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next week and return on
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COURTESY: WWF-NEPAL

VOID

KUNDA DIXIT

The Ghunsa helicopter crash last week that killed 24 people wasn't just a tragic loss of life, it devastated Nepal's nature conservation movement, setting it back by decades.

Many names on the passenger manifest were builders of Nepal's model achievements in environment protection over the past decade. Their deaths have left a void that will take a long time to fill. They proved that nature is best protected through grassroots ecotourism activities, and their projects are being replicated in Nepal and across the world.

"These people represented the diversity of expertise, backgrounds, and ethnicities that contributed to Nepal's conservation successes over the last 30 years. They proved that for conservation to work you need strong local participation, and they would have made even more contributions. Their deaths leave a void that will take a long time to fill, particularly in terms of janajati participation and

leadership," says Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, who worked closely with many in the crash over for 25 years in Nepali conservation.

It is a bitter irony that just the previous day, they had all witnessed another landmark in Nepal's nature conservation history: the handing over management of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) to a local council. The initiative built on the main lesson of Nepal's conservation success, that the environment can be protected best when local people are involved.

In Kangchenjunga, conservation will now be managed by a council representing dozens of village committees and mothers' groups. The project is implemented by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation with support from WWF and other donors.

"This is a great day for the people of Kangchenjunga," Dawa Tshering Sherpa, chairman of the management council had said on Friday in Taplejung,

The chopper crash left a vacuum in Nepal's biosphere

"We are ready to take on this responsibility thanks to support from organisations like WWF."

Chandra Gurung of WWF-Nepal, himself a pioneer of grassroots conservation in the Annapurnas, had said he was proud to be part of the effort. "This handover will be a positive example for the world of people managing their natural resources, and enable learning on how to make conservation more equitable and sustainable," he said.

The Kangchenjunga area is a treasure-house of biodiversity with higher rainfall and cloud forests, and WWF has invested \$1.5 million in conservation efforts here since 1998. Local management means less pressure on forests and less poaching of wildlife.

"WWF is greatly encouraged by successes like this," said Mingma Norbu Sherpa of WWF-US. "I'd like to congratulate the government and the people for working through a decade of conflict to reach this pinnacle."

LEAVING A LEGACY: From right, Chandra Gurung, country representative WWF-Nepal; Jill Bowling Schlaepfer, director of programs, WWF-UK; Mingma Norbu Sherpa, conservation director, Asia Pacific Program, WWF-US; Narayan Paudel, director-general, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; Damodar Parajuli, acting secretary, State Ministry for Forests and Soil Conservation; Gopal Rai, state minister, Forests and Soil Conservation; Pauli Mustonen, Charge d'Affaires of Finland in Kathmandu.

The handover was carried out by the State Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation Gopal Rai at a ceremony in Taplejung on 22 September. The visiting dignitaries then flew out to Ghunsa to inspect a local group implementing the management, and the helicopter crashed into a mountain at 4,000 m just after

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Still among us

Tribute p10-12
Remembering friends and colleagues

takeoff on the flight back. Minister Rai, Chandra Gurung, Mingma Sherpa and Dawa Tshering were among those in the ill-fated helicopter.


The nation also mourns veteran geographer Harka Gurung, senior donor representatives, WWF staffers, several noted government officials and two journalists. ●

Times

Weekly Internet Poll # 317

Q. Does US Ambassador Moriarty's tough stand against the Maoists help or hurt the SPA's efforts?

Total votes: 3,714



Weekly Internet Poll # 318. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think the arms management formula will work?



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STILL AMONG US

There are times these past years when we have despaired. As crisis upon crisis has been heaped upon this hapless nation we have wondered aloud if we have been abandoned even by the divine benefactor.

A country already cursed with inequality, injustice and poverty was saddled with a conflict that made it all much worse. Brutality that we had only heard about in the epic wars of our scriptures became the order of the day. Violence begat more violence and often seemed to be an end in itself. It was hard to believe that ordinary family men with children of their own could be capable of such inhumanity.

Nepalis who were ignored for so long by the state suddenly were at the receiving end of its security agencies. Then our rulers massacred each other in a slaughter of mythic proportions. The brother king took over and ruled with an iron fist. And even when democracy was restored and a ceasefire put into place, there is little to celebrate as terror still stalks the land.

We thought we had seen it all, until Saturday's helicopter crash that wiped out nearly all the country's top conservationists and many of our well-wishers. One of the few things this country can be proud of in the last 30 years was the calibre and experience of our environmental and biodiversity experts. People like Harka Gurung, the authority on Nepal's human geography, Chandra Gurung who masterminded the unique model of ecotourism-based conservation in the Annapurnas, Tirtha Man Maskey who ensured that Nepal's national parks were sustainably preserved for future generations, or Mingma Sherpa whose conservation expertise from Nepal was sought after worldwide.

In a country where there is so little to celebrate, it is a cruel blow to take away the little that stood out. The people who boarded the helicopter in Ghunsa on Saturday morning were all enormously talented, experienced, and dedicated. We owe it to them to continue their work, to innovate and prove by doing that nature conservation and economic progress can go hand in hand. †

This cheerless festival season, let us honour the memory of those who perished by re-dedicating ourselves to our professions. Even if we are not environmentalists let us pledge to do whatever we do with utmost commitment and integrity. †

For every Mingma Sherpa let us nurture a hundred grassroots conservationists. For every Tirtha Man Maskey let us have a hundred civil servants who make a difference. For every Chandra Gurung let us cultivate a hundred self-made, hard-working Nepalis.

Our friends have not gone. They are among us every time we hear the wind rustle in the trees above Chandra Gurung's home village of Sikles, or when we catch a glimpse of Himalchuli from Harka Gurung's district of Lamjung, or when we smell the fresh forests of Mingma Sherpa's Khumbu.



This Dasain began inauspiciously. First came the shocking news of the murder of Krishna Charan Shrestha, lawmaker from Siraha. Krishna Charan was a popular figure in his constituency, two of his followers gave up their own lives trying to defend him and then pursuing his killers. He belonged to a generation of politicians who interact directly with the people over the head of influential powerbrokers.

The second news was even more unsettling. A helicopter with eminent



STATE OF THE STATE C K Lal

conservationists on board was reported missing in the Kanchenjunga region. Two days later, the worst fears of worried families and friends turned out to be true: the helicopter had crashed with no survivors. Professionals in the field say it will take about three decades to produce so many conservationists of that calibre again.

Though not a conservationist in the academic sense of the term, Harka Gurung too died for a cause close to his heart. As a development thinker, Gurung had an abiding interest in establishing mutually beneficial relationships between human beings and their habitat. He died returning from a ceremony handing nature protection to the people of that area.

On first meeting Harka, many found him blunt. He never attempted to even appear likable. Like most interdisciplinary scholars he had strong views about everything. He relished making fun of those less informed but more dogmatic than he was. Irreverence and wit were his natural traits. Despite his lack of social skills he was a towering presence in the field of physical planning. You could agree or disagree with him on various issues, but in the area of regional planning, it was impossible to hold any view without referring to his ideas.

He is credited with creating initially four, then five, development regions in the country. King Birendra's personal interest didn't work for one simple reason: without a

political structure to back them up, development regions were castles in the air, hung by a thin thread from the capital.

When Harka realised why his ideas weren't working, he moved on and proposed his second most significant contribution to planning: the concept of parallel south-north growth corridors to connect railheads in neighbouring India with processing and production centres of the Nepal tarai and Bhitri Madhesh.

Harka was dragged into controversy by the politics of demography. In the 1980s, he headed a commission asked to prepare a purist population plan for the tarai. The report was as expected, and is supposed to have inspired the formation of the Sadbhawana Manch, which later became the Sadbhawana Party. Jaya Krishna Goit, the leader of splinter group of Maoists which claims to have killed Krishna Charan Shrestha, is in some ways the political progeny of backlash created by the report.

Post-1990 Harka Gurung perhaps realised that planning for development means little if the planned-for don't have a

stake in its implementation. He didn't mention 'democracy' as often as many of his former colleagues from Panchayat days did, or display any of the zeal of a neo-convert. His tone and tenor for the last several years had become decidedly egalitarian.

Krishna Charan shouldn't have been in the kind of politics promoted and patronised by Shah kings. Perhaps he fell victim to the legacy of enmity nurtured by state-centric Panchayat-era politics.

Harka Gurung knew too much to be hopping around the Himalayas in a chartered helicopter in bad weather. Perhaps he found the end he subconsciously cherished.

Jaya Krishna Goit is too sharp not to know the consequences of his actions. Will he survive long enough to realise that politics of vendetta is a blind alley?

Rumour is rife that 'something will happen' during Dasain. For far too long, Nepalis have seen their worst fears coming true. May it be different this time despite the sad start to the festival. ●

Wing and prayer

Last week's crash shows, yet again, that aviation rules in Nepal need an overhaul

SOMA SEN

It may still be too early to draw definite conclusions on the crash of a Shree Airlines MI-17 near Ghunsa last week with the tragic loss of lives.

But given reports of heavy rains and rough terrain there are reasons to suspect CFTT—that familiar and ominous acronym that has made Nepal the country with one of the worst air safety records in the world.

Controlled Flight into Terrain is the technical terminology for an aircraft flying into a mountain in bad weather. Of the 15 fatal crashes in Nepal since 1992 with the loss of 320 lives, 12 were CFTT.

To be sure, flying in the Himalaya is difficult even in the best weather conditions: with tricky, ill-equipped airports, lack of navigational beacons, and turbulence. When you mix clouds with mountains, the situation becomes exponentially more risky. "Flying in Nepal in the monsoon, there is one thing we always tell junior pilots: avoid clouds, they have rocks in them," says one trainer pilot with Nepal Airlines.

Even experienced pilots find flying in the Himalaya a challenge. The army pilot who set a world record by landing his EADS Ecureuil on the Western Cwm on a mountaineering rescue in 1996 crashed his B2, a chopper modified for high altitude performance, at Everest Base Camp. In May this year, an MI-8 trying to take off from Dhaulagiri Base Camp with eight climbers on board had to make a hard landing. All escaped miraculously. "Taking

a helicopter to a mountain is more dangerous than climbing it," said one mountaineer in a blog post. There have been four chopper crashes at Everest Base Camp alone and two more have crashed en route in the past five years.

Over-confidence can also be a reason when pilots rely too much on the Global Positioning System, which draws a straight line to the destination without taking terrain into account during white-outs. There is a tendency not to circulate inquiry reports from past accidents and therefore failure to learn from mistakes.

Terrain warning systems are not mandatory in Nepal, and even when they are installed in the cockpit, the audio warnings tend to be ignored because pilots are always flying close to mountains. There is Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning (EGPW) equipment available, which integrates a satellite-based 3D topographic image of the route and warns pilots of mountains ahead even when obscured by cloud. But these can cost up to \$100,000.

Even if EGPW one day became mandatory on aircraft flying within Nepal, the Civil Aviation Authority has to ask what do we do till then. If the weather was as bad as the met office said it was last Saturday, the MI-17 had no business being in Ghunsa. This is a narrow valley and the helipad itself at 4,300m. At the time of takeoff, it was surrounded by swirling mist.

Whether the chopper went down because of loss of control due to turbulence caused by up-valley catabatic winds or hit a



ERIK PONTOPPIDAN/ WWW.BEREJST.DK

cloud-covered mountainside is now academic. The inquiry commission must not just answer what happened, it must also have recommendations on how to prevent similar accidents in future.

