenous values; doing shramadaan (voluntary) work; community building and networking among villages and cities; planting trees and protecting forests and water resources; respecting our elders and forefathers; protecting women, children, and the disabled; campaigning to eradicate illiteracy; conducting free health camps; boosting production of key staples; feeding the homeless; fostering 'sadbhaav' (goodwill) in our communities, neighbourhoods, and workplaces; in another words, healing the soul of the entire nation?

Why are our politicians, intellectuals, journalists not engaged in fundamental civil discourses such as cultivating the attributes of self-respect, self-reliance and self-transformation to live and prosper collectively as a proud nation? Aren't these values truly foundational for any democracy and republic to evolve? Why has our leadership failed to instill self-confidence in our people? Enough of revolution, people want change!

Anonymous

- I am merely speculating here but a one-party Nepali state seems highly improbable. Factors such as geography, ethnic diversity, settlement patterns, wealth inequality, resource scarcity, and geopolitics may mean that no one group will have enough leverage to control the state for quite some time. Geography and ethnic divisions are the biggest worry if Nepal does become a one-party

Maoist state. As the comrades showed, mountains favour insurgents. The party's policy seems to be to preempt this problem by arguing for universal military training for every Nepali citizen above 18. If every citizen is made a part of the state and given a common identity as a soldier of the state, then the risks from ethnic divisions may be reversed. But again, going back to what Prashant said, the intention of order is not enough, one needs to have the capability to create order as well. Are the Maoists capable of stopping young officers from joining militias after they finish their army training? Can a party that cannot keep its cadres in check keep an entire citizen army in check?

Battispatali

SUNNY DEBATES

Solar power still needs to make a breakthrough in technology in terms of cost ('Bring home the sunshine', Paavan Mathema, #530). The cost of installation is still high and people with limited income will think twice before installing it in their houses. The energy from solar is no doubt one of the cleanest, but when it comes to disposal of batteries, it is still an issue for the environment.

However, in a country with abundant water resources, solar is not the ultimate answer for providing energy to industries since it depends on the number of hours of sunshine. If it needs back up from generators when there is no sunshine it does not make sense. Instead hydropower, small and big, should be advocated since it is more reliable and less expensive. However, inept and inefficient agencies and power mafias like the NEA should be disbanded and handed over to the private sector, which could manage production and distribution well.

Shyam Sharma

- I have a solar back-up installed at my house and it is working perfectly fine for me. My electricity bills went down considerably, compared to when I was using inverters. I'm not the techno-savvy kind so for me, the bottom line is that power cuts are here to stay and I don't want to stay in the dark without any light. I could get a generator, yes, but who's going to pay for all the diesel it consumes? Charging batteries from the main line and using inverters consumes more electricity, which in turn increases loadshedding. I'm quite satisfied with my solar power. And as a country, why spend on thermal power from India, when you can do something locally on your own? Although the initial cost is expensive, there are no bills at the end of every month.

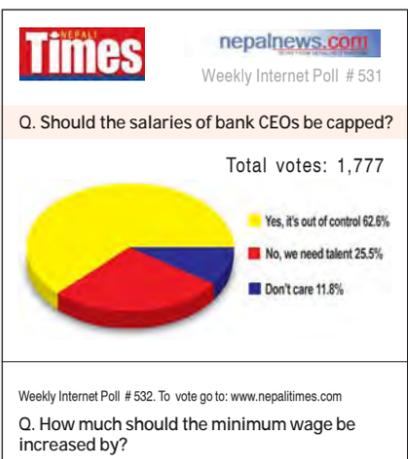
sunny

PLASTIC-FREE

Just start a nationwide campaign to ban plastic bags! ('Plastic out, students in', #530). Take your own shopping bags and get plastic out of Nepal. It's the same in France, if you go to a supermarket, there are no plastic bags available anymore. Only paper bags or carton boxes. This is not polluting!

Nepal plastic-free? Bravo!

Bobo Wolf



Better, not good



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The success of any political-constitutional system is based on four key elements.

To survive, it has to be able to manage contradictions in society. These could range from transactional but unequal relationships between capital-labour and landlord-tillers to the competition between different population segments for government largesse. For this purpose, states use coercion while simultaneously creating mechanisms to settle disputes. If the system fails to strike a balance, and weighs in too heavily in favour of one group, it will face challenges.

Second, the system has to provide tangible benefits to multiple constituencies who will then develop a stake in the larger framework. This involves engineering an elite compact and getting those on the periphery to buy into the idea of the state as something that will lift them up from state of oppression.

Third, politicians need to

keep an ear to the ground, sense shifts in public opinion, and respond to changing aspirations. And most importantly, all the political forces need to feel locked in to the constitutional order, and follow the rules of the game. Once they feel there is no alternative, the possibility of a systemic challenge lessens.

The 1990 order fell because it did not meet all these conditions. NC and UML failed to sense brewing conflicts in the hills and then responded in a totally ham-handed way, with the king adding to the mess later. There was little institutional coherence between the pillars of the constitution.

The discontent among those outside Kathmandu, those outside the Bahun-Chhetri fold, and the poor only grew when they perceived the system to be synonymous with open loot for the Kathmandu-centric establishment. The pie did not grow rapidly enough, and was not distributed evenly enough. Citizens felt they did not have security, and for most, the newfound liberty was not translating into material improvement.

Some of the perceptions may

or may not have been true, but there were few left to defend the system. The elites had characteristically spread their bets – keeping channels open with all sides with a willingness to swing either way depending on where power resided at any moment. The depth (or lack of it) of their conviction was evident when palace loyalists turned into die-hard republicans in less than

the districts. Many have called it appeasement, but there is a reason why there has been no Madhesi movement or major ethnic ferment over the past two years. The system has accepted the legitimacy of their issues, co-opted some of their leaders, and promised to institutionalise changes. There has also been an unprecedented democratisation of political society and public space

group interests. The latent anger among Madhesi and Janjati leaders who see Bahun-Chhetri leaders deliberately dragging their feet on the process will also complicate matters.

Add to this the shrinking numbers of those who defend the 2006 system. It was the fear of the Maoists, and the recognition that monarchical rule was not sustainable, that drove the elites to back the peace accord. But with the monarchy gone, and the Maoist aura dissipating, the yearning for strongman rule is back once again. At the popular level, the disdain for politicians is returning too. If the defining cry across the country five years ago was for peace, the one universal demand now is jobs. The failure of the present system to generate employment is discrediting it thoroughly.

There is no organised force to fill the vacuum, nor a clear roadmap of what an alternative arrangement will look like. The only reason the system lasts is because such a large segment of the population has seceded from it – look at the transnational Nepali proletariat.

All of this means that the coming failure of Nepal's experiment with peace and constitutionalism may not result in outright confrontation. But the grammar of anarchy, to borrow Ambedkar's evocative phrase, is in place.

The 2006 system is an improvement, but only stands because so many Nepalis have seceded from it

a year. The Maoists did the rest, by convincing a vast majority the 'sarkar' had to be overthrown, and showed this was possible by attacking state authority.

These lessons are instructive because it is time to ask where the 2006 transitional system stands.

The new arrangement has done a better job of addressing demands than any other previous system. Relatively speaking, there is a degree of peace and calm in

– with newer groups asserting claim over resources at the local level. All of them have a stake in ensuring that this framework is not abandoned for the unknown.

But the problems are all too apparent. The political polarisation is not merely a Madhav Nepal-Dahal or Ram Chandra-Dahal battle. It is a reflection of the inability of the system to reconcile contradictions between political forces that represent different classes and

THIS WEEK

Hike again

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has raised the prices of petroleum products for the fifth time this year. Petrol now costs Rs 88 per litre, diesel and kerosene Rs 68 per litre, and a cooking gas cylinder costs Rs 1,325. NOC has cited a road tax imposed by the government and the rise in price of crude oil in the international market as reasons for the price hike. NOC has long been claiming it is running at a loss – Rs 170 million per month at the latest count – but sparked controversy in August by attempting to distribute a Rs 19 million bonus to its employees. The decision was quickly withdrawn once the Public Accounts Committee and the CIAA issued directives to the contrary.



Pascoe visits

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe held several high-level meetings after arriving in Kathmandu Friday morning for a two-day visit.

His meetings revolved around the peace process, UNMIN's exit, and the role of the United Nations after UNMIN leaves. Pascoe expressed the UN's willingness to support Nepal's peace process after UNMIN's tenure ends. While talking to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, he expressed concerns about the issues of army integration and constitution writing. Dahal is said to have assured Pascoe of his party's commitment in both areas.

Pascoe was in Nepal for the second time since the UN Security Council decided in September to extend UNMIN's tenure for the final time, until 15 January 2011.

Army objects

Nepal Army (NA) has strongly condemned the report of a French epidemiologist that has linked the cholera epidemic in Haiti with the Nepali peace-keeping forces deployed there. "We strongly condemn the making of such allegations with no firm evidence or facts," NA spokesman Ramindra Chhetri said, adding that the report was 'hypothetical'.

Many Haitians believe that the Nepali troops deployed there are responsible for triggering a cholera outbreak that has killed over 2,000 people. The unpublished report became public after an unnamed source leaked it to AFP. The research conducted by cholera expert Renaud Piarroux has reportedly traced the infection to Nepali soldiers serving in Haiti.



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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

It's no secret that international carmakers are keen to enter the Nepali market. What's more interesting is how Nepali names seem to have caught the fancy of carmakers as well. Only a month ago, Ford launched an SUV named Everest. Now, Skoda has launched Yeti, a

compact SUV, for carbuyers in Nepal and across the world. "Nepal is a relatively small market but it is important to us," says Oliver Glaser, Sales Director of Skoda's International Assembly Projects (pictured above). "Our actions here are parallel to what we do in India

and have been more successful." Yeti was launched in India only two weeks ago.

Glaser expressed satisfaction with Skoda's partnership with Morang Auto Works (MAW) and the way Skoda's brand has been presented in Nepal. In its two years here, the European carmaker has been selling the high-end sedans Laura, Octavia, and Fabia in the small car segment. With Yeti, Skoda will enter the lucrative market for SUVs in Nepal. "We expect a good response on Yeti. In fact, we sold eight units even before the launch," says Vishnu Agrawal of MAW. Glaser and Agrawal anticipate selling 100 cars within the year.

The sturdy-looking Yeti has a ground clearance of 180mm and is fitted with a rough road package of upgraded shock absorbers, as well as a protective underbody coating like all of Skoda's cars. The SUV gives mileage of 8-10kms on city roads and 12kms on the highway. The new model will now be showcased alongside earlier ones in Skoda's showroom in Thapathali.

Bank of the year

Nepal Investment Bank received The Bankers Award-2010 from the Banker Magazine. This is the fourth time that NIBL has been honoured with this award.

Grand entry

CG Automobiles has introduced Maruti Suzuki's new Wagon-R VXI with a roadshow in Kathmandu. The 998cc model has 165mm ground clearance and 18.9kmp/l fuel efficiency. It is priced at Rs 1,921,000 and is available in 6 different colours.

Anniversary

Vaidya's Organization of Industries and Trading Houses (VOITH) has entered into its 44th year of operations. VOITH started its operations as the authorised distributor of Toyota Motors and now owns over a dozen industries and business houses.

For men

Dabur Nepal has launched PROstyle Dandruff Control Hair Oil for men. It is available in packs of 75ml and 150ml, priced at Rs 40 and Rs 75 respectively.

Platinum cheers

McDowell's No 1 has launched 100 per cent grain-based McDowell's No 1 Platinum whisky. It will be available in 750ml, 375ml and 180ml packs, priced at Rs 730, Rs 370 and Rs 190 respectively.

Kumari meets

Kumari Bank organised its 10th Annual General Meeting and announced a 22.51 per cent increment in its net profits during the last fiscal year. The meeting approved a cash dividend of 12 per cent to its shareholders.

NIC grows

NIC Bank held its 13th Annual General Meeting. The bank's net profits have increased by 42 per cent in the last fiscal year. The meeting approved distribution of a 26.32 per cent cash dividend to its shareholders.



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DFID, the Department for International Development, is the part of the UK Government that manages Britain's aid to poor countries. Our work is focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals - the United Nations targets for fighting poverty that must be met by 2015. We work with the governments of poor countries, charities, and international organisations to find lasting solutions to the global problem of poverty.

DFID Nepal is responsible for managing the British Government's contribution to development in Nepal, set out in our country business plan¹. Its objectives are to (a) Support a sustainable and inclusive political settlement (b) Help build a more capable, accountable and responsive state, (c) Promote inclusive, low carbon, economic growth and better jobs for the poor (d) Reduce the vulnerability of the poor and improve their resilience to climatic shocks. This plan is currently under revision, but is expected to continue its emphasis on management of natural resources and climate change.

To implement these plans DFID requires an experienced adviser to work on Climate Change and Natural Resources programmes and provide cross-cutting advice on environmental issues to the office, including South Asian regional issues. The focus will be on supporting the government and its development partners develop and implement a strategic plan for addressing climate change and improve management of natural resources for the benefit of the poor. This is an exciting and fast moving area of work that will give the successful applicant the chance to help shape Nepal's response to climate change, ensure the sustainable development of Nepal's natural resources and above all reduce the vulnerability and poverty of the most excluded people in Nepal.

Expertise and skills

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Closing date for applications is Friday, 24th December 2010.

¹<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/nepal-country-plan.pdf>



Admissions Open

Application forms for Grade I for the academic year 2011 will be distributed from December 13 - 15, 2010. School visits will also be arranged during this time.

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Business reporting 101

A CEO's hobbies are no guide to his company's business strategy



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Business reporting is getting competitively better in Nepal. There are already two broadsheet dailies that focus solely on business and the economy. Recently, I had a chance to sit down with a few young reporters and talk about how they might want to practice their craft. Here's a list of what came up:



1. Learn to read, interpret and analyse the basic financial statements – cash flows, profit and loss statements and balance sheets – of a company. If you can add and subtract, you can pretty much learn all the accounting that you need to know to do your job.

Few Nepali business reporters seem to know how to take apart a company's financial statements, and they do their readers a great disservice when they lack this skill. Mastering basic accounting (and this can be done by taking a course for a month at any institute in Putali Sadak) is one way an ambitious reporter can differentiate herself when reporting on public limited companies.

2. Decide what kind of a reporter you want to be. If you want to be taken seriously, leave the lifestyle reporting to your less ambitious peers. Often, I see Nepali journalists being taken for a ride by CEOs and business managers. It's no use wasting your time interviewing business heads about their villages, their schooling, their favourite gym, the music they listen to, their spouses, their hobbies, their self-reported early struggles, and then using such details as the meat of your reporting.

When you ask a business manager to tell his story, his tendency is to put a nice spin on the story to make him a great hero, when the verifiable truth could be utterly boring. Sure, your publication needs those lifestyle stories to get the advertisements. Still, tread carefully. There is a line between being known for writing only puffery and for good reporting.

3. Do not rush to ask a banker or an accountant questions related to macroeconomics (GDP, trade, employment, etc). For macroeconomics, first ask several economists, who may well disagree with one another. Ask them for data and data sources. Ask them to explain their reasoning, and understand it yourself first. If the economists cannot explain their reasoning in clear, logical language, then don't be intimidated: chances are they themselves probably don't know what they are talking about, and are using jargon to fool you. Do not be intimidated by titles, fancy university degrees, and expert knowledge.

You'd be surprised how many so-called experts bluff about topics they have no idea about. In any case, your job, as a natural self-learner, is to translate the complicated world of business for your readers. So, push your 'ask follow-up questions' button repeatedly until you understand what is what.

4. Always ask yourself: how is this story in the interest of the reader? Always try to have that 'what do the consumers think' angle. This helps break 'big' stories down to the level of the 'ordinary' individuals who are your readers.

5. Never publish anonymous letters and allegations. In any town, there is no shortage of people who have scores to settle with one another. Often, they use you to get even with their enemies. You can add fuel to the fire, and revel in self-serving *wah-wah*. Choose a higher road: focus on your credibility for the long, long term.

6. Never write an entire report based on one person's remark or a press conference put out by a company that wines and dines you. Take a skeptical approach, dig deeper. Talk to analysts, competitors, suppliers, regulators, and report in ways that you'd be proud of five years from now.