Can we have new Instrument Flying Rule (IFR) thresholds for safe flying in high mountain areas? Should we leave private and charter flying in remote areas in bad weather just to pilot discretion? We must also have better nav aids in remote area airports. If a crash does happen, aircraft must have satellite tracking devices so we don't see a repeat of an aircraft disappearing without trace for four days. The fact that an Asian Airlines MI-17 that disappeared on a flight from Makalu Base Camp to Lukla carrying porters from a French Makalu Expedition in June 2002 has still not been found shows us that flying in Nepal needs much more stringent rules than those in other countries. ●

Victims of circumstance

MP Krishna Charan Shrestha and Harka Gurung, connected in life, died the same day

LETTERS

UNEQUAL CITIZENS

CK Lal dismisses the 15 chapters that comprise *Unequal Citizens* which took four years of research and consultations to compile into eight paltry sentences. The work is a summary that analyses the outcomes of exclusion and discrimination within Nepal with hard data, starkly revealing the extent of inequality. Such data is essential to begin negotiating a more equitable and inclusive society. The study was designed to amplify the voices of citizens from excluded groups who lack the social and political influence to attract the attention of decision-makers and development workers.

Lal reveals his disdain for and lack of understanding of the entire development dialogue by presenting a pseudo-history that reduces five decades of development to a string of buzzwords. Particularly offensive are the slighting comments he makes about our colleagues, who carried out the bulk of research and writing.

The writers, academics and activists who contributed to the study rank among the finest of Nepalis seriously engaged in creating a more inclusive nation. To malign them by writing that the project was probably conceived to keep possible activists occupied while the king (governed), is both snide, and false.

Judith R Stahl Amtzis and Isabella C Bassignana Khadka, Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment of Nepal team

● The inclusion preached in *Unequal Citizens* (Development Laboratory, Review by CK Lal, #314) is a donor buzzword, but quite different in practice. Distinguished Madhesi scholars work on gender and ethnicity issues, but none are on the study's advisory committee or research team.

In the study, data analysis, facts and figures concerning Madhesi are inaccurate. How can all Madhesi, whether Brahmin, or middle castes such as Rajput, Baniya, Madwari, Bengali, and Nurang be put in the Brahmin-Chhettri (BC) category?

Donors, INGOs, and NGOs exclude Madhesi in the recruitment and decision-making processes, and in consultations to determine what they need. What percentage of the total staff of the World Bank or DFID are Madhesi? Inclusion isn't about organising seminars, but involving the excluded. Make your own organisations inclusive.

Baldeo Lal Shah, Sarlahi

†
● *Unequal Citizens* is right on track, and the inequality is evident from the selection of its key consultants: Bahun, Chhetri or Newar, with one Tamang woman. It further reeks of

disparity when you know that the project leader's salary made up 15 percent of the \$7,000,000 project budget. Convert into rupees and multiply by four (years it took to publish the book). Talk about inequality.

Based on the findings of this ridiculously expensive work, DFID has developed an action plan to be led by the same foreigner donors think has influence at the Planning Commission and ministries. Around 20 percent of the total projected money will make up this person's salary.

This is not to criticise Nepal-based *bideshi* consultants, but it is disgusting to see money meant to reduce the poverty of Nepalis spent like this. Unequal citizens? Right on.

Siddhartha, email



MAINA

In Letters (#316) Sam Cowan's long letter on Maina was touching, thought-provoking, and disturbing. It is indeed a pity people have to face such ordeals from both the service personnel and the rebels. But right now, with the ceasefire and the talks, I feel it is not the appropriate moment to remind ourselves of the outrages committed by both sides. This is a time for reconciliation and forgiveness. Every Nepali here and settled abroad should now work to find a solution so that horrendous incidents like Maina's are not repeated. May her soul rest in peace. All Nepalis sympathise with her family and beg their forgiveness.

Dr Amrit KC, Bishalnagar

RED CK BLUES

CK Lal's latest column (Let's get this thing unstuck, State of the State, #316) exhibited a xenophobia that seems to be the latest fashion among the chattering classes. His tired complaint that foreigners are 'fear-mongering' and do not have a good record of reading Nepali realities begs the question: how adept at reading the tea leaves does one have to be to recognise the current tsunami of coercion, death threats, extortion and forced billeting of comrades in people's

houses as dangerously regressive and unworthy of a civilised society?

Lal's grudging admission that rampant extortion perpetrated by the Maoists exists (I paid money for this flash of insight?) downplays the unprecedented scale of the problem. His outrageous assertion that many victims quietly pay to cover their previous 'misdeemeanours' (as opposed to avoid being murdered) is deeply insulting to the many thousands of decent citizens facing such threats.

To top off this apologist nonsense he states that 'upright' entrepreneurs have recourse to some mythical 'complaints department' to curb those unfortunate little 'excesses' (boys will be boys). I'm sure many of your readers would appreciate publication of this magical hotline number where the extortionist-in-chief gives one a sympathetic hearing.

As a foreigner and long-time resident I have appreciated the insights your journal has provided over the years to reduce my 'confusion' concerning Nepali 'realities'.

But if I want misleading justifications of criminal activity and apologist propaganda I'll simply ask the CPN (Malignant) cadres. They are more than willing to give you an earful of their bankrupt ideology as they threaten and extort.

In a land ruled by fear I would never dare put my real name to this missive. †

Erst While, email

SPACE FOR ALL

It was interesting to read last week's poll report (What we think, #317). In the back of my mind were the prime minister's remarks about giving space to the monarchy, and its relevance. The institution of the monarchy is at its lowest popularity and vigour, which is what led to these unprecedented changes. Yet, the fact that almost 50 percent of people want to keep it, is a phenomenon in itself. The prime minister's comments weren't for nothing. † No individual leader has high enough approval ratings to guide and shoulder this nation to lasting peace. This means that reconciliation and consensus is the only way out of this political stalemate. It requires mutual acknowledgement and respect between all the existing powers, the king, political parties, and Maoists. After all, democracy is all about accommodation and tolerating dissent and contradiction.

PB Rana, email

GUNS AND VOTES

People like me are beginning to feel that politicians only indulge in unnecessary ordinances and laws. What Nepalis are focused on now is when, how, and whether the Maoists ever give up violence. Parliamentarians, cabinet members, and civil society should focus solely on that. The government must take a tough stand against all perpetrators of violence,

including the Maoists. Once we take the guns out of the ballot boxes, all other problems will be easy to solve.

Bimal Bastola, New York

REAL NEWS

Your weekly poll showed that more than 57 percent of voters believe the ceasefire will not last beyond Tihar (#315). I believe the number is higher, as there are still people who are undecided. This is because, we see that ceasefire norms are generally being violated. Extortion, intimidation, and even recruiting and training of militia is going on more intensively than earlier, and the general public is under intense psychological pressure. Nepalis have little choice but to believe that we are under a Maoist government or anarchy. And we greatly appreciate a newspaper which tries hard to provide a real picture to help safeguard democratic values, despite facing threats.

Prakash Pangen, email

● Thanks for publishing *Nepali Times* online. It is the best way to explain and help the common man understand problems, by disseminating true news. Your editorial section is also very good.

Dhaniram S, email

BHATMARA BHAI

Much has been made about the disappearance of Under my Hat. I find Backside more gossip, and have not got used to it yet. † One columnist whose wit I really miss is your (ex-) connoisseur Bhatmara Bhai, who successfully guided us to make the right choice with regard to our culinary destinations. Even the Maobadis have come above-ground, but there is no sign of Bhatmara Bhai! Find him soon! †

Shyamal Shrestha, email

CORRECTION

● Due to an editing error, the OHCHR report in 'Violations' (#316) was wrongly referred to in the first line as a UNHCR report.

● In Happenings (#316), the venue of the Surya Classic Encounters event was wrongly identified. The concert pictured took place at Olive Bar and Bistro at Radisson Hotel.

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter' to the editor in the subject line.

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Uneven delivery

All women are not equal for Nepal's abortion program

MARTY LOGAN

Nearly 60,000 Nepali women have had legal abortions since March 2004. But despite the impressive numbers, there are still huge obstacles to guarantee women's right to safe abortion.

For example, over 10 percent of women who sought abortions at 22 facilities in the country from January to March 2006 were rejected because they were more than 12 weeks pregnant, according to a recent study by the Centre for Research on Environment, Health and Population Activities.

Anand Tamang of CREHPA, which produced the *National Facility-based Abortion Baseline Study* says so many women are turned away because they calculate their date of conception differently than the law does.

Abortion is permissible up to 12 weeks, until 18 weeks if the

pregnancy resulted from rape or incest and any time, with a doctor's consent, if the women's health is in danger or the foetus is severely deformed.

That ignorance of the law's particulars is not surprising, since the study also found that only 50 percent of women seeking what is known as comprehensive abortion care (CAC) were aware that it is legal. Of those, less than half knew that it was permitted on request during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Four years before abortion was legalised, a Ministry of Health study estimated that 54 percent of maternal deaths were caused by unsafe abortion.

"I think (unsafe abortions) have been reduced. But still they come," says Dr Sudha Thapa, deputy director at Maternity Hospital, the country's only training centre for doctors—and in a current pilot project, nurses—who must be certified before they can perform the procedure.

Another CREHPA study found that of 1,560 cases treated at Maternity Hospital from April 2004-2005, 138 were for complications caused by induced abortion.

"A big challenge is educating women (and men) of their rights to

Jailed

When Shruti learned she was pregnant she decided that she did not want to have the baby. The married woman went to the hospital in Dhankuta, where she discovered she didn't have enough money for the procedure (which averages just over Rs 1,000 in government hospitals). She returned home.

Months later the child was stillborn, Shruti (not her real name) told police after they were alerted about the dead baby. She repeated that story again at the district court, which found her guilty of homicide but sentenced her to just five years; the maximum is 20 years.

An appellate court upheld the shorter sentence but Forum for Women, Law and Development is appealing it to the Supreme Court, arguing that the abortion fee deprived Shruti of her right to abortion.

There are other obstacles, FWLD's Lokhari Bashyal told us. Sometimes women pass the legal deadline for an abortion (12 weeks) for lack of knowledge. Even if there is an authorised hospital or clinic, sometimes the doctor is not there.

safe abortion and what is safe abortion," says Wendy Darby of Ipas, a US-based NGO that has given considerable financial and technical support to Nepal's Safe Abortion Program.

Poor information dissemination, high cost, and lack of staffed service centres have been directly responsible for the jailing of more than a dozen women since the abortion law was changed (see box, Jailed).

In urban areas, government, private and NGO facilities all offer CAC while government centres predominate in rural Nepal. And although the government has twice as many certified facilities, the others have performed more than three times as many abortions.

Sixty-eight of Nepal's 75 districts now have at least one trained service provider, but "23 of them are not yet providing services, for a variety of reasons," Darby told us via email.

Laxmi Raj Pathak helped push the abortion bill through parliament when he was director of the Health Ministry's Family Health Division. He blames slow decision-making for inadequate abortion services in rural areas, the result of poor management. "People are committed but no one wants to take risks," he told us. "If you want to serve rural people you have to deviate from the guidelines sometimes." ●



MARTY LOGAN

Federation

Ethnic politics cuts both ways

Think what you will, but the debate today over creating a new state structure in Nepal is a direct result of the Maoist uprising. A central question is what a future Nepal should look like: should it be a federation of different states, or continue to function as a centralised nation.

No prizes for guessing what the Maoists want. Two years ago, they introduced the concept of ethnic autonomous regions, a precursor to a federal government. They have so far created nine ethnic autonomous regions with ethnic autonomous governments. Today, they are pushing hard to institutionalise this structure in the yet-to-be announced interim constitution.

The UML agrees with a federation, though their concept of it is blurry. The NC leadership is pretty much against a federal state divided along ethnic lines. They are for true decentralisation of power. Just how they plan to achieve it, we don't know. The Nepal Sadbhawana Party supports a strong federal structure, but its advocacy is limited to creating a unified and autonomous Madhes region.

Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the federation concept, what strikes me is the Maoist proposal. They have carefully carved up ethnic autonomous states for all the major ethnic groups in this country. Or so it seems, until you look at the 2001 census.

The census shows that the largest group in this country is still the Bahun-Chhettri castes, which comprise 28.5 percent of the population. Yet, there is no autonomous state earmarked for them. Nearly one-third of the nation's population has been deliberately given short shrift as the Maoists intensely woo the other two-thirds. Could this oversight someday lead to a counter-revolution?

I posed this question recently to Comrade Biswoi, a Bahun himself and senior military commissar of the Maoist's Bethan Smriti Brigade. He replied, "A large section of the population may feel a little alienated at first, but we don't think that will be a big problem."

Biswo continued: "The Bahun-Chhettris are spread out in all parts of the country. They will of course have a share in local autonomy according to their numbers, because we plan to devolve power right to the lowest levels. An ethnic autonomous region does not mean only a particular ethnic group will control the local government. All ethnicities that live in that region will have a say."

In other words, Biswo is saying that an ethnic state will be ethnic in name only. Everyone in it will have proportional representation. The Bahun-Chhettris too will have a say in power according to their numbers.

This is reasonable, until you consider the regional distribution of all communities, and the nitty-gritty of identity politics.

Only in a few regions does any ethnic community completely outnumber the rest. And even that is by a thin margin which can't last forever. The Tharus of the Maoist's Tharuwan Autonomous Region are already outnumbered by the hill tribes, for example.

The other important question is identity. Almost everyone agrees that Nepal's conflict intensified only after the Maoists tactically co-opted the identity question lurking in everyone's minds.

If identity is so important for Nepalis, how can you give identity to some and exclude others? Won't that be sowing the seeds of another, perhaps more violent, conflict in the coming years?

Granted the Bahun-Chhettris have been the classical oppressors/exploiters here. But so have the Newar upper castes, the elites of the Magar, Madhesi, Tharu, and other communities. Yet the Maoists plan to give all of them except Bahun-Chhettris an ethnic autonomous region of their own.

"We are going to suffer a backlash for a couple of generations," says a Bahun friend of mine resignedly. "Then what? Won't there be a demand that we too want an autonomous state?"

Identity politics has served the Maoists well thus far. But they're playing with fire. And I, for one, can't see the fire engines. ●



MEANWHILE
Suman Pradhan



MOHAN MAINALI

Hospital overburdened

Nepal's first legal abortion was performed in Maternity Hospital in March 2004, and nearly 300 doctors and over 200 nurse assistants have been trained to deliver comprehensive abortion care. But the hospital's CAC unit still struggles to meet demand. Some days 25-30 women come. Some are rejected, some we do abortions for about 15 a day and some we ask to come a few days later," says CAC Coordinator Dr Sudha Thapa, sitting in the unit's cramped training room.

The doctors trained at the unit leave, and there is usually just one doctor on duty. Nurse training is meant to meet some of the demand, and other training centres are soon to open in Butwal and Pokhara.

Lack of knowledge remains the biggest obstacle to women getting safe abortions, according to Thapa. "Even doctors who come to work here don't know about the law, so how can the public know?"

Justice for all

In the countryside, ‘peoples’ courts’ are often the best resort

NARESH NEWAR in BARDIYA

Anil Chettri, Chief Justice ‘people’s court’ in Kohalpur listens intently to two villagers argue their cases on a land dispute. Fifteen other people crammed into the small, hot room watch as Chettri sets a one-week deadline for a verdict. “I promise you the decision will not be delayed as in other courts,” he says, a snide reference to state courts that take months, even years to decide on complicated land disputes.

The people’s court is in considerable demand here, because of their speed, largely because it is seen to set a lower burden of proof. Cases thrown out of districts courts, or lost due to inadequate evidence are all brought to the Maoist courts. Plaintiffs, often poor, take legal battles over property, domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse, bigamy, and other social problems to people’s courts.

But equally, people use the Maoist legal option to threaten and intimidate fellow villagers. Verdict on all cases is passed by a single person who does not have a law education or formal legal training, and is often politically motivated. Maoist judges also prefer to try cases related to sympathisers, not unaffiliated civilians.

Chettri, who dropped out of college to join the Maoist movement, disagrees with all of the above. “We provide justice without bias, and our judges are qualified enough due to their 10-year-long involvement in the ‘People’s War,’” he says.

In response to pressure from lawyers and political parties not to interfere in the country’s independent and impartial judiciary system, Prachanda recently ordered his cadres to close down the people’s courts in the core city areas.

As with many Maoist activities, that will be difficult, since the people’s courts are already a fully functional alternative justice system in many rural and some urban areas in this part of the country.

Internally displaced people, who might want to take advantage of the ceasefire and peace

process to return home, will be tried at these courts. But they’ll be tried even if they don’t return. “We cannot stop local people from asking us to try cases, so even absent people will be tried and sentenced according to our laws,” says Sunil of the Bardiya Jana Sarkar. ●

Governing for guns

Out in the far-west, since the peace process started the Maoists have taken over the administration and projects of local government bodies. We were told that most of the government’s activities are aimed at generating revenue to support the PLA.

Local Maoist offices in rural and core town areas, not DDCs, control everything—business licenses, revenue collection, customs and taxation, development work, transportation, building contracts, river leasing, and much more.

From 25km west of the district headquarters, we control all areas and this is why we, and not the seven-party government, have the right to govern,” says Suman, a senior official Maoist people’s government leader in Guleriya.

The development and administration budgets for Bardiya and Banke together are over Rs 21 million annually, and we were told that most of the money will be diverted to strengthen the PLA and its soldiers. The Maoists also control the Rs 1 million local development budgets. They collect custom duties from all but one of the seven Nepal-India border posts in the district, give out bridge and road building contracts, regulate river transport, and collect taxes from vegetable and livestock markets, and forest users.

The message from the local Maoists is clear. “We won’t make the same mistake as the Nepali Congress, which led an armed rebellion against King Mahendra and disarmed even before the peace process was completed,” says Purna Subedi, head in Nepalganj of the Banke Jana Sarkar. “That would be a huge mistake.”

Naresh Newar

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ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

The monsoon has finally receded and despite last week’s irreplaceable losses to the nation there is optimism in the air. Like everyone else, most in the tourism industry are also in the wait and watch mode given our history of political uncertainty.

Ideally, the post monsoon autumn season should be a busy one for the tourism industry in Nepal. The three month-long gap before winter sets and covers the Nepal Himalaya with blankets of snow is ideal for every adventure possible from mountaineering and meeting Maoists, to river rafting and riding elephants in the jungles down south. Besides spring, weather-wise the autumn skies clear out to some of the most majestic views of the mighty mountains up north.

With all this attraction here one can naively assume that if the political situation improves tourism will pick up. But that itself is not enough.

Tourism today depends on a variety of factors, from the world economy to carrying capacity defined as the number of airline seats, get ting to the destination and the maximum number of hotel rooms available in the host country. In an effort to maximise the tourist inflow the

Inquiries have increased, but this tourism season may still not be good enough

government recently announced a temporary increase in the number of inbound flights operated by international airlines to address the lack of seats for inbound tourists until 31 December.

This should have settled the concerns of tourism operators here but many are still sceptical about how much of a difference it will create in terms of volume. “Nepal has long been taken out of travel brochures by international tour operators who don’t want to risk their investment because here, anything can happen any time. There has been an increase in the number of inquiries but everyone is still on a wait and watch mode,” says Shikhar Prasai, director of Natraj Tours and Travels, one of the largest tour operators in the country.

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Pradeep Gyawali may have made



KESHAV BOHORA

the decision in the 28th annual general meeting of Trekking Agents Association of Nepal in an attempt to pacify the hungry industry but international operators have still not received written permission till the time of writing. “The plan has been announced but the actual materialisation still has to take place. In the coming few weeks it will all be clear,” said Gyan Amarsinghe, general manager of Qatar Air, which plans to increase its weekly flights from 11 to 14 once they receive formal permission.

Despite all the bad publicity Nepal has received in the last few years, hope is the flavour of the season. From tour operators to hoteliers, and tourist souvenir shops everyone is hoping the political leaders will come up with a solution. Those like Laxmi Rajthala who runs the LBS

Handicraft, a small tourist souvenir shop in Thamel say, “We are not able to even raise enough for rent sometimes but now that there is peace, perhaps there will be more tourists.”

Pasang Dawa Sherpa, Managing Director of the Nepal Trans Himalayan Explorer is also optimistic and says, “Things have not changed dramatically so far but there are signs that the situation could improve.”

And there is a lot to look forward to, keeping fingers crossed of course. Several mountaineering expeditions have already left to climb various peaks, most popular among them being Ama Dablam and Cho Oyu, the latter being the easiest among above 8000m peaks and considered a preparatory peak for those aiming to climb Mt. Everest. It seems everyone has recognised that giving a boost to the tourism industry will set the economic wheel in motion at least until things are resolved for good.

Among the various promotional events meant to boost tourism here, Nepal has christened one mountain in the Langtang area in honour of the founder of the Scout movement , Lord Baden Powell, to mark 100 years of scouting in 2007. The peak, 5,890m tall, will be called Baden Powell Scout Peak.

A 14-member group of scouts from South Asia returned from a trek to the peak on Sunday. Two members of the team also made it to the summit. “This year’s trip was only to plan the route and look at the area as no one had been there before. Next year when we start the centenary celebrations we hope to bring Scouts from all over the world,” says team leader Keshav Bohora, who is also an instructor at the Kakani International Scout Training Centre.

Shree Ram Lamichane, head of Nepal Scouts says several dozen countries have already been contacted and have expressed interest in coming here to climb the mountain next year. There are 28 million scouts worldwide and groups from Australia and Singapore are already organising trips to Nepal to climb the new peak while Scouts in Denmark and Sweden have confirmed that they will make the voyage in the near future.

The season also has bookings for at least 25 peaks on the permitted list but which have not been successfully ascended yet. The Nepal Mountaineering Association and the Japan Workers’ Alpine Federation are organising a joint expedition to Nangpai Gosum (7312m) in the same area as Cho Oyu to mark 50 years of friendship between the countries. Expeditions are also going out to virgin peaks like Dome Kang, north of Kanchenjunga and the 6905m high Mt Pangbari in the Manaslu area. ●

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Hot off the press



Print Process, in association with Beesants Trading, has now opened in Tripureshwor, just in time to catch the Dasain rush of cards and publications. It offers a one-stop solution for prepress services, using Heidelberg technology. Much is expected from their high-resolution colour separation service, and they offer scanning, retouching, colour proofs and plate-making as well.

Breaking the sound barrier

Soon the Yamaha brand will be associated with more than just the purr of motorbike engines and generators in Nepal. Morang Auto Works have got authorisation to distribute Yamaha musical instruments and audio/visual components, via their showroom in Mountain Plaza, Kantipath. Yamaha drums, guitars, pianos and keyboards are endorsed by musicians including Chris Parker and Dave Navarro, and their home entertainment systems are recognised for their quality. Yamaha speakers, amplifiers, home theatre systems and DVD players are also available.



Cosmic showroom



Nepalís own Cosmic Motorcycles have opened a showroom in Teku, which accompanies the recent launch of the 125cc CY125-20, and plans to launch other upgraded models in addition to their current four. The company is offering heavy discounts, on-the-spot financing and heavy discounts for the showroomís first week.

Dreams and goals

It was a dream come true for Yugesh Shrestha, when he won the ãCarlsberg Football Trip of a Lifetimeí promotion in Nepal and got to travel to Liverpool and watch the Liverpool-Tottenham Hotspur match of the Barclays English Premier League live from Carlsbergís VIP suite on 23 September. Things got even better for the longtime Liverpool fan though, as first his team crushed the opposition in a 3-0 win, and then he got to personally present the Man of the Match award to Steven Gerrard. íl had always dreamed of watching the game live, and if possible getting Gerrardís autograph, but this is more than í ever imagined,í gushed an ecstatic Yugesh.



Innovators, RIP

The younger generation has a legacy to build on

Everyone prayed for miracles as the news of the rescue operations of the helicopter crash poured in early this week. But given the terrain of our country, lack of contemporary rescue operations, hardware, and software it is rare for such miracles to actually happen. The



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

tragedy has been costly: the development world lost pioneers and innovators—people who questioned the status quo, who criticised and were criticised back, hated and envied, but, they could not be ignored.