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MY TAKE

Damakant Jayshi

Against the wind

Imagining we can influence the relationship between Nepal and China is hubris

SALZBURG, Austria – The world is debating how to narrow down differences among countries and get essential work done on trade and business and cooperation on important matters like climate change. Meanwhile, the largest party in parliament here in Nepal, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), is conjuring up ways to drive a wedge between China and India, two of Asia's rising and dominant powers. At a recent seminar on 'The Future of Asian Integration and Security in the 21st Century: Sharing Experience on Multilateralism and Institution-Building from Europe', scholars, foreign ministry officials, and experts from Asia, Europe and the US discussed on minimising the tension in the South China Sea, narrowing the growing animosity between China and Japan, and avenues for cooperation in ASEAN as well as South Asia. Of course, it was not unusual to see national positions being restated

by scholars from 'rival' countries. But there was a willingness to explore and debate ideas and honest attempts to analyse what ails Asia, particularly its south, east and southeast regions (the Middle East was not discussed). After all, Japan and China, and India and China, are still doing business despite existing territorial disputes. For us Nepalis, the growth of our neighbours – China and India – should be a wake-up call to the fact that we are lagging behind, and seriously. Their economies, growing so robustly, are the envy of the world. Their bilateral trade (expected to exceed US\$60 billion in 2010) has defied all expectations. And the party in Nepal that is touted as being strategically and tactically

brilliant seems not to recognise the significance of this.

It's worth recalling a conversation that some former colleagues and I had with a senior Indian diplomat last year. "You Nepalis overestimate your importance when it comes to ties between India and China," he told us. "Nepal does not count when it comes to bilateral relations between my country and China." It was a blunt thing to say, but true. It's foolish to try and put ourselves between the two regional powers and think we can influence their bilateral relations on our account. In which world are the Maoists living? Lessons have not been learnt even after losing out as a neutral venue for India-Pakistan track II diplomacy talks (now the two countries'

interlocutors meet elsewhere). Can we host India-China track II talks, if at all? Hardly, since the two countries are talking directly and more openly than in the past. Can we do anything to bring them closer and reap the dividends from their awesome progress? We can think about it. The two countries are talking about how to intensify the process of business connectivity, working together at international forums like the G20, and presenting a united stance on climate change. But they are also thinking of working together on projects in other countries. "We even talked about the possibility of cooperating in certain subjects in other countries, whether three-party or four-party collaborative projects in the economic field as well,"

said Yang Jiechi, China's foreign minister, during a visit by India's National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon to China in July this year. These projects and areas of third country-collaboration have not been identified but the intent is there. This could be crucial to our efforts to generate energy. Apart from hydropower, the two countries could work together on roads and environmental conservation in Nepal. We need to talk about trade and economy, jobs, infrastructure building, and how to get the best out of the two giant neighbours whose goodwill we can easily tap into. Instead, we are trying to pit India against China. It may only be one party's strategy, but since it is the most powerful party in Nepal right now, it does have an impact. This is a futile, and counterproductive exercise (for us).

"China attaches great importance to this relationship (between China and India)," Yang emphasised on that occasion. It's clear which way the wind is blowing. Instead of going against it, it would be prudent to go with the flow. [damakant\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:damakant(at)gmail.com)

Two cents or nonsense?



KALAM

Rabi Thapa

For a nation of rote learners, we're surprisingly articulate speakers. Not so much in English, as generations of students abroad have found to their expense when fresh-faced Aussies and Brits and Americans stand up and air their half-baked thoughts on everything under the sun simply because they've been given the floor.

Let's get to the point

But ask a Nepali to speak in Nepali, and he (it's usually a he) will certainly talk. And talk and talk and talk. We're not simply talking inaugurations here, where politicians take the podium and begin pontificating on the (political) future of the country, regardless of whether the occasion is the opening of a school, a film festival, or a car showroom. Launch,



KIRAN PANDAY

roundtable, meeting, you name it, the Nepali speechifier will bust the guts of any hope you may have had of demarcating time, topic or turn.

He'll never forget to properly address his audience at the outset, as if apologising in advance for his temerity in taking up your time. Sometime later, he'll actually apologise for taking up so much time, and promise that he's all but done.

And much later, he'll wrap up, the critical moment signalled by the familiar, "Mero dui sabda... (My two words...)" What cheek!

Anyone who has organised an event involving speakers knows just how infuriating the Nepali speechifier is. It doesn't matter how many speechifiers you have invited, the result is the same. The Nepali speechifier will stupefy your

audience and render them, already late in arriving, even more likely to leave early.

Why is this? It is that Nepalis really have no sense of time or context, no self-discipline? Is it that they have an exaggerated sense of self-importance, that they are so focused on enlarging their own space that they forget that of others? Or is it just a harmless cultural tic? Does it really matter if so-and-so divests himself of a few hundred more words?

Probably not. I'd like to accuse the Nepali speechifier of being all talk and no action, his rambling justifying that of others, with the collective result that we are perennially unfocused on the task at hand. But perhaps it's just that even as I marvel at the Nepali facility with the spoken word, I have little patience for it when it's uncalled for. Ergo, I am an impatient, uncultured boor. Fine. But when it's called for, I say, open the floodgates! There's nothing like being in thrall to the *gaphadi* of the gang, as he details (over Royal Stag and *sekuwa*) the events of the night before, or that time ten years back in Minnesota when he...but I'm going on and on here, and it's really not the place. *Mero dui sabda yahi tungyauchu, dhanyabad.* [damakant\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:damakant(at)gmail.com)



Manang's memories

Manang doesn't seem to have changed much in 30 years, but it was the tourist trade that saved the village from being abandoned by its original inhabitants for the capital. Many returned as tourist entrepreneurs, and the new buildings haven't marred Manang's beauty.

MICHAL THOMA

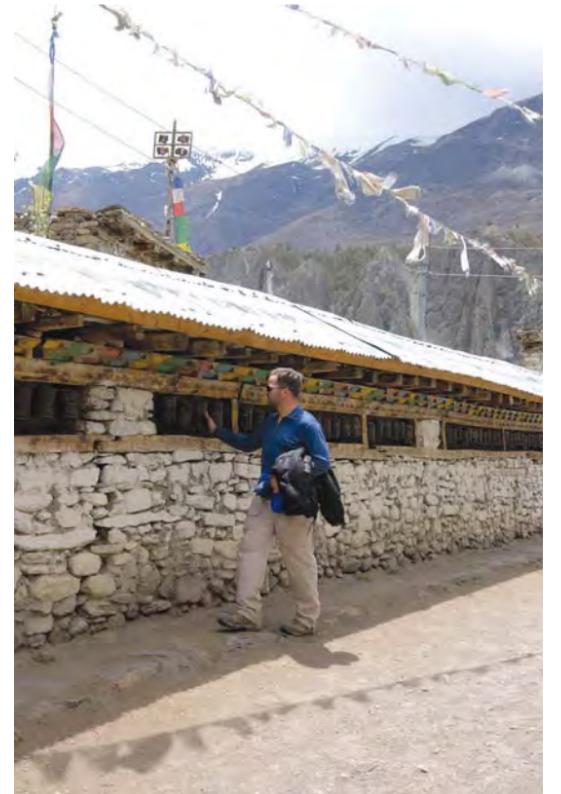
When my father, Zdenek Thoma, first came to Manang village in 1979, I was just six months old. I listened to his stories about Manang instead of fairytales and looked at the photographs he took there very often during my childhood. So when I finally came to Manang in 2008 I was somewhat familiar with the place. Carrying a thick pack of my father's photographs, I looked for the same people and the same places. It was a great experience to see how this remote mountain village had been transformed into a booming tourist hub.

With the exhibition *Manang: 30 Years After*, my father and I hope to express the nature of this change. In fact there are many villages in Nepal that are not much different now from what Manang was like in 1979. The story of Manang could help Nepalis decide how such remote areas should or should not be developed in the future.

Manang: 30 Years After, by Zdenek and Michal Thoma, will be showing during the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival at Kathmandu City Hall (Rastriya Sabha Griha), Exhibition Road. The exhibition will be open to the public following the opening ceremony on 9 December at 2pm, then every day from 11am to 6pm until 13 December.



The prayer wall inside the village is built to bless all sentient beings...



...though today one can often see tourists making the rounds.



This photograph, dubbed 'Little devils', became quite famous in the Czech Republic. To begin with, nobody in Manang could recognise the children in the image. Then a few days later, somebody pointed at the girl at the top of the ladder and exclaimed, "This is the didi from the Ghyalchan lodge!"



This came as a surprise to the didi herself, as she had not recognised herself. She then confirmed that it was her, with her two brothers. The identity of the boy in the mask remains a mystery.

EVENTS



Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2010, the biggest film festival in the country is back, this time with 62 films from 35 countries, on themes of migration and biodiversity. *Till 13 December, Rastriya Sabha Griha, Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap, 5542544, kimff@himalassociation.org, www.kimff.org*

Photo Exhibition by Gemunu Amarsinghe. *10 December to 11 January, 11am to 2pm, Tuesdays closed, Peace Museum, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan Dhoka*

Christmas Bazaar, live music, spit roast barbeque and lots of stalls for festive shopping. *10 December, 1pm to 6pm, Hotel Summit, Kupondole, 5540974, www.summit-nepal.com, Entry: Rs 1650*

Expression of Repression, painting exhibition by Kapil Mani Dixit and Sohan Babu Khatri to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, dwelling on the theme of 'nudity'. *Till 10 December, 10am to 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*

Writing workshop, Kathmandu International Mountain Festival and Quixote's Cove is organising a three-

day workshop with Professor Terry Gifford, submit poetry or prose with a letter of interest. *10 December to 12 December, 9.30am to 11am, Rastriya Sabha Griha, Bhrikuti Mandap, info@qcbookshop.com, 5536974*

Art exhibition, paintings by the associate students of Kathmandu University, Centre for Art and Design. *Inauguration 3pm, 12 December, till 19 December, 10.30am to 5.30pm, Saturdays closed, Park Gallery, Pulchok, 5522307*

5th RSR Beach Volleyball Tournament, 17 corporate teams compete on the sandy beaches of the Trishuli. *10 to 12 December, Riverside Springs Resort, Kurintar, 9851094030*

Oriental Day, food, music, dance and martial arts from Japan, Myanmar and the Philippines. *11 December, 12 pm to 8pm, Moksh, Jhamshikhel, 5528362, 9841889387, Tickets: Rs 100 (free for under-16s)*

Under One Sun Festival, live music, photo exhibitions and art installations. *14 to 17 December, 9am to 8pm, Basantapur Darbar Square, www.photocircle.com.np*

Screening of Invictus, directed by Clint Eastwood, starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon. *16 December, 3pm, Martin Chautari, Thapathali, 4102027, 4240243*

Kumari Lakshan: Layers of Purity, an exhibition of paintings by Adam Swart. *10 to 14 December, 11am to 5pm, Saturdays closed, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Jhamsikhel, 5521120, www.kathmanduarts.org*

One-day Rafting in Trishuli, covers two-way transportation, lunch, rafting with safety gadgets and guides, organised by Buddha Tours and Treks Services. *11 December, Buddha Tours and Treks Services, Pulchok, 5010775, 5010776, Ticket: Rs1500*

DINING



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*

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*

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

Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get really busy with the succulent

ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Jhamsikhel, 5521810*

Singma Food Court, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. *Pulchok, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078, foodcourt@wlink.com.np, www.singma.foodcourt.com*

New Orleans, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. *Jhamel, 5522708.*

Ramalaya Tea Room, 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*

Forever Café, specialising in a variety of steaks and stroganoffs, the café offers carnivorous affairs you'll not forget. *7am-10pm, 470078*



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Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area evokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. *Thamel, 4701170*



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

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

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

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*

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Club Himalaya, for amazing mountain views and refreshing weekend escapades, special package available for Nepalis and expatriates. *Nagarkot, 4410432*

Grand Norling Hotel, countryside weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. *Gokarna, 4910193*

Gimme some beats

Beat-boxing performances, needless to say, are quite rare in Kathmandu. So when Benjamin Stanford aka Dub FX made his south Asian debut in Nepal last Sunday, it probably shouldn't have been surprising to have to jostle through the crowds to get into 1905, Kantipath.

Those who hadn't heard of Dub FX might have been happy to find it wasn't just mad vocal beats and effects. In fact, there was a heavy infusion of reggae in his music – perhaps why the organisers, Kgarira.com and Digital Om Productions, had Babin Bajracharya set the mood with mellow tunes from Bob Marley as the grounds began to fill.

The crowd cheered as Dub FX made his entry, accompanied by the enthusiastic Flower Fairy, who performed alongside. With no instrument other than his own vocals, Dub FX began live looping to create songs for his audience. The crowd couldn't sing along to the compositions, except maybe to Dub FX's own rendition of 'Jack and Jill', but were tapping their feet, moving their heads and finally, dancing to his beats. A great night for Kathmandu's youth, though they may have missed out on the virtuoso tricks that pure beat-boxing can really impress with.

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Preventable poisoning

kill themselves because they had a quarrel with their husband or could not get along with their in-laws.

The local names of these organophosphate compounds are nuvan, metacid, dalf, and suchlor. These are pesticides that are all too readily available from shops in Nepal. Considered essential by the modern Nepali farmer, these

pesticide compounds are deadly when ingested by a human being. Medical students use the mnemonic SLUDGE (salivation, lacrimation, urine incontinence, diarrhoea, gastrointestinal cramps and emesis or vomiting) to help them remember the varied effects of this pesticide in a patient.

These symptoms can be fatal depending on the amount ingested and just how promptly treatment was started. The most essential chemical used to treat organophosphate poisoning is atropine, which is derived from plants from the Solanaceae family

such as datura, deadly nightshade (*pic*), and mandrake. Ironically, the word atropine comes from Atropos, one of the three Fates in Greek mythology, who decides the manner of a person's death. In the case of organophosphate poisoning, atropine is a life-saving antidote.

Organophosphate pesticides inhibit the natural destruction of an enzyme called acetylcholine in the human body, which then sets off the cascade of secretions summarised by the above mnemonic. Organophosphate is now also classified in the West as a major risk for bioterrorism, especially after the sarin (organophosphate) gas attacks in the Tokyo suburbs in 1994 and 1995. Victims complained that "their world went black", followed by all the symptoms of SLUDGE.

The tragedy of organophosphate poisoning in South Asia could be prevented in large measure if there were political will. But as long as a teenager who has fared badly in her SLC exams can go to a general store and easily buy organophosphate pesticides, we will continue to witness these preventable tragedies. 🇳🇵



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In most major hospitals in Nepal, at any given time there are about half a dozen patients admitted with organophosphate poisoning. Indeed this is the most common form of poisoning in Nepal and much of South Asia, especially Sri Lanka. Many patients are young women who have tried to

GREEN SCENE

Green ladies

"I would mop the house, collect the garbage, and hurl it through the window onto the road or the open space in front of my house, thinking that my house was now clean. These days I collect the garbage from the road as it brings me cash," says Nirmala Shakya, vice president of the Tole Environment Improvement Group in Dharan.

Shakya, a housewife, has been involved in a clean environment campaign for eight years, ever since she received training in waste management and composting. She does not use plastic bags and takes a jute bag with her when she goes shopping. She collects food wrappers to weave them into *dhaki*, dustbins, bags, and purses. She has dug two pits in her backyard to prepare compost from degradable household waste. Her group, which has 105 members, runs a recycling factory.

Purna Kala Limbu chairs the Srijansheel Environment Women Group, which has recently built toilets for 51 households with the objective of making their area open-defecation free, in collaboration with Dharan Municipality. Says Limbu,

"We use jute bags with the message 'don't use plastic bags' printed on them."

Tetra Environment Group has 503 women as members, and has launched an awareness campaign against littering. President Dan Kumari Maskey explains that the group also prepares compost.

Radha Gahatraj of Manakamana Environment Group has been making cash out of trash, too. She weaves bags and *dhaki* from food wrappers, and uses the money from sales for the group's campaigns – and sometimes to buy vegetables too.

There are 33 environmental groups in Dharan, with about 3,500 members. One member of each group is represented in the Dharan Municipality Environment Coordination Committee. The committee buys the garbage collected by these women's groups, though garbage collection has been hampered by a shortage of manpower.

The coordination committee has an inspection team that monitors the city, and with the help of the women's groups has become more effective. Shishir Shrestha of the Dharan Municipality Environment and Social Welfare Division says the areas where such groups are active are clean.