It was difficult to argue with Harka Gurung even if you disagreed with him. People like Mingma Norbu Sherpa and Chandra Prasad Gurung brought new thoughts into the development world paradigm. They strived to work on a strategy that revolved around the community. While many development practitioners would lecture at length on ‘inclusive development’, they were the few who actually made it happen. There is rarely a place in the Annapurna circuit where they were not lauded and it is rare for development workers to become household names.

It is also important to understand that non-government initiatives succeed if the government is either silent like in the boom of the IT industry or if there are champions in the government who support these initiatives. Tirtha Man Maskey was one such relentless person in the government who encouraged



for things to happen rather than put a spanner like most bureaucracies are known for.

Indeed, the loss of these individuals is a great blow to the conservation and the development world but this Beed sees more. In the Nepali and development world of corruption, nepotism and favouritism, they stood out as role models who ensured that they derived their strength from being apolitical and clean. The energy they provided to colleagues and friends were through the stand they took vis-à-vis all odds rather than succumb to political or any other pressure. When people are asked to name a few successful Nepali professionals, then these individuals would surely feature at the top of the list.

Surely, the world of Nepali conservation, biodiversity and

community oriented development will never be the same, but there are many leaders they have mentored who can perhaps keep the flag flying high. Their loss should be the fuel for accelerating more innovative interventions to emerge with more creative models in the development paradigm.

For the young Nepalis who find a dead-end to Nepal’s future, those who complain of the ‘khattam’ situation and are desperate to find the next escape flight from the ‘perceived mess,’ there is leaf of learning from their lives. Reading the biographies of Mingma and Chandra would give one hope—where one can reach even if the starting point is some small obscure village in Nepal.

Their lives have been shortened, but what they achieved in their lifetime is much more than many lives put together. ●

Looking forward to the next 25

Express shipping is both an indicator and driver of a country’s trade and industry health. We spoke to Scott Price, CEO of DHL Express, Asia Pacific on his recent visit to Kathmandu about DHL’s prospects in Nepal.

Nepali Times: How far have you got in Nepal?

Scott Price: Twenty-five years ago, we averaged five shipments a week, or 250 a year. Today we have 115,000 shipments a year and nearly 70 employees. That reflects significant development in Nepalís economic maturity. We certainly had challenges in the last couple of years, but we havenít seen a significant downturn despite Nepalís political situation.

How does Nepal fit in with your overall Asia strategy?

I look after 41 countries in the Asia Pacific. You have the mature economies of Japan, Korea, and Australia. Then you have India and China with significant foreign direct investment attractions. Now companies want to hedge their bets and thereís increasing support for smaller countries coming together, as trading blocks in the common market.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepal has a place within that, but there is a direct correlation between an unstable government and a reduction in foreign direct investment. We also move amid regulatory obstacles. The high level of foreign direct investment relative to high-end manufacturing and assembly is very closely correlated to the international express business. What we push for is customs and airport flexibility that facilitates the industry.

Where is Nepal among Asian countries, in the bottom half or the top half?

The bottom half; but countries like Thailand fall into the

same category. More and more governments are recognising the impact the customs regime has upon trade, so you’re seeing more countries exchanging information and aligning towards equalising the level at which you don’t charge customs duty, because it helps their economy. Nepal could also make progress in the customs area for the benefit of the economy overall.

Is security a major hassle now?

Absolutely. And it’s getting worse, in the sense that they’re more stringent. We have always been very careful about security because we use commercial airlifts, we load on passenger airlines. After 9/11, the US put in much more aggressive requirements in terms of security, and many countries in Asia are following American rules. The US is such a huge import market, you might as well follow your largest customer.

Your company has done some particularly good corporate social responsibility work with consumers in Nepal.†

DHL is about 25-30 years old in the Asia Pacific and about 5-10 years ago, we began in corporate social responsibility. I think that’s the maturity of a company, when you reach a size where you feel the need to give back to your community. In this part of the world, the focus is on education. I was very impressed with the school I was taken to. Sometimes, even when you want to do good, you can’t find a local partner who can help you to do that well. However, we are very focused on corporate social responsibility and volunteering our time. Our people enjoy it very much.

Shrestha's death



Himal Khabarpatrika 2-17 October

The Tarai Janatantrik Mukti Morcha (TJMM) split from the Maoists, demanding an independent tarai. On 23 September, RPP leader Krishna Charan Shrestha was murdered at his home village, Belha in Siraha. The TJMM has taken responsibility for that killing.

Angered by the incident, people from the area have not only killed the TJMM's Siraha commander Bihari Mahato and rebel Rudal Mahato, but also burnt down the house of two others allegedly involved in the incident.

Shrestha is perhaps the only non-Maoist leader to be killed by the TJMM so far. According to the TJMM, Shrestha was killed because he was involved in economic and social

suppression. Although TJMM chairman Jaya Krishna Goit (pictured) has expressed interest in talking to the government, there has been no response from the state. It is understood that the TJMM ordered such a high profile killing because it wanted to draw the government's attention. However, the government is so busy talking to the Maoists, it can neither talk to the TJMM nor take any action.

Shrestha served as a minister and district vice chairman during the Panchayat era. Although he lived in a Madhesi area, he is said to have good relations with the other villagers.

Accusing the government of being unable to provide security, RPP chairman Pashupati Shamsher Rana has asked for Home Minister Krishna Prasad Situala to resign immediately. Maoist bureau chief of the Janakpur-Sagarmatha zone, Shitalkumar, and district secretary Abinash have both condemned Shrestha's killing. The government has set up an investigation team under regional administrator Shankarlal Chaudhary.

It has been five months since the government and the Maoists decided on talks, but violence and killing in Siraha-Saptari has not stopped. The TJMM, usually involved in abduction, attacks against Maoists, and looting, has recently also been involved in killings.

Earlier this month, before Shrestha's murder, the TJMM killed Maoist supporter Shree Narayan Yadab (Harish Chandra) and Sambhu Yadab, and former Maoist cadres Mahesh Chaudhary and Badri Yadab in June. The killing of Krishna Charan Shrestha was the TJMM's way of sending the message to the government that it is powerful and cannot be ignored anymore.

Vested interests

Interview with former zonal commissioner Surya Bahadur Sen in *Jana Aastha*, 27 September



KIRAN PANDAY

Why are you against the monarchy?

The king did not do anything for the Nepali people. If the king does not need the people why should the people keep him? I told the king before, 'be a king of all the people,' but he could not be. King Gyanendra only wanted to listen to a few Ranas, his ambassadors and hooligans from yesteryear. The king's time is over and so is the monarchy.

What path should it take?

Everyone, including the king and the political parties, should agree to give the monarchy a peaceful way out. Taking a peaceful path means holding a referendum on the fate of the monarchy. The new constitution should be made based on the people's decision regarding the monarchy.

Are you demanding this from the king or from the parties?

Both. I have been saying we should have a people's referendum regarding the monarchy since 2000. I demanded this in my book *Mero Kathaharu*, published in 2001. The meeting between the Maoists, the CPN-UML, and the NC on 23 September ended with all three parties agreeing to solve the issue through a referendum, which makes me happy.

Is Girija babu trying to save the king?

If the Nepali Congress had trusted the people, they would not have had to make a deal with the king in exchange for security. Girija babu does not trust the people, and the king has betrayed the people's trust. He has even taken the help of foreigners to save his own skin. There are Indian groups that have stepped up to support the king after he asked them to save him. Ambassador Moriarty's regular statements are a product of that. Foreigners are asking to keep the present structure so that either a constitutional or a ceremonial monarchy remains. Girija babu has his own vested interest, but so do foreign powers.

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Secular Dasain

Editorial in *Haank*, 27 September

Nepal is a multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic country. Parliament proclaimed Nepal a secular state [earlier this year], while the 1990 constitution had defined Nepal as a Hindu country.

There are more tribal and indigenous communities in Nepal than Hindus, and they have their own distinct languages, religions, and cultures. Besides them, Nepal also has Muslims and Buddhists. The tribal and indigenous communities who form the majority of the population are non-Hindus.

But Prithbi Narayan Shah wanted to create a ‘true Hindu land’ in Nepal and started converting the indigenous peoples to Hinduism by expanding the borders of Gorkha. The Shah dynasty forced indigenous communities to accept Brahmanistic Hinduism, backed with the slogan of ‘one language, one religion, one people’. Due to pressure from the power centre, indigenous communities have also been forced to accept Hindu culture and norms, and festivals like Dasain are national celebrations.



NILAM GHIMIRE

Indigenous communities and leftists have long demanded that Nepal be declared a secular state. Parliament’s proclamation earlier this year announcing a secular Nepal has been welcomed by political parties, indigenous communities, and social welfare organisations. In a secular country all religions and cultures are treated equally by the state.

Puritans oppose the secularisation of Nepal. The biggest loser from secularism is the monarchy, which declares itself an incarnation of Vishnu and has ruled Nepal for over 200 years with the backup of Hindu religion. This is why puritans, regressionists, and royalists oppose the proclamation. They have even tried to create caste wars in the name of religion. However, their attempts will prove fruitless in the face of people power. After the reinstallation of democracy in Nepal it is essential that secularism be implemented correctly.

Dasain is now used to promote consumerism and force indigenous communities to accept a Hindu identity. The festival is a burden to the poor, subsistence farmers, and daily wage earners. The government should now treat all religions, cultures and languages equally.

Rights wronged

Samaya, 28 October

Five months after the ceasefire, the Maoists are continuing with murder, pressure, extortion, taxation, and abduction. It looks like the government can’t stop the violence and mayhem. Since 25 April, the Maoists have killed 19

and the state has killed nine. Nepal’s who were hopeful that the new political situation would finally make way for peace have lost hope. The Maoists and the state have both violated the ceasefire code of conduct.

Human rights activist Krishna Pahadi says, “Although the Maoists have entered mainstream politics, their character has not changed, and the state has done nothing to remedy the situation.” The Maoists are using threats and violence to get things done.

In the last decade, Nepal has come to be known to have one of the worst human rights situations in the world.

Human rights activists say the nature of human rights violations is changing. “This is the first time since 2007 that the government has been so insensitive towards its citizens,” says Subodh Pyakuryal of Insec. He says the government has failed to provide security to the Nepali people. “The Maoists do not need reasons to kill anyone, they recently killed a widow for remarrying. How can you say that they are following the code of conduct?” asks Pyakuryal.

Birendra Prasad Mishra of the ceasefire code of conduct monitoring committee agrees that both sides need to follow the code of conduct.

The latest victims of Maoist violence are Nepal Dairy’s Herambha and Araniko Rajbhandari, who were beaten up by Maoists when the dairy’s workers were not allowed to form a branch of the Maoist-affiliated union, ANTUF-R.

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Sign on shelf: Seven Party Alliance-Maoist agreements
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Big man: To implement the first understanding came the second agreement, to implement the second came the third, and so on

Small man: Oh! So the last one will not be implemented until another agreement follows?

Abin Shrestha in *Samaya*, 28 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Brother, I am like a crow lost in the fog. You are older than me. Please teach me how to run the ministry.”

Minister for Land Reform and Management Prabhu Narayan Chaudhary speaking with Minister for Agriculture Mahanta Thakur, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 22 September

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Dr Gurung, a tribute



KIRAN PANDAY

A helicopter hits a mountainside, and wipes out an entire pantheon of Nepalis best and brightest, who believed in returning the commons to the people. These professionals, who, along with some equally committed foreign friends, were returning to Kathmandu having handed over the management of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area to the local inhabitants. They were the gift of the central Himalaya, of Nepal, to the world. Each was a life full of creativity, courage, and Himalayan exhilaration, and will be remembered decades hence for how they helped define Nepalis future on the foundation of natural science, geography, and respect for people.

Seated in that helicopter was Harka Gurung, the Nepali who introduced Nepal to Nepalis. He was born in 1938 fast by the Ngadi Khola in upper Lamjung. Growing up at a time when Kathmandu Valley was ñNepali, he decided to reject the ancestral call of Gurkha warriorship, and chose

instead the path of scholarship. He ran away barefoot to Kathmandu, where he joined Darbar High School. Then it was onward to ñlain *chhokraí* schools in India, an IA back at Tri Chandra College, a Bachelorís from Patna Universityó and a PhD on the geography of Pokhara Valley from Edinburgh University in 1965.

That was a time, so soon after the eclipse of the Ranas, when Nepalis of ñethnicityí were near-invisible on the national scene. Those outside the country, descendants of migrants, were able to rise to the level of their genius; within Nepal, however, Kathmanduí autocratic glass ceiling allowed no exception. It was by dint of his personality and steely determination, his rigour and love of learning, that Dr Gurung became a one-man role model and pillar of strength for the rest of emerging Nepal.

His first calling was geography, but Dr Gurung was a multi-tasking multi-disciplinarian who delved into planning, demography, art (under Bal Krishna Sama), history (of mountaineering, hill migration, Gurkha recruitment), economicsóand, most recently, transparency in governance. He was once Minister of Tourism, in the middle of the Panchayat era, and we have never had someone in that position who better understood the countryís cultural and natural wealth. Over the past decade, amidst the tide of righteous ethnic assertion, Dr Gurung was an exemplar, himself intensely concerned about overturning the national legacy of exclusion.

Dr Gurung had the stature and learning that allowed him not to be cowed by possibility of controversy. In 1983, he was pilloried for a report on migration that suggested regulation of the southern border. Last year, ICIMOD published a detailed monograph with four decades worth of photographic evidence from his native Lamjung. In it, Dr Gurung sought to debunk the ñtheory of Himalayan degradationí, which seeks to place the blame for downstream siltation and flooding at the doorstep of the midhill peasantry and its supposed biomass profligacy.

Ever the genial contrarian, Dr Gurung scoffed at the tradition, powered by the myth that it was a holy mountain, of not allowing mountaineers on Machapuchre. He

maintained that there was no evidence the Gurung herders inhabiting its base in fact revered Machapuchre. A student of mountaineering history, he suggested that the first climbers of Nepal were not the Sherpas but Gurkha *lahurays*, starting with Karbir Budathoki and Harkabir Thapa in the Swiss Alps in 1884.

Dr Gurung believed in the power of statistics to reveal and thereby help improve the human condition, and so his latest immersion was in producing the book *Nepal: Atlas and Statistics*. A large-format work in preparation for three full years, it emerged from the printers the day before the author and editor left for Ghunsa at the base of Kangchenjunga. Himal Books, the publishers, was preparing for a grand presentation by Dr Gurung after the Dasain break. It will now have to be done in absentia.

Author of the widely-acclaimed *Vignettes of Nepal* (1980), among more than a dozen equally gripping and authoritative works, Dr Gurungís life cannot be encapsulated other than through vignettes. One of his most prized possessions was a set of black-and-white photographs following the march of the Himalayan ramparts, taken from a Pilatus Porter flight that he took across the 500-mile spine of Nepal.

When it came time to christen scores of the countryís peaks so that they did not all get named by western climbers and cartographers, and alternatively to save them from the fate of mere numericals, it was Dr Gurung who was handed the task. That was also how Peak 29, towering above his home village in central Nepal, became Ngadi Chuli. Across the Nepal Himalaya, thus Harka Gurung left his personal stamp on the *chulis*, and it was amidst the craggy cliffs of the lower Himalaya, in Taplejung in the east, that he himself returned to nature.

Coming down from Manang a few years ago, and passing Ngadi Khola, a porter pointed out to me a collection of houses up the slope to the left. He said, ñThat one, with the kitchen smoke, is the house of Harka Gurung.í It is by that wisp of smoke in his beloved Ngadi that I prefer to remember Dr Gurung. ●

Kanak Mani Dixit



Friends and colleagues

Late Saturday afternoon the phone rang, with news of a helicopter missing in Taplejung with doctors and Sherpas on boardóthe caller was checking to make sure it wasnít me. I switched on the television, hoping and praying that the helicopter had made a forced landing and that those on board were safe. There were far too many names on the passenger list who were my friends and professional colleagues for over 30 years, each with hopes, aspirations, and opportunities ahead. They were pillars of Nepalis much needed conservation efforts, and pivotal at this point in our environmental history. As hours, then days, ticked by in incessant rain, our worst fears were confirmed.

I travelled to Kangchenjunga in August 1994 to carry out a study and its feasibility for protected area status. Like a Buddhist mountain deity, the area displayed both peaceful and wrathful manifestations. On a clear day, the beauty of the ancient forests and gushing waterfalls, interspersed with lush grasslands and agricultural settlements was unparalleled.

Still, the impossibly rugged terrain and heavy monsoon rains can quickly turn this hidden paradise into a ferocious landscape of thunder clouds, rain, and unpredictable landslides into the violent Tamur River. Sadly, it was the latter manifestation that my friends and colleagues encountered on 23 September.

Although I cannot speak for them today, I do know that it was this remarkable versatility and variation in Nepalis landscapes which inspired them to do the work they did.

Narayan Prasad Paudel was recently promoted to director-general at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), a hard-earned achievement for a career bureaucrat in the conservation field for over 30 years.†He studied forestry and had a Masterís in Natural Resource Economics. Narayan and I served together in the same department for many years. He was leader of the team that made the Makalu-Barun National Park and



MIN BAJORACHARYA

Conservation Area in Arun Valley a reality. In recent years he worked hard to ensure the Sagarmatha National Park upgrades its management system through participatory planning processes. As chief ecologist of the DNPWC, he was especially concerned with ensuring that national parks be vigorously protected in these uncertain times.

Narayan did not drink or smoke. He was calm and friendly, and the only times anyone ever thought he was rude were a result of frequent mix-ups with his identical twin. He was always polite and encouraging to co-workers, and when he became director-general, some even questioned how someone so nice could govern such a difficult department. But Narayan handled his post with calm assurance, never becoming caught up in the status of his position, and always seeking input from his staff and outsiders. For many he was a good role model.

Narayan was a deeply spiritual person and should have been celebrating Ghatasthapana on that fateful day. At the same time, he was extremely conscientious and polite, and would never have turned down a request to attend the ceremony handing over the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area to the local community. The task was part of his

responsibilities, and he always believed in empowering and supporting protected area residents. Narayan Poudel leaves behind his wife, Chanda and daughter Reecha. I hope they realise that there are many people like myself who appreciate his contributions and will miss him badly.

Chandra Prasad Gurung
Despite being from different parts of Nepal, I came to know Chandra well when he joined the feasibility study team for the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). Chandra was from the village of Sikles, within the proposed Annapurna Conservation Area. As a local, he had an instrumental role in ensuring local support for the project. Chandra had a PhD in medical geography, but after his involvement in ACAP he took up conservation and protected areas management as his profession, quickly learning the art of conservation and performing excellently.

At international conferences and workshops, Chandra was an excellent presenter and speaker. With him around, Nepal was always well represented at camp fires and parties because he was also an exceptional singer and performer.

Chandra Gurung served as the director of Annapurna Conservation Area and then member-secretary of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation. He was Country Representative for WWF-Nepal over the last eight years, during which time he grew the WWF-Nepal Office to a strong, well-funded conservation institution. He believed in good publicity as a tool to achieve high-profile conservation work. The last time I met Chandra, at Bangkok airport about two months ago, I asked which of WWF-Nepalis projects was looking most promising.



COURTESY: WWF-NEPAL

A great motivator



COURTESY: WWF-NEPAL

I had heard much about Dawa Tshering Sherpa while working for WWF-Nepal, but only met him on 23 April 2003 in Lelep. He'd just been nominated, without contest, as first chairperson of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council. † Born in Lungthung, Taplejung in 1949, Dawa dai attended the Lelep school until class five, after which he stopped to work on his family farm. He later joined the Nepal Army and studied privately and passed secondary school in 1974. A year later, his grandfather died, leaving him alone to fend for himself and his sister. Dawa dai's civil-service phase began then. He was chief of the Border Administration Office, passed the public service exam, and was posted as Khardar in Panchthar, Taplejung, Birgunj, Olangchunggola, and Ilam. In 2000, he decided to return home and work to conserve his district's abundant flora and fauna. When I met him, he had just taken the conservation area staff on a wildlife monitoring trip. He was appreciative of the staff, who had to work in difficult terrain, but was devastated to see the poaching occurring in the area. Dawa dai's motto was to do as much as his knowledge, capacity, and authority would allow, for the area's unique resources. During the project's turbulent past two years, Dawa dai was a capable leader and great motivator who adeptly handled his responsibilities and negotiated between the demands of the project, the locals, and the Maoists. His commitment was a factors which allowed the handover of the management of Kangchenjunga conservation area to the local people. When I left WWF-Nepal in April 2004, Dawa dai wrote me a note saying that I would be missed by the people of Kangchenjunga. Today, Dawa dai, I and many others will miss you and all else you could have done for Kangchenjunga. ● Janita Gurung

Minister Gopal Rai, Mina Rai



KIRAN PANDAY



COURTESY WWF

Gopal Rai, State Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation, was a simple man from Okhaldhunga with a great sense of humour. Down-to-earth and frank, he was admired by local journalists. I remember when we were in Nepalganj and he wanted to see the local bajar. His security guard radioed for security, but Rai preferred to travel informally by rickshaw instead. He usually travelled alone, but on this trip called his wife from the airport at the last minute and asked her to accompany him. Mina Rai was a traditional Nepali homemaker. She was meticulous about taking care of her children and home. This was the first time ever that she accompanied her husband on an official trip. The Rais are survived by one son and four daughters. Jagat Nepal, Kantipur TV

Farewell, friend



I first met Yeshe Lama almost 30 years ago at Darjeeling's Bethany School. We were about six then, but I soon became a fan. Yeshe always topped the class. Boys were sometimes intimidated by this pretty tomboy, but she was always popular. We lost contact after school and met 20 years at her WWF Nepal office in Baluwatar. Yeshe was still a favourite, loved by WWF staff for her kindness, patience, and hard work, and especially for her passion for conserving endangered plant species. In 2001, we travelled to Dolpa's remote Komang village, taking the arduous Jomsom route. Yeshe led us on Mustang horses braving the snow, rain, and extreme cold, to our destination at 5,500m. After we'd shot the film, the villagers and amchis were in tears as they bid farewell to Yeshe, who, in the last few years worked tirelessly to promote their work and traditions. Yeshe believed amchis made an immense humanitarian contribution, saving many lives in remote mountain areas where there are no hospitals, health posts, or government health workers. She organised many training sessions for young lamas to encourage them to preserve and refine their traditions. Yeshe was also a prolific author, with several books on medicinal plants to her credit. In recent years, Yeshe has been responsible for WWF Nepal's Mountain Program, looking after projects in Sagarmatha, Kangchenjunga and Dolpo, the snow leopard conservation project, as well as the newly-initiated sacred Himalayan landscape program. †She remained excited about using film to aid her work, and had commissioned Tsering Rhitar Sherpa to make a documentary about snow leopards in Kangchenjunga. Yeshe was not typical. As a program officer, she never shied away from travelling, making several trips to Dolpa and the Everest region. Often she had to leave her two young sons behind with her beloved husband Tashi, but wherever she could, Yeshe took her boys. Yeshe Lama will be greatly missed, for her work and for who she was. ● Naresh Newar

"The Tarai Arc Landscape Project," he replied. I hope the WWF staff will be able to carry on Chandra's legacy, dreams, and pride. He will be missed by the Gurung community and his family and by conservation as a whole.