About 40 tonnes of garbage are generated daily in Dharan, half of which is dumped into the Seuti River. The municipality has four garbage collection vehicles and sixty workers, and spends about Rs 10 million rupees annually. "Women's environment groups have been doing what the municipality should have been doing," Shrestha says. 🇳🇵
Sita Mademba in Dharan



SITA MADEMBA



KIRAN PANDAY

ROYAL VISIT: Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck, Bhutan's Royal Grandmother, arrives at Tribhuvan International Airport, Sunday. She visited monasteries in Kathmandu and left for Lumbini on Thursday.



KIRAN PANDAY

COLOURFUL STROKES: Assorted Motifs, a group exhibition of paintings by Yuki Shirai, Chirag Bangdel, Shailesh Bhatta and Anurag Bangdel, opened at Chai Chai Cafe and Gallery, Jhameel, on Friday.



KIRAN PANDAY

ROCK INSTALLMENTS: Fans cheer as the rock band Cobweb performs during the launch of their seventh album 'Project Namaste' at i-Club, Darbar Marg, on Monday.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The most striking thing about this week's weather was the quiet collision of two opposite fronts over Nepal's skies. The frontal arm of the seasonal easterly low-pressure trough, which originated in the eastern South China Sea, extended upto the eastern half of Nepal, where it met the westerly front. But the dominant westerly front quickly pushed back the hazy clouds to bring back the sunny days. The satellite image on Thursday afternoon shows a merger of the easterly front with the cyclone over the Bay of Bengal, which has no further impact on Nepal's clear weather. The low foggy sky over the western Tarai belt will get denser this week. Expect sunny days, clear nights with colder mornings over the weekend.



FRI SAT SUN



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The wars within

Sri Lankan photojournalist Gemunu Amarasinghe draws attention to the human cost of his country's internal conflict



A child hangs on to her father's sarong in a church garden in the eastern coastal village of Mankerni in July 2006. Dozens of villagers fled their homes as fears grew of an all-out war.

Sri Lankan war photographer Gemunu Amarasinghe saw his country's conflict up close. Through his lens he recorded the horrors of a war and its cost for the country's civilians.

"The common people of Sri Lanka went through a lot," says Amarasinghe. "They were lost and had no protection." Thirty of the most poignant images of the Sri Lankan war taken since 1995 will be on exhibit at the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Patan Dhoka for a month, starting Friday.

"I want to depict what happened from the victim's point of view," explains Amarasinghe. "It is important that we acknowledge them and go beyond recognising them just as numbers in the news."

One needs a strong heart to look at these pictures. Titled 'People In Between', the exhibition tells a painful story with every image. The futility of war, and the destruction and pain it inflicts on the innocents is evident throughout.

Amarasinghe's pictures serve to remind us that it is the common people who pay the price, regardless of who wins.

Amarasinghe's pictures are arranged down the middle of a hall that houses a permanent exhibition of photographs from the trilogy 'A People War', which documents the human cost of the Nepal conflict. The juxtaposition of the two collections show us how images of suffering are universal.

Says Kunda Dixit, the editor of 'A People War', "The pictures from Nepal are of a class war. Gemunu's photographs show us how much more brutal an ethno-separatist war can be, making reconciliation and the healing process much more difficult." 



Sumitra Kumari, centre, mourns for her husband, killed by suspected Tamil Tigers in June 2006 at the remote hamlet of Maitreepura. Fourteen construction workers were abducted and 12 executed.



Female Tamil Tiger combat instructor during compulsory military training for women recruits in the village of Udayanagar in May 2006. The recruitment blurred the line between civilians and combatants.



A Tamil boy flies a kite at a camp for the internally displaced in the eastern town of Kiran in February 2007. Intensified fighting forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes in areas controlled by the Tigers.



Hundreds of internally displaced ethnic Tamils travel in tractors displaying white flags to refugee camps in the northeast town of Valaichenai in January, 2007. Thousands of civilians fled the area after fighting intensified.



Gemunu Amarasinghe was a photographer with the Associated Press in Sri Lanka. Here he poses with some of the photographs from his exhibition, 'People In Between', which opens in Kathmandu on Friday.

'People In Between'
Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan Dhoka
10 December-10 January
11am-4pm, open all days except Tuesday



Following the Karnali

Nepal's silver lining runs the length of the country

TEXT by RABI THAPA
PHOTOS by GORAKH BISTA

There has always been an easy assumption that whenever the government of Nepal announces one big venture, some brewing misadventure is simultaneously ensuring it will flop, impressively. Take tourism. When we look back on Visit Nepal Year '98 now, it seems laughable to think the state imagined it could pull it off just as the Maoist insurgency had built up a head of steam. When we look forward to Nepal Tourism Year 2011, too, alarm bells begin to ring. If politics is somewhat brambly, then the economy is caught irretrievably within it. Is the tourism sector really hoping to welcome a million



tourists next year? How has it prepared, barring a smattering of promotional material and a hideous new gate at the international airport? If anything, the chaos of Lukla and the declining lure of the road-bound Annapurna Circuit don't promise much for 2011.

But there is a silver lining, and it runs the length of Nepal. Many will have heard of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) by now, and know that in Nepal, it means an east-west trekking trail from Kanchenjunga to Api Himal. The mere idea can spark wistful dismissiveness. "160 days? I wish!" But look

closer, and you'll see the GHT is not (though it can be) meant to expand lungs and disband careers in one six-month burst. It's divided into 10 sections across 16 districts – in the regions surrounding Kanchenjunga, Makalu-Barun, Everest-Rolwaling, Langtang-Helambu, Manaslu-Ganesh, Annapurna-Mustang, Dolpa, Rara-Jumla, Humla, and the Far West – that can be tackled in any number of permutations. Think of the myriad communities living along and around the 1,700km route that could benefit from an influx of teahouse and camping tourists, and you'll begin to understand that the GHT is far more than just 2011's flavour.

This year, I was fortunate enough to join a group of journalists and tour operators on a fortnight's trip to the Humla section of Nepal's GHT with SNV, the Nepal Trust, and Firante Treks. The timing (at the end of the monsoon) was tricky, and highlighted the first and most obvious problem the new breed of GHTers might encounter this far west. We spent four days moping around in Birendranagar, Surkhet, waiting for the skies to clear there and up in Simikot, Humla's district headquarters. We appreciated the genuine attractions of Surkhet (a green valley,

Island Humla



Access is the devil that threatens to wreck man's best-laid plans for Humla. Simikot airport has recently been surfaced, but flights from Nepalganj or Surkhet are notoriously unreliable. "Upto 30-35 per cent of tourists have to return," concedes SNV Tourism Advisor Mim Hamal. Flights from Jumla, once operated by Nepal Airlines, have long been discontinued. But Hamal insists this is the only way forward, as weather conditions between Jumla and Humla are more in sync and if flights do not materialise, there is always the option of an alternative trek to Rara Lake or walking for five days to get to Simikot.

Simikot doesn't have any road access either. The district hasn't even been able to decide which way it wants to be connected to the China border, with the result that limited resources are alternately channelled into excavating roads from either Hilsa to Simikot (85km, *see pic, with surfaced road at top*

on the Chinese side of the Karnali) or along the much less populated Lapcha to Simikot route (55km), depending on which constituency manages to loosen the state's purse-strings.

Eventually, the whole region should be serviced by roads, but for now it would make sense to focus on one uninterrupted link from the northern border to the district headquarters. Unfortunately, Humla currently has two incomplete sections snaking down from the border, of limited utility for most of its inhabitants. Quizzed about whether it made sense to promote a trail that might eventually be usurped by a road, à la Annapurna Circuit, SNV's Communication Officer Sanjib Chaudhary says that access can only be a good thing, especially for Indians travelling to and from Kailash. Firante Trek's Janga Bahadur Lama is not worried, however: "It'll take at least 20 years for this road to be built. Maybe more."



As we banked to land at 2,900m, Simikot spread out below us on a flattened hilltop amidst a colour-checked harvest expanse of fields. It was past midday, but we were raring to go, up the old *noon ra oon* (salt and wool) trading route to Tibet, or at any rate to the border. Soon we were trudging along the muddy trail between the towering green monoliths of the nettle-infested Hindu midlands, accompanied by the roaring quicksilver of the magnificent Karnali. We passed occasional tight clusters of mud-packed, flat-roofed houses where women with heavy gold and silver jewellery embroidered with colourful beads belied the obvious poverty. Thakuri men led flocks of long-haired, impressively horned goats down the trail to Simikot, many a home's Dasain treat.