ANNE B KEISER IN SIR EDMUND HILLARY & THE PEOPLE OF EVEREST

Mingma Norbu Sherpa and I spent many years together, at Ananda Kuti High School in Kathmandu, as university students in New Zealand, and later as colleagues in the DNPWC. Mingma was one of the first Sherpas to go through high school and university, and more uniquely to join the government service. Mingma was always a go-getter. He took Sir Edmund Hillary as his mentor and role model, and followed his motto "nothing ventured, nothing gained". Mingma was a keen outdoor sportsman and liked climbing, skiing and even water sports. Coming from the mountains, swimming was not one of our strengths, but Mingma always dove right in, resulting in a few close calls. Laughing about those close shaves were among our fondest moments as friends. Over the years, Mingma made remarkable

contributions. He served as warden of Sagarmatha National Park and worked on the planning of the Annapurna Conservation Area. Even after he moved to the USA to work for the WWF, he supported conservation in Nepal and Bhutan, and his heart and mind always remained in Asia. Mingma went from being a barefoot Khumbu child to conservation director for Asia Pacific Program of WWF-USA. He made remarkable contributions to Nepal and died doing the work he was most committed to. He was a valued member of the Sherpa community, and is survived by his wife Phurba, son Tenzing and daughter Dawa. We pray that our shared Sherpa and Buddhist beliefs will help them cope with this irrecoverable loss.

Dr Tirtha Man Maskey was a pioneer in the establishment of Nepal's protected areas system. He became the first warden of Chitwan National Park in 1972 and earned his PhD from the University of Florida in 1979. His contribution to gharial conservation work in Chitwan National Park is particularly well known. Dr Maskey was one of the longest serving director-generals of the DNPWC. He was known to have a sharp tongue, but be extremely well-meaning. He oversaw Nepal's protected areas through a very difficult period of conflict and insurgency.

Born in Kathmandu, Dr Maskey had travelled all over Nepal to oversee the national parks and reserves. Although his first love was always the rhinos, tigers, and gharials of the tarai, he was equally fond of the high mountain areas. He was great on social occasions, and loved laughing and chatting with friends and staff alike. Though Dr Maskey retired from government service at the end of 2005, he kept working. He became co-chair of IUCN's Asian Rhino Specialist group, and was working in collaboration with WWF-Nepal when the fateful incident took place. Nepal's conservation community will miss his contributions. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife Laxmi, and sons Jason and Ayush.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Dr Damodar Parajuli, a senior official at the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation for many years, had a special interest in non-timber forest products. He conducted his doctoral research in India on Himalayan yew (Taxus sp), a promising source for cancer treatment. He was known for his unflinching smile and ike chha'i for everyone. Soft-spoken and pleasant, he took a great interest in the work and lives of ministry staff. After joining government service in 1974, he served in many districts as District Forest Officer over the years.†He was director-general of the Forest Department, and was recently in charge of the Foreign Aid Division before becoming acting secretary of the ministry.†He is survived by his wife, four daughters, and a son.

Sarad Kumar Rai was born in 1955 in Khotang.†A career forester with the Department of Forests, he served in District Forest Offices in many districts over the years, both in the hills and tarai.†More recently, he served as a planning officer and had a special interest in community forestry with the Department in Kathmandu.†He was recently appointed director general in the Department of Forests.†Sarad Rai was one of the few high ranking forestry officials from the Rai community.†With his loss there will be less diversity and experience within the Ministry.†He is survived by his wife Kabita and two sons, and will be sorely missed.

Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa



COURTESY: WWF-NEPAL



COURTESY: WWF-NEPAL

Cheers, Pauli

A few days before he left for his ill-fated† trip, Pauli Mustonen, the Finnish Charge d’Affaires in Kathmandu, was† organising a concert by Aavas at his residence. We scheduled it for 24 September, after his return from Taplejung. The concert will never happen.

Pauli was much more than a diplomat. He was a quiet, humble man who wanted to do something good for Nepal and Nepalis, but would never take credit for good results. He loved music and came to every†Nepathya and Paleti show possible.

Pauli had great plans, and they always reflected Nepali desires. He wanted to see all Nepali children going to school. He wanted *Palpasa CafE* to be translated and published in Finnish. He wanted the picture book Kunda Dixit put together, *A People War*, and the images in it, to reach as many people as possible within and beyond Nepal. Pauli wanted to do what he could† to ensure Nepal’s forests were conserved as those in Finland.

Pauli wanted to go back to Peru, where he had served before. He loved music, and food, and never refused a drink. Above all, Pauli was filled with love for life and a sense of purpose. Music has lost a good listener and Nepal, an ever better friend.

Kiran Krishna Shrestha

Sunil Singh

NTV cameraman Sunil Prasad Singh was born in Sarlahi 31 years ago, and joined Nepal Television to man studio cameras in 1997. He worked at the Kohalpur regional transmission centre for several years and then at the central office. Dedicated, quiet, and very warm, Singh had won various awards for his work. He had only started working as a news cameraman two months ago.

Sunil is survived by his wife and two daughters, who are now faced with a serious crisis. Sunil’s wife is an Indian citizen, and as their marriage was not registered, his daughters do not have citizenship either, and the family are not entitled to insurance claims.

Sunil’s colleagues at NTV will remember him as being very committed, and will miss his contributions greatly.

Ram Sharan Mahat, Kantipur TV

Vijaya Shrestha

Vijaya Shrestha was a rare individual who, besides being a successful businessman, also worked to raise social and political consciousness in his home district of Taplejung. As a recent president of the Taplejung Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Mechi zonal representative, Shrestha was also executive member of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He contributed greatly to the establishment and development of the Taplejung Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and always emphasised unity. Shrestha was involved in exporting tea and other local produce from Taplejung to the Indian market. Vijaya Shrestha leaves behind a wife and two children.

Nepali Times



COURTESY WWF

Hemraj Bhandari

In the 15 months that Hemraj Bhandari worked as a reporter and news editor at Nepal Television, he carved a niche for himself as one of NTV’s most diligent and inquisitive staff. Efficient and professional, Hemraj loved doing in-depth reports on development, environmental, and public concern issues.

Hemraj was a well-educated, bilingual reporter, and used his work to push for better education and health programs, especially in the mid- and far-western regions. Hemraj was born in the remote village of Ghodagaon in Rolpa in 1979, and won a prestigious scholarship to Budhanilkantha School.

Hemraj was also a good speaker and leader, and was a valuable member of the Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students’ Association, actively involved in their free health camps. Always conscious of his roots, Hemraj also worked hard to generate funds for the SEBS scholarship program.

Hemraj was passionate, determined, and innovative when it came to his work. Just two weeks ago, he had rushed in at 8PM to cover the pre-launch of the picture book *A People War* and refused to be deterred by loadshedding. He conducted the interview by candlelight, and it was ready to air on the 10.15 news. The loss of such a passionate, promising journalist is a blow to the nation.

Devendra Dhungana, NTV



COURTESY NTV

Jillian Bowling Schlaepfer

Jill had worked as WWF-UK’s director of programs since July 2004, supporting conservation programs tackling global threats such as climate change through business and government advocacy strategies.

A Swiss-Australian, Jill had also worked with WWF-International as deputy director of the Forests Program for two years. Prior to that, she worked as a director at the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers in Switzerland, in the Oregon Department of Forestry (USA) and in the Australian Federal Public Service.



COURTESY WWF

Hannah Williams, WWF-UK

Jennifer Headley

Jennifer Headley joined WWF-UK in August 2003. As coordinator for the Himalaya/South Asia Programme, she promoted community-based species conservation and forestry, plantations, and natural forest regeneration. Jennifer also educated people about climate change. She had been based in Nepal since 2005, focusing on the eastern Himalayas.

A Canadian national, Jennifer first came to Kathmandu in 2001 and worked through CECI on species conservation and natural resource management. Before that, she had lived and worked in the Canadian Arctic.

She was an important part of Nepal’s WWF family. Her friends remember her as being feeling a strong sense of accomplishment about developing a program approach. Jennifer is survived by her parents and two sisters.

Headley family, Hannah Williams, WWF-UK



COURTESY WWF

Bijnan Acharya

Born was born in Tanahaun district into a family of poets, and Bijnan grew to be a leading environmentalist here. He earned a doctorate on Forest and Biodiversity Assessment from Leiden University in the Netherlands, and authored numerous scholarly articles.

Bijnan served at the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation in various capacities until he joined USAID in 1999 as the Environment and Forestry Program Specialist. He was also the mission Environmental officer responsible for ensuring that every USAID project met environmental safety standards before implementation.

Bijnan managed complex programs dealing with community forests, buffer zones, irrigation schemes, and hydropower. †He also contributed immensely to Nepal’s community-based approach to management of forests and

buffer zones, regarded as a highly successful model. He maintained a personal and heartfelt dedication to his work.

Bijnan was a true gentleman. He will be missed dearly, and is survived by his wife, son, daughter, parents, two brothers, and two sisters.

USAID



COURTESY USAID

Margaret Alexander

Margaret Alexander arrived in Kathmandu as deputy director of USAID in 2005, and worked on the peace building and reconciliation process and as a strong advocate for essential development programs. A natural leader, she often served as the acting director of the mission, including during the recent helicopter trip.

Margaret was energetic, courageous, good-natured, and truly inspiring. She previously served in Cote d’Ivoire, Haiti, Kenya, and the Europe and Eurasia Bureau, and took pleasure in learning about each place’s people and cultures. The day of the ceremony in Kanchenjunga, USAID announced her next assignment, mission director in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Margaret’s friends from around the world are still sending condolence letters.

USAID



COURTESY USAID

Matt Preece

Matthew Preece was born in 1975 in New York, but travelled all over the world. He loved people and the outdoors, and was able to combine both in his work in environmental education.

He received his MA in Sustainable International Development in 2004 from Brandeis University in Boston. After internships and consultancies in several countries, Matt joined WWF-Nepal in May 2006 as program officer for the Eastern Himalaya Eco-region Complex. He was particularly interested in hands-on environmental work and teaching conservation.

Matt also spent several months in Bangalore helping locals learn to use natural resources in eco-friendly and sustainable ways. He also led groups of students to study the ecology of coastal Mexico and to help preserve the sea turtles of Costa Rica.

Matt loved to travel and experience life. His humorous emails of experiences overseas and the pictures of his adventures will be greatly missed. He was excited to begin work at the WWF, and felt lucky to work on something he believed in.

Matt is survived by his parents, four siblings, and 11 nieces and nephews. Matt’s family and friends worldwide will miss his sense of humour and generosity of spirit, but he died doing what he loved, and for that we are grateful.

Debbi Wooten, sister



COURTESY WWF

Shree Airlines Crew
Captain Klim Kim was from Kyrgystan and joined Shree Airlines about a year ago.
Flight engineer Valeriy Safronov was Russian.
Captain Mingma Sherpa had joined Shree Airlines just last week, and previously worked for Alliance Helicopters.
Cabin attendant Guruwar Tandul was from Bagbazar. He is remembered by colleagues as a friendly and sincere young man.



RAMESHWOR BOHARA



COURTESY: GAA

DESPAIR AND HOPE: Over 36 hours of continuous rain flooded Banke and Bardia in the first week of September (left). Volunteer doctors treating flood victims in Gangapur

A trickle of hope

We went to help flood victims, and realised the problems went far deeper

GANGAPUR, BANKE—Most of us, myself included, rarely leave our hometowns or see much of Nepal. So when we decided to set up a temporary health camp in the flood-

NEPALI PAN
Sadeep Shah
Abhishek Thapa

affected areas, we knew we'd be experiencing something different. We didn't expect to re-think the way we saw our country.

When the floods devastated Banke and Bardiya, Godavari Alumni Association and West-East Youth Volunteer Organisation Nepal, a recently established NGO, decided at an emergency meeting to send medical relief to the worst-affected areas. I, along with 17 other young volunteers and 10 medical doctors, some fresh from school, eagerly volunteered.

We left on 11 September, bombarded with warnings about landslides and highway closures, as well as fears of dacoits, Maoists, and political unrest. It took us 20 hours to reach Nepalganj instead of the usual 12 because of traffic jams caused by landslides, detours, and a flat tyre.

From Nepalganj we got on another bus, crossed the Rapti on a boat shared with bicycles and two dozen other people. A half-finished bridge stood silently across the river. On the other side, we loaded our supplies into three waiting bullock carts and literally set off into the unknown.