As we approached Hilsa and the northwestern border in the following days, the landscape became drier, and the context, Buddhist. After the desolate views around Hilsa, we made a circuit back southeast via the Limi Valley, through amazing red rock scapes haunted by blue sheep and huge vultures (*pic, left*). The three medieval stone settlements of Til, Halji and Jang were as isolated as anything we had seen. Then we passed the aquamarine Tshom Tsho, a shock in the dessicated high-altitude landscape, to nestle in the glacial valley below the Nyalu Pass. Finally, we crawled up to 5,000m, down past Selima Tsho, and into an astonishingly verdant birch and pine forest chittering with birds and a campsite in the shadow of a massive rock face, before rejoining the trail to Simikot above the Salli River.

the temple ruins of Kakrebihar, and wetlands), but what we were really thankful for was the eventual clearing of the heavens.

Humla is one of the biggest, remotest and poorest districts in Nepal. It's a land of extremes. Like most classic treks in Nepal, our Humla circuit offered a whole range of natural and cultural highlights. It took us from monsoonal Hindu midlands to arid Buddhist reaches akin to the Tibetan plateau, and the isolated Limi Valley. Even Nepalis accustomed to walking up and down hilly trails will find Humla something of a revelation, not least in transforming the perceptions gleaned from the media of a barren, impoverished district. The reality is worth travelling to see across the seasons, in lush green and in wintry white.

The SNV-led project to establish the GHT, which overlaps with the 162-day trek detailed by Robin Boustead in *The Great Himalaya Trail: A Pictorial Guide*, will be officially certified by the government by the end of 2010. But SNV, the GHT's co-funders (UK Aid, and UNWTO in west Nepal) and its local partners (Nepal Trust and Empowering Women in Nepal, in Humla) know all too well that designating an upper and lower GHT and promoting it are just part of an overall strategy. It's not enough to have tourists ready for the trail. The trail has to be ready for them, if one is to move beyond camping expeditions that too often bypass local communities.

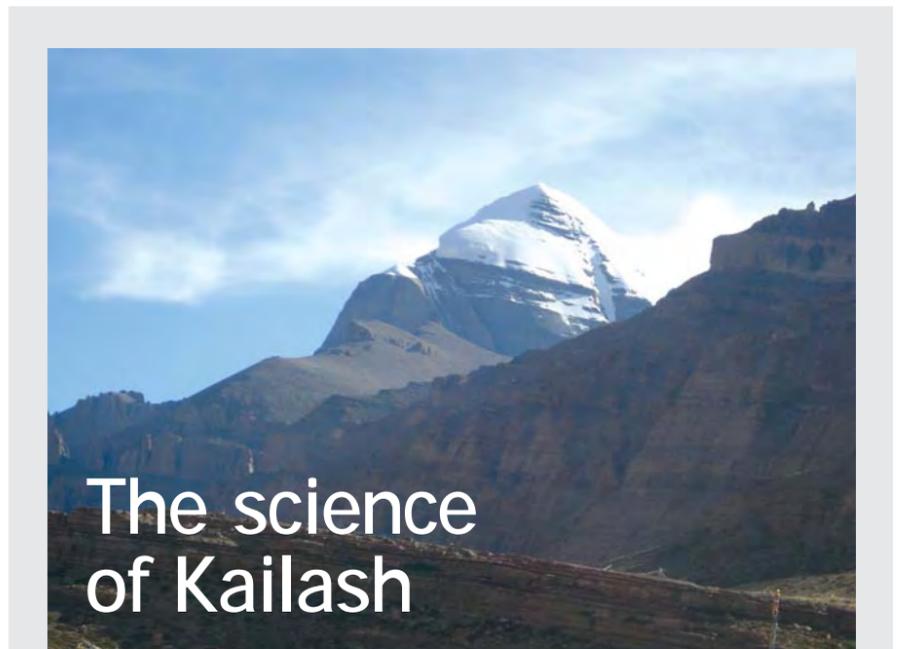
Hoping to replicate the success of teahouse treks in the Annapurna and Everest regions, SNV and its local partners have been working to develop small to medium enterprises along the trail to provide food, lodging, and other trekking services. In 2009 and 2010, 50 small businesses in the pilot GHT sections of Humla and Dolpa received

tourism-related training, covering everything from the importance of boiling water for drinking to dealing with altitude sickness. District Development Committees have received training in tourism planning and management, and Tourism Development Committees have been set up. Trainees were also taken to the Annapurna region for an exposure visit.

Humla's tourism infrastructure is still pretty basic. But one can only imagine how the first lodge in Namche started out. It's no small matter for Humli locals to venture into setting up teahouses on this relatively unfrequented trail. We were grateful for their gumption in undertaking to feed our group of 15 dalbhat, nettle soup, buckwheat pancakes, thukpa, and noodle soup. Rooms were available too, all the way to Hilsa at the border, though we camped throughout (as neither food nor lodging is commercially available in the Limi Valley yet).

It's early days, but clearly changes are afoot. As we passed newly fashioned wooden huts along the trail, men called out to us, offering us crunchy Humli apples and bottles of Coke. Back in Kathmandu, SNV Tourism Advisor Mim Hamal was upbeat when asked whether the training provided had made a difference. "Last year they were offering thirsty tourists beer, early in the morning. This year it's apples, water and Coke. They're learning how to deal with tourists...if we get this right, and other kinds of development come to the Karnali region, it will eventually feed the rest of Nepal."

www.greathimalayatrail.org



Humla has long been considered the gateway to sacred Mt. Kailash in Tibet. Thousands of pilgrims visit the mountain and the huge lakes, Mansarovar and Rakshas Tal, which give rise to the Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, and the Karnali.

But Mt. Kailash is also part of a fragile landscape containing multiple ecosystems that host a number of endemic, endangered and relic species, as well as Buddhist, Bon po and Hindu communities that farm, rear livestock, and trade for a living. To consider Humla a mere gateway is to miss the bigger picture. In working towards conservation, sustainable use, and livelihood improvement over the 31,000 square kilometres of the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Initiative (KSLCI), ICIMOD is living up to its mandate – integrated mountain development and transboundary cooperation.

With support from UNEP and in collaboration with lead partners in China, India and Nepal, ICIMOD's Environmental Change and Ecosystem Services team has come up with a conservation strategy for the region. This identifies gaps, major issues such as climate change, and the responses of local communities as well as flora and fauna. Long-term environmental monitoring (for instance through the establishment of meteorological and hydrological weather stations) will be an important component of the project, says Krishna Prasad Oli, regional coordinator for the project.

Oli warns that though the impact of tourists is low now, if the Great Himalaya Trail picks up then familiar problems – solid waste management, firewood use, littering, lifestyle impacts – will have to be addressed, along with issues of intellectual property and biopiracy in a region that has great scientific, economic and cultural potential.

He is keenly aware of the difficulties associated with transboundary cooperation in such a geopolitically sensitive region. But the groundwork is being laid, he says: "We have had tremendous cooperation from and valuable exchanges with scientists from India, China and Nepal. We have to begin with science, and hopefully the work we do will be the basis of policies that will guarantee the sustainability of the transboundary Kailash sacred region as a whole."

“We are waiting”

Interview with NC President Sushil Koirala in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2-15 December

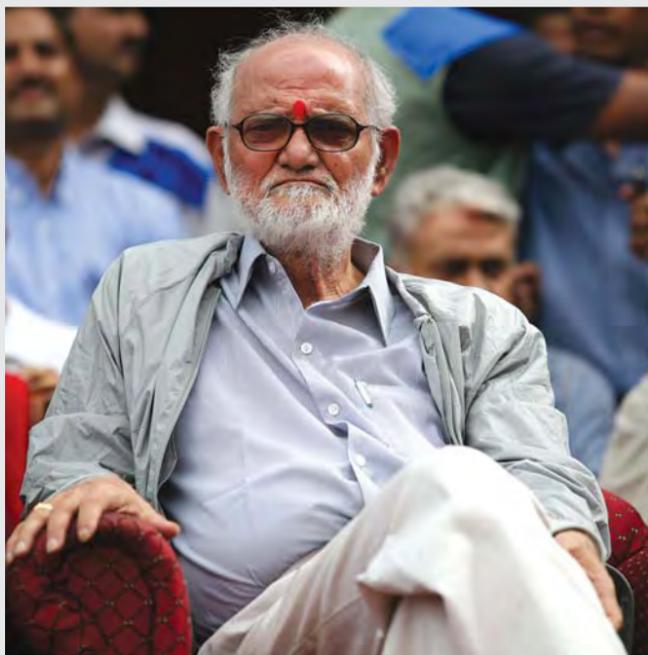
हिमाल

Himal Khabarpatrika: Why did the three big parties fail to reach a consensus after several rounds of talks?

Sushil Koirala: The Maoist leaders appear positive while in talks but never keep their word. The party has yet to become a civilian party as they have a craving for combatants and weapons. We want the past agreements to be implemented. The Nepali Congress does not care about who their principal enemy is. It has been acting responsibly and wants peace to prevail in the country. For this, there is no alternative to talks, consensus, cooperation and unity, as Girijababu said. Therefore, the Maoists are responsible for the deadlock, and UML has part of the blame, too. We supported UML to form a government. After resigning from government, UML should have automatically supported NC in forming a new government.

But the Maoists hold NC responsible for the failure to reach a consensus.

Who can judge this? It doesn't mean it's true just because the Maoists say so. We are ready to reform if need be. We are serious about finding a way out and moving the country forward. It's unjust to blame NC for the mistakes of others.



KIRAN PANDAY

Some say NC wasn't careful enough while signing the 12-point agreement with the Maoists, which has led to this situation. Is this what NC has realised?

This is not true. Incidents of murder, violence, terror, vandalism and atrocities prevailed before the agreement. At least this is not the situation now. As an effort to end the conflict, the Maoists were dragged to where they are today. Is this the mistake of NC? Trust is the biggest thing. All should adopt democratic values. The country can move forward only after the constitution is written, and go for a fresh mandate. The Maoists have always used intimidation as a bargaining tool. They obstruct the peace process and threaten to revolt. The management of PLA combatants is the important task in completing the peace process. The paramilitary structure of the YCL should be dismantled to convince people that the Maoists have changed. You cannot rule by suspending a sword above one's head.

The Maoists seem to feel cornered and have threatened to revolt. Is the country heading towards confrontation?

The Maoist threat to revolt is just muscle flexing. After enjoying the freedom of democracy and other facilities, I don't think they will go back to confrontation, it is impossible. World history has proven that those who flirt with democratic values and norms never succeed.

NC and the Maoists have come together demanding a new parliamentary session. Is there any agreement between them?

It is not good to have a caretaker government run the country. The prime minister too has been stressing the need to take a decision as early as possible. This is why we have called for a parliamentary session. It is just a coincidence that the Maoists are also demanding the same.

Can a session of parliament find a solution without parties reaching an agreement first?

The parliament is the place to discuss problems and find solutions. UML and the Maoists have been saying consensus can be reached only after the withdrawal of Paudel's candidacy for the prime minister. That's not true. The withdrawal of the candidacy will only create a further void. It will not help in constitution writing and the peace process. If we withdraw the candidacy, we hand over power to the Maoists. UML also has no alternatives. Either UML and the Maoists should join forces or UML should help NC. We are waiting.

UNMIN exit

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 5 December

नयाँ पत्रिका

When the Maoists joined the peace process, the United Nations Mission in Nepal was set up to oversee, monitor, and rehabilitate the Maoist combatants. As the mandate of UNMIN comes to an end, it seems its mission has become an impossible one.

When the rebel Maoists and the seven-party alliance signed the 12-point agreement and the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), UNMIN was invited to Nepal. It is now compelled to leave the country without achieving its objectives. The seven-party alliance and the Maoists needed UNMIN for verification, registration of combatants, and the storage of weapons. However, the Maoists and other political parties could not reach an agreement on the basic modality of integrating the combatants. So the mediator, UNMIN, seems to have run out of business.

The state has had a lot of complaints against UNMIN. It has been blamed for taking decisions in favour of the combatants, having no control over them, and working as a spokesperson of the



Maoists. There was a dispute on the extension of UNMIN's mandate for the seventh time, but the Security Council approved a four-month extension. The recent visit of B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for Political Affairs, also underlines the fact that this is the last UNMIN extension. In this situation, people are curious to know how the process of integration and the peace process will continue.

If there was no need for UNMIN to mediate in the integration of the combatants, why did the political parties and the Maoists invite it to Nepal? If it was needed, then how can UNMIN's exit be justified when the peace process and integration of the combatants are still unresolved? Is there no need to explain why UNMIN is being sent back by the concerned parties? It is not the failure of UNMIN to be leaving without achieving its objectives, it is the failure of the signatories of the CPA. It is not due to UNMIN's failure that PLA integration could not happen, it is due to the lack of honesty of the political parties. The government seems to be in a hurry to send back UNMIN by all means but is talking about seeking economic and technical support from the UN. We can't yet tell what effect the government's decision to send back UNMIN will have on the relations between Nepal and the UN. It would not be wise to make haste in sending back UNMIN before deciding what will happen once it is gone.

Electric buses wait for permits

Richha Aryal in *Nagarik*, 9 December

नागरिक

Five months since they were introduced to the capital, electric buses still aren't being used for local transportation. Because of the long and tiresome procedure to obtain route permits, it will be three more months before the buses can ply on city roads, Nepal Electric Vehicle Industries (NEVI) has said.

NEVI imported one electric closed-door bus, one open-door bus, and an electric car for testing from China. More than two dozen organisations and individuals have shown interest



in operating the 14-seater closed-door bus, Managing Director of NEVI Narayan Prasad Bhusal said.

"It's a long process. The buyer has to form a committee first and then obtain membership of the Transport Entrepreneurs Association. If they recommend us to the Transport Management Office, it will set routes and issue us a permit," he said.

The buses can run for 100kms when fully charged. The batteries, which cost at least Rs 100,000, don't need to be changed for two years. The Transport Management

Department says that apart from steep climbs, these buses run well on normal roads.



“Don't worry, all the drivers and helpers have gone abroad for training!”

Board: Notice

Suitcase: Pascoe

Bag: UNMIN

Car: Combatant integration and rehabilitation

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 6 December

Stimulate the green race to tackle climate change

BJÖRN STIGSON

CANCÚN, México, Dec 8, 2010 – While negotiators in Cancún are struggling to make progress, there is something interesting happening in the world. And, it is good news. Countries have started to recognise and act upon the economic value in meeting the demand for green technology.

As a result there is a 'Green Race' emerging towards a more resource efficient economy. This presents huge opportunities for national and international economies which are recognised not only by businesses but also by countries.

More and more countries are taking note of this Green Race and are beginning to participate with serious ambition. Take for example the recent speech by US Energy Secretary Steven Chu. He labelled the success of China and other countries in clean energy industries a new 'Sputnik Moment', which requires the United States to mobilise its innovation machine to compete in the global race for the jobs of the future.

"When it comes to innovation, Americans don't take a back seat to anyone – and we certainly won't start now," said Secretary Chu. "From wind power to nuclear reactors to high-speed rail, China and other countries are moving aggressively to capture the lead. Given that challenge, and given the enormous economic opportunities in clean energy, it's time for America to do what we do best: innovate."

The European Union, under the direction

of new Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard, has also changed their approach to climate change. They are now putting forward the Green Race arguments – the EU should act on climate change to protect its economic interests, jobs and economic growth. This is a clear shift from the 'moral crusade' for global climate actions which sidelined the EU at COP15 in Copenhagen.

Leveraging new technology

During the next 40 years, global population is expected to increase to 9 billion. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), reducing carbon emissions effectively will require investments in low-carbon technologies of approximately 750 billion dollars per year by 2030, and more than 1.6 trillion dollars per year from 2030 to 2050.

About 70 per cent of the reductions needed could be achieved with existing technologies, but there is also a requirement to create new technologies. At the current rate, global low-carbon technologies are not progressing fast enough to keep up with the challenges of global climate change.

With this urgency in mind I must admit to



being somewhat puzzled to see that in Cancún governments are debating a new international technology mechanism to help transfer and deploy technologies to developing countries and ignoring the global solution already in place – it's called business.

We develop, deploy and transfer technologies on a massive scale every day. Governments should try to further our ability to do this rather than try to replace or duplicate the work business is doing. Current negotiations should aim to enhance this system and to ensure that there are specific incentives put in place so that the poorest countries can benefit from these investments.