As darkness fell we found ourselves walking through the jungle, passing the occasional village and struggling to keep everyone together. We reached Gangapur after midnight, and were welcomed by a few sleepy policemen stationed at the local government health post to assist with relief efforts. Tired, hungry,

and thirsty, we slept on a cement rooftop under the starry tarai night.

The local health post was large, with two buildings. The two-storied front building had been converted into living quarters for the policemen, and the five rooms of the single-storied back one were to be our health camp by day, its roof our beds by night.

By 8AM a steady influx of people started arriving at our camp. By afternoon, the crowd

was so large that even the police couldn't control it. Local un-armed Maoist cadres helped manage the crowd—one of the many surprises was seeing them work together with the police, for all the world as if everyone was on the same side.

Over the course of the day, our doctors saw about 1,700 people from four surrounding VDCs. While registering patients, examining them, and dispensing drugs, one of our biggest problems in this Awadhi-

speaking area was the language barrier. It was difficult making sure they understood instructions about medicine dosages and timings. Several of them didn't know their age, or had trouble describing their medical problems. Many of the children were acutely malnourished, and the adults often asked for something to make them strong. Poverty and poor hygiene were also rampant, and those were problems that had been around long before the flood.

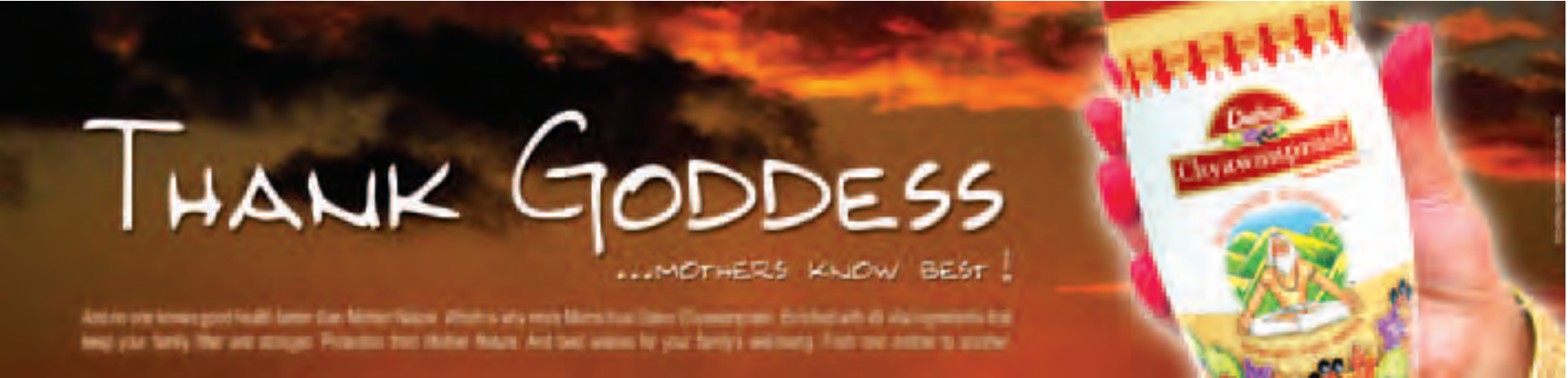
A villager, echoing what others including the police and the Maoists had already told us, said, "This is the first time any organisation has come to our aid in such a large scale, bringing doctors and medicines along."

Despite the heat and communication problems, when the camp ended after 10 hours, the doctors had examined everyone they could, with many people

vowing to return or tell others to come.

The next day when we woke up on the rooftop to the rising sun and the green fields, we immediately started packing and loading our remaining supplies into a tractor, the best vehicle for the terrain. As we started moving, villagers followed us asking us not to leave, telling us that we had to do more. Some even tried to block the road in places. Our hearts went out to them, but we simply didn't have enough time or supplies to help everybody.

Our experience had brought us face to face with the stark reality of our country. The underlying poverty and underdevelopment we had all heard about but never really seen hit us hard. We may not have made huge changes in the lives of the people we helped, but we did what we could. ●



Ready for retail

The mega shopping experience for those with little time and big budgets



MIN BAJRACHARYA

When Bishal Bazaar opened in the 1980s, it quickly became the stuff of urban legends—the size, the variety and, of course, the escalator. Today's Kathmanduites are decidedly more blasé about the mega shopping experience, and understandably so considering the number of new shopping mall, complexes and department stores that have mushroomed across the Valley. These behemoth structures stand as a tribute to Kathmandu's commitment to consumerism, and each seems even larger and more inclusive than the rest—the United World Trade Centre currently under construction in Tripureswor being a prime example. Gone are the days spent hopping from Darbar Marg to New Road and then to Ason for a full Dasain shop. For the time conscious, things have never been so easy. Even so, it still pays to shop around for the best shopping centre—and that's where *Nepali Times* helps you out.

THE BLUEBIRD EXPERIENCE

Two decades after its first department store opened in Tripureswor, the Bluebird franchise has expanded to include another branch in Lajimpat, and is now completing its flagship store's transition into a bonafide mall. When the waning fortunes of the tourism industry forced the Bluestar Hotel to close 11 months ago, it provided an

Bluebird Mall

shopping mall and food court

branding your lifestyle

RADO

TISSOT

CITIZEN

ROMANSON

CASIO

SEIKO

WISMA

THE WORLD WIDE SERVICE

EPART

FUJITIME

CRIMSONE

Wrangler

bossini

Lee

adidas

BALEN

WORLDWIDE

NIKE

WATSON

F

DAPPER

BLUMETT

ROCK

Park Avenue

EXCALIBUR

trichocaine

CATERPILLAR

TOP CLASS

Fetish

FACES

ARROW

Papa John's

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उहि मुन्यमा

साहित्य विशेष सहित

१२८ पृष्ठ

सर्वत्र बजारमा उपलब्ध छ ।

प्रकाशक: सेवा

संस्थापक: २०११/२०२०/००२२/०२/०२/०२

ideal opportunity for Binod Tuladhar to realise his ambitions of creating the ultimate all-in-one shopping experience. Half the old hotel has now been converted into shops. iThereis a food court, over 50 brands and outlets including a beauty salon, a foot massage centre and a florist,î says Tuladhar, explaining that although each outlet rents their own space, it still all comes under a single overall management.

The interior has been done up in a similar style to department stores abroad, and the shops carry everything from perfume, watches, sportswear, lingerie, and luggage to various brands like Addidas, Bossini, Leviís, and Reebok. The mall also houses Kathmanduís first clothing outlets of Baleno, Dapper, Crimsoune, Koutons, Womenís Wear, and Duke. There are also Indian brands like Peter England, Raymond, Woodland, Park Avenue, and Excalibur while local brands are Fitrite and John Players. Plum, a lingerie store that sells brands like Kyra, Wavily, Anne Bra, Sabina and Jockey has opened its second outlet here and so has Top Class, a leading fashion store for women.

The food court, which includes restaurants like Bawarchi, Road House CafÉ and Hunan, is set to open between Dasain and Tihar. The mall will also introduce valet parking afterTihar.

Opening hours: 10AM to 8PM everyday
Special offers: 10 percent discount on all garments, 5-40 percent discount on American Tourister luggage, 1.5 litres of Pepsi free for every food purchase above Rs 2,000, 600ml Pepsi free for every food purchase above Rs 1,000 until Tihar
For a privilege card: Accumulate bills worth Rs 12,000 from any Bluebird stores and get discounts all year round
Other attractions: Childrenís crÉche Punkie Universe and Furniture Land, which is offering a 10 percent discount on all furniture until 25 October
Parking: Available for 70 cars and 60 motorcycles

SALEWAYS

The Saleways Department Store in Pulchok is actually a branch of the Saleways in Pokhara, which started 14 years ago. Following the success of the two Pokhara stores, it opened in Kathmandu in 2004, swiftly gaining loyal customers because of its pricing and impeccable service. It claims to have the lowest prices of any department store in town, and if youíre running short of time the salespeople offer to complete your shopping for you.

iSaleways is popular because of its friendliness. Our motto is buy cheap, sell cheap,î says manager Panu Dutta Paudel. If you find a product cheaper elsewhere, ibring your bill back and weíll return your money,î adds Paudel.

Well-organised aisles make shopping intuitive and easy, and transactions are swift. Apart from food and beverages, there's a a separate cheese corner while the



KIRAN PANDAY

two floors above sell clothing.
Opening hours: 8AM to 8PM everyday
Special offers: 10 percent discount on all garments, up to 50 percent discount on selected items, and 2-3 percent off on food until Tihar
Dasain lucky draw: Winners of Rs 7,50,000 worth of prizes including digital fridge, washing machines, vacuum cleaners to be announced after Tihar
For a privilege card: Contact the store after Tihar. Standard Chartered Bank credit card holders enjoy cash back on discounts and are eligible for the lucky draw
Other attractions: A separate bakery, fruits, organic and non-organic vegetable stand
Parking: 10 cars inside the compound, 15-25 outdoor parking, and up to 70 motorcycles



MIN BAJRACHARYA

GEMINI

While Boudha seems a bit out of the way for most city residentsí grocery needs, many have found the trek worth it since Gemini Grocery opened in 1991. Today there's a second branch in Jawlakhel which opened in 2002, but true fans will still go to the massive new department store complex in Boudha. They sell a vast range of Teflon coated products and are the only department store with a separate freezer unit for frozen products. If youíre looking

for pure, unadulterated mustard oil, head to Gemini.
Opening hours: 8AM to 8PM
Special offers: Up to 40 percent discount on all garments until Tihar
For a privilege card: Regular customers eligible. Distribution begins next month
Other attractions: A bakery and a fresh fruits and vegetable shop
Parking: 25 cars



KIRAN PANDAY

NAMASTE

Currently part of the former Hotel Narayani complex in Pulchok, Namaste Department store now covers a staggering 17,000 sq feet. Namaste started its first store 15 years ago in Jawlakhel and relocated to Pulchok in 2004, and also has another branch in Maharajganj. Itís a must-visit for discerning drinkers, as it has over 3,000 kinds of liquor and boasts one of the best selections of wine in town, meticulously organised by category, year and country. A small kiosk between the stairways acts as a book corner, ideal for the reluctant shopping companion who prefers to leaf through the magazines and novels.
iWe also have the best electronic appliances in town,î says Jeewan Sakya, Namasteís managing director. Sakya knows how to keep his customers happy as the client list has jumped over 8,000.

Opening hours: 8.30 AM to 8PM everyday
Special offers: 5-50 percent discount up to 2 October.
Himalayan Bank lottery every day: Use a credit card for purchases Rs 2,000 or over, and you could win a prize worth Rs 2,000
For a privilege card: Buy goods worth Rs 2000, earn 400 mileage points and become eligible for a Dasain upahar
Other attractions: A separate bakery and a grocery inside the premises
Parking: 15-20 cars

Shop & Win Offer

In Dashain & Tihar

With every purchase of Rs 1500, get a lucky draw coupon and win exciting prizes.

Saleways Department Store
Kathmandu: Pulchowk, Lalitpur. Tel: 9347479.
Pokhara: Chivherga, Tel: 920971. Pokhara Branch: Cakes, Retail/Wholesale. Tel: 9223292.

Supported by:

This offer is valid from 5 Aug to 8 Kartik 2063. This offer is applicable in Kathmandu & Pokhara Branches of Saleways.
SCBN offer starts from 15 Sept. 06. *Conditions Apply.

What are you wearing tonight ?

Festival Offer
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SHREYA MUKHERJEE

Kathmandu jazz pioneers Cadenza sure know how to make an impression—their performance at the 4th Palmer Street Jazz Festival in Townsville, Australia in 2000 impressed everyone from jazz greats Don Burrows and the All-Stars to coordinator Neal Sellars' daughter Susan, who packed up to come work on a smaller festival right here in the Valley. The first Jazzmandu two years later, featuring Burrows and Afro Dizzi Act, took the city by storm. Today the event is a regular fixture of the city's cultural calendar, this year

running as Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 from 11-18 October. Besides Cadenza, this year's artists include The Remi Abram Quartet, Andy Grosskopf, El David Burgos, Francois Carrier, Judy Lewis, Latin Jazz All Stars, Norwegian Musos, and Stupa. They come together with lofty ideals of playing for peace. Like jazz, they say, peace has no boundaries. Jazzmandu certainly seems to transcend nationality, with past acts including artists from Australia, Denmark, the US, Benin, and India. We've heard big band, free jazz, classical Indian-jazz fusion, and a lot of funk-ed-up, danceable crossover music.