Trillions of dollars are needed to achieve the goals of emissions reductions and stabilisation of the climate; nevertheless, it is not a lack of funds that is holding investment back – but mobilising financing

dollars into circulation.

What needs to happen

The leading economies of the world have 'seen the writing on the wall' – if they want to be a leading economy tomorrow, they must be able to supply resource-efficient, non-polluting systems, products and services today.

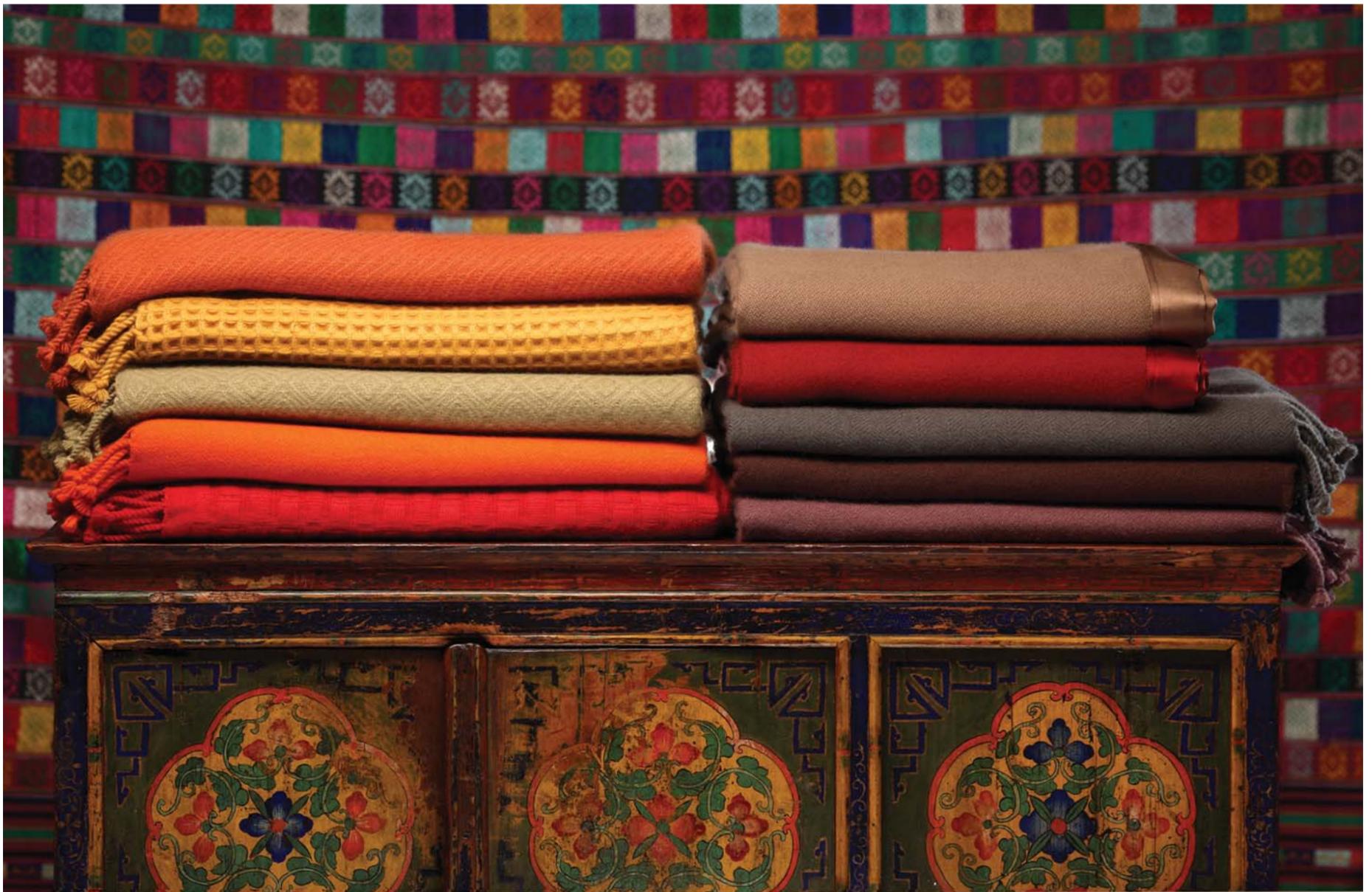
To succeed, a transformation of domestic markets is needed to build demand, capabilities and scale. This level of change can only be achieved in a new partnership between governments and business. Market forces alone are not strong enough to achieve such massive transformation. We need help from supportive regulatory frameworks to stimulate demand for new products and services. During COP 16, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) released a report titled "Innovating for Green Growth: Drivers of Private Sector RD&D".

The report demonstrates that the Green Race between countries and companies offers significant opportunities for businesses to invest in the fast-growing, low-carbon technology market. It offers suggestions to governments on how to leverage research, development and demonstration (RD&D) to drive private sector investments.

Focusing on these recommendations will help ensure acceleration of innovative low-carbon technologies that will be the foundation of any global agreement.

Countries will ultimately determine the playing field, but they cannot achieve success without business as the partner who provides the bulk of solutions. That isn't to say business can continue to sit idly by. The private sector has been lacking in action as a result of the financial crisis. When it's given the appropriate triggers, business must and will spring to life. 

Björn Stigson is President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. (IPS/TerraViva)



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Corruption in the time of cholera

The **Federal Kleptocratic Republic** of Nepal should put in a new bid for Transparency International to reconsider our nation's rankings in the World Corruption Index. We are actually much more corrupt than we give ourselves credit for. Where else in the world do taxi drivers clog the city streets to strike for the right to tamper with their meters? We need to act quickly, however, because India is sure to surge ahead with the \$40 billion telecom scandal involving a minister who gave 3G contracts to favourites.



But we are off to a good start. When Lukla airport was shut down last month for 10 days due to bad weather, airline check-in staff charged \$500 or more to sneak passengers ahead of the



queue. The army's helicopters ended up ferrying thousands of tourists, but even here passes were sold in black. Given our skills in making hay while the sun shines, our earnings from tourism in 2011 should surpass all past records.



The Nepal Army seems ready to declare war on France, given its vehement reaction to the report by Renaud Piarroux, the French public health specialist who linked the Haiti cholera epidemic to the septic tanks of the Nepali peacekeeping base there. We have nothing to hide: Nepal has frequent cholera epidemics and the 'El Tor' strain of the bacillus *Vibrio cholerae* found in Haiti is endemic to South Asia. Why not just admit that cholera was an import from Nepal, and get on with treating the sick not just in Haiti, but also take preventive

measures to have safe drinking water in Nepal as well? Cash in on the publicity.



Still licking his wounds from the Gorkha Plenum, **The Awesome** is now trying to woo **The Physician** in order to sideline **The Doctor**. Even though PKD got his party to declare India The #1 Enemy, he is behaving as if his real enemy is BRB. He has met MBK repeatedly to forge an alliance. After all, there is no substantial diff between the papers presented by PKD and MBK to the Plenum, whereas there is a deep ideological and personal rift with BRB. The only trouble for Chairman Fearsomeness is that he has lost the trust of other political leaders and even within his party, he is known as someone who says one thing and does another. We have it on good authority that now Com Kiran wants PKD to give all his commitments in writing.



With the CentCom meeting postponed again, Com Baburam is in campaign mode, trying to build up support within the party. The Palungtar Conf underlined his weaker support base within the party because PKD's clout is bolstered by his control over the extortion apparatus. BRB is trying to counter this with the force of his pragmatic ideas, but he doesn't stand a chance when it is money that talks.



The PKD camp, however, is elated by rumours in the Indian press of the recall of the Indian ambassador. They are preparing to celebrate this as a major victory for not just the party but for the Chairman's anti-Indian 'Prachanda Path'. Hacks in Delhi sympathetic to the Yechury-Karat line seem to be feeding leaks in the Indian media about a major rift within a fractious South Block on India's current Nepal policy of keeping the Baddies out of power by hook or crook.



PKD's offer to let RCP become PM has the NC leader salivating. And like the **Pavlov Effect**, just dangling a post has made kangresi factionalism erupt all over again. Awesome understands the NC better than the NC understands itself.

Kingji came back much more enthused from his India trip this time. The meeting with Queen Sonia and the BJP seems to have gone well. But the message was the same everywhere: no flirting with the Baddies, and no rocking the boat. What boat?



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