The jazz peace

Grooving with Surya Classic Jazzmandu

Each individual adds their own twist, giving the festival a dynamic profile that keeps listeners coming back for more. Even the artists never really know what to expect at Jazzmandu. Jazz-funk musician Andy Grosskopf, a newcomer to Kathmandu with Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006 says, "I'm very interested in getting to know other cultures and ways of life!" Navin Chhetri, drummer and vocalist of Cadenza, still gets emails from international acts from previous years—and many from outfits that want to play—waxing rapturous about what they fancifully call 'jazz in the Himalaya'. It's not just about the

music at Jazzmandu, but also about how the music and the city meld. The concerts at Gokarna play off the sense of space and to the mountains behind, while Jazz at Patan is always a fusion of the best of all worlds. Even the musicians from Nepal are remarkably diverse. Gandharba musicians have played at a previous festival, and this year Kutumba, a folk-fusion band, and Stupa, a rock-jazz combo will also make an appearance. As always, Cadenza remain a star attraction. Along with their lineup, their style has changed from the straight-ahead, sometimes noodly sound of five years ago, to improvisation-

focused Afro-Cuban traditions. Chhetri, who holds Cadenza together, says, "Nepal's best musicians have played for Cadenza, and when they leave, they're even better. We embrace styles from all over the world and blend them. That's what makes this so challenging, and fun." One of the reasons there is so much crossover music is to spread the jazz bug. The dance grooves serve as a sort of gateway drug for the real thing. As Chhetri explains, "Jazz used to be considered music that old people listen to while lounging around. Now you can feel the excitement, energy, talent, and sophistication. It's simple, yet complicated." ●

Upstairs Jam featuring The Remi Abram Quartet/Cadenza & Friends, 7.30 PM on Wednesday, 11 October at the Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Rs 300.

Free Jazz a spontaneous warm up jam open to all, with Jazzmandu musicians at Darbar Square, Basantapur. 4-5PM, Thursday 12 October

Gokarna Jazz Bazaar featuring Nepali and international performers in a blend of cultural folk, classical and jazz music. 5PM onwards at the Gokarna Forest Golf Resort on Friday, 13 October, Rs 500. Free shuttles available.

Peace Parade Music for peace down the streets of Lajimpat, with jazz musicians, dancers, folk musicians, *pancha kanyas* and Buddhist monks. 11.30 AM ñ 12.30 PM, starting from Upstairs Jazz Bar on Saturday, 14 October

Red Hot Latin Jazz Afro-Caribbean and South American rhythms on Saturday, 14 October from 7.30 PM onwards at Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat. Rs 399

Jazz Movies featuring The Miles Davis Story and Calle 54, 6.30 PM onwards at Upstairs Jazz Bar for Rs 100 on Sunday, 15 October

Valley Jam with Francois Carrier, Andreas Hessen Schei and Hilde Marie Kjersem at 1905, Kantipath. 6.30 PM onwards on Sunday, 15 October for Rs 300

Jazz at Patan Nepali classical music fuses with international jazz and south Indian sounds on Monday 16 October, 6.30 PM on at Patan Museum Square for Rs 999.

All-Star Fever at Hotel Shangri-la, Tuesday, 17 October. The ultimate jam, with Jazzmandu musicians getting together after their individual sets for a high-energy jam. Rs 599, 5PM onwards, includes an exhibition of Jazzmandu photographs.

Jazz for the Next Generation Musicians share their stories and experiences with young jazz lovers at Nepal Music Centre, 11AM-1PM on Wednesday, 18 October.

Upstairs Jam Jazzmandu artists get together for a final gig on Wednesday, 18 October at Upstairs Jazz Bar. 7.30 PM onwards for Rs 300

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Women in Nature** by Erina Tamrakar till 20 October at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Aloha Namaste Sacred Places, Sacred Animal** paintings by Wicki Van De Veer till 20 October at Siddharth Art Gallery
- ❖ **Figures in Paint** by Chirag Bangdel at Imago Dei Caf  Gallery, 9AM-9PM. 4442464

EVENTS

- ❖ **Fulpati** 29 September
- ❖ **Tika** 2 October
- ❖ **Classical Nepali Concert** coordinated by Sarita Mishra, 8 October, 6.30 PM, Rs 500 at the Garden of Dreams
- ❖ **The Jazz Affair** a fundraiser for Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital Diagnostic Centre, 11 October, 6PM, Rs 2,000 at the Garden of Dreams
- ❖ **Japanese Day** displays of Ikebana, Bonsai, Japanese dolls and more, 14 October, 10.30 AM- 10PM, Rs 500 at the Garden of Dreams
- ❖ **Fire in the Monastery** a play by Abhi Subedi, directed by Sunil Pokhrel and presented by Gurukul, 17 October, 7PM, Rs 300 at the Garden of Dreams
- ❖ **Salsa Classes** at the Radisson Hotel, 6PM, pre-register at the hotel reception. 4411818
- ❖ **Tai-Chi, Qi-Qong and Hatha Yoga** at the Self Awakening Centre, Baber Mahal Revisited, call to sign up. 4256618

MUSIC

- ❖ **Dawa Gyalmo** at the Paleti Series, 28 and 29 September, 5.30 PM, nepa-laya R salaa 5552839
- ❖ **Dwarika's Oktoberfest** a fusion of food and music at Dwarika's, 29 September, Rs 850
- ❖ **Jazz Affair** at the opening of the Garden of Dreams, Saskia Laroo to perform, 11 October, Rs 2,000. 4495000
- ❖ **Surya Classic Jazzmandu 2006** 11-18 October
- ❖ **Open Mic Night** at ViaVia Caf , Thamel every Friday, 8PM

DINING

- ❖ **Mezza and Margaritas** at Dwarika's Fusion, every Wednesday at 5.30 PM, Rs 555. 4479448
- ❖ **Seven Sensations** at Hotel Yak & Yeti, cocktails and snacks. 4248999
- ❖ **Thakali Lunch** special price, everyday at Moksh. 5526212
- ❖ **Scrumptious** wood fired pizzas at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel 4262768 and Pulchok 5521755
- ❖ **A Sweet Taste of Life** at La Dolce Vita, authentic Italian cuisine. 4700612
- ❖ **Season of Freshness** at Shambala Garden Cafe, Shangri-La Hotel, happy hours 12-7 PM. 4412999
- ❖ **Creations from the Clay Oven** at Stupa View Restaurant, Boudha Stupa, 4480262
- ❖ **Monsoon Madness Wine Festival** enjoy wines from four continents at Kilroy's of Kathmandu. 4250440
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** swimming and lunch, or overnight stay with breakfast and swimming, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Explore Bandipur with Kutumba** at River Side Springs Resort, 6-7 October, Rs 3,000, book now. 5521690
- ❖ **Sherpa Dasain** trek in the Helambu region, five days from 30 September. 4412508
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** open for Dasain Tihar reservations. 4361500
- ❖ **Nature Retreat** at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Escape to Godavari Village Resort**, an overnight stay package with breakfast & swimming. 5560675

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com



YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



Quest Entertainment

During a night of partying, Anamika (Urmila Matondkar) meets Nikhil (Sanjay Suri) at a pub. The chemistry between them is instant but she disappears into the night without even telling him her name. Nikhil starts to visit the pub regularly hoping to meet her again. One such night at the pub with friends a confrontation leads to a shot being fired. Time stands still as Nikhil realises that he is holding the gun from which the shot was fired. This moment would change all their lives forever.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal
www.jainepal.com



NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



Like the floods last month, last week's inclement weather too was one of those unstoppable natural phenomena that take everyone by surprise. There should be few surprises this week, though, Wednesday afternoon's satellite picture shows a few wispy clouds over Nepal. The monsoon has definitely left, though its erratic appearance and disappearance this year makes one wonder. Dasain days will be marked by occasional patchy clouds, but for the most part expect hot, bright days, and crisp nights.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
27-19	26-18	25-17	27-18	29-17



नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो । यहाँका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेसामा आधारित छन् । कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको रुन्डै ४० प्रतिशत हिस्सा अहिले पनि कृषि क्षेत्रले नै ओगटेको छ । सिङ्गो मुलुकको आर्थिक, सामाजिक मेरुदण्डको रूपमा रहेको कृषिक्षेत्र उपेक्षित हुनु हुँदैन । कृषकहरू देशका वास्तविक नायक हुन् । उनीहरूलाई सम्मान र कदर गर्नुपर्छ । कृषकहरूले पनि आफ्नो पसिनामाथि विश्वास गर्नुपर्छ । नयाँ नयाँ कृषि प्रणाली अवलम्बन गर्नुपर्छ । पढ्दैमा खेती गर्नु नहुने होइन । रुन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत कृषकको खााचो छ । त्यसैले कृषि पेसालाई आदर गरौं, कृषकलाई सम्मान गरौं ।

नेपाल सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग



KIRAN PANDAY

ROUND TABLE: Leaders of the seven-party alliance meeting in Baluwatar on Tuesday to decide to manage the arms of the state and the Maoists, based on the five-point letter sent to the United Nations.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PROMOTING NEPALI: Senior journalist Bhairab Risal receives the Jagadambashree Award from Kamal Mani Dixit for his contribution to the Nepali language through journalism on Sunday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PICTURE THIS: Mukunda Acharya, director of the Department of Information, and Suresh Acharya of the World Bank analyse a photograph at Kishor Kayastha's third solo exhibition at the World Bank Public Information Center on Monday.



ANUP PRAKASH

AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE: Devotees stand in line in Chyusal, Lalitpur, for Ganesh Puja on Tuesday. Many had been patiently queuing since 4AM.



Radio Jeevan

A whole generation of Nepalis have probably picked up their music tastes from Hits FM's executive director, Jeevan Shrestha. He got his enthusiasm from the hippies who drifted through the streets of Jhocchen while he was growing up, bringing with them the sounds of Bob Dylan, Led Zeppelin, and the rest. A decade ago, when Hits FM was leading Kathmandu's FM revolution, the start-up library came largely from Jeevan's personal collection. Most of the albums still haven't made their way back to him. †

After working in tourism and hospitality and spending years in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe, Jeevan's foray into radio in 1996 was largely trial and error. †

Sonny Shrestha (managing director then) and I had to think hard about what people wanted,

and plan our programming around that. † It was time well spent, as ten years later

Hits FM 91.2 is thriving, as the only commercial radio station with a 24-hour focus on music and entertainment. †

It hasn't all been song and games though. With state-run Radio Nepal as their only predecessor, building up a radio advertising industry was just as challenging as gauging listenership and training staff. Using their ear for what sells and making a wise decision to invest in production music, Jeevan and the Hits FM team have created many of Nepal's most memorable and successful radio advertising campaigns.

For clients ranging from local banks and restaurants to international companies like Mazda, Honda, and TIME

magazine, Jeevan is usually personally responsible for the concepts and scripting of ads. He enjoys playing with words, coming up with taglines and slogans like Mercantileist's time has come and the slurred ejunsukai bar, Rum Doodle Bar. Although he doesn't host programs himself, he does do ads, and his distinctive, gravelly voice has become as well-known as those of his presenters. Often, it's what advertisers insist on. †

Despite increasing competition from new FM stations and Nepali tv, Jeevan is confident that the station, which makes a trio of ten-year-olds with his twin sons, is on the right track. The prestigious Closeup-Hits FM Music Awards and a city clamouring for quality entertainment will only help. To get more listeners, says Jeevan, †You just have to be good at what you do. † ●

Himal Southasian: October issue is now on stands!

Includes:

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